

CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE.

And thou, to alien Occident
O'er many a league of blue sea water
Art come, strange, unique implement
Of Ptolemy's daughter!

Back roll the mists of Eld: . . . I see
A land of lotus-blossoms, wine, spice—
Of temples, sphinxes, mystery—
The land of Isis.

Lo, where, within her paradise
Palm-shaded, murmurous with the tweedle
Of harps and viols, Egypt plies
Her busy needle.

What web thrills she with potent wand
Foretelling Fate's relentless shuttle,
While musing with her smile so bland
Her smile so subtle!

Perchance a rug, a quaint disguise
Wherein she, smuggled, may come ris-a-
fiz, and lead captive to her eyes
One Julius Cæsar.

Or, as it well might hap, indeed,
A kerchief her despair to cover
When heart shall break, and breast shall bleed
For her lost lover.

. . . I see her in her pleasure barge
(Hide down the Cydnus, softly smiling,
Marc Antony the noble target
Of her beguiling.

Her 'wildering eyes, her jewelled snoods,
Her witchery so fine and various,
Her gay enchantments, and her moods
So—well . . . precarious!

A regal red rose, she descends
In full orbed beauty from her boat's
Ashamed, out shone, before her bends
The sacred lotus.

With Isis' wisdom, Athor's wiles,
Her splendour Beauty's self eclipses:
A million charms, spells, graces, guiles—
All are the gypsy's!

She knew a hero's brows to bind
With platted garlands of papyrus;
She knew to cure a distraught mind
With a-pic virus!

She knew, when love and all were lost,
To face Fate, an imperial woman;
To vanquish a triumphant host
And trick the Roman.

And, one would think, if ought be proved
(When Cleo speaks there is no knowing!)
She understood—and ereo loved
The art of sewing!

ISABELLA G. MEREDITH.

TRIFLES FROM MY PORTFOLIO.

By J. M. Le Moine.

THE GUIGNOLEE.

If you should, says Mr. B. Sulte, saunter through the rural districts of the Province of Quebec, or through the French wards of our towns, on the evening of the festival of Saint Sylvester, your ear, mayhap, will be greeted with a chant ancient, grave, halting, attracting your attention by its singularity and causing surprise in such a frosty season; serenades being of more occurrence in Canada in December and January.

That chant is the Guignolee—one of the oldest traditions—dating back two thousand years and more.

Of the customs of ourselves, very few exist.

What has become of the idiom of the Gauls, which we spoke two or three thousand years ago? The Latin tongue thrust on us for another thousand years! Where are now the houses, the religion, the arms, the trappings of the companions of Brermus, of Vercingetorix, of the Frank Merovingians? All we know, all we remember of them, is what we gather in books. But a dirge—a snatch of a song has lasted; a popular game may defy the assaults of time. Mere trifles sometimes outlive the stateliest monuments.

When with the darkening shades of winter, the Druids of old, their priests and the Gauls stood round the emblematic moss entwined oak and cut down its boughs, with the golden sickle, carolling joyful songs in commemoration of the new year—*Au gui! l'an neuf!* (to the mistletoe! A new year)—they were far from dreaming that twenty centuries later, some strangers, in a modern tongue—the French—sung by a band of labourers, amidst the ice and snow of a land forgotten beyond the seas—would sum up all that had survived of these notes and of the famous dogmas they held.

Au gui! l'an neuf! We are at a loss to say how our friends, the Gauls, pronounced the words.

The Guignolee as is sung in our Province on New Year's Eve, the doors of houses, as an appeal to charity; a touching custom. Though its origin should be ignored by those who indulge in it, its existence is honourable to our race:

Bonjour, le Maître et la Maîtresse
Et tous les gens de la maison!

It does one good to listen to this ancient lay: combining a souvenir of a poetic past, with a kindly trait of our national character.

From our ancestors, we borrow the custom of commemorating the longest and the shortest day in the year: two Pagan observances, to a certain extent transformed by Christianity—dropped out of the memory of other nations—but still observed by French-Canadians, by them alone, on this continent.

Au gui! l'an neuf! A wish of happiness for the coming year, a joyful, a hopeful cry, sure

to please, whatever be the language or form in which it is conveyed—sweetly crowned by an appeal to charity for the poor.

This custom exists in several localities in France: as shown by M. Ernest Gagnon, of Quebec, in his *Chansons populaires*. Several revisions of the Guignolee are to be met with in Canada. Had I, observes Mr. Sulte, to select one I would give the preference to the subjoined:

Bonjour, le maître et la maîtresse
Et tous les gens de la maison.
Nous avons pris une coutume
De venir voir une fois l'an.
Une fois l'an c'est pas grand' chose!
Pour l'arrivée,
Qu'un petit morceau de chiquée,
Si vous voulez.

