

CAISSA'S CASKET.

This week's chess instalment, although mailed to us on the 12th inst., has not been received. If this is the kind of thing we are to expect from the Post Office we shall be compelled to take example by the Governor General and employ a special courier. In the meantime we are anxiously expecting the publication of our missing chess correspondence in the Montreal Herald.

PICKPOCKETS.

I.

Some months ago, while going down Broadway in an omnibus, as I was looking at the people on the sidewalk, I felt a hand very softly and gently making its way behind me, evidently progressing toward the pocket in the skirts of my coat. Recollecting there was nothing but a handkerchief in one pocket and a pair of gloves in the other, I knew that I could not lose very much, and therefore sat still to enjoy this new sensation. The hand had very nearly reached my pocket when I turned to study the "artist." He was a man about forty years of age, plainly and neatly dressed, and looked like a very respectable citizen.

The instant I began to turn toward him his hand was swiftly but quietly withdrawn, and when I faced him he was looking gravely at something on the sidewalk. As I continued to study him he turned his head, and we had a good "square" look at one another for a moment without a word being said by either. He then pulled the strap and left the stage to seek some other sphere of action.

II.

A few days ago, while standing on the front platform of a Fourth Avenue car, I happened to cast my eyes down, and saw to my astonishment that my vest was unbuttoned. As it could not have unbuttoned itself, and as I certainly had not done it, I took occasion, while slowly rebuttoning it, to quietly look around and decide, if possible, which of my neighbor had been thus attentive to me. I made up my mind from the relative positions of all on the platform, that it must have been done by a gentleman standing nearest to and just in front of me, and who must have seen me return my pocket-book to the inside pocket of my vest after paying my fare. Yet it seemed preposterous to think so, for he was a very decent-looking man; his clothes were neat and well cut, and there was nothing "loud" or extravagant about him. He appeared perfectly respectable, and it seemed utterly impossible that he could be a pickpocket. Noticed, however, that he carried on his left arm a light coat in a "bunchy" way, which would very effectually conceal his right hand when raised for such an operation, and since I had to choose between believing that my vest unbuttoned itself, or that he had done it, I felt forced to believe the latter. I noticed, also, that he and I were the only ones that were quietly studying our neighbors. The rest had the usual straight-ahead look of passengers intent upon their journey.

I had uttered no exclamation when I made my discovery, so the gentleman in question appeared perfectly at his ease. I felt convinced, however, that if he were a pickpocket, he must be in the front rank of his profession for gentleness of touch, dexterity of fingers, and imperturbable demeanor. After studying us all quietly for a few moments, he made his way unobtrusively to the rear platform, and spoke to a taller, but younger man, who, singularly enough, had also a light coat, carried in the same bunchy way on the left arm. After talking together a few seconds, they left the car on the corner of Fourteenth street, and I saw them no more.

III.

Not long ago a car conductor gave quite an interesting account of how his pocket was picked which I shall repeat as nearly as possible in his own words:

"It was not on my own car, or on my own line. You see, I had got a day off to attend to some business in Brooklyn, where I had to make a payment of \$50. As I was leaving the house my brother-in-law said to me: 'Take care you don't get your pocket picked.' 'Well,' said I, 'if any one picks my pocket he's welcome to all he can get.' When I got to the other side of the river, I went to pay my \$50, but I no sooner touched my pocket than I knew I had been robbed. I was thunder-struck. My pocket had really been picked after all. So I just sat down and thought it all out, and when I got through it was just as clear as noonday. You see, as I was getting on the car, I noticed some suspicious looking characters on the platform, so I just buttoned up my pantaloons pocket, where I had my money. Well, Lord bless you, I might just as well have told them in so many words, 'Here's my money;' for they're all the time on the lookout for just such things as that, and they understand in a moment what such a movement means.

"The first thing they did when I got on the platform was to knock up against me and make me angry, for when you get a man angry you get him off his guard. There was no seat, so I stood against one side of the door, and one of these fellows leaned against the other side, so as to make the passage as narrow as possible. Then another went to push through, and as he came rather too much on my side, I pushed him

off. He drew back, and then, making another push, got through, and then went on toward the front of the car. Well, you see, the first time he went to push through he unbuttoned my pocket. The second time, he slid his hand down and very gently took out my pocket-book at the very time that I was resenting his pushing against me. I saw it all when I thought it out, but it was too late then; so I paid for my lesson."

IV.

