

"The Neighbour's Bairn."

(By Henry Irving, in "The Green Room.")

When, a year ago, we produced at the Lyceum, as a first piece, the old Scotch drama of "Cramond Brig," the various members of the company playing in the piece had full choice of wherewithal to wash down their "head and harrigles"—(of which, by-the-way, over a hundred were consumed during the run)—and the miller's supper became a nightly jollity, except, perhaps, to the Scotch nobility and the king's huntsmen, who, with watery mouths and eager eyes, crowded the wings, forbidden by the irony of dramatic fate to enter upon the scene until the supper had been cleared away.

This piece had reminded me of an incident which came under my notice a good many years ago. In the off season of a large provincial theatre, in which I was a stock actor, I took an engagement at a small town, then known as one of the most thriving seaports of the North. The salary was little; the parts were long, and there was not much opportunity for gaining renown. However, it was better than remaining idle, as, at the worst, the amount of debt to be accumulated was minimised. The manager was not a bad fellow, and having been a good actor in his time, was only too glad to be surrounded by a class of actors whose services he could only obtain by the opportunity afforded by the bright summer—in those palmy days the darkest and wintriest season to the airy comedian or the thoroughly legitimate tragedian. Our opening bill consisted of "Cramond Brig," "Lord Darnley," "Wallace, the hero of Scotland," and "Gilderoy, the Bonnie Boy," in all of which I played, besides contributing my share in the National Anthem, which was right loyally and loudly sung by the entire strength of the company. After the rehearsal of "Cramond Brig," our jolly manager said, "Now, boys, I shall stand a real supper to-night; no pastboard and parsley, but a real sheep's head, and a little drop of real Scotch." A tumult of applause.

The manager was as good as his word, for at night there was a real head well equipped with turnips and carrots, and the "drop of real Scotch." The "neighbour's bairn," an important character in the scene, came in and took her seat as usual beside the miller's chair. She was a pretty, sad-eyed, intelligent child of some nine years old. In the course of the meal, when Jack Howison was freely passing the whisky, she leaned over to him and said, "Please, will you give me a little?" He looked surprised. She was so earnest in her request that I whispered to her, "To-morrow, perhaps, if you want it very much, you shall have a thimbleful."

To-morrow night came, and, to my amusement, she produced from the pocket of her little plaid frock a bright piece of brass, and held it out to me.

I said, "What's this?"

"A thimble, sir."

"But what am I to do with it?"

"You said that you would give me a thimbleful of whisky if I wanted it, and I want it."

This was said so naturally that the audience laughed and applauded. I looked over to the miller, and found him with the butt end of his knife and fork on the table, and his eyes wide open, gazing at us in astonishment. However, we were both experienced enough to pass off this unrehearsed effect as a part of the piece. I filled the thimble, and the child took it back carefully to her little "creepy" stool beside the miller. I watched her, and presently saw her turn her back to the audience and pour it into a little halfpenny tin snuff-box. She covered the box with a bit of paper, and screwed on the lid, thus making the box pretty water tight and put it into her pocket.

When the curtain fell, our manager came forward and patted the child's head. "Why my little girl," said he, "you are quite a genius. Your gag is the best thing in the piece. We must have it in every night. But, my child, you mustn't drink the whisky! No, no! that would never do."

"Oh, sir, indeed I won't; I give you my word I won't!" she said, quite earnestly, and ran to her dressing-room.

"Cramond Brig" had an unprecedented run of six nights, and the little lady always got her thimbleful of whisky, and her round of applause. And each time I noticed that she corked up the former safely in the snuff-box. I was curious as to what she could possibly want with the spirit, and who she was, and where she came from. I asked her, but she seemed so unwilling to tell, and turned so red, that I did not press her; but I found out that it was the old story—no mother, and a drunken father.

Still, it was strange; what could she want with the whisky—a child like her? It could not be for the drunken father. I was completely at fault. I took a fancy to the little thing, and wished to fathom her secret, for a secret I felt sure there was. After the performance, I saw my little lady come out. Poor little child! there was no mother or brother to see her to her home. She hurried up the street, and turning into the poorest quarter of the town, entered the common stair of a tumble-down old house. I followed, feeling my way as best I could. She went up and up, till in the very top flat she entered a little room. A handful of fire glimmering in the grate revealed a sickly boy, some two years her junior, who crawled towards her from where he was lying before the fire.

"Cissy, I'm glad you're home," he said. "I thought you'd never come."

She put her arms round him, laid the poor little head on her thin shoulder, and took him over to the fire again, trying to comfort him as she went.

"Is the pain very bad to-night, Willie?"

"Yes." A sigh. "Yes." I never heard

"Willie, I wish I could bear the pain for you."

"It's cruel of father to send me out in the wet; he knows how bad I am."

