The Free Press.

Friday, August 9, 1878.

On a Sheet of Blank Paper.

O virgin page, unbreathed, untainted!
Without a line, without a blot,
Thou emanicipt blank-faced mystery
Of coiled thoughts, of unsung songs,
Who can foresee thy end, thy lot,
Who tell thy future history?

Freedom e'tion art reserved to bear
The record of a lofty mind,
Whose echo shall defy Time's wave;
Or by the rhythmic basket near
Some dread hand may toil thee and
Or, even, mid a wicked grin

Quail, upon thy vacant face,
A poet write a stirring ode,
Some wondrous lay, some graceful sonnet!
Or shall Miss Jones' fingers trace
Some lines to Madame à la Mode
About the color of her bonnet?

Then may'st come doctor's mandate tear
For horrid drugs or an emetic;
Or from the stable an i O'Brien
Some love-sick swain to Dulcinea,
In halting doggerel, may pathetic
May send thee as a billet-doux.

Or on thee, haply, shall be wrought
Some picture, be for aye remain,
A masterpiece of tint and line!
Or shall the baser pen and thought
Of Thomas or of Sarah Jane,
Degrade thee to a valentine?

O empty blank! that only craves
A touch, a word, in paint or rhyme;
Thou silent monument of shame
Or glory, unto artist or sinner,
Or brain that have not thought enough,
Or hands that must give thee being.

What ill destroyed, what good abused!
So ready thus to cheer or pain,
So pr mpt for blessing or for curse—
And here, half-conscious, as I mused,
I took the paper up again,
And scribble off this trite verse!
—Chambers' Journal.

JET:

OR,

HER FACE OR HER FORTUNE

How if the door of moral suicide should be shut upon him—if Lady Anston, most fickle of women, should go the way of the crowd, bestow her affections and her jointure upon some Dr. Herriford of the minute, and leave him penniless?

"The possibility had been brought home to him, during a short stay in England, by a certain growing tone of fretfulness in milgate's letters; and, as I have said, his reputation was already taken when he met Jet Conyngham—Jet, whom to look at was to love, every whisper of whose girlish voice was music, and whose heart, whose fortune, almost before he had set himself to the task in earnest, he had won.

Biron's intention had been to commit moral suicide, to bestow on the husband of Lady Austen. Without merit or demerit of of his, he finds himself the lover of all that is sweet and pure in woman, Jet's decease his portion for the future—with only an empty purse, and the petty annoyance of Schmidt and secretary and secretary—for a bill, as present drawback.

A bill for some three or four hundred francs! – he smiles as he runs his eye down the items—items that, a fortnight ago, he might have disputed, but that to him, the millionaire are insignificant. He compliments Herr Schmidt upon the moderate terms of his establishment. It is necessary that Mr. Biron run over to Nice for six-and-thirty hours on urgent business; it is necessary that Mr. Biron pay a visit to the Berlin Ulrich. His friend, Herr Schmidt, of course, will allow him to remain his debtor until his return!

Herr Schmidt, although the most prudent Prussian, finds himself powerless before Le Heureux's sire! Monsieur has the claims; and, in the early gray of the November morning, a girlish face, wet with tears, is busily forth at upper window of the Hotel Paradis to watch Mr. Laurence Biron's departure. April weather is quickly shed, quickly dried. Jet Conyngham's love is still at the blossoming stage, when to talk of an absent sweetheart is to be a heart of nineteen, only a degree less dear than his presence. And the one human being to whom she could speak of Biron, will arrive in Estere! to-night. Poor Cora, with the horizon of Mlle. Dudford bounding her desires, the unromantic Reader of Dufford for the hero of her life-drama!

Nothing, it has been cynically said, succeeds like success. Happily this is not verified within an hour of his arrival at Nice. A week since Messrs. Ulrich Freres have advanced the Reverend Laurence Biron twenty pounds, twenty pence, upon his own note of hand! I think not. A week ago the Reverend Laurence Biron was only the money-borrowing, impecunious, black-coated adventurer, whom Messrs. Ulrich Freres have known, to their cost, for years; his acceptances, his I O U's, his vouchers, the dim prospect of one day becoming Lady Austen's husband his most valid security.

With his altered prospects his very outward man would seem to have changed. As he walks into the bank his air is that of a merchant prince. His demands an interview with the senior partner as costly as though his balance constituted the treasury of the firm, and is accommodated with one hundred pounds simply in exchange for his own autograph—his own autograph, and the deference introduced by mention of Frederick Conyngham's name.

