

The dragoons could scarcely believe their good fortune, when the young physician, of whose hardihood such wonderful tales had been told, submitted passively to his arrest, and, with his sister still in his arms, suffered himself to be led back to the glen. There he was at once securely bound, and placed with the other prisoners under guard, while Agnes, with her hands tied behind her, was permitted to remain at his side.

(To be continued.)

THE SONG OF THE HEPATICA.

Let them sing of the lily and rose as they will,
Of the daisy and daffodil poets hold dear;
There's a flower that to us must be lovelier still,
When it wakes in the woods in the spring of the year,
The tiny Hepatica, welcome and dear,
As it pierces the brown leaves, so withered and sere,
With its delicate bloom and its subtle perfume,
Its exquisite rareness—its fineness and fairness,
How it gladdens our eyes in the spring of the year!

How it whispers that winter is over at last,
That the time of the singing of birds is at hand,
How it blends with the music of streams rushing fast,
And the note of the robin that thrills through the land:
So fragile and graceful, so welcome and dear,
As it smiles 'mid the brown leaves, so withered and sere,
With its delicate bloom, and its subtle perfume,
Its exquisite rareness, ethereal fairness,
How it gladdens our thoughts in the spring of the year!

It comes like a vision of beauty, that soon
Shall deck all the woods in a bridal of bloom;
The waving luxuriant foliage of June,
The breezes that bring us a wealth of perfume;
Yet none to our hearts is more welcome and dear
Than thine, breathing out from the leaves brown and sere,
With thy delicate bloom and thy subtle perfume,
Thine exquisite rareness, thy fineness and fairness,
How they gladden our hearts in the spring of the year!

For thou comest when trees are still leafless and bare,
When the last patch of snow has scarce melted away,
When even the shad-flower still shrinks from the air,
And thy soft stars shine out from a background of grey;
A herald of hope, with a message of cheer;
Peeping out from the brown leaves so withered and sere,
With thy delicate bloom and thy subtle perfume,
Thine exquisite rareness, ethereal fairness,
How they gladden our souls in the spring of the year!
—Fidelis, in *The Week*.

THE CAVE OF THE CROCODILES.

The sudden demand for mummied cats reminds me of a visit paid many years ago to the famous crocodile pits of Maabdeh. It may safely be assumed that those who have visited Maabdeh are very few. It lies some distance from the Nile, behind Manfaloot, where no one stopped in the good old dabeeh days, and the modern steamers only touch; moreover, the pits are in the desert, itself some hours' ride. "Murray," prudent as usual, does not encourage the adventurous. The editor of the Egyptian Handbook admits that his brief remarks are not based on personal knowledge, and the errors therein show that they are not based upon a trustworthy report. It is no unwarrantable presumption, therefore, to fancy that these very curious antiquities are rather discussed than known. My own experience was due to accident. Dropping down the Nile, very late in the spring of 1863, our dabeeh was becalmed off Manfaloot, and the dragoman, badgered by two young Britons to find them sport, unwillingly named the pits of Maabdeh. He proposed simply to ride thither and return—that, indeed, is a day's journey. But, as it chanced, the legend of the pits had been familiar to me as long as I can recollect. In the beginning of this century a certain Mr. Leigh, M.P., explored them, with most disastrous results. His narrative may be found in a quaint old child's book, called "Winter Evenings," extracted, doubtless, from some record which I never came across. "Murray" gives no reference to the story. My recollection cannot be trusted to tell what happened to Mr. Leigh precisely; but I know that one of his followers died in the cavern, another was lost, a third escaped after awful sufferings; and finally they had to run the gauntlet of an infuriated population to the river-side, whence the Pasha, or somebody, sent them prisoners to Cairo. On the whole, it was a very striking adventure, a special favourite in our nursery. So, when the dragoman suggested in this casual way a visit to the crocodile pits of Maabdeh, it seemed very strange and thrilling to my mind—as though he had proposed a trip to fairy land by excursion train. Of course, his modest programme was derided, we would follow the steps of the unfortunate M. P. to the bitter end. Our dragoman became serious now. He urged that it was much too late in the day for starting, and we had to submit; doubtless the good man hoped that a wind would spring up in the night. But he was disappointed. Long before dawn on the morrow we set out; and in the afternoon we reached the spot.

