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The Saturday Reader.

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4D OR SEVEN CENTS.

MABEL'S PROGRESS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE."

From "All the Year Round,"

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

Continued from page 383.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER IX.

Soft you now;

The fair Ophelia.

Amongst the notabilities of the gentry in the neighbourhood of Kilkclare was a certain Lady Popham, a wealthy and eccentric widow, who owned a fine estate, one of the park gates of which opened into the high road that led from Ballyhack to Kilkclare. Lady Popham had resided many years abroad, chiefly in Italy, with her husband, a languid, invalid, fine gentleman, who found, or fancied, that a southern climate was necessary to his existence. Her ladyship had consequently been an absentee for a very long period. On Sir Bernard Popham's death, however, his widow returned rich and childless to Ireland, and announced her intention of residing permanently on her Kilkclare estate. At first her advent occasioned a great deal of talk and excitement amongst her country neighbours. Lady Popham's peculiarities were the theme of conversation at most dinner-tables around Kilkclare for some weeks. Some were shocked, some angry, some amused by her oddities; but, by degrees, as the genuine goodness and warm-heartedness of her character became known, and as people became accustomed to her eccentricities, all that was odd, outré, or unusual, was set down simply to "foreign manners," and excused accordingly. And at the date of my story there was no more popular or respected individual in the county than old Lady Popham of Cloncoolin.

Lady Popham was known far and wide as a liberal, if not very intelligent encourager of art and artists, and was a staunch patroness of the drama. She had already been twice to the theatre in Kilkclare during the present season, and had on each occasion graciously signified to Mr. Moffatt her high satisfaction with the performances, all which was profitable and pleasant to the manager, and would have been quite perfect but for one unfortunate circumstance, which dashed his cup of content with bitterness. It had been observed that when Miss Moffatt was singing that popular and touching ballad of the modern domestic school, entitled, "Johnny left me in the lane," Lady Popham, after listening for a second or so, unfurled a very large green fan, behind whose ample shade she retired completely during the song, nor issued forth into the gaslight again until "Johnny" had finally left off leaving Miss Moffatt in the lane, when her ladyship emerged from obscurity with a cheerful countenance. This was certainly not pleasant; and poor Mr. Moffatt had to bear the brunt of his daughter's ill humour and mortification. However, Lady Popham was too valuable a friend and supporter of the theatre for the manager to be able to afford to show any resentment of this slight to Miss Annette's vocal abilities; and he consoled the latter by saying that "nobody minded what old Lady Popham said or did," and that she was generally supposed to be "a little touched in the upper story."

Touched or not, however, it was very well known that the sight of the Cloncoolin liveries at the box-office in the morning was sufficient to fill the house at night; and Mr. Wilfred J. Percival had sent a sort of circular to her lady-

ship setting forth that his benefit was fixed to take place on the following Friday evening, and begging Lady Popham to honour him by her presence and support on the occasion. This she had promised to do, and moreover to bring with her a party of friends that were staying at Cloncoolin, and great was the excitement amongst the company as the evening approached, and rose-coloured were the visions of cash and credit to be won, in the minds of manager Moffatt and the *bénéficiaire*.

At Biddy Bonny's too, the whole household was much interested in the forthcoming performance of Hamlet, and especially in the new Ophelia. Teddy Molloy, as he sat in the workshop tapping away at the sole of a "brogue," held forth to his apprentice on the merits of the various Hamlets he had seen when he himself was a pretence in Dublin, and expressed his opinion that Miss Bell would be "the purtiest and ilhgautest Ophaylia" that had ever appeared on the boards of the Kilkclare theatre. And the two apprentices related how they'd heard that Lady Popham and "heaps of the quality" were to grace the boxes with their presence. Even old Joe Bonny seemed to catch a faint reflex of the prevailing glow of excitement, and growled out sundry reminiscences of how he had "seed'd amlet acted nigh upon a matter of fifty year ago in England." He was sure it must have been Hamlet, because he remembered there "were a ghost in it, with a kind of a tin-pot on his head." But, on being pressed with interrogations by Biddy, it turned out that this striking evidence of the play having been Hamlet was not so conclusive as old Joe supposed, for the performance had taken place at Bartholomew fair, where ghosts—even ghosts with tin-pots on their heads—are known to have been numerous.

