

THE EPIC OF THE LION.

Faithfully rendered from the French of M. Victor Hugo's "L'Art d'être Grandpère."

BY EDWIN ARNOLD, S.C.L.

A Lion in his jaws caught up a child— Not harming it—and to the woodland wild With secret streams and lairs, bore off his prey; The beast, as one might cull a flower in May, Had plucked this bud, not thinking wrong or right, Mumbling its stalk, too proud or kind to bite— A lion's way, roughly compassionate. Yet truly dismal was the victim's fate; Thrust in a cave that rumbled with each roar, His food wild herbs, his bed the earthy floor, He lived, half-dead with daily frightening. It was a rosy boy, son of a king; A ten-year lad with bright eyes shining wide, And save this son his majesty beside Had but one girl—two years of age—and so The monarch suffered, being old, much woe, His heir the monster's prey, while the whole land In dread both of the beast and king did stand; Sore terrified were all:—

By came a Knight That road, who halted, asking "What's the fright?" They told him, and he spurred straight for the den:

Oh, such a place! the sunlight entering in Grew pale and crept, so grim a sight was shown Where the gaunt Lion on the rock lay prone: "The wood," at this part thick of growth and wet, Barred out the sky with black trunks closely set; Forest and forest marched, wondrous well! Great stones stood near, with ancient tales to tell— Such as make moorlands weird in Brittany— And at its edge a mountain you might see, One of those iron walls which shut off heaven; The Lion's den was a deep cavern driven Into the granite ridge, fenced round with oaks; Cities and caverns are discordant folks. They bear each other grudges! this did wave A leafy threat to trespasser—"Hence, knave! Or meet my Lion!"

In the champion went. The den had all the sombre sentiment Which palaces display—deaths—murderings—Terrors—you felt "here lives one of the kings"; Bones strewn round showed that this mighty lord Denied himself nought which his wounds afford. A rock-riff pierced by stroke of lightning gave Such misty glimmer as a den need have: What eagles might think dawn and owls the dusk Makes day enough for kings of claw and tusk. All else was regal, though! you understood Why the majestic brute slept, as he should On leaves, with no lace curtains to his bed; And how his wine was blood—nay, or instead, Spring-water lapped sans napkin, spoon, or cup, Or lackeys:—

Being from spur to crest mailed up, The champion enters.

In the den he spies Truly a Mighty One! Crowned to the eyes With shaggy golden fell—the Beast!—It mused With look infallible; for, if he chooses, The master of a wood may play at Pope, And this one had such claws, there was small hope, To argue with him on a point of creed! The Knight approached—yet not too fast, indeed; His football clanged, flaunted his rose-red feather, None the more notice took the beast of either, Still in his own reflections plunged profound; Theseus a-marching upon that black ground Of Sisyphus, Ixion, and dire hell, Saw such a scene, murk and implacable: But duty whispered "Forward!" so the Knight Drew out his sword: the Lion at that sight Lifted his head in slow wise, grim to see;

The Knight said: "Greeting! monster brute! to thee! In this foul hole thou hast a child in keeping— I search its noisome nooks with glances sweeping But spy him not. That child I must reclaim, Friends are we if thou renderest up the same: If not—I too am lion, thou wilt find; The king his lost son in his arms shall bind; While here thy wicked blood runs, smoking hot, Before another dawn."

"I fancy not," Pensive the Lion said. The Knight strode near, Brandished his blade and cried: "Sire! have a care!" The beast was seen to smile—ominous sight!— Never make lions smile! Then joined, they fight, The man and monster, in most desperate duel! Like warring giants, angry, huge, and cruel; Like tigers crimsoning an Indian wood, The man with steel, the beast with claws as good; Fang against fang, hide to mail, that lord Hurling himself foaming on the flashing sword: Stout though the Knight, the lion stronger was, And tore that brave breast under its cuirass, And striking blow on blow with ponderous paw, Forced plate and rivet off, until you saw Through all the armour's cracks the bright blood spirt, As when clenched fingers make a mulberry squirt; And piece by piece he stripped the iron sheath, Helm, armlets, greaves—gnawed bare the bones beneath, Scurching that hero, till he sprawled—alas! Beneath his shield, all blood, and mud, and mess; Whereat the Lion feasted:—then it went Back to its rocky couch and slept content.

