rumours that Jerry Shaw believed Lingo's canine form to be animated by the spirit of a departed friend of his early life; but when such whispers reached the old man's ears he would sniff and scoff and snap in his abrupt queer way, and aver that *he* had never known any man whose virtues could compare to Lingo's, and that if such an one could be found he would cheerfully walk fifty miles barefoot to behold them.

Mrs. Walton shook hands with the two men, and then presented Mabel.

"My niece, Miss Bell," said she.

Mr. Trescott had partly advanced on seeing Mabel, and then stopped as if uncertain how to greet her; but she held out her hand at once.

"You have only known me by my true name Mr. Trescott," she said, smiling. "It has been thought well to give me another for the present. I hope little Corda is well?"

"Quite well, thank you, Miss—a—Miss Bell. She will be so rejoiced to see you."

"Mr. Shaw, let me introduce you to my niece. A young aspirant for histrionic honours."

Mr. Shaw rose and gave his head a sudden jerk that was intended for a bow, and then sat down again. "You've chosen a bad trade, miss," said he, encouragingly. He spoke with singular abruptness, and in short sentences, which seemed to come out of his mouth in spite of him, and which invariably ended a prolonged sniff, that wrinkled up his nose and curled his upper lip.

"I hope not," said Mabel, smiling. "My aunt has not found it so very bad. Poor old boy, poor old dog. Is he yours? May I pat him?"

"You may—if he'll let you. He won't let everybody."

Lingo, however, was graciously pleased to permit Mabel's little hand to caress his rough head, and he even wagged his tail in a faint and lazy way.

"He likes her," said Mr. Shaw, turning to Mrs. Walton. "He decidedly likes her. And I tell you what, ma'am; I'd rather take his opinion than most people's. I've never known him wrong yet."

By-and-by more members of the company began to drop in, and by about a quater-past ten they were nearly all assembled. There was Miss Lydia St. Aubert, very tall, very thin, with a head too small for her height, and dark eyes too big for her face. She wore a crop of waving ringlets, and a little infantine straw bonnet, the strings of which she untied as soon as she came into the room—not that Miss Lydia St. Aubert was very young or very childish. She had a husband and three children, and had not escaped the cares of life, poor woman! But her small head and curly crop gave her a juvenile air, and she rather acted up to her appearance in private life.

There were the Copestakes, husband and wife; he about fifty years of age, she at least ten years older. They were in the last depths of shabbiness: not from destitution—for between them they earned an income more than sufficient to have kept them in respectability—but because they spent an absurdly large proportion of their weekly earnings upon eating and drinking of the most costly viands they could procure.

There was Mrs. Darling, fat and stately, with a black satin reticule full of white wool, and a pair of wooden knitting-needles, wherewith she was manufacturing some mysterious article of clothing. There was the low comedian, bitter and sententious, and remarkably neat about his gloves and boots. The walking gentleman (whose wife was a dancer), neither so young, nor so smart, nor so good-looking as he once had been, but with a great deal of elegance—in the modern comedy style—and an amazing collection of riddles culled from all the news-paper columns of "Varieties" and "Random Readings" for the last fifteen years. Last of all came in Mr. Moffatt, the manager, with his daughter on his arm, and accompanied by Mr. Wilfred J. Percival, the leading gentleman, announced in the bills as being "from the principal theatres in the United States of America."

Mr. Moffatt was very cordial in his greetings to his company—almost too cordial, in fact, for cordiality did not seem to be naturally the most striking trait in Mr. Moffatt's character, and the effect of this sudden gush of it was a little oppressive. Mr. Moffatt was short and spare, with a close-shaven face and little cold grey eyes. His voice had a covert ill-tempered snarl in it, which was audible even in his most amiable moments. Miss Moffatt was a plump young lady—perhaps I might go so far as so say a fat young lady—with a round fresh-coloured face, widered-lipped mouth, turned-up nose, and bright blue eyes, with a strong cast in them. Mr. Wilfred J. Percival was a tall sallow gentleman, with a long chin and retreating forehead; and he wore a brown velvet collar to his coat, over which a gold chain was artfully disposed in many a cunning twist.

Mabel was received very graciously by Mr. Moffatt, and very condescendingly by his daughter. The latter was showily dressed, and especially revelled in bonnet-ribbon, of which she had a remarkable quantity of a very bright blue colour disposed in bows upon her head-gear.

"I'm glad you're a brune," said Miss Moffatt, with elaborately fine *u* and French roll of the *r* (Miss Moffatt had been two years in a cheap boarding-school near Calais, and was a very accomplished person indeed): "so glad. Because, being a blonde myself" (the *n* here so nasal that Miss Moffatt appeared to be seized with a sudden cold in the head), "we shan't clash as to colours."

"As to colours?" said Mabel.

"Yes. I consider that so important. But one never can get the English to think of these things. For instance, when I wear blue, you, playing in the same piece, would naturally wear cerise or amber, which would go so charmingly. But the fact is, we English are *not* artistic."