The rehearsals of the tragedy had gone off very satisfactorily. Mabel had indeed been a little surprised at the complicated and minute instructions given to her by Mr. Percival as to the exact spot on which she must stand during the scenes between Hamlet and Ophelia, when she must turn her head towards him, and when she must look away, how many steps she must take in this direction, and how many in the other; and so forth. But she endeavoured to remember and comply with his injunctions.

"Percival's business in Hamlet is capital," said Mr. Suell, the low comedian. "All his own too. I don't know another Hamlet on the stage with such business in the play scene."

"Sir," remarked Mrs. Darling, with much stateliness, "I do not admire it. I may be in error, but I deem that over-elaboration is a fault. I have seen John Kemble, in my youth, and Edmund Kean in his best days, and I do not think that they depended for their success on their business."

"Oh, hang it!" returned Mr. Suell (who was without any veneration for the traditions of the old school, and who professed his belief that half the famous actors of the past generation "would be jolly well hissed, if they came bow-wowing on to the boards of the London stage now-a-days"), "Oh, hang it, Mrs. Darling, one must have something new, you know. Can't keep on in the old grooves for ever."

"What do they mean by Mr. Percival's capital business in Hamlet, aunt?" asked Mabel that day, after rehearsal.

Before his mother could reply, Jack began:

"Why, they mean that kind of Scotch reel he dances with everybody, Mabel. In and out, backwards and forwards, up the middle and down again. He crosses the stage nineteen times in that scene with you. I counted them."

"The business of a poet, Mabel," said Aunt

Mary, "is, properly speaking, its dumb show, its pantomime. You know every one has his own ideas as to his movement and position with regard to the other characters."

"Pantomime with a vengeance!" exclaimed Jack, who was inveterate against the eminent tragedian "from the principal theatres, &c. &c." "He does everything but tumble head over heels; and I shouldn't be surprised to see him do that before the evening's over. A somersault over Ophelia's grave would be striking, and *new*. That's his great notion."

"Don't be severe, Jack; I don't like to hear it," said gentle, good-natured Aunt Mary.

But Mabel, in her heart, was inclined to agree with her cousin.

At length arrived the eventful Friday evening. The play was to begin at seven o'clock, and long before that hour the pit and gallery were filled with an expectant crowd. The boxes, too, began to show a sprinkling of visitors; and the gap of empty crimson benches in the centre of the semicircle attracted great attention; for it was known that those seats were reserved for Lady Popham and her party. About two minutes before seven the box doors were thrown open with a mighty clatter, and the plunging of hoofs and rolling of wheels was heard coming up from the outside of the theatres. A gay party of ladies and gentlemen entered and took their seats, and in the very centre—for Sir Bernard Popham's widow had no idea of hiding her light under a bushel—sat the lady of Cloncoolin, looking about the theatre with a heavy gold eye-glass, and uttering her remarks upon everything and everybody in a shrill, penetrating little voice. Lady Popham was a very small fragile old woman of nearly seventy years of age; upright as a dart, bright-eyed, nimble-tongued, active. She wore a double range of false teeth which seemed a little too large for her month, and made her lip in her speech, and a jet black wig with stiff curls that framed her small wizened face on each side. She had the tiniest hands and feet in the world, and was always dressed in the richest stuffs and brightest colours that she could find. On the present occasion she wore an amber brocaded silk gown and a white cashmere cloak on her shoulders; a wreath of artificial roses was perched on the top of her wig, and trembled at every movement of her restless little head. A grotesque figure enough, one would say; and yet it is a fact that Lady Popham, however ridiculous she might appear, possessed that indefinable air of good breeding which stamped her as a gentlewoman, and she could, moreover, assume when she chose a dignified, lofty bearing that was quite imposing.

On the evening of Mr. Percival's benefit, however, she was neither lofty nor dignified; but very good humored and talkative, turning her big eye-glass hither and thither, and nodding right and left to her friends and neighbours as they took their seats around her.

Punctually at seven o'clock the orchestra began the overture. It was, of course, a selection of Irish airs, but newly chosen, and arranged by Mr. Trescott, who possessed, from long practice and experience, some skill in such patchwork.

