

(Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.)

THE LORELEI.

(From the German of Heine.)

I know not what it presages
That I so mournful be:
A tale of the by-gone days
Is ever haunting me.

The air is cool, and it darkles,
And gently flows the Rhine:
The crest of the mountain sparkles
In the evening sunshine.

High on the promontory
Sate a maiden wondrous fair,
Her locks were a golden glory,
She combed her golden hair.

She combed with a comb of gold, and
Warbled a lay thereby,
A song which hath a hold and
Magical melody.

The boatman out from the sedges
Is thrilled by its notes of lore:
He sees not the rocky ledges,
He sees only the maid above.

I believe that at length the surges
Swallowed boatman and boat,
And that this with singing of dirges,
The Lorelei hath wrought.

JOHN LESLIE, TRANSLATED.

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ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

II.

Later in life, when his imagination showed signs of occasional torpor, Dumas, who did not wish to grow old, affixed his great name to whatever was put under his hand. In an hour, he would make a play out of a German novel, and a novel out of an English play.

Thus, in one day, he wrote a story, "Catherine Blum," from a drama of Iffland, and then composed a play adapted to the French public, out of the German drama itself.

He had recourse to all sorts of artifices to maintain his reputation of rapid composition. A German writer had made a piece out of "Jane Eyre." Dumas also had intended to construct a drama out of this novel, but in the end contented himself with revising the German play. Jenneval, at that time performing an engagement at Marseilles, wrote to Dumas asking of him, in the name of the manager, a new and unpublished piece. The latter made answer:

"I demand eight days to write the most emotional drama which I have ever composed."

A week later, Dumas was at Marseilles. He assembled the artists for the reading of his play. After the first act, Jenneval took him by the arm, led him away from the company, and said:

"DEAR MASTER.—I will not conceal from you that I have already acted that role at Brussels, where the German drama was translated, three or four years ago."

"Ah, bah!" exclaimed Dumas, who had already forgotten whence he had derived his work. "Well, my dear Jenneval, you have just doomed 'Jane Eyre' to death, but for a long time back I have been thinking over a very striking play. I ask you eight days to write it in."

The following day, the Marseilles papers announced that the great, the illustrious Dumas, had shut himself up into his room to write a new piece, which he would read to the actors within eight days. Dumas had given orders that no one should disturb him under any pretext. But, instead of writing the drama in question, he simply addressed the following note to his secretary:

"DEAR CHILD:

"On receipt of this letter, go to the first story of the pavilion in the back of the garden.

"In that story there are two rooms: one large, the other small.

"Enter the small one.

"You will see three tables there: one of oak; the second of walnut; the third of palisandre.

"In the oak table there is a drawer on either side; open the one on the right.

"You will find in it a play in five acts, entitled 'Les Gardes Forestiers.'

"Armed with this drama, you will start for Marseilles, where I expect you at once.

"Not a word of all this, neither at Paris nor elsewhere.

"A. DUMAS."

The Secretary followed these instructions to the letter, and, a few days after, the following appeared in the Marseilles papers:

"It is well known that Mr. Alexandre Dumas had demanded eight days wherein to write a new drama for the Gymnase, and numerous wagers were made for and against this *tour de force*. It appeared impossible that a dramatic author could, within a week, write a play in five acts, and notwithstanding all that has been said of Alexandre Dumas' marvellous fecundity, it was open to doubt whether so short an interval were sufficient to the redemption of his promise. Well, it is only *two* days to-day that Alexandre Dumas shut himself up in his room, and he has just apprized the Manager that he will be ready, to-morrow, to read his new piece to the actors."

The next day, Dumas read *Les Gardes Forestiers* which the faithful Secretary had brought from Paris. It was mostly the want of money which drove him to these tricks.

Dumas was a genius in cookery, as well as in literature. The anecdotes on this head are numerous, curious and amusing. We shall give only one, and that illustrative rather of his conviviality than of his cooking.

Twenty years ago, Montjoye was a caricaturist of the first order; he was later a distinguished playwright. But secret troubles brought on his downfall and he retired to Varennes-Saint-Maur in search of solitude and silence. There he found Alexandre Dumas. Neither had known the other before; now they became fast friends.

Montjoye went regularly every day to Dumas' and sat down at a table, before a glass, filled to the brim with the poisoned tears of the green muse. He remained there long hours, drinking and smoking in silence. Sometimes, the secretaries

would take their flight; then Dumas and Montjoye remained alone in presence of each other.

Dumas who was not very fond of writing when he was not sufficiently surrounded by friends, would soon throw down his pen and exclaim:

"Montjoye!"

"Master?"

"Let me ask you a question."

"What is it?"

"How many glasses of absinth have you taken to day?"

"This is my second glass."

"You must then have a ravenous appetite."

"No."

"Bah!"

"I will be hungry only after the sixth glass."

"Well, Montjoye, do you know one thing?"

"No," would Montjoye reply mechanically, being used to this despotism of dialogue.

"It is one o'clock, is it not?"

"Half-past one."

"At a glass of absinth per hour, it will be half-past five, before you are hungry."

"Certainly."

"You have therefore four hours before you and I have four hours before me."

