

my science, I—I—feel it my duty to knock him down."

"Gentlemen—gentlemen!" I cried out, "you have both been very clever—a great deal too clever for me. I would gladly have accepted either of your readings, Heavens knows. But I can't accept both; and both your reasons are so admirable that I can't accept either. And what's worse, it's your arguments, not your assertions, that will have to go into Chancery; and into Chancery we must all go. Yes, there's no help for it now; and, once in, Heaven alone knows when we shall get out again."

"I object to the law on principle; I shall have nothing to do with law," said Stedl; and I have no doubt but he had excellent reasons for the only principle I ever heard of his having. "I bring my expert; you are satisfied. I demand twenty-five thousand pounds for my son."

"I despise the law," shouted the Major. "An Irish gentleman doesn't mix up with petty-foggish rascals. I wouldn't touch the dirty thing with the end of an old boot. 'Tis as clear as day—Lucia Bridgita O'Birn."

"It must be compromise, or—Chancery," said I. "Have it as you will."

"Compromise—with him?" said Stedl, pointing to the Major with his thumb. "Not one penny shall he rob my son of."

"Compromise—with a Stedl!" said the Major, in his turn. "Maybe with old Nick I would; for old Nick's a gentleman," added he.

And there was the dearest lock I ever heard of since I was born! No Lord Chancellor ever drew up a will that most clearly meant two opposite and irreconcilable things.

And here, alas, is the end of this story, so far as I am concerned. I may say alas in the conventional spirit of a lawyer (as he is supposed to be); for students of knotty points of Equity may search the Chancery reports in vain for any case bearing the name of Molloy, Lake, Stedl, or O'Birn. The effect of a will written in a cipher which can read in two ways remains undecided to the present hour; and will, unless things repeat themselves in the most incredible way, remain undecided for evermore. The united wisdom of the House of Lords—for it must have got even there at last—was never occupied with investigating the secret thoughts of Miss Molloy.

I really regret, sometimes—quite independently of the advantage that would have accrued to my own banking account—that I did not, in the interests of my profession, apply to the Court instantly on behalf of myself and my co-executor. A certain utterly ridiculous unwillingness to throw Miss Molloy's property into the very maelstrom of litigation led me to put off the evil day as long as possible. For I could not help remembering that if, by any chance, the will should at last be set aside altogether for want of anybody's having brains enough to make head or tail of it, or for want of inherent perspicuity, or for any other sufficient reason, the Count and the Major must divide as next to kin, in right of their wives. And that would be worse for the property than a hundred Chanceries of the good old Elden days. They, in their determination to have all or nothing, were no more eager to push matters to an extremity than I. And so, I verily believe, should we have been standing at this triangular deadlock at the present hour, had not the delay itself brought about a most natural solution in the most natural way in the world. "When in doubt, do nothing," I constantly find to be the wisest maxim that ever was made.

My belief, at the time, hardly equalled my surprise. But, considering that Mrs. Stedl and Mrs. O'Birn had never quarrelled—considering that they had met again—considering what sort of young people their son and their daughter were—I must own that I was an ass to feel surprised on learning of the marriage of Lieutenant Stedl to Lucia Bridgita O'Birn. The history of the Montagues and the Capulets does not stand alone in the effect of the feuds of the old upon the hearts of the young. But this is no part of my story. Enough that her claims became his, while his remained his own—and therefore her own, too. And if two elderly rascals were kept in somewhat disreputable clover for the rest of their days, and if two executors were content to run a little safe risk in making things comfortable all round for everybody, themselves included, and if two cryptologists remained irreconcilable foes, and if two young people became happy in their own peculiar way, and if the Court was deprived of a big cause, and the profession of the bulk of the property of Miss Molloy—well the fault is mainly my own. I profess only to tell the story, not to solve the mystery, of Miss Molloy's most remarkable will.

A DARWINIAN DIVERSION.

The servant of my grocer, a sharp boy named Joe, told me he had lately seen in the streets a large and handsome pigeon with scarlet-tipped wings, purple tail feathers, and a small well-shaped comb, like a cock's, upon his head. This was a staggerer—a pigeon with a cock's comb! The freaks of colour in feathers might be accounted for, but the comb! No, it was impossible; the *columba* were too widely distinct from the *gallina*. I questioned the lad. He declared it was true, and that he had seen the bird often. He calculated he knew a pigeon, and he knew what a comb was. This was a fine sleek bird, with a knowing look, and not a bit skeery.