"Jerry the Buck" figured in it as a matter of course, and the stamping of feet keeping time to it in the gallery overhead, made the theatre quiver until it seemed quite within the bounds of possibility that the flooring would give way, and a pair of corduroy-clad legs be seen hovering over Lady Popham's floral headgear! However, no such disaster took place, and "Jerry the Buck" came to an end in due course, giving place to an old pathetic melody with a walling burden to it in a minor key. Scarcely had

the first few notes of it been played when the house was hushed into breathless silence. The air had been arranged as a violin solo, and the player was Alfred Trescott. Excited by the consciousness of performing to cultivated and attentive ears, the young man threw himself completely into the spirit of the music. Those exquisitely sympathetic tones, of which the violin alone, amongst instruments, has the secret, rose through the theatre with a sweet, sad yearning plaint that was inexpressibly pathetic. The tune was wild and irregular, like the sighing of the wind over some desolate place; and when, at its close, the last long-drawn note had died away, there was for a second profound and absolute silence throughout the house. Then burst forth a storm of applause, led by Lady Popham herself, who leant over the front of the box daintily wiping her moistened eyes with a laced handkerchief, and strenuously beating her fan on the box-ledge with her other hand. "Bis, bis, bis!" cried her ladyship's shrill voice. "Make him play it again, somebody. *Mais c'est charmant. Esquisito. I'm perfectly astonished. Why don't somebody make him play it again?*"

The whole audience having by this time joined in shouts of "Ankour! ankour!" accompanied by much clapping of hands and stamping of feet, and encouraging exclamations of "More power to ye! Give it us again, me boy! Sure it's yourself that can fiddle, any way, &c.," Alfred repeated the air, terminating this time by an improvise cadenza, with a long-drawn shake at the end of it, which raised even still greater enthusiasm.

The applause had scarcely yet subsided, when the curtain rose upon the platform of the castle at Elsinore, and the tragedy of Hamlet fairly commenced. The play progressed smoothly and successfully. The hero of the night, Mr. Wilfred J. Percival, was received with all due recognition of his position as *bénéficiaire*. The new Ophelia was greeted on her first entrance with such unexpected heartiness as to destroy her self-possession for a time, and the first few words she had to say were nearly inaudible. But she soon recovered, and performed the rest of the scene with grace and sweetness. There was a stir of expectation throughout the theatre when Mabel entered for the mad scene, decked with wild flowers and straw, and with her rich dark hair falling dishevelled about her shoulders. On coming to the theatre that evening, she had found in her dressing-room a large basketful of natural wild flowers, woven into fantastic garlands with ivy and creeping plants, and on the top was laid a scrap of paper, with these words written in Corda Trescott's round childish hand.

"Please, please to wear these to-night. Alfred gathered them this morning, and I have twisted them together all myself.

"Your affectionate little friend,
"CORDA"

"Very kind and thoughtful, indeed, of young Trescott," said Aunt Mary; "and how prettily they are arranged."

"I suppose I can't refuse to wear them," said Mabel, musingly.

"Goodness, Mabel! Refuse? Of course not. Why should you?"

To this question Mabel had made no reply, and accordingly, when the time came for attiring her for the mad scenes, Mrs. Walton twined the wreaths in Mabel's hair, and looped them on to her white dress, and pronounced the effect to be quite perfect.

And a very charming and poetical picture of the distraught Ophelia she presented, as she stood in the centre of the stage, pouring out the snatches of song in a voice to which nervousness lent a touching tremor. The girl's fresh youth and natural refinement, and the unalloyed simple earnestness with which she had thrown herself into the character she was representing, made her seem the very embodiment of the poet's graceful fancy; and when she finally left the stage, after the last pathetic scene with Laertes, there were few eyes in the house undimmed with tears. In brief, the performance was a complete and unmistakable success.