"Ain't we?"

"Oh dear no. We have no goût, no finesse, no je ne sais quoi. To any one accustomed to the foreign theatres we are sadly gauche and unfinished."

"Well," rejoined Mabel, quietly, "I hope the Kilclare people have not been accustomed to the foreign theatres, and in that case they won't find us out."

Whereupon Miss Moffatt looked a little puzzled, and held her peace.

Rap, rap, rap. Mr. Trescott knocked sharply with his bow on the table before him. "Now then, ladies and gentlemen, music of Macbeth. I've been here since ten o'clock, and I can't afford to waste my time for the sake of other people who can't get up to breakfast. Now then, if you please. First singing witch."

Miss Moffatt, who had a very high squeaking voice, was the first singing witch, and Miss St. Aubert, who had a very deep and hollow one, sang the music of the second at the wing: it being found impossible to disguise the flowing robes of Lady Macbeth effectually by means of any cloaking or drapery.

So the rehearsal went on. The music was familiar to all, and as they most of them had tolerably correct ears, the effect was better than might have been anticipated, except that old Mrs. Copestake could not be induced to leave off as soon as she should have done, but insisted on singing the bits of symphony that ought to have been confined to the violin. Then followed the rehearsal of the tragedy on the stage. As neither Mabel nor her aunt had anything to perform in it, they returned home together, leaving Jack, in a canvas blouse bedaubed with many colours, putting the last black touches to the background of the blasted heath.

(To be continued.)

The following cure for gout is taken from an old work:—1st, The person must pick a handkerchief from the pocket of a maid of fifty years, who has never had a wish to change her condition; 2nd, He must dry it on a parson's hedge who was never covetous; 3rd, He must send it to a doctor's shop who never killed a patient; 4th, He must mark it with a lawyer's ink who never cheated a client; 5th, Apply it to the part affected, and a cure will speedily follow.

LABOUR AS IT USED TO BE IN ENGLAND.

STRIKES of labour against capital, and a Royal Commission to inquire into the system by which they are organised and maintained; these are the most noticeable facts in the British labour-market at the present moment. Thinking men, solicitous for the well-being of British trade and British workmen, are devising plans by which it is hoped to prevent for the future both the strikes and the heavy loss of time, money, and *morale* which are incidental to them.

While these plans are being matured, it may be well to take a look backward, and see what has hitherto been the relation between employer and employed in handicrafts and husbandry. Such a retrospection cannot fail to be interesting; it may also be useful. Without going back to quite feudal times, when might avowedly lorded it over right, and labour being weaker than wealth, went to the wall, men guiding themselves by 'the good old rule,'

> The simple plan,
> That they should take who have the power,
> And they should keep who can,

there is a law in the statute-book of Edward III which clearly shews the unenfranchised condition of workmen in England under Plantagenet rule. It is called a Statute of Labourers, passed in the twenty-fifth year of the king, and in the formal enactment of an ordinance of the king in council, which was passed two years before, at a time when the parliament, though summoned, did not meet because of the plague (the Black Death) which was raging. The ordinance defined a labourer thus: 'Every man or woman of whatever condition, free or servile, able in body, and under sixty years of age, not living by merchandise or trade, or by his own property, or by cultivating his own land; and commanded that all persons coming within this definition should take such wages, and no more, as they had received in their several districts in the twentieth year of the king's reign, or five or six years before that.

The quaint preamble to the statute states the ground on which the law was framed. It begins by saying: 'Whereas late against the malice of servants which were idle and not willing to serve, after the pestilence, without taking excessive wages,' the recent ordinance was issued, 'and now forasmuch as it is given the king to understand that the said servants, having no regard to the said ordinance, but to their ease and singular covetise, do withdraw themselves from serving the great men or others unless they have liveries and wages to the double or treble of that they were wont to take the said twentieth year and before; to the great damage of the great men, and impoverishing of all those of the said commonalty.' It then fixes the wages to be paid to all sorts of workmen, the principle being that no more wages should be paid than had been paid in the twentieth year of the king. Agricultural labourers were to be hired by the year, and sworn to abide by their work, imprisonment and exposure in the stocks being the punishment provided for defaulters.

The whole thing was very unfair, because 'the great pestilence' which destroyed *more than half the population* of England, and which had doubtless told more severely on the labouring class, ill-housed and ill-fed, than upon the wealthier classes, had so lessened the supply of labour that wages ought naturally to have been increased to the survivors; but a parliament composed wholly of persons who employed labour, and who were interested in keeping down wages, could not perhaps be expected to consider others than themselves in the matter. There was positive injustice in fixing a standard based upon prices commonly paid in the twentieth year of the king, for, owing to the untilled state of the land, consequent upon the death of the tillers, provisions had become much dearer, and other courses had contributed to decrease the value of money. However, the standard was fixed, and the law was passed, and it is not too much to say that they were among the chief causes of the discontent of the labouring classes which found