

kindness—perhaps it might be the beginning of a change. McColl, too, came within the range of her vision as she watched. She saw him steady a small stool on the edge of the bed, spread a sheet of paper on it, set ink close by, and move the candle nearer.

Then George asked: "Have you got witnesses?"

"All right," replied McColl; "when we are ready for them, I can have them in, and get their names down in a second."

"Begin, then," said Armour.

And McColl, taking the pen, began to write, to George's dictation, what Jennie instantly discovered to be his will. She listened to the end, and heard him bequeath all that he had to his loving and faithful friend, Simon McColl, as if neither she nor her children had been in existence. This, then, was his kindness, his consideration! She saw McColl assist him up into a position to sign the document, and give him the pen for that purpose, when, for her children's sake, although neither grasping nor very courageous, she rose, and, in her long white night-dress, glided across the floor. The men were so occupied, that neither of them observed her till she laid her hand on her husband's arm, and said: "George, if you have no regard for me, think of the children, your own flesh and blood. Will you go direct to the other world with a piece of iniquity like that to answer for?" and she pointed to the paper his hand hung over. Then, turning to the other, she said: "McColl, you want witnesses. I am here to witness that you mean to rob the widow and the orphan." The pen dropped from George's hand, and McColl grew pale. Her appearance was so unexpected and so ghost-like, and her voice so soft and solemn, that these men, hardened though they were, cowered before her. A few moments passed, and McColl, lifting the useless paper, said: "I suppose, Armour, I may as well go."

"Yes, go now," replied George; "and come back to-morrow night, and we'll see what's to be done—I'll think over it."

McColl slunk away; he had still enough of manhood left in him to be ashamed. When he returned the following evening, Mrs. Armour led him to her husband's bedside; and there he saw those handsome features fixed and ghastly in death. He turned quickly away—he did not like to look in dead men's faces. George Armour had been quite in his usual state of health till four o'clock that afternoon, when he fell asleep, and never woke again.

Now, my story is really done, except that I may say that Jennie found that what her husband had left would make her independent in a moderate way; and that her children grew up to be a comfort and an honour to her.

COAL MINES ON FIRE.

There are many instances of vast masses of coal which have been ignited and have been burning for years. When once well lighted, and all communication with the external air is not entirely cut off (and some impenetrable fissures are quite sufficient to prevent this), then the devouring element pursues its course without interruption. It partially burns the coal, which has nearly the same chemical composition as the diamond, and a considerable degree of hardness, but without transparency or crystallization. It calcines the sandstones and adjacent schists, changing their colours to a sort of red, and altering their composition. At Brulé, near Saint-Etienne, there is a coal mine which has been on fire from time immemorial. The soil at the surface is baked and barren; hot vapours escape from it; sulphur, alum, sal-ammoniac and various natural products are deposited on it; it might be supposed to be a portion of the accursed cities formerly consumed by the fires of heaven and earth.

Other burning coal mines are cited in France; for example, those of Deczeville, in Aveyron, and of Commeny, in the department of Allier. The inhabitants have even, for a long time, kept up these fires for the sake of working the aluminous salts which are given off from the coal and are deposited on the surface of the soil as whitish efflorescences.

In the carboniferous basins of Saarbrück and Silesia there are likewise coal mines which have been on fire for a long time. In Belgium, between Namur and Charleroi, at a place called Falizolle, the fire has been alight for many years. The inhabitants formerly were in the habit of working the coal on their own account. Now it frequently happened that two parties came in contact, causing endless disputes and often sanguinary fights. A favourite way of keeping rivals or competitors at a distance was to throw pieces of old leather on a burning brazier, causing an insupportable stench. One day the fire extended also to the coal, since which time it has never ceased burning. The fire, which burns underground, is seen through fissures in the surface. Sulphur deposits itself round these vents and acid gases are evolved.

In England, especially in Staffordshire, the ignition of the coal has produced surprising effects of alteration in the measures containing coal. The sandstones have become vitrified, baked and dilated by the fire, the banks of plastic clay hardened and changed into porcelain.