Lady Popham was in ecstasies. She sent for Mr. Moffatt to come and speak with her after the conclusion of the play, and desired he would convey her best congratulations and thanks to Miss M. A. Bell, for the delight she had afforded herself and her friends. "And that charming creature that played the fiddle!" exclaimed Lady Popham. "Where did you pick up these two young artists, Moffatt? I tell you that boy is a genius; and I know something about the matter. I must have him out at Cloncoolin. What's his name? Trescott? Ah, well, I never remember people's names. Write it down and send it to me, will you? I shall be obliged to you. And look here, Moffatt, make that pretty, sweet, poetical Ophelia of yours take a benefit, and I'll promise to come and bring half the county. She is really delicious. You won't be able to keep her here very long, of course. You're prepared for that, eh? Well, make the most of her now, and let me know in good time about her benefit."

All the party from Cloncoolin followed her ladyship's cue, and Mr. Moffatt retired amidst a chorus of "Really charming. Quite delighted. So pleased. Does you great credit, Moffatt," and so forth.

"Well, Mabel, my darling child," said Aunt Mary, giving her niece a hearty hug and a kiss when they were all at home once more in the little sitting room, "you've surpassed my expectations. It's all right now. Quite safe. You must get poor old aunty an engagement to play the Nurse to your Juliet, when you're a great actress in London, setting the town on fire."

"Oh, Aunt Mary!"

"Yes, to be sure you must. But in all seriousness, Mabel, I've no doubt in the world that Moffatt will gladly engage you for the next season; and I think you are pretty sure of getting to Dublin for the winter."

Mabel went to rest with a thankful heart, and her last thought was of her mother and Dooley. Her last thought, but not her sole thought. There ran through her mind a lurking wonder as to what Clement Charlewood would say and think if he could have seen her as Ophelia. Whether he would have been pleased, or shocked, or indifferent.

"I'm afraid he disapproves of the whole thing so much, that he would rather I was unsuccessful than the reverse," thought Mabel. "At least he would have felt in that way three months ago. Perhaps it might be different with him now—now that—other things are all different too!"

CHAPTER X. LADY POPHAM'S LETTER.

"Why, goodness me, Aunt Dawson, look at this, now! I declare here's a letter from my fairy godmother."

The words were uttered in a frank, ringing voice, and with the least touch of an Irish accent, and the speaker was Miss Geraldine O'Brien, first cousin to Augusta Charlewood's affianced husband. Miss O'Brien was a tall, elegant-looking young woman, whose finely-formed though somewhat massive figure was admirably set off by the closely-fitting riding habit which she wore. Her face was not strictly handsome, but beaming with health and good humour, and lighted by a pair of merry intelligent blue eyes, and she had a great abundance of glossy chestnut hair bound tightly round her well-shaped head.

The inmates of Bramley Manor were assembled at an early luncheon, and the party consisted of the Charlewood family—including Walter, who was at Hammerham on leave of absence—Mrs. Dawson, with her son and niece, and the Reverend Decimus Fluke, and his two elder daughters. Jane Fluke, indeed, was staying at Bramley Manor, for she was to have the distinguished honor of being one of Augusta's bridesmaids, and was to remain in the house until after the wedding. Miss Fluke and her father had been invited to luncheon on this day, for an excursion had been arranged to some famous ruins about ten miles from Hammerham, and they had been asked to be of the party. At first it had been proposed to take refreshments with them, and make a sort of pic-nic. But

Mrs. Charlewood had strongly objected to this plan, saying that she never could enjoy her food out in the open air, and especially on the grass, where the insects swarmed over the dishes, and one could never use one's knife and fork comfortably. And as Mrs. Dawson seemed inclined to agree with this view of the case—although she by no means stated her reasons with the same downright simplicity as her hostess—the idea of the pic-nic had been abandoned, and it had been arranged that they should start for the ruins immediately after luncheon, and after rambling about there, return comfortably in the evening to dinner. Miss O'Brien, Walter and Clement were to go on horseback, and therefore the former appeared at the table ready equipped in her riding habit, which was to her the most becoming costume possible.

"A letter from my dear, delightful, ridiculous, old fairy godmother!" exclaimed Miss O'Brien, gleefully, as she opened a letter which the servant had just brought in, together with a large packet of correspondence for Mr. Charlewood. "I hadn't heard from her for an age, and was getting quite uneasy about her, for her ladyship is generally the most indefatigable and voluminous of correspondents. She prides herself on her letters, and they certainly are capital fun."

