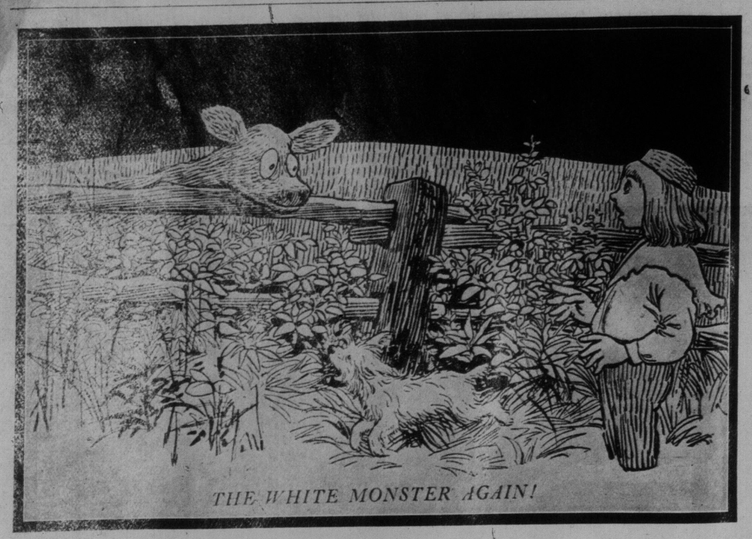
Stories for Young Folks: How Martin Miller Became a Hero



THE WHITE MONSTER AGAIN!

"OTHER boys—yes, and even girls—stay up and play out in the street, too, until nine o'clock, and sometimes later!" declared Martin Dale Miller, as he stood at the foot of the stairs at seven o'clock at night.

"March right up and go to bed!" replied his mother, with sharpness, and Martin marched. He was almost as tall as his mother, but she made him wear long hair and short "pants" and a white collar bordered with ruffles. It was, in fact, only a few months since she stopped curling his hair, but still she treated him in many ways as if he were a baby, and this sending him to bed at seven o'clock was one of them. She was most amazed that he should even think of protesting against that custom, for Mrs. Miller still thought of Martin as her baby.

But the boy, taking off his clothes, murmured stoutly as he heard the whoops and hallocs of his comrades in the street, for it was summer time and the sun was hardly behind the hills; yet here he was going to bed like a two-year-old infant. It was bad enough in winter, but then it was dark early enough to permit him to go to sleep after a reasonable time; but to lie there and hear the flies still buzzing briskly, the boys and girls laughing merrily and the old folks talking below made him hot all over.

Had he been permitted to take his little dog Mike, who was half door mat and half mop, to bed with him, he would have been less disconcerted, but his mother shuddered when he pleaded for the dog's company. Mike would have diverted him for hours, because he fancied there were mice behind everything, and spent all his waking hours sniffing around busily and watching at impossible cracks in great excitement every moment when he was awake.

But, alas, at seven poor Mike also was banished to the woodshed, where sometimes he howled and filled Martin's heart with woe. This night he barked sharply, as if he fancied somebody was prowling outside, and after a time Martin looked out to see what was causing the excitement.

There stood Jimmy Ramsdell below the window smoking a ciagaret. Jimmy appeared to be watching intently, and looked about somewhat startled when Martin whispered softly, but when he saw who it was he whispered:

"I've been watching two fellers that are sneaking 'round down the lane. They're strangers about here, and I think they're a-gooin' to steal a hoss!"

Martin just caught a glimpse of one of them as he vanished around a turn in the road, and told Jimmy what he had seen. Jimmy asked:

"Whatcher doin' up there? Youse ain't goin' to bed a'reddy!"

When Martin explained that his mother sent him to bed at that unheard-of hour Jimmy grinned and said:

"Fully gee! That's fierce! Why don't you shin down that branch there and take a sneak? You can easy get back again any time."

"Mother would be mad!" answered Martin, as he looked carefully at the tree-branch so close to his window.

"Did she ever tell you not to go out after you'd gone to bed?" demanded Jim.

"Nope. I guess she's never even thought of that," said Martin.

"Then it's all right. Ef she'd forbidden you, 'twould be different, you see. As long as she ain't never said you must stay in bed, it's no harm to get up again. See?

