

day is inconvenient, pray name one most suitable to yourself. Excuse my fixing the early hour of six; but you know Colonel Chutney's peculiar habits, and I must study him.

"Yours truly,

"LOUISA CHUTNEY.

"23, Richmond-gardens, Monday."

The effect of this simple note upon the susceptible Adolphus was electric. There is no knowing what vagaries his ecstasy may not have prompted him to commit in the presence of his entire establishment, had not a summons suddenly arrived from the largest show-room. A lady had asked to see him and him alone, declining to transact any business save with the principal. Mr. Deal had to descend from the supreme altitude to which Mrs. Chutney's letter had raised him. In the centre of the apartment he beheld a tall thin elderly lady, destitute of crinoline, attired in a skumpy black silk dress, a bonnet more suited to a museum of defunct fashions than modern wear, a small white shawl, stout walking-shoes tied on the instep, white stockings, and black gloves with long empty finger-ends.

"Hum—ha!" said Miss Bousfield, poking a complicated arm-chair with the large and baggy umbrella, which, together with a steel-rimmed, steel-chained capacious bag, she invariably carried. "What's that?"

"This is a very curious mechanical contrivance," replied Mr. Deal, blandly [the enrapturing thought crossed him, "The angel's aunt!"], but with that assumption of scientific knowledge which high-art salesmen assume. "Only out yesterday, and not yet named. We intend to denominate the chair 'The Loungiensis Multifarium.' You touch this spring, it lowers the back to recline the head. You touch that, and (click) out comes a footstool. Press the other, and an elbow spontaneously projects itself. Here you observe is a—"

"That will do," interrupted Miss Bousfield. "I am neither a cripple nor a lunatic." Mr. Deal bowed. "I want something"—she paused—"something as a present for my niece, Mrs. Chutney."

Every fibre in Deal's frame quivered at the mention of that name. He said, fervently, that, the entire resources of his establishment should be placed at Miss Bousfield's command for so delightful an object.

"Of course they will," said Miss Bousfield, tartly, "if I am ready to pay for them. But I don't want any costly rubbish. Show me something sensible for about six pound ten." And she made a short mental calculation of the probable cost of a circular dumb waiter lately presented to her by Colonel Chutney, beyond the value of which she was determined not to advance. Miss Bousfield considered presents as debts, and always paid them at the rate of twenty shillings in the pound.

"Something sensible for six, ten," repeated Mr. Adolphus Deal, thoughtfully.

Here Mr. Deal despatched his men for several inlaid cabinets, buhl work-tables, bronzes, and ormolu ornaments. Miss Bousfield touched each of them dangerously with her umbrella, and Deal did not even wince.

"Pooh! Mere finery! Have you nothing of a teapoy, or a writing thing?" Several such articles were produced. "What's this?" asked Miss Barbara, examining a teapoy.

"The new garde thé—registered," replied an attendant.

"The price!" demanded Miss Bousfield, fiercely.

"Oh, it's a cheap article, madam. Fifteen guineas."

"I don't know guineas. Fifteen pounds, fifteen for a toy that would come to pieces in a couple of months near a fire! Nonsense! What is this?" asked Miss Bousfield, nearly overturning a work-table with her umbrella.

"Twenty guineas. I mean twenty-one pounds," replied Deal, examining the ticket.

"Where do you all expect to go to?" exclaimed Miss Bousfield, with sudden energy. "I'd see too every stick of furniture in London burning before I would give way to such extortion. Let me out of this." And she made a sudden rush to the door.

"Stop, madam," cried Deal. "Stop, I entreat. We must find something for the adorable—I mean the most interesting—object you have in view."

"If you please, sir," said the old clerk, coming out of his desk at this critical moment, "there is a davenport up-stairs, returned by Sir Frederic Samperton after he had had it a week or two, as not solid enough. We might put it at eight guineas."

"Be seated for a moment, madam," entreated Deal. "Here it is," he said, "at your own price."

Miss Bousfield frowned upon the article severely. Her scrutiny was satisfactory. "You know my price; six, ten."

"Then six, ten be it, madam," returned Deal, bowing, and washing his hands in the air.

"Now call a cab, and I will take it away with me," said the customer, counting the money out of her massively-steeled bag.

CHAPTER III.

Mrs. Chutney and Mary Holden had returned from their morning walk, and, having thrown off their bonnets, sat down quietly in the drawing-room to await the colonel's return to luncheon. They had greatly enjoyed the morning's companionship. Mrs. Chutney, timid and confused when flurried by the colonel, always felt support and encouragement from her cousin's fearless spirit and her ready sympathising affection. She held a complicated whity-brown web to which occasionally she added a few stitches with the crochet-needle while Miss Holden appeared to be reading the Times.

"These have been very happy hours, dear," said Mrs. Chutney, laying down her work, and resting her arm on the table beside her. "I wish you could come oftener."

"You see the day is hardly long enough for all I have to get through," replied Mary. "You know that, like yourself, I have no money; but, unlike you, I have not a rich husband. I suppose you would cut me if I followed my own inclinations?"

