

ENGLAND, IRELAND AND SCOTLAND.

AS REPRESENTED BY A SONNETTEER.

LAURA.

He cometh not—while proud Laura waits,
With aching, yearning heart and brow serene,
The humble suitor whom she loves, yet hates.
For what might be, still more for what has been.
Once oft a guest within her father's gates,
Now driven far by her chill, haughty mien,
Her longing eyes are looking morn and e'en;
Luxuriant ease wealth brings, but aggravates
The looming prospect of a loveless lot;
How welcome now were e'en the meanest cot,
Where with his love to share his petty straits.
'Tis too late now, for still he cometh not,
Love-lost, she grasps at power, and weds a peer,
And moves in state—my lady, cold, severe.

NORAH.

Och! Norah, jewel, sure your purty face,
Your form so ligit, an' bameing eyes,
Would tempt the saints to dreme in paradise—
If dreme e'er trouble thim in that bliss'd place—
An' charm thim down thro' million miles av space,
To hear you spake an' touch your finger tips,
An' sip the neethar from your bonied lips.
Shure, Erin's Isle no crathur dare despise
Whin your smile brightens it, an' linds a grace
To the ould country, which in beauty vies
With rarest gem that in the dape say lies.
Och! Norah darlin', 'tis meeself that knows,
Cushla machree, no swate flower grows
Thin is yourself bena the vernal skies.

JESSIE.

Wee winsome Jessie toddled oot tae play,
Her bonnie face bricht wi' a bairnie's glee;
A sudden, cruel fate nane could foresee
Soon filled her parents' hearts with deepest wae.
The puir wee lammie lingered but a day,
Then waitin' angels bore her spirit far
Ayont yon siller moon an' e'ening star
To his safe arms, who wished the wee pet hame,
Nae mair to feel the pain that fills the e'e,
Ere she knew ocht o' grief that waits on shame.
Or ken'd the cares the weary mourners dree
Wha warstle hard wi' Providence, an' blame
The Hand that's only cruel to be kin—
That bruises grapes to hain the precious wine.

MRS. PERCY'S PERIL.

Though I am a soldier's wife, I fear I can lay claim to but a small portion of the courage which is usually attributed to them.

Arthur Percy, Captain in Her Majesty's Dragoons, is my husband, and the adventure I am about to relate befell me about eighteen months after our marriage, when the regiment was quartered in Ireland.

A detachment was stationed in one of the most unquiet parts of that country, which I refrain, for obvious reasons, from naming. Arthur was ordered to take command of it, and so I, of course, accompanied him with our baby, an infant of about five months. We thought ourselves very fortunate in having secured a small, but extremely pretty cottage at an almost nominal rent, distant about one mile from the barracks.

I cannot better describe the cottage, than by telling you that it was called, "The Bungalow," and, like its namesake, was a long, one-storied building, with a verandah in front of the principal windows. A small entrance hall in which were two doors, was the first thing observed on entering; one led to the drawing-room, dining-room, and three bed-rooms, while the other led directly to the kitchen, servants' room, and into a passage leading to the outer offices.

Our establishment consisted of two women servants and one man; the latter, being a soldier, returned every night to the barracks, which happened to be the nearest habitation to us, not even the humblest dwelling breaking the loneliness of the way between them and the Bungalow.

I have already said that the distance from them was about a mile, and the road, which was partly grass grown, lay through a narrow sort of lane, enclosed on each side by very high hedges.

These hedges were a continual horror to me. Scarcely ever did I see Arthur start in the morning, without visions arising of desperadoes concealed behind them, dressed in the inevitable long-tailed, ragged coat, the high-crowned, narrow-rimmed hat, and the murderous weapon, all of which things I invariably associated with the ruffian of those days.

The Dragoons had been sent to quell some risings, and to support the authorities, consequently they were not regarded by the natives in any friendly light.

As the weeks went on, and every afternoon brought Arthur safely back to me, my fears were somewhat allayed, and occasionally I walked through the lane towards the town to meet him—always, however, feeling glad when I got safely past any chance passer-by whom I might encounter.

Arthur used to laugh at my fears, and as I knew I was a desperate coward, I tried to think they were groundless, and merely the result of my own natural timidity.

The year was drawing to a close, and on the 10th of January we were to bid adieu to the Bungalow, Ireland, and the Irish. The regiment was under orders for England, in spring, and till then Arthur was to go on leave.

I was in raptures at the prospect of being settled in my own part of the world again. It was Christmas Eve. Arthur was obliged, most unwillingly, to spend it at the barracks, as the few officers there wished to have a farewell dinner, and, in addition, there was to be an entertainment for the soldiers at an early hour.

It had been snowing heavily all day, and when Arthur left, about half-past three o'clock in the afternoon, darkness was beginning to come on.