"Her ladyship?" said Mr. Charlewood, pausing in the act of opening a large square blue business-looking envelope, and looking across at his guest. Mr. Charlewood caught at the sweet sound of the title as a hungry pike snaps at a bait. "Her ladyship, Miss O'Brien?" said he.

"Lady Popham, Mr. Charlewood. My godmother, and, I believe, some relative on my mother's side into the bargain. We consider ourselves quite close relations in Ireland, when, I suppose, you cold-blooded Saxons wouldn't make out that there was any kinship at all. But she is the most charming old woman, to those she likes, *bien entendu*. I call her my fairy godmother, because she's so tiny and so bright, and so odd, and because when I was a child she seemed always able and willing to bestow upon me whatever I took it into my head to desire, from a coral necklace to a Shetland pony."

Mr. Charlewood returned to the perusal of his blue business letter with a complacent smile on his face. It afforded him great pleasure to know that a young woman about soon to be connected by marriage with his family, had a godmother who was called "my lady."

"What does Lady Popham say, Geraldine?" asked Mrs. Dawson, a thin fair woman dressed in widow's weeds—though her husband had been dead many years—and with a somewhat stiff cold manner.

"Oh, all kinds of things, Aunt Dawson. But I must decipher the letter myself before I can tell you much about it. You know she writes the queerest little cramp hand in the world, and her spelling is unique."

"Law, dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlewood, with naive astonishment, "you don't mean to say she can't spell? And she a lady of title too! 'Ow curious!"

Nobody responded to this little speech. But Penelope shot a glance at her mother across the table, which had the effect of keeping the poor lady quiet for some time.

The conversation was carried on in groups of two and three. The Rev. Malachi Dawson and his fair betrothed sat side by side, but they were not talking with each other. Augusta was busily engaged in giving Jane Fluke an idea of her design for the bridesmaids' dresses at the approaching ceremony, and the bridegroom elect was mildly listening to Mr. Fluke's exposition of the plan of the new school-house and chapel at Duckreiff; an exposition which the older clergyman illustrated by an utterly incomprehensible arrangement of all the plates, knives and forks within reach of his hand; clattering steel, silver, and china together with his accustomed vehemence, and twisting his napkin into a wisp with both his hands, in the heat of his discourse.

Of the rest, Mrs. Charlewood and Miss Fluke

were discussing the last new curate of St. Philip-in-the-Fields, Walter was relating to Mrs. Dawson some anecdote intended to impress her with an idea of the brilliant social position of his most intimate and particular friend, the Honourable Arthur Skidley, recently appointed Aide-de-camp to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and Mr. Charlewood and Miss O'Brien were absorbed in their respective letters, Clement alone sat silent and unoccupied. His chair was placed next to that of the Irish girl, and he had paid her all the due attention which such neighbourhood demanded, but now he remained quite silent, looking straight before him with an absent musing expression that had latterly become habitual with him.

Suddenly Geraldine O'Brien looked up from her letter.

"Does anybody know a Hammerham young lady of the name of Bell?"

The question, although couched in this general form, was addressed more particularly to Clement, Miss O'Brien having perceived him to be the only disengaged member of the party.

"A Hammerham young lady of the name of Bell?" repeated Clement, smiling, "why, my dear Miss O'Brien, there may be fifty Hammerham young ladies of the name of Bell."

"So there may, to be sure, or five hundred. But I'm asking do ye happen to know one particular one?"

"Bell! Bell! N—no, I think not. One of the bricklayers in my father's employ is called Bell, I think; and he has a large family of daughters. But it is scarcely likely to be one of those young ladies that you're inquiring about."

"Ah, now be aisy wid yer nonsense," said Miss O'Brien, with a comical little assumption of the brogue which it pleased her now and then to indulge in amongst intimate friends. "I'm asking you a serious question, Mr. Clement Charlewood."

"Well then, seriously, I, at all events, do not know any young lady of that name."

"Humph! It's odd too, for she is mentioned as having been a friend of the Charlewood family."

"What are you saying, Geraldine?" asked Mrs. Dawson, who had caught her niece's last words.

