The Watford Guide.

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GHOST STORIES UNVEILED.

"A few years ago I removed into a new and larger house with a young family. Some nights after my removal I was awakened in the middle of the night by a distinct knocking at my bedroom door. I called out; "Who's there?" There was no reply; but after an interval of a few minutes the knocking was repeated as distinctly as before. Again the same question: "Who's there?" and again no reply: but again came the knocking, if possible more distinct and louder than before, and just as if a person outside in the lobby had struck sharply and repeatedly with his knuckles on the door. I sprang rapidly from bed on its being repeated, and rushed to the bedroom door and opened it, determined to catch the knocker. But there was no one outside; and no one could have escaped down the staircase, which was what is called a well-staircase, brilliantly lighted with a flood of moonlight, which streamed through the skylight window. I am not and never was superstition-stricken or superstitious but I will confess my sensations now became trying; my heart began to throb, and I returned to bed with ears painfully awake. Again came the knocking, clear and distinct and methodical as before. Although feeling very uneasy, I crept silently out of bed and stretched myself on the floor with my head on the board and a few feet from the bedroom door, to find out if possible from what part of the door the knocking proceeded. Again it came as before, and I could distinctly refer it to the lowest part or panel of the door. I suddenly opened the door; but with the same result as before; and again I lay in my former position. Again came the knocking, three or four distinct taps; and now fixing my eyes steadily on the spot from which the tapping proceeded, I saw the knuckle-bone of a leg of lamb, about the size of a very small walnut, jerked repeatedly against the skirting that lay alongside the door. The skirting was thinner than the sounding-board of a piano; and it was the sudden tapping of the little bone against the sounding-board that produced the repeated knocking. But how was the tapping produced? By a mouse that had found its way along the hollow space behind the wainscot. It had bored a hole in the very lowest part of the wainscot very nearly on a level with the floor, found its little bone left after the child's dinner, and had dragged it to the entrance of its hole, but could not get it through. It had dragged through the rough bit of sinew which is attached to the end of the bone—popularly known in matters as the Gentleman's Bone—and was trying by jerking it backwards to bring the bone itself through; and each jerk gave a blow against the thin sounding-board, and each blow gave out the sound or mysterious knock. Had I not discovered this, no reasoning could have convinced me that I had *not* heard knocks at my bedroom door; and I should in all probability have attributed them to what is termed supernatural agency.

"My next experience was if possible more puzzling. In the neighbourhood of Dublin, on the rocky sea-coast of Dalkey, there are several castles supposed to have been erected by the Danes for the protection of their traders. They are still in fair preservation, and have dwelling-houses of modern construction built against them. One of these old castles stands on the very verge of the sea, over what was once a rocky inlet, but is now a harbour called Bullock Harbour, along the opposite side of which is a row of fishermen's cottages, principally inhabited by men who earn their livelihood as pilots. The dwelling-house attached to this old castle I with my family occupied in the summer, for health's sake and to enjoy boating, of which I was fond. I observed some time after taking up my residence in it, and no matter at what time I retired to bed—and I generally sat up one or two hours after the other members of my family had retired—the servant from the kitchen story selected the same moment for *their* departure.

"This unceasing regularity became at last annoying, and I insisted on knowing the cause. The information given to me was that the old castle and house were haunted, and that for no inducement would the servants remain after I had ascended from the parlour. I had now reason for thinking there was some ground for the fears. The pantry particularly, and the rest of the house with it, were walked over by footsteps at night. These were plainly heard; and there was added an additional aggravation; for, not content with this, the 'supernatural' visitor began to do mischief, and generally in the grey of the morning made free with eatables and pots of jam on the shelves, occasionally breaking a glass or plate! To add to the mystery, though the pantry was carefully locked every night the depredations still continued, and at length the terror of each night's visitation became greater and greater, and various stories began to be circulated, one being that the visitant was the spirit of a nun condemned to suffer the pangs of hunger for some transgression. This was supported by the circumstance of the old castle and grounds having been some years before occupied as a convent. The only opening into the pantry was through a ventilator in the roof, very high up, and adjoining one of the lofty walls of the old castle. Through this no human being could obtain an entrance but it was entered by a *monkey*, who came to it in this way. One of the pilot-boats was taking off a pilot to a ship, to relieve the one on duty, when the monkey, sick I suppose of the sea, and determined not to lose the opportunity jumped into the boat, and on nearing the shore, jumped out again, and sought the nearest shelter, which happened to be near the old castle. The ship was from the West Indies, laden with sugar. The monkey, though missed from the homeward-bound, was unnoticed by the pilot crew, and finding his way from the castle to the ventilator of the adjoining dwelling-house pantry, sought to allay his hunger there when all was quiet at night. By day the creature lay hidden in the old castle; and it was only after a lapse of many days that poor Jacko was discovered peeping out from his lodging in the old Norman keep!

