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Poetic Aphorisms.

Never associate with bad company. Have good company, or none.

Never look over the shoulder of another who is reading or writing.

Never pass between two persons who are talking together without an apology.

Never will a gentleman allude to conquests which he may have made with ladies.

Never fail to offer the easiest and best seat in the room to an invalid, an elderly person or a lady.

Never be guilty of the contemptible meanness of opening a private letter addressed to another.

Never enter a room filled with people without a slight bow to the general company, when first entering.

Never fail to answer an invitation, either personally or by letter, within a week after the invitation is received.

Never should a lady accept of expensive gifts at the hands of a gentleman not related or engaged to her. Gifts of flowers, books, music or confectionery may be accepted.

Never, when walking arm in arm with a lady, be continually changing and going to the other side, because of change of corners. It shows too much attention to form.

Pennigrams.

Writ of attachment—the epistle of youthful lovers.

Styles are constantly changing, but the turkey this year will be dressed in the same old way.

There is something in store for us all, but it takes money to persuade the clerk to hand it out.

We saw a young man the other day with two heads on his shoulders, but didn't think it much of a curiosity—one belonging to his girl.

A Canada paper speaks of a man who recently smuggled cows into the Dominion. His clothing could not have been properly examined.—*Syracuse Courier.*

Ode to a money lender—"Meet me a loan."

The small boy is generally taken sick at the moment a ton of coal is deposited on the side walk.

An English girl wants to know how long girls should be courted. We haven't seen the statutes in regard to this subject, but as a matter of fact, it usually ends at the altar.

"Maria," observed Mr. Holcomb, as he was putting on his clothes, "there ain't no patch on them breeches yet." "I can't fix it now, no way. I'm too busy." "Well, give me the patch; then, an' I'll carry it around with me I don't want people to think I can't afford the cloth."

In these days of metaphysical research it might be instructive to ask some learned professor what the condition of the man's mind was, who, late at night, after having been out to visit a friend, looked at his wife and said with mountain voice, "Maria, you two girls look enough alike to be twins. Which of your is which, eh?"

Two raw Highlanders, Donald and Dugald, are walking along a street in St. Mungo, when they come on a water cart. "Hi," shouts Dugald to the driver, "hi! you're losing all your water!" Then Donald comes in. "Oh, Dugald, Dugald, dinna show your ignorance. The water is meant to keep boys from riding on the back of the cart!"

Some people can't see the point of a joke. The other day, at a debating club, an old gentleman, who was tired of the silly questions which were being discussed, rose in his place and said sarcastically: "I move that the next question for debate be, How long can a goose live?" A young member at once moved the adoption of the question, and then suggested that Brother Blank be appointed to open it and to state his exact age. Everybody saw the point of the joke except the wounded man.

To tell the truth, we are surprised that the women folks show the amount of common sense they do. Young man, supposing you were told, say twenty times a day, how bright your eyes are, what magnificent tresses are yours, how enchanting your society is, how nicest, sweetest, best you are; how long, think you, before you would develop into the silliest kind of a jackass—always provided you were not one at the start?

SPORTING NOTES.

CURLING—PROSPECTIVE GREAT MATCH.

Local curlers are buckling on their armor, and good sport is expected, but several big matches are also expected. The New York *Herald* says: "There will be played in New York and vicinity this winter three national club matches on a large scale, viz—The North vs. South of Scotland match for the Dalrymple medal, champion rink match for the Gordon medal, and the interstate match for the Hamilton medal. In some of these matches rinks will compete from Canada and the West. Last February a large number of curlers from the States made a peaceful raid across the border and had nearly a week's curling in Canada, when the Gordon and Dalrymple medals were played for, finally winding up with an international bonspiel at Toronto, when the United States came off victorious. Canada has challenged the States to a return match this winter, sixty rinks aside, to be played either at Hamilton or Buffalo."

THE TURF.

There were seventy seven horses that won £1,000 or more in England and Scotland the past season, of which four were six years old, three five years, fifteen four years, twenty four three years, and the remainder two years old, with the exception of one that was aged.

AQUATIC.

The proposed race between Boyd and Hawdon, English oarsmen, has fallen through, Boyd offering Hawdon three lengths' start and Hawdon sticking at four lengths.

Wallace Ross is expected not to go to England this season, but will probably remain in Boston and go in for a slice of the recently offered $5,000 purse, for which it might be mentioned, Hanlan and Courtney are both eligible.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM.—With the near approach of the session of Parliament public attention is again being directed to the promise made by Sir Leonard Tilley that the Government would introduce a measure to reform the Civil Service. An Ottawa paper says that all appointments will be made after a competitive examination, that the heads of colleges will form the Examining Board, and that the nominations of individuals to compete are to be made by Senators and members of Parliament on both sides of those Houses; also, that there are to be stringent provisions prohibiting the Civil Service from identifying themselves with politics or undertaking any business outside of their public employment.