"Why, aunt, it is the funniest thing in the world, quite a romance. Dear fairy godmother always does get hold of the most wonderful people. See here now, I'll just read you a bit of the letter. You must know, Mr. Charlewood," said Miss O'Brien, turning to Clement, "that Lady Popham is, as she says herself, 'fanatica per la musica.' Indeed, she is passionately fond of all kinds of art; especially the musical and dramatic; and when she was living at Naples, I believe she always had her house full of fiddlers, painters, singers, and actors. Wonderful geniuses, whom she flattered herself she was destined to reveal to the world, but who, I think, for the most part, turned out lamentable failures."

Miss Fluke here gave vent to a most extraordinary sound, that began in a groan and ended in a snort, and shook her head in a solemn and lugubrious manner.

"Oh, well, Miss Fluke," said Geraldine, quickly—for she and the clergyman's daughter had already had one or two somewhat sharp passages of arms—"I don't see anything to distress oneself about in that, after all. Lady Popham was always generous and charitable, and I'm quite sure that she did more good than harm on the whole. However, I was going to say, that my godmother writes me here six crossed pages of raptures about two young artists whom she has picked up in—Kilclare of all places in the world! Just fancy! Here's what she says:" and Miss O'Brien began to read aloud from her godmother's letter. "My young Paganini came out here to Cloncoolin a fortnight ago. I sent for him to a little soirée I got up of a chosen few. People who have some faint glimmering of an idea about art. Most of the dear souls here haven't any glimmering. The lad played divinely. I tell you so, and tu sais bien que je m'y connais. I mean to get him to town, where he

must make a fortune! He's such a handsome animal too. Ma come! Well, and then I made him talk to me, and tell me all about his prospects and his family. He spoke a good deal about that delicious Ophelia I've been describing to you. I can see that he admires her desperately, and, in short I have made up a charming little romance, to end as all orthodox romances should end. Basta!"

"How like fairy godmother that is!" said Miss O'Brien, interrupting her reading for a moment.

"She's terribly impulsive," said Mrs. Dawson, icily, shutting her thin lips close. Mrs. Dawson, at all events, was not impulsive.

"Well, but now I'm coming to the point of the letter," said Miss O'Brien, "so please read on:"

"Ophelia—who is perfectly poetical—comes from the most thoroughly unpoetical spot on the face of the globe—Hammerham."

"Law! well now, I do think her ladyship's rather ard on ammerham," Mrs. Charlewood ventured to observe, in a timid voice.

"Hammerham," continued Miss O'Brien: "and I want you, Geraldina mia, to find out all about her. She's a most interesting creature. Has a striking air of bon ton, and shines amongst her comrades des théâtre like a silver star beside the flare of tallow candles. You can easily hear of her, for Alfred Trescott, my handsome fiddler, says she was a great friend of the—oh dear me, I never remember names, but I know he mentioned those people——" Miss O'Brien stumbled a little here, and coloured; then she proceeded in a rather hesitating manner. "The family of the lady that your cousin Malachi is going to marry!"

We, who have the privilege of peeping over her shoulder, can see that Miss O'Brien omitted a phrase or two, and altered another, in her godmother's letter, and that Lady Popham's words really ran thus: "those rich bricks-and-mortar people that Mrs. Dawson has got hold of for your cousin Malachi."

"Well," said Geraldine, looking round the table, for during the last few minutes every one had been attending to her, "well, can't anybody guess who this mysterious Miss Bell may be?"

"As true as I'm sitting 'ere," cried Mrs. Charlewood, struck with a sudden conviction, "I do believe it must be Mabel Earnshaw under another name!"

There was a dead silence, and Geraldine O'Brien, glancing at Clement, saw that he had turned white even to the lips.

"Then it is true," said Geraldine, addressing Mrs. Charlewood, "this young lady is a friend of your family?"

Before her mother could reply, Augusta struck in, with her most disdainful manner:

"She was a friend, Geraldine. That is to say, we used to receive her here, and take a good deal of notice of her at one time. But now of course, you understand that we can have nothing more to say to her. Indeed, I may say, she got into the Manor on false pretences in some measure. For, had I known at first who and what her family and connexions were, I should never have thought of"—and Augusta leaned back in her chair with a languid haughty gesture that said as plainly as possible that she could not be at the pains of pursuing so very contemptible a subject.

