

THE HYDROCASE.

FROM THE FRENCH AND VERY FRENCH.

I.

In 1857, a terrible crime was perpetrated in the neighbourhood of Versailles. Robbers broke into the Chateau L.—, during the night, and assassinated the Dowager Countess de R— in her bed. She was alone in the building with two of her grandchildren and a youth, sixteen years of age, who, hearing the voice of the old lady, flew to her room and was also murdered. A little girl, eight years of age, owed her safety only to a profound slumber. An ancient servant had been the first victim. The others had heard nothing. The Countess wore a magnificent ring which had long been unique in France. It was an hydrocase. The hydrocase is a diamond containing a single drop of water. To render this drop of water more visible, the jeweller had surrounded the diamond with square sapphires of the deepest blue. The ring had been brought from Russia by a certain Prince Gagarine, who had given or sold it to a noble lady of the Court of Louis XVI., and it became soon after the property of the mother of the unfortunate Countess de R—.

The assassins who had cut off the finger of their victim to get the ring, were never captured, and all hopes of recovering the legendary gem were abandoned by the family.

The little sleeping girl, who had so miraculously escaped assassination, lost her father and mother and remained alone in the world, the heir of a great name and a large fortune. She was sent early to a convent, and married as soon as she became of age. The marriage had not been a difficult thing to settle, as the brother of one of her convent friends was all ready to her hand.

Never was there a happier union. The young man was an only son, rich, a Marquis, in fine everything that the beautiful orphan could desire.

What had most delighted the poor child was to find a family. Her mother-in-law appeared to her an angel come down from Heaven to protect her. It is very rare that mothers-in-law so appear.

The young couple advanced from one stage of bliss to another, and in the midsummer following the marriage, the youthful Marquis gave birth to a splendid heir, "who weighed as much as an old hare," said the delighted grandfather.

To crown all, Monseigneur the Bishop, without being asked, deigned to announce that he would himself christen the baby in the chapel of the Chateau.

II.

It is no small matter to receive a Monseigneur. Preparations went on for a fortnight, and then it turned out that Monseigneur could not come at the appointed time. There was only one comfort. The young mother would herself be able to assist at the baptism, and the preparations were continued.

Finally the happy day arrived; all the surrounding Chateaux were invited. The ceremony was magnificent, but the breakfast was clouded by a painful incident. On rising from the table to caress her babe, the young mother suddenly turned pale, tottered and fell into a swoon. She had just perceived on her mother-in-law's finger the ring of her grandmother.

She was carried to bed, where, during three weeks, she lingered between life and death. At length, one day, she summoned sufficient courage to call for her mother-in-law.

"Mother, why do you not wear your beautiful ring?"

"What ring, my child?"

"Your hydrocase."

"Hydrocase! What is that?"

"A diamond with a single drop of water in it."

"My dear, I declare to you that I do not know what you mean."

And the good lady was pained at the belief that her daughter-in-law had lost her mind, because never, never had she heard of diamonds containing water. She knew that diamonds were said to be of fine water, as there were pearls of fine orient, but that was all. The young woman did not dare to inquire further, and became more and more distressed.

One day, at a reception, when the guests had departed, she took courage again and said to her mother-in-law:

"This is the ring of which I spoke to you. Look at in this way, and you will see the drop."

"I declare it is so. Do you know this jewel?"

"I have seen one like it. Might I ask how you got this?"

"My husband gave it to me, and I never could discover why he would not tell me how much he paid for it, nor where he bought it."

The young woman grew so terribly pale that her mother-in-law perceived it.

"You know this ring," she exclaimed. "I remember that once before it produced a painful impression upon you. Speak, my dear child. Am I not twice your mother?"

"Madame, excuse me, but you remember the tragedy of the Chateau L.—?"

"Certainly."

"You remember that my grandmother, the Countess de R—, was assassinated?"

"While you were asleep, my dear."

"The assassins not only took her life, but cut off her finger."

"Heavens! The wretches! But why?"

"To get her ring...."

"Horrible!"  
"And the ring...."  
"Go on."

"Is the one which you wear. I would know in a thousand."

The Marquis, astounded, rang the bell, and ordered that her husband should be sent for.

Five minutes after, the Marquis entered, smiling.

"Sir, one question, I pray you. Where did you buy this?"

"But," replied the Marquis, still smiling, "I told you I had reasons for not letting you know."

"Mon ami, we must be serious. I entreat you on my knees to answer my question."

