A PICTURE.

Two little souls, a boy and a girl,
Wandering on to the foot of the hill,
Bushes of green and blossoms of pearl
Laugh at them as in the Springtime still.
Crossing the lane a gorgeous fly,
Bathed in the light of a Butterfly sky,
Jauntily chatters, "Some day, some day?"

Two sweet souls, a man and a maid,
(Bamboo branches twined above,)
Making the daisies' white sprinkle the glade,
And playing their luck at a game of love.
"Pick you?" "Next year?" What do they say?
And out of the bamboo the curious jay
Pops and chuckles, "Some day, some day?"

Two old souls, and the end of the day
Follows their tight race at the foot of the hill;
One late gloom which has wandered astray
Breaks from a cypress and dimples the still.
Autumn leaves are strewing the way,
And loaves from the lush the hungry jay
Shoots out to the night, "Some day, some day?"

Two poor souls, in the dead of the night,
Side by side, lie stiffened and still;
And the wintery moon just softens her light,
As it solemnly rests at the foot of the hill.
Remembering the here and the beds and the blue
The Summer gold and the Autumn gray,
And the warm green lane where the bobbin play,
In the crisp cold night the shivering jay
Croaks out of his dream, "Some day, some day?"
—*Pinafore's Magazine.*

THE BROTHERS.

A LEGEND OF MORDAUNT HALL.

I.

THE BEGINNING.

In the days when Queen Anne reigned in this country—that is to say, over a hundred and fifty years ago—the Mordaunts had held their ancestral hall for generations and generation. It was now in the possession of Sir Selkirk Mordaunt, who had two sons, Henry and George. He was a man of austere manners, but generous and kindly character; and, having only these two children, he wished to do justice to them both.

Henry would inherit his title and estates; but he was a saving man, and the accumulations, with his mother's fortune, would make George very much wealthier than most younger sons.

Henry was a mere country gentleman—he delighted in the sports which belonged to his position, took a deep interest in agriculture, and was learned at quarter sessions. George was more of a butterfly, as he had been to Court in his character of a soldier, and seemed to enjoy life to the utmost, without being a profligate or a roisterer.

He, however, was very fond of his father's place, and came to spend as much of his time as he could at the Hall.

Apart from the associations connected with it, it was a splendid pile, built before the Rhinebeck was built, in fact a kind of Gothic building, with arched-roofed passages, a chapel, a grand refectory, and all that pertained to baronial and Catholic times.

Sir Selkirk had been intended for the Church, and in his day had been a very studious man. Such a tone once adopted generally remains in after life, and the Baronet was apt to spend more time in the library than the others thought was good for him.

"Never mind, Harry," his father would say, with a smile; "as long as I don't interfere with you, don't interfere with me. Lame my horses, burst my guns, spend my money, but don't touch my books."

"Well, all right," would Harry, "if you would only take a canter with me, it would brighten you up."

"Get away tempter! I, that never bestroode a horse, except a very quiet one, to go to quarter sessions, to ride my neck when you across country. No, no, Harry! Leave me to Dick." And with this the conversation generally ended.

Now, Dick was a universal favourite. He was distantly related to the Mordaunts, and indeed bore their name. He had been educated by his father for the Church; but in the family, having a small competence, he had become not a mere book-worm, but one who was fond of study, and yet excelled in almost everything that belonged to a gentleman.

He could rhyme so as to rouse the envy of every one around him, he was a deal shot, and could disarm George in a fencing bout.

Sir Selkirk had been at a loss what to do with him, seeing that he was pursuing a particular line of studies, and that his library should be so certain nearly all the materials he required, asked him to remain. He gladly accepted, and his visit had now lasted two years.

None objected. With the father he read and talked, I knew what Harry meant by mixed agriculture; with George he fenced and held capital stories of the Court and city.

The brothers were somewhat alike—the elder tall, stout, with a fine Saxon face, curly brown hair, and good-natured eyes; did George was his counterpart, only slighter and more elegant. Both were handsome men; but George was the more graceful *beau monde* manners, was rather the favourite of the fair sex.

