

"Now, if you were Beauty, what would you ask papa to bring you?"

I laughed shyly.

"A prince?" I blushed and shook my head.

"No, not yet," I said, smiling rather mischievously.

"A ring, a bracelet, a brooch?"—"Oh, no!"

"A Murray's Grammar, a pair of globes, a back-board?"

"No, Mr. Rayner. I should say a rose like Beauty—a beautiful Marshal Niel rose. I couldn't think of anything lovelier than that."

"That is a large pale yellow rose, isn't it? I can't get it to grow here. What a pity we are not in a fairy tale, Miss Cristie, and then the soil wouldn't matter! We would have Marshal Niel roses growing up to the chimney-pots."

We had sauntered back to the dining-room window, and there, staring out upon us in a strange fixed way, was Mrs. Rayner. She continued to look at us, and especially at me, as if fascinated, until we were close to the window, when she turned with a start; and when we entered the room the intent expression had faded from her lustrous eyes, and she was her usual lifeless self again.

At dinner-time Mr. Rayner did not appear; I was too shy to ask Mrs. Rayner the reason, and I could only guess, when tea-time came and again there was no place laid for him, that he had gone away somewhere. I was sure of it when he had not reappeared the next morning, and then I became conscious of a slow but sure change, a kind of gradual lightening, in Mrs. Rayner's manner. She did not become talkative or animated like any other woman; but it was as if a statue of stone had become a statue of flesh, feeling the life in its own veins and grown conscious of the life around it. This change brought one strange symptom; she had grown nervous. Instead of wearing always an untroubled stolidity, she started at any unexpected sound, and a faint tinge of color would mount to her white face at the opening of a distant door or at a step in the passage. This change must certainly, I thought, be due to her husband's departure; but it was hard to tell whether his absence made her glad or sorry, or whether any such vivid feeling as gladness or grief caused the alteration in her manner.

On the second day of Mr. Rayner's absence Sarah came to the school-room, saying that a gentleman wished to speak to me. In the drawing-room I found Mr. Laurence Reade.

"I have come on business with Mr. Rayner; but, as they told me he was out, I ventured to trouble you with a commission for him, Miss Cristie."

"I don't know anything about business, especially Mr. Rayner's," I began doubtfully.

"Perhaps Mrs. Rayner—"

"Oh, I couldn't trouble her with such a small matter! I know she is an invalid. It is only that two of the village boys want to open an account with the penny bank. So I offered to bring the money."

He felt in his pockets and produced one penny.

"I must have lost the other," he said gravely. "Can you give me change for a threepenny-piece?"

I left him and returned with two half-pennies. He had forgotten the names of the boys, and it was some time before he remembered them. Then I made a formal note of their names and of the amounts, and Mr. Reade examined it, and made me write it out again in a more business-like manner. Then he put the date, and wrote one of the names again, because I had misspelt it, and then smoothed the paper with the blotting-paper and folded it, making, I thought, an unnecessarily long performance of the whole matter.

"It seems a great deal of fuss to make about twopence, doesn't it?" I asked innocently.

And Mr. Reade, who was bending over the writing-table, suddenly began to laugh, then checked himself and said—

"One cannot be too particular, even about trifles, where other people's money is concerned."

And I said, "Oh, no! I see," with an uncomfortable feeling that he was making fun of my ignorance of business-matters. He talked a little about Sunday, and hoped I had not caught cold; and then he went away. And I found, by the amount of hemming Haidee had got through when I went back to the schoolroom, that he had stayed quite a long time.

Nothing happened after that until Satur-

day, which was the day on which I generally wrote to my mother. After tea, I took my desk up-stairs to my own room; it was pleasanter there than in the schoolroom; I liked the view of the marsh between the trees, and the sighing of the wind among the poplars. I had not written many lines before another sound overpowered the rustle of the leaves—the faint tones of a violin. At first I could distinguish only a few notes of the melody, then there was a pause and a sound as of an opening window; after that, Schubert's beautiful "Aufenthalt" rang out clearly and held me as if enchanted. It must be Mr. Rayner come back. I had not thought, when he said he played the violin, that he could play like that. I must hear better. When the last long sighing note of the "Aufenthalt" had died away, I shut up my half-finished letter hastily in my desk and slipped down-stairs with it. The music had begun again. This time it was the "Standchen." I stole softly through the hall, meaning to finish my letter in the schoolroom, where, with the door ajar, I could hear the violin quite well. But, as I passed the drawing-room door, Mr. Rayner, without pausing in his playing, cried "Come in!" I was startled by this, for I had made no noise; but I put my desk down on the hall table and went in. Mrs. Rayner and Haidee were there, the former with a handsome shawl, brought by her husband, on a chair beside her, and my pupil holding a big wax-doll, which she was not looking at—the child never cared for her dolls. Mr. Rayner, looking handsomer than ever, sunburnt, with his chestnut-hair in disorder, smiled at me and said, without stopping the music—

"I have not forgotten you. There is a souvenir of your dear London for you," and nodded towards a rough wooden box, nailed down.

