



Mr. Paul lay on his couch with his head bandaged up. His general appearance was pitiful in the extreme, and at once aroused the sympathy of the reporter.

"My dear Mr. Paul!" he ejaculated. "What in the world has happened?"

The sagamore groaned.

"Are you ill? Or have you been hurt?" asked the reporter.

The old man asked to be straightened up to a sitting posture. This was done, and he took a whiff or two of the reporter's breath, which strengthened him considerably, for the former had not forgotten to honour St. Patrick, as had long been his annual custom.

The reporter repeated his question.

"It's all 'bout that Blake letter," said the sagamore.

"What Blake letter?" asked the reporter.

"That one them people kep' back till after them 'lections," said Mr. Paul.

"Oh! you mean Hon. Edward Blake's letter on unrestricted reciprocity and the future of Canada," said the reporter.

"That's what I mean," rejoined the old man. "That's what makes me sick. I been tryin' to find out all 'bout that letter—I'm pooty near crazy now."

"I don't see why it should have that effect," said the reporter. "It seemed to me to be a rather harmless sort of epistle, on the whole."

"I tell you how it comes," said Mr. Paul. "One them Injun boys kin read bully. He read over that letter. Then he read what them grit papers said 'bout it. Then he read what Mr. Blake he said 'bout it las' week. Then he read what them grit and them tory papers said 'bout that. Then I set down try find out if I kin understand it—that's what makes me sick."

"Overtaxed your thinker, did you?" queried the reporter.

"Ah-hah."

"What appears to be the chief difficulty?"

Mr. Paul, in reply to this question, talked for about half an hour, but without making it clear either to himself or his listener just how the case stood. For his mind was in a terribly muddled condition. The reporter, however, was able to glean from his remarks that he was in doubt on the following, among other points touching the case.

(1) Whether Mr. Blake meant what he said in his first letter.

(2) Whether Mr. Blake said what he meant in his first letter.

(3) Whether Mr. Blake meant in his first letter what he said in his second letter that he did not mean in his first letter.

(4) Whether Mr. Blake meant in his second letter to say what he meant in his first letter.

(5) Whether Mr. Blake meant to say in his second letter what he meant to say in his first letter—and if so, what?

(6) Whether Mr. Blake meant anything, at all in his first letter, or his second letter, or both, or which he meant, or what he meant, and where or when.

(7) Whether Mr. Blake meant what the tory papers said he meant or what the grit papers said he meant—or either or both—and if so how much.

(8) Whether the grit papers said what they meant when they said what they thought Mr. Blake meant.

(9) Whether the tory papers said what they meant when they said Mr. Blake meant what they said he meant.

(10) Whether the grit papers meant what the tory papers said, or the tory papers meant what Mr. Blake said, or Mr. Blake meant what the grit papers meant he said, or the tory papers said he meant, or whether Mr. Blake and the grit and tory papers meant to say what they said they meant, or meant what they said they said—and if so which and under what conditions.

Having reached this stage in the diagnosis of Mr. Paul's



malady the reporter paused in the investigation and gave the old man another whiff of his breath.

Somewhat revived, the sagamore was about to proceed further but the reporter objected.

"Your symptoms," he remarked, "are rather serious, but I think you will pull through. You needn't tell me any more. Is that boy of yours around anywhere?"

"I kin send git him right away," said Mr. Paul.

"Very well," said the reporter, "let him get a few editorials from the American press touching the recent Canadian elections and read them to you. That will divert your mind and do you good. Comic fiction is an admirable stimulant if judiciously prescribed. Don't take too much. Even laughter may prove injurious. I will call and see you again to-morrow."

"You better hold on till I tell you some more," said the old man. "One thing troubles my mind more'n anything else."

"What is that?" queried the reporter.

"I been tryin' to find out whether Mr. Blake knowed himself what he meant in them letters."

"My brother," said the reporter gravely, "be warned in time. Don't tackle that problem in your present condition. And if Mr. Blake should write a third letter I positively forbid you to allow it into your wigwam. There has got to be an end of this thing sometime. The affairs of the world must not be paralyzed because Mr. Blake has written a letter. The issues of life and death and human destiny do not hinge upon the movements of one man, however distinguished. Mr. Blake and myself, for instance, might both pass into silence and the sun would not refuse to shine nor the grocer to render his weekly bill. It is true that the public mind has been more exercised over Mr. Blake's letters than it has been over almost anything else since our cow was threatened with the whooping cough. But the thing must stop. Life is short and Mr. Blake's first letter was a buster. Burn it up. Drop the whole business. Stop speculating in futures until you have worked off some of the problems in sight. I knew a

man once who got in the habit of writing letters to the newspapers. People read them for a time and talked about them. Some even tried to find out what the fellow was writing about. A few died in the effort. Then the interest relaxed, and to-day that man's letters are as little read and as little regarded as a notice of a patent medicine. You take my advice. Get something to divert your mind and you'll pull through. Then you will load your gun, and the first man that says Blake to you will do so at his peril. Send your youngster after that comic reading matter right away."

Having thus delivered his instructions the reporter departed. The first man he met stopped him to ask what he thought of Blake's letters. The inquirer was the larger man of the two, but he will carry the marks of that struggle to his grave.

## Stray Notes.

In Montreal the other day a man was seen cleaning a street crossing. He soon became the centre of a wondering crowd.

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The people of New Orleans are down on prize fighting, and the authorities there would just like for once to get their clutches on Sullivan or Kilrain. So small a matter as the killing of a dozen or so of Italians by leading citizens does not worry their consciences, but if they could just catch a real prize fighter—Gosh!

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Last year the Irish constabulary were busy using their clubs to prevent the people from pitching into "the enemies of Ireland." This year their clubs are kept busy to prevent the Parnellites and McCarthyites from pitching into each other. The "enemies of Ireland" is an expression rather hard to define just now.

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The question arises as to who shall arbitrate provided England and the United States finally agree to submit the Behring Sea dispute to such a tribunal. Doubtless Mr. Eratus Wiman would undertake the task for a nominal consideration. He is not a bashful man, and rather likes to shape the destiny of nations in his little odd intervals of leisure. What's the matter with Mr. Wiman?

The London Standard some time ago criticised a new poet strongly, saying among other things: "And this extraordinary production Mr. — modestly conceives to be equal to Goethe." The poet's publisher turned the tables by inserting among the favourable comments on the book printed in his newspaper advertisement the following:—

Extraordinary production \* \* \* equal to Goethe, —London Standard.