The entrance of the pits is an oblong fissure in the middle of a small plateau among the mountains—that is,

no other entrance was known in 1863. There are no facilities for descent; one may let oneself fall sheer a matter of nine or ten feet, and clamber up again with the help of a donkey boy's cummerbund. I do not recollect that the ugly possibilities of this situation struck us at all, but perhaps some measures had been taken to make sure that the boys did not desert. One of them, indeed, headed the advance; our dragoman had never been down before. The Arab began by stripping completely, and he advised us to do the same. Then we lighted a candle each, and in single file dived into the bowels of the rock. At a few feet distance the passage narrowed rapidly until there was only room to crawl along on one's stomach. This first gallery may be some fifty yards long, it opens on a chamber spacious enough, but a natural cavern evidently. On the further side runs another gallery as cramped as the last, heated like a furnace, reeking with foul air, vile stench of bats, and pungent fumes of bitumen. Then we understood why the Arab had stripped. This frightful passage may be a hundred yards long, or the double of that, or more—one is unused to measure distances crawling like a snake on one's stomach. At the end lies another chamber, of good height apparently, if the floor were cleared, but the whole area with enormous masses of stone packed as they will stand, over which one has to clamber. Here myriads of bats assail the explorer, fling out his candle instantly, clinging to his hair and in ropes. A moment more, and they vanish with a rustle of countless wings, such as I have heard in our climes when the sand grouse fly over head at dawn or evening. On the opposite side of this vault, the first piece of handiwork is observed—a square doorway. I myself would have been quite satisfied to drop the track of Mr. Leigh's footsteps at this point. But the dragoman was interested now—taking, perhaps, a professional pride in putting the business through successfully. He could speak with the guide also. So we went on, still on our stomachs, for an indefinite time, in an atmosphere beyond analysis and heat beyond example in the upper air. It was here, probably, that Mr. Leigh's party broke down, for I think they did not reach the end. We did. After some hundreds of yards, as it seemed, slowly the passage heightened—one could get upon one's knees; and then the flooring changed from smooth granite to soft uneven compost. I lowered my candle to observe. We were crouching along over kneaded human forms.

A very strange spectacle, which seemed to us an embodied nightmare under the excitement of that awful journey. I think I was almost delirious. No scene recurs to my memory now more fresh and striking than that black cave, with a slender glow of candle light here and there, and the half-naked figures glistening with perspiration stretched out above a pavement of heads and limbs. Many of the faces had been gilt, and they shone flickering here and there upon the dusky mass. We could not get any explanation of this extraordinary mangling. The Arab said things had been so ever since he could recollect. It must be supposed that these were mummies of priests and attendants buried with the sacred reptiles in their charge—great personages, some of them evidently. Their families had been laid with them; for there were as many women perhaps as men, and a great number of children. Everyone had been stripped and torn to pieces, all those on the surface, at least, for a hurried examination failed to show how deep the serried pile of bodies lay. Mingled with them were sheets and strips of cloth, fragments of sarcophagi and quantities of women's hair in scalps—wigs possibly. On the other side of this vault lie the hindmost battalions of the crocodile host—innumerable. Standing on the human pavement, there is just space enough above and in front to observe the manner of their disposal, for the topmost layer or two has been pulled down. If it were not certain for other reasons that the present entrance is not that formerly used, the arrangement of the crocodile mummies would prove it. They filled the space completely from floor to arch and side to side until the upper ones were removed—neatly aligned, tail to head, head to tail, with palm leaves laid between, and the interstices filled up with countless multitudes of young and eggs; these latter tied in bundles and wrapped each one in a strip of cloth. Since every layer was piled to the roof, it is manifest that those who arranged them must have worked backwards; and since it would be as easy to drag an elephant through those passages as to drag the superb specimens here—unequaled in my experience—of alligators and crocodiles—they must needs have been brought from the other side. The demonstration is complete, for we had extreme difficulty in drawing behind us two heads chosen from among the smaller ones. Moreover, it is unlikely that the bats used that long subterranean outlet; they are probably acquainted with a better and nearer route. I fancy that the enormous blocks of stone upon the floor of the second chamber had been put there after excavation, out of the way. No one can form any idea how far the caverns extend. Removing the top layers as they went, and crawling beneath the roof, Arabs, we were told, had explored a vault beyond this and found more crocodiles still on the further side. The mountain, they said, was stuffed with them; and it is possible. Assuredly the pits are a mine of nitrate, and this exportation of mummies for manure may effect one good thing at least, by causing them to be emptied. Treasures may lie beyond the vaults where those myriads of crocodiles are stored.—*An Old Traveller, in the St. James' Gazette*.