I opened it without much difficulty; it was from Covent Garden, and in it, lying among ferns and moss and cotton-wool, were a dozen heavy beautiful Marshal Niel roses. I sat playing with them in an ecstasy of pleasure, intoxicated with music and flowers, until Mr. Rayner put away his violin and I rose to say good-night.

"'Lucky Beauty!' he said, laughing, as he opened the door for me. "There is no boast for you to sacrifice yourself to in return for the roses."

I laughed back and left the room, and, putting my desk under my flowers, went towards the staircase. Sarah was standing near the foot of it, wearing a very forbidding expression.

"So you're bewitched too!" she said, with a short laugh, and turned sharply towards the servants' hall.

And I wondered what she meant, and why Mr. and Mrs. Rayner kept in their service such a very rude and disagreeable person.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Railway Improvement.

As is well known, the slipping of the driving-wheels of locomotive engines is an inconvenience of very common occurrence and not always easy to remedy, besides being attended by loss of steam, waste of fuel, and wear and tear of both engine and rails. This trouble is very apt to be experienced in certain kinds of weather, under heavy loads and steep grades. A mode, therefore, of overcoming the difficulty is well worth knowing, and such mode has recently been communicated to a Scientific Society in France. On a certain line of railway where, from local causes, the rails were abnormally slippery and the difficulty in question had been very great, a lucky accident revealed a remedy. A joint in one of the cylinder cocks of a locomotive sprang a leak, whereby a jet of steam was thrown upon the rails. The engine driver instantly found the wheels to bite the rails so well that he was able to ascend a steep grade without the usual slipping. This has led to a slight modification in all the locomotives used on the road, by which they are made to discharge steam upon the rails as required, the result being a saving of fuel of some twenty per cent.

It Didn't Hurt Him.

"Did the blow hurt him?"
 "No, it killed him instantly."
 "Don't you call that hurting him?"
 "Of course not. He was dead before it hurt him any."
 Then the other man cogitated as to what "hurt" meant.

A NIGHT IN A CHINA TOWN.

A Few Facts Relating to Their Habits and General Mode of Living, Etc.

The Chinese in Los Angeles are quite numerous and almost monopolize a certain portion of the city; they are quiet and orderly as a class, attentively minding their own business, but, nevertheless, always a target for the over present hoodlum.

Through the kindness of one of the city officials—a courteous lawyer and gentleman—we were escorted on a most interesting tour through "Chinatown," as it is called. Starting out at 8 o'clock one pleasant evening, we called first at some of their stores; business being about over for the day, we found them in clusters, old and young, eagerly gathered about the counter, at their greatest of amusements—gambling. Not a word was uttered by any, so absorbed were they in their game, and, after casting a hasty and wondering glance at us, they ignored us entirely. Passing on and visiting many stores, we came to a restaurant about 10 p.m. First entering a small office, we passed in at a door to find ourselves in the dining room; here, seated at tables, are several Celestials quietly but hard at work on a dish of thick kind of soup, which they caused to disappear rapidly by throwing into their mouths with chopsticks. A fat cook busy at the stove is seen in the rear, humming a dismal air. The man who does the waiting, being considered quite a musician, is called upon for music and favors us with a series of howls and groans which he calls a song; and then, on his one-stringed instrument, he makes us feel generally ill. As the music progresses and the musician seems to warm up to his work, he howls like a dog and rolls his eyes wildly. A movement is heard above and, on looking for the cause, we find a dozen pair of sharp eyes looking down at us from above; thus, while supposing ourselves in the company of two or three Chinamen, we realize that a score or more of them are about us, and we find that the apartment is, as it were, cut in two, thus giving two floors to an ordinary sized room, a ladder being used to ascend into the sleeping apartment above. Thus one fair-sized room can be used for a restaurant below, and lodge twenty persons or more on the shelves above; but they seem happy and contented. As they are packed together in such a state, we wonder how they can emerge looking so cleanly each day; but they are particular about their appearance generally and carefully bathe every morning.