If this is true, thought I, I will knock the naturalists endwise. A pigeon with a comb! I

must have that bird. I will give him to Mr. Thornbury as a subject for a lecture. He will go back to Darwin, even. I will write to Darwin myself. It will be a favourable opportunity to get an autograph letter; for, of course, the great man will acknowledge my service in the cause of science.

"Joe," said I, "if you can catch that bird in a trap—alive, I mean, and without injury—I will give you ten dollars."

The boy's face brightened with a keen intelligence, and he said, "I'll try."

I visited Mr. Thornbury, and gave him the news. Our discussion was animated and long, but it need not be reproduced here.

I had stipulated with Joe that, in case he should catch the bird, he should take the trap direct to my friend's house.

Meanwhile the pigeon had been seen by many persons, and it was noised about in the grocery and provision stores of the South End that his phenomenal ornaments had excited great interest among savants. Joe had, moreover, expatiated upon his expected reward, and had promised to take his "girl" to the theatre on the strength of it.

When at length Joe made the capture, and started off with the prize in the grocer's wagon, he was followed by a curious crowd. I got the word, and started also. By the time I arrived there were a dozen persons in the front yard. Joe had already alighted with the box, and taken it in-doors.

Mr. Tooke Thornbury, in his best blue coat, and with eyes that gleamed behind his huge glasses, stood waiting for the trap to be opened.

There the pigeon was, as bright a creature as ever was seen, with purple tail, scarlet-tipped wings, and a coral comb. The bird ran about the room without fear, but did not choose to be handled.

Mr. Thornbury's emotion was extreme. "Shades of Hunter and Buffon, of Owen, Agassiz, and Aristotle!" he ejaculated. "Am I too to be one of you—known to after-times as one of the great co-ordinates in science! The *Columba Thornburyi* shall mark a new era in classification. Now we will see if the director of the Stubbs Institute, who has refused to invite me to lecture, will delay longer the acknowledgment of my talents!"

Meanwhile the lively bird kept hopping about, gracefully eluding capture. Mr. Thornbury was unconscious of the gradually increasing audience, as he talked and meditated by turns. The entry and door-way were filled with eagerly curious folk.

There was a slight rustle, then a voice, and quick footsteps. A buxom and saucy girl about twelve years of age, in a short dress, and wearing long braids of yellow hair, rushed in, saying in a tone that was like scolding and crying at once, "I declare it's too bad! Billy, pretty Billy, come!"

She held out her hand, and the bird rose on his wings and alighted on her finger. "There! there!" she said, soothingly; "Pretty Billy, kiss me!"

The bird put his bill to the full red lips, and gave an audible coo of delight.

"Now, Joe Saunders," she said, turning to the grocer's boy, "you see if you don't catch it! My pa says there's a law against setting traps for birds in the city. Yes, poor Billy!" she said, caressing the bird again, "they were going to cut you up" (giving a spiteful glance at Mr. Thornbury), "but they sha'n't—no, they sha'n't."

My feelings went through as many phases as the colours of a dying dolphin. There was a pathetic as well as a comic side to the scene. The face of Mr. Thornbury was a study for a picture of vacuity. He was at his wits' end.

I ventured to calm the girl's wrath by admiring her pet. "Those are very unusual colours," I said, pointing to the purple and scarlet tips.

"Oh, I did that," said the girl, gayly. "Papa's carmine ink on the wing feathers, and violet on the tail feathers. Aren't they pretty? Kiss me, Billy!"

"But his extraordinary comb!" gasped Mr. Thornbury.

Here the girl laughed outright, while her merry eyes shone and her fresh colour came.

"Pretty nice, isn't it? I cut it out of red felt. See the nice smooth ridges—just like a real comb. It's stuck well, hasn't it? Fish-glue doesn't soak off. Nice Billy!"

And the pretty fiend dandled the ornithological monster up and down, while he clung to his perch on her finger, and now and then fluttered his carmine-tinted wings and spread his violet tail.

"Say good-bye to the gentlemen," said the girl, mischievously; and away she went.

There was not much to be said (from a scientific point of view), and I was in haste to settle with the grocer's clever boy and be gone.

I feared that Mr. Thornbury would be prostrated with the shock, but it is singular to observe the elasticity of great minds.—F. H. UNDERWOOD, in *Harper's Magazine*.

