ON THE SEASONS, OR WEATHER.

There is a law for the air, as the tides of the ocean,
Unknown to men, in its wonderful motion.
The clouds we can see as they float through the air,
But none can conceive yet, their whether or where.
We only perceive them, but cannot say why
They move so irregularly thus in the sky.
The north wind presages a blizzard of harm,
The south, in its turning, pronounces it warm.
On the whole unto me, as the hour or the where,
That the law is restrained by the accents of prayer.
Elijah like us, as a man had the power
To close all the clouds for the day and the hour.
When mercy came down, like a miracle given,
To show us the power of our Father in Heaven.
It would not be well if each man had the power
To bring, when he order'd, the sunshine or shower.
Far better it is as it is, for I see,
No two out of twenty could ever agree.

—Peter Murray.

Athol Bank, Feb. 5, 1880.

AN ARCADIAN REVENGE.

A Sketch of English Society in 1879.

BY JAMES PAYN.

"Depend upon it, my dear sir, there is a system of compensation: I, for example, occupy a position in the country beyond my talents, while you possess talents that are considerably above what is necessary—ahem—to a person of your condition of life."

This amazing speech was addressed to me confidentially in the smoking-room of our common club one night, by Mr. Dornoway-Dicke, after we had dined together for the first time. It was late in August; the club was empty, and I had invited him to join tables, though I knew him to be an ass, rather than to dine alone. The bad man may take a solitary meal without moral damage, and even to the public advantage, since the custom is unwholesome, and tends to shorten life; but to the good man it is harmful. His thoughts, constant as the needle to the pole to what is pure and good, are naturally attracted to himself, and his benevolent actions, his excellent motives, his whole blameless career, pass in review before his eyes, and he becomes self-conscious and self-complacent. Rather than run the risk of this, having ordered my own modest repast, I looked up at Dornoway-Dicke, who, with his glass painfully fixed in his eye, was scanning the same "limited carte" for the day, in doubt (as I guessed) about the French dishes, and observed, "Shall we dine together?" and he had replied courteously, "Charmed, I am sure."

As a matter of fact Mr. Dornoway-Dicke was a man not easy to charm; it was not in Genius (though up to that date I dont think it had ever tried it) to do so; and I believe even beauty herself would have failed in the attempt, unless she had had a title to back her.

Mr. Dicke's weakness was for a lord; a very common one, of course, but in his case unusually pronounced. His conversation was studded with titles as the firmament is with stars; and he was in respect to them what Mr. Carlyle, in relation to spiritual things, calls "terribly at ease in Zion"; that is, he was shockingly familiar with earls and viscounts, while as to baronets, he would refer to them by their Christian names. To say that his views upon all matters were common-place would have been flattering to his intelligence; they were conventional to sublimity.

"Ghost stories are absurd," argues Coleridge, "because, though men tell us they have had such an experience, if a man did really ever see what he actually believed to be a ghost, idiocy would at once supervene"; but I firmly believe that Dornoway Dicke would have seen a ghost without the least injury to his intellectual powers; not because he was already an idiot, but (independently of that) because so unconventional a subject as the supernatural had never entered his mind. If the ghost had a title, then, indeed, an impression might have been made, but it would have been produced by his temporal not his spiritual lordship. In all matters which exercise the human mind, from theology to American bowls, he took not the faintest interest; but I had been informed—and warned—that upon the subject of the dignity and position of the Dornoway-Dicke family he could and would be very diffuse if you were not careful. He was a man in short to nod to, but not to speak with, unless the means of escape were handy. Still, late in August at a London club one cannot afford to be particular, and having such strong moral reasons for not dining alone, I had to dine with Dornoway-Dicke.

There was one circumstance, however, which really did attract me toward this gentleman, and made me wish for a closer acquaintance. It was a much debated question in the club whether he wore a wig or not, and I wanted to solve it. If he did so (for even after dining with him I was not sure), they were the best wigs that ever were. I say wigs, because he must have had lots of them, for his hair was sometimes short and curly, times long, and sometimes—just as it ought to be in the case of a fashionable young gentleman of fifty-four. For there was this disadvantage about the distinguished position of the Dornoway-Dicke family, that, being in the peerage—though it must be confessed in a very remote and "presumptive" fashion—the man's age was known to a nicety. There was then this point (as to his wig) to be cleared up, which promised me some little excitement, and I was also curious to know whether he talked of "the Land" as though it were alive, which I was assured he did. My information upon this point, as it turned out, was correct. The one supreme effort of originality which Mr. Dornoway-Dicke had made was so personify the landed interest in this fashion.

'What the Land wants, sir," he would observe very slowly and majestically (so that you had plenty of time to suggest to yourself "top dressing;" "coprolitics," and what not), "what the Land wants, sir," he always repeated this charming phrase, "is fair play."