"It not unfrequently happens that houses are haunted, and kept haunted, by certain persons who have a *direct interest* in keeping up the silly trick. In the same neighbourhood—the neighbourhood of the old castle—was a house reputed to be haunted, and which has maintained its reputation for more than two summers. Footsteps are heard at night, doors are slammed, and on one occasion, jugs of water have been poured upon some members of the family, to their great discomfort. The ghost has been clever, and has not yet been caught; but the solution is not far to find, as the caretaker has a comfortable residence gratis, which is lost when the house is let and occupied for the season."

[We gladly offer the foregoing "ghost-stories unveiled" to our readers, as proving what we have over and over again maintained—namely that apparently unaccountable sounds or sights are, in almost every case, capable of being solved, and relegated to natural causes, by the exercise of a little perseverance and common-sense.—ED.]

FIVE telegraph cables now unite Sicily with the main land of Italy.

HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED POEM BY LORD BYRON.

NEWSTEAD ABBEY, Aug. 25, 1811.

In the dome of my sires, as the clear moonbeam falls
Through silence and shade o'er its desolate walls,
It shines from afar like the glories of old;
It gilds but it warms not—'tis dazzling, but cold.

Let the sunbeam be bright for the younger of days;
'Tis the light that should shine on a race that decays,
When the stars are on high, and the dews on the ground,
And the long shadow lingers the ruin around.

And vain was each effort to raise and recall
The brightness of old to illumine our hall;
And vain was the hope to avert our decline,
And the fate of my fathers has faded to mine.

And theirs was the wealth and the fullness of fame,
And mine to inherit too haughty a name;
And theirs were the times and the triumphs of yore,
And mine to regret, but renew them more.

And ruin is fixed on my tower and my wall,
Too hoary to fade, and too massy to fall;
It tells not of time's or the tempest's decay,
But the wreck of the line that have (*sic*) held it in sway.

AN AUSTRALIAN FRAUD

[From Chambers' Journal.]

"What can be keeping Davis to-night? Surely he is very late." I had just made this remark when he knocked at the door.

"If you please ma'am, can I speak to you?" said he.

"Yes. Come in Davis. What has happened to keep you so late this evening?"

"I have been to see my grandfather, ma'am."

"Well, how is he?"

"Oh, grandfather is right enough; but my aunt"—so he called his grandfather's second wife—"is very ill; and I've heard a queer story to-night. It seems I am likely to come in for a large fortune—if it's all true they say."

"Why, how is that Davis? Tell us all about it."

"Well ma'am, you see my grandfather has had a letter sent him to read, that the clergyman at Carsten has received from some lawyer in Australia. The lawyer wants to find the next of kin to Tom Harris, an old man who has died in L—— in Australia, and has left a hundred thousand pounds; and my aunt thinks she is his nearest relation."

"How is that? Who is this Tom Harris?"

"My aunt's name was Harris, and she says her father's youngest brother was named Tom; that he went to Australia many years ago, and has never written home nor been heard of since; and she thinks he is the man because he was born in these parts. This lawyer has sent letters to all the clergymen near here to make enquiries and to search all the registers for the certificate of his birth."

"Then what are you going to do, Davis?"

"I don't know, ma'am. I'll see what grandfather says next time I go to Dewsford."

"Very well. Be sure you tell us what you hear, for we shall be anxious to know."

This was indeed extraordinary news. Even in these days of self-seeking there is occasionally to be found a servant of the Caleb Balderston type, and Davis was one of them; he had grown up in our service from boyhood to manhood, and had so identified himself with our affairs and interests that he always spoke of our belongings as "ours" and "my." We had complete confidence in him, and in return took an interest in all that concerned him and his family; hence his coming to us with this wonderful tale, feeling sure of our sympathy. Although it seemed too strange to be true, there was nevertheless a certain amount of possibility in it which kept alive our interest; and from time to time we used to ask Davis how his fortune was coming on. But beyond hearing conflicting details, which he got from his grandfather now and again, the affair did not seem to progress in the least; so we came to the conclusion that we must set to work ourselves to help him, if anything was to come of it.

The first thing to ascertain was that such a town or district as L—— actually existed in Australia; and for this end we wrote to one of the directors of a colonial bank in London, and had the satisfaction of being told that he not only knew that there *was* a district so named, but that a man of reputed wealth bearing the name of Harris resided there.

We next thought we had better see Davis's aunt and try to get certain facts from her. But here a difficulty arose, for the poor woman had been confined to bed for some weeks, and we knew she was dying of a painful disease. It seemed cruel to disturb her about such things; but Davis was her adopted son, and we knew she would gladly do what she could to further his interests. We found her very weak, and her face bearing an expression of suffering that was distressing to see, but perfectly composed and alive to everything. I went forward gently and said: "Good-morning, Mrs. Davis. How are you to-day?"

"Thank you, ma'am; I be poorly."

"Are you no better?"

"No ma'am. I don't hope ever to be better; but I must bide my time patiently.—How is Davis ma'am?"

