

Scraps.

One of the new beverages is called "Bottled Bliss." Burns is to be honoured by a colossal statue in Glasgow. They are to have a daily illustrated in London, next year. Mr. Beresford Hope, supposed to be the wealthiest commoner of England, has presented 26,000 entomological specimens to the Oxford Museum.

Whiskey can be obtained at an Edinburgh temperance hotel by asking for a selditz powder. It is astonishing how the systems of the guests need clearing out.

Professor Henry, of Washington, has been presented with a magnificent Sevres vase by the French Government, because he served so well on the Standard Metro Commission.

An enthusiastic Paris patriot has his yacht on the river with a tricolour mainsail, across which is written "Tierser."

It is reported that M. Broussé, a French free-thinker, has bequeathed a sum of 400,000 francs for the establishment of a secular school, together with a splendid castle for that purpose.

A young gentleman at Kansas city sent seventy-five cents to New York recently for a method of writing without pen or ink. He received the following inscription, in large type, on a card: "Write with a pencil."

Mr. About writes in his journal, the *XXIe Siècle*, that if it be true that the Jews are the most obstinate enemies of the Bourbon Restoration, he sincerely regrets that the chance of birth has not made him a Jew.

It is rumoured that the Comte de Chambord has written a letter to Don Carlos, addressing him as "Your Majesty," and that the latter has replied in similar terms. They have invited each other to their coronation.

The latest gold diggings out are located, it is said, well towards the North Pole in Lapland. Russians and Norwegians are digging out the precious metal from beneath the frozen soil, and there is not an American in the territory.

Don Pietro Carrera recommends players at chess, in order to win, "to avoid eating superfluous food. Those persons," he adds, "are praiseworthy who, previous to playing, clear their heads by medicines, which have the virtue of rendering the spirits pure and subtle."

A Hungarian, named Mester, has discovered a new locomotive which is propelled by compressed air, instead of by steam. Several Hungarian engineers express warm approval of this discovery, and funds are being raised for trying the locomotive on railways and roads.

Two persons, to whom an orange tree had been bequeathed, divided it by sawing it through from the top to the bottom. They covered the wounds made by the saw with a mixture of clay and cowdung, and planted. By degrees, the bark covered the exposed surface, and each of the halves became a perfect tree.

A new cholera preventive is suggested by a French newspaper, in the form of silk shirts. It says that the well-to-do Chinese protect themselves absolutely from the epidemic by wearing these garments, and it recommends the manufacture of a silk fabric for the purpose, which will be cheap enough for all to obtain.

They have some queer sobriquets for their churches in New York. The new edifice of the younger Tyng is known as the church of the Holy Office. That of Dr. Bellows rejoices in being called the Church of the Holy Zebra; that of Mr. Chadwick in Brooklyn is called the Church of the Holy Tortle, and Mr. Hapworth's new tabernacle is profanely designated the Holy Hippodrome.

The Library of the British Museum contains over 1,000,000 volumes, and an equal number of pamphlets are on shelves. In the main reading-room there are about 100,000 of the most desirable books for common use, but none of the rare and curious ones. This reading-room is an immense dome 140 feet in diameter, containing seats and desks for about five hundred readers. No books are allowed to be taken out of the building.

Oddities.

An unknown quantity: A ton of coals.

In West Rutland, Vt., seventeen inches make a foot, and twice as many dollars as is usual make up a boot-bill.

A new style of boys' trousers has been invented in Boston, with a copper seat, sheet-iron knees, riveted down the seams, and water-proof pockets to hold broken eggs.

A Maine woman ate four quarts of oysters at one sitting the other day, and won one hundred dollars by so doing, which, after deducting her burial expenses, eighty-five dollars, left her fifteen dollars to commence the next world with.

Vicksburg offers a reward for the recovery of an old lady, aged one hundred and eleven, who, it is supposed, had been kidnapped by some felonious journalist from a rival city, desirous to secure her obituary for his own local items.

A breach of promise case has just been decided at Fort Wayne. Only one letter was put into the case, but that was conclusive. It read as follows: "My heart beats only for the, my darling honey." Verdict for the female; damages not stated.

