

ity. The Englishmen remained quietly; all intercourse with the townspeople they avoided—the sights they troubled themselves not at all about. Every day they walked into the country, and ate and drank, smoked, slept, and read the papers, and lived as quietly and peaceably as angels. No letters came to them—they sent none off; the world was dead to them, and they were dead to the world.

Every third morning they regularly paid their bill; took nothing off, although the landlord daily charged a threefold price for everything. Van Rysvoort spoke usually but little too, and troubled himself about his guests still less, since they paid so well; but these self-same Englishmen took up all his attention. He puzzled his brain over and over again, and at last took his wife into his counsels; but as they could not even conjointly solve the mystery, they consulted with friends and neighbors upon what these Englishmen could possibly be doing at Ostend.

"They are spies," said one. "Birds of flight, who are escaping punishment," said the others. At last the town clerk, who had been some years in England, settled the matter. "Do not trouble your heads; I'll tell you what these two Englishmen are—they are nothing more nor less than mad Englishmen. Do you know what that means? Listen, and I'll tell you. I knew in London a man who, in his old age, took to leading such a beggarly life, that for fifteen years he lived as the most wretched of paupers. From his fellow-beggars he received every sort of annoyance; his mode of life brought on him cudgellings and imprisonments; but he still persisted. At last one morning he was found in a lane frozen dead! And listen, he left a will—valid, and drawn up by a notary—in which he disposed of more than £50,000 to a village he had never seen nor known. Confess that that was a mad Englishman. Such are those now lodging in the Scheidt." So spoke this clever man. But Van Rysvoort answered, "Mad or not, they are good customers; they live and pay well; never complain and if I only for five years could keep such guests, I should become a made man."

A week after this consultation, and three after their arrival, the Englishmen called their host, and thus addressed him: "Herr Van Rysvoort, your hotel pleases us very much, and if our proposition pleases you, we may continue our acquaintance with each other."

"My lord," answered the delighted host, with a low obeisance, "I am quite at your disposal; say your wishes, and they shall become mine; for I know what I owe to such distinguished guests."

"My good friend," said the little fat man, "your hotel is by no means so large as it ought to be; you know you have but three apartments in which gentlemen can be accommodated, and these look upon the street. The rattle of carts and carriages makes noise without end. We love quiet. We are here every instant disturbed. Our health must sink under it. In short, the noise is unbearable."

"I am very sorry to hear it, my lord; what can I do? You are quite right. It is true the traffic is without end, but I cannot shut up the street."

"Certainly not; but the thing is not so difficult after all."

"What does my lord mean?"

"The cost cannot be important, and we will willingly bear the half."

"Pray, continue, my lord," cried out the landlord with a frankness and warmth most unusual to him.

"You have, behind your house, a small garden, in which nothing grows; the old wall is also in ruins. Could you not build there a small house, with three comfortable rooms, and there we shall find a quiet lodging? If you freely give into our plan, as we have said, we will pay the half. When we leave, the house will belong to you; but should this not please you, we must go, although we would willingly remain."

Van Rysvoort seized eagerly upon the proposition, finding his own advantage in every view; he kept his customers, and enlarged his house at their expense.

The same evening the honest Van Rysvoort consulted with a builder, who, at one and the same time, was his gossip and godfather. The builder set briskly to work next morning; for the Englishmen would admit of no delay, and as they marked out the ground, all was quickly in progress.

From morning till night Mr. Richard Mowbray and Mr. William Featherington never left the workmen. Van Rysvoort took great interest in what was going on, but said nothing. It is true he was not quite contented that the haste with which the Englishmen hurried on the building gave no great guarantee for his durability. He would have been better pleased, perhaps, had the building not been raised quite so much in the corner by the old wall, and that it had been carried up a storey or so higher; but his guests were inexorable, and would only allow of one floor. In fourteen days the garden-house was completed, as if by magic. The Englishmen were so delighted, that they took immediate possession.

Van Rysvoort and his wife were now convinced that none but mad Englishmen would leave a good dry house for a new and wet one. However, that was the business of his guests, and being to all appearance a freak, they resolved that it should be well paid for. The entire building, according to the accounts of the architects employed upon it, cost 2,374 florins—a sum which the innkeeper considered so unreasonably low, that he increased it to 4,738 florins—for his own benefit. Monstrous as was the bill presented to them, the Englishmen paid it, the avaricious host consoling his conscience with

the reflection, that it was all little enough for accommodating such crazy lunatics within his premises.

