

THE SATURDAY READER.

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CONTENTS

TO ARMS! TO ARMS! (Poetry.)	A SALT WATER CURE FOR JEALOUSY.
MY MAIDEN BRIEF.	GONE LIKE A DREAM.
THE JAUNDICE, A SEQUEL TO THE SCARLET FEVER.	NO MAN'S LAND.
LITERARY GOSSIP.	WHY DON'T HE MARRY.
WHAT EMMA SAID. (Poetry.)	PASTIMES.
LIST OF NEW BOOKS.	CHESS.
THE FAMILY HONOUR.	TO CORRESPONDENTS.
THE BIRDS OF CANADA.	MISCELLANEA.
	SCIENTIFIC AND USEFUL.
	WITTY AND WHIMSICAL.

Continued from week to week, the NEW STORY,

"THE TWO WIVES OF THE KING."

TRANSLATED FOR THE "SATURDAY READER" FROM
THE FRENCH OF PAUL FEVAL.

TO ARMS! TO ARMS!

A CRY from the west!—the foe
Have dared pollute our soil;
Up! up! in your native might,
Sons of wealth, and honest toil.
To arms! to arms! let the dastards feel
The vengeful weight of patriots' steel.

To arms! with a gallant rush—
With brave, stout hearts and true:
As our fathers fought, still fight
And crush the robber crew.
Strike home! spare not! let your blows be strong—
Short shrift for the outlawed Fenian throng!

Montreal, June 1st, 1866.

"MY MAIDEN BRIEF."

A LAWYER, says an old comedy which I once read at the British Museum, "is an odd sort of fruit—first rotten, then green, and then ripe." There is too much of truth in this homely figure. The first years of a young barrister are spent, or rather worn out, in anxious leisure. His talents rust, his temper is injured, his little patrimony wastes away, and not an attempt shows a sign of remorse. He endures term after term, and circuit after circuit, that greatest of miseries—a rank above his means of supporting it. He drives round the country in a post-chaise, and marvels what Johnson found so exhilarating in its motion—that is, if he paid for it himself. He eats venison and drinks claret; but he loses the favour of both when he reflects that his wife (for the fool is married, and married for love, too) has, perhaps, just dined for the third time on a cold neck of mutton, and has not tasted wine since their last party—an occurrence beyond even legal memory. He leaves the festive board early, and takes a solitary walk, returns to his lodgings in the twilight, and sees on his table a large white rectangular body, which for a moment he supposes may be a brief—alas! it is only a napkin. He is vexed, and rings to have it removed, when up comes his clerk, drunk and insolent: he is about to kick him down stairs, but stays his foot, on calling to mind the arrear of the fellow's wages, and contents himself with wondering where the rascal finds the means for such extravagance.

Then in court many are the vexations of the briefless. The attorney is a cruel animal; as cruel as a rich coxcomb in a ball-room, who delights in exciting hopes only to disappoint them. Indeed, I have often thought the communications between solicitors and the bar has no slight resemblance to the flirtation between the sexes. Barristers, like ladies, must wait to be chosen. The slightest overture would be equally fatal to

one gown as to the other. The gentlemen of the bar sit round the table in dignified composure, thinking just as little of briefs as a young lady of marriage. An attorney enters,—not an eye moves; but somehow or other the fact is known to all. Calmly the wretch draws from his pocket a brief; practice enables us to see at a glance that the tormentor has left a blank for the name of his counsel. He looks around the circle as if to choose his man; you cannot doubt but his eye rested on you—he writes a name but you are too far off to read it, though you know every name on your circuit upside down. Now the traitor counts out the fee, and wraps it up with slow and provoking formality. At length, all being prepared, he looks towards you to catch (as you suppose) your eye. You nod, and the brief comes flying; you pick it up, and find on it the name of a man three years your junior, who is sitting next to you; you curse the attorney's impudence, and ask yourself if he meant to insult you. Perhaps not, you say, for the dog squints.