PRESERVATION OF THE DEAD.—The United States Consul-General at Berlin, Mr. Kreissmann, has communicated to the Department of State a new process patented in Germany for preservation of the dead. The liquid used is prepared as follows—In 3,000 grammes of boiling water are dissolved 100 grammes of alum, 25 grammes of cooking salt, 12 grammes of salipetre, 60 grammes of potash, and 10 grammes of arsenic acid. When cool it is filtered. To 10 litres of this liquid 4 litres of glycerine and 1 litre of methylic alcohol are added. The process of embalming is by saturating and impregnating the bodies with it. From 1½ to 5 litres of the liquid are used for a body.—*Scientific American.*

Mr. Edward Jenkins, M. P., following the example of Dickens, purposes, it is said, appearing on the platform as a reader of his own works, and will shortly afford the public the opportunity of hearing his interpretation of "Ginx's Baby."

Rev. Dr. John Hall is said to have received over $10,000 in wedding fees during the present year. Can any good ever come of money thus obtained from innocent and trusting young men?

DRIBBLETS.—Mr. Murdoch McKenzie, who claims to be the champion of Wellington and Halton, challenges Mr. John Leslie, Salmonville, to play for $25, or give up the ship.

The new oratorio which Mr. Arthur Sullivan is writing for the Leeds Festival next year is to be entitled "Saul and Jonathan."

The Rev. J. A. Spurgeon [illegible] lecture, illustrated by [illegible] his recent travels in Canada.

Colorado boasts of 200 [illegible]

Alone.

She stands beside the cottage door
To watch the flying rain,
Her cheek has lost its youthful glow
With fading of silver grey;
And many a blight and many a mark
That pale pat lovely face,
To mark where slow and silent tears
Have left their lasting trace.

And still her whispered thoughts will tell
Of one that she has got,
And soon the once-loved form that dwelt
On Memory's shadowy shore;
Again the blight will be dead
That now so empty stands;
Again to feel around her neck
The touch of tiny hands.

How long, the weary spirit cries,
Within this world of pain,
Ere 'neath the never-fading skies
I meet them once again?
And as she hears the river night,
Slow sweeping to the west,
A renewed peace in faith takes flight
To Him who giveth rest.

THE TRANSFUSED TRANSFORMED.

A TALE OF BLOOD.

(James Payn in Belgravia.)

If you live in Downshire and do not know the *f f* lendells of *f f* lendell Court, you are unknown indeed. The circumstance of their name being spelt with two little f's and pronounced Fendall, stamps it with a peculiar aristocracy. Radicals indeed—persons who interest themselves in roots—assert that there was at one time no such thing as a capital in our alphabet, and that it was indicated by the duplication of the small letters. As intelligence increased, capitals were invented, and the last persons to use them were, of course, the most illiterate, so that the retention of the two small f's is not, intellectually speaking, a feather in the *f f* lendell cap. On the other hand, as a token of antiquity, it is invaluable. The possession of a name that nobody can pronounce without instruction is also obviously a great inheritance and in this case it was the more valuable, since there is no record of a *f f* lendell of Downshire having been distinguished in any other way. The family had flourished for centuries, in the sense that an old tree is said to flourish, and, like it, most of it was under ground.

Sir Geoffrey Fendall (for we will take the liberty of spelling his name as it was pronounced, as though he were an ordinary Christian), the present tenant of the Court, was a widower, childless and stricken in years. The long line which had moved as directly as a pawn in chess for so many generations had at last failed, and the succession was going astray; nay, even s'gnag—alike the knight's move—to a sickly cousin, young Percival Fendall, of Lincoln's Inn, barrister-at-law. His father had subsisted on a very moderate property, the income from which had been in no way supplemented by the head of the family and had bequeathed it in a reduced condition to his son. The former had discovered by bitter experience that the fact of his name being spelt with two f's did not enhance its financial value at the back of a bill. While the latter was seriously thinking of discarding the peculiarity altogether as an affectation out of which nothing had ever come but ridicule, when suddenly old Geoffrey, acting under advice (not legal, but medical), awoke to the fact of his heir-presumptive's existence. He wrote from Downshire with his own hand to invite Percival to Fendall Court.

Most young men would have jumped at such an offer, nor was Percival himself by any means blind to its possible advantages; but he was a man of that disposition which, in poor people, is called obstinacy, in persons of moderate means firmness, and in rich people determination of character. Thanks to nobody but himself, he was purely but slowly making his way in the world, and he was not disposed to barter his independence, even for the reversion of the family estate. This was not entailed upon him, but it would have been contrary to all traditions of the house if his two f's that cousin Geoffrey should leave it to any other person than the natural heir. The young man knew, in fact, that unless he gave his kinsman some grave cause of offence, he would one day reign in his stead. Would it not be better, therefore, as he had not an idea in common with the old Squire, that they should keep apart, so that no offence could be given by him? Percival certainly did not wish to go to Downshire. It was November, and, since he was no sportsman, he greatly preferred London at that season to the country. Just now, indeed, he preferred it at all seasons, from the circumstance that it contained, in Gloucester Place, a young lady called Mary Blake, whose name it was his intention to change to Fendall (with one F) as soon as his income had become sufficient for him to marry upon it.

