

TWO FISHERS.

One morning when spring was in her teens—
A morn to a poet's wishing,
All tinted in delicate pinks and greens—
Miss Bessie and I went fishing.

I in my rough and easy clothes,
With my face at the sunshine's mercy;
She with her hat tipped down to her nose,
And her nose tipped—vice versa.

I with my rod, my reel and my hooks,
And a hamper for luncheon recesses;
She with the bait of her comely looks,
And the seine of her golden tresses.

So we sat down on the sunny dyke,
Where the white pond lilies reared,
And I went to fishing like quaint old Ike,
And she like Simon Peter.

All the noon I lay in the light of her eyes,
And dreamily watched and waited,
But the fish were cunning and would not rise,
And the baiter alone was baited.

And when the time for departure came,
The bag was fat as a flounder;
But Bessie had neatly hooked her game—
A hundred-and-eighty pounder.

MAY WOMEN WOO?

It is generally supposed to be a dreadful thing for a woman to "set her cap at"—in other words to woo and win—a man. Those who air the cheap philosophy of the time, and consider that there is no law so supreme as etiquette, while they hold the supposed decrees of the omnipotent Mrs. Grundy in deep reverence, seem to imagine that it is the duty of a girl to hide from herself the fact that she has a heart until some unexceptionable suitor discovers it to her, and ardently protests that it is the one great thing in the world necessary to his happiness. If she ventured to hint that she was so anxious for the affection of some male that she would do anything, within reason, to secure him for her lord she would be accounted unmaidenly, bold, and what not; and it would in all probability, be urged that she might be expected to come to a bad end, and serve as an awful warning to all members of her sex who were inclined to be undisciplined. But there is nevertheless, only too much reason to believe that female human nature is so weak, and wayward and impervious to the concentrated wisdom of the ages that the emotions which lead to matrimony do not always have their origin in the bosom of impassioned beaux. Now and then, it is solemnly recorded in shocked tones, and under the veil of secrecy, so that the terrible fact obtains almost as much publicity as if it were proclaimed by the town crier, and has a peculiarly delicious flavour imparted to it, that Mrs. Brown actually committed the enormity of making love to Mr. Brown, if she did not in plain terms invite him to become her husband. It is comparatively unimportant that she and her mate appear to be as happy and to get on as well together as they would, in all probability have done if he had been the first to feel the stab of Master Cupid's dart, and had warmly taken the initiative in the courtship. It seems to be held that the only plea which may appropriately be urged in extenuation of her conduct is that she rejoiced in the possession of an abundance of pelf and a certain position, while his social status was as low as his purse was light; and even this plea has to be handled with adroitness if it is to become effective. Indeed, at a critical moment when they have all the touching details of the exceptional matter before them they will not hesitate to speak in terms of withering scorn of the frail female who is so much the slave of her heart that she is acting as if she desired to bring to her feet a man who, from bashfulness or some other cause, would not, seemingly, get there but for her stimulating influence. If she fails they rejoice over her downfall, and feelingly declare that she will merely meet with her deserts if she degenerates into a neglected and petulant old maid, while if she succeeds they vigorously discount her triumph, on the ground that it is one of which any well-regulated female would be thoroughly ashamed. The members of her own sex, who, when they cultivate the power of introspection and are becoming mature, should know how to make excuses for her, are invariably her most virulent critics. Even men, however, are disposed to show her no mercy, and there is, probably, no more lofty and virtuously indignant creature than the being who feels that he has been "angled" for, but flatters himself because he has not been caught by the bait which has been so temptingly placed before him. He would almost appear to fancy that he should, on account of the way he has escaped the snares which have been spread for him, be placed on the roll of the world's heroes. Novelists are the most venturesome of beings, and they have a fondness for flouting conventionality, but there are bounds beyond which they dare not go, and they perceive how hazardous it would be for them to outrage popular prejudice by depicting heroines who took the initiative in love affairs. A queen of England is at liberty to make an "offer" to a prince—indeed, it is not etiquette for a prince to make an "offer" to her—but she occupies quite an exceptional position, and the fact is one which need not be further considered in reference to the subject, especially as her marriage may generally be deemed to be largely influenced by State considerations. Thus, everything is against the woman wooer, and it is not surprising that she remains something of a *rara avis*, and when her heart proves too strong for her sense of proprieties, often works in cunning and crooked ways, as if she were bent on deceiving herself and not letting her left hand know of