It is in connection with this that I have to tell my sad story, into which I entered as a bloodless spectator.

It was at the time of the wars of the Spanish succession. The actual declaration was not made, but every one knew that something was about to happen. George had been over to Paris; but it was so modishly hinted that we were about to engage in hostilities with France, that he necessarily left that gay capital and hurried to London.

Here he was told that he would be required to leave England to join the army in the low countries in two months' time.

As the war was likely to be a long and protracted one, George was determined to spend the whole of his time of furlough at the Hall, and so this purpose set out with his faithful attendant, Morris.

Horseback was the mode of travel in those days, and a very pleasant mode of travel it was before people discovered that the great object of life was to reach a particular point at a given moment.

The sun was just setting on a mellow lake in the autumn of the year, when Captain Mordaunt reached the outer lodge of his father's Hall. The grey gloom of twilight threw its sombre shadow over the park, while the roof of the castellated Hall was tipped by the rays of the setting sun.

George gazed around at the familiar scene with mingled emotions of pleasure. Was it possible that he was about to visit the place for the last time? Such might be his fate. The fortune of war is proverbially fickle. Going forth to fight for his country under the Duke of Marlborough, he might win glory, and perhaps a soldier's bloody grave.

Though as brave a man as ever lived, George felt very serious. To fight for one's native land is the desire of every patriot worthy of the name, yet one may give a sigh at the thought of leaving a world where one has hitherto only known happiness.

Passing under the great avenue of trees, lined with dark-leaved holly and bright arbutus, he soon reached the person of the house, the steps leading to the portico. Alighting, and throwing the reins of his horse to his man Morris, he was about to run up the steps and announce himself, when he was obliged to fall back a kind of of the highest order.

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Music in the old hall—the music of a harp, and, still more extraordinary, the rich harmonious melody of a woman's voice—of a sweet and startling melody, the voice, singing some long-forgotten melody.

George listened for a while, and then glancing cautiously in the direction of the hall, he ventured to the village inn—he calmly went into the house, and walked to the door of the room whence proceeded the sounds which had so confused him.

He peered in, and paused a moment at the scene which presented itself. His father was seated in his favourite armchair, evidently in a most unusually urbane state of mind; behind him, almost in the shadow, was Richard Mordaunt, the cousin.

His white, intellectual face, his high forehead, his manly aquiline head, his grey eyes, gave to him a very different aspect than to any other of the race, while his rather diminutive stature made him a more than marked contrast.

His face even was more animated than usual.

No wonder, thought George, as his eyes travelled to the other side of the hall, where his brother stood in conversation with a young lady, who had risen from the harp, as if to move away, and from whom Henry was begging one more song.

She was not tall, rather below than above the middle size, yet cast in such a perfect mould as to seem the very standard of female loveliness. The expression of her face was bright and beautiful; her eyes were large, liquid, and of a deep brown; her hair was worn after the somewhat outrageous fashion of the day, and slightly powdered. Her lips, parted in the act of speaking, were irradiated by a smile of singular sweetness.

"Enough, Mr. Henry is as good as a feast," she said. "Don't let me expose my ignorance by playing myself out in one day. Later I will try and find something suitable to you."

"As you please, Mona," he answered, gallantly.

What could it all mean? the young man asked himself, a strange tremor making his heart flutter. Had his brother taken to himself a wife in his absence, and if so, why this particular girl?

"Excuse my breaking in upon such a pleasant party," said the younger son, entering the room with easy grace; "but I waited in the hope of hearing another song."

"My son!" cried the Baronet, rising.

"My brother!" exclaimed Henry, equally heartily, as he ran to meet the other, and shake his hand.

"And allow me to introduce Mademoiselle d'Estelle, who has no word of greeting for me!" he presently said, turning to the young lady, who was standing by with crimson.

"Of course I have, cousin George!" she said; but I only knew by accident that the gentleman I met in Paris was my cousin."