Her father was a hop merchant, and no doubt given to speculation in his own line, but strongly opposed to contingencies in connection with his daughter's settlement in life. He had at first refused to take Percival's great expectations into consideration at all; but when this invitation came from the old Baronet he had visibly thawed, and even held out a hope that he might not now insist upon seeing Percival's ledger, setting forth that he had received in fees, etc., at least £500 a year, before he would give consent to his daughter's marriage.

To the young man himself this relaxation of Mr. Blake's proviso gave much less satisfaction than that gentleman had anticipated. In his own mind he was persuaded that the match would be disagreeable to Sir Geoffrey, and render his expectations even less promising than before; and this was one of the reasons that made him incline to be very dutiful to his venerable cousin at a distance, and through the medium of the post-office. He did not like the old gentleman; he had resented the coldness he had shown to his father, and he did not appreciate the overtures now made to him, which he thoroughly understood were not owing to any personal regard, but only because circumstances had made him the sole surviving member of the house of two f's. At the same time he was much too sensible to throw away the brilliant prospects which had thus unfolded themselves to his view, if he could retain them with self respect and without much inconvenience. Although a very unworthy descendant of his race as regarded the belief in their blue blood—which he locked upon either as imaginary or as a very serious physical ailment—he had inherited a strong indisposition to be bored or troubled. Old Sir Geoffrey himself, with his £20,000 a year and an obedient country, did not dislike being "put out" more than he did, and when he was annoyed he took as little pains as his kinsman to conceal it. Such men are, socially speaking, the very salt of the earth, who, among a world of snobs and toadies, speak the plain truth to his little tyrants, even if they do not succeed in teaching them how to behave themselves. But Percival had no sense of apostleship whatever. He simply liked his own way as much as his betters did, and (since his ambition was limited) almost as often got it. A man who did not walk and look and speak as if the street belonged to him, but rather as if he did not care one half-penny (which was the case) to whom it did belong. Moreover, his father had been no "tenth transmitter of a foolish race," and this young fellow was as intelligent as he looked. He knew himself—it is only fools, notwithstanding what philosophers have said to the contrary, who do not—and was well aware that he would not make a favorable impression upon the owner of Fendall Court, and that was another reason why he was unwilling to go there.

That we should be able to keep at a distance the good people from whom we have expectations and yet retain them is, however, a mere dream of the optimist; and so Percival found it. [illegible] worded letter [illegible] evade a [illegible] ance [illegible] with [illegible] Pa [illegible] full [illegible] and thirty acres [illegible] of [illegible] blue of sale [illegible] years (if required) [illegible] seven per cent per [illegible]

"Recollect, my darling, that he is an old man," argued Mary, meaning that allowance as well as reverence was due to gray hairs.

"He is not so old as all that," mused Percival. "This sort of thing may go on—I mean, one's having to put up with his impertinent arrogance—for years and years. The question is, is it worth such a tremendous sacrifice?"

The wretch was thinking of his own peace of mind, and if he could keep his temper if such things were said to him about "respect" and "obedience," as his kinsman had thought proper to put on paper.

"If you put on with your scowls," she murmured with a beautiful blush, "dear papa would, I think, be more inclined to consent; that is, perhaps he would let us marry a little earlier."

"You darling! that's true," said Percival, "and is worth going through almost anything for. I'll write and say I will run down to Downshire in the course of next week."

"Don't write, dear—telegraph; and run down by to-night's train."

"But I am to meet you at dinner, Mary, at the Joneses, on Saturday."

"Never mind; don't let me be the cause of your running any risk of incensing Mr. Fendall's dispiritedness. I am sure I am giving you good advice. Go to night."

"Very good; I'll do it."

And Percival went accordingly.

Sir Geoffrey received him with a stately welcome, the coldness of which, however, was owing to the general frigidity of the establishment rather than to any annoyance at his tardy obedience to his summons. Upon the whole, Percival's hesitation had perhaps done him good. If he had showed himself eagerly desirous to accede to his kinsman's wishes, it would probably have been set down by Sir Geoffrey to anything but disinterestedness and might have even suggested death—a subject very distasteful to the head of the *f f* lendells. An independence of spirit which had eventually given way to his wishes was not unpardonable, for it exemplified the power of the will which had subdued it.

The Baronet himself volunteered to be the young man's guide over the picture gallery and the stables (the horse, we may be sure, was a favorite animal with him), and gave him to understand less by words than by his confidential tone that at some time or another, though at a date so distant that it would be absurd to allude to it, all these things might be his own—if he behaved himself.

It was well understood in Downshire that good behavior in Sir Geoffrey's eyes was doing what Sir Geoffrey wished, and for three days Percival's behavior was unexceptionable. On the fourth morning, however, it became infamous.