La guignolee, la guignolee!
Mettez du lard dedans ma poche
Et du fromage sur mon pain:
Je revendrai l'année qui vient.

Si vous voulez rien nous donner,
Dites-nous le.
Nous prendrons la fille aînée
Si vous voulez.

Nous lui ferons faire bonne chère,
Nous lui ferons chauffer les pieds.
Pour le dernier jour de l'année,
La guignolee vous nous devez.

Nous ferons du feu dans les bois
Étant à l'extérieur.
On entendra chanter l'écoucou
Et la coucoube.

The lines vary, according to fancy, but the sentiment and substance remains identical.

"This song," writes M. Ampère (of the French academy) is probably the only vestige extant of a souvenir tracing back to the Druidical era. In the country parts of France, it invariably meant a begging excursion for the poor, in which the chief object as food, was a piece of ham with the tail (*écoucou du porc*) still attached: this was called *l'écoucou* or *la chiquée*.

It is probable, says M. J. E. Taché, that the lines:

"Nous prendrons la fille aînée
Nous lui ferons chauffer les pieds."

was a faint allusion to the human sacrifices of the ancient rites of the Gauls. It recalls the words of Velleda, in the martyrs of Chateaubriand:

"Tentatis wants blood . . . on the first day of the century . . . he has spoken in the Druidical Oaks."

Let us retain, adds Mr. Sulte, our peculiar customs.

The *Boston Post*, in 1873, thus noticed this singular custom: "Canada is the refuge of French antiquities driven from their natural land by a relentless and radical civilization, among which is the custom of 'running the ignolee,' which originated twenty-five hundred years ago. Though this ceremony, which is druidical, would be hardly expected to wear so well in a land that professes to be Christian, it nevertheless was this year as sacredly observed among the French-Canadians of the rural districts as two hundred years ago. Only a few years since it was allowed in Montreal, but the late influx of outside influence has smothered it there. Freya, the wife of Odin, the Saxon God, made all things swear not to harm Balden, the Son, except the mistletoe, a plant so diminutive that she did not think it worth noticing. Lake, God of Evil, found out his weak point, however, and tearing up the mistletoe gave it to Odel, the Blind God, who with it fatally pierced Balden. This was the fable, and it was to prevent Lake from slaying Balden that the Druids solemnly sought the oak trees, and gathered the mistletoe from their boughs with the joyous cry, '*Au gui! l'an neuf!*' of which '*La Ignolee*' or '*Guillonnee*' is a corruption, meaning the mistletoe. At the New Year, company of young men meet and serenade every house with a fanlarade of tin horns and house-fiddles. After greeting the host and hostess, the singers and instrumentalists beg a piece of ham with tail attached, called '*a chiquée*,' threatening in the event of a refusal, to take the oldest child of the family to the forest and roast it under the oak tree, where the dove and cuckoo sing. Druidism was introduced into Gaul seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, and its still vigorous rites show that a heathen plant may flourish in Christian soil."

ENGLISH NOVELIST AT HOME.

TRAITS OF JAMES PAYN.

When James Pavn laughs—and he is not only a humourist himself, but keenly appreciative of humour in others—he may be heard from one end to the other of that inside-out square known as Warrington Crescent. As he puffs his eternal pipe of Latakia, and looks quietly on at his daughters playing lawn-tennis and his son turning somersaults on the grass, he greets you, one of his visitors remarks, not with a dry, woody cachinnation or a harsh metallic clatter, but with a genuine round, mellow English laugh. He is delighted at the notion of a common friend, the father of a family, going, out of a sense of duty, to spend a month of misery at the sea-side. The idea of his greatest crony fidgeting savagely in the morning because the newspapers have not arrived, and walking fiercely up and down the promenade wishing himself in London, arriving at his own office with the punctuality of a fraudulent clerk, who fears discovery, gives Mr. Pavn keen delight for the moment, and then excites his sympathy; for he not a good idler himself,

and is quite of the opinion of "old Q." concerning the comparative merits of town and country. One of his peculiarities is that of "running on," as women call it, in a humorously bantering strain; full of life and fancy, good-tempered, pleasant, and droll. With all this faculty of leaving on the minds of his friends a bright impression of sparkling conversation, he is not a sayer of good things in the sense that Jerrold was, and Messrs Gilbert and Burnand are. His conversation rather charms by its liveliness, by its abundant illustration and anecdote, than by perversions of words and inversions of thought. His gaiety is thoroughly contagious. Perhaps no living Englishman possesses in greater perfection the art of putting people in a good temper. This sympathetic temperament appears to be equally attractive to animals; for an immense black Persian cat comes presently bounding over the lawn, leaps on her master's shoulder, and curls round his neck like a gigantic fur collar.