STRANGE MARRIAGE LAWS.

The *Times of India* publishes the rules which the Bombay Government, with the assent of the Governor-General, has drawn up for regulating the marriage expenses of the Kadva Kanbi caste in the district of Ahmedabad and Kaira. Power to make these rules is given under the Act for the prevention of female infanticide. Some of them are curious. The *chenllo*, or present given at betrothal by the bride's father to the bridegroom's father, is not to exceed one rupee and seven *suparis* and betelnuts. The marriage *chenllo* payable to the bridegroom's father may be one rupee and shall not exceed one hundred rupees. The value of the cocoanuts distributed at the marriage procession is not to exceed ten rupees, and the same limit is fixed on the value of the *mosalu*, or present by the bride's maternal relation. The payment at the ceremony, when the bridegroom touches with his finger his mother-in-law's dress, must not go beyond two rupees. The number of dinner parties given by the bride's family is not to be more than five, and the number of guests at each not more than twenty-five. The marriage party going to the bride's village are not to spend more than thirty rupees, and when the bridegroom is invited to a social evening at his father-in-law's house he is not to be paid more than two rupees, nor to take with him more than five men.

MAGNITUDE OF THE STELLAR CREATION.

The starry heavens present a field to our vision of such beauty, grandeur and immensity that the human mind is lost in wonder at beholding them and asks in vain, under old theories, for a consistent explanation of their physical structure. It is constantly reiterated by astronomers that stars are composed of heated, luminous matter; consequently, uninhabitable. That the fixed stars, with our sun the nearest, are fire balls, or melting furnaces, ever ready to devour nebulae, and everything else around them that is tangible, in order to supply light and heat for the cold and dark universe of space. This old theory cannot longer be rationally sustained, and must give space to the newly discovered law of Action, i.e., combustion. More than six thousand stars meet the gaze of the naked eye in its survey of one night. Astronomers say that the fabulous number of 20,000,000, all aglow, can be seen with a powerful telescope. When we consider that the nearest of these is 200,000 times as far from us as the sun, and that it would take from three and a half to twenty-one years for the light which reaches us to cease, if they were extinguished, we cannot grasp and hold the vast conception in our minds. Yet it is supposed that each of these is a central sun with its own colony of planets circling round it, which in size are vastly superior to those of our own solar system and are travelling through space with such speed that it is impossible for us to comprehend it. The star Sirius is said to be moving fifty-four miles a second, or 194,400 miles per hour; a flaming mass, leading its brood of planets through illimitable space.—*Stephen M. Allen, M.A., in the April Arena*.

CHURCH LIGHTING.

An essential element in the work of every church is a well-lighted sanctuary. A gloomy temple is not a wholesome place to worship in. Cheerfulness belongs to Christianity. The church should be well supplied with windows to admit the sunlight, and supplied with the very best appliances known to science for the artificial light needed for illumination at night. The most efficient dispenser or diffuser of light, either from oil lamp or gas or electric light, is the Reflector manufactured by Mr. I. P. Frink, of this city. There are differences in the quality of reflectors as there are differences in the quality of flour. Competition has brought a number of inferior reflectors into the market. Those who reflect before they buy will buy the Frink Reflector.—*New York Christian Advocate*.

PRACTICAL PHILANTHROPY.

To do good to the utmost limits of our capability is the first duty as it is the highest privilege of the Christian, and in no way can more real benefits be conferred upon mankind than in making known far and wide a sure and certain means of escape from that deadly malady consumption. Where is the family that does not reckon among those of its circle who have gone before one victim to this direful disease? It chooses the fairest, the brightest, the best, and when a fond parent sees pale consumption stealing into his loved daughter's bosom, flushing her cheek, bleaching her skin, and revelling like a living worm upon her vitals, who would not hail as a deliverer sent from heaven one bearing in his hand a remedy which would save his darling from a yawning grave. The mother anxiously watching the boy of her love who at the threshold of manhood is seized by the destroyer and dragged with ruthless and unfinishing hand down to the tomb, would bless with all a mother's heart the power which could save him. Such a power exists, and a benevolent man, himself a brand plucked from the consumptive fire, holds out the hand of help, and without asking for remuneration is ready to communicate the means by which he was cured. All he wants is to behold who suffers. You can send a letter to T. A. Slocum, 186 West Adelaide Street, Toronto, and by return you will receive, free, two bottles of remedy, which is a positive cure.—*Elmira Telegram*.