

MY PET BIRD.

"Why do you not have your little dead pet bird embalmed and mounted?" Because—

It would not be my bird if he
Could turn no dark, bright eye
Down to the green earth lovingly
Nor upward to the sky;

Neyer my coming step to greet
Could speed on fluttering wing;
Nor with a merry "Peep, peep" greet
The dainty I might bring.

At sunset hour, all still and cold,
Upon a perch to stand—
Not nestling as in days of old,
Warm in my hollowed hand.

O no, it would not be my bird:
My love to him outpoured,
And in his little breast was stirred
A sympathetic chord.

In him lived memory, hope, delight,
His heart with joy could brim,
All that in me is strong and bright
Shone, too, a spark, in him.

Then fold around the little head
The linen white and fine,
And make a soft and tiny bed
Beneath the flowering vine.

What once with conscious life doth thrill
I deem can never die;
My bird is living somewhere still—
A spark in the spirit sky.

CONSTANTINA E. BROOKS.

A GREAT LIBEL SUIT.

The Belt libel case, after lasting 43 days, has come to an end, the jury giving a verdict for the plaintiff. They have awarded him, as compensation, the heavy damages of £5,000; and the tremendous bill of costs in the action—except those "between solicitor and client," which must in themselves amount to a considerable sum—will have to be paid by Mr. Lawes, the defendant. In artistic circles the issue of the trial will probably give little satisfaction; but the general public will be heartily rejoiced that a conclusion has at length been reached in this needlessly spun-out law suit, and will not, we think, be disappointed or surprised at its result. Had their verdict been for Mr. Lawes, Mr. Belt would have been a man ruined not only in pocket but in reputation. The defendant chose to asperse his character, and to call him an impostor and cheat, to which, in the witness-box, he also added an imputation of forgery. Mr. Lawes, therefore, has only his own indiscretion to thank if he has, in the supposed interests of his profession, dug a pit for his adversary and fallen into it himself. Originally the libel which was the cause of this action appeared in the pages of a well-known weekly journal, and imputed to Mr. Belt, the plaintiff, that he had falsely and systematically claimed to be the author of works, for which he was only the broker; that, while he represented himself as an artist and a sculptor, he was nothing better than a "statue jobber." Mr. Lawes made himself responsible for the statements contained in the libellous paragraph, and actually thought it incumbent upon him to dispatch a copy to the Lord Mayor, as Mr. Belt was then engaged in the civic competition for the bust of Lord Beaconsfield, which now stands in the Guildhall. Mr. Lawes expressed his belief that the statements about Mr. Belt being an impostor were true, especially as they had remained uncontradicted for a considerable time. Instead of suing the publisher of the paper in which the libel was printed, Mr. Belt seems to have gone to the office of the journal and demanded an explanation; and he was then challenged to submit himself to an examination of his whole career. Considering that the libel had already appeared in print and had been widely read, it is scarcely to be wondered at that Mr. Belt preferred to place his case in the hands of a jury rather than consent to an investigation which in fairness should have taken place prior to the publication of the charges. During the progress of the trial a remarkable change came over the tactics of the defence. At first Mr. Belt was declared as a vulgar swindler, without an atom of artistic ability or talent; but finally Mr. Webster, for the defendant, had to admit that Mr. Belt was at least capable of making "superficial" alterations in busts, and of modelling a bust in clay so as to be a very good likeness of a person; but this, it was argued, was a widely different thing from being able to "invest a statue with artistic merit." "The greater the unlikeness to the original, the more the artistic merit," seemed to be the only answer which could be made when it was seen that Mr. Belt had, under the eyes of the Court, executed an excellent representation of M. Paggiatti. The case, however, for the defence was that Mr. Belt was an arrant impostor, and that he with three others had entered into a conspiracy to palm off as his own productions works which he had never executed. The three chief co-conspirators were alleged to be a Mr. Verhyden, who was the real undiscovered genius that put on the "artistic" merit in a secret studio; Mr. Curtice; and Mr. Walter Belt, brother of the plaintiff. The whole story was of the complexion usually met with in the pages of sensational novels. There was, to begin with, the secret studio to which nobody but the conspirators were admitted. Here the model of the colossal statue of Lord Byron, now standing in Hyde Park, was supposed to have been "built up." Mr. Scholtz, a sculptor who worked for Mr. Belt, said that he himself and Mr. Harrison, also a professional assistant, were in the