Literature and tea have this bond of affinity, that both before purchase must be submitted to a "taster." The "taster's" name is kept as secret as possible; but it comes out sometimes. Mr. Pavn is "taster" to a firm of some renown, and his custom of an afternoon is to "taste" the various works submitted to the house with a view to publication. Hence his friends have compared him with the deadly upas or literary elder-tree, which blights hope, health and genius with the odious "Not suitable," or "Do not see our way," which all but the small percentage of very successful authors have encountered during their career. It is position of power; but all but the most patient or good-humoured of men would break down under the long agony of reading eternal manuscript to which the "taster" is doomed.

In addition to the writers of three-volume novels, which he turns out at the rate of one and a half per annum, and the "tasting" of others' productions, Mr. Pavn gets through an infinity of literary work of various kinds. He frequently writes articles in the Nineteenth Century, and turns out a humorous story nearly every month for *Belgravia*; he is said to write many of the light articles in the *Times* in the season of vacation, and is special correspondent for newspapers in Melbourne, Paris, and New York. It is difficult to believe that all this work is got through by the apparently easy-going gentleman, who appears to be always telling stories and making jokes at the Reform Club; but the fact undoubtedly remains that it is so.

It is done on the system, the fashion of which was set in this country by Dickens, and followed by Mr. Anthony Trollope, of working for so many hours, or doing a certain minimum quantity of work, every day. It was tried long ago in France by Heine, and afterward by Alexandre Dumas. Everybody recollects poor Heine's complaint that nothing filled his mind with such profound melancholy as the sight of a number of sheets of fair white paper. The elder Dumas had a plan of counting the number of "slips" he ought to fill, and sticking to his work till it was done; Dickens had a fixed time to sit at his desk, whether he produced much or little "copy," and Mr. Anthony Trollope has a minimum of quantity. Mr. Pavn following the system of those great masters, devotes the three hours between ten and one in every day to the composition of original or imaginative matter, as distinguished from tasting, compilation, and such commonplace reading as journalists are compelled to undergo. His day is curiously mapped out. Believing in much sleep as an absolute necessity for persons employed in brain-work, he sleeps, as many would think, an extravagant time. Of thoroughly domestic habits, he eschews evenings from home, loving to eat his dinner with his wife and the seven daughters, who, with his young son, compose his family. Shortly after the evening post comes in the last pipe is lighted, and at ten o'clock the household is wrapped in slumber. The industrious novelist does not appear till eight o'clock the next morning, and by ten he has read his newspapers, breakfasted, and is seated in his "tasting" office, with the design, however, of giving the first three hours to original composition, mainly at stories, short or long. It is a curious exemplification of the "serial" system so much in vogue among us, that he has never published but one novel except in a serial. But this industrious and prudent worker does not permit himself, as some of the greatest writers of serials have formerly done, to be run a race by the printer. All his novels are finished before a line of them is printed; so that he is never hurried nor anxious concerning them. The dread of illness or of "breaking down" never presses upon him. There is another advantage in this habit of having all written before it is delivered to the printer: it gives an exceptional opportunity for making arrangements for advance sheets with distant colonies and such remote spots as Japan.

Three hours having been devoted to imaginative literature, Mr. Pavn makes for the neighborhood Reform Club, where, at the hour of luncheon, he foregathers with his friend, Mr. Robinson, the manager of the *Daily News*, and Mr. William Black, the novelist. The particularly cheerful luncheon table invariably occupied by the same members has long excited the curiosity of outlying members, who burn with anxiety to make the fourth side of the triangular symposium. Jokes and stories having been exchanged, Mr. Pavn betakes himself to his desk—this time as "taster," and either recommends, curses, or "damns with faint praise" the manuscript before him. During the whole time

he smokes persistently, still at that Latakia, which the doctors told him would "kill the strongest man in ten years," but which he has smoked for a quarter of a century with impunity. "Tasting" over, he winds his way back to the club, and plays whist for two or three hours, till it is time to think of dinner and home, and his "familiar," the Persian cat. He is not of those who believe in physical exercise as a restorative for the brain. On the contrary, he never walks or rides in London or elsewhere, but economizes wear and tear of tissue by living, in hansom cabs. This detail is the more remarkable, as he, who appears the most idle of men, is really most industrious so far as trainwork is concerned, and has steered a middle line, avoiding on the one hand the sentimental otour of the "midnight oil," and on the other the equally offensive cult of mere thews and sinews.

