

A Pointed Reminder.

A party of adventurous lads, myself among the number, were out for a glorious holiday. Each had his canvas bag across his shoulder, and we stole along the stone wall yonder, and entered the woods beneath that group of chestnuts. Two of us acted as outposts on picket guard, and another, young Teddy Shoopegg by name, the best climber in the village, did the shaking. There were five busy pairs of hands beneath these trees, I can tell you, for each one of us fully realized the necessity of making the most of his time, not knowing how soon the warning cry from our outposts might put us all to headlong flight, for the alarm, "Turner's coming!" was enough to lift the hair of any boy in town.

But luck seemed to favour us on that day. We "cleaned out" six big chestnut-trees, and then turned our attention to the hickories. There was a splendid tall shagbark close by, with branches fairly loaded with the white nuts in their open shucks. They were all ready to drop, and when the shaking once commenced, the nuts came down like a shower of hail, bounding from the rocks, rattling among the dry leaves, and keeping up a clatter all around. We scrambled on all fours, and gathered them by quarts and quarts. There was no need of poking over the leaves for them, the ground was covered with their bleached shells, all in plain sight. While busily engaged, we noticed an ominous lull among the branches overhead.

"Set! set!" whispered Shoopegg up above; "I see old Turner on his white horse dawn the road yonder."

"Coming this way?" also in a whisper, from below.

"I dunno yet, but I jest guess you'd better be gittin' red-dy to leg it, fer he's hitchin' his old nag to the side o' the road. Yis, sir, I believe he's a-cummin'. Shoopegg, you'd better be gittin' out o' this," and he commenced to drop hap-hazard from his lofty perch. In a moment, however, he seemed to change his mind, and paused, once more upon the watch. "Say, fellows," he again broke in, as we were preparing for a retreat, "he's gone off to 'rd the cedars; he ain't cummin' this way at all." So he again ascended into the tree-top, and finished his shaking in peace, and we our picking also. There was still another tree, with elegant large nuts, that we had all concluded to "finish up on." It would not do to leave it. They were the largest and thinnest-shelled nuts in town, and there were over a bushel in sight on the branch tips. Shoopegg was up among them in two minutes, and they were showered down in torrents as before. And what splendid, perfect nuts they were! We bagged them with eager hands, picked the ground all clean, and with jolly chuckles at our luck were just about thinking of starting for home with our well rounded sacks when a change came o'er the spirit of our dream. There was a suspicious noise in the shrubbery near by, and in a moment more we heard our doom.

"Jest you look eah, you boys," exclaimed a high-pitched voice from the neighbouring shrubbery, accompanied by the form of Deacon Turner, approaching at a brisk pace, hardly thirty feet away. "Don't you think yer've got jest about enuff o' them nuts?"

Of course a wild panic ensued, in which we made for the bags and dear life, but Turner was prepared and ready for the emergency, and raising a huge old shot gun, he leveled it, and yelled, "Don't any on ye stir me, or by Christ-pher I'll blow the heads clean off'n the hull pile on ye. I'd shoot ye quicker'n lightnin'."

And we believed him, for his aim was true, and his whole expression was not that of a man who was trifling. I never shall forget the uncomfortable sensation that I experienced as I looked into the muzzle of that double-barrelled shot-gun, and saw both hammers fully raised too. And I can see now the squint and the glaring eye that glanced along those barrels. There was a wonderful persuasive power lurking in those horizontal tubes, so I hastened to inform the deacon that we were "not going to run."

"Wa'al," he drawled, "it looked a little that way, I thort, a spell ago," and he still kept us in the field of his weapon, till at length I exclaimed, in desperation,

"Point that gun in some other way, will you?"

"Wa'al, no! I'm not fer pintin' it enny whar else jest yet—not until you've sot them ar bags down ag 1, just whar ye got 'em,

every one on ye." The bags were speedily replaced, and he slowly lowered his gun.

"Wa'al, naow," he continued, as he came up in our midst, "this is putty bizness, ain't it? Bin havin' a putty lively sort o' time teu, I sh'd jodge from the looks o' these 'ere bags. One—two—six on 'em; an I vaow they must be nigh on teu two an' a half bushel in every pleggy one on 'em. Wa'al, naow"—with his peculiar drawl—"look eeah: you're a putty ondustrious lot o' theives, I'm best if ye ain't." But the deacon did all the talking, for his manœuvres were such as to render us speechless. "Putty likely place teu cum a-nuttin', ain't it?" I pause. "Putty nice mess o' shollbarks ye got thar, I tell ye. Quite a sight o' chestnuts in yourn, ain't they?"

There was only one spoken side to this dialogue, but the pauses were eloquent on both sides, and we boys kept up a deal of tall thinking as we watched the deacon alternate his glib remarks by the gradual removal of the bags to the foot of a neighbouring tree. This done, he seated himself upon a rock beside them.

