

its short chopping sea before I had to face it again. Happily, I am back in town all right, and my hatred of salt water is passing away, which is well, for in a week's time I shall have to visit the "first isle of the ocean, first gem of the sea," that is to say, Ireland, or Erin, or Hibernia, which it pleases you. From thence, Mr. Editor, I shall date my next letter, and do not mean to lose the opportunity of letting you know how the land of the shamrock strikes an Englishman.

I forget whether or not I mentioned in my last that a rumour sprang up here the other day, pointing to the marriage of our Princess Louise to the King of Greece. On the face of it, this rumour bore the stamp of doubtful authenticity. Her Majesty is a good mother, and one not at all likely to allow her daughter to go so far away, to share so slippery and uncomfortable a throne as that of George I. Poor Greece, how must the shade of Byron weep over her sorrows. There she lies, surrounded by her thousand isles, misgoverned, torn by faction, and wasted by banditti, till she can hardly be said to live. It would be romantic, somewhat, it is true, to send a princess of England to hold court in Athens beneath the shadow of its classic glories, yet a mother's mind attaches little value to romance. What mother has the smallest belief in "love in a cottage," and that sort of stuff? So there has come out an official denial that there is any truth in the aforesaid rumour. People say, however, "Wait awhile, this is the age of the resurrection of nationalities, the 'sick man' is again in a bad way, and a Greek empire, holding the keys of the Hellespont and the Bosphorus, is not at all unlikely. We shall soon see what we shall see." Undoubtedly.

I have also to contradict another rumour, which I was the means of sending you. John Brown is not dismissed, and is not given to habits of intoxication. So that personage still retains his position as Her Majesty's faithful and honoured servitor. Lucky John, his greatness is "still a ripening," and the day, perhaps, is far distant when the tender leaves of hope and promise will suffer from a blight.

The Queen made her annual appearance last week at the Braemar Gathering. Do you know what the Braemar Gathering is? Simply a Highland festival, when the clans round Balmoral meet to display their strength and agility in national and characteristic games. For a long course of years these displays have been under the patronage of royalty, and at their celebration there is exhibited as much of the old clanish pomp and pride as has survived the march of time. A good deal of hollowness attaches to the affair, however. Its feudalism is a very electroplated article, the "clansmen" being for the most part servants in connexion with the establishments of the Highland seigneurs, and not, as of old, those who, otherwise independent, are bound to do suit and service at their lord's command. But, doubtless, the games are interesting; at least it is to be hoped so, seeing what exalted and illustrious personages condescend to honour them with their presence.

Another gathering has taken place just now, also of a national character, but which has had to get on as best it could without any high and mighty presence. I allude to the Eistedfodd at Chester. Very few of your readers, perhaps, know anything about the meaning of this portentous word. Let me have the pleasure of explaining. Well, then, the Eistedfodd is a Welsh festival, dating from a very remote period, almost prehistoric, in fact, at which assemble all those who are skilled in art or science, in order to compete for certain prizes there and then awarded to the most deserving. The descendants of the ancient Britons take an immense interest in this annual assembly, inasmuch as it flatters their nationality, and tends to prolong the existence of their mother tongue. The one just held in the border city of Chester seems to have been unusually successful. Thousands of sturdy and intelligent sons of St. David were present from all parts of the principality, and for a time the leek was exalted even on English ground, far above the rose, shamrock or thistle. The *Times* has contrived, in connection with

this business, mortally to offend the patriotic Welshmen. In a leader the other day, it sneered at the whole affair, said the Welsh language was the curse of Wales, and plainly intimated that the sooner it, and all other of their national peculiarities, were forgotten the better. In reply to this, the Welshmen have waxed furious, and have, with some justice, taunted the *Times* for recording at full length the Braemar Gathering, and writing down the Eistedfodd, which aimed at something so much higher and better. The *Times* was, doubtless, wrong on the merits, and very ill advised besides in stirring up the hot-headed western men, whose resentment is both fierce and enduring when the honour of their country is concerned.

Something more about the Fenians. Last week an armoury was discovered at Liverpool, and its contents duly seized by the police. No more important capture was made, for the birds had flown. Very ugly birds they must have been, for it seems that the worthies in question had some connection with a volunteer regiment, and carried on their traitorous designs in the guise of sworn defenders of the Queen. The foregoing is a fact; now for a rumour of a portentous order. It is said, but I don't believe it, that the 3rd Buffs, or a detachment of that famous Irish regiment, have mutinied against their officers on board a transport, thrown them into the sea, and are steering for America. The thing is absurd on the face of it, yet people may be found here who credit the story, just as, I should say, they would credit the wildest absurdity of a modern Baron Munchausen. The alarm we felt for you in connection with the Fenian Brotherhood in the States has now partially subsided, and we are waiting calmly for the next move in the game. Are you doing the same?