"Before the new year, my dear Ulrich, Mr. Conyngham will be my father-in-law. My engagement to his daughter is not yet formally announced, but I do know that I can rely upon your discretion. As to the forms of my banker—"

"The fortune of Mademoiselle Conyngham admits of no question," returns the complaisant banker—"the fortune which at first wife was an heiress—West Indian property—money dependent on sugar plantations. I was a boy at the time of his marriage, but I remember the circumstances well. The young lady to whom you are engaged will have a dowry, of forty thousand pounds."

Always that ridiculous legend of sugar-plantation and of a West Indian mother! Legend of jet's wealth matters little to Laurence Biron, from Westminster was fixed for noon, but own. The weight of his hundred pounds, all in solid golden *rouleaux*, appears to him a delightful morsel of his gilded future. He walks about Nice, seeing the familiar sights and streets under the kind of glamour of an opium eater. Huge orange-and-blue placards are advertising to the public that the opera will open for the season to-night. The name of Mlle. Desmarais Rose Fanon, a pretty *figurante*, whom Biron remembers well in Paris, is among the *corps de ballet*.

He wends his way to the principal Nice flowershop, buys the costliest bouquet it contains, and has the gratification of flinging it that night, from his stall in the first stalls, at the agile feet of Mademoiselle Rose! Coming out of the theatre, the notorious Count Zaffa—a too close gambling associate of other days—lays his hand on Biron's shoulder. The count proposes an hour's adjournment to the club for whist. As miladi is not in Nice, the evenings of his reverence are, of course, at his own disposal? Whist means baccarat; the hour lasts till daybreak; and Jet's lover loses—gold, I O U's—everything.

The terrible eye of Morning soon him beggar'd as he stands!

Well, as he travels back to Estere! in the course of the afternoon, Mr. Biron considers himself by recalling the adage respecting bad luck at cards (curious that a man who looks upon conscience as a myth, upon prayer as moral delirium tremens, should still cling to some puerile, pet superstition, in the matter of hearts and diamonds!) To have lost may prove a better omen for his love affairs than to have won. If he could but free himself from the horrible embarrassment of the moment—for, whatever the fate of milady and secretary, his debts of honor must be slurred over like a tradesman's!

It has been decided between himself of last that Mr. Conyngham shall bear of their engagement at the first auspicious moment after Cora's arrival. Mr. Conyngham may prove a man easy to deal with on the score of money, a man belonging to the invaluable landing-section of the human race. If not—as money must be had and at once—why, there is Lady Anston. During all the by-gone years, all the stormy vicissitudes of their friendship, Lady Austen has never once drawn back from helping him in his difficulties. And when he is married—ah! when he is married—he will taste the sweetness of repaying her every benefit that the cruel reverses of his life have forced him to accept, and with interest!

Absorbed in dreams of Jet Conyngham—I mean of Jet Conyngham's fortune, and of the miserable skills to which he may yet be put ere he handle it—Mr. Biron finds himself nearing the termination of his journey. The sun is setting over the mountains of Les Maures as the train passes by Carcoules. And the rose-flushed peaks, the tender, opal sky, recall to him, little sentimental though he be, the scene among the fir-woods—his girlish sweetheart's first blushing whisper of his name, the first contact of her lips! He is in love—as Mark Austen was in love or as Jet is; but he likes the girl to the utmost point of his capacity for liking, and looks forward, with genuine impatience, to the moment when he shall once more fold her in his arms.

When love and interest are inseparably, vitally connected, even a thirty-six hours' absence may be fraught with peril.

The omnibus from the Hotel Paradis awaits him by command at Salon, the little station five miles from Estorel, at which passengers from the south are wont to stop in preference to making the longer circuit by Tamaris and the junction. The German conductor advances to greet him, finger on cap. Two other travelers are expected by this train for the Hotel Paradis. Will the gaslight Herr have the complaisance to remain a short five minutes on the platform while their luggage is being seen to? Or will the gaslight Herr take his place at once in the omnibus?

Biron takes his place mechanically, his thoughts still of Jet, and of how by this time she and Cora will begin to look for his coming. Mechanically he listens while box after box, mule after mule, are being thrown up, with many a muttered curse from drivers and railway officials, to the roof. Mechanically he watches a couple of Englishwomen mistress, it would seem, and maid leave the station.