the doings of her right. Yet there is, after all, a good deal of reason and common-sense on her side; so much that it is surprising the advocates of the "women's rights" movement have yet to energetically take up the cudgels on her behalf. It is absurd to suppose that affection must inevitably begin with the man. It is equally absurd to suppose that he alone should be at liberty to win the being whom he believes to be necessary to his life's happiness. The individual who allowed a rich prize to elude him because, through some mistaken notion of what people in whom he was in no way interested and for whom he did not care a jot would think, he would not stretch forth his hand and grasp it when it was well within his reach would, very properly, be accounted a fit subject for Colney Hatch or Rainhill. Why, then, should a woman be debarred from doing her best to stir the sluggish nature of the being whom she has, with the natural perversity of her sex, fallen in love with, and who would, she has every reason to believe, be worthy of her? She may say that if she will hold out her hand he will take it, but that if she gives no sign he will pass on, and their lives, which she fondly thinks would be so exquisite, if blended, in the future lie far apart. Will it not be merely elementary wisdom for her to come down from the uncomfortable pedestal, where all her energies and emotions are cruelly cramped, on which artificiality has set her? We do not believe in the popular impression that the well-directed maiden only discovers that she has a heart when the right man asks for it. On the contrary, we are of opinion that many girls long, with all the intensity of fresh and ardent souls, for certain men as consorts, when no word of love has been whispered in their ears, and when no token of affection has been tendered them, and that not a few become broken-spirited because the chance of their bright dreams being realised vanishes. At present, a woman frequently forfeits her possibility of bliss, from the circumstance that she, owing to her surroundings and sense of what is expected from her, feigns a coldness which she is far from feeling when the man whom she loves, while fearing to take the final plunge, evinces some desire to win her favour. Many would-be husbands hesitate to say "will you marry me?" only because they dread that their query will be answered in the negative and they shrink from incurring what they would regard as a keen humiliation. Of course it may be urged that such cravens are unworthy of woman's love; but the women have to be considered as well as they, and the fact remains that, notwithstanding their obliquity of vision and cowardice and the clumsy manner in which they mismanage their amours, they would frequently make true, and excellent husbands. It is a pity, then, for all parties that their short-sightedness and stumbling should be permitted to lead to such disastrous consequences, and their sweethearts might very well be allowed to help themselves. Men have the whole world to choose their wives from, but women may, under the most advantageous condition of things, only select their mates from the comparatively limited number of men who seek their society and deign to look on them with favour. Of course, it may be urged that the existing rough-and-ready system of natural selection leads to fewer evils than might be anticipated—some enthusiasts may still maintain that marriages are made in Heaven, notwithstanding the fashion in which female humanity is hampered, and the ridiculously one-sided state of things prevailing, on earth—but that it leads to gigantic mistakes is certain, and it is time the weaker sex were given to understand that, under certain conditions, they may help themselves to gratify their legitimate and natural longings.—*Liberal Review*.

VARIETIES.

A MAN OF INORDINATE STOMACH.—An official of the Paris *petit*, while walking in the Rue de Rivoli, met a very thin gentleman whose face seemed familiar to him, though he had always associated it with a body of unusual obesity. The official was somewhat puzzled, but thought nothing more of the circumstance until the next morning, when, on duty at one of the gates of Paris, he saw the identical gentleman approaching in the direction of the town, but this time endowed with a most redundant figure. The wary officer stopped the phenomenal gentleman, and, requesting him to step into the office, asked for an explanation of the extraordinary alteration in his proportions. The individual thus brought to task tried to run away, but was arrested and relieved of a large india-rubber false stomach, containing twenty quarts of alcohol, which he was endeavouring to smuggle into Paris free of *octroi* duty.

A REMARKABLE DOG.—There is a dog at Brighton, England—a remarkable dog—a large Maltese. Sometimes that dog has a purple body, with a yellow head and a green tail; sometimes he is scarlet and puce. He is a kind of rainbow dog. The fact is he belongs to a dyer in the town, and being naturally white he takes any other colour easily, and now he gets a dip in one vat, and now in another, and he forms a sort of canine advertisement. It is fun to see this dog, who is quite unconscious of his distinguished condition, come up to other dogs wagging his yellow head and green tail, and the way that those dogs, after regarding him out of the corner of their eyes a minute, tuck their tails between their legs and "scoot" is a caution. Some time since a friend who had occasionally been a victim of the "old complaint" was go-

ing down to Brighton for the race week in great health and spirits. When driving from the station he suddenly came on this dog. "Hallo, hey! What's that? Hey! hey! what! a purple dog with a green tail! Oh, lor! I got 'em again!" and he turned round and went back to London, firmly persuaded that he was again a victim to D. T.