On the previous evening there had been a large dinner party, composed chiefly of the magnates of the neighborhood, who had treated the young barrister with civility that had sufficiently indicated their opinion of his prospects; and the young ladies had been at least as gracious as the fathers and mothers.

"Percival, did you notice that girl in blue last night?" enquired Sir Geoffrey, snipping off the end of his after-breakfast cigar and proceeding to light it. "Amelia Eaton, Lord Wraxall's daughter. It is my intention that you shall marry her."

Percival lifted his eyebrows. "It can't be done, Sir Geoffrey"—here he also lit his cigar with great deliberation—"that is, if I continue to live in England. We shall have to go to Salt Lake City, where bigamy is permissible."

"What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed the Baronet. "Have you a wife already?"

"No, Sir Geoffrey." Percival could not help wondering to himself what would have happened had he answered "Yes." Would his cousin have had an apoplectic fit (he looked very near it as it was) and gone off the hooks at once, leaving everybody happy ever afterward? or would he have sent for his lawyer and devised everything he had to the county lunatic asylum on the spot? Percival had felt that this crucial matter must crop up sooner or later, and had nerved himself for the encounter. "I have no wife," he went on, "but, what is the same thing, Sir Geoffrey, so far as my future is concerned, I am engaged to be married."

"What, to that hop picker's daughter?" thundered the old man, who, it seemed, had been making keener enquiries into Percival's affairs than he had any idea of.

"Well, sir, her father is a hop *merchant*," returned the young man coolly, "and I dare say he has made some pretty pickings; but I don't think he would like to be called a hop *picker*. I may, perhaps, be allowed to add that your use of the term is not very polite to me."

His face was very white, and looked all the whiter by comparison with his companion's, which was scarlet. They were both in a fearful rage, the one at a white heat, the other boiling.

"And who the deuce are you?" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey, in precisely the same tone (though he *was* such an aristocrat) in the butcher's boy used who, having run the leg of his wooden tray into the Duke's eye, enquired of him: Who the deuce *he* was that she should be so particular about his eyesight?

"My name is Percival Fendall, sir. A man that boasts better blood than you, inasmuch as he can count a generation beyond you." This *sally*, intended to be satirical, was an inspiration, and quite quite the contrary effect to what he had expected. He had accidentally protected himself as it were by this interposition of the other's fetish, as though it had been a shield.

"By Jove, that's true," said Sir Geoffrey, regarding him with undisguised admiration. "You're the eleventh of us, though not in the direct line. I am glad you appreciate the circumstance at its full value. I had been told by a mischievous fellow that you had been thinking of spelling our name with a capital F."

"That would be blasphemy indeed," said Percival, without moving a muscle.

"Of course it would," put in the Baronet, eagerly. "I perceive that my informant was a liar. You are worthy of your name, and you were only joking—though let me observe that I don't like such jokes—when you talk of being engaged to this Miss Lake."

"Blake, sir, is her name," continued Percival with unruffled calm; "it is a very decent one, though she doesn't spell it with two little b's. She is a delicate-minded, honorable gentlewoman, and I mean to marry her."

"What! without my consent?"

"No, Sir Geoffrey, I hope, with your consent. You have only to see her, and I venture to think you will confess that Miss—the young lady in blue, whom you were so good as to recommend to me—cannot hold a candle to her."

"But her blood, sir! You, of all men, should understand the importance, the necessity, the indispensability—" The Baronet supplied in expression and gesture what was wanting to him in words.

"I do, Sir Geoffrey. Science has lately corroborated your opinion upon that point. To persons about to marry it recommends the microscope. Mary's blood shall be subjected to investigation."

"What nonsense you talk! As if it could possibly be blood like ours! Beware how you trifle—or rather how you venture beyond trifling—with persons of this class. A blot on the 'scutcheon, remember, is ineradicable."

"If a Fendall were to break his word, Sir Geoffrey, would not that be a blot on the 'scutcheon."

It was cruel to place his kinsman on the horns of such a dilemma. But there is no fetish so utterly illogical—and, to say truth, so selfish and egotistical—as that of blood.

"A promise was extracted from you by [illegible] answered the old man, "and therefore [illegible] school [illegible] proficiency as evidence [illegible] number of prizes [illegible] competitive examinations [illegible] his term of teaching, and the number who have passed the entrance examination into the High School. He intends to enter one of the learned professions.

The Christmas Gift.

Around the Christmas tree we stood,
And watched the children's faces,
As their little gifts received
With shouts of joy and praises.
We grown folks had our share of fun
In making we one merry,
And laughed to see the juveniles
Kiss 'neath the "holly berry."
Beside me sat sweet Bessie Moore,
A lovely dark-eyed maiden,
Whose near her stood our little Eve,
Her arms with love gifts laden;
Until around the room she went,
The blue-eyed baby, shyly
And blushing red, into each lap
Her offerings dropped slyly.