The Englishwomen advance. He hears a voice that he would recognize at the nether pole disputing the porter's demands in voluble bad French. He catches one glimpse of a face. Another moment, and Lady Anston for it is she—is standing in on the step of the omnibus—has entered, recognized him.

"Laurence!"

(To be continued.)

Extraordinary Case of Abstinence from Food

Fasting for Seventeen Days—Novel Cure for Consumption.

From the Spectator.

There is now in this city a well-authenticated case of a lady, 17 years of age, who has not tasted food of any kind for 17 days, but we are not at liberty to give the name of the lady at present, or to indicate the locality where she may be found. Her accompli fasement is that when she began to study the Scriptures, but, somehow, she could never have her doubts set at rest until she met a young woman who preached repentance by baptism through Christ, and even then she was not convinced until she witnessed the cure of a young woman of that dreaded disease, consumption, after all the physicians she had consulted had given her up to death. The young woman was completely cured, and in a short time after was made the recipient of special dispensations from heaven. At one time she received a message to fast, and actually refrained from food for forty-five days. About the 20th of July, while meditating in the garden of Goderich, she received a command to proceed to Hamilton and commence another fast, and accordingly she took the train and came to this city, and immediately commenced her mission, and will continue to refrain from food of all kinds until information from above that she has accomplished her task. She converses freely about her belief and her special endowments, and is no doubt sincere in her hallucination. The family whom she is visiting have watched her very closely, and they state that she has tasted no food of any kind for the past seventeen days, and that the only liquids which have passed her lips during that time has been one glass of lemonade and a few glasses of water. She also states that 23 years ago her husband went to Australia to seek his fortune, and regularly remitted her money for several years, but recently no letters from her acknowledging the receipts of money, he came to the conclusion she was dead, and ceased remitting. Not having heard from her husband she arrived at the conclusion she was a widow, and put on the clothing necessary to indicate this lonely condition; but one day she had a revelation, and was informed that her husband was still in the land of the living, had married her money, which a neighbor had appropriated to his own use. She did not say whether this man had been informed of the vision and had restored his ill-gotten gain, but the presumption is she would not hide such a vision under a bushel. The stranger, Travelling Salesman Island, with whom a lady seems to be reasonably well sustained, but her face has a pinched and care-worn appearance, and her tongue is not apparently affected in the least. She says she is a mother in Israel, and when she has time to spare from her devotions eating she is astonished to set to and devour all the food which her appetite or condition of body may demand. The gentleman whose house she is visiting had some doubt of her physical powers, and when informed the other day that she had carried a four gallon can filled with coal oil from the top to the bottom of the stairs he requested, as the feat was accomplished in his absence, that it should be repeated, and the woman at once complied, when the gentleman's scepticism was removed. She sleeps well, and states that she feels on heavenly manna, but says nothing about honey. She extends considerable familiarity with the Bible, and quotes copiously from it to prove her claims to special attributes to be borne out by numerous texts. The Bible is correct in her opinion, and without it the world could not go on—we would not be specially favored. In conclusion, we might say, that the whole of the family where she is visiting—father, mother, son and daughter—believe in her truth and sincerity, and are convinced that she has received food of any kind since commencing her fast.

Miss Beckwith's bwim.

London Telegraph.

Miss Beckwith accomplished the task yesterday of swimming twenty miles in the Thames, and it was stated that the feat was not performed for a wager, but to encourage ladies in the art of natation. The start from Westminster was fixed for noon, but it did not take place until twenty six minutes later, by which time several thousand spectators had gathered on the bridge and the Victoria embankment. As soon as the young lady, attired in an orange-colored costume, appeared on the steamer which was to accompany her she was greeted with cheers, and the cheering was repeated when she dived into the water. She was followed on the journey by a boat containing Prof. Beckwith and his son Willie, the champion of London. She swam in the middle of the stream with a long, powerful breast stroke, and reached Lambeth bridge in nine minutes. Battersea bridge was passed in thirty-four minutes, and Chelsea in forty-seven minutes, while the distance covered in the first hour was about three and a quarter miles. Going merrily along the swimmer was off Wandsworth in 1h. 15m., and Putney, five and a half miles from home, 1h. 50m. She continued the same measured stroke, and in 2h. 9m. passed Hammersmith bridge, where a large crowd encouraged her efforts with a cheer. The ship at Mortlake being reached, nearly half the journey was performed in a little less than three hours. Kew Bridge, eleven miles was shot under in 3h. 28m. from the start, and then, for the first time, some refreshment was partaken of. At 5 o'clock Richmond was sighted, and a short distance beyond this pleasant resort a turn was made for home, the young lady not exhibiting the slightest symptom of fatigue. The journey back to Barker's rails, Mortlake, where the twenty miles were completed, was accomplished without mishap, and Miss Beckwith, far from being exhausted, was taken into the steamer amid hearty manifestations of satisfaction, having been in the water six hours and twenty-five minutes.