For some time past a humorous controversy has been carried on in the columns of a vivacious Parisian newspaper, its subject being this delicate question—"If a man find himself at one and the same time in the society of his wife and his mother-in-law, to which of these ladies should he offer his arm for the purpose of conducting her home?" On the one side it is contended that preference in this regard should be accorded to the mother-in-law; for, should she, lacking support and protection while in charge of her daughter's husband, slip down and break her leg, or haply be run over at a crossing, her son-in-law could scarcely fail to be saddled with the cost of repairing her—a contingency which no married man can contemplate without a shudder. Another writer upon this issue observes that, "even admitting the mother-in-law's prior claim to be established by some *lex non scripta* of polite manners, exception must be taken to it during the honeymoon, when the prescriptions of etiquette are bound to give way to the dictates of the heart." A battered worldling exhorts his married readers to offer their arms to their young wives, leaving mothers-in-law to take care of themselves. "For," he argues, "if your wife walk alone, who knows what amatory whispers may reach her ears, and with what effect; whereas your mother-in-law is shielded from these insidious molestations by her greater experience." The expert appointed by the *Figaro* to sum up the arguments on both sides and pronounce judgment upon the original question gives his decision in the following characteristic terms—"A mother-in-law enjoys priority of right to her son-in-law's arm, but upon the sole condition, to which no exception will be tolerated, that she be older than her daughter."

A MOST REMARKABLE WILL.

Profane laymen believe that, when the cloth is removed at a lawyer's dinner, the oldest member of the profession present rises, and solemnly proposes, amid enthusiastic too-deep-for-applause, this solemn toast—"The man who makes his own Will." The story has, at any rate, the merit of being well invented; for most assuredly that man has a feel for his client in a double and treble meaning of the famous saying about men who are their own lawyers; and it is true enough, and I, an old lawyer, say it, with all respect for that science of common sense popularly called "the law," that the people who find their way into court, and learn what Costs mean, have mostly got into the predicament through having too strong an antipathy to lawyers and their bills. But I think it is even worse than common folly when a testator, instead of self-conceit, leaves a Chancery suit instead of an inheritance to his heirs. Women are not, in this respect, quite so criminally imbecile as men are, because they are mostly free from the little knowledge which is at the root of most bad wills. But then they are apt to make a more thorough hash of things when they make any at all. On the whole, I should place makers of their own wills in the following order of badness, taking the extreme type in each degree of comparison: Positive—Bad, Elderly Gentlemen. Comparative—Worse, Elderly Ladies. Superlative—Worst, Lord Chancellors. But not even a Lord Chancellor ever managed to draw up so extraordinarily bewildering a will as Miss Bridgeta Molloy. She could have taught something even to the late Lord W—y. As the case never actually came into court, the details will probably be new to most of my readers; but I heard them all at the time, and have the clearest recollection of them—and no wonder. On this occasion there is no harm in giving real names. And that is fortunate; for the story could not possibly be told without them. It simply defies invention.

Miss Bridgeta Molloy was a maiden lady of royal descent, who lived at an English watering-place—I really forget whether at Bath, or Chilton, or Cheltenham, or Malvern, or Leamington, or Buxton; but it was at some such place, and luckily the name of the town is the one detail which does not matter. For the sake of avoiding blanks and dashes, I will call it Chatterbury, as more or less applicable to them all—at least, in Miss Molloy's time. She was a little eccentric in trifles; but, in all essential things, as notoriously whole-minded, and strong-minded too, as any lady of sixty in the whole kingdom. I must enter a little into her family history; but only so far as is needful. She had been the second of three beautiful sisters, the daughters and co-heiresses of a gentleman of large estate in Ireland. They were much run after in their girlhood, and had once been known as the three pocket-beauties—less in allusion to their size than to their reputation—then somewhat uncommon in Dublin—of being worth marrying for something more lasting than beauty. Well, to cut a long story short before it is well begun, the eldest, Miss Lucia Molloy (a quaint first name; but it always struck me as a singularly pretty one for a pretty girl), eloped with a gentle-

man, also descended from royalty—so far descended, indeed, that there was scarcely a further social depth left him to descend to—named Fitzgerald O'Birn; and the youngest, Miss Judith, went off with a foreign refugee, a sort of Hungarian-German Polish dancing-master Count, named Ferentz Steldl. Ferentz is the Hungarian for Francis, I believe; Steldl, I fancy, is Bavarian or Tyrolean. Both marriages turned out miserably—so miserably, that Miss Bridgeta forsware romance, and even matrimony, and actually kept her vow.