"Thar," he exclaimed, removing his tall hat and wiping his white-fringed forehead with a red bandana handkerchief. "I'm much obliged. I've been a-watchin' on ye gittin' these 'ere nuts the hull arternoon. I thort ez haow yeu might like to know it." And then, as though a happy thought had struck him, what should he do but deliberately spit on his hands and grasp his gun. "Look eeah"—a pause, in which he cocked both barrels—"yeu boys wuz pswowful anxyus teu git away from eeah a spell ago. Naow yeu kin git ez lively ez yeu please. I hain't got nothin' more fer ye teu deu to-day." And bang! went one of the gun-barrels directly over our heads.

We got, and when once out of gun range we paid the deacon a wealth of those rare compliments for both eye and ear that always swell the boy's vocabulary.—From "An Autumn Pastoral," by WILLIAM H. GIBSON, in *Harpur's Magazine* for November.

Midnight Oil.

To the student, night reading is the most congenial, the most satisfying—and, we are bound to add, the most injurious.—By tradition, your true bookworm burrows deepest at night. Perhaps the essayist was right when he exclaimed, "There is absolutely no such thing as reading but by a candle." Had he tried the perusal of a book at noon-day, and found it labour thrown away?

"Whence is thy learning? Hath thy toil O'er books consumed the midnight oil?"

There is at least a grain of logic in the tradition, for, supposing the author to have given his thoughts expression by the light of the taper, it is no more than consistent to believe that we ought to approach their perusal by the same light, "if we would catch the flame, the odour." Moore, enraptured of the young Mr. moon, gave it out that the best of all ways to lengthen our days is to steal a few hours from the night. But pilfering of this kind is, as we have said, injurious to health. Leigh Hunt was right when he said that sleep is best before midnight. He who burns the midnight oil is rarely one who rises with the lark, and lying late in the morning is never found in company with longevity. Besides it tends to create complacency. Weak eyes and weary heads likewise follow nocturnal indulgences such as are the delight of a student. But remonstrances, forsooth, avail little. There is a fascination about midnight study and midnight composition more potent than the alarmist's notes of warning, and authors and students will probably continue to yield to its spell until authors and students are no more.

It is probable that the scheme which was proposed first by Mr. Shaw Lefevre, and which has been advocated by Mr. Bright, will form the basis of the contemplated settlement of the Irish land question by the present English Government. All landowners ready to sell will be given debentures bearing three per cent. for their property. These tenants will be charged four per cent. during a term of years—three per cent. being to pay interest on the debentures, and one per cent. to act as a sinking fund, so that at the end of the term the land will become the property of the occupier. In addition to this, large tracts of waste lands will be bought and let in lots of thirty or forty acres to peasants, and these lots will become the property of the peasants after a certain number of payments.

Under an Umbrella.

One day the duo de Borri happened to be taking a walk in Paris with his wife, and they were returning toward the Elysee when a heavy rain-shower came on. The two promenaders, being unprovided with umbrellas, took refuge under a porte cochere already tenanted by a young man with the appearance of a clerk, who had an umbrella. When the storm had somewhat abated, the duo de Borri stepped up to the young fellow and asked whether he would mind lending the umbrella to enable him—the duo—to take his wife home. The other was suspicious and decidedly objected to parting with his property on any conditions. The duo persisted, but finding that there were no hopes of obtaining a loan of the coveted object, he asked its owner whether, though not having sufficient confidence in him to lend it, he would mind offering the lady his arm as far as her residence. The gallant young clerk willingly agreed to do so, and off the duchess and her escort accordingly started. The latter individual, very garrulous by nature, soon opened a conversation by the query as to whether his companion lived in the quarter they were then in. "Quite close to here," replied the duchess. "I in a splendid quarter, madame, plenty of... and very comme il faut. In fact, it is the grandes dames' quarter, with nothing but duchesses and marquises in it, with their dresses all worked in gold." "Quite so," "I don't know whether madame has noticed the fact, but generally the less elevated a person's grade of nobility the higher the floor he or she occupies." "There is some truth in that," gravely responded the duchess.

"For instance," pursued the theorizer, "you will usually find viscountesses and baronesses on the fourth floor, and if madame happened to be a viscountess I would wager that I know the floor on which she lives—the fourth, that is"—"Not low enough, sir!" said the lady. "Oh, well, then, madame is very likely a comtesse!" "Lower still," observed his companion. "Indeed!" madame must be a marquise, then? "My floor is lower yet," replied the duchess, who had found it very difficult to avoid laughing outright. Just at this moment they arrived at the Elysee, the guard, of course, presenting arms in due form. The proprietor of the umbrella felt inclined to shrink into himself, and was beginning to stammer out some excuse when the duchess cut him short by thanking him very heartily for the service he had done her, and stating that she would not forget it. The young fellow returned to his employer, a wealthy man of business, and recounted his adventure, not quite recovering from the, to him, unaccustomed effect of the society of a duchess for the remainder of the day. Before the expiration of a week he received from his quondam acquaintance of the Elysee an umbrella richly adorned with silver.

Less Anxious to Fight a Duel.