"The Land" wanted so many things in the course of our conversation at dinner, that I had begun to think it somewhat exacting, and indeed to get a little impatient of Mr. Dornoway-Dicke himself. But I am never, or at least hardly ever, discourteous, and though bored to extremity, like a wooden ship exposed to the action of the *teredo navalis*, I endured it as though I had been made of iron. I had asked the man to dinner, and in one sense had certainly paid for it, so felt constrained by the duties of hospitality to be civil till the meal was over. When it was finished and we repaired to the smoking-room I had no such scruple. "The Vine," says the classic author, "is the Evoker of Truth," and this is even still more the case with the cigar. Imagine then my indignation at that amazing remark of my companion, "I, for example, occupy a position in the country beyond my talents; while you possess talents that are considerably above what is necessary—ahem—to a person of your condition in life."

"Pray," said I, "Mr. Dornoway-Dicke, confine your observations to yourself, as you generally do. As to your talents, I have no reason to doubt your own modest estimation of them but as to your position in the country I was not aware that you had any."

I hope this was not rude. I spoke in the gentlest tones of which the human voice—or at all events my voice—is capable, and in a manner that was certainly winning, for I felt that I had scored. To my astonishment Mr. Dornoway-Dicke remained quite unruffled; he carefully removed the ash from the end of his cigar with his signet ring, and answered quietly, almost humbly, "You quite mistake me. I said my position in the country, of which, as you tell me, you know nothing. You are not then familiar with Mangelwurzelshire?"

I was certainly not. I had heard of it of course, but I felt myself fortunate in not having to spell it.

"Ah, I thought so," he continued blandly. "You should come down to Dornoway Court and see me at home. Then you would understand why I don't oftener visit London. In town I am, comparatively speaking, nobody, but in Mangelwurzelshire—what do you say now to running down to us for the first week in September.

Five minutes before I should have said "No" without the slightest hesitation; but the outrageous vanity of the man's manner tickled me to the core. I felt curious to see those natives of Mangelwurzelshire to whom Dornoway-Dicke appeared to be a person of importance, and moreover I had not yet discovered whether he wore a wig or not. "The worst part of a wig," says the old riddle, "as of love, is the parting"; but Mr. Doronoway-Dicke's parting was perfect, and so delicate that one would have almost said it had been effected by a female hand. Among the simple inhabitants of Arcadia he might take less extreme precautions to deceive the public; and he certainly would not get his hair cut, if cut it ever was, so often. "I will come to Dornoway Court with pleasure," I said; and on the appointed day I went.

Important as my host's condition in the country may be, it is not my intention to describe "Mr. Dornoway-Dicke at home," as though he were a public character. Suffice it to say, that he was better at home than abroad (or at least in London); and as his family were pleasant people and his house full of cheerful company, I did not regret my visit. The "Court," as he loved to call it, was, however, so peculiar that I must say a few words about it. It was the only edifice with which I am acquainted which gratified one's sense of humor. It was quite spick-and-span as respects newness, but built and furnished in the mediæval style. A gravel drive, rolled to perfection, led up to a frowning entrance, with a huge oaken portal in which was inserted a little hole barred with iron for purposes of espial. Through this the porter was supposed (though he never did it) to take cognizance of the approaching visitor, and if peaceful, to unbar the massive bolts of the great door to let him in. Everything in the house was apparently of the same epoch, but in reality about three years old. In the dining-room was a fire-place as big as an ordinary parlor, and before which one would not have been surprised to see a pair of trunk hose airing, or a couple of jack boots. The sideboard, to the modern and inartistic eye, resembled a kitchen dresser; while in the morning room was a spinning wheel with the flax in it, as though the thrifty housewife had just been called away from that occupation to superintend the construction of a venison pasty, or to issue orders for the entertainment of the company invited to the morrow's tournament.

These ridiculous objects, as I soon discovered, were designed to persuade the public that the Dornoway-Dickes themselves were mediæval, and had resided at the "Court" for the last six hundred years, whereas, as a matter of fact, they were new comers. In the country, even though you are distantly connected with the peerage, this is a serious obstacle to "position," and the whole of my host's gigantic intellect was concentrated on attaining it. He had been "called upon" at once by everyone in the country within a circuit of twenty-five miles, except One. I write it reverentially with a capital O, for it was "The Duke." I am not, of course, speaking of the late Duke of Wellington; in Mangelwurzelshire, as in every other county, the duke was the duke who lived there; his Grace of Turniptops. This divinity was still a young man, unmarried, and not much given to call on anybody; and for three long years all the efforts of the Dornoway-Dickes had been unavailing to induce him to honor the "Court" with his august presence. Two months ago, however, he had sent his card by a mounted messenger, and one month ago, oh, joy of joys! he had accepted an invitation to a garden party at the house for one of the very days on which I was to remain its guest.

It was just after this gracious promise had been given that Mr. Dornoway-Dicke had made his appearance at the club, to make arrangements with Gunter; and now that I knew the circumstances, I was not only not surprised at the magnificence of his deportment on that occasion, but astonished that he should have been so affable as he was. My private impression is, that he asked me down to Dornoway Court not so much from personal affection, as to secure an additional witness to his social triumph; but that is neither here nor there. The Duke was coming, and the family were in a state of excitement rare, I should hope, in Hanwell, and not habitually exhibited even at Broadmoor.