"Well!"

"Well, don't you see what I am coming to?"

"Not yet."

"To this: I am going to cook you a dinner."

And Alexandre Dumas did as he said. He put on an apron; he went to the yard where he twisted the necks of the chickens; he went into the kitchen-garden, where he gathered vegetables; he lighted the fire; he sliced out the butter; he looked for the flour; he culled the parsley; he set out the pots and pans; he threw in the salt by the handful; he stirred, he tasted, till he achieved a culinary masterpiece.

Just at the hour indicated, while Montjoye was finishing his sixth glass of absinth, Dumas came in, punctual and triumphant, exclaiming:

"Dinner is ready!"

For six months, Dumas spent three and four days of each week doing the cooking for Montjoye.

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CORSETS—FROM A PHYSIOLOGICAL POINT.

Having seen two articles on the subject of tight-lacing in recent numbers of the *Canadian Illustrated News*, one fanciful and partly approving of the custom and the other condemning the corsets strongly, but without other than general reasons, it has occurred to me that a few words on the subject from a physiological point of view would not be entirely amiss.

It will be readily admitted by any one acquainted with the wonderful mechanism of the human body that absolute non-interference with its workings and an absence of all restriction were best; but civilization and climatic influences have necessitated the use of clothing, which more or less impede the freedom of action and exert pressure. These evils are not likely to be entirely abandoned, and if it can be shown how the greatest pressure can be employed with a minimum of evil, the result will not be an unimportant one. Of all articles of dress the corset has been the most absurd; but despite its condemnation by royal edict and medical dicta it still flourishes wherever fashionable woman lives.

To properly understand the evils produced by the corset, it is requisite to have a knowledge of the human anatomy and the functions of the vital organs. The pressure exerted by this article of dress extends over portions of the thorax and abdomen. The first cavity contains the lungs invested by the pleura and the pericardium with the heart enclosed. The abdomen contains the liver, stomach, intestines, spleen, gall bladder, &c. Though the pressure of the corset extends over a considerable portion of these two cavities, the greatest restriction is exerted on the waist proper, or on the meridian of the trunk drawn through a point half way between the hip and lowest rib, beneath which we find the stomach, a part of the right lobe of the liver, a portion of the lesser intestines, and to a small extent the pericardium or heart bag. The first result of the pressure is the lessening of the capacity of the stomach and a consequent decreased desire for food and, as a result, insufficient nourishment and the fashionable weakness found with ladies of great tenuity of figure. The expansion of the lower portion of the lungs is to a slight degree restricted by the upward pressure of the liver, and as a consequence greater work is thrown on the upper portion, which accounts for the difference between the panting of ladies after exertion and the deep breathing of men under similar circumstances. The loss of appetite, the lessened desire and capacity for food is the first great evil attributable to tight corsets. This decreased desire to eat has by some writers been attributed to the lessening of the organic oxidation by the contraction of the lungs. I feel inclined to dispute this; but even suppose that some portion of the declining desire for food be placed to this account, there can be no doubt the main cause is the lessening of the capacity of the stomach. This may be proved by the fact that the desire to eat is immediately decreased by tightly lacing the corset or wearing a belt drawn very tight around the waist. Our hunters of the North-West are aware of this, and when the dinner hour approaches without the chance of a dinner, they tighten in their belts a point or two, and fast with greater ease till supper.

The pressure on the liver is liable to produce torpid action of that organ, and this and the diminished quantity of food produce that feeling of lassitude which is so frequent with women as compared with men. This is an evil, no doubt; but not as serious as those writers would have us believe who state that the lungs are so impeded that consumption (phthisis) must result, and that the delicate mechanism of the uterus is greatly deranged.

The chief danger arises from badly-made corsets, which exert an undue pressure across the chest and over the lower portion of the abdomen. Ladies have the remedy against the greater evils in their own hands. Let the measure of the chest be taken at its full inflation and the size around the abdomen, over the hips, when fairly expanded, and these measurements being observed, considerable pressure may be exerted at the waist proper with a minimum of evil.

It is a hopeless task to persuade ladies to abandon their corsets altogether. As long as a small waist is admired—and, notwithstanding æsthetic essays on classic beauty of contour,

a small waist is admired—any evils will be submitted to to produce the desired delicacy of form. Under such circumstances it is the duty of the medical man and the physiologist to show how the desired end can be accomplished with the least amount of injury to health, and this can be accomplished by properly fitting corsets, which shall only confine the waist, leaving the chest and lower abdomen free from undue restriction.

Scraps.

There are 10,000 Mormons in the British Isles. The Sultan of Zanzibar will visit England this year. The Shah has given in his adhesion to the rules of the Geneva Convention.

Russia only owns 193 newspapers. Her neighbour, Germany, claims 2,300.

The United States Government will send a competent officer of the Signal Department with the *Daily Graphic* Transatlantic Expedition for the purpose of taking scientific observations.

In his work on the atmosphere, M. Flammarion draws attention to a peculiarity in the habits of our large towns which every one must have noticed. The wealthy classes have a pronounced tendency to emigrate westward, leaving the eastern districts for the labouring populations. This remark applies not only to Paris, but to most great cities—London, Vienna, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Turin, Liège, Toulouse, Montpellier, Caen, and even Pompeii.