"Yes my lad!" cried the hearty father; "this d'Estelle is my niece's child. As war is likely to be declared, she has come home, to make it brighter than it has ever been since your mother's—Hush! Enough, with a significant look at Henry, which made George's heart bound wildly—"she may never leave it!"

"Ah!" she exclaimed, in her pretty French way, "my uncle is only too kind to the orphan!"

But though she spoke in such a lowly manner, she was, indeed, a mate-hearted girl. She had been brought up in a convent school, but without any interference with her religious or any attempt at conversion. She had moved in some of the very best French society. Her father had been a Protestant nobleman, married to an English lady, as we know, and her associates were of the highest order.

"May I?" asked George, fervently, when he had lost some of his reasons for coming home—"may I ask you, cousin Mona, to sing one more song?"

She blushed, and Henry Mordaunt slightly started. For six weeks—six whole weeks—he had almost monopolized this charming stranger. Much as the Baronet liked her, and much as Richard seemed to be charmed with her, they did not very materially alter the routine of their life.

But Henry Mordaunt changed his wholly. The intimacy ripened into something remarkable.

Unless Mona wished to join him, he left off riding. He would show her over the ladies' garden; he would walk in the park; in fact, he never hardly strayed away from her, except from sheer necessity.

It was only the day before that a conversation occurred, which made the young lord very vividly indeed.

"Pray, Mr. Henry," she said suddenly, after some little thought, "have you not a brother who rather resembles yourself?"

"That," he said, coloring slightly, "is rather a compliment. I have a brother some years younger than myself, only better looking. Why do you ask?"

"I thought the *beau capitaine* must be your brother. It strook me, however, only just now. We are the best of friends?"

A cold chill came over the young man, a kind of premonitory warning of what was to come. Still he roused himself, and continued the conversation with his accustomed heartiness. Soon, under the influence of her sweetness, gentleness, and that peculiar charm of conversation which she possessed in the highest degree, he felt his fears vanish.

He thought no more of the matter until he now saw the two together, and in conversation.

There was a brilliancy in George's eye, a graceful coquetry in his address, as she rose to comply with his request, which alarmed him. And then, when she began singing some merry ditty which, indeed, he did not understand, she looked up into his face with a sweet, provoking smile, heaviness of conscience, it time for breakfast, cool, calm, collected, but a trifle serious. Still, not enough to excite comment.

Scarcely was he away from the thicket than a third personage appeared, plainly attired, Richard, who, unlike the others, wore no sword. His face carried a double expression of triumph and vexation.

But the latter feeling was conveyed by his looks as he walked along was that of deep thought.

The broadcast was rather embarrassed, simply because, except Sir Selkirk, all were busy with their own business. When he was over, Mona retired to her own apartments, Sir Selkirk went into the library with Richard, to write letters, and George prepared for his journey.

Those were early days, and dinner would take place, at the latest, at one o'clock. The ride was a long one, and George, for many reasons, was in no hurry. Above all, he desired to be back in time to spend an hour or two with his beloved.

As George was giving some directions to his servant, Henry approached. His aspect was very grave, but he evidently was making an effort to appear cheerful.

"What time do you propose being back," he asked, "if I am not too curious?"

"Not a minute later than eight," was the decisive reply.

"And you come by the lower road? Shall meet you."

"Yes. Why do you ask?" said George, rather puzzled at his brother's manner.

But Henry made no reply, but gave up stairs with a strange manner and expression. He appeared no more that day, pleading a headache and a sleepless night as the reason of his absence. Perhaps he was ashamed of his feigned interest in the matter—a matter which surprised no one, as about once a month he settled up all his pecuniary affairs.

"If must be done—yes, it must be done!" he said, as he rose, a little after six o'clock; and, putting on his roquelaire, went down-stairs.

He seem like a ward, as usual, and going to the stable, ordered his favourite horse to be saddled at once. But he took with him no sword.

And yet, before he had gone ten minutes, one in the garb of a menial was following him at a respectful distance.