The great subject of discussion among them for weeks had been, who was to be invited to meet the Duke? and it was not exhausted yet. Everybody—who was anybody—had been asked except the Titbats; and the knotty point that could not be settled was, whether these people should be asked or not. Captain and Mrs. Titbat were their immediate neighbors; their lawn-tennis grounds were in fact contiguous, and the two families, though not absolutely on a friendly footing, were well known to one another. Young Titbat, when a player was wanting, had sometimes even been invited to make up the party at their favorite amusement; and when the balls went over the wire fence that separated the two domains, the juvenile Titbats did not pretend (as some young people would) that they were lost, but would honestly chuck them back again. Still the Titbats were not among the County Families, nor anything like it. Their efforts—far more desperate than those of the Dornoway-Dickes—had miserably and utterly failed in that direction. It was not so much that their mansion was too small to be reckoned as a country house, that their paddock could not by any strain of courtesy be called a park, or that their ornamental lake was an undeniable pond. There was something amiss—I never could find out what—about Mrs. Titbat.

She was a woman—I once beheld her, and under circumstances I can never forget—of large proportions and hirsute aspect (indeed, she had a very respectable beard); her complexion was rubicund, and to the unchantable might seem to indicate that she indulged in liquor, though I never heard that she did so. Whatever was wrong with her had happened so long ago that it would have been much better and kinder of her fellow-creatures to have forgotten it. My impression is, instead of rushing into matrimony with the imprudence of most young couples, Captain Titbat and herself had exercised an unusual prudence, and had not got themselves indissolubly united till time and trial had shown them to be suited to one another.

However that might have been, Mrs. Titbat was not "visited," nor would the Dornoway-Dickes have dreamt of asking her to their garden-party except for that contiguity, to which I have referred, of their lawn tennis grounds. The Duke, it was known, was devoted to the game; and if the two grounds could be thrown into one, it was felt by all the family that it would have been an immense improvement. This could scarcely be done, however, without asking Mrs. Titbat's permission, and also the pleasure of her company; and upon the whole it was judged best to leave matters as they were. The wire fencing between the two lawns was so very slight that they really looked to be one and the same, and as there was plenty of ground for the Duke to play upon, he would probably never discover that both the lawns did not belong to Dornoway Court.

In the course of the intimacy that existed between the two families, the young Dornoway-Dickes, with a frankness characteristic of their age, told the young Titbats that the Duke was coming on Friday to play lawn-tennis, but that nobody but tip-top (not Titbat) people were to be asked to meet him; nor was even this the worst, for it had certainly been hinted by elder members of the family, in view of the suggested amalgamation of the tennis-grounds, that such good neighbors as Captain and Mrs. Titbat would certainly be included in the invitation list. To explain what follows I must add that Mrs. Titbat herself was firmly persuaded that she would be among the guests, and was transported with the idea of it; for the being asked "to meet the Duke of Turniptops" (as was stated on the cards) was in Mangelwurzelshire like being presented at Court, and at once both whitewashed and gilded the invitee. One has heard of the ire of the tigress when robbed of her young, but what is that as compared with the state of mind of a lady of blemished reputation who has persuaded herself that it will be rehabilitated, and that in the most splendid fashion, and then suddenly finds that she has been given the cold shoulder? Mrs. Titbat had actually ordered a dress from London in which to appear before his Grace of Turniptops, and the sight of it, as it hung useless in her wardrobe, envenomed her whole being, as though she had worn it, and it had been the garment of Nessus.

She clutched the skirts of Hope to the very last, but when Friday morning arrived and no invitation had come it fled from her soul, and was replaced by the desire for vengeance. If the Dornoway-Dickes could but have known what was passing in that injured lady's mind they might have been reminded of those warning lines—

Lest when our latest hope is fled ye taste of our despair,
And learn by proof in some wild hour how much the wretched dare;

or even if that quotation had not occurred to them I am quite sure they would have asked her to their garden party even at that eleventh hour.

The guests arrived, and in due course—that is to say, exceedingly late—the Duke. The meeting of his Grace and my host and hostess was positively affecting. I thought Mr. Dornoway-Dicke would never leave off shaking his hand, and that his wife would have kissed it. However, he got away at last to luncheon. About two hundred people sat down to it; a select twenty on mediæval chairs, and the rest on much more comfortable but common ones. A dozen of the last had been borrowed, days ago, by the housekeeper without her mistress's knowledge, from the Titbats. The host enjoyed himself as most people do under similar circumstances, that is to say, he was intensely miserable and anxious, but buoyed up by the thought that it would all be over presently, and he would have "his friend, the Duke of Turniptops," to talk about for the rest of his natural life. After luncheon we all repaired to the lawn-tennis ground.

"What a capital lawn you have," observed the Duke; "and what a good plan that is of dividing your ground."

He was referring of course to the iron fencing.

"I was a plan of my wife's," observed Mr. Dornoway-Dicke; for as the other lawn was vacant there was really no need to intimate that it belonged to somebody else.