"It doesn't seem right!" replied Martin, thoughtfully.

"Aw, you're a girl-boy, anyway!" snorted Jimmy, and walked off in disgust. The sneer on his lips made Martin's heart beat with rage, and he threw himself on his bed disgusted with everything. The moon, which had risen before the sun had set, shone pale in the twilight on his wall, and he lay there watching it grow brighter and brighter as darkness fell, but never for an instant feeling like sleeping, only nursing his rage and envy of Jimmy, the free and the bold, who was roving the darkened lanes and acting as an amateur detective.

The lad's advice, altho somehow it seemed to savor of wrongdoing, was, after all, so it looked to Martin, perfectly reasonable, for as his mother had never told him to remain in bed it would not be disobedience to her if he went forth for a time. But the thought of such a daring action quite flustered Martin. However, after considering it from every possible point, and getting used to the thought very gradually as the night wore on, Martin found himself debating as to where he should go and what he would do provided he took Jimmy's suggestion seriously.

The boys had ceased their uproar, the old folks' talk had died away, and now only a rare shout, that mingled with the far-away barks of dog, the distant piping of frogs in the pond, and an occasional complaint from some wandering cat showed that all the village was getting ready for sleep.

The full moon beamed temptingly and filled all the land with bright light, so that it seemed a shame to waste the hours in sleep.

Martin got up for the twentieth time and put on his clothes. Even then he only half intended to venture forth, but as he looked out and saw that glorious moon aloft in the heaven a sudden courage filled him, and without exactly knowing how it happened he found himself sliding down the tree that hugged the house so closely.

Then he stood underneath for an instant, half decided to release Mike for this night-prowl, but the thought that the dog might betray him by a joyful bark stopped him at once, and off he slipped alone. Down the shaded lane where the moonlight fell in silver bars across the road he hastened, as the clock in the church solemnly rang out ten times. Then, as he turned into the road, he heard Mike whine loudly and he stopped; but no, it would never do to go back now!

Along by the millpond where the dark gleaming water reflected the moonlight in a broad path he stole, for the road ran close to the water. How strange the pond looked at night, yet he knew every stone and blade of grass on its border. Something suddenly rippled the surface with a soft swish and then the silver path of light was broken into millions of moons dancing in the water. Perhaps it was a big fish, perhaps a muskrat swimming away, but it vanished into the deep black shadow of the trees before he could see what it was.

Suddenly a deep bellow that startled him immensely came from almost beneath his feet. He had never heard a bullfrog's voice so near before, but, before he could run away, another, deeper still, boomed out, followed by the shrill piping of hundreds of young ones, that told Martin just what they were at once. He smiled at his fright and walked on, hemmed in by the trees that lined the road. He heard other sharp splashes in the water as he moved slowly, and everywhere the pond seemed alive with things; mysterious twittering came from the muddy, grassy shore, and he thought he saw shadows moving among the flags that grew there.

He halted, and as he stood motionless out walked two birds as big as small chickens, but with long yellow bills and short legs! He could see them plainly on the shining mud. Then followed a surprising spectacle. One of them shot up into the air with a whir, mounting far up toward the silver moon, and then down he dropped like a shot to his mate. Up and down, again and again, while the other bird tiptoed about, peeping softly, and then Martin, watching closely, saw that dozens of others were performing in the same manner all along the shore of the pond. It looked like a bird circus! These were woodcock, and this is the bird's courting, but very few people have ever had the pleasure of beholding it, I assure you. Martin gleefully hugged himself as he thought of telling about this to the other boys and girls.

Then suddenly every bird vanished, and a moment later he heard a long, blood-curdling shriek coming from the woods. It was so sudden and so unearthly that he stopped, chilled to the heart; but it came twice again before he remembered that he had heard it, far off and faint in the distance, more than once before as he lay in bed. It was the voice of the screech-owl, but nevertheless it was enough to startle even a grown-up, so Martin thought, as he moved on along the road.

