

THE SCRAP BOOK.

ROMANCE.

My love dwelt in a Northern land.
A grey tower in a forest green
Was hers, and far on either hand
The long wash of the waves was seen,
And leagues on leagues of yellow sand,
And woven forest boughs between.

And through the silver Northern night
The sunset slowly died away,
And herds of strange deer, lily-white,
Stole forth among the branches grey;
About the coming of the light
They fled like ghosts before the day!

I know not if the forest green
Still girdles round that castle grey;
I know not if the boughs between
The white deer vanish ere the day;
Above my Love the grass is green,
My heart is colder than the clay!
—From Mr. Lang's "Rhyme à la Mode."

TOBOGGANING IN THE ALPS.

THE "snowing-in" period is often supposed to be an extremely objectionable and almost intolerable time. Like so many other things, it is not so bad as it is painted. No doubt the thawing of fresh-fallen snow is not pleasant, and the large quantity which often falls tends to make it still more disagreeable; but in a high-lying place, like St. Moritz, for instance, the water quickly runs off, and owing to the extreme dryness of the air large quantities of moisture speedily evaporate. This transition period does not last long. A few days of unsettled weather lead, as a rule, to the heavy downfall, and then a spell of calm, cloudless days will usually follow. Wheel vehicles are replaced by sledges, snow gaiters are put on, and visitors as well as natives give themselves up to the pleasures of tobogganing. The toboggan is a small sledge, about forty-two inches long by fourteen inches wide, on iron runners. The rider drags it to the top of a steep snow slope, on which the snow has been beaten down so as to become hard, sits astride it with feet slightly projecting in front, and allows himself to slide. Soon he is rushing through the air at a tremendous pace; all his attention is bent on turning the corners neatly and with the least possible interference with the motion of the machine. Faster and faster he goes down the steep incline, with a cry of "Anhtung!" to warn anyone off the course; at the same time he keeps a sharp lookout for dangers ahead, until he reaches the long piece on the level which ends his journey. Strange to say, there are very few accidents, although the speed is considerable, often amounting to more than twenty-five miles an hour. The mode of guiding a toboggan is either by pressing lightly with the heels on the snow on the side towards which one wishes to go, or by using one of two sticks held in the hands. By pressing both feet the brake is applied and the machine readily stopped, except when the upper surface of the track is glazed with ice; in this case a halt is made by running off the course into the soft snow on either hand. Toboggan-runs can be made on any sloping ground. The snow requires to be first more or less consolidated on the surface to prevent the runners from sinking in. At St. Moritz, which is the only place in the Engadine where many visitors have stayed in the winter, there are three runs. One goes through the village, then along a road leading to the St. Moritz Baths, and finishes under the English Church. On this course there is always much uncertainty in turning the corner of the village street as to what may be encountered further on, and it is frequently necessary to exercise special care, and sometimes even to slacken speed, in passing sledges, as the horses drawing them are not always accustomed to toboggans provided not only with shouting riders, but often with jingling cow-bells. Another run at St. Moritz leads from the front of the Kulm Hotel, along a foot-path, through a gate padded with sacks to diminish the discomfort of a collision; it then goes down a flight of steps, which, covered over and banked up with snow, give a very steep slope, turns sharp to the left, and so by one or two curves runs on to the frozen surface of the lake. No one who has not tried it can realize how much variety a course like this can supply in a short three minutes. Many were the occasions, during some races held there, on which the toboggan and its rider parted company, the first to perform a journey alone, the latter to be shot forward and buried in the snow. But the favourite run is by a steep footpath on the way to Samaden. Here, late in the season, when the track has become glazed with ice, the speed is enormous, and there is one corner round which one always looks eagerly for the first peep of the highway to see if there are any sledges coming along the road, which might bring before one, in a very unpleasant manner, the dangers of a level crossing. When the track is in good condition for fastest going this road is altogether cleared by the toboggan, a slight rise on one side of it giving a sufficient elevation to enable the machine to shoot over it, and come to ground some distance on the other side, thence to dash on at express speed towards its final leap. There is a feeling of boundless exhilaration in thus flying through the air which cannot be imagined unless it has been experienced. The only thing at all resembling it is riding on a locomotive engine, but the jolting and bumping in the latter case are absent on a

good, though by no means on a bad, toboggan course, and the rider is much more master of his machine, which, though going at nearly equal speed, can be almost immediately brought to rest. The delight of this exciting sport may be much intensified if it be carried on by moonlight. Then the extreme cold of the night freezes the upper surface of the snow and makes the travelling faster than by day. There is a feeling of weirdness and doubt as one dashes into the masses of shadow projected from wall and gable. The attention is strained to the utmost to avoid any lurking perils that have to be detected by eyes dazed with passing from brilliant moonlight for an instant only into the darkness, thence to emerge with headlong speed into the brightness beyond.—Prof. J. F. Main in the *Fortnightly Review*.