A gilt youth of the county with one of its gilt young ladies was selected for one side, and his Grace and Miss Dornoway-Dicke for the other. The rest of the company stood round in attitudes of respectful admiration. They were just about to begin when the Duke observed, "Hullo, what the deuce is this?"

The exclamation was caused by the appearance of Mrs. Titbat, splendidly attired, and followed by all her maid-servants; some of them carried baskets of linen, and others lines and clothes props. In the course of a few minutes the whole of the Titbat family linen was hanging on the line; some of the articles were very pronounced in shape, and became much more so when inflated by the breeze, which also (as they were purposely hung close to the wire fencing) carried their graceful folds right over the Duke's head.

The game was begun, but presently an immense petticoat broke loose, and after eddying doubtfully for a few moments settled upon the Duke himself, who emerged from it with difficulty and with a frightful execration. He threw down his racket and said something I could not catch; indeed, I fled into a neighboring arbor and gave myself up to such paroxysms of mirth as almost threatened me with dissolution.

I was conscious of great excitement among the company without, and heard what sounded like the hurried departure of some of them, but I was positively incapable of ascertaining what was going on. The vision of all Mangelwurzelshire's noblest as they stood around that fatal place, and pretended to ignore the fact that the very firmament was darkened above them by the Titbat family linen, and then the spectacle of that petticoat descending upon his Grace's brow, and of himself emerging from it, was always too much for me. I sat in the arbor and fairly wept. Presently, after several severe relapses, I became conscious of a companion. Beside me sat a little man, bald as a knob on the centre of a front door, and swearing softly, and, as it were, thoughtfully, to himself. It was only by his voice that I recognized Mr. Dornoway-Dicke.

"My dear Dicke," I murmured, for I felt it necessary to say something, "why are you here? why are you not entertaining (I did not venture to mention the Duke) your guests?"

"He's gone," he said. It was plain he was only thinking of one of them. "It was all on account of that infernal Mrs. Titbat. It's her own petticoat; it's marked with an M and a T."

I nodded, and held out my hand as though to entreat him to spare himself the recital of the catastrophe. I felt ready to expire. "But are all the rest of the people gone?" I murmured.

"What do I care! Yes. No. What a terrible day!"

"But, my dear Dicke," I said, beginning sincerely to pity him, "it will never do for you to stop here; you must not desert your friends."

"No, that's true," he answered, rising feebly and moving toward the house.

"But you have forgotten something."

"Have I? What? Oh, yes, my wig." It lay on the floor of the arbor where he had flung it in his frenzy. He stooped and put it on mechanically and hind before. This I ventured to remedy, and he thanked me in feeling tones. "Do you think he will ever come again?" he whispered eagerly. "He was very angry. He thought they were our own clothes hanging out to dry. I showed him the M and T. But he would pay no attention. It is a dreadful blow."

And it really hurt poor Dornoway Dicke exceedingly. He had not risen the next morning when I came up to town, and all the family were very much depressed, as though there had been a death in the house. He has been to the club once since, in a more beautiful wig than ever, but of course it can never deceive me. I asked, "How are all at home?"

"Pretty well, I thank you," he said; "that is, as well as can be expected. He has never been near the place since."

Of course I knew that by the personal pronoun he meant "the Duke."—*The Cornhill*

AROUND THE WORLD.

—Mr. Hoppin, the American Charge d'Affaires in London, has taken to attending courts and drawing-rooms in a nondescript uniform, which includes "breeches."

—Asparagus may be now seen in the Paris markets. A small bundle of about a dozen heads sells for four or five francs, and an ordinary sized one from twelve to eighteen francs.

—Instead of taking part in the recent debate on obstruction, Mr. Gladstone attended the matinee of the "Merchant of Venice" at the Lyceum Theatre. He was recognized and heartily cheered on his arrival.

—The Marquis Ginori, proprietor of the Florence Porcelain Works, has gained judgment in the Naples court against the ex-Khedive for the sum due for the dinner service ordered by the latter, and presented by him to the Prince of Wales.

—The fauteuil in the Academie Fancaise, which is at present occupied by the noble form of the Duc d'Audiffret Pasquier is the thirtieth in order of creation. It has been occupied by several illustrious names, including La Fontaine, Marivaux and the hellenist Dacier.

—The yachting world will be glad to hear that Lord Otho Fitzgerald intends shortly to launch upon the waters a splendid new yacht, which is now building for him on the Clyde. She is to be of 300 tons burden and to combine the advantages of sailing and steam vessels—much in the style, though considerably smaller, of the Sunbeam—and is built with three raking masts. She is to be christened the Fair Geraldine.

—In "Daniel Rochat," Mlle. Bartet has her hair dressed charmingly in wavy bandeaux with frisures on the forehead, the chignon is composed of a nœud Psyche and plaits, and the only ornament is a gold comb. This new mode of dressing the hair has been christened by the inventor the "coiffure Iea," from the name of the personage represented by Mlle. Bartet in Sardon's piece. The coiffure has been at once adopted in the salons of fashion.

