

Written for the LADIES' PICTORIAL WEEKLY.

Idle Thoughts of an Idle Woman.

I have been casting about in my mind for some feminine equivalent for fellow. The English language has no female fellow. The nearest word I can hit upon is jade, and there is something too rakish about jade, it lacks respectability. Therefore I have been obliged to substitute the solemn and imposing woman for the engaging and sportive fellow. Jerome K. Jerome has a great deal to answer for in the combination of his signature. Jerome K. Jerome has instigated Tomkins H. Tomkins, Haye Q. Haye and various other adaptations of the original idea. Writing of signatures suggests another thought! Why do so many married women now-a-days retain their maiden names and prefix them to those of their husbands. Emily de Smythe now signs herself Emily de Smythe Browne, and Mary Hopkinson is known as Mary Hopkinson Jones. Not even the longest name deters them. Possibly it is meant as a clue to identity, a substitute for the almost obsolete *nee*. We used to read of Mrs. Ponsonby nee de Tomkins and other ladies of that ilk who are never so distinguished now. Husbands I fear are losing their individuality in the 19th century. America is a fine country, and the Paradise of women after all. Really the apathy of married men is astounding. Last month the ladies, presumably of that sort upon whom Mrs. Lynn Linton looks with favourable smiles—of Carmarthen held a debate at which the discussion was "Should ladies open their husband's letters?" The discussion seems to have been very warm indeed; in the course of it one young and innocent maiden timidly ventured to state she thought that ladies should not open their husband's letters, and characterized such a proceeding as "inquisitive, unwomanly and improper." All the matrons present immediately sat upon her and one stern Minerva-like female—a Mrs. Bowser—proposed an amendment to the effect "That ladies were perfectly and legally justified in opening their husband's letters and also in making the fullest inquiries into all their business transactions." This was carried by an overwhelming majority! One would like to know if matrimony is popular down in that part of Wales, and how many of the down-trodden sex have their letters addressed to their clubs. These good women should be reminded of the instructive little fable in which one Blue Beard once figured.

DO WOMEN FEEL PAIN.

My ideas of the sexes are becoming hopelessly mixed, since I read a curious little paper in the *Fortnightly Review* on the "Physical Insensibility of Women" by Professor Lombroso, the same eminent man of science who discovered that all men of genius are mad. He now maintains that a woman does not feel anything nearly as much as man. In fact he has proved it by experiment. "I have myself," he says "used Weber's aesthesiometer to measure the power of tact, and sensitiveness to pain at the tip of the forefinger in over 100 women; and I have found that, except in the case of very young girls whose tactile sensitiveness is exceedingly developed woman's sense of touch is in general, nearly twice as obtuse as that of men." But this is not all. Here be further proofs. "From some of the principal surgeons in Europe, I have elicited opinions amply confirming me in the above conclusions concerning the manner in which women bear pain during the course of surgical operations effected under the same conditions of age and disease as in the case of an equal number of men. I have been informed that the majority of women allow themselves to be operated upon with astonishing insensibility almost as though the body beneath the surgeon's knife were that of another and not their own." "The Professor then quotes Balzac, Dante, and the Italian proverbs to show that women do not feel joy, sorrow, or love so keenly as men. In fact the male is after all the sensitive sex.

FEMALE CUPIDITY.

No case probably since the baccarat scandal has excited more curiosity and comment than the Pearl Robbery by Mrs. Florence Osborne, which points the moral and adorns the tale of female vanity. It seems to me to specially illustrate that Devil's proverb, "the sin is in being found out." I am convinced that there is an amount of petty purloining going on in English society at any rate, which is almost incredible. Women deliberately annex articles of value belonging to their bosom friends or near acquaintances, and then defy detection by denial. If the article is not marked what proof has the unlucky owner of her own property. Now it has become the fashion when the thief is taxed with her theft to sue the victim for libel. I saw last week that this had happened in England and following upon the Osborne case threatened another scandal in high life. One Lady well known in London society missed a valuable brooch, which she subsequently discovered accidentally in a jeweller's window; she promptly entered the shop and enquired where it had been obtained. The jeweller gave her the name of one of her personal friends from whom he had bought the bauble for a good round figure. Lady No 1. went home and wrote a note to Lady No 2. taxing her with the deed. As an acknowledgement of her missive, she was served with a notice of libel the next day. We now await developments. But the matter will probably be adjusted between these social lights rather than brought into court. I know of a case of larceny which occurred during the present winter in England, at a cotillion in a private house.