Next came a hermit: He found out the cave: With girdle, gown, and cross—trembling and grave— He entered. There that Knight lay, out of shape, Mere pulp: the Lion waking up did gape, Opened his yellow orbs, heard some one grope, And—seeing the woolsen coat bound with a rope, A black peaked cowl, and inside that man— He finished yawning and to growl began: "Then, with a voice like prison-gates which creak, Roared, 'What would'st thou?'"

"My King," "King?" "May I speak?" "Of whom?" "The Prince." "Is that what makes a King?" The monk bowed reverence, "Majesty! I bring A message—wherefore keep this child?"

"For that Where'er it rains I've some one here to chat." "Return him." "Not so." "What then wilt thou do? Would'st eat him?" "Ay—if I have nought to chew!" "Sire! think upon His Majesty in woe!" "They killed my dam," the beast said, "long ago."

"Bethink thee, sire, a king implores a king." "Nonsense—he talks—he's mad! when my notes ring A Lion's heard!" "His only boy!" "Well, well! He hath a daughter." "She's no heir." "I dwell Alone in this my home, mid wood and rock, Thunder my music, and the lightning-shock My lamp;—let this content him." "Ah! show pity."

"What means that word? is't current in your city?" "Lion, thou'dst wish to go to heaven—see here! I offer thee indulgence, and, writ clear, God's passport to His paradise!" "Get forth, Thou holy rogue," thundered the Beast in wrath; The hermit disappeared.

III. Thereat left free, Full of a lion's vast serenity He slept again, leaving still night to pass. The moon rose, starting spectres on the grass, Shrouding the marsh with mist, blotting the ways, And melting the black woodland to grey maze; No stir was seen below, above no motion Save of the white stars trooping to the ocean; And while the mole and cricket in the brake Kept watch, the Lion's measured breath did make Slow symphony that kept all creatures calm.

Sudden—loud cries and clamours! striking quail Into the heart of the quiet, horn and shout Causing the solemn woods to reel with rout, And all the nymphs to tremble in their trees. The uproars of a midnight chase are these Which shakes the shades, the marsh, mountain and stream, And breaks the silence of their sombre dream. The thicket flashed with many a lurid spark Of torches-borne 'mid wild cries through the dark; Hounds, nose to earth, ran yelping through the wood, And armed groups, gathering in the alleys, stood. Terrific was the noise that rolled before; It seemed a squadron; nay, 'twas something more— A whole battalion, sent by that sad king With force of arms his little Prince to bring, Together with the Lion's bleeding hide.

Which here was right or wrong? who can decide? Have beasts or men most claim to live? God wots! He is the unit, we the opher-dots.

Well warmed with meat and drink these soldiers were, Good hearts they bore—and many a bow and spear; Their number large, and by a captain led Valiant, whilst some in foreign lands had bled, And all were men approved and firm in fight; The Lion heard their cries, affronting night, For by this time his awful lids were lifted; But from the rock his chin he never shifted, And only his great tail wagged to and fro.

Meantime, outside the cavern, startled so, Came close the uproar of the shouting crowd. As round a web flies buzzing in a cloud, Or hive bees swarming o'er a bear ensnared, This hunter's legion buzzed, and swarmed, and flared. In battle order all their ranks were set: 'Twas understood the Beast they came to get, Fierce as a tiger's cunning—strong to seize— Could munch up heroes as an ape cracks nuts, Could with one glance make Joe's own bird look down; Wherefore they laid him siege as to a town. The pioneers with axes cleared the way, The spearmen followed in a close array, The archers held their arrows on the string; Silence was bid, lest any chattering Should mask the Lion's footstep in the wood; The dogs—who know the moment when 'tis good To hold their peace—went first, nose to the ground, Giving no tongue; the torches all around Hither and thither flickered, their long beams Through sighing foliage sending ruddy gleams:— Such is the order a great hunt should have: And soon between the trunks they spy the cave, A black, dim-outlined hole, deep in the gloom.