In the environs of Dudley there was formerly a coal mine on fire. The snow melted in the gardens as soon as it touched the ground. They gathered three crops a year; even tropical plants were cultivated; and, as in the Isle of Calypso, an eternal spring prevailed. In another Staffordshire colliery, the firing of which dates many years back, and which is called by the inhabitants "Burning Hill," it was noticed, as at Dudley, that the snow melted on reaching the ground, and that the grass in the meadows was always green. The people of the country conceived the idea of establishing a school of horticulture on the spot. They imported colonial plants at a heavy expense and cultivated them in this kind of open-air conservatory. One fine day the fire went out, the soil gradually resumed its usual temperature, the tropical plants died and the school of horticulture was under the necessity of transferring their gardens elsewhere.—*Underground Life.*

IT'S SET FOR TWENTY MINUTES.—A good story is told of a judge visiting a penal institution, and being practically disposed, the learned judge philanthropically trusted himself on the treadmill, desiring the warder to set it in motion. The machine was accordingly adjusted, and his lordship began to lift his feet. In a few minutes, however, the new hand had had quite enough of it, and called to be released, but this was not so easy. "Please, my lord," said the man, "you can't get off. It's set for twenty minutes; that's the shortest time we can make it go." So the judge was in duress until his "term" expired.

ANTS AT PLAY.

It is not generally known that some of the smallest insects enjoy themselves in sports and amusements, after their ordinary toils, or satiating themselves with food, just as regularly as is the case with many human beings. They run races, wrestle with each other, and, out of fun, carry each other on their backs, much in the same manner as boys. These pleasing characteristics are particularly observable among ants, which are remarkable for their sagacity.

Bonnet, a French author, says he observed a small species of ants which, in the intervals of their industry, employed themselves in carrying each other on their backs, the rider holding with his mandibles the neck of his bearer, and embracing it closely with his legs. Gould, another writer on ants, mentions that he has often witnessed these exercises, and says, that in all cases, after being carried a certain length, the ant was let go in a friendly manner, and received no personal injury. This amusement is often repeated, particularly among the hill ants, who are very fond of this sportive exercise. It was among the same species that Huber observed similar proceedings, which he has described with his usual minuteness.

"I approached," he says, "one day to the fornicary of wood ants, exposed to the sun, and sheltered from the north. The ants were heaped upon one another in great numbers, and appeared to enjoy the temperature on the surface of the nest. None of them were at work; and the immense multitude of insects presented the appearance of a liquid in a state of ebullition, upon which the eye could scarcely be fixed without difficulty; but when I examined the conduct of each ant, I saw them approach one another, moving their antennae with astonishing rapidity, while they patted, with a slight movement, the cheeks of other ants. After these preliminary gestures, which resembled caressing, they were observed to raise themselves upright on their hind legs by pairs, struggle together, seize each other by a mandible, foot, or antenna, and then immediately relax their hold to recommence the attack.

They fastened upon each others' shoulders, embraced and overthrew each other, then raised themselves by turns, taking their revenge without producing any serious mischief. They did not spurt out their venom as in their combats, nor retain their opponents with that obstinacy which we observed in their real quarrels. They presently abandoned those which they had first seized and endeavoured to catch others. In one place two ants appeared to be gambolling about a stalk of grass; turning alternately to avoid or seize each other, which brought to recollection the sport and pastime of young dogs, when they rise on their hind legs, attempting to bite, overthrow, and seize each other, without once closing their teeth."