"He is very well, thank you."

"I have heard him speak of ye so often, ladies; he says you are all so kind to him, and that he could not have a better place."

"O well, he is good and faithful to us, you know, so we may well be kind to him. But what is all this about this money? I fear you are too ill to be troubled about such matters, but we would like to help Davis if we could. Can you tell us anything about this man Harris?"

"Well, ma'am, my father's name was Harris; and I remember hearing that his youngest brother was called Tom, and that he went to Australia."

"Had your father any other brothers?"

"O yes. There was Henry. Then there were Mary, Elizabeth, and Anne."

"What became of Henry?"

"I don't know; I know nothink about *him*."

"Do you know where they were all born?"

"In the parish of Newcom; my father lived there when he was not at sea. There's a man who calls himself Harris, stays at Carsten now."

"Do you think if we went to Newcom we should find the register they want?"

"Yes ma'am'; I should think so."

"Thank you Mrs. Davis. I fear we are tiring you. It seems cruel to worry you with all these questions."

"O ma'am, you are very kind to trouble yourself about it. I shall soon be where I shall need no money; but if Davis could get it and my poor old man, I'd be cruel glad. You see ma'am, he can't work as he used to."

We left the poor woman, more anxious than ever to help to clear up the difficulty and, if possible, to secure some money to her husband and Davis, even if it were ever so small a share of the hundred thousand pounds. We therefore determined to drive to Newcom and Carsten; and accompanied by Davis, started for the latter place on a fine autumn morning.

The expedition proved most enjoyable. At first the road was a good one, just along the banks of the river, then ascending in zigzag for miles through rich woods, whose openings now and again disclosed magnificent views of country and river far below, with the blue sea in the distance; then out upon the moor, with its wealth of gorse and heather and its bracing air, making the search for the fortune an enjoyable thing in itself, independently of its result. At last we finally descended upon Carsten, an out-of-the-way village, lying on the slope of a hill.

Our first visit was to the Rectory, the servant informing us that Mr. White was out shooting, and the time of his return uncertain; so we resolved to ask about the old man Harris of whom we had heard. We found him in a field hoeing turnips, hale, hearty, and seemingly quite contented. At first he looked at us rather suspiciously, and was not inclined to answer questions. It then turned out that we were not by any means his first interviewers.

"There have been people here to see me," said he. I wish now I had never said nothink about this man. I am not going to trouble myself; I have quite as much as I want. I am over eighty years of age. But you are all working for *me*. If there be any money, it *must* come to me in the end. And as you be all working for me, I beant agoing to trouble *myself*." All this was said in the most indescribable air of self-satisfaction and complacency, the old man leaning on his hoe.

At last, by dint of a little coaxing, we got him to bring up some recollections from the depth of his eighty years. He stated that his cousin Tom Harris was the illegitimate son of Betty Smith, but that he was always called Harris; that he had gone to Australia; he recollected his having come over from the parish of Newcom to bid them good-bye, etc.

It was in vain we represented that the time he mentioned of this youth's departure did not correspond with the date required, and that Betty's son had no right to the name of Harris; he however, insisted that he was the man, and that he himself was his nearest heir, and that we were all working for him.

We then returned to the Rectory, in the hope that the clergyman had tired of his gun, or had got hungry and come home to lunch. But no! In the meantime we got the parish clerk to bring the register, and we spent a considerable time poring over its faded old pages to try to find the date of Tom Harris's birth. It was no easy task; worn dirty old records of events nearly a century old, some in black-letter, with the figures all but illegible. Page after page was patiently scanned; and births, marriages, and deaths of various Harrises were found; but either the Christian names was different, or if we did come to a Tom Harris, our excitement was speedily chilled by finding the date would not agree at all with the age of the man we sought.

Tired and hungry, we gave up the search, and went to find an inn and some refreshment. The inn we found; but as to the refreshment, that consisted of the perpetual bacon one is offered in village inns; not even the eggs were forthcoming. Not caring for bacon, we had to content ourselves with bread-and-cheese and milk.

It was now getting late; and the prospect of bad roads and crossing the moor in the dark was not inviting; so we had reluctantly to start without seeing the clergyman, though we had had the pleasure of a chat with his father, who was at the time on a visit to the Rectory. Soon we found ourselves at home, where we made up by a comfortable tea for our poor fare at dinner.

Of course we got laughed at for our pains; but that had not much effect. The dreary drive had more, and it was some time before we resumed our attempts. One thing we gained by our visit to Carsten; the clergyman's father advised us to get Davis's aunt to make a deposition to a magistrate of all she had told us. The poor woman was far too ill to be out of bed, and it seemed very unlikely she would even be able to do this unless it were done at once. So we persuaded my brother, who is a justice of peace, to go with us to see her, and write it all down from her own lips. A sad and solemn scene it was—the low-roofed room with only the most necessary furniture, yet clean and comfortable: the woman, slowly dying, speaking with difficulty, yet clear and collected, and exerting herself to recollect the scenes of her childhood and youth. Not for herself—for very soon she would be beyond all earthly need—but for her husband and her adopted son. An unlikely place in which to find the heir to a hundred thousand pounds!