The moon had also moved along and lowered somewhat toward the western hills that showed, black as ink, against the sky, but he knew that it could not be very late, and, besides, he could always hear the bell in the steeple and hurry home when he wished. At last he came to the old rail fence that divided the woods from the road. Everything looked so different from its usual daylight aspect that he hesitated a moment, but as he knew every path, almost every tree, he climbed over and strolled along slowly. It was pretty dark in there, he was willing to admit, but still that gave it all a fearful sort of charm. Here by the creek was the big dead buttonwood tree where he had often sat and caught sunfish, and there the flat stone on which the boys cracked nuts. But how changed everything was, and the curtain of black that hid all things a few feet away, blotting out each familiar object, seemed to conceal something that swelled and shrank, swayed and shifted, in each direction his faltering eyes moved. This was the same wood, and yet it was not the same. As he tried to gather courage to penetrate further something came scampering past with a rush, almost brushing against him, and then something else after it! What they were Martin never knew, but probably a pair of frisking rabbits, or maybe a mink chasing a rat, or any two of a dozen wood animals that make the night their feeding time. At any rate, Martin almost toppled over in fright.

He heard again the screech-owl, but this time far off in the darkness, and yet it made him feel faint. He promptly sat himself down on the big flat stone. A second after there came to his ears the sound of a scuffle among the hemlocks that he knew stood back from the path. This ceased after a minute, and then came faint breathings and a little louder pattering and rustling of dead leaves. Suddenly he recollected reading, only on Monday, of Russian wolves, in great famished packs, scouring the icy steppes and snowbound woods, dashing out at travelers in sleighs, with red slavering jaws and white teeth, pursuing the sleigh until the despairing travelers forsed out to them their babies and even their luncheons in order to delay the attack! His spine seemed to turn to ice on that warm, pleasant night in the dewy woods! Alas, he had no baby, nor even a ham sandwich, to devote to the prowler that seemed approaching!

It was hovering about a few feet off, for the breathing seemed close to him, yet he saw no glow of eyes. He rose hastily and grasped the great tree trunk, but it was far too big for him to think of climbing it, and there was no other near. He was struck just then by the awful thought that he was himself a baby of the Miller family, and it was with a chill that he turned to face the approach of the unknown thing; but, whatever it was, it came no nearer, nor did he hear it after a few moments of breathless suspense. Some sleepy birds in the bushes nearby feebly piped as if in sleep, and then all was silence in the forest.

But only for a moment; then began all sorts of queer sounds: twitterings, squeaks, scratchings, murmurings, snappings and splashings in the dark creek. It seemed that there was life everywhere about him, but as none of these sounds seemed to indicate anything very large they did not alarm the boy. Yet it seemed better to be out in the bright moonlight of some clear space; so he hastened away on the back track, but somehow the moon no longer shone so brightly, and he turned into the wrong path, which he followed until he came to a rail fence bordering a field of tall grass that was gently rustling in the night wind, and here he stopped to discover just where he was.

Far away a dim light in some farm house window glowed and then vanished as he looked at it. The moon was sinking down behind the woods and the stars were twinkling in the blue vault above as if they were laughing at him. He climbed up on the fence to think it over. Tall blackberry bushes hedged him all about. He wondered if blacksnakes wandered around at night, for blackberry bushes always do suggest blacksnakes to a country boy. A whippoorwill far up in the heavens called sadly, and from away off in the blackness came a reply, faint and plaintive.

"Why did these birds," wondered Martin, "spend the night soaring up there, and why did they always complain so persistently?" He did not know that this was their busy time, and that they were catching night moths and mosquitoes by the thousand. He was now fairly well satisfied with his prowlings and ready to return home; in fact, he began to consider the question of climbing into the window again with some fright. Suppose he was caught by the constable? He decided to hasten home at once, and with one leg over the rail was about to clamber down when, across the field of ripe grass, he dimly detected something moving slowly, a strange and misty shape of white! It came on in a wavering, uncertain manner, going to one side and then another, as if watching to see which way he would move! Then he suddenly caught the gleam of greenish eyes! His heart stopped beating. Tremblingly he awaited the approach of this awful thing, so ghostly and pale, as it so slowly came on, so silently, too, just softly brushing the grass away before it with a low swish! He dared not run back into the black woods, for he felt that it would be better out here where the stars shone to have to grapple with this thing than in the darkness of the forest. His knees knocked together, and a sweat broke out on his forehead. The white thing, as if trying to head off his escape along the fence, moved sidewise along the left side of the field and its eyes gleamed even more distinctly. It looked as big as a house! All was deep silence and he could hear his own heart thumping wildly as he sat there paralyzed with fright, clutching the top rail wildly as he trembled, while at that awful moment there came to his mind the full force of his wrongdoing. He now saw, very plainly, that, altho his dear mother had never really forbidden him to rise from his bed, of course she had intended that he should remain there until morning. He wished most heartily that he had only seen this as plainly before he started out to explore the night. The thing came nearer and nearer until, when it was perhaps twenty feet from him, all his strength oozed away, and his grip on the top rail loosened, his backbone became mushy and weak, and with a faint gasp he fell over, crashing backward into the blackberry bushes. He heard a sound of pounding and the swishing of tall grass as the Thing came for him, as he imagined, but, after he had lain there for a long time, he decided that it must have run away instead of attacking him. He sat up and scratched his neck with the thorns, but as he was about to rise something came rushing thru the bushes and pounced upon him wildly, a cold nose was pushed against him, and a hot, moist tongue began to lick his face!