But when to *me* the darling came
All empty handed was she,
And when I asked, "Why slights me thus?"
She answered, "Oh, because you—
We dinna know you tumming here!"
And then, with blue eyes shining,
To Bessie's side she went, her arms
Her sister's neck entwining.
"But something I must have," said I,
"My Christmas night to gladden."
A shade of thought the baby's face
Seemed presently to sadden;
"I'll sit a once, with gleeful laugh—
"Oh! I know what I'll do sir!
I've only sister Bessie left,
But lil *dir her* to you, sir!"

Amid the laugh that came from all
I drew my new gift to me,
While with flushed cheeks her eyes met mine,
And sent a thrill all through me
"Oh! blessed little Eve!" cried I,
"Your gift I welcome gladly!"
The little one looked up at me,
Half wonderingly, half sadly.
Then to her father straight I turned,
And humbly asked his blessing
Upon my Christmas gift, the while
My long cherished hopes confessing
And as his aged hands were raised,
Above our heads, bowed lowly,
The blessed time of Christmas eve
Had seemed to me so holy.

THE MAGIC SPECTACLES.

A Christmas Story.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

CHAPTER I.

MEMOIRS OF AN ARCTIC VOYAGER.

"He says, sir, he thinks he's nigh to his latter end, and he would like, if convenient, to see you before he goes."

"Do you mean before he dies."

"That's about it, sir."

I was in no humor (for reasons to be hereafter mentioned) for seeing anybody, under disastrous circumstances of any sort; but the person who had sent me word that he was "nigh to his latter end" had special claims on my consideration.

He was an old sailor, who had first seen blue water under the protection of my father, then a post-captain in the navy. Born on our estate, and the only male survivor of our head gamekeeper's family of seven children, he had received a good education through my father's kindness, and he ought to have got on well in the world; but he was one of those born vagabonds who set education at defiance. His term of service having expired, he disappeared for many years. During part of the time he was supposed to have been employed in the merchant navy. At the end of that long interval he turned up one day at our country house, an invalided man, without a penny in his pocket. My good father, then nearing the end of his life, was invalided too. Whether he had a fellow-feeling for the helpless creature whom he had once befriended, or whether he only took counsel of his own generous nature, it is now needless to enquire. He appointed Septimus Notman to be lodge-keeper at the second of our two park gates, and he recommended Septimus to my personal care on his death bed. "I'm afraid he's an old scoundrel," my father confessed, "but somebody must look after him while he lasts, and if you don't take his part, Alfred, nobody else will." After this Septimus kept his place at the gate while we were in the country. When we returned to our London house the second gate was closed. The old sailor was lodged (by my mother's direction, without doubt!) in a room over a disused stable, which our coachman had proposed to turn into a bachelor's. Everybody disliked Septimus Notman. He was said to be mad; to be a liar, a hypocrite, a vicious wretch and a disagreeable brute. There were people who even suspected that he had been a pirate during the time when we lost sight of him, and who declared, when they were asked for their proof, that his crimes were written in his face. He was not in the least affected by the opinions of his neighbors; he chewed his tobacco and drank his grog and, in the words of the old song, "He cared for nobody, no, not he!" Well had my poor father said that if I didn't take his part nobody else would. And shall I tell you a secret? Though I strictly carried out my father's wishes, and though Septimus was disposed in his rough way to be grateful to me, I didn't like him either.

So I went to the room over the stables (we were in London at the time) with dry eyes, and I sat down by his bed and cut up a cake of tobacco for him, and said "Well, what's the matter?" as coolly as if he had sent me word that he thought he had caught a cold in the head.

"I'm called away," Septimus answered; "and before I go I've a confession to make and something useful to offer you. Are we peeried among the servants, Mr. Alfred, that you're in trouble just now between two ladies. You may see your way clear in that matter, sir, if death spares me long enough to say a few last words."

"Never mind me, Septimus. Has a doctor seen you?"

"The doctor knows no more about me than I know of myself?"

"Have you any last wishes that I can attend to?"

"None, sir."

"Shall I send for a clergyman?"

Septimus Notman looked at me as directly as he could—he was afflicted with a terrible squint. Otherwise he was a fine, stoutly-built man, with a ruddy face profusely encircled by white hair and whiskers, a hoarse, heavy voice, and the biggest hands I ever saw. He put one of these enormous hands under his pillow before he answered me.

"If you think," he said, "that a clergyman will come to a man who has got the Magic Spectacles here, under his pillow, and who has only to put those Spectacles on to see through the clergyman's clothes, flesh and what not, and read everything that's written in his secret mind as plain as print, fetch him, Master Alfred—fetch him!"

I thought the clergyman might not like this and withdrew my suggestion accordingly. The least I could do, as a matter of common politeness, after giving up the clergyman, was to ask if I might look at the Magic Spectacles.

"Hear how I came by them first!" said Septimus.

"Will it take long?" I enquired.

"I will take long and it will make your flesh creep."

I remembered my promise to my father, and placed myself and my flesh at the mercy of Septimus Notman. But he was not ready to begin yet.

"Do you see that white jug?" he said, pointing to the washhand-stand.

"Yes. Do you want water?"