Some time before, it had occurred to us she had better make a will, in case of the money coming after her death. We had tried to persuade her to get a lawyer to make out one; but this she would by no means consent to do, on account of the expense, so the only thing left was to try to write one out for her which should include all possible contingencies. This we managed to do. She was quite satisfied with it, and her husband also. (What was more to the purpose, a lawyer friend afterwards told us it would "stand.") We now took advantage of my brother's presence to get Mrs. Davis to sign this will; and we all signed it as witnesses. It occurred to me that it might be disputed on the score of her not being in a fit state to make one; and I thought that if could get the medical man who attended her to see her, it might be useful; so I went in search of him. I was fortunate enough to find him, and explained matters, and said I was anxious he should be able to say that Mrs. Davis was in a capable state when she made her will. He very good-naturedly went with me at once, and pronounced that she was perfectly collected, quite fit to understand and make any arrangements she wished. So that was settled.

Poor thing! We had not taken the precautions much too soon. Not many more visits to inquire for her, when the end came, peacefully and longed for. Whether or not the heiress of a hundred thousand pounds, she was an "heir of God," and His heirs are often found in the poorest of earthly homes.

We now determined to search the registers at Newcom. Here we found a rather disconsolate-looking Rectory. The door was opened by an old woman, who seemed to think we had better have stayed away, but who conducted us to her master because she could not help it. The rector was a nice old man who, when we explained our object, seemed anxious to help us. He said he had an old man in his parish who was one of that family, and would likely know all about it. So he rang the bell.

"Mary, where is old Harris working to-day?"

"I think sir, he is in the back-field digging potatoes."

"Very well. Please go and tell him to come here."

She disappeared, looking rather unwilling to do his bidding; I sometimes wonder if she ever did. Anyhow, the old man did not come. She was one of those servants who have been with one master until the get to believe themselves mistress, and more. She reminded me of an old Scotch servant who was in the service of a friend of ours in Edinburgh, who when the lady rang for coals, would look in at the door, examine the fire at a distance, and say: "Deed mem, the fire doesna need mendin'," and disappear without paying any further attention to the request.

As old Harris was not forthcoming, the clergyman next sent for the parish clerk and the registers. So here again we had a long search; this time with this success, that we found the register of marriage of the said Tom Harris's father and mother, and the births of all his brothers and sisters, but his own—the only one which was of any use. We also found the register of the illegitimate Harris; and the date proved that he, as we had always thought, was certainly not the man. We had evidently got on the right track at last, for here were all the generations of Harrises, uncles, aunts, and cousins, but not *the* one. It was most unaccountable; for as there was nothing more to be done, we returned home still baffled.

We now began to wonder whether Tom Harris could possibly have been registered by some other name, not so unlikely a thing as it would be in our days. The clergyman told us that about the date we required, he knew there had been no resident clergyman in the parish; that the clergyman of another parish used to ride across the moor and take the duty, and that he often used to leave the clerk to fill up the registers. He had actually seen one register of marriage with a foot-note signed by the clergyman, to explain that the above couple had been registered under wrong names, and that he had married them over again a year after, to make sure!

Davis, thinking now, I suppose, that our amateur efforts were not successful, determined to apply to a lawyer in the village; so he and his grandfather consulted Mr. Spiers, gave him all particulars, and got a promise that he would write to Australia to make inquiries. On Davis's return I asked him what Mr. Spiers had said; but of course found that he had been too cautious to give an opinion; besides he had not been paid for it.

Some one now suggested that as Harris's father had been a sailor, perhaps Tom was born at sea. We discovered that there is a parish where such births are registered, and wrote accordingly to inquire. In a few days came reply to the effect, that the books had been searched, but no such name was to be found.

We were getting into despair, beginning to think the whole affair a myth, when a fresh impetus was given to our energies by Davis that a gentleman was expected at the village in about two months who had actually known the said Harris in Australia; so for him we determined to wait. Meanwhile the cousins who were claiming the money through the illegitimate Harris were hard at work, writing and sending money to the lawyer in Australia, and receiving replies stating that he was doing all he could to elucidate the matter for them. Other cousins in the metropolis were also doing their best to establish their kinship and trace the pedigree of the Carsten Harris. It was quite wonderful how many relations started up in all quarters; and we used to get the most varied and perplexing accounts from time to time both from Davis and his grandfather, whom we often went to see. Poor old man! *he* had had no money to send to the lawyer, which made us the more anxious to establish his claims, for it was clear that his deceased wife really was the nearest relative. He was a fine-looking old man, one of Nature's gentlemen, but very helpless in such a matter; and his gratitude to us was real and touching. He seemed surprised at the interest we took in it, and said: "He could almost cry to think any one should take so much trouble for him." To add to his disquietude, his cousins who lived some miles off at a place called Everston, told him all sorts of bewildering things, and tried to get out of him what *we* were doing and finding out. He could keep his own counsel, however.