THE FUTILITY OF REVOLVERS.

IF we wish to shoot any one because we think poorly of his political principles, his taste in dress, or the like, it is certain that a "two-scatter shot-gun," at close quarters, "aimed low" (like Considine's cut-class decanter), is much more to be relied on than a revolver. A dagger, too, in a bold, determined hand, possesses many advantages. But it has been demonstrated, in the case and on the *corpus vile* of Captain Phelan, that a dagger is not infallible. Besides, a young and beautiful woman, whose girlish modesty has hitherto kept her from attempting murder, will almost certainly make a fiasco with a dagger. The case of Mlle. Corday has, indeed, been quoted by several hundreds of journalists to prove the reverse; but Mlle. Corday was an unusually strong-minded woman, and her opportunity was of a sort not likely to occur again, especially in the case of an Irish gentleman. Marat was in his tub. Again, a young girl would certainly attract attention if she walked down Broadway with a double-barrelled fowling-piece on her shoulder. She would look less like "an intellectual school marm" than an avenging angel or a deserter from Colney Hatch. A hammer and a nail, also a millstone, have been used with effect by heroines in the remote past, but the opportunities for employing such direct and unaffected methods now very rarely occur. The young girl, rejecting the idea of an explosive cigar, naturally falls back upon a revolver. It is here that her inexperience and retiring character are apt to prove destructive to her hopes. Now there are revolvers and revolvers. In the works of writers who imitate Ouida, the revolver is always a dainty toy, with an ivory handle and blue-steel barrels, set, too, if necessary, with priceless opals and star sapphires. Such weapons (though painfully ineffectual) haunt the imagination of the amateur assassin, but she (or he) can rarely afford to purchase these military luxuries. Accordingly she or he buys a miserable, futile, dangerous toy, a cheap revolver "about the size of a perfume-bottle." These wretched little make-believes carry a bullet about the size of a pea, and inflict a wound which would be despised by the domestic cat. These little weapons should really be prohibited by law. They are sure to get "jammed," the cartridges stick, the cylinder refuses to revolve, and they are only dangerous when they go off by accident. Then they are not only dangerous, but generally fatal. Now the very purpose of a revolver, when used in legitimate warfare, is to stop the rush of an enemy at close quarters. To do this, a sturdy weapon is required carrying a heavy and perhaps round-headed bullet. Suppose a Soudanese Arab with his big shovel-like spear makes a rush at an officer, you might empty a handful of pea-bullets into him without producing the faintest effect. He would not fall down and bellow for mercy, like the chicken-hearted Jeremiah Donovan. But a heavy pistol-bullet may "prevail on him to stop." If ever the Irish so far alter our institutions as to beget the private wars which prevail in France, they will be met by men who do not carry toy revolvers. Already an "English pupil" is said to have assaulted "Professor Mezzerooff" and beaten him into a mummy with his fists. These private but not ineffective weapons, reinforced perhaps by a horsewhip, are not unlikely to be at the service of too noisy Hibernian patriots.—*Saturday Review*.

IF the State of New York can buy the land on the American side of Niagara Falls for the sum named in the appraisers' report, \$1,433,429, there ought to be little delay in consummating the bargain. Private ownership of all the approaches of this greatest of natural wonders has become a public disgrace.—*Philadelphia Record*.

THE way in which these volumes are saturated with what may be called the cant of Freethinking, the goody-goodiness of irreligion, the unction of the anti-supernatural, the gush of Positivism and Nihilism, might be disagreeable if it were not so extremely interesting. The moral and intellectual atmosphere is that of the class-room and the tea-party, only that the experiences are anti-Christian and the proceedings are opened with a chapter of Strauss instead of a chapter of the Bible. A very curious incident noticed here is that Miss Evans translated the Crucifixion and Resurrection part of the *Leben Jesu* with a crucifix before her as a relief to the disgust of her subject—an instance of feminine logic which is probably unparalleled. Indeed, the whole book shows how impressionable, how emotional, how illogical, how feminine she was. In an Evangelical milieu she was strongly Evangelical. Transferred to the little Freethinking coterie of Hennells, Brays, Brabants, etc., she exchanged the matter of her Evangelicism for unbelief, retaining its manner. It will probably provoke screams from her admirers, but we say hardily that, if at the time when she fell under Lewes's male influence she had fallen under the male influence of an orthodox Churchman, she would probably have been a pillar of the faith and a brand plucked from the burning. The person whom superficial critics long took to be the most masculine of her sex was a very woman.—*Saturday Review*.