Captain George enjoyed himself with his friends, many belonging to the same regiment as himself. They talked of war, and rumours of war, of the coming campaign, toasted all the ladies of their acquaintance, and then the young officer, attended by his groom, rode homewards.

He was was by no means intoxicated, but slightly elevated and reckless.

He rode rapidly, as one eager to reach his destination; and, after a trot of nearly an hour, was startled to see a horseman at his destination, when he was startled to see a horseman standing still in the middle of the road, as if waiting for some one.

"Let me pass!" cried George, a little hastily.

"To I, George," said his brother calmly, "I wish to say a few words to you in private. Send your horse home with mine. We will then stroll along the river's bank. I will not detain you long."

The voice was rigidly cold and composed, yet not strictly unkind. But George, who began to guess the object of the meeting, at once dismounted, joked and sparred together in good cousinly style.

Richard looked on with his keen, sarcastic glance, which meant as much and said so little.

"Either," he whispered to himself, "she is very artful, or she is playing a double game. But we shall soon see, and then—woe will it end?"

Yes, indeed—he was right to say how will it end? I wish my poor darling, as I was soon to call her, that I had been there at this time.

A month of the furlough allowed to Captain George was up. In three weeks he must leave the Hall for London, thence to sail for the seat of war in Spanish Continent.

It was a bright October morning, when Mona, in her jaunty hood and cloak—she liked this attire when out before breakfast—stripped through the old pleasaunce on her way to the wood. She looked to the right and left, as if she was a little frightened, as well she might have been, and moved generally as a person not wishing to be seen.

As soon as she had reached the greensward which stretched far away, broken in her beautiful expanse by mighty oaks and elms, and here and there a clump of younger trees, she ran, startling the cows, and ran on the deer.

She never looked back, and soon entered a thicket where some of the larger trees commingled with the smaller. As she did so, Henry, who had been strolling in the park, came in sight from a pathway close at hand. She had disappeared in the thicket, but he was swift of foot, and soon came upon other's hand.

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The voice was rigidly cold and composed, yet not strictly unkind. But George, who began to guess the object of the meeting, at once dismounted, and Morris, his groom, took the two horses and led them away by the bridle.

The man was scarcely paraded as he what his young master was going to do there by the river side. He little suspected that he was never to see one of them alive again.

A little after eight, Captain George came in and went to his room, where, having made his toilette with his usual taste and care, he descended to the room where his father and Mona awaited him.

"Where is Henry?" asked his father, in rather an anxious tone.

"He will be here directly, sir," was the quiet reply, though the lip quivered, and the cheek was somewhat flushed.

"And where is Richard?" continued the old gentleman, a little testily.

He had been rather neglected that day.

"I can't say," was the answer. "I dare say he will soon be here to answer for himself."

And the Baronet saying nothing, the two lovers went on with their conversation in a low, earnest tone which the father noticed not.

Suddenly there arose a loud cry from the hall, which soon became a general wail all over the house. Sir Selkirk rose and advanced towards the door.

It was hastily opened by Richard, who stood in the way, haggard, pale, livid.

"For Heaven's sake!" he said, "do not come this way; it will kill you!"

"What has happened?" gasped the Baronet.

"My poor son Harry—any accident?"

"Cruelly murdered!" continued the other, in a low tone, "by the stream side, near the hand-bridge. Shot in the back with a pistol."

"My son—my elder born—murdered, shot—by whom?" The poor father paused, and then, without waiting for an answer, he fainted right off.

Mona stood the picture of horror; but she, too, presently gave way, and was carried off insensible. The confusion was awful. The body was carried to one room, the insensible Baronet to another, and Mona was soon to by her maidens.

"Are you sure he is quite dead?" asked George, who, for reasons of his own, was overwhelmed with horror. "Have you sent for a doctor?"

"Yes, and a magistrate," replied the other, coldly. "It was a most foul and wicked murder. Rie—the pride of his father, the loved of all who knew him—slain like a dog!"