It was a full second before he recognized Mike and then hugged the dog to him with a glad cry. Now he felt quite safe, and up he got, and with Mike barking so loudly that everything else shut up at once in all the woods for miles around, they started off for home. Mike examined every object carefully, stuck his busy nose into every hole, snuffled around each tree trunk and clump of grass, and just as they turned the bend in the road he stopped. There at the corner of the field stood the pale, white monster again! Mike attached it fiercely, yet with caution, and as it put its head over the fence Martin saw that it was a big white calf! He stared, and then he laughed, and was very brave at once. He shouted "shoo!" and away the calf bounded with thuds and swishings. This taught him a lesson. He decided he would never be frightened again until he was quite sure there was something to be afraid of; and, therefore, his little journey into the dark had done him good. On they went up the road, past the pond turned black and sullen, and thru the dark lane, Mike in front and now very silent and suspicious, for he surely scented something ahead. Martin noticed the change and began to walk slowly and carefully, as he did when they played "Indians and Settlers" in the woods. The house across the street looked ghostly in the starlight, for the moon had gone. Then Martin saw a light, and while he stared it grew into a flame, and he saw two men's figures moving beside Squire Gelwick's great grain barn. The blaze flashed up higher and higher against the building, and in an instant Martin saw that the men were setting fire to the barn! He could see their bad and desperate faces in the light of the blaze, and he knew that they must be wicked, dangerous men, but that never stopped him for an instant. He let out a yell of "Fire! Fire!" that startled all the village, and that caused the men to run down the main street like frightened rabbits, with Mike after them. Martin, while he shouted "Fire!" wasted no time, but darting into the back yard he seized a bucket and swiftly crossed the road to the town pump, where he filled it from the horse trough in a twinkling, after which he dashed the water on the blaze that was creeping up the side of the grain barn. Neighbors arrived, half-clad, in less than a minute, when he had refilled his bucket for the third time, but the fire was now almost out.

When Martin's father arrived he found his little long-haired boy a hero! The street was filled with people praising him, and Mr. Miller swelled with pride when he heard how his "girl-boy" had saved the big barn. Seeing lights in the barber's shop he walked Martin over there and said to the barber:

"Paul, I know it's after business hours, but I'll give you half a dollar to cut my boy's hair. He's a man now, and I want no more curls!"

So Paul cut off the long locks, and when Martin went home his mother didn't know him.

"To-morrow he's going to have long pants and suspenders, or my name's not Bill Miller!" said his father. "Why, that boy ought to be in the fire department instead of being sent to bed with the chickens!"

So that's how Martin became a real boy and the lion of the village, also, but his greatest joy and satisfaction came from sitting up until he got really sleepy; and now, when he's a newspaper man, he tells me that he often remains awake until four or five in the morning just sitting around, because he's never gotten over the feeling of delight. The two "fire-bugs," as they call men who set fire to buildings, were captured because Mike made such an outcry, as he chased them, that they hid in a haystack, where they were found and taken to jail. So Mike came in for a lot of praise, and was afterward so much prized by the Millers that he was allowed to stay in the house, so you will not be surprised to hear that he managed to sleep with Martin very often indeed. But Mrs. Miller, proud as she was of her brave lad, was a long time getting used to either her boy with the long pants and short hair, or the brave dog whose pants and hair were both the same length.