A young friend told the writer recently that his mother was sitting not long ago in an omnibus, when she became aware that the "gentleman" on her right was feeling for her pocket under her cloak. For a moment a cold shiver passed through her, but as there were evidently many persons in the omnibus to whom she might apply for protection, she took courage, and recollecting that in the dress she wore her pocket had, much to her previous annoyance, been sewed on the wrong side of the skirt, concluded to sit still and await the course of events. After having been sufficiently entertained by the vain efforts of her neighbor to find the pocket, she turned to him and said quietly, "My pocket is on the other side, sir." The man immediately jumped up, pulled the strap, and disappeared with most amusing rapidity, the contemptuous coolness of the lady having been too much for his artistic nerves.

V.

The passengers at one of our crowded ferry-boats were much amused one day at seeing a gentleman very deftly pick his friend's pocket of his pocket-book and transfer it to his own. They were still more amused at seeing a third "gentleman" take the pocket-book even more deftly from the amateur and disappear in the crowd. The denouement soon came. Number Two asked Number One to let him see his pocket-book, and, when his friend could not find it, proceeded with a smile to restore it to him. His smile, however, was soon changed to a look of intense surprise, which was very much enjoyed by the bystanders, for they expected that "gentleman" Number Three would soon appear and unravel to his friends this amusing mystery. But, alas! Number Three never came back. He was, it seems, a true "artist," who had coolly robbed the amateur as publicly as the latter had robbed his friend. In the hurry and confusion of landing Number Three made his escape, so the amateur was obliged to compensate his friend for the contents of his pocket-book, probably resolving at the same time to eschew ever after any such practical jokes.

VI.

While the writer was one day conversing in a car with a friend on this subject, he told the following story: The best joke I know of about picking pockets is what happened to a gentleman named A., who at the time was President of one of our New York banks. I had occasion to go to Philadelphia to attend to some business in which A. was interested, and in the cars met an old gentleman and his grown-up son. When we reached Philadelphia, the old gentleman declined getting into the coach of the hotel to which we were going, preferring to go more cheaply by the horse-cars. We had got to the hotel before him, and when he joined us he said he had his pocket picked on the cars. He and Mr. A. had been talking with a friend about something else, but catching a word or two of the conversation he asked me about it, and when I told him what had happened, he said: "Oh! I can never have any sympathy with a man who has had his pocket picked. Why, when I was getting on the cars at New York a fellow reached across me very roughly, pretending that he wanted to reach the knob of the door. I looked at him and knew in a minute that he was a pick-pocket; so I just put my hand on my breast pocket, where I carried my pocket-book and papers, and kept it there, while I looked at him so as to let him see that I knew who he was and what he was after."

We then went on conversing about the business that had brought us to Philadelphia. After discussing it for some time Mr. A. wished to show us some memoranda he had made, and put his hand into his breast pocket to get his pocket-book, in which they were. I saw him start, and asked what was the matter, when he exclaimed, with a countenance expressing the most intense astonishment, "Why, my pocket-book is gone."

It was very clear that the man that reached across him had taken his pocket-book, and that he had been ever since feeling the other papers in his breast pocket, and been thus deluded with the idea that his pocket-book was safe. It was a very nervous business for him, for he had brought on about \$30,000 worth of notes of Philadelphia merchants to negotiate for his bank, and he had besides some five or six hundred dollars in bills. He asked me what he should do, when I advised him to telegraph immediately to New York, and put an advertisement in the newspapers offering at least \$2,000 for the return of the papers. He replied, "Oh! no; \$500 will do." "Very well," said I, "try it." He did try it, and received a note stating that \$2,000 were required. He tried to negotiate for less, but was finally compelled to pay the price named. Since then I have occasionally amused myself by quoting to him his own remark: "Oh! I can have no sympathy with a man who has had his pocket picked."

VII.

A well known prestidigitateur was one day showing some gentlemen some of the tricks of

pickpockets. One gentleman remarked: "Well, I don't think anybody could take out my breast-pin or my pocket-book without my knowing it." "Don't be too sure of that," said the Professor, reaching across his breast and patting him on the further shoulder. "I am inclined to think," said he, reaching across again, and patting him as before, "that even so wide-awake a man as you may have his pocket picked. Suppose you show us your pocket-book."

Much to the gentleman's astonishment his pocket-book was gone, and when asked for his breast-pin, he was amazed to find that also missing. The magician then, much to our amusement, produced the pocket-book and breast-pin, and restored them to their owner. He explained that when he first reached across to tap the gentleman on his shoulder he loosened the pin, and the second time he took it out.

