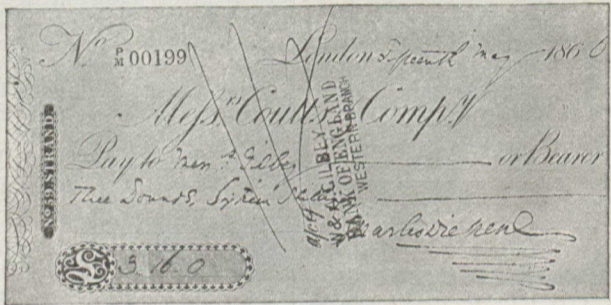


Two cheques drawn 45 years ago by Charles Dickens in favour of his Wine Merchants, W. & A. Gilbey.

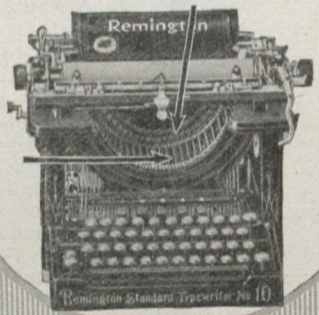


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intensely alive, so a-quiver with undying interest in things; perhaps only because he likes me, and is bent on my salvation. There's smoking, for instance—he's forever insisting that I cut it out." Lifting the chipmunk up on the bookshelf, the man turned again to Nance.

"If you will allow me, I'll pull the couch round. Yes. That's right. Now to bring in the old man."

In a few minutes McCullough found himself resting on the couch covered by the grizzly bearskin. Nance and Dick Wynn sat down beside him, and Wanota drew near, looking on with inscrutable sad eyes, but speaking nothing.

Neither had the old man any further desire to talk after he had thanked Wynn. The twisted smile had almost left his face, but his left side was no less helpless than at first.

Wynn thought him more gaunt, more sharply white, than on the day before. He reminded him of a giant spruce he had seen the bush, storm-felled.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE scented warmth of the hemlock fire brought the old trapper drowsiness. He shut his eyes in deep content, after listening while the two gave a jocund account of their voyaging. He asked no questions, but when they had done, roused and mentioned Francois, saying he had sent him to look at a bear trap set miles north of the lake; that he was to go still further over one line where snares and little steel martin-traps were already set, take the fur, and raise and bring in the traps.

Reaching out his right hand he touched the girl's dress as he spoke, and she clasped his fingers and understood. He rested awhile; then spoke again to Wynn.

"When you come over next time, boy, bring the fiddle. Nance would like to hear it, wouldn't you, honey?"

"Has he a fiddle then?" she demanded, opening her eyes wide. "Do you play?" to Wynn.

"I do," he admitted. "Oh, lovely!" she cried. "And it may be that you sing also?"

"No, I am a person of one accomplishment, and that one a trifle tarnished. But you—now I am convinced that you sing?"

"I remember a lullaby that was sung to me when I was a baby," she said half-wistfully, "and—Sister Mary Philomena taught me two or three little French songs. But they are love songs. The Holy Mother would have been distressed—she does not get angry—if she had known Sister Mary Philomena taught me those songs, or that she even remembered them."

"But memory is so elusive a thing," rejoined the man whimsically, gazing into the red heart of the logs, "so difficult a thing to capture and slay. What does the Reverend Mother do to prevent Sister Mary Philomena from—remembering things better forgotten?"

A troubled expression darkened the girl's face.

On the couch the old man slept, his drawn face peaceful. Wanota sat on the floor and stitched at the beaver coat. A candle stood on a chair beside her, and threw its yellow circle of light down on her work. She did not seem to heed or hear.

"Sister Mary Philomena," said Nance, dropping her voice, "fasts often and does much penance. She is only twenty-three, and she had a sweetheart—before—well—when she was in the world. I do not know what he did, but he is in prison, she told me; and it is for life. That is why she took the veil, I think, though she did not say so. She prays for his soul far more than for her own. She did a great deal of penance for telling me of him. Once afterwards I heard her crying in the night, and I understood." The blue eyes that were not all blue grew dark in the firelight.

Wanota drew her waxed pack-thread back and forth monotonously, as the Fates spin their web.

The man leaned forward. "I said you had a compelling way with you," he answered, pitching his voice low. "It is a charm born in you with the

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