The night is wearing on, and midnight brings us to a dark, dreary spot, where, hand in hand, we were wonderingly led through passage after passage, first up, then down, until our leader knocks at a door, being answered by a Chinaman who, after a glance, recognizes one in authority, and quietly ushers us in. We find ourselves in a dimly lighted temple, a weird, strange-looking place with an altar. We are conducted to an apartment in the rear behind the altar, and there we find a singular scene. Reclining on couches smoking opium are the priests, who at first look amazed at the intrusion, but soon relapse into their stolid, fixed expression. One of the priests, by request kept tolling us his feelings as the smoking gradually affected him, and if he told the truth, as he probably did, he soon became too happy to talk, and the expression on his face certainly denoted intense and almost supreme happiness.

We accepted an invitation to take some tea, which was very hot and without sugar. The custom of offering hot tea to all visitors is a universal one among the Chinese, the omission of the courtesy being considered extremely ill-mannered.—N. Y. Post.

Fashionable Dinners.

Years ago, when David Crockett was a member of Congress and had returned home at the close of the first session, several of his neighbors gathered around him one day and asked him questions about Washington. "What time do they dine in the city?" asked one. "Common people, such as we have here, dine at 1. The big ones dine at 3; we Representatives at 4; the aristocracy and Senators eat at 6." "Well, when does the President fodder?" "Old Hickory?" exclaimed the Colonel; "well, he don't dine till next day."

If the stair-rails are dingy, their appearance may be improved by washing them with a little sweet milk; polish with a flannel cloth.

Underground Railways in London.

As every American knows who has visited London, the underground railway system is one of the most extraordinary systems of locomotion in the world. Subterranean London is literally honeycombed by tunnels branching off in all directions, so that, while waggons and handsome rumbles overhead, innumerable trains shriek and groan as they thread their way in darkness beneath the busy thoroughfare. When it was proposed to construct this underground railway system, much opposition was made to the scheme. It was believed that the thundering of the trains would shake down the houses above, and that to enter the long tunnels would be certain death to any person venturesome enough to attempt it.

When the opposition was overcome, after a long struggle between the promoters and the citizens, and the first portion of the system was completed, it was soon discovered that instead of the underground railways being a public danger, they were in reality a great public benefit. They took an enormous amount of traffic off the already crowded public thoroughfares, and provided a speedy means of communication with the most distant parts of the metropolis such as was impossible under the old-fashioned modes of traversing the streets of London. Indeed, it is owing to the underground railway system that the English metropolis now possesses means of rapid communication such as is possessed by no other large city in the world. The system consists of two rings of subterranean tunneling—an inner and an outer. The outer ring was long ago completed. Within the next six months the inner circle will be completed, at a cost of something like \$15,000,000 a mile. Underground London will then be ramified by a complete reticulation of tunnels, and it will be possible to reach any part of the gigantic suburbs in less than an hour.

When the original objections to the underground railway system appeared before the promoters, they based their opposition to the scheme mainly on two grounds—that it would cause a vast diminution in the value of property, and that noxious vapors and the locomotive smoke would prove highly dangerous to the public health and safety. Neither of these objections has been seriously realized. Where property was injured the Metropolitan Railway Company gave compensation; and as for foul vapors, all danger from that source was obviated by the numerous air holes which were bored through the roof of the tunnel, and the open character which was given to all the stations.

One danger, however, which was not dreamed of in connection with the underground railways, was the presence of infernal machines in the tunnels, and the instantaneous death and injury of unsuspecting passengers by their explosion. The horrible affairs which occurred in London of late, cannot be attributed to an explosion of fire damp. With trains travelling continuously at three minute intervals through the tunnels, foul air would inevitably be driven through the air holes or out at the open stations, which are situated at very short distances from each other.—Philadelphia Press.

ALL SORTS.

A sage remark—"A little more of the dressing, please."

Darwin's body lies mouldering in the grave, but the dude goes marching on.

The great ease of running an oil well is that you can't water the stuff, as oil and water won't mix.

It's a mighty mean man who wrote "Pull Down the Blind." He would probably be in favor of beating the cripples.

A Texas man is a Texas man. Oao who lost both arms in a saw-mill has learned to fire a revolver with his toes.

Only about one half the people of Chicago are natives. This relieves the State of Illinois of a great responsibility.

Madame Rainsford

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