—London *World*:—"There is, I understand, every reason to believe that a contract of marriage will shortly be entered into between a prince of our royal house, whose modesty and learning have won for him golden opinions, and a debutante who was universally admitted to bear away the palm for beauty at the last drawing room, and who is the daughter-in-law of a Scottish earl distinguished for his gallant bearing and literary attainments."

—It is said that the plot to blow up the Winter palace was discovered by the Berlin police, and information giving many details of the designs of the conspirators was forwarded to St. Petersburg under Prince Bismark's instructions by special couriers ten days previous to the catastrophe which has startled the world. It is no wonder that of the two officials who had charge of the palace one has since shot himself and the other has had a paralytic stroke.

—The chateau of Bagatelle, which the Comte d'Artois, afterwards Charles X. had built in six weeks in order to win a bet of 100,000f. that he had made with Marie Antoinette, is now in the possession of Sir Richard Wallace. At the entrance of the garden were two bronze statues, Hippomene and Atalanta. The other night some thieves scaled the park wall and stole Hippomene and escaped with their heavy booty. The police have not yet discovered any trace of them.

A BRIDE'S REVENGE.

A sensation of a rather unusual character took place not long since in the quiet and sedate village of Collegeville, the circumstances as related to us being as follows:

A marriage was announced to take place in the above named village, the wedding guests were invited and everything appeared to be lovely. At the hour appointed, the wedding party took their places and the clergyman proceeded with the ceremony. He propounded the usual questions to the groom as to whether he would take this woman to be his wedded wife, to love, cherish and protect her, etc., to all of which the gentleman gave a prompt answer in the affirmative. The usual questions were asked of the lady, when, to the surprise of all present, she replied with a decided and emphatic "No!" and, with head erect and a most queenly air, strode from the room. The affair created a commotion among the wedding guests, who were at a loss to understand the cause for the lady's strange conduct. It afterwards leaked out that her intended husband had been displaying his gallantry in another direction, which was not pleasing in the sight of the lady, and she determined not only that she would not marry him, but that she would punish him as well, and she succeeded.

—Brazilian bugs and beetles, both real and artificial, are much used for decorative purposes on the feathers and flowers of new millinery.

—A good digestion will do a good deal more to keep a man straight than good resolutions.

—The "fifteen" puzzle is all the go. Have you tried to solve the problem?

AN UNCOMMON SORT OF SPECTRE.

I.

The Ancient castle of Weinstein, on the upper Rhine, was, as everybody knows, inhabited in the autumn of 1352 by the powerful Baron Kalbsbraten, better known in those parts as Old Twenty Flasks, a sobriquet derived from his reputed daily capacity for the product of the vineyard. The Baron had many other admirable qualities. He was a genial, whole-souled, public-spirited gentleman, and robbed, murdered, burned, pillaged and drove up the steep sides of the Weinstein his neighbors' cattle, wives and sisters with a hearty *bonhommie* that won for him the unaffected esteem of his contemporaries.

One evening the good Baron sat alone in the great hall of Weinstein, in a particularly happy mood. He had dined well, as was his habit, and twenty empty bottles stood before him in a row upon the table, like a train of delightful memories of the recent past. But the Baron had another reason to be satisfied wfth himself and with the world. The consciousness that he had that day become a parent lit up his countenance with a tender glow that mere wine cannot import.

"What ho! without! Hi! Seneschal!" he presently shouted in a tone that made the twenty empty bottles ring as if they were musical glasses, while a score of suits of his ancestors' armor hanging around the walls gave out in accompaniment a deep metallic bass. The Seneschal was speedily at his side.

"Seneschal," said Old Twenty Flasks, "you gave me to understand that the Baroness was doing finely?"

"I am told," replied the Seneschal, "that her ladyship is doing as well as could be expected."

The Baron mused in silence for a moment, absently regarding the empty bottles, "you also gave me to understand," he continued, "that there were——"

"Four," said the Seneschal, gravely. "I am credibly informed that there are four, all boys."

"That," exclaimed the Baron, with a glow of honest pride, bringing a brawny fist down upon the table—"That, in these days, when the abominable doctrines of Malthus are gaining ground among the upper classes, is what I call creditable—creditable, by Saint Christopher, if I do say it!" His eyes rested again upon the empty bottles. "I think, Seneschal," he added, after a brief pause, "that under the circumstances we may venture——"

"Nothing could be more eminently proper," rejoined the Seneschal. "I will fetch another flask forthwith, and of the best. What says your Excellency to the vintage of 1304, the year of the comet?"

"But," hesitated the Baron, toying with his moustache, "I understood you to say that there were four of 'em—four boys?"

"True, my lord," replied the Seneschal, snatching the idea with the readiness of a well trained domestic, "I will fetch four more flasks."

As the excellent retainer deposited four fresh bottles upon the table within the radius of the Baron's reach, he casually remarked:

"A pious old man, a traveler, is in the castle yard, my lord, seeking shelter and a supper. He comes from beyond the Alps, and fares toward Cologne."