"Who could have done it?" asked George, still scarcely knowing what he said.

Richard Mordaunt gave him a look of withering scorn, and then left the room.

George gazed about, as one bewildered, nor moved until the doctor came and the magistrate. The former's verdict was brief. He was quite dead, shot in the back by some murderer who had lain in ambush.

But as yet no inkling existed of the criminal, and the magistrate had nothing to do but to order a rigid inquiry.

III.

AFTER THE DEED.

Morning broke on that afflicted house just as mornings will break on the unhappy as on the happy. George had never been to bed all night. He could not rest. His mind was in a state of muzzle and uneasy. What his sensations were could scarcely be painted in words. It was agony unutterable.

He hastily attended to his toilette, and then went into breakfast, where Richard Mona had come down.

His father was not to be disturbed under any pretence whatever. The doctor had been with him—was, indeed, with him now.

"My poor darling!" cried George, as he entered the room, where Mona sat, rigid, pale, haggard; "why have you come down? Surely it would have been better to take some rest!"

"I cannot rest," she answered; in a tone that was almost harsh, "when I think of my uncle ill, and my poor brother, I may say, lying rigid in death, murdered, shot by a ruffian in the low, hushed accents by whom? He had no enemy!"

"None in this wide, wide world!" cried George, with a warm enthusiasm that came from the heart. "But, he added, speaking low, "he had somebody dear to him, who loved him, gaged, and his grief was terrible. The doctor declares that he was shot in the back. Sometimes I think that the doctor was mistaken, and that in his cruel despair he turned the weapon on himself."

"Slanderer, as well as assassin!" at this moment said the voice of the Baronet, who, leaning on his faithful attendant, entered room in company with Richard Mordaunt.

"Sir!" began George, in angry amazement, "what does this mean?"

"It means that I, a father, accuse you of murdering your brother!" said Sir Selkirk, in the cold tone of a judge. "Take him away, Dick, and let him, in proved in the next reign, at a rate of about two to three miles an hour. Then I will be at rest on which to carry my slender baggage, and thus I reached Mordaunt Hall, to my mind a perfect palace of palaces.

But there was no Mona to greet me. An elderly matron, who was the housekeeper, and I was led away rather gloomy corridors until I reached an apartment very much like what I had seen in convents.

Passing through this, I found myself in the presence of Mona; yes, but not of the Mona of other days. She was wan and pale; there was a wild look in her eyes, a hectic flush was on her face. My heart gave a great bound, for it is said that my darling was not long for this world.

"I am so thankful you have come," she said, in a sweet, musical voice, low and tones, and, indeed, only too plainly told its tale. "I am so much alone. I cannot talk to the servants about my poor, poor faithful boson on which to repose and tell my bitter sorrows."

"Sorrowful!" I cried. "My brilliant Mona talking of her sorrows—you, the bright queen of this house, the beloved and envied of all who knew her."

"Hush!" she said, in a tone which was more like a wail—"do, pray, hear no more of those bright and happy days. All since has changed. The world, once a paradise, is gloomy, weary world. Everything that flowers no longer have any smell, the leaves green all disappeared. I see no blue sky, only black clouds—for my love is dead, dead, dead!"

I listened in blank astonishment. Surely my darling was not mad! This was my first impression. But she went on with a rapidity that—from deep-rooted sorrow, harrowed grief, I thought—her mind was to a certain extent affected.

And under this influence she was dying. Her cheek was hot, her hand was too hot to take some refreshment, and had shown me my room, which was out of here—in fact, a dressing-room—she became calmer.

"You must soon dress for dinner," she said; for, though death and woe be in the house, we must still dine," she added, with a little bitterness of tone.

"Death and woe!" I cried. "What does my darling mean? Surely you are mistaken."

"Death and woe, I repeat" she exclaimed, in a low, hoarse tone. "After dinner you shall hear all."