OUR CHESS COLUMN.

Solutions to Problems sent in by Correspondents will be duly acknowledged.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. W. S., Montreal.—Papers to hand. Many thanks.

Student, Montreal.—Correct solution received of Problem No. 293.

A. C.—The Problem is correct.

E. D. W., Sherbrooke, P. Q.—Look over Problem 292 again. It deserves it.

CHECKMATE.

It is only the chessplayer who feels the full force of the word checkmate when uttered with that decisive tone which announces the termination of a contest over the chequered board. There may be several contestants engaged in play, and that profound silence which betokens the importance of the occasion may reign in the room, and yet the utterance of the little word "mate" will cause a visible stir in an assembly which is generally not much interested in surrounding events. No one who has been in the habit of watching two players engaged over a chess board can have failed to notice the different expressions of countenance exhibited by the belligerents towards the termination of a game, which must evidently end in the discomfiture of one of the parties.

The one upon whom fortune smiles, and who is at ease with reference to the issue of the contest, shows it by that happy air of indifference and satisfaction which leads him to look round the room with apparent unconcern, and even to interest himself to some extent in a neighbouring encounter. Not so with his opponent: the ominous word "checkmate," which he just now heard, may be the knell of his own fate, and his whole soul is absorbed in the position before him.

It may have been noticed, also, by the visitor to the chess club that there is much difference in the mode in which checkmate is administered by players who may have beaten down all opposition and driven the enemy into a corner.

Each individual, to some extent, exhibits in this simple act his own character, and the more so because the nature of the struggle he has been engaged in has thrown him off his guard, and he appears as he really is. He is too much absorbed to avail himself of those conventionalities which are so necessary in ordinary social intercourse.

The player, who is naturally impulsive in his nature, announces the final doom in tones as boisterous as they are decisive, and accompanies his declaration with a sound on the board which resounds through the chamber. Another, on the contrary, gives the coup de grace with a quietness and self-possession which is, perhaps, much more annoying to his opponent than any amount of noisy demonstration.

The player who is so much pleased with his success in achieving a victory that he bursts into unseemly mirth, and laughs heartily at his own success, rarely gives of fence, as it is evident that he is not accustomed to such good luck, and that consequently he cannot keep his hilarity within proper bounds.

It is the part of a gentlemanlike player to avoid everything which may add to the irritation of his opponent who naturally feels some vexation at finding himself worsted in an encounter in which he has just exerted all his skill to avoid the inevitable checkmate. An invitation to engage in another contest, accompanied by very few, if any, remarks on the last encounter, is the safest way to avoid unpleasantness. We may remark here, however, that there are some players who delight in adding to the misery of the unhappy victim who is writhing under the infliction of move after move, each one calculated to drag the luckless player to the gulf down which he is to be thrust headlong.

How much better it is to save the feelings of a defeated enemy as much as possible, and spare him the pain of slow and deliberate torture. The action of Mrs. Gilbert, the Queen of Chess, in her contests with Mr. Hooper is much more commendable, and in every way fitted to set chess-players a good example. With the benevolent instincts of womanly character, she announces her checkmate in thirty or forty moves in advance, and thus saves all the trouble of unnecessary delay and protracted mental anxiety.

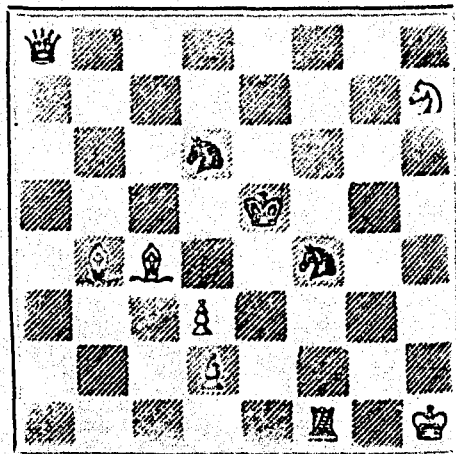
Gentle player, go thou and do likewise, when thou canst.

PROBLEM No. 293.

(From the English Mechanic.)

By F. J. Heechev.

BLACK.



WHITE.

White to play and mate in two moves.