Gaping, but blank and silent as the tomb, Wide open to the night, as though it feared As little all that clamour as it heard. There a smoke where a fire smoulders, and a town, Where men lay siege, rings tocsin up and down; Nothing so here! therefore with vague dismay Each stood, and grasp on bow or blade did lay, Watching the solemn stillness of that chasm; The dogs among themselves whimpered: a spasm From the horror lurking in all voiceless places— Worse than the rage of tempests—blanched all faces; Yet they were there to find and fight this thing, So they advance, each bush examining, Dreading full sore the very prey they sought; The pioneers held high the lamps they brought: "There! that is it! the very mouth of the den!" The trees all round it muttered, warning men: Still they kept step and neared it—look you now, Company's pleasant, and there were a thou—

Good Lord! all in a moment, there's its face! Frightful!—They saw the Lion! Not one pace Further stirred any man; the very trees Grew blacker with his presence, and the breeze Blew shudders into all hearts present there: Yet, whether 'twas from valour or wild fear, The archers drew—and arrow, bolt, and dart Made target of the Beast. He, on his part— As calm as Pelion in the rain or hail—Bristled majestic from the nose to tail, And shook full fifty missiles from his hide; Yet any meaner brute had found beside Enough still sticking fast to make him yell Or fly; the blood was trickling down his fell, But no heed took he, glaring steadfastly; And all those men of war, amazed to be Thus met by so stupendous might and pride, Thought him no beast, but some god brutified. The bounds, tail down, slunk back behind the spears; And then the Lion, 'mid the silence, rears His awful face, and over wood and marsh Roared a vast roar, hoarse, vibrant, vengeful, harsh— A rolling, raging peal of wrath, which spread From the quaking earth to the echoing vault o'erhead, Making the half-awakened thunder cry "Who thunders there?" from its black bed of sky.

This ended all!—sheer horror cleared the coast: As fogs are driven by the wind, that valorous host Melted, dispersed to all the quarters four, Clean panic-stricken by that monstrous roar; Each with one impulse—leaders, rank and file, Deeming it haunted ground, where Earth somewhere Is wont to breed marvels of lawless might— They scampered, mad, blind, reckless, wild with fright. Then quoth the lion, "Woods and mountains! see, A thousand men enslaved fear one Beast free!"

As lava to volcanoes, so a roar Is to these creatures: and the eruption o'er In heaven-shaking wrath, they mostly calm. The gods themselves to lions yield the palm For magnanimity. When Jove was king, Hercules said, "Let's finish off the thing, Not the Nemæan merely; every one We'll strangle—all the lions." Whereupon The lions yawned a "much obliged!" his way.

But this Beast, being whelped by night, not day— Offspring of glooms—was sterner; one of those Who go down slowly when their storm's at close; His anger had a savage ground-swell in it: He loved to take his naps, too, to the minute, And to be roused up thus with horn and hound,— To find an ambush spring—to be hemmed round— Targetted—'twas an insult to his grove! He paced towards the hill, climbed high above, Lifted his voice, and, as the sowers sow The seeds down wind, thus did that Lion throw His message far enough the town to reach.

"King! your behaviour really passes speech! Thus far no harm I've wrought to him your son; But now I give you notice—when night's done I will make entry at your city gate, Bringing the Prince alive; and those who wait To see him in my jaws—your lackey crew— Shall see me eat him in your palace too!"

Quiet the night passed, while the streamlets bubbled, And the clouds sailed across the vault untroubled.

Next morning this is what was viewed in town: Dawn coming—people going—some adown Praying, some crying, pallid cheeks, swift feet, And a huge Lion stalking through the street.