It now seemed that the only remaining thing I could do was to write to a cousin of ours, a banker in Australia, thinking that if such a very large sum of money was really unappropriated, a banker in the same district would be not unlikely to know something of it. I wrote accordingly, told him the tale, and asked him if he could tell me aught of either the men or the money.

The next event of interest was the arrival of Mr. Brown, the gentleman from Australia, who was said to have known Tom Harris. Strange to say it turned out that it was Mr. Brown's father that Harris had taken letters of introduction long years before. Mr. Brown told us that he knew him perfectly well; that he *was* born in the parish of Newcom. (This was satisfactory, as it quite proved that *our* man was the right one.) He could tell us nothing as to his death, having lost sight of him for some years. He knew he was wealthy, but doubted his having left any such sum as a hundred thousand, adding that the lawyer whose name we mentioned as our authority for the whole matter was, he knew, a great rogue. Mr. Brown intended returning shortly to Australia, and promised to make inquiry for use, offering meanwhile to write to his own man of business there, who would do what he could to find out the truth. This we gladly assented to, and forwarded to him a sum of money, which a relation of old Davis's had offered to spend in the cause.

Some time now elapsed, and we were almost forgetting the thing, when one morning Davis told me that two people wished to see me, and that he had shown them upstairs. Up I went, and found two women, perfect strangers to me, in possession of the drawing-room. One was big, fat, and vulgar, sitting very upright on the edge of her chair with her hands crossed in front of her. The other was a fashionably dressed woman, with an indescribably French air about her; due in part perhaps to a handsome lace tie she had arranged with French grace. We saluted each other, and I sat down wondering what they could possibly want. They seemed at a loss how to begin. At last the French-looking one said: "I believe you know something of the Harris money. I have been told you are acquainted with a gentleman who knew Mr. Harris, and we have come to ask for his address."

I thought: "You may have come for it, but you are not likely to get it." (I fancied how Mr. Brown would feel if he were to be suddenly appealed to by all the Harrisses from all quarters!)

I said: "I know a gentleman who knew Mr. Harris; but he is not here at present" [he had left], "and I am unable to give you his address."

"Oh! can you give me no idea where I could see him? I am a dressmaker in Paris" [that accounted for the lace tie]. "I only heard of this money two days ago. I took the first train for England, and came over to help my sister to get the money. I don't wish it for myself—I have a good business—but for sister and her children."

"There are others besides your sister who seem to have a better claim to it," I observed. "How do you prove your relationship?"

"Sister knows about that. She is related to an old man called Harris at Carsten; and the lawyer says she has only to send out ten pounds to Australia to him and he will get the money for her. I am willing to go the length of two hundred pounds to help sister."

I was sorry that the poor woman should risk the loss of her money, so I said: "I think you had better not send any more money till we know more about it. I have been told that this lawyer is not to be trusted."

"O dear, yes! It is all right. He says sister is sure to get the money. Besides, he is *Sir* George Sleigh."

This she seemed to think was a conclusive argument, and that I must be convinced that "sister's" claims could not be disputed, and that a lawyer with a title was beyond distrust.

I next took some pains to convince them that even if Sir George's letters were all right, and their being the next of kin to the Carsten Harris proved, still he was not the man; that the date of his birth did not agree with that required, by many years; that we had traced the whole family of *our* man, and that his probable date of birth quite agreed with the date given. I rang for Davis, thinking they might perhaps believe *him*. He however, did not seem inclined to have much to say to them; a French dressmaker was out of his line altogether, and he speedily retired. It was all no use. They thanked me, and asked me to let them know if I found out anything more, which I promised to do. They then departed, with their ideas evidently quite unshaken; indeed I am not sure they did not think I was deceiving them from interested motives.

It was now a year and a half since we first commenced this hunt for a fortune. We had often anticipated the pleasure we should have in getting even a small part of this fabulous sum for old Davis and settling him in some neat little cottage with a garden, where instead of his daily hard work, he might enjoy his favourite occupation of growing cabbages, &c. Alas for our anticipations! One morning a letter arrived with the Australian post-marks and in my cousin's writing. I was all eagerness to open it, thinking I should get some decisive information at last. I did so. A peal of laughter was the result, which brought the others to inquire the news. I read them the following: "I wrote to a friend of mine, a banker in the neighbourhood you named, to make inquiries respecting the Harris affair. I think you will consider his reply decisive at least, though perhaps not satisfactory." Here was a quotation from the banker's letter: "With regard to old Harris, he is alive and kicking; I saw him the other day. He is not like dying, as far as I see. When he does, there is no chance of his leaving a hundred thousand pounds, though he is a very well-to-do man. Besides, he has a family of his own, who would of course inherit whatever he may leave. Sleigh is a sly rogue; he has been trying the same game here with old Harris, telling him that a relation of his in England has left him a property there."