A young lady was the proud possessor of a very handsome and valuable fan. One of the figures selected for the evening, happened to be one in which all the ladies' fans were put in an ornamental basket, the men selecting their partners according to the fans they had noticed or imagined to belong to certain ladies present. The girl in question tied a piece of narrow blue ribbon on to her valuable fan to assure identification, but when her turn came she found it had been claimed by another girl, and the one offered her by her partner was not hers at all but a very inferior article, which being unclaimed by every one fell to her lot. She at once said it was

not hers, however there was no alternative left but to dance. After the figure was over she noticed a girl on the opposite side of the room calmly using her cherished fan, she accordingly sent her partner who happened to be an officer over to her with the fan he had given her saying there was some mistake, as the fan she saw her with was her's, and she accordingly returned the one she had been given. Imagine the surprise of the gentleman when the young woman addressed calmly informed him, that the fan with the piece of blue ribbon attached was her own, that she had used it all the evening, and did not understand what his partner meant. He returned crestfallen without the fan, and I do not know what was the sequel of the story. Nothing more has been heard of the matter up to date, and the presumption is that the rightful owner being a quiet gentle girl, was afraid to press her claim. I am told such cases are of constant occurrence, but in America we have been spared, so far as I have heard, similar experiences. It is just as well in these degenerate days not to be too intimate with the ornaments of our female friends. I felt quite nervous lately when I was being showed some valuable diamonds, and casually remarked that I trusted my friend would not miss any of them during the coming weeks. I don't want to see any one's jewels, laces, handkerchiefs or fans until the present epidemic is over.

A WOMAN'S IDEA.

I suppose every one has read Jerome K. Jerome's new magazine "The Idler" of which the February and March numbers are now on the market. I should like to have seen a large butterfly or a busy bee emblazoned on its cover which has no merit of original design. The matter within however is original enough to have absorbed all the author's attention. Indeed it struck me as so very original that I venture in fear and trembling of the literary critics to suggest, that the stories in it purporting to be by Mark Twain, Bret Harte, James Payn and Andrew Lang are not by these well known authors at all, but are in the cases of Mark Twain, Bret Harte, and James Payn parodies by Jerome of these authors' styles. In that of Andrew Lang Jerome has given experiences of literary ideas which are most unlikely to be Andrew Lang's. In fact I look upon "The Idler" as a very clever hoax. As it has been accepted in good faith I feel I am casting a library bomb-shell, at the public. I do not know how such a scheme could be carried out unless with the concurrence of the authors. But any one who will read the two magazines by this new light will find it not unworthy of consideration. Jerome K. Jerome and Robert Barr are also I believe one and the same person, the clever humorist, in their joint authorship parodying the present rage for literary collaboration.

SPRAGGE E. SPRAGGE.

An Amusing Game.

An amusing game is one called "Queries." Questions are written on slips of paper, sufficient room being left for answers. They are all folded, dropped into a basket, and thoroughly mixed. Each person draws one, opens, and reads it, writes the answer, folds it again, and drops it into the basket. Then whoever is good at deciphering strange handwritings is appointed to read aloud the results of the intellectual efforts of the assembly. There have been some good answers—usually they have been stolen—but if people can steal good things it's much wiser than giving original things that are stupid. "What is love?" is, funnily enough, oftenest written by a man, and answered by a woman.

I laughed over one answer given to this the other night. A bold, masculine hand had made clear that never-ending question, "What is love?" and in a woman's handwriting was the answer, "The selfish desire on the part of a man to make one woman unhappy." Another that was written by a woman was, "When is a woman at her best?" and the answer from a man said, "when she is like a salad—tender, young and well-dressed." Somebody was idiot enough to write, "What is the best book to read!" and somebody else impertinent enough to answer, in a bad pun, "The Scarlett Letter." The thing that broke up the game that night was the question, written by an innocent young man, "Should women smoke?" and the answer, written by another man, was, "Not if she was my wife or a sister, unless she yearned for a horse-whipping afterwards." This was discussed to such an extent that all intellectual efforts were given the go-by, and "sassing back" became the order of the evening until peace was brought about by supper. However, knowing it is the vogue to be a little blue, and to be decidedly analytical, and that is fashionable, makes the trying of the game of queries worth while in any place.

Why Man is the Superior Being

"There, I've come away and forgot my gloves," said Mrs. Buxom to her husband as they started to make some calls the other evening. "You were in such a hurry that I don't suppose I'm more than half dressed."

"That's just like a woman," said Buxom, "always something left behind. Now, you see a man has an orderly and disciplined mind and always does one thing at a time, and doesn't get left. But I'll go back and get your gloves. Great Scott! I have left my door-keys in my other pocket, and the girl has gone out."

"No, you took 'em out and left 'em on the bureau by my gloves," said Mrs. Buxom. "I remember seeing them."