"Hush! Willie, hush! he might hear you."

"I don't care! I don't care! I wish he would kill me at once."

The reckless abandon of the child's despair was dreadful.

"Hush! hush! he is our father, and we mustn't say such things!" Thus through her fast-falling tears. Then she said, "Let me try and make the pain better."

The boy took off his shirt.

The girl leaned over and put her arms round him, and kissed the shoulder; she then put her hand into her pocket and took out the snuff-box.

"Oh, Willie, I wish we had more, so that it might cure the pain."

Having lighted a dip candle, she rubbed the child's rheumatic shoulder with the few drops of spirit, and then covered up the little thin body, and, sitting before the fire, took the boy's head on her knee, and began to sing him to sleep.

I took another look into the room, through the half-open door; my foot creaked; the frightened eyes met mine. I put my finger on my lips and crept away.

But, as I began to descend the stair, I met a drunken man ascending—slipping and stumbling as he came. He slipped and

stumbled by me, and entered the room. I followed to the landing unnoticed, and stood in the dark shadow of the half-open door.

A hoarse, brutal voice growled, "What are you doing there?—get up!"

"I can't, father; Willie's head is on my knees."

"Get up!"

So gently laid the boy's head on the floor, followed it in her little shawl, and stood up.

"Father, Willie is very sick! you ought to try and get him cured."

"Shut up. If I hear another word, I'll make you and him too keep yourselves quiet. And the brute flung himself on his bed, muttering to himself in his drunken semibewildered, "Cure him, indeed! Not if I know it. That's not the way to get the money; his cough is worth a lot alone. Cure him, indeed! Not likely!"

The black-hearted scoundrel!

The girl bowed her head lower and lower. I could not bear it. I entered the room.

The brute was on the bed already in his heated sleep. The child stole up to me, and in a half-frightened whisper said, "Oh, sir, mightn't people to keep secrets if they know them? I think they ought, if they are other people's." This with the dignity of a queen.

I could not gainsay her; so I said, as gravely as I could, to the little woman, "The secret shall be kept, but you must ask me if you want anything." She bent over, suddenly kissed my hand, and I went down the stair.

The next night she was shy in coming for her whisky, and I took care that she had no measure.

The last night of our long run of six nights I looked more happy than I had ever seen her. When she came for the whisky she held out the thimble, and whispered to me, with her poor, pale lips trembling, "You need only pretend to-night."

"Why?" I whispered.

"Because he doesn't want it now. He's dead!"

SOME of the most timid girls are not frightened by a loud bang.

Died Like a Gentleman.

A KENTUCKY [LAWYER'S IDEA OF SELF-MURDER WITH PROPRIETY, AND HOW HE REALIZED IT.

Hayden H. Shouse recently said, while talking with a friend about a man who had blown his brains out, "It was a dirty thing to do. Nobody has a right to make a mess of himself in that manner. There are 600 different ways of committing suicide in a gentlemanly way. Shooting and cutting are disgusting, and no man of sensibility and taste would disgrace himself. Opium offers the best means of suicide, and if over I conclude to go, I'll take it. A man can go to sleep like a gentleman and wake up at his destination. There is no blood, no horror." Mr. Shouse was noted for being singularly handsome. His face, when he was younger, had been described as Raphael-like, and a maturity of heavy eating and drinking had not robbed him of his beauty. He was a lawyer residing at Henderson, but his reputation and practice extended all over Kentucky. He was a candidate for the Congressional nomination in the Second district last fall.

Recently Mr. Shouse turned from a table on which he was writing in a public room of the Louisville Hotel and read to a perfect stranger in the room a letter that he had written. It was a request that the person to whom it was addressed would receive his body and bury it, and it enjoined a quick transportation, so that the remains might not suffer injury on the way. The lawyer's manner was distraught, and the listener, seeing him a lunatic, walked away, without regarding the matter as of any importance.

The matter was soon afterward related to the hotel clerk, who knew that Mr. Shouse had been drinking heavily, and feared that he had been written in earnest. He had a physician sent to the lawyer's room and found him dying neatly in bed from opium. Everything possible was done to save his life, though he protested against the undue treatment, and he died.

Just after his death came this despatch from his father-in-law:

EVANSVILLE, Ind., Dec. 1.

Phil. Judge, Louisville Hotel:

Hayden Shouse is a noble soul. If he is not dead, tell him to live for Vancie and Mollie. A thousand friends will sustain him. If he is dead, comply with his request, and send bill to me.

S. B. VANCE.

"Vancie" is Mr. Shouse's baby and "Mollie" his widow.