HISTORY has once more repeated itself. Mr. Popham, when he was Speaker, and the Lower House had sat long, and done in effect nothing; coming one day to Queen Elizabeth, she said to him—"Now, Mr. Speaker, what has passed in the Lower House?" He answered—"If it please your Majesty, seven weeks." The present session of Parliament has completed its seventh week.

ECHOES FROM LONDON.

THE recent illness of the Sultan is solely attributed to the return of Mr. Goschen. It is called neuralgia.

If the Arms Bill is proceeded with, the Irishmen propose to give the House a "considerable quantity of good exercise."

It is proposed to confer yet another post upon the hard-worked Prime Minister—namely, that of President of the London Library, rendered vacant by the death of poor Thomas Carlyle.

THE slang of the House of Commons has resulted in changing the name of the "People's William" into "Coercion Bill." Among the shouts raised when Mr. Gladstone announced his intention to stop the Committee, there were cries of "Coercion Bill."

MR. PARNELL, who recently advised an excited audience of Irish farmers to call their friends together, in case of eviction, and get their assistance to plough up the fields so as to render them useless to the incoming tenant, now writes to say that such a line of conduct would bring those who once indulged in it within the grasp of "cruel, exceptional and barbarous laws." No English or Scotch tenant would consider himself cruelly or exceptionally treated if the law laid him by the heels in the event of his tearing down the fixtures and paper-hangings, and smashing the windows and the gas and water pipes before quitting the house in which he had resided. But then English and Scotch ideas "don't count" at Irish mass meetings or with philosophers of the Parnell, Rochefort, Davitt and Blanqui school.

THE House of Commons seems to be recovering its flow of animal spirits and its love of fun. The other night Mr. Gorst rose from his entrenchment below the gangway and began to talk in his usual pompously patronizing manner. "If the Government refuse to accept this suggestion, he said, 'a considerable number of us in this part of the House will feel compelled to vote for the adjournment.' This is how the sentence runs when completed, but it was some time before Mr. Gorst got to the end of it. When this distinguished member of the Fourth Party reached the phrase 'a considerable number,' members opposite cried out 'Four! four!' The cry was joyously taken up in other parts of the House, and for some time Mr. Gorst, who stiffly declined to see the joke, was engaged in the enterprise of finishing his sentence. As soon as he again got to 'a considerable number' shouts of 'Four! four!' and roars of laughter once more interrupted him.

THE old saying that, strong as Samson was, he could not pull the breeks off an Highlander, is having a new reading, for the Government having given way in the matter of the tartans it is quite plain that even so powerful a Ministry as Mr. Gladstone's cannot pull the kilts off our Caledonian fellow-subjects. It has now been determined that they are to be allowed to retain possession of their various and distinctive plaids. Indeed, Mr. Childers says there never was the slightest intention to abolish these distinctive tartans! That is a bungling way of getting out of the mess. If this be true, why did he not say so before the Sutherland House meeting, and the numerous petitions, and the threat to turn every Liberal member out of Scotland at the next election? Why, the army tailor was instructed to "invent" a tartan which should do for all the Highland regiments, and so save the expense of making the different plaids; and was not the owner of a bit of genuine Stuart tartan invited to take it to the War Office for the inspection of the Clothing Department? A desire to save a few miserable pounds a year has led Mr. Childers into this mess, and necessitated his humiliating denial.

ECHOES FROM PARIS.

THE son of the Emperor of Japan has arrived in France on his way to England, to complete his military education.

THERE is a report current that Cora Pearl is going to be married to a cousin of that ilk, who fell in love with her when she was a young girl and whose passion is still lively. The cousin in question has become a millionaire by gold-digging in Australia.

THE Viscountess Vigier (the charming and gifted Cruvilli), will give at Nice, on the 7th March, her annual operatic representation for the benefit of the poor. The occasion will be a memorable one this year, as the work selected is Wagner's "Lohengrin," which will then be given for the first time in France. Mme. Vigier herself will impersonate Elisa, while the part of the hero will be taken by the American tenor, Mr. Edward Scovel, whose projected debut in Rome has been apparently indefinitely postponed.

