

could see others display their agility, and often the want of it, for there was much merry laughter over a seemingly uncalled-for falling about. "Do you slide, Mistress Ruth?—that is, do you care to?"

"I—no;—that is, I have never slid—much. I don't think I should care much." This as she saw a group of four take sitting and recumbent positions rather abruptly. She gave a slight start, a little cry, and the little russet feet went both suddenly to the left, and the little black hood, and the mutinous curls, and the dimpled smiles, and the jaunty muffs, and the rest of it, went as suddenly to the right; and as the outstretched appealing hand went to him, like lightning, for support, she felt a strong, quick arm interpose itself in good time to prevent as neat a fall as any one might wish for.

"There! you were nearly down. Not hurt? Well—there again!" as she gave another little slip. "I think you would do well to take my arm."

She had his arm at the moment, but he felt as if the timid little hand was slipping from it, and then the next instant he felt a more firm hold and pressure. But it was still anything but a steady lean upon it. He took the little fingers gently, and placing them with his own hand on the exact spot on his arm where she would have surer support, he gave her hand a little re-assuring pat, and almost a pressure, and left it; and it stood where it was placed, taking kindly enough to the resting position.

"We are passed all the slippery places now, are we not?" she asked, perhaps to save her sense of propriety.

"Nay, there may be many such places on the road, although we did not notice them so much coming as we do going back. It has been freezing, you know. Are you warm enough?"

"I think so; I don't think I have thought about it before."

"Keep close to me."

She said nothing, but she kept close enough; he did not have to allude to it again.

And now came the dread bridge again. The words of the gushing cousin came to her mind—"Indeed, yes; we pay toll both coming and going." She also remembered how he had waived all his claims in view of their strangeness to the land. The skirmishes of those who had gone before them had been very brief and scarcely noticeable. The time-honored custom was observed without a murmur.

It was rapidly getting dusk; the winter's afternoon was becoming winter's evening without much lingering in the way of twilight. The sun fell into a ditch of cold, gray, slushy cloud, and seemed to perspire a lurid stream for a few minutes, and then to get cold with the gelid ashen purple of iron plunged in snow; then it seemed to fall through torn slits of its sea of troubled gray, and it left the world to quick-gathering darkness.

The little party, each pair toned down a little with the sudden chill and gloom, crunched its way over the freezing snow toward home. The planks of the bridge creaked and complained as if stricken by sudden cold and rheumatism the heavy and the light step of the last pair touched them. The surface of the snow bore still the traces of much wild prancing to and fro in the regular and irregular toll-taking. Ruth said no word; there was not the slightest effort to withdraw the trustful hand, or the slightest impulse of the little mouse-like feet to fly again across and out of danger. He merely smiled, as if he was thinking of something he did not wish to say; and she, seeing the smile, guessed it out as well as if he had spoken. And he did speak when they were well over.

"You did not think it worth while to flee from me this time."

"You, too, seemed as if you had forgotten all about it."

This was not exactly the conveyance of what she meant to say. As she thought of it hurriedly, it seemed almost like a challenge. What if he would regard it in that light? In fact, if he did she could scarcely blame him; but she said nothing to mend matters.

"How soon the stars have come out! What a very bright one overhead—the pale green one!"

She lifted her hooded face to the place whence the starlight should have fallen—when, swift as flashed light, warm to her as a sun's ray, a light kiss just brushed the peachy down on her cheek—and the deed was done!

She felt that the world about her seemed suddenly to change its meaning to her. He was no longer the pure hero; for the moment she was tempted to believe him capable of any deceit or crime; and then, like a flash, she turned the blame upon herself, because of that unfortunate little remark. What else could he have done when he was plainly told he had forgotten? She hid one side of her face for a moment with her gloved hand, and the nearer side to him with her muffs, and wished for an inspiration for some proper thing to do. He only stood near her these few seconds, during which the universe turned inside out to her. And I am afraid he laughed a merry laugh of wicked enjoyment.

"There! it was not such an awful thing after all. Come, take my arm again—it is still slippery. It shall not happen again."

She took her previous hold upon his proffered arm, but she tucked the rebellious curl under her hood, and looked as stern and puritanical as she could at a moment's notice.