"Good gracious, woman, you are enough to drive one wild! Why didn't you tell me? You might have known I laid them there so as to be sure to put 'em into my other pocket. Of course I did; that's the only way to do a thing; have some system about you; but of course, a woman would never guess what I laid them down there for."

The Fallacy of Fish and Brain.

As a result of personal experience, says a recent writer, I may state that some years since I lived for a period of forty days, so far as what is called solid food is concerned, solely on fish, with, of course, the addition of bread (no potatoes were eaten during the period); but I cannot recommend that mode of living. I discovered, before the forty days had expired, that fish was not the staff of life.

In the course of my experiment I not only lost flesh, but also energy, nor did I feel my head clearer, or my thoughts and feelings more alert than when subsisting on more varied food.

Whilst living upon fish only, one feels "a want," a craving for "something you don't know what"—that is to say, you cannot give a name to your desires, nor does the feeling wear off as you continue the dietary; at all events, in my case, "custom came not to the rescue"; so, after forty days had expired, I returned to the flesh-pots, not all at once though, being convinced that caution was necessary.

One popular fallacy in connection with fish may be noticed—namely, the oft-repeated assertion that the eating of that particular food increases brain power. No one who has studied the subject can possibly believe the assertion. A man might eat a huge portion of fish every day of his life, and on the day of his death, if the quantity of phosphorus (the brain invigorator) consumed were to become visible, it would not amount to more than might probably suffice to tip a couple of lucifer matches. Communities have existed that lived almost solely on fish, but these ichthyophagists were certainly not famous for intellectual attainments. Nor are other fisher villages, in many of which much fish is presumably consumed, the seats of any great amount of brain power. None of our fisher-folks are remarkable for genius, or even what is called common sense; their views of life and its responsibilities being shrouded in a haze of superstition, which they lack sufficient strength of mind to see through.

No fishing community, so far as is known to the writer, has given to the world a great man. Men of mark—poets, preachers, lawyers, warriors, philosophers, and physicians—have emanated, in Scotland at any rate, from all classes except the fishing class.

Love at First Sight.

We often read in song and story of "love at first sight," of young men and maidens whose "eyes meet," and whose fate is there and then settled for life. As a general thing, there is more of romance than reality in these cases. Love in this work-a-day world is not a spontaneous creation. He generally comes after long preliminaries, after months—or, at least, weeks—of acquaintanceship.

"We met, 'twas in a crowd," and all that sort of thing, is voted old-fashioned along with the poetry of a former generation. Cupid is now represented with money-bags, instead of a bow and arrow, and love's young dream has turned into stern reality. Not that there is no such thing as love nowadays. Its existence is unquestionable, but it is not indispensable in the marriage relation.

Nevertheless, there are many cases of love at first sight, notwithstanding the practical way in which people, as a rule, look upon courtship and marriage.

Not long since a young German girl was standing near the window waiting her turn to purchase a ticket to take her back to the Fatherland. A young countryman came up on the same errand. The moment his blue eyes fell upon Gretchen, the dart of Cupid transfixed both their hearts.

Commanded by the young man's gaze, Gretchen stepped out of the line, and the two commenced an animated conversation, and, shortly afterwards, both went away together. The banns were put up there and then, and the marriage took place as soon as the necessary formalities could be complied with.

A lady was standing at her window with a friend one day, and saw two strange young men go by. She looked at one of them quickly, and then said, quietly, to her friend: "That man will be my husband." The young man did not hear her—it was quite impossible that he could do so—but he turned round suddenly, and then said to the other young man: "That girl in pink is the wife for me."

Nothing but a due respect for the conventionalities prevented him from going into the house, and making his proposal on the instant, so certain did he feel that it was only a matter of introduction. He was a stranger in the place, but he persevered until he found someone who was acquainted with the young lady, and he called in company with him that very evening. As soon as Miss A—saw him enter the room she said, "my fate is sealed." They talked business that very evening—his references were found highly satisfactory, and they were married in less than a month. Fourteen years have elapsed since then, and they have never once repented their hasty union.

But, as a general thing, marrying on such slight acquaintance is a dangerous proceeding. On the other hand, there is a couple who have been engaged for no less a period than fifty years! Those who knew them in their youth, say they were just as near to marrying half-a-century ago as they are to-day. When anyone speaks to the old lady on the subject she acknowledges the engagement; but says that she does not want to anything rashly—people make such dreadful mistakes by hurrying on a marriage!

Equipped for Travel.

Boston Maid (in Hub bookstore): "I am compelled to go to New York for an extended sojourn. Have you a New York guide?"

Clerk: "I regret to say, madam, that we have not."

Boston Maid: "How unfortunate. Well, give me a dictionary of American slang."