I had begged of him not to return if the snow continued, as I knew it might be very late ere the party broke up, and I could not bear the idea of his coming home through that dark, narrow road, in the middle of a snowy December night.

If he did come, he was to tap at my window, which would enable me to let him in without disturbing the servants, who slept at the other side of the house.

After I had watched his figure disappear, I re-entered the cottage, with a disagreeable sense of solitude, and eeriness, which I tried to dispel by ringing for the nurse to bring my baby, stirring the fire into a cheerful blaze, and otherwise occupying myself. Though almost quite dark, it was now only about four o'clock, and the blinds in the little sitting-room were still undrawn. I was sitting on the hearth-rug, with baby on my lap, amusing her with my watch and its glittering appendages, which were an unfailing source of pleasure to her; and as she stretched out her little hands to grasp them, I was suddenly attracted to the direction of the window, through which, to my unutterable horror, I distinguished distinctly the face of a man gleaming upon me. In that swift, momentary glance, I could see that it was a pale, sinister, malevolent countenance, with small, hungry eyes. My heart beat wildly, but I dissembled my terror well, I suppose, as had I done otherwise, baby and I might have fared differently. So rapidly had I comprehended the necessity for appearing not to have observed him, that I hardly stopped speaking to my baby; but a thousand projects for escape from my present position revolved themselves through my whirling brain. How could I escape from that little room, with its dark, unshaded window? Furtively I looked again, and was infinitely relieved to find that the apparition had vanished, for the present at least, from its late close proximity to the window. I got up at last, still chattering to my unconscious child, and moved slowly towards the door, even pausing for an instant at the table, partly to gather strength to proceed, as my limbs were tottering beneath me; partly because I dreaded lest the lurker without might still be marking my movements. I had scarcely strength left to turn the handle of the door, but once on the other side of it, I rushed across the little hall, and gained the kitchen, where I found my two domestics seated at their tea.

I briefly told them of the fright I had got, and was not much reassured on finding that both were, if possible, greater cowards than I was myself.

The sound of a whistle at no great distance from the cottage roused me to the necessity of instantly making every place as secure as possible. Accompanied by the two trembling servants, and with baby in my arms, I began my tour of inspection. At last, every bolt was drawn, every shutter closed, and nothing more remained to be done. I found, on looking at the clock, that it was little past five, so that a long evening was before me.

Not a sound was to be heard, nothing fresh occurred to alarm us in the least, and at last I grew almost ashamed of the panic I had given way to, merely from having seen a man glance through the window. Very probably he was some strolling vagrant who had been attracted by the bright light of the fire to look in, without an idea of doing us any harm.

So I reasoned with myself, and so I tried to reassure the servants. Under any circumstances, I was glad to feel that we were safely shut up for the night, and determined to go soon to my room, where I felt less lonely than in the empty drawing-room.

Had there not been the chance of Arthur returning, I would have proposed that the servants should sleep in a bed there happened to be in his dressing-room; but as they assured me they were not at all afraid, now that nothing more had been heard of the man, and I knew it would be a great nuisance to Arthur, if he did return, I concluded that it was wiser to let them sleep in their own room, though it was at some distance from mine.

I went to my room at about half-past nine, and proceeded to undress; after which I put on my white flannel dressing-gown, placed my candles behind me, and seating myself in front of the fire, began to read.

In spite of all my assurances to myself and my servants, I felt strangely nervous and restless. My book was a very interesting one; but it failed to obliterate from my mind the horrible remembrance of the face at the window. Perhaps he was there still—perhaps he was watching for Arthur's return to waylay and murder him. All sorts of wild visions presented themselves to my mind. Once baby moved slightly, and it made me start nearly to my feet with terror.

I was thoroughly upset, and the only thought that consoled me was, that I had begged Arthur not to return; so he was, no doubt, safely at the barracks, little dreaming of my state of mind.

It was snowing heavily still. I knew it by the dropping that came steadily down the chimney. The atmosphere seemed to choke me, somehow. And ever and anon I found myself listening intently.

The hall clock struck eleven; every stroke vibrating through me. Still I sat on; my fire growing dim, and myself feeling cramped, cold, and almost immovable.

What was I so afraid of? I asked myself a hundred times. I could not tell; it was a vague, shadowy terror that seemed to be chaining me down. I had heard of people's hair turning white in a night from fear. Surely mine would be as snowy as the ground without, if I had to spend the whole night thus.

Oh, for the sound of Arthur's voice—perhaps I should never hear it again—perhaps he would never know what a night I had spent, as either he or I might be murdered before morning. Half-past eleven—only thirty minutes since the

clock struck. In eight hours our servant from the barracks would come, even if Arthur had settled not to return till the morning—eight hours of this!