"Say you quite forgive me. We should not try to make ourselves so very much better than the others, who seem to enjoy themselves so much." He again patted the little hand snug-

gled in upon his arm, in a still more soothing and protecting way. "I find one looks like a fool if he does not follow the happy customs of a kindly people."

"I ought not to have reminded you of it; it seemed forward of me, as if I courted it, and I am sure I was not thinking of it in that way," she went on, half excusing him and accusing herself, and finally forbidding him to forget it and be forgiven.

The dreadful bridge was still in sight, and all this change, this revelation of new emotions, this upheaval of her little world to her, had taken place and was a thing of the past in this short time. And then, as if to make this offense seem small and trivial, he told her, as they walked home together under the winter stars, such tales of the marvellous and wonderful! It was Othello and Desdemona over again, only, let us hope, the Moor told the strict truth with more fluency than Miles did. He was so strange about this one quality of his! One would think that a good liar would not be able to contain his splendid gifts, but would lie right and left. But Miles was a born genius; he was the soul of truth and honor in all things except these dreadful adventures of his. Perhaps he more than half believed in them himself, so well did he tell them, and so strongly did he wish them to be true.

Ruth, so far from being shocked or scandalized, followed each awful incident with the effacing sponge of forgiveness, and when she had wiped away all the real sin she could with her sponge, she gilded up and haloed the occurrence until it became a thing to swing incense before in her own mind.

There was little concealment about her frank admiration of him. The tender eyes were ever on the watch for him when away, ever following his every movement when present. The tendrils of her sunny hair were twined but for him, because he admired it. The bows and the ribbons became more bewitchingly tied, and sprigs of cunning needle-work broke out about her dress like running vines in a June sun. She believed his most elaborate and embroidered romances with such readiness that he lost faith in his power of invention. It was like pouring water upon the thirsting earth, or telling fairy tales to eager children. The uncles and aunts, and even the cousins, were getting seriously anxious about this development. Ruth no longer shunned the awful bridge in their walks, and there was no more need of apology for not doing in Rome as the Romans do.

But, alas! one fine day there came a new figure upon the scene, who greeted Miles with much noisy familiarity and expansiveness, not entirely shared by the younger man, I beg to say. This was an old friend of Miles and his family, who knew them all, root and branch. The first surprise he gave them was by calling Miles simply Fox, instead of Foxcroft. This Miles explained, in his friend's absence, as merely an abbreviation; and then he was forced to admit that he liked not the name of Fox alone as well as with the croft. And then, finding that the threads of many of his stories were being drawn out to such an extent that the whole fabric would come to pieces before his face before long, he, feigning uncalled-for importance to an ordinary letter received, took himself away, not without several scenes with Ruth, and much dispensing with all need of the bridge as any excuse for the "custom of the people."

One week away, and Ruth half consoled by vows to meet again, the kindly friend of Miles's youth told the whole of his history. His father, old Fox, was a quiet, well-to-do trader down in Maryland, who had never done anything in his life more dreadful than drive unequal bargains with the simple red Indian, to whom he trafficked rum and provisions in exchange for furs. Miles had been the mainstay of his father's trade, fond of hearing tales of pirates and of Indian adventure; had only once gone away from home, on a coasting vessel, and then came near killing himself by falling from the rigging, where he had no business to go, and cutting that ugly welt on his forehead. As there had been some four different versions of the origin of the wound, the company resigned themselves to the last one as being the most reliable.

"And now, as he has been a good boy so long, his father gave him leave and money to go to see a little of the country, and perhaps he might be able to fix on a good spot for a branch business. A most excellent young fellow, fond of telling of adventures that nobody seems to know much of except himself; but there! I'd trust him with anything except a story." Thus spoke the friend, and all seemed relieved that this blood-stained youth was now purified and washed clean.

Poor Ruth! It was a sad blow to her. There had been no real call for the tear of the angel to blot out the sin, no need of the gilding or the incense. The idol was of common clay. She never wished to see him more; and when they thoughtlessly laughed away his crimes, she could have wept, for to her they seemed to wash the dirt well into him, and smear him with common whiting as an outer finish.

Unreasoning!—very.

Unsatisfactory!—rather.

