The Cayenne Pepper Plot

A RASCAL EXPOSED AND A TRAGEDY AVERTED

By D. W. H.

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"'Tis the first virtue vices to abhor,
And the first wisdom to be fool no more."
—Pope.

BACK again at Yale—bright, breezy, busy, festive Yale—a while agone a sleepy Indian village and a quiet Hudson's Bay Company's station—now the theatre of extensive mining operations, the head of steamboat navigation and the starting point of pack trains and miners bound for the golden bars of the canons and the upper river. A city of tents and shacks, stores, barrooms and gambling houses. The one street crowded from morning till night with a surging mass of humanity of all sorts and conditions. The year is 1858, and the month is September. The hour is nine in the evening and in company with three or four other homeless young men I found myself standing in the midst of a crowd of men and women gathered about a table to watch the players as they "bucked" at faro. The dealer was a scorbutic-looking man of perhaps 25. He was reputed the best faro dealer on the Coast. And, being not a little proud of the distinction, he seemed to regard the foolish persons who gathered about him with a cynical smile, while a contemptuous expression lurked in his sallow, immobile countenance. Every age was represented by those who surrounded the table to watch the playing with feverish anxiety or to stake a coin on the outcome of a card.

As the game proceeded the excitement increased and many of the gamesters, having lost their all, slowly fell back and others who were anxious to try their fortunes took the vacant places. In the front rank of the latest comers my eyes fell on a respectably dressed man of about thirty. He was smoking a cigar and appeared to regard the exciting scene with an expression of cynical listlessness. His well-to-do appearance attracted the attention of the professional gamblers who, in the hope that he would enter the game, gradually fell back and allowed the stranger to advance to the table until he stood in the front rank. Another deal from the box was impending and the eyes of the dealer were fixed like those of a basilisk on the new-comer, as if challenging bravado, it seemed to me, placed a ten dollar gold piece upon the ace of clubs.

A miner standing near the stranger laid two twenties on another card and when the result was known the young man had won and the miner had lost. The miner turned away with a dejected air and his place was taken by the stranger who continued to wager with a cool indifference. After the first winning he lost steadily. Soon his money seemed to be exhausted—for he bet no more, but still retained his place without the least show of excitement or chagrin. Presently a bearded miner pushed his way to the front and laid four twenties on the first card that caught his eye. When the card came from the box the miner had won. He doubled his stakes, and again and again won. The owners of the bank scarcely concealed their anger. They made signs to the dealer to close the bank; but he did not appear to understand what was expected of him and continued to deal, while the pile of gold in front of the miner grew apace. The other tables were soon abandoned and crowds pressed forward to watch the duel between the bank and the miner and heavily to pray that the bank might be broken. There must have been one thousand dollars on the last card the miner selected and, strange to say, he won again. Then he began to place his winnings in a buckskin sack, for he had announced that he would play no more. The bystanders watched with covetous eyes the fortunate man as he filled his bag with the golden winnings and several patted him on the back and congratulated him on his good luck. The dealer had closed the bank and was in the act of leaving the table when a pistol shot rang through the room. Simultaneously every coal oil lamp was extinguished and the place was in total darkness. A lamp that stood on the table where I had watched the playing was thrown to the floor and went out. The table was upset with a crash and then there arose cries of alarm and agony, mingled with fierce maledictions and murderous threats. I tried to grope my way outside, but found myself entangled in a struggling, shouting mass of humanity. It was some minutes before a light could be had. At last some one brought a lantern and then the faro dealer and the lucky miner were seen to hold their hands to their eyes while they raved and stamped with anguish and cried for "Help! in heaven's name, help!" The affair was plain to the most ordinary mind. A band of ruffians had conspired to rob the bank. The pistol shot was the signal for extinguishing the lights and dashing cayenne pepper into the eyes of the dealer and player. In the darkness and excitement the funds were seized and carried off, with the exception of a few gold pieces that fell to the floor. The anguish of the sufferers was pitiful to behold, and neither ever recovered the full use of their eyes. A hue and cry was raised. The police were notified and the whole population turned out to search for the miscreants. But in the absence of telegraphic and telephonic communication little could be done. It was learned the next day that an Indian canoe in which were seated two white men left the water front before daybreak. These men were believed to be the culprits; but they got safely off and were not overtaken by the constables who were sent after them. On the next day and on several succeeding days I looked in vain for the well-dressed man who stood near the table when the trouble came; but he did not appear at either of the hotels, nor was he seen on the street; so at last I began to connect him with the affair at the gambling house, and finally became convinced that he was one of the conspirators who made off with the money. I mentioned my suspicions to several and we found that he had stopped at York's hotel, giving the name of Burdal, or something like it, that he had no baggage and that he did not return to the hotel after the robbery.