"Why not? What has she done?" said Miss O'Brien, fixing her frank bright eyes upon Augusta's face. This was too much for Miss Fluke, who had been snorting and panting and swelling with suppressed indignation for some time past, and who now burst forth with irrepressible vehemence:

"What has she done?" She has disgraced herself and discredited the precious evangelical teaching that she was so highly privileged as to enjoy! She has forsaken a Christian home, where strict piety was combined with the instruction of the first professors, to join the society of—of—rogues and vagabonds. In a word she has chosen the path of perdition with her eyes open!" And Miss Fluke, as though to illustrate her forcible phraseology, opened her

own eyes very wide indeed, and glared round upon the company.

The Reverend Malachi Dawson, to whom Miss Fluke was quite a new phenomenon, stared at her with timid astonishment depicted on his mild countenance, and when, in making the circuit of the table, her eye lighted upon him, he made an involuntary shrinking movement, like that of one who who tries to avoid an expected blow.

"The carriages are at the door, ma'am," announced a servant to Mrs. Charlewood. Every one rose immediately, and the interruption was felt to be a most welcome one, for there was a sense of uneasiness and of something vaguely disagreeable hanging over all present, an effect, indeed, which any ebullition of Miss Fluke's eloquence was pretty sure to produce on her hearers.

"Fairy godmother's letter seems to have burst amongst us like a bomb-shell," said Geraldine O'Brien to Walter, as she stood putting on her gauntlets and waiting for her horse to be brought up to the door. Walter coloured and smiled uneasily. The weak vulgar vanity, which was his besetting foible, made him dread to compromise the family dignity in Miss O'Brien's eyes by saying any word in defence of Mabel, whom he really liked, and thereby confessing a too intimate friendship with a person in a social position which he looked upon as so infinitely inferior to his own. But there was yet a spark of manliness in the lad which made him ashamed of his cowardice.

"Where's your brother?" said Miss O'Brien, looking round for Clement as the groom led her horse up.

"Oh, please, miss," said the man, touching his hat, "Mr. Clement's best compliments, and would you kindly excuse him for the present? He won't be able to go with the party, but will ride out and meet you in the evening coming home, if he can."

Miss O'Brien put her foot into Walter's palm, and sprang neatly into the saddle.

"The old story," said Walter, as they rode side by side down the avenue. "Clement's got some business or other at the last minute, that keeps him at Hammerham. The fact is, the governor's business is on so vast a scale," added Watty boastfully, "and Clem is such a fellow for sticking to work and seeing to everything himself, that we look upon it as quite a wonder when he goes out even as much as he has been doing lately."

"I don't believe it's business one bit," said Geraldine O'Brien to herself, remembering Clement's changing colour and disturbed face. "Fairy godmother, fairy godmother, I'm afraid you have innocently been doing a little mischief! And yet, who knows? It may all turn out for the best after all."

And, for some quarter of an hour, the gay-hearted buoyant Irish girl remained in a very unwarmed mood of silence and contemplation.

SNAKES IN QUEENSLAND.

OF the many species of snakes that infest this distant colony, there are but few intensely venomous, but the individuals of these few species are extremely numerous. The Brown Snake, the Whip Snake, the Diamond Snake, and the Black Snake, are frequently found, especially in the Mitchell district.

A curious circumstance that occurred last year to a friend of mine, a Mitchell squatter, a gentleman of clear honour, and consequently of indisputable credibility. He accompanied me last May when I was out with my men "examining" and surveying his "runs," which were situated on a splendidly-watered creek, the resort (as I soon found to my sorrow) of a tribe of murderous black fellows.

"I had camped" just here, where we now are," said my friend R., "and towards morning I had a nasty dream. I dreamed that I saw a

* Let the reader remember that "camping" means in Australia taking up one's sleeping-place for the night even on the ground, with or without tents.

brown snake coming over from that direction (pointing to the north), and soon felt it crawling over my bare feet. Guess my surprise, on awakening, to feel a snake actually winding itself between my feet? I was lying on a blanket, with another blanket over me. Remember, I was on my back, and my feet were a few inches apart. Well, this snake first passed over my left foot, then round the sole of my right foot tickling it horribly. After a pause, it glided over the right foot and round the sole of the other after which it kept 'dabbing' at both soles, perhaps catching flies, until the titillation almost drove me mad. At length I mustered courage to raise my head and give a 'hiss' when it quietly slipped away."

