

currants of home production (even the humble house-fly has a marketable value, when dried), to barrels of sugar—the legacy of Cain—mostly imported from the sandy shores of Lake Ontario. These country stores have long since solved the problem of having in stock nothing but what one does not want. “Bacon!” demanded the Baron in a confident tone. “Just out of it!” answered the store-keeper (a corpulent specimen of humanity); “have some in next week. But here’s some fine amber syrup, fresh!” The Baron’s stomach yearns for bacon, not syrup, and he declines the proffered delicacy. “I’ll take a toothbrush!” ventured the Boy Trapper. “Yes, sir; how many did you say?” and he hands out a ferocious-looking scrubbing-brush. The Boy Trapper is very sensitive about the abnormal development of his mouth, and blushes. It was the Baron’s turn, now. “Got any dried apples?” he asks, hesitatingly—“Afraid not!” answers the rubicund merchant. “But I can heartily recommend this non-corrosive baking powder, warranted not to rust, only twenty-five cents a tin.” The voyageurs, of course, took a dozen tins and hungered for more. “Butter?” ventures the Boy Trapper, mournfully. “Yes,” says the gentleman with enthusiasm, “How many pounds?” and he casts himself headlong down a trap-door in the floor. A moment of silence, then a crash of falling kerosene cans and the obliging store-keeper re-appears simultaneously, with a strong odor of coal-oil. The Dauntless Ones snatch up the precious edible and flee for the canoe. That butter! In union there is strength! May heaven preserve mortal man from any edible half so strong as butter united with kerosene.

VIII.

Darkness fell that historic evening in much the same way as it usually falls, and after the Boy Trapper had fortified himself against dental disorders by frequent copious draughts of toothache stuff, the explorers sought the privacy of their bed-chamber, re-constructed this evening on entirely newer and improved lines (patent applied for). Some idea of the magnitude of the “tent” may be gained, when it is stated that the Baron experienced no great difficulty in stowing his head away inside the edifice, in spite of the incredible inflation of that head-piece since the tragic death of the heron. The night passed without mishap or interruption, save a midnight attack that the voyageurs made upon a fisherman’s nets a short distance down the shore. The attacking party was eminently successful in the foray, capturing eight perch without the loss of a single man.

The following morning after a hasty breakfast of fish, all sail was crowded upon the “Undertaker’s Joy” en route for Port Credit, for on the preceding afternoon, an ancient mariner, prompted by feelings of gratitude for the gift of an old pipe and a thimbleful of firewater, had invited our two adventurers out in his fishing-smack to witness the operation of hauling in the nets. They reached Port Credit none too soon, for “The Sally” was just starting as they leapt aboard. A heavy gale from the east had risen and was blowing up such a nasty sea that, as they crossed the bar at the mouth of the river, there recurred to the Boy Trapper the cheerful words of the poet—

“Three corpses lay out on the shining sands,
On the shining sands as the sun went down,
And the women are weeping and wringing their hands,” etc.

The personal appearance, too, of their companions did not tend to reassure the discoverers. The skipper, the man who had invited them, was a wizened-up man of about sixty, apparently entirely dominated by his assistant, a powerfully-built fellow, of most forbidding aspect, and misanthropic temper. This prepossessing mortal evidently did not approve of the presence of strangers in the boat and took no pains to conceal his displeasure. The Baron and Boy Trapper felt decidedly uncomfortable,

especially when the unlovely individual waxed abusive but fortunately his pent-up ill-humour found vent in a torrent of oaths, that acted as a safety-valve, and he gradually permitted the light of his countenance to shine with a great refulgent brightness. The mild-tempered man in an effort to maintain peace, endeavoured to amuse the company with a series of tales of a most morbid character. Countless accidents, robberies, deaths, and even murders were swept out of the corners of his mind and retailed to his suffering audience with all due embellishment. In one of his narrations he told the fate of his cousin’s wife’s little nephew—

“This small boy stood on the leathery ice,
Which bent beneath his weight,
And buckled his pair of skimmers on,
And skum to a watery fate.”

Another tale dealt with the suffering of a woman with eight children, deserted by her husband. The Baron and his companion almost fancied that they heard the wail of the desolate children,—

“We shall miss him, for our father
One day left us here alone—
With his pockets full of boodle,
He has skipped for parts unknown.”

Many other yarns did the skipper spin, but always in the same morbid strain. Even the misanthrope took a hand in the conversation, and waxed incoherently eloquent in his efforts to prove that “There ain’t no Purgatory because this here world’s a Purgatory itself, and there ain’t no other.” His instructive discourse was illustrated by picturesque scenes from his own life. Thus pleasantly the time passed until the “banks” were reached. The nets were picked up in spite of a heavy sea, and a good haul made—thirty-one salmon trout, the largest one weighing twenty-four pounds. This excellent catch put even the misanthrope in good humour and as the “Sally” flew homeward he fairly dazzled the voyageurs with the charms of his brilliant conversation.

(Concluded next issue).

Book Reviews.

SIMON DALE.

The swing of the pendulum is fast bringing the historical novel once more into favour. Not since the time of Dumas the Great has so much good work been done in this direction as during the last decade, within which have appeared “The White Company,” “Micah Clarke,” “Mistress Dorothy Marwin,” and many others—for the list is a long one. We welcome the newborn appreciation for this class of fiction as one of the signs that the régime of the morbid, the psychological and the analytical is rapidly passing away, unmourned by us, at least, who watch the disappearance of its heavenly twins, its unsavoury men, and its unlovely women, with nothing but joy at heart and a “Sit terra gravis” on our lips. Mr. W. L. Alden has remarked that the world is being portioned off among our modern novelists. Rudyard Kipling holds exclusive sway over India and Afghanistan; Africa is the portion of Rider Haggard; while “this Canada of ours” falls to Gilbert Parker. At present the world of history is wide, but if the swing of the pendulum becomes much more pronounced, our novelists will soon have to keep a sharp eye on their spheres of influence in this domain also. A good portion of the ground is already taken up by Scott and Dumas, and he must be a bold man who will try conclusions with them in their territory. Dumas in “Vingt ans après,” and the “Vicomte,” actually had the audacity to invade English history—a feat attended, too, with signal success.