A quarter from twelve! By a mighty effort, I forced myself to get up; glancing at the glass, my own ghastly reflection terrified me. I laid my watch under my pillow, and was in the act of lying down beside baby—not to sleep, as till two o'clock, I should hope for Arthur—when a sound, awful wild, unearthly, broke the stillness of the dark December night. It was a scream from a woman's voice in dire distress; another followed, and it came from somewhere within the house. Not a moment did I hesitate.

Springing out of bed, and putting on only my slippers, happily having kept on my dressing gown, I seized my child, paused only to snatch up her little shawl that lay beside her on the bed, unbarred my shutter, opened the window, and the next moment was on the verandah. It needed not a third wild shriek to impel me to a speed beyond what I had ever dreamt of as possible.

In a second or two I was beyond the gate, flying for life, for my own and another existence, dearer far, in my arms clasped tightly to me—flying through the lanes, past the dreaded hedges, on, stumbling now and then, but recovering myself only to resume my race for life with greater desperation. Death surely was behind us, but a refuge was already looming in front of me. If the pale, piercing face of the outside watcher overtook me now, what would be my fate?

God was merciful indeed to me, and gave me the power to proceed in my awful extremity.

Heaven's portals could hardly have been more rapturously reached than the barrack-gates, as I flew inside of them. I saw a group of men standing in the doorway, and towards them I rushed, recognizing, to my unutterable thankfulness, among them, my husband.

His amazement may be better imagined than described, as he beheld us; and as I could not do more than point behind me, I believe poor Arthur must have thought I had gone suddenly raving mad. I only heard their voices murmuring round me, and I felt baby lifted out of my arms, though they told me afterwards I held her so tightly they could scarcely separate us. The next thing I knew was, that Arthur had laid me on a sofa in a bright, warm room, and that we were safe—Arthur, baby, and I—and together!

But the servants! I conveyed to Arthur, as coherently as I could, the events of the afternoon and night, and my conviction that nothing short of murder had been committed. In less than five minutes he was off, with some of the others, to the cottage, where an awful scene presented itself to their view as they entered.

In the passage from the kitchen to the entrance hall lay the dead body of our unfortunate cook. A blow from some heavy weapon had actually smashed in the back of her head, and life was quite extinct; our other servant was found in an insensible state, but, after some time, recovered sufficiently to be able to give the particulars of the attack, and a description of their assailant, who proved to be no other than the monster who had glared in upon me that very afternoon. It seemed that, after I had seen that everything was secure, the servants had gone out to the coal-house, and during their temporary absence from the kitchen door, the ruffian had slipped in, secreted himself in a cupboard in the passage, and thus being actually locked into the house with ourselves!

Imagining, it was supposed, that Arthur would not return, and knowing that we had a good deal of plate in the house, he had arranged to begin operations after all was quiet, and the first scream I had heard had been elicited from the unfortunate servants, at whose bedside he suddenly appeared.

The miscreant had struck down the cook while she attempted to escape, which, happily for herself, the other servant was too paralysed to do. The scream I had heard as I left the house must have been the last dying one of the poor cook, whom the murderer had pursued and overtaken before she could gain my door, which was, no doubt, the point to which she was flying for succour. Not a moment too soon had I gone.

An accomplice had been admitted by the front door, which had been found wide open, my bedroom door shattered, but nothing touched, my flight having, doubtless, scared them. The tracks of their pursuing footsteps were discerned easily, when the blessed morning light of Christmas Day shone. They had evidently gone in pursuit of me, but probably my safety was due greatly to the whiteness of my garments, which must have rendered my flying figure almost invisible against the snowy-ground. The police were soon in quest, and ere many hours elapsed the retreat of the assassins was discovered.

A desperate struggle ensued, and recognising in the one man an escaped and notorious convict, and in the conflict feeling his own life was in danger, the constable fired on him, and the miserable corpse was conveyed to the police station, where our servant identified it as the murderer of the cook, and the assailant of herself. The wretched man had, with his companion and accomplice, escaped only two days before from prison, to which the latter was safely escorted back by a couple of policemen. The funeral of our poor servant took place a few days afterwards, and the Bungalow was finally deserted by us. The other servant recovered completely, and the policeman, who had been wounded by the convict rather severely, was reported convalescent before our departure.

I never saw the Bungalow again; and very joyfully did I enter the steamer which conveyed us to dear old England.

Neither baby nor I suffered any bad effects from our midnight race through the Irish lanes; but when I think of its terrors, I lift my heart in fervent gratitude to God, who preserved us when encompassed by perils so profound, and guided so graciously my faltering footsteps, as I fled through the snow on my first and last lonely Christmas Eve.

ABSURDITY OF HIGH-HEELED BOOTS.