"I presume," said the Baron, with an air of indifference, "that he has been duly searched for plunder."

"He passed this morning," replied the retainer, "through the domain of your well-born cousin, Count Conrad of Schwinkenfels. Your lordship will readily understand that he has nothing now save a few beggarly Swiss coins of copper."

"My worthy Cousin Conrad!" exclaimed the Baron, affectionately. "It is the one great misfortune of my life, that I live to the leeward of Schwinkenfels. But you relieved the pious man of his copper?"

"My lord," said the Seneschal, with an apologetic smile, "it was not worth the taking."

"Now by my soul!" roared the Baron, "you exasperate me. Coin, and not worth the taking! Perhaps not for its intrinsic value, but you should have cleaned him out as a matter of principle, you fool!"

The Seneschal hung his head and muttered an explanation. At the same time he opened the twenty-first bottle.

"Never," continued the Baron, less violently, but still severely, "if you value my esteem and your own paltry skin, suffer yourself to be swerved a hair's breath from principle by the apparent insignificance of the loot. A conscientious attention to details is one of the fundamental elements of a prosperous career—in fact, it underlies all political economy."

The withdrawal of the cork from the twenty-second bottle emphasized the sentiment.

"However," the Baron went on, somewhat mollified, "this is not a day on which I can consistently make a fuss over a trifle. Four, and all boys! This is a glorious day for Weinstein. Open the two remaining flasks, Seneschal, and show the pious stranger in, I fain would amuse myself with him."

II.

Viewed through the Baron's twenty odd bottles, the stranger appeared to be an aged man—eighty years, if a day. He wore a shaggy gray cloak and carried a palmer's staff, cast in too common place a mould to furnish even a few minutes' diversion. The Baron regretted sending for him, but being a person of unfailing politeness, when not upon the rampage, he bade his guest be seated, and filled him a beaker of the comet wine.

After an obeisance, profound yet not servile, the pilgrim took the glass and critically tasted the wine. He held the beaker up athwart the light, with trembling hand, and then tasted again. The trial seemed to afford him great satisfaction, and he stroked his long white beard.

"Perhaps you are a connoisseur. It pleases your palate, eh?" said the Baron, winking at the full-length portrait of one of his ancestors.

"Proper well," replied the pilgrim, "though it is a trifle syrupy from too long keeping. By the bouquet and the tint I should pronounce it of the vintage of 1304, grown on the steep slope south southeast of the castle, in the fork of the two pathways that lead to under the hill. The sun's rays reflected from the turret give a peculiar excellence to the growth of that particular spot. But your rascally varlets have shelved the bottle on the wrong side of the cellar. It should have been put on the dry side, near where your doughty grandsire, Sigismund von Weinstein, the Hairy Handed, walled up his third wife in preparation for a fourth."

The Baron regarded his guest with a look of amazement. "Upon my life!" said he, "but you appear to be familiar with the ins and outs of this establishment."

"If I do," rejoined the stranger, composedly sipping his wine, "'tis no more than natural, for I lived more than sixty years under this roof and know its every leak. I happen to be a von Weinstein myself."

The Baron crossed himself, and pulled his chair a little further away from the bottles and the stranger.

"Oh no!" said the pilgrim, laughing; "quiet your fears. I am aware that every well regulated castle has an ancestral ghost, but my flesh and blood are honest. I was lord of Weinstein till I went, twelve years ago, to study metaphysics in the Arabic schools, and the cursed scriveners wrote me out of the estate. Why, I know this hall from infancy! Yonder is the fireplace at which I used to warm my baby toes. There is the identical suit of armour into which I crawled when a boy of six and hid till my sainted mother—heaven rest her!—nigh died of fright. It seems but yesterday. There on the wall hangs the sharp two-handed sword of our ancestor, Franz, the One-Eared, with which I cut off the moustaches of my tipsy sire as he sat muddled over his twentieth bottle. There is the very casque—but perhaps these reminiscences weary you. You must pardon the garrulity of an old man who has come to revisit the home of his childhood and prime."

The Baron pressed his hand to his forehead. "I have lived in this castle myself for half a century," said he, "and am tolerably familiar with the history of my immediate progenitors. But I can't say that I ever had the pleasure of your acquaintance. However, permit me to fill your glass."

"It is good wine," said the pilgrim, holding out his glass. "Except, perhaps, the vintage of 1392, when the grapes——"

The Baron stared at his guest. "The grapes of 1392," said he drily, "lack forty years of ripening. You are aged, my friend, and your mind wanders."

"Excuse me, worthy host," calmly replied the pilgrim. "The vintage of 1392 has been forty years cellared. You have no memory for dates."

"What call you this year?" demanded the Baron.

"By the almanacs, and the stars, and precedent, and common consent, it is the year of grace fourteen hundred, three and thirty."

"By my soul and hope of salvation," ejaculated the Baron, "it is the year of grace thirteen hundred, two and fifty."