"Alive and kicking!" more decisive than elegant certainly.

So this was the end of all our hopes and all our trouble. There was nothing to be done now but to tell poor Davis, which accordingly I did as sympathetically as possible. He took it very quietly, saying he never did believe in it! The old grandfather was sorely disappointed, but very grateful that we had found out the truth, and so saved him from thinking any more about it.

My cousin's letter was shortly followed by one from Mr. Brown, corroborating the facts, and returning the money which had been sent to his lawyer, minus a trifling sum which had been expended before the facts were ascertained. Besides all this, Mr. Brown had actually met old Harris at an elegant wedding-breakfast in the house of one of the leading men in the colony, the bride being a relation of his. Of course in such circumstances Mr. Brown did not think it expedient to inform him of the anxiety of his relations concerning him.

We had at all events found the right man; but after this denouement we thought it only kind to let the Harrises in Everston, &c., know the facts of the case. To our amazement, we were utterly discredited both by them and the French dressmaker; and we are told that they are actually still sending out money to "Sir George," who obligingly informs them that his investigations are progressing favourably, and that he hopes soon to establish their claim to the Hundred Thousand Pounds!

[The foregoing tale, which we are assured is perfectly true, shows how cautiously we should receive statements of windfalls, from unknown sources. We are told that there are certain would-be lawyers in the colonies whose nefarious business it is to obtain sums of money from those to whom they transmit the intelligence of friends deceased, and money going begging! Their *modus operandi* is to write for money to assist them in negotiating with the colonial government for the realization of the deceased's capital, and its transmission to the lucky (!) heir in Great Britain. Sum after sum is thus written for, and probably sent, by the unsuspecting victim; and so it goes on till the bubble bursts and the fraud is discovered.—ED.]

An Old Lady's Advice.

An "old mother" writes to *The Hartford Times* about married life thus: "Preserve sacredly the privacies of your own house, your married state, and your hearts. Let no third person come in between you two. With God's help build your own quiet world, not allowing your dearest earthly friend to be the confidant of aught that concerns your domestic peace. Let moments of alienation, if they occur, be healed at once, never speak of it outside, but to each other confess, and all will come out right. Never let the morrow's sun find you at variance. Review and renew your vows; it will do you good, and thereby your soul's will grow together, and you will become as one."

A Permanent Place in Literature.

When we are asked to assign to a book "a permanent place in literature," we are reminded of a young gentleman who had once been a clerk in a Government office, and had afterward taken to a literary life as a reporter of cricket matches for some sporting paper. He one day visited his old office, and addressing his former comrades said: "What an easy life you have here, you who write mere minutes that live but for a day, compared with the anxieties of a man like myself, who in his work feels that he is writing for all the time.

THE heliograph was used for the first time in war by the British troops which operated against the Afridis on the Peshawur frontier, India. This instrument consists of a circular mirror, moving upon a universal joint and supported on a tripod. Wishing to send messages, the operator, by a quick elevation or depression of the glass, so as to catch the full glare of the sun, is able to throw flashes a distance of twenty-five miles. The length of the flashes corresponds with that of the dashes in the Morse alphabet, by which the messages are translated. This method of field telegraphy does away entirely with the dangers of wire tapping and cutting by the enemy, and, after a thorough test, has just been adopted by the Spanish military authorities.

Swearing on Bracelet, Sword, and Cross.

Several oaths of the Middle Ages were borrowed from the pagans, as idols upon arms, the usual mode of adjuration among Northern nations; upon the scabbard of the sword; confirmation of the oath by joining hands; by taking hold of the hem of the garment; swearing by the feet of the abbot and monks; upon bracelets, and others. Concerning the bracelet oath, Sir Henry Ellis has observed that Aragin Jonas, in his work on Iceland, describes a bracelet of twenty ounces weight, which was kept upon the altar, and, being sprinkled with the blood of victims, was touched by those who took any solemn oaths. He says it was either of silver, or of silver and brass mixed. He adds, in another page, that for this purpose it was worn on the Judge's arm during trial. Sir Henry Ellis was reminded by this "of a very remarkable passage in the Saxon Chronicles, made under the year 876, when the Danes made peace with the English Alfred, at Wareham, in Wessex, they gave him the noblest among them as hostages, and swore an oath to him on the holy bracelet." Of swearing on the sword, we have an interesting instance in the life of the great Gustavus Vasa, of Sweden. In 1540, he assembled the States, in which it was decided that the monarchy should be hereditary; whereupon the King drew his sword, and extended it before him, saying: "In the name of the Holy Trinity, and by the power of Almighty God, who hath bestowed on us our children, and hath caused them to be the heirs of the Swedish Empire, we stretch over you the sword of justice, as a testimony from us and our heirs, to you and all our subjects, faithfully to guide, guard, and rule you, and for confirmation, stand forth each one of you, and touching the sword with your corporeal fingers, thus repeat the oath of truth and fidelity, that to us and our heirs you have freely offered." Hearing this, the States approached—senators, nobles, citizens, peasants, all laid their hands on the royal sword, and each took the oath of allegiance and fidelity. Swearing on the cross was practised by the Russians from early times; thus, in 1557, on the conclusion of a treaty of peace with Sweden, Ivan ratified it by kissing the cross before the eyes of the Ambassadors, a ceremony that was repeated by his representative at Stockholm, in the presence of the Swedish monarch. In the reform of the statutes of the Order of the Garter by Henry VIII., the knights were enjoined to make a general oath upon the Holy Gospels to obey the statutes "without fraud or delusion," touching the book and kissing the cross. Selden mentions an oath taken by the Spaniards, which is very curious: "If I first designedly fail on this oath, on that day, ye Powers above, torment me my body in this life, and my soul in the next, with horrid tortures. Make my strength and my words fail. In battle, let my horse and arms and spurs and subjects fail me, when my need is sorest." This oath was confirmed by the parties sharing between them the consecrated wafer. The "oath by the bosom," formerly observed in Germany, had a curious and interesting origin. Women and boys were generally accustomed to carry on their bosom, suspended from the neck, a small copy of the Gospel; so the hand, when laid upon the breast, was in reality laid upon the Gospel. Chrysostom mentions a similar custom as prevailing in his time.