..They have an ant out in Utah that must be almost as strong as a mother-in-law, for it is said to be able to draw 16 times its own weight. Four of them together weigh only a grain, but they can easily pull 64 grains, or 19 of them would be sufficient to move a pound. This ant is red and black, is a great fighter, and is said, to keep diminutive cows, which it milks whenever it wants a drink. Anybody may believe the cow part of the story who is that kind of a man.

..'Camping and fishing parties," says the Ithaca (N. Y.) *Journal*, "can obtain a good light by soaking a common brick in kerosene oil for ten minutes. The brick absorbs the oil, and on being suspended with wire and ignited, a brilliant light, lasting for half an hour, is obtained. This is said by those who have experimented with it, to be greatly superior to the torch in general use."

..'Murder! murder!" cried a pretty milliner of Galveston, Texas, Mrs. Ella Quinn, and all the time she was peppering the body of Capt. Guthrie, a false lover, with Derringer balls. Guthrie was trying to dodge behind a tree, but he will die.

Cypriot Women.

The Turks when describing a Greek girl say that she is kneaded up with tricks. They ought to know, for in the palmy days of the harems those institutions contained many a young lady from the Ægean Isles, bought by agreement with her kinsfolk; and doubtless so late as two years ago the Turkish girl merchant paid his yearly visits to Cyprus. His ostensible purpose was to recruit dancing girls, for the word slavery was not to be so much as mentioned among the Greeks; but it was pretty well understood that when a young Cypriot woman accepted an offer to go and dance at Constantinople or Bagdad her relatives saw no more of her unless she turned up in after years as a large widow with a great deal of superfluous jewellery about her. Vassilopoulos, the inn-keeper, used to say (but this was some years ago) that the palace, and even his Majesty the Sultan, had a particular liking for the Cypriot maidens, owing to their merry eyes, and their incomparable grace in dancing; and that if it had not been for the vigilance of the Cyprian young men and the patriotic disinterestedness of Cyprian mothers, the whole female population of the island sacred to Aphrodite would have found its way into the Turkish seraglios. This statement contained possibly but a grain of truth; for Cyprian mothers of the peasant class, when overburdened with families, did not think twice about accepting a merchant's offer of a cash payment in exchange for one of their daughters. The transaction was not, indeed, regarded as honorable; it was not talked about, and some mystery had to be observed in conveying the girl away; but the merchant scarcely selected more than a score or two of the population every year, and it was known that the chosen few were going to a life of brilliant possibilities which might result in their wielding considerable power in the State and sending home frequent remittances to their relations. For the rest, the female population in Cyprus, as in the other Greek islands, much exceeded that of the males; and when the inn-keeper's two sons, Dimitri and Pericles, went a-courting they must have found the marriage market rather overstocked. The Cyprian damsel is a curious compound of fascinations and oddities. Seen at her best, on one of those innumerable saints' days when she does no work beyond tricking herself out in fine clothes and assisting her mother to dispense hospitality, she looks like a masquerade heroine, whatever be her station. She weaves up her hair with gold coins, twists it, plaits it, and contrives with a red and yellow kerchief, a head dress which looks like a turban, but is made top-heavy by being surmounted with an embroidered muslin cap and tassel. She wears baggy breeches, sky blue or pink, which descend to the knee, the rest of the legs and feet being bare, except when she has saved pocket money enough to buy a pair of babouches, in which she feels uncomfortable. She is generally fat, and wears a short jacket profusely braided, which does not reach to her waist; tongue and whitens her creamy complexion till it looks like the face of a wax image; she paints her eyebrows deep black, and by some cunning pencil-work about and at openness ever since. It would make a the corners of her eyes, contrives to make them look more than their proper size. Then she feels happy, and giggles when complimented. She cannot read or write, but she can sing, play on a triangular guitar, and spin round in a fashion dance which is the delight of Arab sway, and makes her cry "Hoo!" while the sheikh or who watches her turns giddy from sympathy. Nor is she without worldly wisdom: for during the long Lenten fast and on Fridays throughout the year she lives on bread and olives, considering it a deadly sin to eat "anything that has breathed"—fish included. She soon learns to lisp her lips during that time has been one glass of lemonade and a few glasses of water. She also knows that abstinence oneself with a Cyprian girl; for something of the Mussulman practice of secluding women prevails among the Greeks, and very few maidens will accept off like frightened poultry if a man approaches them to talk; but once this shyness has worn off, the chief conversational topic of the bashful maiden will relate to her neighbors' shortcomings. Armed at once with smothered laughter things which she has learned in the most surreptitious manner; and her dark eyes will sparkle with the fun of mischief-making.