Books and Authors

"JUSTIN WINGATE, Ranchman," by John H. Whitson, (Toronto: the Musson Book Co.), is a strong and vigorous work. Its title indicates the personages around whom the story is drawn. There is no great depth in the plot, which, to speak truly, is somewhat ordinary, but the characters stand out distinct against a well-defined background, and there is action all thru. Paradise Valley, which was anything but paradise, until the blessings of irrigation came along, supplies both the locale and the principal figures. Justin Wingate at the opening of the book is a waif, the ward of an agent, who is the relic of a bursted boom. Peter Wingate, the said agent, dies, and Justin falls under the influence and care of a Dr. Clayton, who has settled in the place because a beautiful but designing woman has played him false. Justin grows up to manhood under Dr. Clayton's attention and instruction. He early falls in love with Lucy Davison, the ward of her uncle by marriage, Philip Davison, who subsequently turns out to be Justin's father, wife with babe at her breast having flown from his neglect and cruelty. Justin enters Davison's employ and finally thru many well-told episodes becomes recognized as his heir, and, of course, marries Lucy. Many stirring and exciting scenes are depicted, and altho several of the leading characters are removed by quick despatch towards the ending of the story, the incidents are sufficiently artistically interwoven to come upon the reader naturally and without any undue straining. People sound in mind and body will enjoy "Justin Wingate, Ranchman."

THE HAT HER FATHER WORE.

It would perhaps be ungenerous and ungracious to describe "On the Firing Line," by Anna Chapin Ray, as commonplace, seeing that the hero is a Canadian, the book a tale of the South African War and the authoress' sympathies very pronouncedly pro-British; but for all that the novel is sadly lacking in vim and strength. Miss Ray had the assistance of Hamilton Brock Fuller, and where there is any virility one is disposed to think it comes from the man. The lady makes practically every male a hero, even down to the Kaffir servant, and every female a heroine. They are all good and brave, and on that account the book in places is just a wee bid tedious. There is too much of the blue-eye business about it, and too much tea-taking and spooning. And the title, "Cooee," given to the real heroine is a decided plagiarism from the Australians, altho the girl herself says it was given her by her Kaffir nurse a dozen or more years before the war broke out. She even seeks to throw a halo around the somewhat ordinary name of Ethel, saying there has been an Ethel Dent in her family for four hundred years, thus exhibiting the commonness of a commoner in alleging length of known descent. If Hamilton Brock Fuller, who at least has a knowledge of the campaign, had applied the blue pencil a little vigorously to the lady's platitudes, had cut out some of the vulgarized similes and suggested that a man having once been given blue eyes they remained with him to the end, he would have conferred a favor upon reader and authoress alike. There are bits of brightness in the book, and some of the incidents are interestingly depicted; but the dialogs are wearisome in detail, besides being shallow and generally lacking in originality. It would be pleasant to be able to say something nice of so evidently well-intended a book, but a military story to be well told must be forcefully told, and it is hardly possible to concede that quality to "On the Firing Line," despite the ring in the title.