My maiden brief was in town. How well do I recollect the minutest circumstances connected with that case! The rap at the door; I am a connoisseur in raps,—there is not a dun who could deceive me; I know their tricks but too well! they have no medium between the rap servile and the rap impudent. This was a cheerful touch; you felt that the operator knew he should meet with a face of welcome. My clerk, who is not much under the influence of sweet sounds, seemed absolutely inspired, and answered the knock with astonishing velocity. I could hear from my inner room the murmur of inquiry and answer; and, though I could not distinguish a word, the tones confirmed my hopes:—I was not long suffered to doubt: my client entered, and the pure white paper, tied round with the brilliant red tape, met my eyes. He inquired respectfully, and with an appearance of anxiety which marked him to my mind for a perfect Chesterfield, if I was already retained in *v. ———*. The rogue knew well enough I never had had a retainer in my life. I took a moment to consider; and, after making him repeat the name of his case, I gravely assured him I was at perfect liberty to receive his brief. He then laid the papers and my fee upon the table, asked me if the time appointed for a consultation with the two gentlemen who were "with me" would be convenient; and, finding that the state of my engagements would allow me to attend, made his bow and departed. That fee was sacred gold, and I put it to no vulgar use.

Many years have now elapsed since that case was disposed of, and yet how fresh does it live in my memory; how perfectly do I recollect every authority to which it referred! how I read and re-read the leading cases that bore upon the question to be argued. One case I so *belumbed*, that the volume has opened at it ever since, as inevitably as the prayer-book of a lady's-maid proffers the service of matrimony. My brief related to an argument before the judges of the Queen's Bench, and the place of consultation was a Coffee-house, adjoining the Court House. There was I, before the clock had finished striking the hour. My brief I knew by heart. I had raised an army of objections to the points for which we were to contend, and had logically slain every man of them. I went prepared to discuss the question thoroughly; and I generously determined to give my leaders the benefit of all my cogitations—though not without a slight struggle at the thought of how much reputation I should lose by my magnanimity. I had plenty of time to think of these things, for my leaders were engaged in court, and the attorney and I had the room to ourselves. After we had been waiting about an hour, the door flew open, and

in strode one of my leaders, the second in command, less in haste (as it appeared to me) to meet his appointment than to escape from the atmosphere of clients in which he had been enveloped during his passage from the court—just as the horseman pushes his steed into a gallop, to rid himself of the flies that are buzzing around him. Having shaken off his tormentors, Mr. ——— walked up to the fire—said it was cold—nodded kindly to me—and had just asked what had been the last night's division in the house, when the powdered head of an usher was protruded through the half open door, to announce that "Jones and Williams was called on." Down went the poker, and away flew ——— with streaming robes, leaving me to meditate on the loss which the case would sustain for want of his assistance at the expected discussion. Having waited some further space, I heard a rustling of silks, and the great ———, our commander-in-chief, sailed into the room. As he did not run foul of me, I think it possible I may not have been invisible to him; but he furnished me with no other evidence of the fact. He simply directed the attorney to provide certain additional affidavits, tacked about, and sailed away. And thus ended first consultation.

I consoled myself with the thought that I had at least all my materials for myself, and that, from having had so much more time for considering the subject than the others, I must infallibly make the best speech of the three.

At length, the fatal day came. I never shall forget the thrill with which I heard ——— open the case, and felt how soon it would be my turn to speak. Oh, how did I pray for a long speech! I lost all feeling of rivalry; and would have gladly given him everything that I intended to use myself, only to defer the dreaded moment for one half hour. His speech was frightfully short, yet, as it was, it made sad havoc with my stock of matter. The next speaker was more concise, and yet my little stock suffered again severely. I then found how experience will stand in the place of study; these men could not, from the multiplicity of their engagements, have spent a tithe of the time upon the case which I had done, and yet they had seen much which had escaped all my research. At length, my turn came. I was sitting among the back rows in the old court of Queen's Bench. It was on the last day of Michaelmas Term, and late in the evening. A sort of darkness visible had been produced by the aid of a few candles dispersed here and there. I arose, but I was not perceived by the judges who had turned together to consult, supposing the argument finished. B——— was the first to see me, and I received from him a nod of kindness and encouragement, which I hope I never shall forget. The court was crowded, for it was a question of some interest; it was a dreadful moment; the ushers stilled the audience into an awful silence. I began, and at the sound of an unknown voice every wig of the white inclined plane at the upper end of which I was standing suddenly turned round, and in an instant I had the eyes of seventy "learned friends" looking me full in the face! It is hardly to be conceived by those who have not gone through the ordeal how terrific is this mute attention to the object of it. How grateful should I have been for any thing which would have relieved me from its oppressive weight—a buzz, a scraping of the shoes, or a fit of coughing would have put me under infinite obligation to the kind disturber. What I said, I know not; I knew not then; it is the only part of the transaction of which I am ignorant; it was a "phantasma or a hideous dream." They told me, however, to my great surprise, that I spoke in a loud voice, used violent gesture, and as I went along seemed to