She also kept more than her vow—she kept her fortune. When the creditors got hold of Mr. Molloy's great estates, he left the very handsome surplus left him in cash and consols absolutely to his one wise daughter. Not a penny went into the pockets of Count Steldl or Mr. O'Birn. It was a bitter disappointment to both gentlemen; and I believe they avenged their wrongs upon their wives after the manner of their kind.

So while poor Madame Steldl suffered and starved all over Europe, and poor Mrs. O'Birn starved and suffered in the larger and darker continent of London, Miss Molloy lived alone and in dignified opulence at Chatterbury. She was a first-rate economist, and her patrimony had prospered. She used to amuse herself by speculating in stock—always shrewdly and cautiously. By the time she was sixty, it was reckoned that her income could not amount to less than a safe twelve hundred a year, of which she saved at least five.

Now what in the world was to become of all this money if Miss Bridgeta Molloy ever happened to die? I have been thinking of the best form in which I can tell the story of what did happen shortly; and I think it best, on the whole, to undergo a transformation, and multiply the result by two. That is to say, I will henceforth speak as if I were myself Miss Molloy's solicitor, my old friend, the late Charles Lake of Chatterbury; and I will, in addition, use the privilege accorded to authors and to counsel of speaking after the facts, and so of putting them into clearer and more readable form than if I followed them in order of detail. So, for the present, instead of being your correspondent, Mr. Editor, Mr. Thomas Key, formerly of Barcham, I will, for the moment, write to you in the person of Mr. Charles Lake of Chatterbury, a very dry matter-of-fact man of business—indeed, who told the tale as it was told to me.

II.

One afternoon the mail-coach from London set down two gentlemen at the Old Swan, Chatterbury. Both had remarkably little luggage for those days, when men could not run from York to London and back again in a few hours. Both ordered a bed, both walked into the coffee-room, and one of them rang the bell. When the waiter answered it, one of the gentlemen ordered cold brandy, the other hot whisky. And the waiter's report at the bar was not favourable to either. But with that opinion lack of luggage may have had something to do.

There were other resemblances between the two men. Both were well past middle age; neither looked like one of the hunting men, or officers on half-pay, or rheumatic patients, who formed the bulk of the male visitors to Chatterbury. But there all likeness came to an end. He of the whisky was a long lean man, with fierce untrimmed whiskers, a shiny bald head, bloodshot blue eyes, and a toll-tale nose, dressed in the height of the fashion, with a tendency to overstepping it into fondness. He had ordered his grog in a thick rich brogue. He of the brandy, on the other hand, was short and squat, with a dirty sallow complexion, thick grizzled hair, and twinkling black eyes. He wore the then unusual ornament, if ornament it be, of a moustache; and, for the rest, was clean, or rather half-shaved, and there was something Frenchified about his costume.

"Waiter!" said the Irishman. "If anybody calls here to-day or to-morrow for Major O'Birn, I'm Major O'Birn!"

The other started for a moment, and laid his glass down.

"Shall I comprehend, Monsieur," he asked, "that you give your name?"

"Me name I and why wouldn't I give me name?" said O'Birn, with a little leap in his chair. "'Tis none to be ashamed of, anyhow. I'd like to see the man with a name to his back as good as O'Birn!"

"One hundred thousand pardons, Monsieur. I am glad that I know—that is all. Eh, but one thousand thousand pardons, Monsieur Fitzgerald O'Birn."

The Major's jaw fell, and all his face, save his nose, grew suddenly pale.

"Sure, now, ye're not goin' to tell me ye're one of them blagyard Jews!" cried he. "Sure 'twould be too cool an' all, when I've come down to see my own wife's sister, that's rollin' over and over in jools an' gold. An' ye've followed me all the wee down here; an' this is a free country! An' bad luck to the country where an officer an' gentleman mustn't see a visit to his wife's relations without being hunted by all Jerusalem in full cry! Come, Moses, ye'll give me another dee."

"Aha! So you think no one shall know your name but the people which shall hold your bills, Monsieur O'Birn? I hold not your bills; I am not fool. You come down to see Mdlle. Bridgeta, then, I shall comprehend?"

"Sure, then, 'tis the divvy ye are! But that's better, anyhow, than bein' what I thought ye—"