The iron and stone building on the southeast corner of Langley and Yates streets, Victoria, was erected by J. T. Pidwell in 1861. It is still a substantial structure. The lot upon which it stands was one of three or four that were assigned to Governor Blanchard, who preceded Governor Douglas, and upon those lots stood the first Government House of the Colony of Vancouver Island. The Bank of British North America and the Adelphi (the latter erected by the late Theodore Davie), also occupy two of the gubernatorial lots. The Adelphi and the brick building where Hall & Goepel's extensive coal business is transacted, occupy the site of Mr. Blanchard's residence. The first occupants of the store in the Pidwell building were Burtle & Moore, druggists. They had opened business on the opposite side of Yates street, their building, which was of frame, standing just where Oriental alley now runs. After it had been decided to open Oriental alley Burtis & Moore leased the Pidwell building and moved into it in the fall of 1861. Mr. Burtis was an American, a jolly, whole-souled fellow, willy and generous, and an able chemist and druggist, and known to his intimates as "Jim" Burtis. He had but one fault, the nature of which will be developed as we proceed. Mr. Moore was an Irishman, very quiet and sedate and the reverse of his partner in most things. He was an excellent druggist and a good man in all respects. Burtis married a charming young American girl in 1860, and the following year built a pretty cottage on Birdcage Walk. This house was torn down in 1897 and its site now forms part of government square.

I took a room in the Burtis cottage and the owner and I became fast friends, and when business did not prevent we were often together. I may say here that the pleasantest days of my bachelor life were passed with the Burtis household.

The upper flat of the Pidwell building was divided into offices, which were rented to lawyers and others. In 1862 the front room was occupied by a stranger named Redford. He represented himself as a Southerner who had been driven away from his plantations by the Northerners and had come to Victoria to reside until the war should be over. The room was very prettily hung with draperies and pictures and filled with good mahogany furniture, and there was nothing about the occupant to indicate that he was other than what he said he was—a Southern gentleman in exile. He was a smooth-talking, quiet person, possessed of much general information and was remarkably well read. I passed several evenings in his company and was entertained by his conversation, and—must I confess it?—by his cigars and sherry. His stories of the South were engaging, too, and as I had many personal adventures in California and on Fraser river to narrate, we got along very well together.

One evening Redford asked me to describe Yale to him and I did so as well as I could.

"Ah!" said he, "I should like to see that place and I shall go up some day. Life there must be most interesting."

I told him that although there were pleasant times there life was not all "beer and skittles." Did you ever hear of the cayenne pepper plot? I asked.

No, he had never heard of it. What was it all about? What kind of a plot was it? Anything like the gunpowder plot, for instance?

I told him about the scene in Ben Nett's house, where red pepper was thrown into the eyes of the banker and one of his patrons by robbers, who made off with the coin.

"Dear me! dear me!" Redford exclaimed. "To think that there are such rascals in the world! Robbery would be bad enough, but to throw pepper into the poor men's eyes—it was horrible." He shuddered as he passed the decanter and remarked, "This playing for money is a bad business. I do not mind a social game of whist or poker, but not for money—not for money. Do you play?"

"No," I replied, "I cannot play cards at least, not well; and I have never played for money and never shall."

"That's a good resolve," he said quickly. "Stick to it and you'll come out all right."

The conversation here lagged and as I took my leave a strange fancied that his manner was less cordial than formerly. When I met him on the street next day he was distant and reserved and I made up my mind that I should not visit his room again without a special invitation, which was never extended.

About a month after my last visit to Redford's room a rumor reached me that several business men had succeeded at cards in a building on Yates street, the locality of which was not stated. Amongst the losers was said to be my friend Jim Burtis. It was said that he was out two thousand dollars and that two of his personal friends had assisted in his disembitlement. I went at once to his store and found him looking very dejected. I told him what I had heard and he admitted that the rumor was correct. But he scouted the idea advanced by me that he had been cheated. It was just pure luck he claimed, and tomorrow the pendulum might swing in his direction.

"Where do you play?" I asked.

He pointed with his hand at the ceiling, and then I understood that the gambling went on upstairs.

"In whose room?" I asked.

"In Redford's," he answered.

"Do you mean to say that Redford allows gambling in his room?" I asked.

"Of course he does," Burtis replied. "Well, then," I exclaimed, "you'd better look out for him. Less than a month ago he sounded me to find if I played cards, and when he found that I did not he denounced card playing for money in forcible terms. 'I don't like the look of this,' I added, 'and you'll find that Redford is either a rascal or a hypocrite.'"

Jim shook his head and the interview ended. An hour or two later I met Redford on Government street. He was strolling leisurely along, cigar in mouth and cane in hand. He saluted me coldly and was passing on when something prompted me to address him. I forget what I said, but he stopped short and turning around remarked, "You have not been to see me lately."