Coleridge, when a lecturer, in his younger days, was once violently hissed by some excited individual who did not love what Coleridge was saying, whereupon the poet delivered the following smart retort: "When a cold stream of truth is poured on red-hot prejudices, no wonder that they hiss."

A nice question of taste: Jeweller—What kind of a chain would you like? Young Man—Well, I don't know hardly. What kind of a chain would you think I ought to have, that is, what style would you think would be the most becoming for a young man what carries groceries to some of the best families in town?

A gentle hint: A youth and maiden were walking beneath the blue canopy of the firmament "fretted with golden fires," and the maiden, moved by the sublimity of the scene, pointed a taper finger—the one on which the engagement ring is worn—towards the zenith and exclaimed: "Oh, Adolphus, isn't jewelry beautiful?"

"It is a waste of valor for us to do battle," said a lame ostrich to a negro who had suddenly come upon her in the desert: "let us cast lots to see who shall be considered the victor, and then go about our business!" To this proposition the negro readily assented. They cast lots: the negro cast lots of stones, and the ostrich cast lots of feathers. Then the former went about his business, which consisted in skinning the bird.

A Virginia city (Nevada) man is said to have invented an ingenious plan of keeping his house clear of insurance agents and similar nuisances. On each side of the path leading to his door he has fixed several sections of water pipe filled with small holes, and on the approach of a suspicious character a tap is turned, and instantly numerous jets of water, onslide the path in all directions, and effectually keep the invader at a safe distance.

A fellow with a pistol bullet in his left side, one inch above his heart, a six-inch slash on his head, and a broken leg, crawled into a Bangor, Me., doctor's office, "to get fixed up," as he pleasantly put it, the other morning. He said "they'd been havin' some fun over to a house," but he declined to designate the domicile more particularly; and possibly they are too well used to these comic eccentricities down in Maine to enquire very closely.

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

OUR BEST.

We never do our best. We seldom try
To pass the barrier of comparison.
"As good as better than, some other one—
That is enough for such as you or I."
Or else, "Need we attempt to reach the sky
Where those stars shine?" And so we seek the ground
And grovel as though we our place had found.

To do our best—that is to work as blind
To all but God, and let Him judge the work,
If worthy of His gift: nor ever shrink
His work for any thought of humankind.
For as we best serve Him, we best serve man,
By doing, in our day, what good we can.

JOHN READS.

TAKEN AT THE FLOOD.

A NEW NOVEL.

By the Author of "Lady Audley's Secret," "Strangers and Pilgrims," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE THRESHOLD OF FATE.

The dinner at Perriam Place was a very quiet business, Mr. Carew and his daughter found the drawing-room empty of human life when they entered it a few moments before seven. That vast apartment with its massive, but somewhat scanty furniture, had a melancholy look in the evening light. The size and grandeur of the room seemed to cry aloud for people to inhabit it. Mr. Carew, who, like all self-indulgent people, was easily affected by external influences, gave a faint shudder as his gaze wandered round the spacious, lofty saloon.

"A fine room," he said "but it looks rather dismal." Sylvia looked about her curiously. She was glad of the opportunity to examine these splendours. On her previous visit it had been first dusk, and then but dimly lighted by solitary lamps and candles, and the two gentlemen had been present. Any inspection of the apartment had been therefore impossible. To-day she was able to take a deliberate survey—and to-day she contemplated the room with a new feeling. A month hence it would be her own. She walked up and down the stately chamber slowly, looking at the tall china jars, the wire-guarded book cases, the massive sofa, the bare tables.

"What curious foreign-looking curtains," she exclaimed, examining the oriental embroidery. "But they are a good deal faded. I think I shall persuade Sir Aubrey to have new ones—amber satin would be the thing for this room."

"I hope you will find Sir Aubrey compliant enough to oblige you," answered her father, remembering that interview of last night, in which the baronet had appeared to him by no means pliant.

"O, I am not afraid of that," returned Sylvia, smiling at her own image in the tall narrow glass between the windows.

"And when I am Lady Perriam,"—she never said "When I am married," but always "when I am Lady Perriam."—"I shall give plenty of parties—and this room will look as it ought to look. It's a superb room for parties, isn't it, papa?"

