

## ON A THIMBLE.

Welcome assistant,  
Steadfast and bright,  
Shielding its owner  
With all its might,  
Should the keen needle  
Wound in its flight.

Symbol of patience,  
Token of care,  
Honoured and time-worn,  
What can impair  
Such a brave marvel,  
Wrought for the fair?

Tell me, O Thimble,  
Of gossip sweet!  
Of rumour of scandal,  
Not too discreet,  
Canst thou accomplish  
This daring feat?

Whisper the secret  
Uttered so low,  
When her white fingers  
Fly to and fro,  
Why doth her bosom  
Palpitate so?

What sudden tremor  
Darts through her frame?  
Is she recalling  
Some tender name?  
Is it a recent,  
Or a late flame?

What dainty garment  
Bordered with lace,  
Doth her sweet fingers  
Silently trace?  
Making the blushes  
Flit o'er her face?

Tell me, O Thimble!  
Happy and wise,  
All the sweet language  
Of her bright eyes,  
Or the true meaning  
Of her deep sighs?

Killings and gosses,  
Gathers and frills,  
Fellings and pleatings;  
Humming soft trills,  
Numberless moments  
Swiftly she kills.

Happy the mortal  
Lingering near,  
Constant and hopeful,  
Whispering clear,  
Some playful nothing  
Into her ear.

Watching the needle  
Heedlessly dart,  
Fearing a torture  
Near to his heart,  
Should she command him  
Then to depart.

Envious mortal!  
Favoured to please,  
Murmuring love-words,  
Trying to tease;  
In a shy moment  
Giving a squeeze!

Rapturous moment,  
Of tenderness,  
Tremors and blushes,  
Dreadful to guess,  
When her hand pauses  
And she says "Yes!"

London.

ISIDORE.

## THE SPRING CAPTAIN.

The London season is ushered in by various outward and visible signs of the crush and gaiety that are about to take place. One by one the squares and crescents and terraces lose their deserted aspect; the old newspapers have been taken off the windows, the sheets and coverings have been removed from the furniture, the painters have departed with the pails and scaffolding, the little plots of grass in front of the houses have been cut and swept, and the walks freshly gravelled; whilst the tradesmen around look up their books and take stock of their goods, for "the family" have arrived. Now it is that the carriage-builders bring out their newest vehicles and place them in the front of their warehouses, whilst the job-masters walk cheerily round their stables, and think of the prices they can command for the nags they bought for a song during the autumn. Operatic and theatrical managers advertise their companies and quote the opinions of the press upon the new artists who, after having starred in the provinces, are now about to astonish the fastidious metropolitan world. The clubs have taken up their heavy stair-carpet and made their arrangements for additional waiters. Lodging-house keepers are turning into their basement floors in order to have more space for letting purposes. Pious divines, who pay their way by pew-rents, and who during the past winter have had ample opportunities of living more for the other world than for this, now begin to look up their most effective sermons, and to study their most imposing attitudes. Cab-owners have brought up extra cabs from country towns to be added to their stock in the London yards. The shops crowd their windows with their most attractive goods, the principal streets have been put in repair, the parks have been trimmed, and the Row done up for the hundreds of horses that are soon to canter up and down it; the offices of the house-agents are filled with country visitors in quest of tenements in a fashionable quarter and at a reasonable price. On all sides there are bustle, activity, and awakened interest, for the season has begun!

From such symptoms the ordinary observer becomes aware that the old state of things has passed away, and that a new régime is on the eve of introduction. Yet your true Londoner knows that all this is only the prelude to the play, and that until the appearance of one great actor upon the scene the real drama or comedy of life has not commenced. The streets may be thronged with carriages, the Row may be crowded with equestrians and pedestrians, the columns of the *Post* may be filled with the festivities of the fashionable, the clubs may be so populated that to obtain a seat within their princely walls is almost as difficult as to obtain

a seat in Parliament; the uninitiated may look upon the outward world, and greet each other with "It's going to be a goodish season; town very full!" Still the arrival of one individual is absolutely necessary to constitute the height of the season. As surely as the needle points to the north, or as the barometer prophesies the weather, so surely does the appearance of the Spring Captain on the steps of his club, or taking his walks abroad, calm, important, and resplendent, proclaim to all interested in the matter that the season is at its height.