secret studio helping to "build up" the model; and another witness, Mr. Mellen, a caster, swore that he asked Mr. Harrison who it was that modelled this colossal figure, to which Mr. Harrison replied mysteriously, "The ghost." Here is another sensational element added: only it must be admitted, in justice to Mr. Harrison, that he denied having ever said anything of the kind, and that Mr. Mellen appeared to be a witness on the side of the defendant. The argument for the defence was that Mr. Belt had no notion of sculpture himself, but had a very good notion of obtaining commissions and passing himself off as a heaven-born genius in high social spheres. A general atmosphere of fashionable life was thus cast over the case. Perhaps Mr. Belt may be a master of the knack of insinuating himself into the graces of the aristocracy; but that fact alone is not sufficient to negative the supposition that he may also possess the soul of an artist and the skill of a sculptor. His own side averred that he was a man who had raised himself by his own exertions to honourable prominence in his profession, and that therefore he had been made the mark for the jealousy of rivals, who tried to drag him down by libelling him. Between these two versions the jury were called upon to choose. There can be no use in denying the fact of a strong prepossession against Mr. Belt existing among painters and sculptors. The feeling of his own profession was against him, and no wonder, considering the persistent blackening to which his character had been exposed. The artistic air was thick with rumours of impostures practised by Mr. Belt, which rumours had their source in the quarrel that took place between Mr. Belt and Verhyden, after which the latter went about declaring that most of Mr. Belt's supposed works were actually sculptured by himself. Mr. Belt was undoubtedly injudicious in the manner of his money payments to such a person as Verhyden, and in not keeping a strict account of all the sums he disbursed. But this is only to say that Mr. Belt was a bad man of business, which probably his most intimate friends would be the last to deny. The strong point in Mr. Belt's favour was the number of independent witnesses who came forward to swear that they had seen him with his own hands executing and altering busts. A large number of Royal Academicians, including Sir Frederick Leighton, Mr. Thornycroft, and Mr. Millais—who is a painter, and not a sculptor—were called for the defence, and most of them gave it as their opinion that the old terra-cotta head of M. Paggiatti was, as compared with Mr. Belt's bust, a beautiful creation, and that the rival busts were distinctly the work of two different hands. Unfortunately for the evidence of these "experts," M. Melpre then came forward and stated that he saw Mr. Belt working on the first, or terra-cotta bust. This incident shattered the whole mass of testimony furnished by the Royal Academicians, thus once again showing the worthlessness of mere hypothetical expert evidence compared with that of a single credible eye-witness. What was the good of the most talented sculptors and artists saying that the Conway bust "could not" have been modelled by Mr. Belt, when Mr. Morris swore positively that he had seen Mr. Belt model it? A tremendous amount of incriminatory evidence would have been required to destroy the effect of Mr. Belt's witnesses, and the most weighty matter which the defence could single out was the money payments made by Mr. Belt to Mr. Verhyden. The latter kept a diary in which he put down what he had received, with the avowed object—so he stated—of some day being able to use it against Mr. Belt. The jury evidently attached no value to this diary or to any of its contents. They probably thought that a man who, by his own confession, allowed another to palm off his productions as his own was a witness whose word and whose diary were equally open to suspicion. Verhyden swore that Mr. Belt paid him £300 for the model which won the Byron Memorial competition. Mr. Belt, on the other hand, asserted that the sum was in compensation for some cartoons of Verhyden's which had been lost through his—Mr. Belt's—fault. The amount seems enormous for the loss of a few drawings by an unknown man; but the evidence of Mr. Robinson partly bore Mr. Belt out, as that gentleman deposed that he was present in Mr. Belt's studio when Verhyden came in and said that "the cartoons were worth far more than £300 to him." The questionable evidence supplied by Verhyden and his diary, going to show that the plaintiff had paid large sums without any obvious cause, was quite inadequate to shake the effect of the positive testimony of those who had witnessed Mr. Belt perform all the delicate manipulative processes of the skilled sculptor. It was impossible for the defence to justify the statement that Mr. Belt was not a sculptor, but a statue jobber. Thus the attempt to rake up the whole career of Mr. Belt, and hold him up to public scorn, has been a miserable failure, and the result of the present trial will tend to show that calumnious statements are not to be printed and retailed as fact without investigation, in order to ruin the reputation of a professional rival or a private enemy.