Woman is not in the habit of taking the advice so freely offered her in a kindly spirit by man. She listens apparently to all he says as to the inconvenience and extravagance of her dress and of its prejudicial effect on her health, but she pays no attention to his warnings and resolutely follows the path of her own inclinations, even though it leads to the workhouse or the grave, with that firmness which is one of her most charming characteristics. At the spring season of the year, however, when, owing to the treacherous nature of our climate and the greasy condition of our pavements, out-door exercise is often as dangerous as it is beneficial, woman can hardly fail to see the absurdity of her high-heeled boots. It is quite impossible for her to walk with any ease, comfort, or safety to herself in these instruments of torture, which, by throwing her out of the perpendicular, give her the appearance of the leaning tower of Pisa, and produce an impression on spectators that she may at any moment topple over. Her boots, also, are far too thin for walking purposes, and it was only very recently that an inquest was held on the body of a young lady who, owing to a nail piercing the sole of her boot, received such an injury to the foot that she died of lockjaw. Woman moreover, now that she takes so active a part in the business of life and is almost ubiquitous, requires to be strongly if not ponderously shod, so that when necessity arises she may hold her own with man, returning kick for kick with that fascinating but foolish creature. A few words from the pulpit would perhaps induce her to take the question of boot reform into serious consideration.

ARTISTIC.

THE tercentenary of Rubens' birth is to be celebrated at Antwerp with great fêtes.

M. BONNAT has just finished the sketch of his grand picture of the "Flagellation of Christ."

MR. PELLEGRINI, better known as "Ape," is unwell, and will cease contributing to *Vanity Fair* for the present.

GUSTAVE DORÉ will bring out his illustrated edition of Shakespeare at his own expense. The first play will be *Macbeth*.

It is stated Millais's landscape "Over the Hills and Far Away," intended for the next Academy, has been sold for the sum of 3,500 guineas.

EXCAVATIONS are now being made for the erection of the Palmerston statue, opposite that of the late Lord Derby, in Palace-square, Westminster.

THE workmen and inhabitants of Creusot have resolved to erect a monument to the memory of Schneider. So popular is the scheme that the subscription list is already signed by more than 25,000 persons.

THE *Piccolo*, of Naples, announces the discovery in a shop in the street Santa-Chiara, of a Madonna by Giotto. A dealer in wood has engaged the premises, which belong to the State, to store his goods. He gave orders to have the walls whitewashed, but the artist Morelli, happening to enter, saw the picture, and stopped the proceedings. The Crown has again taken possession of the building.

THE well-known foreign artist, J. B. Zwecker, who had been living in England for twenty-five years, is dead. The works describing the labours of Livingstone, Du Chaillu, Speke and Grant, Vambéry, Stanley, Sir Samuel Baker, Winwood Reade, &c., owe a great deal of their popularity to his skilful pencil. To the chief illustrated papers like the *Illustrated London News* and the *Graphic* he was also a frequent contributor.

THE inhabitants of Friburg (Switzerland) are organising some grand fêtes for the third centennial anniversary of the famous battle of Morat, gained on the 22nd June, 1476, by the Confederate forces over Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. An historical cortege will represent the entry into the town of the victorious army. The distribution and composition of the groups will be regulated in accordance with the narration of the contemporary *Chronicle* Diebold Schilling.

DOMESTIC.

OYSTER SAUCE.—Parboil the oysters in their own liquor, beard them, and reserve all the liquor. Melt a piece of butter in a saucepan, add a little flour, the oyster liquor, and enough milk to make as much sauce as is wanted. Put in a blade of mace and a bay leaf tied together, pepper and salt to taste, and the least dust of cayenne. Let the sauce come to the boil, add the oysters, and as soon as they are quite hot remove the mace and bay leaf. Stir in a few drops of lemon juice, and serve.

RUSSIAN SALAD.—Take thin small slices of cold chicken, partridge, and salmon, add cold cooked young green peas, green beans, and asparagus heads, carrots, turnips, beet root, and cauliflower cut into thin lozenges, a few stoned olives, and some anchovies cut in small pieces, some fresh or pickled shrimp, capers, and a little caviar; season with a sauce made of mustard, vinegar, salad oil, and cayenne pepper, add a few finely minced shallots or onions, mix well, and set on ice till needed. Care should be taken that all the ingredients be chosen so that all will taste, but none predominate.

FRICASSÉE OF CHICKEN.—Cut up a large chicken into neat joints. Throw them into boiling salted water for two or three minutes. Take them out, and on doing so rub each piece with a lemon cut in half. Melt an ounce of butter in a saucepan, add a tablespoonful of flour, white pepper, salt, powdered nutmeg to taste, and half a pint of white stock, with an onion, a bunch of parsley, and some button mushrooms; stir the sauce till it boils, then put in the pieces of fowl, and let them stew gently. When done remove the onion and parsley, lay the pieces of fowl neatly on a dish, stir into the sauce, off the fire, a couple of yolks of egg, strained and beaten up with the juice of a lemon, pour it over the pieces of fowl arranging the mushrooms round them.