The "spring captain" is nothing unless fashionable; he only comes up to town when everybody is there and everything in full swing; and he quits the "little village," as he pleasantly terms the capital of his country, a fortnight before Goodwood. Why this distinguished personage should be so careful to identify his arrival and departure with the movements of what is called, down-stairs, "high-life," is not very easy of comprehension; for the circle of his acquaintances is limited, and he has about as much to do with society as the penny postman has with the Cabinet. He is a man upon town instead of a man about town, and the difference between the two is all that is contained between social exclusion and social admission. In spite of his immense pretensions, candour compels us to state that the spring captain is an "outsider."

Yet he is eminently a representative man. Of society's representative men there are various kinds. There is the man who is careless as to his personal appearance—who wears short trousers and dirty white socks, whose hair is unkempt and beard unshorn, and whose ill-fitting hat is always at the back of his head; who is shortsighted, who is always immersed in diligent perusal, and never met unless with books and pamphlets under his arm; who is given to much lecturing, sporting and amateur writing and reviewing; who adopts no opinions but his own, and silences all opposition by argument, contention, and incessant contradiction; he is the representative of culture, of progress, and of advanced ideas, which fail, however, to advance him. There is the man who is always staring before the public—who addresses pamphlets to Cabinet Ministers on most of the great public questions, who is incessantly badgering the political committees of clubs for pecuniary aid, who is great at election meetings, who is the ally of Workingmen's Associations, and who is frequently to be met with in the lobby of the House of Commons, hanging on to any member who will be content to be bored by his society; he is the representative of political ambition. There is the man, generally in the city, and always in the volunteers, who is the great critic of strategy and military manoeuvres—who knows the *army list* as a priest knows his breviary, whose talk is confined entirely to military matters, and who is never so happy as when investigating the military estimates, criticising the working of a new gun, or finding fault with the operations of a campaign; he is the representative of the military spirit of the country. A great warrior this man, and the bloodthirstiest of the bloodthirsty where the honour of his nation is concerned; yet in private life he is mild and exemplary, and is often the most active of churchwardens. The spring captain is, however, none of these things—he does not care for "culchaw," he knows nothing of politics, and he "curses pipeclay;" he is the representative of swagger.

Yes, before the shrine of swagger he bows down; in his gait and demeanour he is the fond disciple of swagger; and in all that he does, thinks, and says, swagger in its most exaggerated form has marked him for its own. As a rule your true man about town is indifferent to dress; he dresses like a gentleman, and it is his object to pass through the world without attracting attention, so far as sartorial art is concerned. Not so the spring captain. His visit to London is not an every-day affair. During the winter and spring he has thought much upon the subject; he has not quitted his dreary provincial quarters for the capital with any intention of hiding his candle under a bushel; nay, he has economised so that the light of his dip during the few weeks he is an external member of the gay world may flare up, and, by the brilliancy of its flame, attract much comment. There are some simple people—generally from the country and the suburbs—who think when once they have donned their finest garments, have walked in the Park without bowing to a soul, have mooned about what they call "the West-end," and have visited the haunts and show-shops of fashion, that they are really the *habitués* of society, and swells of a most alarming character. To this order belongs the spring captain. He feels that without all the aid of his tailor, hatter, and haberdasher, and without adopting that peculiar "dismounted dragon-like walk, and that remarkable pronunciation of the English language, he would be, what his inner voice plainly tells him he is, a nobody. He is one of those men who think they are bound to bolster up their position by constant swagger and self-assertion; as if a keen, inquisitive world did not speedily detect all their little artifices, and place them upon their true level!

The spring captain, like everybody at the present day, of course belongs to a club—not to one of the exclusive clubs, but still a club. He has a bedroom in one of the back streets near Pall Mall, and his life is not very *orangeuse*. The invitations he receives to dance or dinner are very limited and seldom of a character to ad-