(From the New York Times.)

The lie passed between Wolf von Scheirbrand, one of the reporters, and Gallus Toman, the assistant editor of the *Frie Presse*, of Brooklyn, and the former sent the latter a challenge to mortal combat. Von Scheirbrand was once in Kaiser Wilhelm's army, and is said to be of noble lineage. Toman is a Greek; he speaks five languages with ease, saw service in the union army during the rebellion, and is said to be an adept with pistols. The law reporter of the same journal, Sigismund Kander, was called to be second to Mr. Toman, and he conveyed to the German his principal's acceptance of the challenge. The terms of the match, as fixed upon by the challenged party, were pistols, three shots, the first at fifteen paces, the second at ten, and the third at five, the man who retreated before the programme was carried out to be posted as a coward. Von Scheirbrand jumped at these terms and wanted to fight forthwith. He purchased a pistol, sent his wife to Pennsylvania, and settled his affairs. A hitch occurred. Mr. Toman's second insisted on delaying the duel until some convenient spot might be found where the principals might have their fun without interference. The German swore Toman was a coward, and refused to delay an hour. Thus the matter stands. Scheirbrand's pistol is loaded, primed, and ready, like its owner, for immediate action. Toman has not yet found the convenient spot, disinterested persons say he has not yet neglected his editorial duties in the search. Chief of Police Campbell does not place so much confidence in the determination of either of the gentlemen to fight to consult council as to whether he is empowered to act in the matter.

Lost Explorers.

COMMANDER CHEYNE ON THE TRUE CAUSE OF THE ANNIHILATION OF FRANKLIN'S EXPEDITION.

Commander Cheyne has written the following to the New York Herald:

Franklin's companies were starved to death by the contractor who applied preserved meats—or, rather, proscribed filth—to the Erebus and Terror. This statement I make upon clear and undeniable grounds, as follows: The contractor who supplied Sir John Franklin's expedition also supplied the first searching expedition under Sir James Clarke Ross with preserved meats. What was our experience? In very many instances eight-pound tins labeled "roast beef" and "roast mutton" were found to contain nothing but bones. Meat tins contained rotten vegetables, but never the reverse. The public will hardly credit the statement when I say that the whole of the animals were preserved in tins excepting the horns, hoofs and hides; the very entrails and contents were preserved for our subsistence during an arctic voyage, when no other provisions could be procurable. Often were we, in the midshipmen's mess of her majesty's ship *Enterprise*, compelled to hold our noses while we ate our dinners, so great was the stench, and often also, when the daily rations served out were taken on the quarter-deck for survey and condemnation, Sir James Ross' answer would be, "If I condemn those I might condemn half the provisions in the ship and then we should simply starve."

As one of the victims of that contractor's greed for money I feel the necessity of making these facts public. Now, what happened on board her majesty's ship *Plover*, another arctic ship sent in search of Franklin? On one day, in the arctic regions, 10,670 pounds weight of preserved meats from the same contractor were found to be in a pulpy, putrid state, and were condemned and thrown overboard as unfit for food. What happened at Malta and Dep.ord? Let others supplement this letter by details of the survey held upon his abominable meats at those places. What large quantities of his provisions were thrown overboard from her majesty's ship *Herald* in the arctic regions, doubtless Capt. Bedford Prim can and will disclose. Sufficient for me to say that, when serving in her majesty's ship *Resolute* on Capt. Austin's expedition, my eyes lighted upon this contractor's name on the empty tins lying about the beach at Beechy island, the first winter quarters of Franklin. I knew at once that starvation must have done its work and that Franklin's party fell victims, not to the severity of an arctic climate, but to this man's cupidity. Thank God the remains of Lieut. Irving, one of Franklin's officers, as known by a Royal Naval college medal found in his open grave, have been brought away by Lieut. Schwatka, commanding the American searching expedition, so that I trust a thorough investigation of all the circumstances will be demanded by the public, if only in common gratitude to those brave men who fell, one by one, in the service of their country.

Kind Heartedness.

It is a great blessing to be kind hearted and to be actuated by a desire to be of service to your fellow creatures. If you have the will to confer a favour or to make some one happy the opportunity will not long be wanting. The changes of fortune in this lower world are so frequent that the time is sure to come when you can accommodate your neighbour, and all this without serious inconvenience to yourself. For instance:—A German gentleman with slender means said to his neighbour, the Herr Baron, who lived in a fine house on the other side of the avenue, "My dear Baron, my daughter is to be married next week and I have come to ask if you will kindly lend us your equipage to take us to the church." The Herr Baron was not only kind hearted, but also very discriminating in his favours, so he replied, "My good friend I shall always be delighted when I can be of any service to you. My horses, however, are very large and stately, and I have noticed that people always drive very fast to and from a wedding. You will therefore excuse me if I refuse. But," and here he became very confidential, "if it should so happen at any time in the future that you need my horses to attend the funeral of any member of your family I shall lend to you with the greatest of pleasure."