"No doubt. But I don't fancy Sir Aubrey is a party-giving man. People have talked a good deal about his keeping himself shut up here and hardly seeing anybody."

"How can you be so stupid, papa? Of course as a bachelor Sir Aubrey would care very little for company. But it will be different when he is married. Do you suppose I mean to be buried alive when I am Lady Perriam. It would be much better for me to marry Edmund if there were any chance of that."

"Of course not, my love," replied her father hastily. "Pray don't talk of young Standen. It is treason against Sir Aubrey to remember his insignificant existence."

Sylvia sighed. The mere mention of her first lover's name brought a flood of sad memories—memories that were sweet as well as sad. She thought of the summer evenings they had spent together a little while ago. A little while! It seemed now as if she were divided from that too recent past by the space of half a lifetime.

"I feel ten years older since I accepted Sir Aubrey," she thought with another sigh.

The inspection of the saloon had no further charm for her. She hung herself into a chair by an open window, and sat there silent, dejected. Her father looked at her with some concern, not for his daughter's feelings, but for his own chance of that promised hundred per annum.

"If you are going to give yourself sentimental airs about Edmund Standen, the sooner you tell Sir Aubrey the state of the case and give up the notion to be Lady Perriam the better," said the schoolmaster sternly. He felt that it was no time for soft pleading.

Before Sylvia could answer him the door opened, and Sir Aubrey came in, followed by his land steward.

The baronet crossed the room to greet his betrothed. Mr. Bain walked towards the empty fireplace, at which Mr. Carew had taken his stand.

"My dear Sylvia, I owe you a hundred apologies," said the baronet, after pressing the little hand which was somewhat coldly offered to him. "I have been detained, talking to Bain, my lawyer, and agent; but as our conversation concerned your future interests I hope you will forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive, Sir Aubrey," answered Sylvia, and, then in a lower voice, she added, "I have to thank you for your kindness in giving papa the money for my trousseau. I know it is not customary,—but we are such paupers—and I cannot refuse your gift."

Tears, tears of wounded pride, were in her eyes as she spoke. She had heard so much about it trousseaux from Mary Peter, and she knew it was always the bride's father who provided his daughter's outfit. Here seemed almost the gift of charity.

"My dearest, pray do not mention such a trifle. I hope you had a pleasant drive here."

"Very pleasant. How thoughtful it was of you to send the carriage."

"It will be your own carriage very soon, to order whenever you like."

That was a consoling thought. Those proud tears were quickly dried.

It would be very nice to spend Sir Aubrey's hundred pounds too, although it had been a somewhat humiliating business to accept it. Sylvia meant to devote the next day to shopping. What delight to walk into Ganzlein's and feel that she could buy whatever she pleased, for she could not imagine her fancies soaring beyond the limits of a hundred pounds.

"By-the-bye," said Sir Aubrey, when they had talked a little about the weather, and about Perriam, which the baronet liked to hear praised, "I must introduce my agent, Mr. Bain. A very useful and estimable person. He takes the entire management of my estate, takes all trouble off my hands; so that I have nothing to do except receive my rents. Come here, Bain, I want to present you to Miss Carew."

Mr. Bain obeyed the summons. He had seen the slim white robed figure from a distance, and his keen eye had taken in every detail of that graceful form. But Sylvia's face had been turned away from him, and he saw it now for the first time, in the clear soft light of the summer evening.

He bowed, murmured something indistinct about the honour he derived from the introduction, and then stood silently awaiting his patron's next address. He looked at Sylvia, but that steadfast straightforward look of his told nothing of the man's thoughts.

He was thinking that this girl was lovely enough to bewitch a wiser man than Sir Aubrey Perriam, thinking even, that he, Shadrack Bain, had never seen real beauty until to-night, that all the pretty young women it had been his advantage to behold at divers periods of his existence had been but as images of clay compared to this perfect and delicate porcelain. This pale, blossom-like loveliness was a style of beauty he had never met with. Those deeply lustrous hazel-eyes were as strange to him as the flora in some newly discovered island in the vast Pacific is strange to the botanist.

But Shadrack Bain was not a man to be deeply moved by beauty, however unfamiliar. He wondered and he admired, but no flutter of his strong heart paid tribute to Sylvia's power to charm. Had she been his own daughter he could hardly have contemplated her with a more calmly critical eye.