vance his progress in society. He, however, cheerfully accepts his position, and is quite content with himself, provided his tradespeople turn him out to advantage. His daily programme may appear to some monotonous, but it is strictly gone through, and seems to give him pleasure. He never, if fine, misses the Park in the morning; and indeed, to me, it would not be the Park without his attractive presence. I like to see him lounge up the Row with his gorgeously-gloved hands behind his back, and dangling his tasselled cane. A fatuous smile overspreads his face, and when he comes upon a crush of people he conceals his shyness by pretending to be anxiously looking for some one in the crowd. Yet, poor man, his fervent prayer is that he may meet no one. What an awful collapse would it be for him, with his glossy hat upon his head, his hair parted behind, his moustaches curled and brilliantined, his dazzling scarf, his neck envied in the highest and starchiest of collars, his exquisitely-fitting frock-coat, with the expensive little bouquet in the button-hole, his delicate tinted trousers that a fly walking over would soil, his white gaiters and polished pointed boots—I say, what an awful thing it would be for him, with the eyes of the polite world gazing upon him, to meet some of his friends! The acquaintances of the spring captain are always drawn from the eligible set, but his friends do not belong to the same class. It is the one terror of his life that he should come across, when thus attired, like Solomon, in all his glory, those he knows in the country. Fancy meeting his village apothecary—with whom he plays sixpenny whist during the winter, and whose wife, on Sundays and festival days, is much given to curious bonnets and green satin dresses of the year one—in the Row during the very height of the season! "Ulllo! you 'ere! My, what a swell you are, John! ain't he, old woman? Well, we are like you. I and the missis have come up to see the sights and gay folk and do the fashionable. You're alone; come and toddle about with us, and show us who's who," he fancies he hears them say; and he is ready to sink with shame into the boots he owes Thomas three guineas for. He is always alone; it is a characteristic of the spring captain to be solitary; and he knows if he meets any of his provincial friends he will be powerless to avoid them or shake them off. It is the one bitter drop in the cup of his life, and has more than once marred the pleasure of his visit to London. It does me good to observe him on those trying occasions. I like to see him the perfect tailor's dummy—haughty, condescending, stolid; and then to see him suddenly greeted in the most affectionate terms by some little cad who in the country may be his bosom friend, and to watch him colour, shift from leg to leg, and whilst in his heart of hearts consigning the intruder to eternal perdition, yet daring not to display his mortification, but pretending to take an interest in the conversation; and then to see him sneak off subdued, crestfallen, and, O, so humble!

Having "done" the Row—that is to say, having walked up and down it a certain number of times without recognizing a friend, and having paid his penny for a chair whilst he smoked his cigar in solemn silence—the spring captain solemnly wends his way along Piccadilly to his club for lunch. Here he is more in his element. Provided he pays for what he orders, he receives the same comfort and attention as the proudest lord. Having economized during the winter for his weeks of metropolitan splendour, the spring captain does not deny himself a single luxury. At home he may be accustomed to a somewhat frugal board, and his establishment may leave much to be desired; but watch him at the club, and the stranger would take him for the most consummate gourmet, and the master of the most princely appointments. With what an air he enters the coffee-room, and gazes at the different dishes on the tables! and how severe he is upon the waiters, if they are in the slightest degree remiss in their duties! At home a maid-of-all-work may dish up his cold mutton, and draw his mug of beer; but at the club he is content with nothing less than the most careful and exacting service. He lunches with his hat on, because he has been given to understand that it is the custom with certain members of Parliament, and with others who imagine themselves to be of high degree. The spring captain is observant, and the most imitative of beings. He watches what the leaders of fashion in his club do, and orders and follows in their footsteps. He drinks nothing but the driest of champagnes and the silkiest of clarets, though as a matter of fact he prefers pale ale or whisky-and-water. Everything that is just in season, and consequently very expensive, he makes a point of ordering. It does not matter whether he likes what he orders, or whether he has ever tasted it before, but, as he says, it is "good form." Who does not remember that immortal spring captain who, having told the waiter to bring him some plover's eggs, took one of them up to eat, and then, in tones of the deepest indignation, bade the servant remove them, as *they were quite cold*? It is the spring captain who is so particular about his lettuce and tomatoes being served up in the French style, though the profusion of oil makes him terribly bilious; who has kidneys stewed in sherry, who sprinkles his ham with champagne, and who carries out to the very letter every gastronomic instruction he has heard of. Yet ask him what he really likes, and he would tell you a steak and a bottle of stout. But your true spring captain is always satisfied so long as he can make a display.