And then, hand-in-hand, soon after we went down to the drawing-room, where I saw the Baronet, a thin, gaunt, hard man, with white hair, haggard eyes, and a look as if he never had known what a heart was, also Mr. Richard, a courteous gentleman, with a very intellectual face, black eyes, and a handsome but not pleasant face.

The Baronet gave me a gentle welcome, and Richard seemed glad to see a stranger. There was no conversation to speak of, and when the ceremony was over, all rose like shadows, and like shadows departed. I thought it like a scene in some weird old ballad.

I and my dear friend returned to her room. She seated herself, bade me give her a powerful smelling salt, manufactured by a celebrated Italian dealer in cosmetics, and then told me her story, which it is not necessary to repeat here. I have sketched the outlines elsewhere, for the use of anyone who cares to know the truth of the and mystery of Mordaunt Hall.

"And now," she said, with a faint blush upon her cheek, "they think, with my brother dead, my lover gone before with this foul accusation on his name, I will marry that sombre though really handsome man you saw at table."

"Marry Richard Mordaunt!" I cried, shocked at such a proposition in my voice as to make her stare. "Why, he is like an old man!"

"Old or young, what matters it to me?" she answered, bitterly. "Before the six months are over I shall be dead. Never shall mortal man call me wife. My uncle will grieve, I know, for he is good, and generous, and kind to me. But he and Richard will soon find another lady of Mordaunt Hall. I never shall be."

"This was my opinion; but I said nothing. I devoted my whole time, my every thought to her. I walked with her a little, talked, sung doleful ballads she chose herself, read sometimes, but never could rouse her from the dead level of her deep despair.

Then, in a little demonstrative, that I believe neither Sir Selkirk nor Mr. Richard noticed what I did. She was sinking gradually under her sorrow, which was of a nature too sacred for me to peer into offenser than she chose to speak of it.

"I spoke to her with my brother, in Heaven," she said to me one night, three months after I had joined her, speaking with such a vehemence, a radiance in her eyes, that was very and to see.

"Now," I answered, gently, "I think you are yielding to a mania. You think that, because they are gone, you must follow. I believe you made an earnest resolve you might live."

"For what?" was the sharp answer. "To marry Richard, and feel that I make my darling should be? Never!"

"Spring of the year, I thought—I had made up my mind to it a long time—" are you so able to judge as Sir Selkirk of the truth of the dreadful tragedy?"

Ah, me, I thought my dear a lamb, but she was a tigress. She leaped up, her face deadly pale, her hands clenched, her eyes starting from her head. She stood from his room."

"Hush! hush!" whispered the clergyman, clutching his friend's arm.

"Did I not follow you, did I not see you—Mr. George and Mr. Harry shook hands and went different ways—creep out of a place, and when the elder brother's back was turned, shoot him? can you deny this?" turned Morris in his chair.

"I deny nothing," was the hapless cry.

"Then did I not come upon you, clutch you by the throat, as I do now, to drag you to the house; and did not you, in a whining voice, declare you never meant to do it, and say, 'Good Morris, it will do no good to hang me. I will give you three hundred guineas to leave the country and never appear against me?' and did I not, rascal that I was, take it and go?"

"You did!" muttered Richard, whose teeth chattered with mingled horror and fear.

"I went, I enlisted, and, at the battle of Blenheim, I helped to save my noble master, Captain, now Col. Mordaunt; and did he not, when I was dying myself at the point of death, tell me why he had left England? Heavens! what a rascal I felt when I heard it. But I told all; and as soon as the Colonel's wounds were cured, we came to England to confound the assassin and murderer!"

At these words Richard recovered himself, and turning round, looked at the tall, commanding figure of Colonel George, whom his fears had made him take for the ghost of the murdered Henry.

"A nice little scheme between an assassin and a cheating servant! Do you think Sir Selkirk will believe this lying tale? I have only to deny it, to re-accuse you of your ingenious correspondence."

"In his fierce anger you will both be punished. Go, lest I call for assistance."

"We can go together," shocked the Baronet, during forth. "Come to my arms, my injured son! Let me, on my bended knees, expiate my sin!"

