

THE QUEST OF THE SIX-MINUTE EGG

In Europe It's As Vain As Searching for Rainbow Treasure.

"Boil the egg six minutes."
"Six minutes?"
"Six minutes!"
"The same."
The waiter was pop-eyed by this time. He waved his hands feebly in the air, wobbled his head, and moaned in many languages.
"But," he protested, "it will hard be the egg."
"Sure, That's the way I want it—or them, rather—hard; you know—hard."
"It will—hard—be," and his voice trailed off into inarticulate woe.

"All right, let it come—hard—or them. Look here, my dear sir, I want two eggs—or three—and I want them hard. Now, get under motion. Scat!"
"It will—hard—be," he wept moving sideways towards the kitchen. "It will—"

"I know it will. I know it. If those eggs are relatives of yours and you don't want to boil them hard, I'll take something else; but if they are just ordinary eggs, comparative strangers to your family circle, I want them hard, and that goes two ways—hard-boiled and hard-wanted—do you get that?"

He didn't. He stood by the door for a space and looked at me with reproachful eyes. Presently the head waiter came. "You ordered eggs, yes?" he inquired, with a finely modulated inflection at the end, as if he were playing it on a flute.

"I ordered hard-boiled eggs," I answered, with much firmness.
"Hard-boiled eggs, yes?"
This time the "yes" had scorn, contempt, pity, pathos and contumely in it.

"Yes."
"I tried to do some vocal gymnastics with my 'yes,' but it was a flat failure. It sounded weak, and it was. I felt ashamed of it."
"Six minutes," he continued, patronizingly.

"Yes."
"This time I got a little bass into it. A fairly good growl effect."
"But they will be hard, yes?"

"Ordinarily," I explained, with chilly sarcasm, "in consonance with the immutable laws of nature, hard-boiled eggs are hard. Of course, I can foresee, from this conversation, that my hard-boiled eggs will be soft, but usually, except in Europe, where the sole expression of the egg seems to be the omelet, hard-boiled eggs are understood, not to say granitic."

He stood and smiled at me, a kindly, encouraging smile, with a dash of pleasant condescension in it, the sort

of smile a father bestows on his little boy who is trying to take off his shoes without unlacing them.

"Hard-boiled eggs," he repeated softly to himself, "hard-boiled eggs. They are no such things. You mean an omelet with truffles."

"Certainly," I replied. "I mean an omelet with truffles, or the latest hip-less effect, or, mayhap, with the pig; and, it is quite likely, I mean pickled pigs' feet or a George Washington pie. But, as a matter of fact, I mean eggs that have been boiled six minutes."

"No, no," he whispered. "Try some marmalade. We have that."
"I was perfectly calm. Long weeks of dickering with European waiters had chastened me. I arose and directed: 'The manager, bring the manager! Please!'"

The waiter had spread the news. Here was a person who desired some extraordinary eggs, hard, as if the outside of an egg was not hard enough! Could it be the inside? Impossible!

The Manager—What does the gentleman desire?

"Two plain, hard-boiled eggs of commerce. Two—count 'em—two," holding up two fingers and making a rapid oval with another finger.

"Certainly; certainly, gentlemen. It shall be done."

They brought me a pair of chubby little sausages and an anemic omelet. You see, it is this way: No person has a license to eat hard-boiled eggs, except in the United States. You can get them in England, if you take a chair and beat the idea into the reduced nobleman who hates to serve you, but does. In Paris you might as well ask for a small slice of the Eiffel Tower, broiled and garnished with one of Napoleon's battle flags. And outside of Paris, anywhere on Le Grand

Circular Kilometrique (Cook's you know, and spelled Thome-Cook), you get an omelet. Custom over there has decreed that eggs shall be eaten soft-boiled—when they are boiled at all—warmed into a consistency that makes it advisable to take them down with a sponge or with a straw, and no self-respecting waiter will order them boiled hard for you, because he cannot comprehend the barbarous appetite that demands them, any more than he can comprehend a baked potato. Ever try to get a baked potato in France or Germany or Austria or Switzerland?

That is a project of high emprise, worthy of the endeavors of any man. Wherefore, coincident with the Le Grand Circular Kilometrique began the search for a hard-boiled egg, leading variously through many countries, and finally, ingloriously, in Switzerland. So far as Europe is concerned, there is no such thing. From an article in Everybody's Magazine.

ity class, whilst others wished to reform the wayward young genius. Among the reformers was Anna Milbanke, to whom he proposed and by whom he was rejected. Two years later he proposed again and was accepted. Byron wrote to a friend that she married him from vanity and with the hope "of reforming and fixing me." The lady, however, declared that Byron married her from revenge. Pretty kettle of fish. One can imagine that words passed occasionally from the fireside chairs at the Byron domicile.