THE works of the Hotel de Ville are rapidly progressing. At the foot of the scaffolding, in a tent for protection from the weather, a number of superb mantle columns are now to be seen. These columns, which are destined to form the peristyle of the building on the Rue de Rivoli side, will soon be put in their proper place. All the statues are also ready, and therefore a gene-

ral idea can now be obtained of what the physiognomy of the construction will be when entirely completed. In conclusion, it may be added that the total cost of the Hotel de Ville, when finished, is calculated to approximate forty millions of francs, about the same sum as was expended on the new Opera House.

M. GAMBETTA, with several Deputies, went to the Chamber the other morning before breakfast to test the merits of Signor Michella's new stenographic machine, which has long been in use in the Italian Parliament. It consists of a small piano with twenty keys, which produce signs upon a small band of paper and continuations, which may be multiplied *ad infinitum*. M. Gambetta read some speeches, and in order to test the merits of the machine and of the old system of reporting, a skilful stenographer was engaged to report simultaneously with the machine. The test was triumphant for the latter, and M. Gambetta at once decided that it must replace the old system of reporting. Signorina Michella, the inventor's daughter, presided at the piano, on which she played with wonderful facility.

WHAT was to be called the Eden Galerie will henceforth be known as the Musée Grévin. The well-known artist of that name is now in London studying the wax figures of the Tussaud Museum with the object of getting up in Paris a similar exhibition of living and defunct sovereigns, statesmen, etc., and a chamber of horrors in the background. The world of art and fashion, the theatres, the boulevards, the Bois de Boulogne, the turf, and every feature that belongs to this gay capital, will be tastefully represented in M. Grévin's Museum, which is to be installed in the rooms now occupied by the Café de Mulhouse, fronting the Variétés, and where, in the midst of a flood of light and flowers, the public will be admitted to view, not only the wax figures which are to be wrought by the artist himself, but quite a collection of objects weekly renewed and calculated to attract on account of some passing event of interest, some general topic of conversation, in fine, what took place yesterday or what is likely to occur to-morrow, an idea which originally belonged to M. Villemessant, but which has only been partially realized by the "salle des dépêches" of the *Figaro*, although since imitated by most of the leading organs of the French capital.

SOCIETY AT LARGE.

THE Princess Louise left London last Saturday for Paris, on her way to Italy.

PRINCE Gustavus, Crown Prince of Sweden, has been affianced to Princess Victoria, the oldest daughter of the Grand Duke of Baden.

THERE is a new debating society in London, called the "Wranglers," and it is strictly limited to ladies. The society meets at the house of its president, Miss Biggs, and has on its roll the names of not a few lady graduates.

THE Prince of Wales gave recently a dinner to twenty-five guests, at the Marlborough Club, to decide on the qualifications of a new "chef de cuisine." Each guest was to give his unbiased opinion on the back of the menu-card before him. The cook was voted *à l'unanimité* not up to the mark.

THERE is a new law respecting Italian nobility. Any person may now become a prince on the payment of 30,000 francs, or a duke for 25,000 francs, or a marquis for 20,000 francs, or a count for 15,000 francs, a viscount for 10,000 francs, and lesser titles for 5,000 francs. A mere grant of arms costs 700 francs.

THE latest eccentricity of London drawing-rooms is the sheep-fold screen. It is a low wooden fence, or palisade, painted in a sad green of æsthetic love, which stretches from one post of the folding-doors to another, and opens in the middle with a real wicket-gate and a real latch. The sheep-fold does not pretend to be a real division of the rooms so as to bar the progress of intruders, for it is so low that it can be easily stepped over, but it is intended to signify that the purposes of the divided apartments are different, one division being for work and study, the other for visitors and trifling conversation. One or two ladies have been training ivy along their screens.

THE young Queen of Spain is greatly adored and almost idolised in Madrid. She shows a decided disposition to relax the strict etiquette of court traditions. As an example it is related that she recently visited several charitable institutions, which are conducted by the ladies of the nobility. On one of these visits Her Majesty entered a saloon in which several young ladies of Madrid were taking their drawing lessons. Looking at some of the drawings and not being quite satisfied with the execution (she being herself a skilful artist), the queen quickly removed her gloves, took up the pencil, and quietly seating herself by the side of the young lady, she made the necessary corrections *propria manu*. Such traits gain the hearts of the Madrilenos more than ever, and Her Majesty, who bravely rises above the strict etiquette hitherto prevailing at court, finds an ardent admirer in the king himself. The vivifying influence of the queen's example is being felt in all the circles of the Spanish capital; she has been most happily successful in turning the attention of her high-born subjects to everything relating to art and literature.