"There is evidently a misunderstanding somewhere," remarked the venerable stranger. "I was born here in the year 1352, the year the Turks invaded Europe."

"No Turk has invaded Europe, thanks to Heaven," replied Old Twenty Flasks, recovering his self-control. "You are either a magician or an impostor. In either case I shall order you drawn and quartered as soon as we have finished this bottle. Pray proceed with your very interesting reminiscences, and do not spare the wine."

"I never practise magic," quietly replied the pilgrim, "and as to being an impostor, scan well my face. Don't you recognize the family nose, thick, short, and generously colored? How about the three lateral and two diagonal wrinkles on my brow? I see them there on yours. Are not my chaps Weinstein chaps. Look closely, I court investigation."

"You do look damnably like us," the Baron admitted.

"I was the youngest," the stranger went on, "of quadruplets. My three brethers were puny, sickly things, and did not long survive their birth. As a child I was the idol of my poor father, who had some traits worthy of respectful mention, guzzling old toper and unconscionable thief though he was."

The Baron winced.

"They used to call him Old Twenty Flasks. It is my candid opinion, based on memory, that Old Forty Flasks would have been nearer the truth."

"It's a lie!" shouted the Baron. "I rarely exceeded twenty bottles."

"And as for his standing in the community," the pilgrim went on, without taking heed of the interruption, "it must be confessed that nothing could be worse. He was the terror of honest folk for miles around. Property rights were extremely insecure in this neighborhood, for the rapacity of my lamented parent knew no bounds. Yet nobody dared to complain aloud, for lives were not much safer than sheep or ducats. How the people hated his shadow, and roundly cursed him behind his back! I remember well that, when I was about fourteen—it must have been in '66, the year the Grand Turk occupied Adrianople—tall Hugo, the miller, called me up to him, and said: 'Boy, thou hast a right pretty nose.' 'It is a pretty nose, Hugo,' said I, straightening up. 'Is it on firm and strong?' asked Hugo, with a leer. 'Firm enough, and strong enough, I dare say,' I answered; 'but why ask such a fool's question?' 'Well, well, boy,' said Hugo, turning away; 'look sharp with thine eyes after thy nose when thy father is unoccupied, for he has just that conscience to steal the nose off his son's face in lack of better plunder.'"

"By St. Christopher!" roared the Baron, "tall Hugo, the miller, shall pay for this. I always suspected him. By St. Christopher's burden, I'll break every bone in his villainous body."

"Twould be an ignoble vengeance," replied the pilgrim quietly, "for tall Hugo has been in his grave these sixty years."

"True," said the Baron, putting both hands to his head, and gazing at his guest with a look of utter helplessness. "I forgot that it is now next century—that is to say, if you be not a spectre."

"You will excuse me, my respected parent," returned the pilgrim, "if I subject your hypothesis to the test of logic, for it touches me upon a very tender spot, impugning, as it does, my physical verity and my status as an actual individualized Ego. Now, what is our relative position? You acknowledge the data of my birth to have been the year of grace 1352. That is a matter in which your memory is not likely to be at fault. On the other hand, with a strange inconsistency, you maintain, in the face of almanacs, chronologies, and the march of events, that it is still the year of grace 1352. Were you one of the seven sleepers, your hallucination (to use no harsher term) might be pardoned, but you are neither a sleeper nor a Saint. Now, every one of the eighty years that are packed away in the carpet bag of my experience protests against your extraordinary error. It is I who have a *prima facie* right to question your physical existence, not you mine. Did you ever hear of a ghost, spectre, wraith, apparition, eidolon, or spook coming out of the future to haunt, annoy, or frighten individuals of an earlier generation?"

The Baron was obliged to admit that he never had,

"But you have heard of instances where apparitions, ghosts, spooks, call them what you will, have invaded the Present from out the limbo of the Past?"

The Baron crossed himself a second time and peered anxiously into the dark corners of the apartment. "If you are a genuine Von Weinstein," he whispered, "you already know that this castle is overrun with spectres of that sort. It is difficult to move about after nightfall without tumbling over half a dozen of them."

"Then," said the placid logician, "you surrender your case. You commit what, my revered preceptor in dialectics, the learned Arabian, Ben Dusty, used to style syllogistic suicide. For you allow that, while ghosts out of the future are unheard of, ghosts from the past are not infrequently encountered. Now, I submit to you as a candid man this proposition: That it is infinitely more probable that you are a ghost than that I am one!"

The Baron turned very red. "Is this filial," he demanded, "to deny the flesh and blood of your own father?"

"Is it paternal," retorted the pilgrim, not losing his composure, "to insinuate the unrealness of the son of your own begetting?"

"By all the saints!" growled the Baron, growing still redder, "this question shall be settled, and speedily. Hallo! there Seneschal!" He called again and again, but in vain.

"Spare you lungs," calmly suggested the pilgrim. "The best trained domestic in the world would not stir from beneath the sod for all your shouting."

Twenty Flasks sank back helplessly in his chair. He tried to speak, but his tongue and throat repudiated their functions. They only gurgled.