THE BEAVER.—"The manner in which the beavers make their dam, and construct their lodge, has long been reckoned among the wonders of the animal creation; and while some observers have claimed for the little creature more sagacity than it really possesses, its instinct is still sufficiently wonderful. It is certainly true that it knows how to keep the water of a stream to a certain level, by means of an obstruction, and that it cuts down trees for the purpose of backing up the water by a dam. It is not true, however, that it can always fell a tree in the direction required for this purpose. The timber about a beaver dam is felled in all directions; but as trees that grew near the water generally lean towards it, the tree when cut, takes the proper direction by gravitation alone. The beaver then proceeds to cut up the fallen timber into lengths of about three feet, and to convey them to the spot where the dam is to be situated, securing them in their places by means of mud and stones. The work is commenced when the water is low, and carried on as it rises, until it has attained the desired height. And not only is it made of the requisite height and strength, but its shape is suited exactly to the nature of the stream in which it is built. If the water is sluggish, the dam is straight; if rapid and turbulent, the barrier is constructed of a convex form, the better to resist the action of the water. When the beavers have once commenced a dam, its extent and thickness are continually augmented, not only by their labours, but by accidental accumulations, thus accommodating itself to the size of the growing community. At length after the lapse of many years, the water being spread over a considerable tract, and filled up by yearly accumulation of drift-wood and earth, seeds take root in the new-made ground, and the old beaver dams become green meadows, or thickets of cotton-wood and willow."—*The River of the West by Mr. F. F. Victor.*

Mark Lemon, whose death was recently announced by telegraph, had occupied the editorial chair of *Punch* for nearly 30 years. He was one of the knot of authors who in 1841 set on foot the popular periodical with which his name has been so long associated, and from the first he acted as joint editor. Upon the secession of Mr. Henry Mayhew, however, about two years later, he succeeded to the chief post, and this he continued to hold till his death. Mr. Lemon was the author of about 60 plays of various descriptions, principally farces and melodramas, among which, perhaps, the most popular are "The Ladies' Club," "The School for Tigers," "What will the World Say?" and "Hearts are Trumps." Besides these, he wrote a host of charming *nocturnettes* and lyrics, many of which appeared without his name. He was also a frequent contributor to *Household Words*, to *Once a Week* in its palmy days, to the *Illustrated London News*, and to the *Illuminated Magazine*; and some of his *brochures* which originally appeared in these periodicals were subsequently collected and republished under the title of "Prose and Verse." He also was the author of "The Enchanted Doll" and "Tinnikin's Transformations," two Christmas fairy-tales for children; "The Lost Book," "Legends of Number Nip," (from the German) "Tom Moody's Tales," and three or four novels, each in three volumes—"Wait for the End," "Loved at Last," and "Faulkner Lyle." He also edited a collection of jests in one volume, and wrote about a hundred songs. As a lecturer, Mr. Lemon drew large audiences, when in the year 1862 he delivered a course of interesting addresses on various topics connected with the history of London. In 1868 he came out again, but on this last occasion in an entirely new character—the impersonation of Falstaff in the form of a popular entertainment. These representations proved very attractive and lucrative. Death cut short his career at the comparatively early age of 61 years.

Dr. LIVINGSTONE.—At the usual fortnightly meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, Sir R. Murchison, president, said:—I have taken a deep-felt and loving interest in the position in which my very dear friend Livingstone is now left. We have every reason to believe that, from the month of May last, he has been at Ujiji on the eastern bank of the great Lake Tanganyika, and that there he is fairly stopped. His advances are stopped, his provisions and means are exhausted, and most of his attendants are gone, or lost, or dead, though he has got all his documents with him. It, therefore, became of intense interest to me to know how he was to be relieved, and I am happy to say that, in consequence of a communication that I made to the Earl of Clarendon, Her Majesty's Government has consented, to my great satisfaction, to provide the means for relieving Livingstone from Zanzibar. Dr. Kirk had organized some supplies to be sent to him, but, as you know, the cholera broke out, and the caravan was paralysed, and the people lost. However, Her Majesty's Government are now ready to support his claims and supply the money. We are heartily grateful to the Government for having thought geographers worthy of this support.

TO NEUTRALIZE THE ACID OF FRUIT IN COOKING.—The acid in fruit pies may be neutralized by adding to each as much carbonate of soda as will cover a 25-cent piece. This simple precaution, which does not affect the flavor of the fruit or impair its healthiness, saves much sugar, otherwise needed to render the fruit palatable.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Miss Rye intends to return to Canada about the end of June and to bring with her a hundred orphan little girls.