This matter being settled, the Englishmen, now installed in their garden-house, seldom made their appearance out of it. They ate, drank, smoked and read the papers as usual; but the most curious part of our story is, that they allowed no one to enter, and even made the beds themselves.

All this time their accommodation was not of the best order. Perhaps the frau Van Rysvoort wished to try how little they could be pleased with. Nothing could be worse than their eating and wine; for honest Herr Rysvoort's reasoning was, that before mad Englishmen should drink of a good vintage, they must learn to value it. The facility with which they paid his double charges was only equalled by the uncompainingness with which they swallowed his ill-prepared viands.

The more shamelessness he exhibited, the greater became the forbearance of his guests. The brain of mine host was always at work to solve so much mystery; he ventured to display a certain dogged anger; still, he moved not the equanimity of his customers. The most puzzling and annoying circumstance was the making their own beds. Why did they always keep themselves fast locked in? Why did they burn a light all night? They moved into the garden for quiet sleep; and yet, since they had possession, they appeared to sleep not at all! Van Rysvoort lost himself in wild conjecture. He stood at his window for whole nights watching the light in the Englishmen's rooms; and at last so puzzled his senses with his guests, that he could no longer enjoy life. The bewildered and tormented landlord now took a good friend or two more into his counsels, and the result of a long deliberation was, that the two Englishmen were neither more nor less than false coiners. Van Rysvoort, not a little alarmed at this verdict passed in review the whole of the gold pieces he had received from the Englishmen, but found amongst them not a suspicious piece. Urged by his thrifty better half, he took a guinea to a neighboring Jew money-changer to ascertain its weight and purity. The Jew made every usual test, but declared it good. Now was the honest innkeeper quite at his wits' end; so was his wife; and so was his gossip and godfather, the builder.

Things went on in this manner until the middle of October, when the Englishmen suddenly changed their mode of living. Each bought a gun and a shooting-pouch, and went out—but never together—as they said, to sport upon the dunes and canals. At last, one evening Mr. Featherington called the innkeeper, and informed him that they were both going upon a three-days' shooting excursion.

And sure enough, the following morning, long before sunrise, a carriage was waiting at the door, and the Englishmen, in full sporting trim, jumped into it, and drove off.

So precipitate were they, that the innkeeper had no time to make them his lowest bow, nor to wish them a pleasurable excursion. During the next three days, Van Rysvoort was in a state of considerable perplexity. The Englishmen had taken with them the key of the garden-house; and a hard struggle ensued in his breast between curiosity and discretion. Curiosity said, break open the garden-house; discretion said, such an intrusion would lose him his guests.

Wednesday, the fourth day from the departure of the Englishmen, arrived, and still they did not appear. In the evening a council was held in the inn; the sitting was long and stormy; all sorts of surmises and strange hypotheses were indulged in.

On the Thursday, Van Rysvoort put on his great-coat most woefully, and went to give information to the police. He, however, took this step very unwillingly, as he wisely calculated that, in the event of his guests having met with an untimely end, he could not quietly possess himself of their valuables. The commissary and three gendarmes attended at the inn, to clear up the mystery.

As a matter of form, three knocks at the door summoned to a surrender. Of no use—no reply. Then, as a matter of course, followed the forcing of the entrance. The happy long-wished-for moment arrived. Lo! what came to sight? Nothing, literally nothing!

The police functionaries and the innkeeper started back in amazement. Then followed a long-drawn breath from the head-over-head peeping band of curious friends and relatives pressing on the back-ground. A gendarme drew his sword, and valiantly rushed into the apartments. But there was nothing to encounter but two empty trunks and an open letter. With these trophies he hurried back. A new movement then took place. The commissary read as follows:

"MY DEAR VAN RYSVOORT—Convinced that you are as well versed in the chronicles of your town as you are in your ledger, of whose exactitude you have left us nothing to doubt, it may be useless to tell you that Ostend, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, was mixed up in the war then raging between Spain and Holland. Your town was, from the year 1601 to 1604, exposed to those vicissitudes that all so situated are liable to, until the Dutch garrison was forced to yield to the Spanish general Spinola. Amongst the defenders who fought like heroes under the colors of the United Provinces, were many Englishmen, sons of the first families of our country. In this band was one of our ancestors, who was treasurer of the expedition. Before the town capitulated, he with great caution hid from the capture of the Spaniards the treasure-box."