But here the story ends, as I heard it. Whether Ruth ever saw him again, or whether she went back to unmitigated Puritanism and straightened her rebellious curl back with searing-irons, I know not. I like to imagine an ending to her story, but I will not here put it with the pure fragment of an old-time tale as it was told to me.

ODE TO A HEN.

"How fond thy clucks, when quick thy callow brood
Thou call'st to gorge some poor, belated worm," etc.
—Stanza ciii.

Author of omelettes! Origin of eggs!
High be thy place in proud creation's plan!
If thou wert not, where were fair *fricassees*,
Seductive salad, or the potted can?

Some taunt thy courage, hen, nor deem thee brave
When nude contention, rears "her wrinkled front."
Guard thou the nest, most useful of thy kind,
Whilst roosters, spurred, sustain the battle's brunt!

Thou art not wise, yet wisdom leads, full oft
Through paths most devious, to conclusions blind;
With level head thou tread'st life's thorny road,
Leaving the purblind pedant far behind!

What be the goal men seek, but few may gain?
Wealth, fame, ambition,—fleeting shadows all.
Contentment, priceless jewel, nought can buy,
Not all the gold hid in Earth's rolling ball!

Then art thou blest! 'Neath thy protecting wing,
Thou gatherest thy chickens, safe and warm.
What though a second Caesar strode the blast:
Not 'pon thy head should break the bloody storm!

What though yon peerless Corsican arose,
That giant genius, mightiest of man's race;
A loaded die, thrown by an unseen hand
To serve some end, then hurled to dire disgrace!

Still wert thou safe! Napoleon knew, full well,
The perfect nourishment thine egg supplies!
Ye strung the sinews that wild Waterloo
Alone might snap before a dazed world's eyes!

How fond thy cluck, when quick thy callow brood
Thou call'st to gorge some poor, belated worm,—
Some "evening reveler" (as Byron sang),
Surprised at morn, and "nabbed without a squirm."

When ye bold drummer sells ye heaviest bills,
Wot'st thou whence flows his inspiration, then?
By "egg-flip" braced, prates he his well-worn tale,—
A "ten strike" scores, and—thanks ye humble hen!

And, oh! full oft, as o'er his lonely meal,
In fancy sits he by his faithful wife,
The new-laid eggs recall their courtship days,
The good-night kiss, and all the old farm life.

Yon grub, a thing abhorrent to man's sight,—
A vicious pulp that blasts the tender vine,—
Thy balmy chemistry transmutes, forsooth,
To blest spring chicken, or to pot-pie, fine!

Were I to name thy myriad virtues o'er,
No editor would print my mussy scroll;
So, hen, farewell! If thou wouldst get in type,
I must cut off my tale—not thine, good soul!

ELLIOTT PRESTON.

ECHOES FROM LONDON.

LONDON, Nov. 3.

It is stated that the Duke of Connaught will not serve the usual five years in India, but that, after two years, he will return home to succeed the Duke of Cambridge in the Horse Guards.

THE Farmers' Alliance, which has just had an important meeting, will not be content with the Agricultural Holdings Act, so that we may have the whole question reopened next session. A very pleasant look out.

THE Clarendon Historical Society are preparing for publication a facsimile pack of cavalier playing cards of the time of Charles II. The society, founded in 1882, has already reproduced a considerable number of rare and curious pamphlets.

WHEN the explosion occurred on the Metropolitan Railway, there were some 20,000 people besieging South Kensington Station from the Fisheries Exhibition, waiting to be taken home. By twelve o'clock the trains had got in order again, and had managed all the traffic.

It is the intention of the foreign and colonial commissioners at the Fisheries Exhibition to ask the Prince of Wales to accept from them a handsome album containing the portraits of all the representatives of the countries and colonies taking part in the show at South Kensington.

THE Luther Exhibition at the British Museum continues to attract a great number of visitors, and it is probable many Londoners have been attracted by it to Great Russell street who had not previously visited the institution for years.

LISZT is going to publish his piano method; the pianist world will be all on the *qui vive*. He will, of course, remember that he can stretch his digits about two inches farther than any other mortal. His method, however, chiefly consists of swooping down on the keys with his talons like an eagle does on a dove.

It is stated that the main object of the visit of the Cape Premier and the Transvaal delegates to this country is to raise money. The Transvaal exchequer is as empty at this moment as it was when the sum of twelve shillings and sixpence was all we could find in their coffers at the time of the Convention.