Duelling in the 19th century is not without its difficulties, and even Frenchmen sometimes are at a loss for a quiet spot where they may settle their "little affair" undisturbed by the police. Thus, about six months ago, says the Paris *Figaro*, two very Parisians, quarrelling over the colour of a lady's chignon, duly adjourned with their swords to the Belgian frontier. Barely had they crossed weapons when the police came down upon them. The duellists then went over to England, and arranged to meet near Swenham, but were stopped by the inevitable police. Again they went to Belgium, and again they were arrested, and finally returning to Paris, succeeded in having it out in the Vincennes Wood, the result of all this travelling being a simple wound in the sword hand.

The Belgian Government has recently ordered securely locked letter-boxes to be placed in all the insane asylums of the country, public or private, in positions where they will be easily accessible to all the inmates. They are designed, says the *London Medical Record*, to allow complaints and suggestions to be made to the authorities in a way independent of any of the officers or attendants. No one connected with the institution can have access to them. They are in charge of the Procureur du Roi of the district, and the letters which they contain are taken to him weekly for examination. The complaints made are investigated, and if any one assert that he is sane, he is ordered to be examined by medical experts. Abuses are corrected. The system exerts a wholesome influence, and tends to secure management in all its details.

THE MARKET PRICE OF SERMONS IN ENGLAND.—AS AN INDEX to the market we give the following, taken from amongst other pious announcements in one of the English Church papers:—Sermons.—Good, sound sermons by an experienced clergyman, adapted to the Church's year. Subscriptions, 15s. 6d. per quarter. Single for any Sunday, 15 stamps. S. P. G., Confirmation, Hospital, &c., 2s. 6d. each. Clergy only.—Address, &c. Sermons.—Sound, Practical, and Original. Edited by an Oxford graduate. Strictly confined to the clergy. MSS. for the season and S. P. G. (2s. 6d.) now ready. A specimen, 1s. 6d. Address, &c. Sermons.—Earnest, Original, Practical upon the Sunday Gospels, Epistles, and Old Testament Lessons, by an experienced Priest. Specimens free on approval to Clergymen. Sermon for an Assize, Volunteer Corps, &c. Strict confidence. N.B.—These Sermons have been highly commended by many eminent and earnest clergymen.—Address, &c.

Famous folk have strange appeals made to them. Mrs. Sturmy was a victim to innumerable "requests," and for a time kept a record of quotations from them. The following are specimens:—"A funeral hymn for a minister when he should die, he now being well and preaching as usual."—"The owner of a canary-bird, which had accidentally been starved to death, wishes some elegiac verses."—"To punctuate a manuscript volume of three hundred pages, the author having always had a dislike to the business of punctuation, finding that it brings on a pain in the back of the neck."—"To prepare the memoir of a celebrated preacher, of whose character and existence I was ignorant."—"Desired to assist a servant-man, not very well able to read, in learning the Sunday-school lessons, and to write out all the answers for him, clear through the book, to save his time."—"A monody for the loss of a second wife, entitled by the argument that I had composed one at the death of the first."

A Paris correspondent writes to a contemporary: You should bid your countrymen and countrywomen who go to the French plays in London to remark the "trick of singularity," as *Melville* would say, of the "inevitably," the dandy of the dictionary. You should remark the infinite trouble which he takes to omit his 'S', which he drops as officiously as some Londoners do their 'H's. Do not fail to mark his exclamation when the soldiers enter the ball-room in the *Fille de Mme. Angot* as he draws out "petit" for "petite," and his persistence all through the admirable chorus of conspirators, "peuke blonde" for "peuke," &c. The Parisiennes of the present day have invented a language which they call "Javanese." They place "av" before every vowel. Thus they said that we should have a shower at the races this afternoon. A "shavovaver" they called a shower, and races "ravavaves." I listened to people on the race-course just now, who were talking this language with amazing rapidity, and though unintelligible to the uninitiated, they have attained a perfection in the art perplexing to all but themselves.

The *Pull Mall Gazette* speaks as follows of a curious superstition: Householders who are laying in their stock of coal for the winter will do well to study the moon, which is believed, in some quarters, to exercise no small influence on fuel stacked or stored at certain seasons. The *Skye* correspondent of the *Cornish Telegraph* mentions that, during the fortnight which began on the 10th of last month, the people of *Skye* were busy stacking their peats and securing their winter firing, being anxious to complete the operation while the moon was waning. During the fortnight commencing on the 24th of June, when the moon was crescent, no real *Skye*man would stack his peats for any consideration, believing that unless stacked under a waning moon the peat will give neither light nor heat when burned. "A power of smoke" is all that can be expected from peats stacked under a crescent moon. In *Skye* the crescent is called "fas," and the wane "tarradh," and under these two terms the moon not only exercises a great influence over peats, but also over many other things. In some parts of the Highlands, sheep, pigs, and cows are only killed in the "fas," as meat made in the "tarradh" is supposed to be good for nothing but "shrinking" when in the pot.

No Family should be without Colby's PILLS.