Michelet's brilliant and remarkable study of witchcraft in the Middle Ages—"La Sorciere"—has recently been published in English, the translation being admirably done by A. R. Allison, who has splendidly succeeded in preserving the melody of the author's style. A writer in one of the English magazines not long ago affirmed the superiority of the psychological to the armchair historian, and declared anew the futility of the German notion that history may be represented in an interminable series of petty facts. He pleaded for large views, philosophical syntheses, illuminating ideas. These are in Michelet's domain. He could not anticipate psychology, but his poet's imagination sometimes foresaw its conclusions. He wrote history with passion, interpreted archives emotionally, and by endorsing them with his own life he makes dry bones live. He does not always bring conviction of the justice of his views, but there is no doubt of his individual sincerity. "The Sorceress" is a fantasia upon history, histrionically founded and often literally adapted, yet as a whole history played upon by Michelet's vehement mind. A history of witchcraft, was, he says, his object; he wished to portray the essential Witch, to show how she arose and why, to explain her as woman and to account for her formula of Satanic possession. The astonishing vogue of witchcraft in the middle ages is scarcely comprehended by many modern readers. The witches' Sabbaths were often vast assemblies, sometimes connived at by the church and the law. Michelet cites a gathering of 12,000 persons in one small Basque canton, another of 6000 in one petty hamlet. While woman doctors are generally objected to in hospitals, it is curious to read Michelet's declaration that for a thousand years the people had one healer, and one only—the Witch. Paracelsus, to whom we owe the introduction of laudanum into medicine, declared that he had learned from the witches all he knew. They roamed the woods and gathered herbs and plants, distilling their medicinal liquors and learning all their lore. And for reward they were outcast and banned, and burned by tens of thousands at the stake. From the year 500 to 1500—or a little earlier or a little later—Europe was lost in the quagmire of superstition, with its mud of physical dirt and mental darkness. The mass of the people lived in misery, under tyranny scarcely conceivable nowadays. Morality, as we understand it, hardly existed. Adultery, says Michelet, was a recognized institution of Christian society—normal, established, esteemed, sung and celebrated; incest was the ordinary condition of serfs. "There was never a bath known for a thousand years! We may be quite certain, not one of those knights, those fair and ethereal ladies, the Percivals, Tristrams, Iseults, ever washed." This statement, says H. Ellis, requires some qualification; tho doubtless it is generally true. Ellis adds: "The church killed the bath. St. Jerome tells us with approval that when the holy Paula noted that any of her nuns were too careful in this matter she would gravely reprove them, saying that 'the purity of the body and its garments means the impurity of the soul.' Or, as the modern monk of Mount Athos still declares: 'A man should live in dirt as in a coat of mail, so that his soul may sojourn more securely within.'" The fundamental idea of the opposition was this: that bathing is a physical stimulant. It is not possible to suggest the wealth of learning with which Michelet invests his subject—one of the most curious in the whole realm of history. For nearly fifty years "La Sorciere" has been held valuable and profoundly interesting, and in excellent English dress it is equally acceptable.

Altho Erin is symbolical of minstrelsy, there has never yet appeared anything like a trustworthy History of Music in Ireland—that is to say, of genuine Celtic-Irish and Anglo-Irish Music. We have absolutely no compact record of the "divine art," wherein the Celts of Ireland pre-eminently excelled, or of its professors and exponents during sixteen hundred years of authentic history." This quotation from William H. Grattan Flood's "A History of Irish Music" gives the raison d'etre of the work. E. A. Banghan in reviewing the book admits that he had not realized how advanced the ancient Irish were in musical knowledge and in the practice of the art. Many other people were and are equally as ignorant. Mr. Grattan Flood shows that the ancient Irish were acquainted with the Ogham music tablature in Pre-Christian ages; that they had their battle marches, dance tunes, folk songs, chants and hymns in the fifth century; that they were the earliest to adopt the "neums," or neumatic notation, for the plain chant of the Western Church; that they modified and introduced Irish melodies into the Gregorian Chant, that they had an intimate acquaintance with the diatonic scale long before it was perfected by Guido of Arezzo; that they were the first to employ harmony and counterpoint, and, among other things, that they invented the musical arrangement which developed into the sonata form; that they had a world-famous school of harpists; and, finally, that they generously diffused musical knowledge all over Europe. The foregoing is a list of their achievements at the close of the ninth century. The chapter on ancient Irish scales will be of particular interest to musicians. Mr. Grattan has his own ideas on this vexed question. After a long and careful study of some thousands of ancient melodies he has arrived at the conclusion that the old Irish scale was pentatonic. That in itself is not a new discovery, of course. But he limits the modes to five, whereas some writers have placed the number at 15, and the most recent authority on the subject only admits four. Mr. Grattan gives the following scale: C D EG AC. By making each note in this first mode a tonic, or key-note, four other modes are naturally formed. The notes F and B are studiously omitted, and the arrangement is made thruout these modes so as not to include the fourth and seventh. Between the eighth and twelfth centuries the missing notes were gradually supplied, and thus the ancient "gapped" scale became almost the same as one of the so-called Gregorian modes. The author is sarcastic over the delusion that the plaintiveness of the minor key is particularly characteristic of Irish melancholy. He points out that some of the liveliest and most inspiriting dance tunes are in the minor, and many dirges are in the major. "Strange as it may seem there is a vein of melancholy or tenderness thruout all our old tunes, which character is derivable from the peculiarity of scale construction." It would be impossible to give an idea of the interest of this volume, which is by no means only for the skilled musician. It will give quite a new idea to the majority of readers of Irish music, and will probably be the text book on the subject. Its compilation has evidently been a labor of love stretching over many years.