"Soon after, he returned to England and died, but not before he had given to his family some intelligence of the concealed treasures. This good fortune has devolved upon us; your house and garden were pointed out as the spot. Once upon our track, we lost no time in installing ourselves in your inn, and soon found reason to be satisfied with our operations. We have succeeded, without giving rise to any suspicions, in obtaining the possession of the treasures so long and deeply buried in oblivion, and in appropriating them to ourselves, their right destination. How we operated, need now no longer be a secret; but, Herr Van Rysvoort, we must premise our disclosure by declaring, upon our honor as gentlemen, that we have fairly let you into one half of the treasures. So long as Ostend exists, no innkeeper will have again such profitable guests. You have robbed us through thick and thin, as though we had fallen into the hands of a banditti. You have not only doubly, but hundredfold chicaned us. We were determined to shut our eyes to your proceedings. As we promised, you have profited. In the furthest room you will find a portion of the floor broken up; you will also find a hole ten feet deep at the bottom of which lies an iron chest. We took our time in removing the old ducats of Charles V. The chest we bequeath to you, with the recommendation that you fill up the chasm again at your convenience."

"Perhaps you will wish to know how the 'mad Englishmen' are really named. We are very sorry in this respect to be unwilling to oblige you. The discovery would be of no use, as we firmly intend never to set foot again in your memorable town, or in your inn. Do not trouble yourself with any reflections upon our conduct. The finance minister of Queen Elizabeth can alone call us to account; and he, good man, has already given up his claims full two hundred years ago; so, upon his score, we lightly trouble ourselves."

"For the future, in laughing over the very questionable conduct you have shown us, we shall always bear witness to the high esteem with which we are impressed as to your character as a man and an innkeeper. In the hope of never seeing you again, with our hearty farewell, we give you leave to call us, and to speak of us, as the

"MAD ENGLISHMEN."

Van Rysvoort rolled his eyes and bit his lips; but to what purpose? The first transport of rage having passed away, the innkeeper ended the matter by an observation which did honor to his perception, "that these Englishmen, after all, were not so mad as they seemed to be."

## LIVING IN HONG KONG.

BY AN OFFICIAL'S WIFE.

To say that I enjoyed my life in China would faintly express my feelings. Such immunity from the turmoil of domestic life, from the petty cares of existence, the wastefulness of servants, I never expect to experience again.

The Chinese are a race of cooks. During my residence in Hong Kong of some years, never was an ill-cooked or ill-served meal placed upon my table.

I know little of the preparation myself, never going to the kitchen; but all my orders passing through the commodore or steward, who was responsible for their execution. When giving a dinner party, I had only to specify the number of guests, and style of entertainment, to have everything complete without the trouble of personal inspection or risk of failure.

When we arrived in Hong Kong we found our predecessor had left for us his well-trained corps of house-servants, ten in number; and as we were to live in a Government house, which was already furnished, we could take immediate possession. The house was large and handsome, built of stone, with verandas running along each story, and set in a lovely garden, full of delightful shrubs and tropical plants. The days were delightful, for it was the winter season; but we had fires in the evening, in large open fire-places, which reminded us of our early days at home. Only in the houses of the very wealthiest people is fire for the purposes of warmth ever used. Shall braziers be employed, filled with coals. They are portable, and many of them are very ornamental, made of bronze or copper, in the shape of vases or animals, and are very beautiful.

Our carpets were matting, our furniture of bamboo and beautiful lacquered ware, and our hangings of India muslin and mandarin silk; the lightness, delicacy, and strangeness of everything was very taking to the children; they ran about, shouting at the ornaments, many of them in the shape of hideous monsters, which the Chinese love to depict on the screen, from which leered Chinese lords, with their servants standing in bowing submission before them.

In the winter we had the wind blowing from the north in our faces, but when summer came, Hong Kong, being situated upon the lower sides of a hill, was shut off from a breeze, and was like an oven. The thermometer never rose above eighty-nine; but it was at this figure night and day, unchanging for months, and with a moist, sticky heat, that brought out the mould upon everything. A pair of boots in one night would grow up lovely specimens of fungi, kid gloves could not be kept unspotted, and we all descended to thread gloves, until thermome-

ter changed; every room had a large fan suspended from the ceiling, called a "punka," which was kept in motion by a servant, and made a breeze of hot air. Occasionally lizards darted across our parlor, or hid in our bed. Now, in England, a poor little mouse would often frighten me out of my wits; but a lizard was such a terrible novelty, that horror kept me awake, especially when I found one of these reptiles snugly ensconced between the sheets.