"No," I replied, "and if what I hear about you is true I shall not trouble you again."

"What do you mean?" he asked, with that smooth, even drawl which was peculiar to him and which I had begun to regard as assumed.

"I mean, Mr. Redford," I exclaimed, "that I have a friend, a young man recently married. He has a wife and child and a prosperous business and it is the scandal of the day that he has been induced to gamble in your rooms, and that he has lost thousands of dollars there."

"I do not know that it is any of your business to Paul Pry into what goes on in my rooms," he remarked in a dreamy sort of way.

"Perhaps not, and I have not pried, but others have and they have told me. The last time I was in your room you said that you abhorred gaming for money. And now it would appear that you tolerate it if you do not share in the profits."

For an instant the good-natured, easy demeanor of the man deserted him. He raised his cane and turned red and pale by turns. Recovering himself quickly, he said in his soft, purring way, "You are altogether wrong—you do me an injustice. I have nothing to do with the gambling. If friends of mine meet there and insist upon playing, how can I prevent them?"

"Easily," I replied. "You might as well say that if a man intended to murder another and you were aware of his intention that you were justified in permitting the crime to be perpetrated."

By this time I was hot, for I was thinking of the victim's little family. Redford, who remained as cool as an iceberg, did not reply, but with a crisp "good-day," moved off. I watched him as he walked along, apparently unconcerned, and then I fell into a curious train of thought. Where had I seen the man before? Surely we had met somewhere; perhaps in California, or was it Central America, or Mexico? Could it have been at Yale? The instant Yale occurred to me I felt a strange twitching in my eyelids. It seemed to me that something which smarted and gave me pain had fallen into my eyes. Then my mental vision cleared and—I saw plainly!

Some two weeks later an exciting scene was enacted in Redford's room. The story, as it reached the public, was to the effect that the infatuated Burtis had sat down one evening to a game of poker. About a dozen persons were present. Four men were in the game—Burtis, Redford and two others—one being an intimate friend and partner for the time being of the intended victim. From the first Burtis lost heavily. It was evident that the card partner of Burtis had entered into a conspiracy with Redford and the remaining gamblers to make a finish of Burtis that night. He was to be stripped of all his possessions and on the morrow would walk the streets a beggar!

The betting was heavy and as the evening wore on the victim grew more and more excited and bet higher and higher. The interest among the bystanders was great and they crowded around the table to watch the game. All but Burtis could see that the other players had conspired to destroy him. He, poor, innocent man, continued to bet on hands which he held, while the others met him every time. The lookers-on were annoyed at the shameful way in which the victim was being fleeced; but not a voice was raised or a hand stretched out to save him. All but Burtis could see that there was a conspiracy to destroy him, and if any one remarked that it was a shameful piece of business he took care that no one heard him. A hand had been dealt for the final stroke. Burtis staked his last available dollar on three aces and two kings. When the show down came Redford produced four aces. Then the scales seemed to fall from Burtis' eyes, and he sprang to his feet as Redford reached out his hand to grasp the stakes.

"Cheat! Swindler! Thief!" roared Burtis as he extended his left hand so as to cover the money. "You stocked the cards on me!"

Redford, who had also risen, made a motion as if to draw a weapon, but Burtis was too quick for him.

"Throw up your hands," he shouted, as he leveled a revolver at the gambler's head. "Higher! higher! There! keep them up. If you lower them I'll shoot you dead! Damn you!"

The other persons present exhibited the utmost alarm. Some ran to the door, but found it locked from the outside. Others made for the windows, but the drop to the street was too great as the reader will see by inspecting the place. Still others flattened themselves against the wall in a vain effort to reduce their figures to the smallest possible compass.

Burtis' card-partner ventured to remon with him. He was told with a savage curse to stand back, and all this time the cocked revolver was leveled full at Redford's head. Of all present Redford was apparently unmoved. While cheeks were blanched Redford was calm and collected. Without changing color he demanded:

"What does this mean, Burtis?"

"It means that you are an infernal swindler; it means that I have got you in the door and that I am going to squeeze you until you disgorge the money you have unfairly won from me and others. You a Southern gentleman! You are a low-lived scoundrel and thief!"

Redford, with his eyes bent full on Burtis, was seen to drop his right hand into the pocket of his sack coat.

"Stop that!" shouted Burtis. "Take your hand out of your pocket or I'll shoot you dead. I'm with your hands again, you scoundrel. Up! Up! Hold them over your head, so. There, that's the now keep them there till I tell you to let them down," continued Burtis, as he crammed the money on the table into his pockets. "Now," he said, "I am going to loose through you and your friends to the extent of $3,000. You have corrupted even the partners whom I have had nightly, and you have had a merry time discussing my affairs and predicting that after this night my ruin as a business man would be complete.