"I want grog. There's grog in the white jug. And there's a pewter mug on the chimney piece. I must be strung up, Master Alfred—I must be strung up."

The white jug contained at least half a gallon of rum and water, roughly calculated. I strung him up, in the case of any other dying person, without hesitated. But the man was [illegible] Magic Spectacles was such an exception to ordinary rules, and [illegible] finish his sinner and finish his grog [illegible] and the last time.

"I'm ready," he said. "What do you [illegible] was up to in the time when you all thought of me? The latter part of that time, I mean?"

"They say you were a pirate," I replied.

"Worse than that. Guess again."

I tried to persuade myself that there might be such a human anomaly as a merciful pirate, and guessed once more.

"A murderer," I suggested.

"Worse than that. Guess again."

"I declined to guess again. "Tell me yourself what you have been," I said.

He answered without the least appearance of discomposure, "I have been a Cannibal."

Perhaps it was weak of me—but I did certainly start to my feet and make for the door.

"Hear the circumstances," said Septimus. "You know the proverb, sir? Circumstances alter cases."

There was no disputing the proverb. I sat down again. I was a young and tender man, which, in my present position, was entirely against me. But I had very little flesh on my bones, and that was in my favor.

"It happened that when I went out with the Arctic expeditions," Septimus proceeded "I've forgotten all my learning, and lost my memory for dates. The year escapes me, and the latitude and longitude escape me. But I can tell you the rest of it. We were on exploring party, you must know, with sledges. It was getting close to the end of the summer months in those parts, and we were sighter than any of them have ever got since to the North Pole. We should have found our way there—don't you doubt it—but for three of our best men who fell sick of the scurvy. The second lieutenant, who was in command, called a halt, as the soldiers say. 'With this loss of strength,' says he, 'it's my duty to take you back to the ships. We must let the North Pole be, and pray God that we may have as much invalided men to carry. I give you half an hour's rest before we turn back.' The carpenter was one of our sound men. He spoke next. He reported one of the two sledges not fit for service. 'How long will you be making it fit?' says the lieutenant. 'In a decent climate,' says the carpenter, 'I should say two or three hours, sir. Here, double that time, at least.' You may say, why not do without the sledge? I'll tell you why. On account of the sick men to be carried. 'Be as quick about it as you can,' says the lieutenant; 'time means life in our predicament.' Most of the men were glad enough to rest. Only two of us murmured at not going on. One was a boatswain's mate; t'other was me. 'Do you think the North Pole's the other side of that rating ground there?' says the lieutenant. The boatswain's mate was young and self conceited. 'I should like to try, sir,' he says, 'if any other man has pluck enough to go along with me.' He looked at me when he said that. I wasn't going to have my courage called in question publicly by a slip of a lad; and, moreover, I had a fancy to try for the North Pole, too. I volunteered to go along with him. Our notion, you will understand, was to take a compass and some grub with us; to try what we could find in a couple of hours' march forward; and to get back in good time for our duty on the return journey. The lieutenant wouldn't hear of it. 'I'm responsible for every man in my charge,' says he. 'You're a couple of fools. Stay where you are.' We were a couple of fools. We watched our opportunity, while they were all unloaded the broken down sledge; and we slipped off to try our luck, and get the reward for discovering the North Pole."

There he stopped, and pointed to the grog. "Dry work, talking," he said. "Give us a drop more."

I filled the pewter mug again. And again Septimus Notman emptied it.

"We set our course northwest by north," he went on; "and after a while (seeing the ground favored us) we altered it again to due north. I can't tell you how long we walked (we neither of us had watches)—but this I'll swear to. Just as the last of the faint daylight was dying out, we got to the top of a hillock, and there we saw the glimmer of the open Polar Sea! No! not the Polar Sea that makers Kennedy's Channel, which has been mistaken for it, I know—but the real thing, the still and lonesome Polar Sea! What would you have done in our place? I'll tell you what we did. We sat down on some nice dry snow, and took another libation of grog. Fancy the work, do you say? You'll find it on the books, if you don't believe me—the further north you get in those parts, the less cold there is and the more open water you find. Ask Captain M'Clure what sort of a night he spent upon one night of October thirtieth, fifty-one. Well, and what do you think we did when we had eaten and drunk? Lit our pipes. And what next? Fell fast asleep, after our long walk, on our nice dry snow. And what sort of prospect met us when we woke? Dark, and drizzle and mist. I had the compass, and tried to set our course on the way back. I could no more see the compass than if I had been blind. We had no means of striking a light, except my match-box. I felt it on the snow by my side, when I fell asleep. Not a match would light. As for help of any sort, it was not to be thought of. We couldn't have been less than five miles distant from the place where we had left our messmates. So there we were, the boatswain's mate and me, alone in the desert, lost at the North Pole."

I began to feel interested. "You tried to get back, I suppose, dark as it was?" I said.

"We walked till we dropped," Septimus answered; "and then we yelled and shouted till we had no voices left, and then we hollowed out a hole in the snow and waited for daylight."