IV. The quaking townsmen in the cellars hid; How make resistance? briefly, no one did; The soldiers left their posts, the gates threw wide; 'Twas felt the Lion had upon his side A majesty so god-like, such an air— That den, too, was so dark and grim a lair— It seemed scarce short of rash impiety To cross its path as the fierce Beast went by. So to the palace and its gilded dome With stately steps unchallenged did he roam, In many a spot where those vile darts soared still, As you may note an oak scored with the bill, Yet nothing recks that giant-trunk; so here Paced this proud wounded Lion, free of fear, While all the people held aloof in dread, Seeing the scarlet jaws of that great head Hold up the princely boy—aswoon.

Is't true Princes are flesh and blood? Ah, yes! and you Had wept with sacred pity, seeing him Swing in the Lion's mouth, body and limb: The tender captive gripped by those grim fangs, On either side the jaw helplessly hangs, Deathlike, albeit he bore no wound of tooth, And for the brute thus gagged it was, in sooth, A grievous torture to wish to roar, yet be Muzzled and dumb, so he walked savagely, His pent heart blazing through his burning eyes, While not one bow in stretched, nor arrow flies; They dreaded, peradventure, lest some shaft Shot with a trembling hand and faltering craft Might miss the Beast and pierce the Prince—

So, still As he had promised, roaring from his hill, This lion, scorning town and townfolk sick To view such terror, goes on straight and quick To the King's house, hoping to meet there one Who dares to speak with him: outside is none! The door's ajar, and flaps with every blast; He enters it—within those walls at last!— No man!

For, certes, though he raged and wept, His Majesty, like all, close shelter kept, Solicitous to live, holding his breath Specially precious to the realm: now death Is not thus viewed by honest beasts of prey, And when the Lion found him fed away, Ashamed to be so arid, man being so base, He muttered to himself in that dark place Where lions keep their thoughts: "This wretched King! 'Tis well, I'll eat his boy!" Then, wandering, Lordly he traversed courts and corridors, Paced beneath vaults of gold on shining floors, Glanced at the throne deserted, stalked from hall To hall—green, yellow, crimson—empty all! Rich couches void, soft seats unoccupied! And as he walked he looked from side to side To find some pleasant nook for his repast, Since appetite was come to munch at last The princely morsel—Ah! what sight astounds That grisly lounge?

In the palace-grounds An alcove on a garden gives, and there A tiny thing—forgot in the general fear, Lulled in the flower-sweet dreams of infancy, Bathed with soft sunlight falling brokenly Through leaf and lattice—was that moment waking; A little lovely maid, most adored and taking, The Prince's sister; all alone—undressed— She sat up singing: children sing so best.

A voice of joy, than silver lute-strings softer! A mouth all rose-bud blossoming in laughter! A baby-angel, hard at play! a dream Of Bethlehem's cradle, or what nests would seem If girls were hatched!—all these. Eyes, too, so blue That sea and sky might own their sapphire new! Neck bare, arms bare, pink legs and stomach bare! Nought hid the roseate satin, save where A little white-laced shift was fastened free; She looked as fresh, singing thus peacefully, As stars at twilight or as April's heaven; A floweret—'you had said—divinely given, To show on earth how God's own lilies grow; Such was this beautiful baby-maid; and so The Beast caught sight of her and stopped—

And then Entered—the floor creaked as he stalked straight in.

Above the playthings by the little bed The Lion put his shaggy massive head, Dreadful with savage might and lordly scorn, More dreadful with that princely prey so borne; Which she, quick spying, "Brother! brother!" cried, "Oh! my own brother!" and, unterrified— Looking a living rose that made the place Brighter and warmer with its fearless grace— She gazed upon that monster of the wood, Whose yellow balls not typhon had withstood, And—well! who knows what thoughts these small heads hold— She rose up in her cot—full height, and bold, And shook her pink fist angrily at him.

Whereon—close to the little bed's white rim, All dainty silk and laces—this huge brute Set down her brother gently at her foot, Just as a mother might, and said to her— "Don't be put out, now! there he is, Dear!—there!"

Two sweet little girls sat upon the sidewalk in front of the Post Office, one of them nursing a large wax doll. Her companion asked in tones of deep earnestness: "Does 'oo have much touble wif 'ooa baby?"—"Oh, doodness, yes," was the reply, "she ewies mos' all 'e time. She's jes' cwied an' cwied ever since she was born. I's jes' discouraged, an' I don't fink I'll ever born any more."