"That is right," said his guest, approvingly. "Conduct yourself as befits a venerable and respectable ghost from the last century. A well behaved apparition neither blusters nor is violent. You can afford to be peaceable in your deportment now; you were turbulent enough before your death."

"My death?" gasped the Baron.

"Excuse me," apologized the pilgrim, "for referring to that unpleasant event."

"My death!" stammered the Baron, his hair standing on end. "I should like to hear the particulars."

"I was hardly more than fifteen at the time," said the pilgrim musingly; "but I shall never forget the most trifling circumstance of the great popular uprising that put an end to my worthy's aire career. Exasperated beyond endurance by your outrageous crimes, the people for miles around at last rose in a body, and, led by my old friend tall Hugo, the miller, flocked to Schwinkenfels and appealed to your cousin, Count Conrad, for protection against yourself, their natural protector. Von Schwinkenfels heard their complaints with great gravity. He replied that he had long watched your abominable actions with distress and consternation; that he had frequently remonstrated with you, but in vain; that he regarded you as the scourge of the neighborhood; that your castle was full of blood-stained treasure and shamefully acquired booty; and that he now regarded it as the personal duty of himself, the conservator of lawful order and good morals, to march against Weinstein and exterminate you for the common good."

"The hypocritical pirate!" exclaimed Twenty Flasks.

"Which he proceeded to do," continued the pilgrim, "supported not only by his retainers but by your own. I must say that you made a sturdy defence. Had not your rascally Seneschal sold you out to Schwinkenfels and let down the drawbridge one evening when you were as usual fuddling your brains with your twenty bottles, perhaps Conrad never would have gained an entrance, and my young eyes would have been spared the horrid task of watching the body of my venerated parent dangling at the end of a rope from the topmost turret of the northwest tower."

The Baron buried his face in his hands and began to cry like a baby. "They hanged me, did they?" he faltered.

"I am afraid no other construction can be put on it," said the pilgrim. "It was the inevitable termination of such a career as yours had been. They hanged you, they strangled you, they choked you to death with a rope; and the unanimous verdict of the community was Justifiable Homicide. You weep! Behold, father, I also weep for the shame of the house of von Weinstein! Come to my arms."

Father and son clasped each other in a long, affectionate embrace, and mingled their tears over the disgrace of Weinstein. When the Baron recovered from his emotion he found himself alone with his conscience and twenty-four empty bottles. The pilgrim had disappeared.

III.

Meanwhile, in the apartments consecrated to the offices of maternity, all had been confusion, turmoil and distress. In four huge arm chairs sat four experienced matrons, each holding in her lap a pillow of swansdown. On each pillow had reposed an infinitesimal fraction of humanity, recently added to the sum total of Von Weinstein. One experienced matron had dozed over her charge; when she awoke the pillow in her lap was unoccupied. An immediate census taken by the alarmed attendants disclosed the startling fact that, although there were still four arm chairs, and four sage women, and four pillows of swansdown, there were but three infants. The Seneschal, as an expert in mathematics and accounts, was hastily summoned from below. His reckoning merely confirmed the appalling suspicion. One of the quadruplets was gone.

Prompt measures were taken in this fearful emergency. The corners of the rooms were ransacked in vain. Piles of bedclothing and baskets of linen were searched through and through. The hunt extended to other parts of the castle. The Seneschal even sent out trusted and discreet retainers on horseback to scour the surrounding country. They returned with downcast countenances; no trace of the lost Von Weinstein had been found.

During one terrible hour the wails of the three neglected infants mingled with the screams of the hysterical mother, to whom the attention of the four sage women was exclusively directed. At the end of the hour her ladyship had sufficiently recovered to implore her attendants to make a last, though hopeless count. On three pillows lay three babies howling lustily in unison. On the fourth pillow reposed a fourth infant, with a mysterious smile upon its face, but cheeks that bore traces of recent tears.

EFFECT OF SMOKING ON THE HEART.

Dr. Decaisne has made a communication to the French annals of public medicine on this subject. In 1864 he studied the intermittence of the beating of the heart and pulse as a sequel to the abuse of tobacco smoking. He observed in the memoir read to the Academie des Sciences that if one consider, first, that none of the subjects submitted to examination were attacked by any organic lesion of the heart; second, that the majority of them were not in the condition of health which favor the production of intermittence of the beating of the heart; third, that it sufficed in nine of these individuals to suppress the use of tobacco to see the heart return to its normal rhythm; that the following conclusions will not be considered premature: The abuse of tobacco produces, in certain subjects, a state which may be called nicotism of the heart, and which is translated by intermittence in the beating of the heart and the pulsations of radial artery. It is enough, in certain cases, to suspend, or at least reduce, the use of tobacco in smoking to see the irregularity in the heart disappear entirely or diminish. In 1864, Dr. Decaisne related cases of 38 young people, in 27 of whom the effects of tobacco on the economy were observable, and intermittences. He terminated his work by saying that, whatever conditions may be perceived in ascertaining in adult subjects the pernicious effects of tobacco smoking, they are inconteestable to children.