After luncheon comes the important question

of how to spend the afternoon. Tobacco and the newspapers carry him on to four o'clock very well; but what is he to do then? He has no calls to make, because he knows no one. For the same reason he never has to put in an appearance at afternoon teas, at homes, or afternoon dances. He does not play whist, and he is dressed too well to soil himself with billiards. What shall he do? Many men under the circumstances might find time hang heavy upon their hands, but not so the spring captain. The public—any public—is his audience, and as long as he can appear before it he is perfectly happy. Solemnly he descends the steps of his club, and begins to take his afternoon's constitutional. He has brushed his hair and spiked its ends after the fashion of spring captains; a new flower blossoms in his button-hole, which he has bought from the hall-porter; not a crease or a bulge is to be observed in his attire; his boots are as bright as polished ebony; and he feels, as he loftily surveys mankind, that he has nothing to fear. He is the most perfect of "mooners." Without coming across a single acquaintance, without looking into a single shop-window, without observing anything that is going on around him, he is perfectly content to wander up and down the town. His favourite haunts are well known. The Academy, the Burlington Arcade, Regent street, the lower part of Bond street, Piccadilly, and the Park constitute his London. Whenever he passes a shop in which there is a mirror, he stops and studies with pride his own reflection. Quite the ladies' man in his own estimation, he puts himself into attitudes whenever he has to pass the gauntlet of the fair occupants in carriages drawn up in front of the establishments of our great mercers and milliners. If a woman makes some audible remark in his favour, or a little boy admiringly exclaims, "Lawks, what a swell that cove is!" he is made happy for the day. The exercise he takes over the London pavement is a splendid feat of pedestrianism, for he is always walking (except in rainy weather, when he frames himself in the bow-window of his club); and he sits down seldom, because it mars the fit of his frock coat, and makes his trousers bulge at the knees. And so he passes his day, lounging about the fashionable streets, or uniting himself with the crowd that throngs the Park from Apsley House to Albert Gate, until it is time for him to return to his lodgings and dress for dinner.

Exercise has given him an excellent appetite, and he does not stint himself. A man may say, even in those epicurean days, that he has dined who sits down to Painter's clear turtle, white-bait, sole *au gratin*, two kromeskys, a dish of cutlets, a spring chicken, a dish of asparagus, ice- pudding, and the whole washed down by a bottle of Perrier Jouet extra dry, and a couple of glasses of old East India sherry. The spring captain always orders the most perfect of little dinners, spends every sou he has upon himself, and reprimands the steward in the haughtiest manner if anything goes wrong with the details of the repast. How often has he told the wine-butler that the vintages were corked when they were not! and when he complains of the smallness and hardness of the asparagus, you would imagine that the kitchen-gardens "down at his place" were one of the sights of the county, when perhaps he owns a thirty-pound villa and a back-yard.

After dinner, of course, comes the play. Occasionally the spring captain visits the Opera, and last season he went into ecstasies over Sarah Bernhardt, though his knowledge of French is confined to mis-spelling the dishes he orders from the club menu; but the theatre and the music-hall are his favourite places of recreation. He does not care for severe music and high-class comedy, but he is much given to *opéra bouffe*, to burlesques, and leg-pieces. Cane in hand and toothpick in mouth, he is one of the most devoted admirers of the Lotties and Nellies and Claras, whose theatrical photographs are seen in every window. At the music-hall he poses as a patron; he goes behind the scenes, is on familiar terms with the ballet, and stands a bottle of "fizz" to the great comique; there he is reported to be a lord, and does not contradict the rumour. In his opinion the country is going to the dogs, since the doors of "the Duke's" have been closed, and Cremorne a thing of the past. "What is a fella to do with his evenings?" he sighs; and returns to his club, to finish a well-spent day over his cigars and sundry brandies-and-water.

A life of mild imposture is that of the Spring Captain. In the country he may be a worthy and manly creature; but so far as numbering himself amongst the *habitués* of London is concerned, he is the vainest and most empty of snobs. A foolish display in dress when dress is no longer a distinction; petty effeminate airs which only recoil upon himself; a conceit that would be offensive were it not too ridiculous, and an assumed knowledge of the world when he is the most ignorant of its votaries, are his main characteristics. However, he is harmless; he is so completely the fool that it is impossible for him to develop into the knave.

## POVERTY AND SUFFERING.

"I was dragged down with debt, poverty and suffering for years, caused by a sick family and large bills for doctoring, which did them no good. I was completely discouraged, until one year ago, by the advice of my pastor, I procured Hop Bitters and commenced its use, and in one month we were all well, and none of us have seen a sick day since, and I want to say to all poor men, you can keep your families well a year with Hop Bitters for less than one doctor's visit will cost, I know it. A Workingman."