There still remain a few litterateurs who have got into the habit of speaking of Robert Louis Stevenson as if he were a fashion which would pass. But the vogue of Stevenson during his life and immediately after his death was as nothing to the recognition which he has now almost universally received. The appreciative articles of critics are not so sure a testimony as the repeated editions which, year after year, are issued by the publishers and accepted by readers who certainly cannot find in him the approved qualities of the modern popular novelist. A further sign of the fact that, tho many years have elapsed since his death, the popularity of Stevenson is not waning, may be seen in the number of books of memoirs, recollections and appreciations which have recently been issued. The least of the writings from his pen have been unearthed and successfully issued. To these, however, do not belong the three works which Messrs. Chatto and Windus are publishing. The "Essays of Travel," "Tales and Fantasies," and "Essays in the Art of Writing," appeared in the Edinburgh edition, of which only 1000 copies were printed, but otherwise none of the contents of these three volumes have been printed in book form. The first, "Essays of Travel," was issued on May 2. It contains fourteen essays and sketches.

Edwyn Sandys, whose new book, "Sporting Sketches," is in press with the Macmillan Company, has enjoyed the cream of American sport, north, south, east and west. He is himself a combination of author, artist, naturalist and sportsman; and his new book is said to present fascinating pen pictures of red letter days afield. He is a sportsman rather than a killer, his motto being "in reason and in season." These sketches incidentally describe the best of our game, great and small.

A pathetic letter, addressed by Countess Sophie Tolstoi, wife of Count Leo Tolstoi, to a friend on the subject of the Russo-Japanese war, was published in The London Times recently. The countess says:

"I am persuaded that the continuation of the war is not only useless, but will lead to increasingly greater losses and disorders by those disaffected masses in whom the war has awakened contempt for human life and an aimless, brutal thirst for blood. I simply cannot understand those who dare to continue to advocate war."

The countess then goes on to remark: "Peace cannot be a disgrace, as so many wrongly imagine. A lost war is not a disgrace, but a misfortune. What disgrace can be greater than that of torturing men and compelling them to commit the greatest crime imaginable—that of depriving others of their lives by cruel complicated improved methods, invented by a shameful, wrongly-directed civilization? What cruelty can be greater than that of leaving hundreds of thousands of children and aged people without fathers and sons, foodless, unclothed, dying from want?"

As an illustration she adds:

Yesterday, on returning home, the first thing I saw at the entrance of my house was a pale woman, thin as a skeleton, who was leaning in exhaustion against a post. I asked her what she wanted:

We are dying from hunger! Help us! Five children; I am the sixth.

And where is your husband?

In the hospital. Maimed at the war, unable to work.

After a short silence the woman sighed and asked me: And what is the news? Will they soon stop the war?

Nothing is heard about that.

Then what is he doing? she said in a tone of unspeakable suffering.

Whom do you mean?

Why, the czar! How many people are dying of hunger, how many orphans he has sent begging! Good God!

In conclusion the countess says:

"This is what the people say, this is what a common mother feels, but a mother with the same feelings towards her hungry, suffering child, emaciated from its extreme privations—a mother in this respect similar to us, ladies, empresses, in this feeling common to all mortals. But if czars and generals are afraid of the disgrace of peace, then let us mothers of all masses revolt against those slaughters which have so rent our hearts."