"Father! dear father!" replied George, holding him in his manly arms, "you were deceived. Take my arm, and let us to the house. My poor darling is very ill, I am sure!"

And leaning on the arm of his son and that of the venerable Morris, the old man hoped to have returned, to his house, relieved of one fearful judgment—the belief in the Fratricide.

Richard was dragged along by Morris, who, like a true Scotchman, was a drawing-room, looking as innocent as possible, so eager was I to know the truth. Three entered Sir Selkirk, George, and the rector, who gave me a pleasant smile.

Richard had been placed in the strongest room in the house, and was guarded by Morris and others.

In few words, during which I was introduced, George explained all up to the point which the reader knows; he then further explained what passed when he was alone with his brother.

George:" he said, after walking up and down for some minutes, "I know all. I am bitterly disappointed, for I love her—oh, how much may she never know. But she has chosen, and far be it from me to gainsay her. You are younger, handsomer, more fit to make a girl happy."

"Brother, do not torture me," was George's reply.

"I shall be very brief," continued Henry. "I shall leave home, and take service as a volunteer in the army in Flanders. I've must resign, and stay with my father. I cannot trust myself. If you are to marry this tender flower, you must nurture her in a garden fit to bear it. To wed her to a man of my nature would be cruel. Do not discuss the question, I am your elder brother and will be heard. All will be straight with my father. Leave the commander-in-chief. I have some little influence, and will not hesitate to use it. Henry inclined of George in a communion.

An earnest but friendly discussion followed, and then the brothers parted.

It appears that, on his own confession, Richard suspecting from what he had overheard—a chat behind the brothers—had conceived the fiendish idea of slaying the survivor. When, however, he overheard what passed, it struck him that to kill Henry and put the crime on George would be more dangerous than as well. And this fell purpose he carried out, as we have seen. Suffice it to say that, having concealed himself in the hand-bridge before he was given over to the authorities.

It would need acquire the pen of a poet to depict the scene which occurred when Mona knew that her lover was alive and the honoured guest of his father. It nearly killed her.

A silly servant girl—I could have beaten her with rods, and would, if it had been in my power—went and told the story in the kitchen, and, I in the meantime, neglecting my duty to hear the story of his innocence:—

"Oh, Jemima," said the girl, "Mr. George is come home, and is in the drawing-room with master, and Mr. Richard is took for murdering Master Henry!"

Well, she fell back as if dead; but immediately the frame seemed to vibrate, and though she became rigid for a moment, life appeared to come back.

Dismissing the foolish girl, she took a little of a powerful cordial, and then dressed herself.

Leaning my horror, when I saw the half-white, half-dazed face of my poor ghostly looking being poor, with wild staring eyes, into the apartment in which we stood.

"George!" she cried, with a vibration in her voice which amazed me, and darting forward, was caught in his arms.

Speechless was the joy of both, when, recovering from a fainting fit, she knew it was all true.

She did not die; and, as I write, she there a buxom dame, with her grown-up sons—one called Henry and the other George—and how many smaller ones I need not say.

PERCY B. ST. JOHN.

—Bow Bells Christmas Annual.

AGRICULTURAL.

In a weekly newspaper no department is more valuable than the agricultural if readers and editors work together, aiding and correcting one another; and no department is less interesting, and we might almost say less reliable, when the whole work is thrown upon the editor, and the reader does nothing. The editor, no matter how much experience he may have, is but one man, and we all know that in farm experiments and farm work so many items go to make success, and so many trifles may cause failures, that any man is liable to charge these successes or failures to the wrong sources. We are all seeking the same ends—How to make farming profitable; how to keep up our farms and improve our farms; how to lessen our labours and yet be more certain of success. Why cannot we help one another? Why not make this department our club, in which we shall all join to discuss matters of so much importance to us? Do not fear that your language will be too rough, or your style not good enough. We want ideas, facts. If it is necessary we will dress them up for you. When you read that a brother farmer wastes some information which you have don't be niggardly about it. Sit down and give us your experience. You may need advice yourself some day, and you will see how readily others will return your good deeds with interest.