But let us pass over that in silence. It is interesting to note that genius has many love affairs. This does not necessarily signify that a saintly spinster or a very proper old bachelor must be excluded from the list of geniuses. People who are gifted with great art, great minds or great achievements seem to have most amazingly flirtatious ways with them.

In the midst of wars, in the most exciting chapters of a novel, in the midst of the composition of a sonnet or a nocturne, genius can comfortably settle back with fevered brow and trembling fingers and put together a love letter that will make the world smile. And it can write the same love letter at yearly intervals to different ladies without observing that the system is funny.

Oh, Cupid, you're a wise one. Poe's Love.

However, all the love affairs of genius have not been flighty. The story of Poe's loves is interesting. For eleven years the author of "The Raven" was a devoted and sympathetic child-wife, the beautiful Virginia, who, during most of these years, was a helpless invalid. All through this period there was dire poverty and heavy debts, but Poe was a faithful attendant to his suffering wife. The editor of "Love Letters of Famous Poets and Novelists" says: "Poe was of a peculiar and sensitive nature, and his isolation ever, great sympathy and tenderness. The women with whom he came in contact, and who were sympathetic and tender with him, he repaid by a reverent and at once sentimentally eloquent devotion which might be called the apotheosis of platonism." His letters to Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, to whom he was engaged to be married, are beautifully poetic and of high sentiment. The commonplace terms of the average love letter are happily lacking. But Poe was unusual, even in his heart affairs. His genius was eccentric even to such a point as that.

William Congreve was a gay flirt. When he lived England was saturated with a sort of tiresome romantic, sentimental wave, with a deep current of immorality. Congreve found everything flourishing for him, and he fell into mad, wild affairs with ladies of all classes—ladies of the court, wives of wealthy shopkeepers, actresses and even their maids. His success as a lover was far-famed, but his great reputation was for discretion. Why? Because he destroyed all letters immediately after reading them. A wise plan surely. And a cautious one also.

But the letters he himself wrote went all consigned to the flames. His notes to Mrs. Arabella Hunt are preserved, and they show the same tendency of the ordinary masculine writer of love letters—assurances of faithfulness until death, guarantees of deepest affection and all the usual delightful ravings and delicious rantings of love's joy and agony.

Victor Hugo's loves were many. He married the first one, Adele Foucher. But the sentimental letters he wrote in after life to other ladies had the same ringing tones of ardent affection and mad passion as those that he penned in early manhood. It would seem that the older men grow, the more maudlin they become—which is certainly pleasant. It may be a recompense for the dashing spirits that age must dampen.

The Flirtatious Goethe. Goethe, Germany's most renowned poet, was never able to win the heart of the woman of his choice. The list of his flirtations is very long indeed, and just exactly what each woman meant to him it is extremely difficult to say.

Goethe did not always choose from high classes. At the age of 15 he ardently loved Gretchen, the daughter of an innkeeper. When he went to Leipzig to study law he fell victim to the wiles of Kitty Schonkopf, daughter of a wine dealer, who teased and tormented him quite properly by her other flirtations. Frederica Brion, daughter of a village pastor, was the third object of his love, and about her the poet wrote rhapsodies and bushels of verses.

Then came Charlotte, who inspired "The Sorrows of Young Werther," and after her Lily Schumann, whom it is said Goethe actually entertained serious thoughts of marrying. While still under the influence of Lily, our German trifter started in motion a rapturous correspondence with the Countess Augusta.

Soon after this still another lady appeared—Charlotte von Stein, a lady of the Weimar court, wife of the master of the house. Their correspondence continued for many years, and their love affair for twelve, or until the time came when Goethe took to his home a very plump and practical creature by the name of Christiana Vulpius, who became the mother of his children.

Even others followed—Betina Brentano, who flattered Goethe, and Mariana von Willemer, who flirted with the poet when he was nearly 70 years old. It seems that Goethe never outgrew the habit of paying pretty compliments and swaying the impulses of feminine minds. It was part of his life.

There are many other interesting love affairs among the great poets and novelists, and these are all in the book of letters. There is Sir Walter Scott, "one of the best of writers, one of the best of men and one of the most respectful of lovers." There are Merimee's letters to the "Unknown," Heine's to "The Fly," and Balzac's delightful effusions. Also "more yet than that."