The foreign population, which makes the society of Hong Kong, is small, and composed of various classes. With little delay, most people call upon us; no tradesmen are admitted into the best society; every one who hangs out a sign with his own name upon it, unless a doctor, loses all chance of sunning himself in the smiles of the upper class! to bow to one's dentist was awful; to speak to an auctioneer, unless upon business, consigned one to the lower strata. We, being in Government employ, resolved to return all calls made upon us, and be polite to every one. It was a difficult question. If we joined the dons, we must do as the dons did, and be always haw-hawing at somebody or something. On the other hand, if we went to the other extreme, and consorted with ship captains who were guiltless of collars, vests, and neckties, and performed juggler's tricks with their knives, we should be consigned to a sort of social limbo. We resolved to call upon all who called upon us, and thereby escape shipwreck.

Upon the very first week of our arrival, we were invited to a dinner-party at the governor's, a party of thirty-four. These are the great occasions in Hong Kong, and full dress, as at a ball, is necessary. The ladies were gorgeously dressed, as much so as I had ever seen them upon any occasion in England. The leader of fashion was an American, a daughter of one of the United States' naval heroes, but married to a foreigner at Hong Kong. She was *petite* in size, dressed in a pink silk train, for the waist and sleeves were nothing to speak of. She had a necklace composed of twenty-five diamonds, a diamond tiara upon her head; arms flashing back the lustre from the bracelets covering them; she flashed and glistened as she moved, and eclipsed all rivals by her ornaments. The other ladies were attired in ball dresses, blue, amber, and Nile green silks, some in tarlatan, and all wore many diamonds. The table had plate of the elegant frosted silver made in China, and the most unique Chinese porcelain. By each plate lay a bouquet of flowers, and behind each chair stood a Chinese servant, in spotless white. The dinner consisted of twelve courses, abundance of fruit, flowers in profusion; and the regimental band, in the veranda outside, made delightful music. After a sitting of two hours, the ladies retired to the drawing-room, and the gentlemen to the garden to smoke, where wine and cigars were carried to them. The dinner was much like a state dinner in any civilized country.

Just after our arrival in Hong Kong a typhoon was expected one day; and all our rear windows looking upon the harbor were boarded up. The previous year great damage had been done, and many houses were overflowed and ruined by neglect of precautions for safety. A typhoon is a "terrible blow," worse than any hurricane, and while it lasts, which is generally not more than half an hour, sometimes less, is dreadful. First comes an ominous silence, as though all nature had stopped breathing; then a terrific roaring, which gradually increases in loudness, bringing the wind, whirling and tearing up trees, twisting them like reeds, creating a vacuum over the bay which drew up boats and small vessels, and apparently dropped them again, an undistinguishable mass. Thunder and lightning added to the terrors of the scene. The rain also came in torrents, and pelted upon the windows in great plashes, like hail. I sat with the children in the centre of one of our front rooms, listening to the deafening roar, and trembling in anticipation of what might come next. But it soon passed away, the sun came out, and we could look upon the destruction—not so great, I was told, as is usual upon such occasions. The water was strewn with wrecks, floating boxes, spars, and other *débris*; some of the choicest shrubs in our garden lay low; the walks were covered with broken branches of trees, and most of our trellises were down. I never could think of a typhoon without terror, for generally the barometer gave us notice, and we had time to make some preparation; yet experience never lessened the fears with which we awaited one.

FUN IN A NAME.—A writer in *Notes and Queries* has made a collection of singular names, which, if published some years ago, might have saved Dickens and Balzac some trouble. Dickens, as is well known, was very peculiar about the names of his characters, and was a month often in sitting himself. The felicity of many of them well repays the pains taken. His works are a perfect cabinet of nomenclature. Balzac was equally, if not more scrupulous. It is said that he wandered about the streets reading the signboards to find names to suit his characters. The writer in *Notes and Queries* has certainly gotten together a comical collection. Here are Allechin and Mr. Appleyard; Mr. Bythessea and Mr. Bytheway—probably a forgetful gentleman—with Messrs. Baby, Barefoot, Butler, Bellhanger, Christmas, Camomile, Cutbush, a florist; Cobblepick, who should be a shoemaker; Death, Deadman, Drawwater, Drinkwater, members of the temperance society, and Drinkall, who believes in Anacreon. Eyes, Eatwater, Gosling, Gray, Goose, Gotobed, Ghost, Handsomebody, Heskiah Hollowbread, Mackerel, Oysters, Punch and Pigeon, and these are only a smattering.