The pocket-book was extracted in the usual way by the forefinger and the middle finger, which he had trained to take a strong yet delicate grip, and he had judiciously yet carefully inserted them into the pocket in the course of conversation.

He also explained that one of the distinguished marks of a pickpocket is the position of these fingers when in repose. A man's hand usually, when resting on his knee, has the fingers separated equally, but those of a pickpocket are apt to have the forefinger and middle finger nearer to each other, so that it is possible sometimes by looking around in an omnibus or car to notice this difference and thus be more upon one's guard.

THE SLAVES OF BARBARY.

The number of the Christian slaves was immense. For instance, in the early part of the sixteenth century, Hayraddin employed no less than 30,000 Christian slaves, for two years, in constructing a pier for the protection of his ships at Algiers; and, a century later, in Algiers and its surrounding district alone, there were between 25,000 and 30,000 Christian slaves, French, Spanish, English, Italians, Styrians, and even Russians. There were three denominations of slaves—those of the State in the service of the King or Dey, those of the galleys engaged in the seaports and the expeditions of the pirates, and those belonging to individuals, either employed in domestic, farm, and other labors, or dealt in as an article of commerce, being sold and resold in the same way as horses or cattle. The records of the sufferings of the unfortunate captives are truly heart-sickening. Immediately on their landing, they were stripped of their clothes and sold; and then, covered with a few rags and chained, they were set to work, some in the galleys, but the greater part in the country, under a scorching sun—some in tilling the soil, some in cutting wood and making charcoal, some in quarrying, some in sawing marble, some in the port, up to the middle in water, for nine hours a day; and all this under the whip of a brutal overseer. In many an instance, as described by the missionaries, their skin peeled off under the broiling sun, and their tongues lolled out from excessive thirst, which they could not leave their work to quench. But their physical sufferings were fully equalled, or rather surpassed, by the pangs of their mental pain and moral degradation. While many endured this protracted martyrdom rather than abandon the faith of Christ, others, in their utterly subdued and broken-down state, embraced Islamism, which immediately procured them some alleviation of the cruel treatment under which they groaned. Driven to desperation, several committed suicide, and numbers died from hardship.—*Murphy's Terra Incognita.*

LIFE IN NAPLES.

Every mule wears hundreds of buttons and little jingling bells. The carriages creak as if creaking was the object of their construction. The sellers of newspapers, and in general all itinerant traders, shout in the most astonishing manner. Every tradesman at the door of his shop, or over his stall, makes a pompous oral programme of his rich merchandise, bearing every stranger to purchase. The seller of popularies, without knowing anything of his own country or religion, fixes his amulet on your neck; while the shoe-black, no matter whether your boots are dim or shining, rubs them over with his varnish, with or without your consent. The flower-seller, who carries bundles of roses and orange blossoms, adorns your hat, your button-holes, your pockets, without ever asking your permission. The lemonade-maker comes out with a flowing glass, which he places at your lips. Scarcely have you freed yourself from his importunity, when another tormentor approaches with a pan of hot cakes, fried in oil, which he asks you to eat whether you will or no. The children, accustomed to mendicity, although their plumpness and good humor are indicative of proper feeding, seize you by the knees, and will not allow you to advance till you have given them some money. The fisherman draws near with a costume the color of seaweed, barefooted, his trousers tucked up and exposing his brown legs, his head covered with a red cap, his brown shirt unbuttoned, opening oysters, and other shell-fish, and presenting them to you as if by your orders. The cicerone goes before and displays his eloquence, interlarded with innumerable phrases in all languages, and full of anachronisms and falsehoods,

historical and artistic. If you dismiss him, if you say his services are useless, he will talk of the peril you are in of losing your purse or your life from not having listened to his counsels or being attentive to his astonishing knowledge. Do not fancy you can get out of all this by being in a carriage. I have seen people jump upon carriages more quickly, or stand upon the step, or follow clinging to the back, or to any part, regardless of your displeasure. But if you have the air of a newly-arrived traveller, they will not annoy you with their wares, but will force you to engage a carriage of their choosing. In half a second you are surrounded with vehicles, which encompass you like serpents, at the risk of crushing you, whose drivers speak all at once, a distracting and frightful jargon, offering to take you to Posillippo, to Baize, to Pozzuoli, to Castellamare, to Sorrento, to Cumæ, to the end of creation.—*Castelar's "Old Rome and New Italy."*

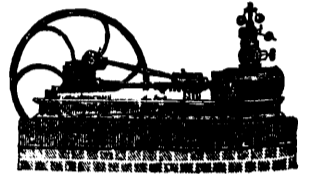
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