Marriages in France.

The civil ceremony is the only one recognized as valid by French law, and must be performed at the Mairie of the district in which one or other of the parties contracting marriage resides. Six months of residence are necessary to constitute the legal domicile, and even in this case it is necessary to make a publication of the intended marriage at the Mairie of the previous domicile. Two publications must be drawn up and placed before the door of the Mairie of the present domicile on the two Sundays preceding the marriage. These publications declare the names, ages, professions, and residences of the parties, as well as those of their parents or nearest relations. On the third day after the second publication, the marriage may be celebrated, provided no opposition has been made in any quarter.

The Maire is the officer appointed by the law to perform the civil ceremony, and the French code expressly forbids the celebration of a marriage by any minister of any religion until after the performance of the civil ceremony. Registrars are kept at the Catholic churches, and certificates given; but they are invalid in the eye of the law.

The original contract of marriage is kept at the Mairie where the ceremony takes place, and a duplicate of the contract is deposited with the Clerk of the Tribunals of the arrondissement. A copy of the contract of marriage is given to the married pair, should they express a desire to possess such a document; and should this copy be lost, another can always be obtained by application at the Mairie.

The law of France with regard to marriages has not been changed during the last quarter of a century. It may be well to mention that French law requires the consent of the parents of the persons to be married (or in default of parents, of the next relations), until the age of twenty-five years for a man, and twenty-one years for a woman. Before these ages, no marriage can take place without such consent. After these ages, it is necessary, in case the parents refuse their consent, to make what is called an "*acte respectueux*," asking in formal terms for the said consent. Should this be withheld, the marriage cannot legally take place till the "*acte respectueux*" has been twice renewed, unless, indeed, the parties should be over thirty years of age, in which case one "*acte respectueux*" is sufficient. A Frenchman who may contract marriage in a foreign country is equally obliged to obtain the consent of his parents.

MOTHER-IN-LAW, holding the screaming baby—"Dear little darlin'! How it looks like papa now!" (Papa wonders why it is that his wife's mother always compares the baby to him when it is crying, and not at other times.)

A CURIOUS transaction, which occurred at the Detroit Opera House a month ago, A young lady who is blessed with a fine head of hair, and generally wears it braided at full length, one night attended the opera, and on returning home discovered, to her amazement, during the performance some bold depredator had nicely clipped a full half of the appendage without her knowledge. Patient and quiet investigation has so far failed to discover the thief.

JUDGE WENDELL went fishing near Truckee, Cal. The stream was almost dry, and he could walk over its rocky bed between the pools. He sat down on a boulder and dropped his line into a pool. Suddenly he heard a tremendous roar. Looking up stream, he saw a vast body of water, eight feet high, rushing down upon him. A dam had broken away. He ran as fast as he could, yet not very swiftly, being fat and short-legged. The water quickly overtook him and carried him nearly a quarter of a mile, finally throwing him on the bank so nearly drowned that he was thought to be dead.

The Contented Man.