"This is all Tommy rot," began Redford.

"You may have it so, if you like, but if I give the word that door will fly open and policemen will take you in charge. It will be too late to parley then.

"What do you mean—what am I accused of?" faltered Redford, whose injured air and calm demeanor had at last fled.

"I accuse you of being the principal in the Cayenne pepper robbery at Yale four years ago!" cried Burtis.

Had Redford been struck a heavy blow he could not have shown greater consternation. He turned a greenish white and staggered back, and seemed on the point of sinking to the floor. "Take! take!" he murmured, "all that I have, but do not hand me over to the police!"

Then the door was thrown open and there glided in the figure of a young woman. She wore a waterproof, the hood of which was drawn over her head. She advanced into the middle of the room and it was then that she recognized Mr. Burtis' dear little household treasure. Swiftly crossing to where her husband stood, her eyes flashed fire as she laid one hand on the hand that held the pistol, and facing Burtis and his pals like a guardian angel, she pointed with the other hand at them. "Villains," she screamed, "you have robbed poor Jim! Would you murder him too?"

"My God, Jenny, you here!" cried Burtis as he lowered the pistol.

"Yes, Jim, dear Jim," the angel replied, "and we must hasten home for I left the baby in the crib asleep with no one to look after her if she should awaken. Come, dear," she said, as she led her husband to the door, "we must hurry."

The two passed out of the room, along the hall to the stairs and then out into the night. No man attempted to stay their progress and they reached home unmolested with the money.

The next day Redford disappeared and was not heard of again. His furniture and pictures were taken possession of by his victim and sold. Mrs. Burtis, if afterwards transpired, had gone to the room in search of her husband and while listening outside the door turned the key in the lock. She afterwards said she never knew why. At the critical moment she entered the room and rescued her husband. Burtis said he had no understanding with the police and that he only mentioned the Cayenne pepper plot to unman Redford.

In the Burtis cottage there hung for several years the headless photograph of a man taken at full length. It had been the portrait of the false friend who acted as Burtis' partner on the night of the gambling adventure. The intended victim, after the adventure, cut the head from the photograph, and when questioned as to his reason for doing so took keen delight in narrating the story that I have told above.

I passed the Pidwell building yesterday. Time has dealt lightly with the structure; but not so, alas! with its occupants. Mr. Moore died many years ago and his two sons succeeded him. They were not fortunate and a padlock on the front door tells the story of adversity and ruin after more than forty years of earnest effort. It is said that the building will soon be converted into a bank; but whatever may be its future, no more exciting scene than the one I have chronicled in this paper will be enacted within its four walls. Burtis and his wife long since went away and died, and the false friend—he of the headless photograph—has also crossed the border. In fact not one actor in that famous gambling scene is now in the land of the living.

"The Human Hand."

By Carmen Sylva.

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The hand is the link between man and man: It signs the pledge of every social bond, its symbolism plays an important part in all the functions of public life—whether it be as the priestly hand, uplifted in solemn benediction, or as the silent witness to spoken words, when raised on high to testify to the sanctity of an oath. Clasped hands are the emblem of the alliance of nations as of individuals, the frank grasp of the hand is the token of loyal friendship; the outstretched hand, the sign of welcome; the reconciliation that puts an end to a lifelong feud is attested by the simple action of joining hands. Man's instinctive homage to woman is never better expressed than by the touch of the lips upon her hand,—the chivalrous deference to the whole sex is most fittingly symbolised in this simple action. The recognition of its high import has caused numerous proverbial expressions relating to the hand to pass into our daily speech; to go through life "hand in hand" has become a synonymous with most entire union in thought and deed; we speak of those who are unduly influenced by others as having fallen "into bad hands," and the expression "to lend a hand" is equivalent to giving help in any form—not necessarily of a material nature. Above all, the supreme beauty of the hand, its instinctive abhorrence of the touch that contaminates, of all base, unworthy action, its shrinking from aught that might sully its native purity—is not all this admirably summed up in the popular acceptation of "clean hands" as the symbol of unstained honor?

This supreme significance of the hand in social intercourse has its counterpart in its importance to the individual organism, where it serves as a swift and sure medium of correspondence between consciousness and the outer world. The physical evolution of the human race records an acquisition of no inconsiderable as that of this sensitive and highly elaborated member, which has become—like speech itself—a vehicle for the rendering in concrete form of mental conceptions, the dictates of the will, and the impressions of the senses. In the written characters it traces, thereby lending enduring form to the thought of passing generations, in the figures it models in clay or carves in imperishable marble, as in the pictures wherein by means of the pencil and the brush it transfers fleeting scenes of the outer world or still fairer glimpses of the interior universe—in all these processes we perceive the hand as the finest and most delicate instrument—almost we might say as the conscious agent of the brain,—and the services it renders in giving objective life to the creations of the latter are indeed of incalculable worth. Nor are these services confined to the plastic arts alone,—though their action there is peculiarly direct and indispensable,—but music, also, that most ethereal language of the human soul,—music itself would lose at least half of its significance and be shorn out from the sphere of its most complex development, had there not been bestowed upon us, in addition to the singing voice, the fingers, whose touch upon the keys or strings has power to draw from their depths the hidden sweetness slumbering within. Man's noblest ideas must in course of time have perished, sterile and forgotten, had there not been means of recording them, the highest flights of the imagination could never have taken shape, but for this interpreter.