The countless feast-days in the Greek calendar afford an excuse for public processions, mixed with social festivity, and there is no breed up, but imagine a young Cypriot on these occasions to put forth fruit jellies, raw spirits and coffee to entertain the stranger. Travelling Turks of the Island with Vassilopoulos, one was reminded one or twice a week that a day had come when no work was to be done; and, in fact, the fields are as deserted on these days as Sunday is on Sunday. In the morning the people troop to church, where the papas (priests) officiate in gorgeous vestments which chronicles mostly in ruins, but full of votive images in painted marble or in carved wood, dressed and lit like dolls. In the afternoon, romping, gambling, athletic feats, and often drinking, quarrels, ending by fights with knives, serve to while away the time until night comes on, when there is a great deal of dancing, singing and carousing inside barns. All this is gay enough, and is kept up in the streetranger, who finds the people more attractive on working days, when they have no fripp ery or gewgaws on at all. The women are excellent housewives, and their daughters learn early in life that whatever they make the store doorsteps of their cottages must be like white beasts. It might be wished that they were equally active in warring against the parasites which linger in the woodwork of their dwellings, but they are taught to treat these creatures as honored guests, and never to disturb them. On wearing days the Cyprian girl dresses loosely in cotton breeches and chemise, and lets her hair fall down her back. She puts on below the neck with a string of beads. She is surprisingly active, despite her plumpness, and races about after goats, pigs, and fowls, with a fleetness which might result in their wielding considerable power in the State and sending home frequent remittances to their relations. For the rest, the female population in Cyprus, as in the other Greek islands, much exceeded that of the males; and when the inn-keeper's two sons, Dimitri and Pericles, went a-courting they must have found the marriage market rather overstocked. The Cyprian damsel is a curious compound of fascinations and oddities. Seen at her best, on one of those innumerable saints' days when she does no work beyond tricking herself out in fine clothes and assisting her mother to dispense hospitality, she looks like a masquerade heroine, whatever be her station. She weaves up her hair with gold coins, twists it, plaits it, and contrives with a red and yellow kerchief, a head dress which looks like a turban, but is made top-heavy by being surmounted with an embroidered muslin cap and tassel. She wears baggy breeches, sky blue or pink, which descend to the knee, the rest of the legs and feet being bare, except when she has saved pocket money enough to buy a pair of babouches, in which she feels uncomfortable. She is generally fat, and wears a short jacket profusely braided, which does not reach to her waist; tongue and whitens her creamy complexion till it looks like the face of a wax image; she paints her eyebrows deep black, and by some cunning pencil-work about the corners of her eyes, contrives to make them look more than their proper size. Then she feels happy, and giggles when complimented. She cannot read or write, but she can sing, play on a triangular guitar, and spin round in a fashion dance which is the delight of Arab sway, and makes her cry "Hoo!" while the sheikh or who watches her turns giddy from sympathy. Nor is she without worldly wisdom: for during the long Lenten fast and on Fridays throughout the year she lives on bread and olives, considering it a deadly sin to eat "anything that has breathed"—fish included. She soon learns to lisp her lips during that time has been one glass of lemonade and a few glasses of water. She also knows that abstinence oneself with a Cyprian girl; for something of the Mussulman practice of secluding women prevails among the Greeks, and very few maidens will accept off like frightened poultry if a man approaches them to talk; but once this shyness has worn off, the chief conversational topic of the bashful maiden will relate to her neighbors' shortcomings. Armed at once with smothered laughter things which she has learned in the most surreptitious manner; and her dark eyes will sparkle with the fun of mischief-making.

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