An awful story has just come to us from the sea, which reminds me of what I used to read in my boyish days of peril and adventure. A ship was wrecked somewhere in the Pacific, and for I know not how many days one of the boats steered across the watery waste, seeking help and finding none, till the voyagers were reduced to the last extremity. They ate everything they could lay their hands upon, and when they caught sight of land, were actually speculating how long a sickly comrade would live, and how long they would be debarred from eating his flesh. Happy would it have been for these unfortunates, had they possessed the enduring powers of a Captain Casey, whose adventures have lately been a subject of wonder. For thirty days, or thereabouts, this poor man was in the maintop of his deserted and waterlogged ship, without a morsel of food. The thing seems incredible, yet the log book vouches for it, and the captain is now the recipient of public charity, consequent upon the horrible sufferings he underwent.

Talking of the sea reminds me that we have now among us a ship and its crew which lately made a remarkable passage from your side of the Atlantic to ours. The vessel itself is not a very big one, since they have carried it to the Crystal Palace for exhibition, and the crew is proportionately small, being two in number. It is true that one died off our coast, but then he was a dog. Quite a curiosity has been excited by the marvellous voyage of this wee craft, and the story of her adventures even now forms a standard source of wonder and admiration. As for the two sailors, they are the heroes of the hour.

In my last I gave an account of a curious phenomenon attending an accident by lightning; the appearance of a tree being found upon the body of the injured person. In connection with this, a letter has appeared in the *Times* from Mr. C. Tomlinson, of King's College, who says:—"It is not generally known, however, that such a figure is really produced with every flash of lightning, and with every discharge of a Leyden jar. Most scientific men are aware of the fact, and that such figures can be made visible. If a thin sheet of window glass, about four inches square, be held between the knob of a charged jar and the discharging rod, the discharge will pass over the surface nearest the jar, turn over its edge,

and so get to the discharging rod. On holding the glass up to the light, no trace of the discharge will be seen; but on breathing upon the glass we get a remarkable ramified figure, consisting of a trunk, from which proceed a number of branches covered with minute spray, the whole figure presenting a striking resemblance to a tree. In some cases the discharge bifurcates, and even trifurcates, when we have two and three trunks, each accompanied by its own branches and spray." Whether this explains the appearance on the human body or not, it is a remarkable fact, and will, doubtless, be interesting to your scientific readers.

I have another fact to communicate, which will also excite their wonder. There lately appeared at Paris from Italy a man who professed to be in possession of a secret of the highest importance in connection with warlike matters. He succeeded in obtaining an interview with a General, who, after hearing what he had to say, introduced him to the Minister of War. Before that official this Italian appeared clothed in a dress weighing about 4½ lbs., which he asserted to be absolutely bullet proof. He did not shrink from putting his assertion to the test, and it is said that pistols were fired point blank at the man without injuring him in the least. Of course the invention was submitted to the Emperor, who, after trial, expressed his readiness to purchase it, and now it is rumoured that this wonderful coat will in future protect the bodies of the Emperor's soldiers. If all this be true, we are fast going back, in effect, to the days of yore, when armour was in the ascendant, and, before being killed, men had first to be cracked.

We are having serious weather just now. Our harvest is nothing like gathered in, and runs great risk of being spoiled, consequent upon the wet and inclement weather now so prevalent. In the northern counties large districts are quite under water, presenting the appearance of a vast lake, and still, day after day, the rain descends. Unless a change takes place, serious results will follow, and we shall have to purchase our bread from other and more favoured lands. Happy are we in the thought that anything like scarcity is impossible; and that now, by help of steam and free trade, the necessities of one nation are readily ministered to by the abundance of another.

But if we have gloomy prospects in one direction, there are bright ones in another. The cholera still diminishes, save only in Liverpool, and promises soon, as winter is coming on, to leave us altogether. May the lesson of its visit not be lost.

LITERARY GOSSIP.

Mr. Sutherland Edwards' new story called "The Three Louisas," has given rise to a well-sustained file-fire of small jokes about that gentleman's evident penchant for "unlimited loo."

The author of "Margaret and her Bridesmaids," who is deservedly popular among novel-readers, has lately produced a new tale entitled "Lords and Ladies."

Mr. George Henry Francis, for many years connected with the London press, the writer in *Fraser's Magazine* of "The Age of Veneer," and the author of various other papers, died recently at Paris at the age of fifty.

It may be fittingly noted, by the way, that two men of letters, holding superior appointments in the Post Office, are, so to speak, running novels at the same time: Mr. Anthony Trollope, "The Claverings," in the *Cornhill*; and Mr. Edmund Yates, "Black Sheep," in *All the Year Round*.

"Napoleon III and the Rhine" is the title of a political brochure by Mr. Pope Hennessy, just published.

The author of "George Geith," Mrs. Riddell, has been, through severe illness, forbidden all literary labour, and through observance of the prohibition is slowly recovering.

Dr. John Brown, whose name will ever be associated with "Rab and his Friends," is, we regret to say, in the worst condition of health in which his friends could fear to see him.