Mr. Shouse made his mortuary preparations with a degree of tranquil forethought which seems somewhat remarkable. Two weeks ago he left his home at Henderson, spent a night at Evansville, and came to Louisville. He had been drinking, and continued until he made himself sick, when he had a doctor and got better. He gambled recklessly for several days, and appears to have lost about \$3,000. The day before his death he paid up insurance policies on his life to the amount of \$8,000. Later he went to an express office, put about \$60 in money, some private papers, and his watch in a small box, directed it to his wife, paid the charges and took a receipt. Then it seems he went to his hotel and wrote and read aloud the letter before alluded to. This crowding of a personal matter upon the attention of an utter stranger showed a lack of gentlemanlike reserve so foreign to Mr. Shouse's character as to seem to his friends evidence of insanity. When he had finished the letter, it appears that he went to his room, took a bath, put on fresh linen, and, having fixed himself as nicely as he could for the trip he had in prospect, he took the laudanum and got into bed.

It is said that he was delicate in appearance, but of an iron will; that he was addicted at times to the intemperate use of liquor; that he had a remarkable sense of humour, and could be sarcastic when he chose.

On the night he died one of his friends said: "If Shouse could see these people trying to resuscitate him, he would be the maddest man in the State."

When he was first found in bed an emetic was brought to him, and he was asked to take it, but he said, "No, I won't; I didn't take poison for that purpose."

No satisfactory reason is given for Mr. Shouse's action. "Self-Help," by Samuel Smiles, was not found among his effects. It is said that his gambling losses were no large enough to have caused fatal uneasiness.

ness. But his health was shattered and he feared consumption; and, although he had a wife and child, it seemed advisable to him not to live, and he got away as narrated.

How to Act in Case of Fire.

American Builder.)

Better than all the elaborate and costly apparatus for extinguishing fires are constant care and watchfulness, and quick and intelligent action on the part of those who first discover a fire in progress. The fire which at its beginning could be smothered with a pocket-handkerchief, or dashed out with a bucket of water, neglected a few hours, lays in waste millions of dollars worth of property. If there is any time in which a person should be cool and calm, in perfect command of himself, it is when he discovers a fire that threatens the destruction of life and property. The first thing to do is to learn precisely where it is; the second, to consider the chances of extinguishing it. Of course, in cities, an alarm should at once be sent out, but at the same time a vigorous effort should be made to put out the fire with the means at hand; for sometimes what the fire engine is unable to accomplish when it reaches the scene, can be done by one or two persons who act promptly before the flames have had time to gain headway.

First, then, do not be alarmed on account of smoke. Frequently there is a great deal of smoke before the fire has made much progress. Remember that one can pass through smoke by keeping his head near the floor, or by enveloping it in a wet woollen cloth. On entering a room to fight down a fire smothered, keep the door closed behind, if possible. A pail of water and a tin dipper, in the hand of a resolute person, can be made to work a miracle at the beginning. If the fire has progressed too far to admit of this course, and it is necessary to depend entirely on outside help, then see to it that every door and window is closed. By so doing, where there is a fire engine in the neighbourhood, it will often be possible to confine the fire to one room.

Every person who stops at a hotel should take special pains before retiring to note the location of the stairways, so that in case of an alarm he can find his way out, even though the halls are filled with smoke. Never leave a room when there is an alarm of fire without first securing a wet towel, or, if possible, a wet sponge or piece of woollen cloth, through which to breathe. If escape by the stairs is cut off, seek an outside window and stay there till help comes. Above all things be cool and have your wits about you. When a lady's dress takes fire, let her fall on the floor at once and call for help, in the meantime reaching for some rug or woollen cloth, with which to smother the flames. There is nothing new in this advice. It has been repeated in one form or another hundreds of times; but it will bear repeating thousands of times.

The Coming Year.

There are a number of curious things with regard to the figures and their relations in the year 1881. From right to left and from left to right it reads the same. This will not happen again for a long time to come—just how long we will leave for the reader to determine. The first two figures of 1881, divided by 2, gave 9, and the last two figures, divided by 9, gave 9 also. If the figures of the year be divided by 9, the quotient will contain a 9, and if multiplied by 9, the product will contain two 9's. If the first one figures be added together, the product is 9, and if the last two figures be added, the sum is 9 also. If the first two figures be placed under the last two, and added, the sum will be 99, and 18 is 2-9 of 81. By adding, dividing, and multiplying, nineteen 9's are produced, or one 9 for each year required to complete the 19th century. The year that is before us is certainly peculiar in a figurative sense. What else this coming year, that will soon be upon us, may bring can be better told upon the morning of Jan. 1, 1882, when it will give place to its successor.

Capt. O. A. Horne's construction party at Arlington, Ga., went into their tent at night and were greeted by the rattling of a dozen or more snakes. The cook found one in his bed waiting company. Capt. Horne had his men fall into line, each one armed with a stout fence rail, and marched to a more agreeable place for the balance of the term.