The Marquis hesitated and appeared embarrassed. The two women trembled, and in spite of themselves, a thousand wild fancies crossed their minds.

Finally the Marquis said:

"I bought this ring at the *greffe* of the Imperial Court. I wished to hide this detail from you lest you should refuse to wear a ring which is without an equal. It is an admirable hydrocase. There are only three in Europe, that of the Emperor of Russia, that of the Princess of MouraviEFF, and a third which has disappeared."

"It is this one!" exclaimed the Marquis, slipping it on the finger of her daughter-in-law. "Take it, my child. It is God who restores it to you."

JOHN LESFERANCE.

THE NEW POST OFFICE, MONTREAL

We produce some further sketches of leading rooms in the new Post Office in our city. That designated "Accountant and Secretary," on the second story of the building, is occupied by Messrs. Laroche and Derostang, who discharge respectively the functions indicated. In this room are conducted the sales of Postage Stamps to stamp vendors and are kept the accounts appertaining to the various sources of revenue and expenditure of the office. Certain branches, too, of the Postmaster's official correspondence are here attended to. Adjoining is the office of the Postmaster himself, Mr. G. Lamothe, who here receives the many callers on official business having occasion to see him during the day. It is a pleasant-looking room and furnished in good taste, although not extravagantly. Next to it, we see the office of Mr. Emery, the Assistant Postmaster, who so ably aids the Postmaster in the general management of the office. It is only within the last few days that, much to the satisfaction of all who know him, he has resumed his duties after a long and serious illness. Then, from a skylight in the second story, we look down into the main office, in which is placed the long range of locked letter boxes and drawers as well as the "General Delivery." Here, too, all outgoing letters are stamped, assorted into pigeon-holes and made up into packages. In this same room also, the operations of the Letter Carriers' branch are conducted. It is the largest and most important room in the Montreal Post Office. It is exclusively used for the despatch of the letter portion of the mail, newspapers being dealt with in the basement beneath. And of this basement we also get a glimpse, seeing the exterior of the newspaper frame or "bank" as it is sometimes termed. This bank contains large pigeon holes or receptacles for bags for all the many offices with which Montreal exchanges mail. It is into this room that the publishers send their papers for despatch, and many are the bagsful of the "CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS" forwarded from it to all quarters of the Dominion. It is the field of a large amount of work. We see, too, in this basement, the large furnace for the warming of this large building, which is effected by warm water circulating in coils through it. An engineer and assistant are in charge day and night. The mails are received and despatched through doors leading on to Fortification Lane, as also shewn in our sketches, not a very convenient arrangement, for the Lane is narrow, but there is no alternative.

Finally, we show the room of Mr. E. F. King, the very popular and efficient P. O. Inspector, and a couple of the adjoining rooms connected with the Inspection branch. The Inspector's room is on the second story, in the East end of the building, and has a pleasant look on the Place d'Armes. The Inspection branch is that charged with the general management, under the department at Ottawa, of what is termed the "Montreal Postal Division," comprising some thirty-six counties and upwards of five hundred Post Offices, including also the Railway mail service through the Division, a system involving the employment of about thirty railway mail clerks.

THE BAKE APPLE.

The Bake Apple or Cloud Berry (*Rubus Chamaemorus*) abounds on the desolate shores of Labrador and furnishes the inhabitants with fruit which is not only agreeable, but capable of keeping during the long winter when supplies of other fruit are inaccessible. The plant has two or three imbricating leaves of a bright green color and a stem of six inches terminating in a pretty cup-shaped flower of white color. The flower is succeeded by the fruit which in form resembles the strawberry, or white raspberry. When unripe it is red. In this condition it gives a distinct tinge of red to the fields; when ripe it is yellow with a flavor between a mulberry

and strawberry. It is preserved as jam and jelly, and is frozen and packed away for winter. There are several other fruits on the coast, such as blueberries, dewberries, low cranberries. Without these few fruits the people who are shut out from the outer world for six months would suffer from scurvy. These plants were gathered at Bonne Esperance at the mouth of the Cariboo river, a small settlement consisting of a few families where, however, a Mission has been maintained for over 20 years by friends in Montreal. The staff consists of a minister and teacher; a small church and school-house have been built. The mercury often reaches over 40° below zero. The only vegetables that can be raised are turnips and potatoes in favorable seasons. The sea is the only certain harvest field. Notwithstanding all the vicissitudes to which they are exposed, the people are strong and healthy, and when circumstances compel them to leave for Canada or the States, they invariably return to their native shores as soon as chance permits.