Messrs. J. B. LIPPINCOTT & Co. will add to their series of foreign classics for English readers, edited by Mrs. Oliphant, a new book on Rousseau by Henry Gray Graham; and in a new set of volumes to be called the Philosophical Classics, they will issue, as the initial number, a work by Dr. John Veitch on Hamilton.

ECHOES FROM PARIS.

Paris, January 19.

THE Grand Hotel's principal visitor is Prince Takahito, the heir to the throne of Japan, who has been studying in England. The young gentleman has been giving some very elegant entertainments.

THE death is announced of M. Desvignes, a well known member of the French turf. He was liberal in the fullest and best sense of the word. His Château de Bazouges was the rendezvous of men of the highest distinction and true sportsmen.

BARON STIEGLITZ, the Rothschild of Russia, is expected in Paris with the greatest pleasure. It is not only for the reason that he is a very agreeable man, but for the fact that he is worth about two millions sterling a year. He is generous and a bountiful buyer.

PAYNE, the famous pistol shot, has returned to Paris to give exhibitions of his skill. One of his achievements is to shoot an apple off the head of his mother-in-law. He has never swerved in affectionate care for her, and the wonder is that he should do so, seeing that his pistol shot targets show a divergence from the dead centre.

THE Mediterranean Fleets of various nations are exceedingly polite to the various towns on the Riviera which they visit, and, of course, protect one after the other during the fêtes. The French fleet is at present at Cannes, and will remain there till the festivities are at an end, and then proceed to Nice for the same purpose.

THE French are in the height of expectation. They are to be allowed to smoke real good Havana cigars, which the Government, the monopolist of tobacco, is going to import. Of course, they will be dear, but still they will be at the disposal of the public that can pay, which is not the case at present. How is it that the French have so long submitted to this tobacco slavery? One would have thought that it was a better cause for a revolution than any of the former excuses.

PARIS has been shocked by the many girls who, yet in their early teens, crowd around the hotels and club houses under the pretence of selling flowers. The end of these girls requires no prophet to see. This new phase of Paris life is charged to the laxity of the police under the Republic, for it is said that when Napoleon ruled there were no such shameful sights, despite the licentiousness which prevailed. Some three hundred girl children have been rescued by a society, and placed in a home.

ECHOES FROM LONDON.

LONDON, January 19.

A SHORT time since at a fashionable marriage—in which the bridegroom was a member of one of the most aristocratic houses—several gentlemen, who were guests, wore plain gold rings in their ears.

It is proposed to establish a White Ribbon Army, the emblem being the pledge of virtue—the protest against all kinds and forms of vice and sin, the protest against war and bloodshed under all or any circumstances. Why not the white feather?

AMONG the mysterious clubs of which we from time to time hear, not the least curiously named is the High Hat Club, which it is presumed was founded to resist the encroachments on society of the Clerical Bowler, the Dodger, and the Round Turn.

THE pigeons of Monaco have had a bad time of it. The slaughter of the doves has been very large at the recent pigeon matches. Among our countrymen who have figured successfully are Colonel Vernon, Captain Shelley, and Mr. Wilson.

It is stated that the authorities have in contemplation the institution of bronze earrings with "Merit" engraved on them. These ornaments are to be given to female nurses who have distinguished themselves in hospital service during war.

HAVING attained the dignity of a baronetage and passed his seventieth year, Sir Henry Allsopp, head of the world-renowned firm of Burton brewers, has retired from that profitable position in favor of his sons, the member for Taunton and Mr. A. P. Allsopp.

WITH reference to the proposed Roman Catholic Cathedral in Westminster, it is said that Sir Tatton Sykes has offered to contribute £100,000 towards the building, and it is likely that subscriptions will be asked, and subscription lists for small as well as large subscribers will be opened throughout England, as well as in certain parts of the Continent. It is calculated that from first to last the proposed cathedral will cost over £250,000.