"The Russian Navy in the Japanese War," by Captain N. Klado, translated by L. J. H. Dickinson, is a book that will command attention alike on account of its subject and its author. The notable points in the author's straightforward criticism of Russian men and methods, criticism for which, being in Russia, he was naturally sent to prison, have long since been the round of the European press—outside Russia. It is well that we should be able to digest these solid criticisms at leisure and to ponder on the strong remarks on England and her policy uttered by a Russian who had no inducement to soften his words for her benefit. The chapter that is not yet out of date, and that touches, indeed, a vital matter of current politics, is that wherein Captain Klado urges that the Black Sea squadron must sail for the far east "in spite of all treaties." In considering what England would do if the squadron passed thru the Dardanelles he asks: "Is it supposed that this would mean a declaration of war by the English?" and he answers: "This is hard to believe when we consider the various incidents which they have let pass, for neither the Malacca affair nor the celebrated 'North Sea incident' has provided them with a sufficient pretext for war." He urges that, England willing or unwilling, the fleet must leave the Black Sea, but believes that "since the English are an eminently practical race, they will readily understand our way of reasoning, and they will be ready to come to terms with us, unless they really wish to enter upon a war with Russia." Here we leave Captain Klado, as he reiterates that it would be "madness," "impossible," to leave a powerful squadron "lying paralyzed in the Black Sea." We merely add that the French translator supplies a eulogistic account of the author, and that the English translator expresses his opinion that if Russia had listened to Captain Klado earlier she might have been spared "many humiliating defeats."

Religious Relic

Letter Written by the Saviour.

THE following letter is believed by persons who have seen it to have been written by the Saviour. A Brooklyn correspondent writes: It has been cherished by my family for many years as an heirloom. A copy was given my mother by the wife of an English officer stationed at Bermuda. She was a missionary. I ask you to print this letter that it may do some good. I do not pretend to be the only person who has owned a copy. I know of three people who have lived in the south and have seen it. One was the pastor of a Methodist Church, who said he had owned one while living there and had lost it.

The letter was found under a great stone, large and round, at the foot of the cross, eighteen miles from Iconium, near a village called Mesopotamia. Upon the stone was written or engraved, "Blessed is he that turneth me over." People that saw prayed to God earnestly and desired that He would make known to them the meaning that they might not attempt in vain to turn it over. In the meantime, a little child turned it over without any help, to the joy of all that stood by. The letter was found sixty-five years after our blessed Saviour's crucifixion, transmitted from the Holy City by a converted Jew and faithfully translated from the original Hebrew copy now in possession of Lady Cuba's family in Mesopotamia.

"Whosoever worketh on the Sabbath day shall be cursed. I command you to go to church to keep the Lord's day holy without doing any manner of work. You shall not idly spend your time in bedecking yourselves with any superfluities and costly apparel and vain dresses, for that I have ordained a day of rest. I will have that day kept holy, that your sins may be forgiven you. You shall not break my commandments, but observe them and keep them written with my own hand and spoken with my own mouth. You shall not only go to church yourselves, but your men servants and your maid servants, and observe my words and learn my commandments. You shall finish your labor every Saturday in the afternoon by 6 o'clock, at which hour the preparation of the Sabbath begins. Fast five Fridays in the year, beginning on Good Friday and four Fridays following in remembrance of the five bloody wounds which I received for mankind. You shall diligently labor in your respective callings, wherever it has pleased God to call you. You shall love one another with a brotherly love, and cause them that are baptized to come to church and receive the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper, and be made member of the church. In so doing will give you long life and many blessings; your land shall flourish and your cattle shall bring forth abundance, and I will give you many blessings and comforts, the greatest temptations, and he that doeth to the contrary shall be unpromeable. I will send a hardness of heart on them until I see them, but especially upon impenitent unbelievers. He that hath given to the poor shall not be unprofitable.

"Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day, for the same I have taken to myself and he that hath a copy of this, my letter, written with my own hand and spoken with my own mouth, and keepeth it without publishing it to others, shall not prosper, but he that publisheth it, shall be blessed of me and tho his sins are in number as the stars up in the sky, he that believeth in this shall be pardoned, and if he believes not this and the commandments, I will send many plagues upon him and consume both him and his children and his cattle. And whosoever shall have a copy of this my letter written with my own hand and keepeth it in their house, nothing shall hurt them, neither pestilence, nor lightning, nor shall thunder do them any hurt. You shall have no other news of me but the Holy Scriptures until the Day of Judgment. All goodness and prosperity shall be in the house where a copy of this my letter shall be found. Finis."

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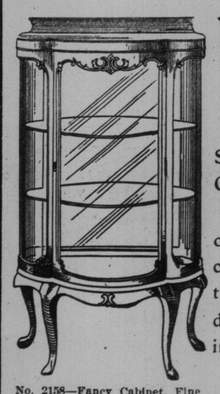

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