He was, however, essentially a practical man—a man who looked at everybody from one point of view, and measured everything by one standard. The standard was self interest. In his prolonged meditations he had made up his mind that Sylvia must come into the scheme of his life. She might be fit or unfit to fill that square in the geometrical plan of his destiny which he intended her to fill, but if unfit she must be made fit. Upon that point Mr. Bain had no doubt.

Mr. Perriam shuffled into the room presently in his old-fashioned dresscoat, and short black trousers of antique cut, and white stockings and ancient shoes, with loosely tied ribbons looking like an elderly copy of his brother, indifferently executed. It was a singular evidence of the unwholesomeness of a sedentary and secluded life that Mordred Perriam looked ten years older than his elder and more active brother.

The butler announced dinner, and they went to the dining room, Sylvia on Sir Aubrey's arm, Mordred and Mr. Carew side by side, talking of books—or rather Mordred talking—and the schoolmaster pretending to be interested.—Shadrack Bain, stalking behind them, silent and alone. The butler planted them out at the long table, far apart, like young trees on a new estate; so remote from one another that conversation had a forced air. It was like halloing to somebody on the opposite side of a street. Sylvia sat next Sir Aubrey, and as the dinner proceeded he contrived to draw his chair a little nearer hers, so that their talk should be unheard by the rest. Mr. Bain sat at his dinner in almost absolute silence. Like a guest at a royal table he waited to be spoken to, and as no one spoke to him he remained discreetly mute. Mordred twaddled on unendingly to Mr. Carew with his stories of bargains in second-hand books. Sir Aubrey devoted himself exclusively to his future bride. But Mr. Bain ate his dinner and amused himself with his own thoughts, and wore the aspect of a contented mind. Now and then he stole a little look at Sylvia; once or twice he smiled to himself—a slow, thoughtful smile—and that was all.

The meal itself was good and ample, but scrupulously simple—a dinner of the old-fashioned, substantial order, not nearly so grand as the dinners given by Mrs. Toyabee, which Sylvia had heard described by Mary Peter, the village gossip—dinners which were in preparation for days before the festival, and at which Monkhampton confectioners came to assist.

Sylvia admired the handsome old china, with its dark reds and deep purples, and rich gilding—the massive old-fashioned silver, a trifle clumsy, perhaps, but with such a look of long established wealth and state. The room in which they dined was sombre, but its very gloom had an air of grandeur. The full flowing curtains of darkest crimson velvet, were in perfect tone with the oak panelling; the wide mantlepiece of dark green marble was supported upon clustered columns of white veined stone, with bases and capitals of red porphyry. This, the handsomest object in the room, relieved the darker hues of the walls and furniture.

The gentlemen, at Sir Aubrey's suggestion, returned to the drawing-room with Sylvia, and then followed one of those evenings which irreverent minds distinguish as "slow." Sir Aubrey naturally devoted himself to his betrothed. He showed her the various—but not numerous—objects of interest in the saloon; told her the history of each. How those vases had been sent from India by a certain General Perriam, his great uncle; how those curtains had been worked by Hindoos who squatted on the floor of the corridor outside his Great Aunt's apartments in Calcutta, and who were paid so many pice a day for their labours. He took Sylvia to the library and showed her that apartment, a treasury of learning which hardly wore the most attractive shape. Here, indeed, the severer muses seemed to frown forbiddingly upon the young student. The lightest book on yonder massive, carved oak shelves was Spencer's Fairy Queen, and even that work of fancy was rendered outwardly repulsive by its dingy binding.

Sir Aubrey showed Sylvia the table at which he was wont to write letters and transact his business with Mr. Bain—an old office desk, covered with well worn leather.

"The library is not so pretty as the drawing-room," said Sylvia.

"No," replied the baronet, "a library is for use. One does not expect prettiness in a library."

"Are the books very nice?" Sylvia asked, timidly. It was too dark for her to read the titles, and she thought those dingy volumes might possibly belie their outward show.

"Well, I don't quite know a young lady's idea of niceness in books. You like the Sorrows of Werther, by the way, a flimsy, sentimental piece of nonsense, which took the world