ONE of the oddest things which is the outcome of agricultural distress is the announcement of a hare farm—to wit, a large tract of land taken for the purpose of breeding hares for the market, the same as rabbits are. There might be some extra profit made in letting out the shooting per day and week when trade requires the killing down to supply demand. Whether the noble sportsman would shrink at butcher business is doubtful, seeing how near it is often approached in the batue.

GREAT efforts are being made to get the Beaconsfield statue ready in time to be placed in position on the day before Parliament opens. If it be not ready then the occasion will be deferred to some time when the House has settled down to its work. Whenever that happens a great Conservative demonstration will take place, at which it is expected that both Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote will be present with a large following of members of both Houses.

HOTEL-KEEPING is, apparently, profitable in London, to judge from the numbers of new hotels building or to be built. The proprietors of the Grand Hotel at the corner of the Northumberland Avenue are building the Hotel Métropole on the opposite side of the roadway, while not far off another immense hotel is to be "fixed," which shall be the biggest in London, containing 500 rooms, with a dining-room 100 feet long by 42 wide and 32 feet in height. Then there is the one which is nearly finished in Holborn, and a large one to be built in Coventry street, on the same site as Mr. Edgar Bruce's new theatre, the Prince's.

Is any millionaire in want of a steam-yacht? If so, that whitest of white elephants, the *Great Eastern*—the despair of its owners, though monarch of the seas—is available for a bigtelle of £5,000 per annum. Since it was long ago unavailingly offered by auction in the city, the gigantic vessel, once described as the chief triumph of Mr. Scott Russell's genius, has been idly lying at Millford Haven, not only eating its head off, but—as the shareholders could testify—other portions of its stupendous frame. What to do with the 25,000 tons burthen thus wasting their sweetness on the ocean air the *Great Eastern* Steamship Company know not; so once again they appeal for some offer, but the nautical masterpiece may not gradually perish of senile decay until it is any seaport in want of a breakwater, or any Barnum desirous of opening a penny peep-show on the Thames? Now is the time to strike a bargain.

MISCELLANY.

So impressed were the Indian Contingent with the gracious condescension of their Empress that they propose to make a presentation to Her Majesty, praying that she will be graciously pleased to appoint a special body-guard, to be selected from her Indian regiments, to serve a term of two years, till the *roza* has been thoroughly exhausted. With real *esprit de corps* these gallant soldiers have determined that, in case their prayer is answered, the cost will not come out of the Imperial Exchequer.

THE origin of the term "grog" has hitherto been shrouded in some mystery, but a writer in a morning contemporary has lately given its derivation. About 150 years ago Admiral Vernon, who then commanded our fleet in the West Indies, advised his sailors to dilute their rum with water. The old Admiral was in the habit of wearing breeches made of a silken material, called by the French *gros-grain*, but vulgarly grogram, and in this way he received the appellation of "Old Grog." The diluted rum was soon preferred by his men, and, out of compliment to their old commander, they always called it "grog."

To the Blue Ribbon men who never take a glass, and the Yellow Ribbon men who never refuse one, must now be added the Scarlet Ribbon Army that has been established at Broad-henbury, in Devonshire, and which takes for its motto the words of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians, iv., 5:—"Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand." The Army differs from the Blue Ribbon Army and kindred bodies in one important particular, inasmuch as total abstinence is not insisted upon, the wearer of the scarlet ribbon promising to abstain from smoking, swearing, and from excessive drinking.

THE ruins of the Tuileries have just been sold for 32,000*l.*, the buyer being Mr. Picard, who pulled down the Exhibition buildings of 1875. There is thus an end of the royal palace which had so many associations. Part of the site was purchased by Francis for his mother, Louise of Savoy. Catherine de Medicis, some years afterwards, revived the same, bought additional land, and ordered Philibert Delorme to draw up plans. The architect, dying in 1577, lived to see only a small portion of the design executed, and his successors had neither his genius nor that sense of their inferiority which would have deterred them from tampering with his plans. Additions and alterations went on at intervals till almost the eve of the destruction of the building by the Commune on May 23, 1871. The incongruities of architecture and the scantiness of any remains of Delorme's work were adduced as arguments against any attempt at restoration, but it is tolerably clear that the building has been sacrificed to Republican prejudices.