"How dear?" asked Mrs. Chutney.

"Well, I do not fancy the legitimate line for distressed gentlewomen—the meek, ill-treated governess, with some hard-hearted matron for a task-mistress, half a dozen unruly pupils, and a scampish young nobleman making love in the background. Though I should rather like that part of it."

(To be continued.)

A GOSSIP ABOUT TOADS.

THE study of natural history is becoming more popular than heretofore, now that the old tomes, which, by reason of their pedantic style and display of technicalities, could only be appreciated by the learned few, have been supplemented by works more readily understood by the many. Our naturalists are beginning to perceive that their ranks may be much more extensively augmented by the publication of natural history guide-books, which impart information in an interesting and readable form. An instance of this improvement is displayed in a pleasant little volume entitled "Links in the Chain," being "Popular Chapters on the Curiosities of Animal Life," in which the tedium of study is broken by many curious anecdotes relating to each immediate subject—a very judicious as well as pleasing feature, for these anecdotes throw considerable light on the life, habit, or capability of plant or animal. The following anecdote of a toad, taken from this book, can scarcely fail to interest our readers:—

"But the toad is not one of our appointed servants; he is also willing to become an intimate and confiding friend."

"Numerous instances have been recorded of toads that have been rendered tame and attached to those who have treated them kindly. Mr. Bell mentions that he possessed one which would sit on one of his hands and eat the food offered to it on the other. And Dr. Lankester speaks of having repeatedly seen these domestic pets of the children of a naturalist. But perhaps the most interesting case of this kind is that of a toad

mentioned by Pennant. The animal first made its appearance on the steps before the hall door of a gentleman's residence in Devonshire.

"The owner of the mansion and his family, seeing the creature, frequently gave it food, and by gentle treatment gradually rendered it so tame, that when they came out of an evening with a candle, would creep out of its hole and up, as if expecting to be taken into the house and fed. It was frequently gratified in this way, being carried into the parlour, placed upon the table, and there treated to a supper, in the presence of the assembled household. The favourite food of the pet was the common flesh maggot, a supply of which was regularly kept for it in bran. In taking its food, it would follow the maggots on the table, and, when within a proper distance, would fix its eyes, and remain motionless for a while, apparently preparing for the stroke; and then, quicker than the eye could follow, it darted out its tongue, and the maggot was swallowed. This sort of exhibition excited, as a matter of course, great curiosity in the neighbourhood, and often brought the toad a number of visitors. For the long period of thirty-six years the pet continued to occupy his hole under the door-step of his benefactor and friend; but one fatal day, another pet, in the shape of a tame raven, espied the poor toad at the mouth of his retreat, and pulling him out, wounded him so badly, that no great while after he died; and thus terminated a career, the record of which has probably done more than the most eloquent appeals to the humanity of mankind to redeem the race from the cruel persecution to which they are exposed."

It may be added that, in many rural districts, other equally remarkable instances of tameness in toads are to be found, showing that the real character of the reptile is very different from that so erroneously assigned it by the voice of popular prejudice.

TERRIBLE RECORDS.

IN England, so William of Malmesbury tells us, the plague was so great in 772, that in and about Chichester 34,000 people perished. In 1111, Hollinshed tells us of a dreadful pestilence in London, in which thousands of people, cattle, fowls, and other domestic animals perished. In Ireland, in 1204, a prodigious number perished. In 1348 the "Black Death" raged in Italy, and in 1348 the plague, described by Boccaccio raged over Europe, causing a fearful mortality. In London alone, in the year 1348, when the plague at Florence, described by Boccaccio, took place, 200 people were buried daily at the Charter-house. Again England was visited by plague in 1367, Ireland in 1407, and again in 1478, when 30,000 people were slain by pestilence in London alone; and throughout England, more persons were slain by disease than by the fifteen preceding years of war. In 1485 the country was ravaged by the *Suder Angliscus*, the sweating sickness, and this again broke out in 1499-1500 so dreadfully in London, that Henry VII. and his Court removed to Calais. In 1611, 200,000 perished at Constantinople. In 1664-5 the great plague, called so probably because most remembered, carried off 68,596 persons; Defoe gives the number at 100,000. "Infants," wrote he, in a fiction unequalled for its terrible pictures save by the reality, "passed at once from the womb to the grave; the yet healthy child hung upon the putrid breast of the dead mother; and the nuptial bed was changed into a sepulchre. Some of the afflicted ran about staggering like drunken men, and fell and expired in the streets; while others calmly laid down, never to rise again, save at the last trumpet. At length, in the middle of September, more than 12,000 perished in one week; in one night 4,000 died, and in the whole, not 68,000 as has been stated, but 100,000 perished in this plague. The appalling cry 'bring out your dead' thrilled through every soul."

Things should not be done by halves. If it be right, do it boldly; if it be wrong, leave it undone. Every day is a little life, and our whole life is but a day repeated.