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The Contrast Between Ideals and Practice

[From the London Nation.]

It is the fate of this generation to be met at every point with the contrast between its ideals and its practice, and between the various forms of its activities. In the week when the Christian world celebrates the great example of unrelenting surrender to violence and death, its statesmen are endeavoring to fix it more firmly than ever in the doctrine of meeting force with force, and base even their hopes of peace on the proper adjustment of national armaments. And, on the other hand, so far from countering or abating all those influences which tend to bring men together for common purposes of livelihood and assistance, the matrilins of these armed states forward and encourage them. On the one hand, they speak of an inevitable war between Germany and ourselves; on the other, they, or their countrymen, are parties to innumerable acts of peaceful co-operation wherein Englishmen and Germans, so far from killing each other, feed each other, clothe each other, visit each other, exchange each other's discoveries and ideas about religion, science, literature, social reform, municipal government, and even the means of lessening the area of the oceans, and the ravages of war, and founding and extending the reign of international law. So that, as the result of these armed states, in spite of its tariffs and frontiers, is more united than it ever was; exchanges more services than it ever did; is more like a single state than any other period of its history. While it talks of battles and invents new and terrifying machines of slaughter, it does its best to make the world a better place to live in.

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and tortured on the other by those flames. This contradiction besets Liberalism as it besets every other contemporary form of intellectual activity. The party which lives by moral force finds itself responsible for government at a time when belief in material strength seems to rule the European world, and when to the superficial eye it appears impossible to approach the special type of men who rule German or Austrian destinies with other than material weapons and calculations. Yet this account even of the diplomatic world is not true, either for us or for our neighbors. It was not physical force which settled South Africa, any more than it is the element which binds the colonies to the mother country. And, on the other hand, the frightful collapse of the Russian revolutionary movement was due to the use of physical force, just as the slower fall of the remnants of autocratic rule is decreed by its intellectual weakness and its failure to satisfy the public opinion of Europe or of Liberal Russia. It is here, indeed, that we touch the new source of strength for democracy and civilization. In the end public opinion, if it can be organized and saved from the pervasities of the sensational press, constitutes a moral factor of incalculable vigor. It is not, perhaps, a quickly evolving agent of change. But, on the other hand, it is a more conservative or stationary element in modern society. It moves, as the earth moves; not before the eyes, but in clear view of its influence makes against all those excesses of material power of which Sir Edward Grey spoke with such grave concern in his speech of last week. Badly as the Russian movement for freedom has gone, European opinion has sensibly modified the reaction. And in its turn it would be hostile to any such movement for "dominating" Europe by armed force as our Foreign Secretary predicated of the German Empire. Moral considerations helped the Finnish patriots, and even through the badly-tangled controversy in the Balkans, had much to do with the issue. All theories to the contrary implicitly deny the progress of the race. They assume that some fiendish and intractable element resides in society. But this is a conclusion which, in his private life, man

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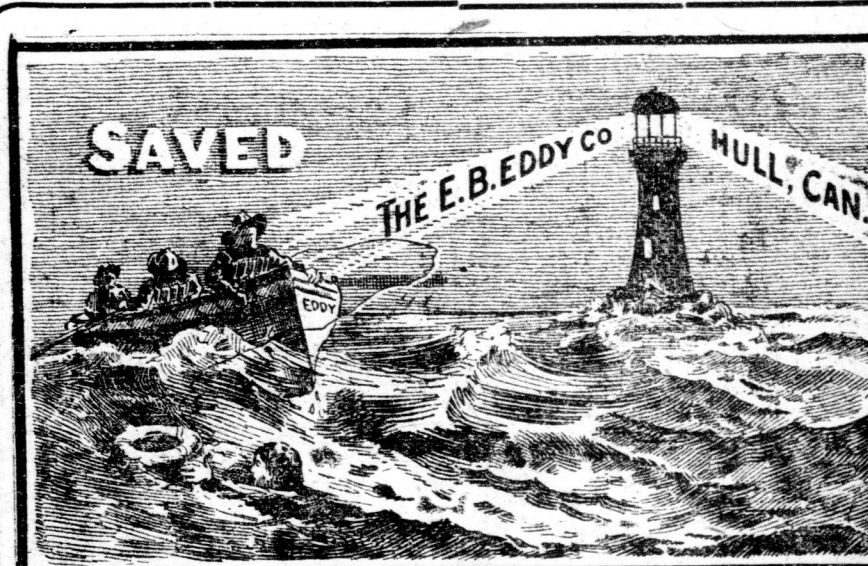
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