But it is above all in its unstrained spontaneous movements, in the direct and involuntary expression of strong and swift emotion, that the hand's true eloquence lies. Races among whom the habit of gesticulation has died out can perhaps barely appreciate the full force of meaning to be conveyed in the graceful and appropriate gestures of a pair of shapely hands. Just as an expressive countenance may be likened to a mirror that reflects the hidden workings of the soul, so may every turn, every twist—nay, the merest quiver of the fingers—more definitely and more accurately express than the most mobile play of feature—as a revelation of each passing mood, each fleeting impulse or impression. From the loving caress a light touch imparts, to the malediction invoked by the same fingers uplifted menacingly, is there any shade of feeling so subtle or so intense that it cannot be rendered in this mute language, which unlike the forms of articulate speech—is not restricted to any special branch of the human race, but is equally much or comprehensive to all? Can we mistake their purport, these convulsive signs of joy or sorrow, hope or fear,—the deprecatory or disdainful wave, the start of surprise or nervous tremor of doubt, the rapid beating together of the palms in acclamation, the spasmodic clenching of the fist in anger or despair? Do they not tell their own tale, these hands now outstretched in eager entreaty, now thrown protectingly around some cherished object, or again silently wrung in agony or clasped in prayer? In their dumb show, deliance or scorn, wonder, horror, and remorse, are made visible to us, as it were by so many lightning flashes cast upon the sombre drama perpetually being enacted within the depths of the human soul. And although within the narrow limits of our conventionalities, every strong outburst of natural feeling is so systematically repressed, that we must needs betake ourselves to more primitive peoples and a less artificial state of society, in order to behold the picturesque display of uncontrollable and uncontrolled passion, yet the artistic beauty and dramatic sincerity of such manifestations is amply testified to among us by the important development lent them as aids to oratory and the actor's art. Both at the tribune and on the stage appropriate gesture furnishes a sort of running accompaniment to speech, and much of their success who thus "suit the action to the word" is due to the persuasive power of the mute auxiliary.

Yet modern training is on the whole too much concerned with mere muscular development and too exclusively utilitarian in its tendencies to pay a proper attention to the culture of this noble member; hence the finest specimens of grace and suppleness are chiefly to be found among those nations who have not yet learnt to consider material prosperity as the test of civilisation, or success in commercial enterprise as one of the principle factors in the same. For the beautiful slim hand, shapely and supple, we must go to the least flourishing of the Latin nations—the Spaniards notably, or to the Slavs, the Gypsies even, and the handsomest of the so-called savage tribes. Or better still, we must go back to the ages that cherished and respected the nobility of the hand. It has been said that the armor worn by our ancesters in the Middle Ages affords conclusive proof of the smallness of the hands which wielded their heavy battleaxes and huge two-handed swords, and scarcely in any instance would the iron gauntlet worn by the Crusader allow entrance to his descendant's broader and clumsier hand. I think that nowadays we pay far too little attention to the hand, in its way quite as interesting and as well worthy of study as the face, indeed often affording far surer indication of our thoughts. To a certain extent we can control our faces, but how much less our hands, whose involuntary palpitations and pulsations not only betray— as "thought readers" are well aware—the sensations of the moment, but also give evidence of our habitual occupations. All hands have their own beauty and meaning, if rightly considered. The hand hardened by honest labor is as admirable in its way as that which guides the pen, or pencil, or fashioning works destined to immortality. Sometimes though, innate vulgarity, successfully hidden under exterior polish in the rest of the hand is apparent in the hand alone,—sometimes even a tendency to crime. It is as if to hands like these evil clung like "the smell of the blood" which haunted the sleep of the guilty partner of Macbeth's usurped throne.

Allusions to the supreme significance of the hand are frequent with the poets. Readers of Mrs. Browning's Sonnets from the Portuguese will recall that first "kiss imprinted by the lips of that man whose Camoens on "the fingers of this hand wherewith I write;" and the loveliness of Guinevere's "as she swayed the rein with slender fingertips" is a pleasant remembrance familiar to all. "A hand like a white-wood blossom," sings another English poet in exquisite verse, while the Victoria's dramatic action of perhaps the best known play of the age makes a temporary poet of Italy centres in the lovely hands of its heroine, the sculptor's wife.

"Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand!" we have all at times surely sighed at some moment of our lives. And who does not think of hands, and their beauty and their charm, without calling to mind the inimitable genius of Vandyck has fixed in imperishable loveliness upon the canvas, each one of them so perfect, it would seem that Art and Nature could go no further, the one in furnishing the model, the other in perpetuating for ages such as these fitly set off in the lace ruffles of those more refined and happier days, could belong to none but high and noble women, the very soul of the magnanimous Cavalier seems to speak in them. That was the age of beautiful hands in Europe, and who can tell, I ask once more, how much we may have lost by the neglect that has succeeded the care and attention then bestowed on them? And do we value enough, or turn to sufficient account, the strange power of attraction, the magnetic force known to emanate from certain hands, whose miraculous results have been attested at all periods and in all parts of the world,—the laying on of hands, so practised in Apostolic days, and for many centuries later, and now fallen into disuse?

Who can deny that in some hands a mysterious power resides, a hypnotising force, that may be employed for good or evil, and surely often be turned to good use for the healing of pain, for conjuring sleep? How welcome is the gentle touch that smooths our pillow in our hours of pain and suffering, and how must the wounded and the sick crave or bless the skilful hands that minister to them in their need! I once watching the hands of a great surgeon during a very difficult operation, the dressing of a gunshot wound so deep and so near to a great artery that the least slip might have proved fatal. The hands, although streaming with blood, so fascinated me with their unerring skill and dexterity, I could hardly take my eyes off them, though I was busy administering chloroform to the patient, a poor young, wounded soldier, and had to watch his face very closely too, to observe its effect on him. And I thought to myself, there is something of the same pleasure in seeing these hands at work, that we experience in watching the delicate handling of his bow by the violinist, or the graceful action of a hand sweeping the strings of the harp. Nor can ever a woman's hands, however their beauty may be set forth by every adjunct of the toilet, show to such advantage as framed in the coarse serge sleeve of the Sister of Charity, whose soft touch charms away the anguish of the deathbed she attends on her benevolent mission. Each one of these calls to our minds the vision in the famous lines:

"Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together
prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory like a saint:
She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for Heaven."

No less beautiful in its way than this, the picture of saintly hands crossed upon the bosom in prayer, is the noble attitude of classic antiquity, the palms held upwards outstretched to the Gods.

But the theme is so rich in its suggestions, these would lead us too far.

It was while sitting at my typewriter that the perfection of the hand as a piece of mechanism came upon me with redoubled force,—as I realised all the ingenuity and pains which man had expended in making an instrument after all so infinitely inferior to the corresponding instrument in the human frame. And I realised, too, for the first time, the incalculable amount of thought, the appreciable fraction of time that intervenes in the transmission of that thought, to the fingers from the brain. But the result of all my musings was only as ever to fill me with more and more wonderment at the divine mystery of all creation, and more and more thankfulness for the blessings that in that marvelous scheme have been so fully and freely bestowed upon Man.

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VIII.—SOME IRISH SONGS.

Kinglake, the historian of the Crimea, who hated Irishmen as Johnson hated the Scots, used to say cynically that "human nature is the same all the world over, except in Ireland." If Kinglake had known her songs he would not have said this about Ireland. Nor perhaps if a certain old-time Irish priest had known her songs would he have uttered that famous libel on the Emerald Isle. When the devil, wrote this priest to the Pope, shewed our Lord all the kingdoms of the world he did not shew Ireland, because he wanted to reserved that accursed country for himself! How could anybody have said this of a land which gave birth to "The Dear Little Shamrock," "The Last Rose of Summer," and "Rory O'More?" Ireland is as famous for her songs as for her brogue, her potheen, and her pretty dairymaids.

I suppose, if a vote were taken on the subject, it would be found that "The Last Rose of Summer" is the most universally popular of all Irish songs. This popularity is due, in a large measure, to the fine melody, which had a history of some hundred years or more when Thomas Moore wrote his celebrated song for it. As most theatre-goers are aware, the melody appears in that old-fashioned yet ever-welcome opera "Martha." Some people will indeed tell you that "Martha" would never have survived but for "The Last Rose of Summer." Berlioz, the French composer, said that the "beauty of the Irish melody served to disinfect the rottenness of the 'Martha' music." But Berlioz loved not Count Frederick von Flotow, the composer of "Martha."

It does not matter. The point is that Moore found a fine old melody ready to his hand, and made it immortal. It is the melody indeed that allows the song to be claimed for Ireland; for there is nothing characteristically Irish about Moore's words. They are English in form, metre and sentiment, just as the great bulk of the lyrics in the "Irish Melodies" are. Moore undoubtedly was a poet in sediment, sympathy, or sensibility. Still, he rescued a host of fine old Irish airs from oblivion. "The Last Rose of Summer" among them, and for those service lovers of popular songs must ever be grateful to him.