Among the inhabitants of one of the houses near the river is a man who for the last seven or eight years has been in the habit of walking regularly every afternoon on the the quay, from 1 o'clock until 6, in all weathers, and without ever having missed a day. Some one informed M. Herault, now Lieutenant of Police, of this singularity, whereupon he sent for the individual in question, saying that he wished to speak with him; to which the man replied that the begged to be excused, having notging whatever to do with the police. M. Herault, determined to penetrate the mystery, went to the house described to him, and found the object of his search in a room on the fourth floor, surrounded by his books and engaged in reading. On being asked why he had not complied with the summons, he answered that he had neither the honour of being known to the lieutenants nor, heaven be thanked, committed any crime. "My motive in coming," said M. Herault, "was not to accuse you of ill-doing, but to know why you walk on the quay every day at the same hour?" "Because my health requires it," replied the other. "You will understand me better, Monsieur," he added, when I tell you that I am of gentle birth, and formerly enjoyed an annual income of 25,000; circumstances have reduced this sum to 500 livres, and I am obliged to live according to my means. My books afford me an agreeable occupation; the neighbourhood of the river suits me, and on that account I have hired this room. I rise early, pass my mornings in reading, and dine at 12 on *beuf a la mode*, which is excellent in this part of the town; I then take my exercise on the quay, converse with two or three friends I am accustomed to meet there, and am perfectly contented with my lot." M. Herault, admiring the good sense of this discourse, related what he had heard to the Cardinal, (Fleury,) who was equally impressed by it. "But," said the latter, "if this man were to fall ill, his income would not be sufficient for his wants; tell him from me that he may count in the future on a pension of 300 livres from the King." The Lieutenant, enchanted at being the bearer of such a message, at once communicated the offer to the impoverished gentleman, but could no induce him to accept it. Five hundred livres, he maintained, were all he needed; and having them already, he wished for nothing more."

Rules for Polite Behaviour, 1766.

Do not nudge your neighbours with your elbow; do not scratch yourself; do not betray by any gesture that you are hungry, and do not look eagerly at the food as though you could devour the whole of it. Whoever it be distributing the cut viands, do not hastily present your plate to be served first.

* * * Do not crunch the bones nor break the stones of fruit with your teeth. Do not suck the bones to get out the marrow. It is very indecent to touch anything fat, either sauce or syrup, with the fingers, seeing that you are thereby compelled to practise two or other other indecencies, to wipe your hands frequently on your dinner-napkin, and so dirty it like a kitchen-clout—to wipe them on your bread, which is even more uncleanly, or to lick your fingers, which is the very height of impropriety. Be careful not to dip your portion in the dish, or what you are eating in the salt-cellar; do not offer to others what you have already tasted; and take it for a general rule that what has once been on your plate must never be put back in the dish. There is nothing so abominable as to clean and wipe a dish or plate with one's hands; during the dinner do not critioize the meats and sauces or ask to drink first, for it is a great incivility. Carefully avoid talking with the mouth full. It is uncivil to pick one's teeth during the repast either with a knife or a fork.

* * * In placing yourself at table have the head uncovered. Always wipe your spoon when, after having already used it, you wish to take something from another plate, as there are some people so delicate that they would not partake even of soup, where you had dipped your spoon, having previously carried it to your mouth. Join the lips in eating, so as not to make a lapping noise like animals. If, unfortunately, you burn yourself, bear it patiently if you can, but if you cannot, take your plate delicately in one hand, and, lifting it up, cover your mouth with the other hand, putting back upon it what burned you, and then you will pass your plate behind you to a lackey.

* * * Do not drink your wine as though you were tasting it, and do not make two or three draughts of your glass, for that is too familiar, but drink it down at once and resolutely, looking into it as you do so.

* * * One must also take care in drinking not to make any noise in the throat marking the number of times one swallows, in such a way that the company can count them.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS.

JAPAN is to be a great wheat producer

How to rear a mule—Tickle his hind legs.

THE letter D is truly an old salt—been following the C for years.

THE English duty on tobacco amounts to some $45,000,000 a year.

THE man whose offence was rank was probably guillotined during the reign of terror.

"PRINCE Bismarck's so-called fellow creatures" is the happy term invented by Count von Arnim.

POLICE Court Justice—"Well, had you no savings?" "Yes, sir; about seventy-five cents. "Ah! yes, I see; and you've gone and spent it all in hideous orgies. Six months!"

A COURTLY negro recently sent a reply to an invitation "in which he regretted that circumstances repugnant to the requiescence would prevent his acceptance of the invite."

A SYBERITE is already ecstatic at Professor Edison's electric-divisibility discovery. He thinks cigars will be made with the spark in them. When you nip the point off they will light.

THE Egyptian Minister of Public Instruction is an able Swiss known as Dor Bey, but the miserable sum of $118,500 is all that the current budget allows him to educate young Egypt on.

AN inventor is getting up a new patent for dentists. A concealed spring in it runs a tack up through the seat, and while the patient is howling, and his attention is diverted by the attack below, the tooth is yanked out.

JAPAN is pushing ahead quietly but steadily with her industries, and much faster than some people will like. The large cotton mills and spinning factory erected at Sakai several years ago are in successful operation. A visitor to these establishments reports that the buildings are very substantial, and that they are provided with good machinery. In the factory there were employed about 150 hands. In considering the conditions of successful foreign trade, it will not do much longer for Western nations to overlook what the people of the East are doing for thomselves, not only in Japan, but in China and India.