HEARTH AND HOME.

MARRIED LIFE.—There is a blissful reliance on the devotion with which a man may inspire his wife, by proper regard to her disposition, and that gives to what may be called the fifth act of the drama of wedded life a holier and happier interest than memory, disposed as she is to gild the past, can find to embellish the scenes in which it is believed by many the torch of Hymen burns brightest.

EFFECTS OF SOLITUDE.—Unsocial humours are contracted in solitude, which will, in the end, not fail of corrupting the understanding, as well as the manners, and of utterly disqualifying a man for the satisfactions and duties of life. Men must be taken as they are, and we neither make them or ourselves better, either by flying from or quarrelling with them. Of all excellences that make conversation, good sense and good nature are the most necessary, humour the pleasantest.

HAPPINESS.—No man can judge of the happiness of another. As the moon plays upon the waves, and seems to our eyes to favour with a peculiar beam one long track amidst the waters, leaving the rest in comparative obscurity; yet all the while she is no niggard in her lustre—even so, perhaps, Happiness falls with the same brightness and power over the whole expanse of life, though to our limited eyes she seems only to rest on these billows from which the ray is reflected back upon our sight.

HOME.—Home is the place of the highest joys; religion should sanctify it. Home is the sphere of the deepest sorrows; the highest consolation of religion should assuage its griefs. Home is the place of the greatest intimacy of heart with heart; religion should sweeten it with the joy of confidence. Home discovers all faults; religion should bless it with abundance of charity. Home is the place for impressions, for instruction and culture; there should religion open her treasures of wisdom and pronounce her heavenly benediction.

WORK.—The man or woman who engages in some congenial, regular work will never be on the brink of despair; their names will never be chronicled in the list of self-destroyers, for in idleness alone is despair. Work chases it away, no matter how thickly the clouds may have gathered. Nature is one vast workshop, teeming with millions of busy workmen. If we follow in their footsteps, all will be well. The beauties, gifts, and glories of nature may be scattered around us in great profusion, yet she demands toil to reach out and grasp them, and utilise them to our fancies and wants.

AFTER MARRIAGE.—If you would not marry a young woman, provided you believed she would continue to be as she is now, without any very marked change in her disposition, then you do a very perilous thing to marry her at all. The same rule applies to the young men. Many and many a girl has made shipwreck of her happiness for life by marrying a young man in the confidence that after marriage she would wield such an influence over him as to reform his wild habits. She finds her influence diminished rather than increased, after they are married, and disappointment, disagreements, and misery necessarily follow.

CIVILITY AND CEREMONY.—Nothing is more honourable and pleasant than civility, and nothing more ridiculous and burthenous than ceremony. Civility teaches us to behave with proportionate respect to everyone, according as their rank requires and their merit demands. In other words, civility is the science of men of the world. A person of good address, who conducts herself with due circumspection, conciliates the love and esteem of society, because every one is at ease in her company; but a ceremonious woman is the plague of all her acquaintance. Such a one requires too much attention to be a pleasant associate; is too seldom satisfied with what is paid her, and every moment feels her pride hurt, by want of some frivolous etiquette. You cannot be too formal to her, nor can she dispense with her formalities to others.

DULL BOYS.—Don't be discouraged. Slow growth is often sure growth. Some minds are like Norwegian pines. They are slow in growth, but they are striking their roots deep. Some of the greatest men have been dull boys. Dryden and Swift were dull as boys. So was Goldsmith. So was Gibbon. So was Sir Walter Scott. Napoleon at school had so much difficulty in learning

his Latin, that the master said it would need a gimlet to get a word into his head. Douglas Jerrold was so backward in his boyhood that at nine he was scarcely able to read. Isaac Barrow, one of the greatest divines the Church of England has ever produced, was so impenetrably stupid, in his early years, that his father more than once said that, if God took away any of his children, he hoped it would be Isaac, as he feared he would never be fit for anything in this world. Yet that boy was the genius of the family.