"What did you expect when daylight came?"

"I expected nothing, Master Alfred. The boatswain's mate (beginning to get light headed, you know) expected the lieutenant to send in search of us, or to wait till we returned. A likely thing for an officer in charge to do, with the lives of the sledging party depending on his getting them back to the ships, and two men missing, who had broken orders and deserted their duty. A good ridance of bad rubbish—that's what he said of us when we were reported missing. I'll be bound. When the light came we tried to get back; and we did set our course cleverly enough. But, bless you, we had nothing left to eat or drink! When the light failed us again we were done up. We dropped on the snow, under the lee of a rock, and gave out. The boatswain's mate said his prayers, and I said amen. Not the least use! On the contrary, as the night advanced it got colder and colder. We were both close together, to keep each other warm. I don't know how long it was, I only know it was still pitch dark, when I heard the boatswain's mate give a little flutter of a sigh, and no more. I opened his clothes, and put my hand on his heart. Dead, of cold and exhaustion, and no mistake. I should'nt have been long after him but for my own presence of mind."

"Your presence of mind? What did you do?"

"Stripped every rag of clothes off him, and put them all on myself. What are you shivering about? *He* couldn't feel it, could he? I tell you, he'd have frozen stiff before the next day's light came—but for my presence of mind again. As well as my failing strength would let me, I buried him under the snow. Virtue, they say, Master Alfred, is its own reward. That good action proved to be the saving of my life."

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't I tell you I buried him?"

"Well!" "Get on to the end!" I said.

"Why didn't you die at the North Pole?"

"Because somebody helped me to get away."

"Who helped you?"

"The Devil."

He showed his yellow old teeth in a horrible grin. I could draw but one conclusion—his mind was failing him before death. Anything that spared me his hideous confession of cannibalism was welcome. I asked how the supernatural rescue happened.

"More grog first," he said. "The horrors come on me when I think of it." He was evidently sinking. Without grog I doubt if he could have said much more.

"I can't tell you how many days passed," he went on; "I only know that the time was nigh when it was all dark and no light. The darker it got, the deeper I scooped the sort of cavern I'd made for myself under the snow. Whether it was night or day I know no more than you do. On a sudden, in the awful silence and solitude, I heard a voice, high up, as it were, on the rock behind me. It was a cheering and a pleasant voice, it cried out Septimus Notman, I asked in a fright, 'who the——?' The voice stopped me before I could say the rest. 'You've hit it,' says the voice, 'I am that person; and, it's about time the Devil helped you out of this.' 'No,' says I, 'I'd rather perish by cold than fire any day.' 'Make your mind easy,' says he, taking the points, 'I don't want you at my place yet. I expect you to do a deal more in the way of degrading your humanity before you come to me, and I offer you a safe passage back to the nearest settlement. Friend Septimus, you're a man after my own heart.' 'As how, sir?' says I. 'Because you're such a complete beast,' says he. 'A human being who elevates himself, and rises higher and higher to his immortal destiny, is a creature I hate. He gets above me, even in his earthly lifetime. Between have dropped—you dear good fellow—the level of a famished wolf. Do you think I'll leave such a prime specimen of the Animal Man as you are, domiciled at the North Pole? No, no! I grant you a free pass by my railway; darkness and distance are no obstacles to Me. Are you ready?' You may not believe me; but I felt myself being lifted up, as it were, against my own will. 'Give us a light,' I says, 'I can't travel in the dark.' 'Take my spectacles,' says he, 'they'll help you to see more than you bargain for.' Look through them, sir, if you please, and you'll see the lowest thoughts and feelings, hearts as plain as I do, and considering your nature, Septimus, that will drop you down below the level of a wolf.' 'Suppose I don't want to look,' says I, 'they I suppose, are the spectacles only?' 'They'll come back to you,' says he. 'May I smash them on my?' 'They'll put themselves together again.' 'What am I to do with them?' 'Give them to another man. Now, then! One, two, three—and away!' You may bet believing me again! I felt my senses, Master Alfred. Hold me up; I'm losing them over. More grog—that's right—more grog. I came to myself at Upernaveik, with the Magic Spectacles in my pocket. Take them, sir. And read the two ladies' hearts. And not secretly, mind. Hush! I hear him speaking to me again. Behind my pillow. Just as he spoke on the rock."

He sang the last words faintly, and died with a smile on his face. Delirium or lies! With the Spectacles actually in my hands, I was inclined to think lies. They were of the old-fashioned sort, with big, circular glasses and stout tortoise-shell frames; they smelt musty, but not sulphurous. I possess a sense of humor, I am happy to say. When my mind thoroughly cleansed, I determined to try the Magic Spectacles on the two ladies and submit to the consequences whatever they might be.

(Conclusion next week.)