THE fashion of refreshing clients and customers is not to be confined to houses of business. There is one very well-known physician, whose waiting-rooms are crowded with patients and their friends, and whose butler brings each visitor who

has to wait for the doctor a cup of tea. This was the usage of Dr. Critchett also, and has found favor with other oculists.

THE Rev. E. Brice, B.A., of Bradford, a clergyman of eleven years' standing, announces that he has left the Church for the Stage. We are accustomed to the announcement of converted actors and converted clowns as preachers; but it will be indeed a novelty to see the Rev. Julian Gray, or the Prison Chaplain in "It is Never Too Late to Mend," played by a real clergyman in Holy Orders.

AN illustration of the dangers of overhead telegraph and telephone wires was given in the city this week. By the falling of a telephone wire in the heart of the city a lady was seriously injured and several gentlemen had narrow escapes, and one street in London is said to be crossed by 1,400 wires, which makes pedestrianism in the city become a positive peril. Civilization is becoming too complicated.

ANOTHER exhibition which is likely to become a permanent institution among us is that of the show of St. Bernard dogs, held under the auspices of the St. Bernard Club, at Knightsbridge. It is a magnificent collection of those fine animals, and the club is evidently doing good service in encouraging the keeping, and improving the breed, of those useful and sagacious specimens of the canine race.

AN action has been entered—whether it will go for trial remains to be seen—in which a gentleman sues a well-known morning paper for a thousand guineas for supplying an early copy of "Endymion." Competition is often keen amongst newspapers, but a thousand pounds is a high price for even a modern tip. However, the gentleman who is to be plaintiff is very sanguine that he will recover the amount.

UNDER the title of "Our Sceptred Isle," Mr. Alexander Macdonald, a journalist of travelled experience, sings the praises of the Dominion as a field par excellence of emigration, but Mr. Macdonald is sufficiently cosmopolitan to admit that "every facility has been provided for the further development of our race whose powers and capabilities as colonisers of the waste places of the earth have been fully proved." "Our Sceptred Isle" is dedicated to the Earl of Dufferin.

"To the Sweetest Woman the World Has Ever Known." This is the romantic heading in an advertisement published in one of Monday's papers. The advertiser goes on to address his innamorata in the following dulcet tones:—"Come to me without a shilling. Help me in the work of providing for the welfare of those dependent on me, and you shall not be sorry that you gave up all for a work of love." This is cheerful. Young ladies, as a rule, when they marry a man, expect that he will do the working part of the contract, and leave them to manage the house. But this gentleman evidently wants a business partner as well as a wife. What can "The Sweetest Woman the World Has Ever Known" think of the appeal?

THE sale of coral, shell, and glass has been so unprecedented and so steady that some of the chief Italian dealers have decided to be permanently represented in the West end. Shops have been taken close to the South Kensington Station for the rest of the season, and the Italian colony seems to thrive. We shall inevitably have cheap restaurants in the district, and the Kensington Museum will be relied upon as the local attraction for visitors. The Italians are like the French in this, that they do not so much settle in a foreign city as that they colonize it or part of it. We know the French quarter in Leicester square, and the Italian quarter round about Hatton garden. The sudden springing up of cheap Italy in the district of Queen's gate is regarded with a very modified feeling of enthusiasm by the fashionable neighbors.

Loss and Gain.

CHAPTER I.

"I was taken sick a year ago
With bilious fever."

"My doctor pronounced me cured, but I got sick again, with terrible pains in my back and sides, and I got so bad I

Could not move!

I shrunk!

From 223 lbs., to 120! I had been doctoring for my liver, but it did me no good. I did not expect to live more than three months. I began to use Hop Bitters. Directly my appetite returned, my pains left me, my entire system seemed renewed as if by magic, and after using several bottles I am not only as sound as a sovereign but weigh more than I did before. To Hop Bitters I owe my life."

Dublin, June 6, '81. R. FITZPATRICK.

HOW TO GET SICK.—Expose yourself day and night; eat too much without exercise; work too hard without rest; doctor all the time; take all the vile nostrums advertised, and then you will want to know how to get well, which is answered three words—Take Hop Bitters!