Half a century ago there was not a more popular song than "Rory O' More," and even now it is generally the best known of Irish songs. The author, Samuel Lover, thus relates the story of its origin. He says: "From an early period I had felt that Irish comic songs (so-called) were but too generally coarse and vulgar, devoid of that mixture of humor and feeling so strongly blended in the Irish character—that a pig and a poker, expletive oaths, 'humpers' and 'whack fol de lols' made the staple of Irish comic songs; and having expressed this opinion in a company where the subject was discussed, I was met with that taunting question, which sometimes supplies the place of argument, namely, 'Can you do better?' I said I would try; and 'Rory O'More' was the answer."

Its popularity was immediate and extensive, so much so that on the day of Queen Victoria's Coronation every band along the line of procession, in Westminster Abbey played "Rory O'More" during some part of the day; and, finally, it was the air the band of the Life Guards played as they escorted Her Majesty into the park on her return from Buckingham Palace. Being called upon to write a novel, Lover availed himself of the popularity attaching to the name, and entitled his story "Rory O'More." The success of the novel induced the management of the Adelphi theatre to apply to the author to dramatise the story, and in dramatic form, "Rory O'More" was again received by the public with such approbation that it was played over one hundred and eight nights in the first season in London, and afterwards universally throughout the kingdom. In this metamorphosis "Rory O'More" is surely unique among songs.

A very popular song is "Kathleen Mavourneen," which, looking at the words, may be considered as belonging essentially to Ireland. The words were written by an Irish lady, Mrs. Crawford, and the song was first heard in Dublin from the pen of the husband of the lady, Mr. N. Crouch, under circumstances which he himself related.

"The words," says Crouch, "had attracted my attention by their purity of style of diction. I sought the authoress and obtained her permission to set them to music. Leaving London as my wife's (to Chapman & Co., Cornhill, while prosecuting my journey towards Saltash. I time to pass down the melody on the historic banks of the Tamar. On arriving at Plymouth I wrote out a fair copy of the song, and sang it to Mrs. Rowe, the wife of a music publisher of that town. The melody was captivating to her and others who heard it that I was earnestly solicited that it should be given the first time in public at her husband's opening concert of the season. But certain reasons obliged me to decline the honor. I retired to rest at my hotel, and rising next morning, and opening my window, what was my surprise to see on a boarding opposite a large placard, on which was printed in the largest and boldest type: 'F. Nichölls Crouch, from London, will sing at P. E. Rowe's concert "Kathleen Mavourneen," for one night only.'"

Crouch goes on to say that, amazed and confused by the announcement, he hurriedly completed his toilet, took his breakfast, and rushed off to Mr. Rowe's warehouse. "But despite my reluctance, and overcome by the entreaties of the fascinating Mrs. Rowe, I appeared, and sang the song to a crowded audience, with the most enthusiastic applause." Shortly after this Crouch was engaged by the London music-publishing firm of D'Almaine, and "Kathleen Mavourneen" was issued by that house. The copyright of the song was sold not so long ago for £600. How much do you think Crouch got for it? Only the paltry sum of £10, identically the same price paid to Milton for his "Paradise Lost." And yet the first year saw 20,000 copies sold. In fifteen years the number reached over half a million. "Kathleen Mavourneen" was translated into several languages. Publishers issued it in every conceivable form, and embodied it in every collection of popular songs. For publishers it brought in thousands of pounds, but to the poor composer it never brought a penny beyond the original £10!

The story of Crouch's career was, indeed, as sad as it was romantic. Whilst a child he played the violin before Rossini, and sang in the choir of Westminster Abbey. He was in the choir at Queen Victoria's Coronation. Later on he turned to speculating in zinc mills in the county of Kent. This affair ruined him completely. In 1849 he went to the United States, and picked up a precarious living as a music teacher. The gold fever seized him and he set off for California. Presently he was serving as a volunteer in the long Civil War. Later still he became a gardener, and for twenty years he had a hard struggle with poverty.

At length the tide turned—for a time—and in 1883 a petition was filed by a person calling himself James Marion, praying for permission to change his name from Marion to Crouch, as he said it attached himself to the family of the implacable composer, and thought that by adopting his name he could serve his interests better. The benefits arising from this connection cannot, however, be shown of a very substantial nature, for reports of Crouch's distressed circumstances were continually being circulated in England for years before his death in 1896.