Mdlle. Schneider has been acting and singing in Edinburgh, and has been much appreciated by large audiences. The famous Can-Can has not been performed owing to the representations of the magistrates.

A monk of the order of La Trappe has invented a new potato-peeling machine, by means of which a man can easily peel 600lbs. of potatoes per hour. Does this practically-minded Trappist think for one instant that any one ever wanted to peel 600lbs. of potatoes, and to do it in an hour?

A complete Shakspeare Grammar, treating all the points in which his phraseology differs from modern usage, is in the press, written by the Rev. Edwin A. Abbott. Every part of speech, with its flexions, and every phrase are dealt with; the poet's prosody is treated in the same manner.

The Sultan was so much pleased with a leading article on his speech from the throne which appeared in the *Terak*, a Turkish paper published in Stamboul, that he has conferred upon the editor, Ali Bey, the grade of *caimacan* (lieutenant-colonel) and given him a *baksheesh* of 500*l.* The military rank given to the fortunate editor is explained by the fact that he was originally a cadet in the military school.

The *Miner's Journal*, of Pottsville, Pa., having stated that there was a man in the place who had been drunk for thirty-five years, its editor says he has been called to account by at least twenty different persons, who insist that the item was a personal attack upon them. The man he really referred to, the editor remarks, "is sharp enough to keep his mouth shut about it, but keeps on drinking, just as if not a word had been said."

The *Petit Journal* describes a visit to an extensive manufactory recently established in Paris for making the celebrated *Susini* cigarettes. Before being shown round the works, visitors are ushered into a reception hall in which is situated a beautiful and very curious mirror, and this, attracting the spectator's attention, affords an opportunity for securing his portrait unobserved. On the visitor leaving the manufactory afterwards, a packet of cigarettes is offered for his acceptance, bearing upon the outside a copy of his own portrait, which has been printed and mounted in the meantime.

INTERESTING DISCOVERY.—An interesting discovery has been made by an advocate of Woman's Rights on the other side of the line, as to what the mission of man is. It is, according to this writer, to clean the household crockery. This is based on the authority of the Bible, in the 21st Chapter of 2nd Kings, and 13th verse, viz.: "I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish; wiping it and turning it upside down."

A Juliette woman has original and pronounced views on female suffrage, which she expresses in this way:—

"I just don't believe in these new women notions. I have raised six boys—four of them vote now, and the others will soon be old enough. Then I will have six votes. Now these good for nothing women who have fooled their time away, and never raised a single boy, come round and want every woman to vote for herself. I don't believe in nonsense. I have raised my six boys, and I am going to have every one for me. Those women who go lecturing around the country instead of raising boys, have no business to vote any way."

The *London Court Journal* of a late date reports as follows:—

"A coffin and mummy discovered at Old Gournah, near Thebes, in the course of some excavations undertaken last year by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, has just been deposited in the museum of the Royal Artillery institution at Woolwich. The mummy is in excellent preservation, although it appears to have been partly opened in search of scarabæi and other ornaments. The relics have been thus described by Dr. S. Birch, keeper of Oriental antiquities at the British Museum:—1. Inner coffin, in shape of a mummy, of sycamore-wood, face coloured red, and bearded, striped head-dress and collar on the neck, with the following representations:—The goddess Nu kneeling on doorway; judgment scene in the Hall of Truth. Hades vignette of the 125th chapter of the Ritual; visit of the soul to the mummy on its bier; vignette of the eighty-ninth chapter of the Ritual; Genii of the dead, Anubis, Herus, and symbolic eyes, Isis on feet; at the bag the Tat crowned, the Aif, and dedications to deities. At the foot Apis, bearing a mummy on its back. This coffin is covered with lines of hieroglyphics in black upon a yellow ground purporting to be the speeches of the deceased and deities. It is of the period of the twenty-fifth dynasty, about B. C. 700, in good condition and preservation. 2. Mummy of Ptahareres, son of Shepenah and Takemnebenhar, in its bandages prepared with bitumen; it has been partly opened. The existence of the tomb in which the remains were found was made known to the Prince by an Arab, whose grandfather had discovered it."