The Presbyterian Synod of Long Island has, by a two-third vote, acquitted Dr. Talmage of the charges of falsehood brought against him. The rev. gentleman, addressing his congregation on Friday night, expressed his joy. He said:

"When yesterday, at Jamaica, the Synod of Long Island sustained me by a two-third vote, I was filled with thankfulness to Almighty God. If there be any man this side of heaven happier than me I should like to see him. (Applause.) I have but little of the hurrah in me, but I must express my gratitude for the glorious result of my trial. The way those young ministers in the Synod of Long Island took the Brooklyn clergyman on their knees and applied the ecclesiastical tomahawk to him was delightful. I wish to thank the people of Jamaica or the good cheer they furnished us at their tables. It is wonderful how much a Brooklyn minister can eat; but the elders beat me. (Laughter.) I hope all antagonism among us clergymen will cease. How poorly we imitate Christ. Let us have a millennium on a small scale (Suppressed laughter.) Heaven is eternal, and why shouldn't we stop crowding each other? Heaven has twelve gates, and whether we go in by the north or south or east or west, we will be all working up to the throne. And there will be Dr. Van Dyke and Dr. Knox and Dr. Crosby and Dr. Talmage and Dr. Moody and Sankey hymns forever. (Loud laughter.) You see we'll have to come to it. "Oh, Lord God! how great are Thy mercies."

THE AFGHAN WAR.

CANDAHAR, Dec. —.—Gen. Gough reports that in consequence of the destructive attacks of the Ghilzais it became necessary to engage them along the line. The Ghilzais have been driven off, and he hopes they are dispersing.

LONDON, Dec. —.—The Viceroy of India telegraphs that Gen. Bright reports the movement of reinforcements all along the line. Gen. Gough marched yesterday for Cabul. Azmatullah Khan, a Ghilzai chief of Loghman, who led the tribe in the recent engagement with Gen. Gough's command, is reported wounded, and his followers are deserting him. Reinforcements have been sent to Dakka in consequence of a report that the Mohmunds are assembling.

The St. Petersburg *Gazette* says the Afghan war will be one to the cruelty of the English victors. It charges Gen. Roberts with gross cruelty towards the Afghans.

VICE-REGAL BENEFICENCE.

ST. JOHN, N. B., Dec. —.—A letter has been received by Mayor Roy from the Governor General, in which he encloses a Christmas gift of $500, to be distributed among the poor of St. John, who still suffer from the effects of the great fire. His Excellency expresses the hope that the coming year may develop an increase in the trade and commerce of the city, and takes this opportunity of again expressing admiration for the courage displayed in the misfortune of St. John in struggling against disaster and depression of trade, a courage which, he remarks, deserves future prosperity.

RIOT IN A CHURCH.

PITTSBURG, Dec. —.—A pitched battle occurred in the First Reformed Presbyterian Church last night over the election of Rev. Nevin Woodside as pastor. His congregation refusing to permit him to preach, and endeavoring to substitute another minister, the police were called in and succeeded in quieting the riot. Several arrests were made. The church this morning presents a sorry appearance. Pews are broken, remnants of glass globes strew the floor, hymn-books and Bibles are scattered in all directions, and a large quantity of hairpins and bangs have been gathered up. The utmost indignation prevails in Church circles, and the matter will be investigated by the Presbytery. The rival pastors were in the thickest of the fray.

THE WHISKEY BOTTLE.

THOROLD, Dec. —.—A man named Walker, from Fonthill, called at Brown & Williams' livery stable about eleven o'clock on Saturday night, and arranged to be driven home. It seems that Walker had to celebrate with whiskey with him, of which both he and the driver—a man named Wm. Burns—partook rather freely, as they fell out of the cutter at different parts of the road. Walker accidentally dragged the robe belonging to the cutter over him, which protected him. Burns, however, lay unprotected all night, with the mercury about zero. About seven in the morning he managed to crawl to Mr. Jacob Upper's house near the road at Allanburg. Walker, on waking, made for another house, and had the farmer drive him to Fonthill. Burns' hands and feet were badly frozen. His hands are in such a state that it is feared amputation will be necessary. He was taken to the St. Catharines Hospital to-day. Walker is said to be a Baptist minister.

BRITISH STATISTICS.

WASHINGTON, Dec. —.—The Consul-General at London states that a change for the better has recently occurred in the trade of the United Kingdom, indicated by the renewed American demand for British manufactures, especially of scrap and railroad iron. There is a distinct increase in the last few months of exports generally, rising prices in wholesale markets, and a decided change in the returns of railroad traffic. The number of emigrants in 1878 was 133,000; half to the United States, one-third to Australia and New Zealand, and one-tenth to British North America. The number of poor in receipt of relief on the 1st of January in the United Kingdom was 957,000. There was an increase in Ireland, and a decrease in Scotland. In the primary schools there was an increase of 300,000 pupils in 1878. The total expenditure for schools by the Government was $13,667,000.

Lawrence Barrett, the tragedian, is to become manager of the California Theatre, San Francisco, next spring. The stockholders guarantee him against loss, the establishment having been, like the rest of the Pacific coast theatres, financially unsuccessful for several years past.

A Poor Show for a Dividend.

A first