KEEP STRAIGHT AHEAD.—Pay no attention to slanderers or gossip-mongers. Keep straight on in your course, and let their back-bitings do the death of neglect. What is the use of getting into a worry and fret over gossip that has been set afloat to our disadvantage, by some meddling busybody, who has more time than character? These things can't possibly injure you, unless, indeed, you take notice of them, and in combating them give them character and standing. If what is said about you is true, set yourself right at once; if it is false, let it go for what it will fetch. If a bee stings you, would you go into a hive and destroy it? Would not a thousand come upon you? It is wisdom to say little respecting the injuries you have received. We are generally losers, in the end, if we stop to refute all the backbitings and gossippings we may hear by the way. They are annoying, it is true, but not dangerous, so long as we do not stop to expostulate and scold. Our characters are formed and sustained by ourselves, and by our own actions and purposes, and not by others. Let us bear in mind the "edumaciators" may usually be trusted to time and the slow but steady justice of public opinion.

LITERARY.

LOWELL is fifty-seven, and has the look of the critic rather than of the poet.

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW is sixty-nine, and wears well the dignity of the gentleman and the poet.

WHITTIER is sixty-eight years old and a most quiet, kindly, and refined person, using habitually the Quaker "these" and "those."

A lyric poem by Milton which was given in manuscript to a friend, but not printed, will be published on the 27th of Dec., 1876, in commemoration of the poet's birth.

ACCORDING to the German philosopher, Aelhay, the number of languages spoken in Europe is 567, in Asia 237, in Africa 276, and in America 1,254 making a total of 3,044.

THOMAS BAYLY ALGER, just forty years of age, was born in New Hampshire, but the foundation for his reputation in New York, wrote "Walter Beane" while he was in business, and now resides in Boston.

THE Crown Prince of Germany has made his debut as an author. Under the title *Myne Reise nach dem Vorpommern im Jahre 1874*, the Prince has described the incidents of his visit to the East. The present edition is limited to forty copies.

STODDARD is fifty-five years old, about five feet one inch high, and wears a full iron-gray beard. This author looks every inch a poet, and in conversation is bright and witty. The right hand being paralysed, Mr. Stoddard has learned to write with his left.

THE Rev. D. H. Lowder declared, at a recent conference, that "the 'Arabian Nights' Entertainments are a useful companion to Scripture, because the descriptions therein of people and scenery are descriptions which they read in the Bible, and because the morals attached to the stories are good."

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT recently celebrated his eighty-second birthday. He looks little over three score and ten, having still an erect figure and elastic step. He shows his vigor and fondness for exercise in walking, as he frequently puts it, "every morning down to his Evening Post."

MISS BRADDOCK had a narrow escape, lately, when the horses in her carriage took flight at Prince's gate and ran away. They proceeded for about 400 yards, when the carriage came in contact with a lamp post, and was overturned. Fortunately Miss Braddon and her children were helped out unhurt.

WM. BLACK, the novelist, hopes to turn his American tour to good account. He not only did the Centennial and the regular American rights, but went on an excursion into the wild Indian country. He is going to lay the scene of his next tale in the United States, and it is to be published there, simultaneously with its appearance on the other side of the Atlantic.

MR. TENNYSON, now sixty-six years old, is still in his prime of thought and capacity for work. The only of his hair is an annual pay lover. He is six feet high, broad shouldered and large-boned, but not stout. His hands and feet are large. His face is long, and somewhat resembles that of Dante, save that it has not the right mould and expression of the great Florentine, and the nose is not so aquiline. His hair is long and black, his complexion olive.

WILLIAM MORRIS, the poet, lives in a charming house in London, brightened by the presence of a beautiful wife and three pretty children. His study is reached by three flights of stairs, and is a bare room, hung with lumps of tobacco, and having for writing purposes a wretched humped table and an ancient inkhorn. Herein the "Earthly Paradise" was written. The shaggy-haired, kind-faced poet never looks his handsome than when his little ones are dancing about him and climbing over him.

SCIENTIFIC.

Few people can form a definite idea of what is involved in the expression—an inch of rain. It may add such to follow this calculation: An acre is equal to 6,272,640 square inches; an inch deep of water on this area will be as many cubic inches of water, which at 277.274 to the gallon is 22,632.5 gallons. This quantity weighs 226,225 pounds, or 103,533 tons. One one-hundredth of an inch of rain is equal to one ton per acre.

OUT in Nevada, in a region where there are now no trees, and only a stunted sage-bush grows, there is a petrified forest. Some of the trees in size the "big trees" of California. Many stumps are still standing, and trunks and limbs strew the ground about them. A section three feet high, eighteen feet in circumference, and weighing, it is thought, three tons, was cut from one of these trees for the Centennial Exhibition. It took three men ten days to do it. These trees must have grown hundreds of years ago, when the climate of Nevada was more favourable to vegetation than it is now.