A touching anecdote may fittingly close this history of a famous song. When the late Mlle. Titiens, of ballad concert fame, was in New York, I think in 1876, she sang "Kathleen Mavourneen" as an encore. The song excited great applause and when the enthusiasm had subsided the singer was told that a man, presumed to be a lunatic, was fighting his way over the barriers from the pit to the stage (it was in the opera house), saying he was determined to see Titiens. The commotion told the parties to let him come on. On entering the man burst into tears, crying out: "Oh, Mlle. Titiens, I never before heard my song sung as you have just sung it!" "Your song!" was the astonished reply. "Why, you are Irish, aren't you?" "I am indeed," rejoined the poor old composer, "and I felt I must thank you myself." He had scraped together a dollar for a pit seat, little thinking to hear his own "Kathleen Mavourneen" made the most thrilling morceau of the evening.

A FRAGMENT.

[The Globe points out that there has been no Epic of Cricket yet written.]

Stumps and the man I sing, that the gallant fight
Of those who trundle, and of those who smite,
Of fair pavilions and of level swards,
Of Stars on village Commons and at Lords,
Of Fuller Pilch's fame, of Shrewsbury's nerve,
How wily Hirst would make the leather swerve,
Of centuries and epochs with the bat,
Of duck's-eggs, and of tricks that win the hat;
How Cornstalks made the British game look black,
Till gallant Warner brought their ashes back;
But chiefly thee—the records slow to yield,
First with the bat, mighty to bowl and field,
Long, great Leviathan, thy praise shall ring—
Great Grace inspire my numbers as I sing.

Lifebuoy Soap—disinfectant—is strongly recommended by the medical profession as a safeguard against infectious diseases.

QUEEN WILHELMINA OF HOLLAND FROM THE DEFENDER.

The

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Day's Doings At Ottawa

Intercolonial Telegraphers Ask For More Salary—St. George's Day.

Sub-Collector Is Appointed For Ladysmith—Rifle Association Grant.

Russians are Still Attempting to Shirk Responsibility as to Sealers.

From our own correspondent.

Ottawa, April 23.—St. George's Day was worthily celebrated here today. The local society held a banquet to-night and many distinguished guests were present.

Thos. D. Conway has been appointed sub-collector of customs at Ladysmith.

A delegation of Intercolonial Railway telegraphers is here to see Mr. Emerson and secure an increase in wages.

The question of the amount to be paid by Russia for the seizure of British Columbia sealing vessels will not be settled until the Dominion government hears from St. Petersburg. Russia wants to shirk the responsibility and desires to settle for only two instead of six.

The Dominion Rifle Association wants an augmented grant from the government.

All sales of Dominion coal lands in the future will be made subject to a provision that actual settlers shall be entitled to buy at the pit's mouth, whatever coal they may require for their own use at $1.75 per ton.

A MISGUIDED YOUTH.

Young Lord Brooks Will Join Unemployed Army at the Front.

London, April 23.—Young Lord Brooks will leave London for Harbin, Manchuria, April 27th, as war correspondent for Reuter's Telegram Company. Though only 21 years of age, and the son of the once famous beauty, the Countess of Warwick, Lord Brooks already has been in two wars. He refused to stay home when Great Britain was at war with the Boers and ran off to the Transvaal with the Yeomanry. There he became an aide de camp to Lord Milner. Last year young Brooks went to Tibet. Man to where he acted as war correspondent during the outbreak there, now he will follow the fortunes of General Kuropatkin.

CHINESE EXCLUSION.

Some Important Amendments Made in the Senate.

Washington, D. C., April 23.—The general deficiency appropriation bill was passed by the Senate today. It carries all one of the appropriation bills unreported upon by that body. A large number of amendments were adopted, one providing for limiting the Chinese exclusion legislation to a reaffirmation of the exclusion law of 1902, and other existing exclusion laws. An amendment which was adopted, provides that excluding Chinese and other aliens coming in as a result of agreements between countries and steamship companies, having especial reference to contracts following the Cunard line and the government of Hungary to supply 30,000 immigrants to the steamship companies. About 200 private pension bills were passed during the day.

Reported Landing Above Port Arthur

Twenty Thousand Japanese are Said to Have Landed at Kinchau.

Discovery of Mines in the Neva Proves to be Empty Powder Cans.

St. Petersburg, April 23.—Some excitement was caused here today by a report that mines had been discovered at the mouth of the River Neva, where they had been planted by the Japanese for the purpose of blowing up the battleships when they leave. The report grew out of the sighting of four floating powder cans. These were recovered and turned over to the police authorities, who, upon making an examination, found the cans were part of a load of powder which was being transported in a cart to Cronstadt more than a year ago, and were dropped through the ice.

A report is current here that the Japanese have landed 20,000 troops at Kinchau, about Port Arthur. This report, however, cannot be confirmed tonight.

ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION.

St. Petersburg, April 23.—The story that an attempt was made on General Kuropatkin's life by two disguised Japanese while the commander-in-chief was in New Chwang a few days ago is confirmed