FREE ARTICLES.

During the winter months you will have a little leisure time, and to keep out of mischief here is something to occupy your minds with. We propose to give a series of prizes for articles on the following subjects:—

The care of cattle.

Oats, varieties, and proper soil.

Peas, varieties, proper soils, and time to sow.

Potatoes, varieties, how to grow, and how to save manurie.

Subsoiling.

When these subjects are exhausted others will be proposed. We will give due notice as to when the articles are to be sent in, and what the prizes will be. We only ask you of it now so that you may be preparing for the work.

We call the attention of our subscribers to the following letter sent to us by a farmer in the County of Middlesex, and we ask all of you who have information upon the subject to write immediately, as the subject is of great importance, and will bear discussion. Remember that your soil and situation will both affect the question, and should be considered:—

DEAR SIR,—I wish to sow ten acres of wheat in the spring, and find it hard to decide which to take among the many varieties offered. Some excel for beauty of grain, some on account of strength of straw, some shell less readily than others, etc. so I decided to ask the advice of other readers of The Mail. My soil is clay, surface drained, and the land is fairly protected from the north. I will be thankful for any suggestions, and will be happy to return the compliment by answering other questions on which I may have information.

Yours inquiringly,

WESTMINSTER.

Present indications are that our plants will go into winter quarters in better condition than for many years. Some writers learned in vegetable physiology, assert that all injury to growth is caused by imperfect ripening of the wood, and not by intense cold at all. There is some truth in this, we may all admit, but perhaps the general application is almost too sweeping. Be that as it may, if ever we had a fair opportunity of testing its truthfulness, we shall certainly have it the coming winter, for never before was there a more propitious autumn for thoroughly ripening up the growth than this one—mild, even, temperature, and usually a frost to hurry vegetation; but, instead, a gradual, healthy change from growth to maturity, such as will leave the cells and tissues of vegetation in a condition to withstand any reasonable amount of rough weather that may possibly be in store for us.

Work on roads should not be put over any longer, especially in the standing that in the intervals roads must take care of themselves. Not a month should go by in these working seasons of the year without at least once passing over the town roads by the duly appointed guardian with a load of good mending material, or proper implements—to fill the light ruts, open the water courses, and remove any incumbrance of the road-bed. For the furtherance of this a system of light repairs at regular intervals, it is well to establish certain depots of good road material—such as coarse gravel or disintegrated rock, in easily accessible localities along lines of road. By judicious choice of position, such deposits will no way interfere with the traffic of the highway, or with its orderly appearance, while they will be of capital service in keeping good little wastes and gaps consequent upon violent summer rains.

A capital adjunct to agricultural exhibitions would be a cosy sit-down to a dinner, or lunch, or supper, where the products thereof may be put to actual test. The grower of prize fruits might be brought to the feet to tell how he managed his trees or how he ripened and stored his fruit. A lunch again, at which the pick of dairy products should be put upon the table would provoke appetite, and the very best sort of practical talk. The same would be true of a supper where there would be opportunity to compare a Leghorn fowl with a well-trussed Hamburg, or a Southdown haunch, with a cut from a longwoolled mutton. There would belong to such gatherings good cheer, good talk, good companionship, and a better chance of carrying away positive gain in shape of valuable information, and new wakened pride in a man's specialty than he is apt to get from fairs and turmoil of a universal farm circus.

Celery may be well kept through the winter, says a good authority on the subject, "by simply burying an ordinary flour barrel in the ground, mixing in the bottom about nine inches of this mud, placing the celery upright with the balls of roots in this mud, and covering the top over with a mound of straw, leaves, or manure. The celery came out finely bleached, and without any shriveling. Experienced people say many methods has taught us that this is one of the very best for small lots for family use. We have also seen excellent results by placing the barrel in a cool cellar; of course the roots should be packed in this mud in this case as well, and