BRELOQUES POUR DAMES.

PATTERN women—The dressmakers. SUITABLE dowry for a widow—Widower. KISSING the bride in church has gone out of fashion.

BAY windows are safe harbours at night for little smacks.

"PERFECTLY mag." is the Boston girl's synonym for awfully sweet.

THE woman who maketh a good pudding in silence is better than she who maketh a tart reply.

AN Aberdeen woman has applied to be appointed a constable, despairing of catching a man in any other way.

ONE lady in the city boasts of hair eight feet and one inch in diameter, and that she has refused an offer of \$2,000 for it.

WOMEN above 50 cannot marry in Portugal. The law is designed as a protection for aged and innocent bachelors.

A MINNESOTA father who has five grown-up daughters has sued the county. He claims that his residence has been used as a court-house for the past two years.

Mrs. Sarah M. Irish Henay, who is lecturing in the West on "What is a Boy Worth?" estimates the total cost of the raw article, near the age of fifteen, at \$3,410.

THE name of Stewart will go down to posterity, not as that of one of the New World's millionaires, but as that of the man who thought he could keep an old maids' hotel without allowing cats in the rooms.

IN Scotland, hereafter, married women can own their own earnings, and husbands are not liable for debts contracted by their wives before marriage, except as they have had property with their wives.

OUR John, who likes geometry, has a very pretty friend who dislikes compliments. So when he calls her an angel he justifies himself by telling her 'tis only an axiom—a "self-evident truth."

"My dear," said a husband, in startling tones, after waking his wife in the night, "I have swallowed a dose of strychnine." "Well, then, do for goodness sake lie still, or it may come up."

THE sun had sunk behind the western hills, and the bright rays which streaked the horizon had disappeared, when a lovely female, who had been but six short weeks a wife, sat in a secluded apartment with her husband. She slowly moved her sylph-like form towards the partner of her bosom, raised her delicate hand and slapped his face.

ELIZA MAURY, daughter of Capt. M. F. Maury, is at the head of a woman's movement in Virginia to rescue the old Dominion from disgrace by paying its debt. She proposes organizing and appointing an agent in every town for the "Woman's fund for the liquidation of the State debt." Country people are invited to contribute a pound of butter or a dozen eggs, and "town folk need not give quite as much as usual for their best bonnet and dress."

A RUSSIAN lady in Paris wore at the Russian Easter festival pink brocade embroidered with silver flowers and a girdle studded with emeralds. Her necklace consisted of innumerable rows of pearls, and her bracelets were so numerous that they reached the elbow. It is quite common for Russian ladies to wear a dozen to twenty bracelets at a time.

JOE HOOKER, at the reception of the Army of the Potomac, occupied a big arm-chair, having a beautiful little girl of seven on his knee, whom he kissed repeatedly. One of the company remarked to the child: "You must remember this. Ten or fifteen years hence you will be very proud of having been kissed by Fighting Joe Hooker." Whereupon the General wittily retorted: "I should not mind it, either, my dear, if you were ten or 15 years older now."

A CAMPAIGN SLANDER.

When Dr. R. V. Pierce was a candidate for State Senator, his political opponents published a pretended analysis of his popular medicines, hoping thereby to prejudice the people against him. His election by an overwhelming majority severely rebuked his traducers, who sought to impeach his business integrity. No notice would have been taken of these campaign lies were it not that some of his enemies (and every successful business man has his full quota of envious rivals) are republishing these bogus analyses. Numerous and most absurd formulas have been published, purporting to come from high authority; and it is a significant fact that no two have been at all alike—conclusively proving the dishonesty of their authors.

OUR CHESS COLUMN.

Solutions to Problems sent in by Correspondents will be duly acknowledged.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. W. S., Montreal.—Letter received. Thanks. Student, Montreal.—Correct solution of Problem No. 180 received. E. H., Montreal.—Solution of Problem for Young Players No. 177 received. Correct. X., Montreal.—On the 20th of August next. Timely notice will appear.