I have generally found among my men a belief that the whip snake can jump forward. One of my men told me that he came suddenly on one of these virulent little beasts one day, that it immediately sprang at him as high as his breast, and that but for a very active spring on his part it would have "cooked" him. He then picked up a piece of stick, just in time; for it made spring number two, and he met it by a blow that knocked it to the ground with a broken back.

The whip snake is a most courageous and vindictive little wretch. I was one day in a boat on the river Logan, when I spied one swimming, and directed one of my men to hit it with his oar. He made a blow at it, but missed. The creature instantly turned and came stem on towards the boat. I made several blows at it with a whip-handle, but the water broke their strength, and the reptile could easily have got away; on it came, however, vindictively hissing, until its back was broken by a lucky stroke.

In the Mitchell district, the year before last, I had turned in about ten o'clock at night, and lay busily planning out the programme of my future campaign in the far west, not far from Burke and Willis's track, when all at once, as I turned on my side, I felt a snake underneath the blanket on which I lay, and close to my shoulder. I felt it, through the blanket, gently with my hand. There was no doubt of the fact; there it was, and what was to be done! After much reflection I thought it best to lie still, as from my weight on the edges of the blanket, it could do no harm until morning, whereas, if I stirred, it would probably have a fair chance at me. So I lay still and slept heartily till after sunrise, when I discovered that the supposed snake was the thong of a stock-whip which my son had deposited there for safety.

Soon after I was sent to Logan, I was returning one afternoon late to my camp, which was in a place very difficult to find even by daylight, but next to impossible in darkness. I was pushing on my horse as rapidly as the thick timber would allow, when I saw an enormous black snake a little to the left of my track. The light was fast failing, and although I make it a matter of conscience to kill every snake I can, I determined to pass him. To my astonishment, however (I had never seen the like before), the beast made right towards me with a wicked hiss. This was more than I could bear, so I got off my horse, determined to "wipe him out." I don't think I ever had such difficulty in killing a snake, and was never in such danger—save once, which I will speak of in due course. I selected a piece of wood, and made furious whacks at him, which were unsuccessful. The stick broke in two, but my blood was up; so, fearing that he would escape, I went very close to give him a finisher. Before I could do so, he turned with wonderful quickness and seized me by the arm, hanging on to the bite in such a venomously tenacious way that I knew he had emitted his poison. When I felt the puncture I grow reckless, and seized him with both hands, fortunately near the neck, and destroyed him. I brought him to my camp, tying him with a saddle-strap to the D-hook of the saddle, skinned him that evening, and found in him thirteen eggs as large as those of pullets. He was the largest black snake I ever saw—upwards of six feet. I experienced no ill effects, as he had not drawn blood, but had only given me a sharp pinch through my thick coat.

An Irish peasant had settled on the Logan river, having with great industry cleared some hundreds of acres. He had three children, the youngest of whom was about four years old, and one of the loveliest little girls I ever saw. I used often to alight and kiss the little creature, she looked so rosy and fresh, and was kept so clean and tidy. One morning she was romping with her brother near the hut. All at once the latter rushed in:

"Oh, mother, mother, Nelly's been bitten by a snake!"

It was too true. The marks of the reptile's fangs were visible on the instep. They hurried her within doors, and sucked the wound, but the stupor of death lay heavy on her. There was no medicine for many a mile, and no doctor. They walked her about, as long as the little limbs could stir, but at last they laid her down, and, after one wild recognising flash from her glazing eye into her mother's face, and with a shuddering sob, the spirit of poor little Nellie passed away.

On the Saturday succeeding this event the government surveyor, who with his staff was camped about seven miles from me, was returning on foot to his camp accompanied by his chainman. They were walking through long grass, when on a sudden the chainman cried out:

"My God, sir, I'm bitten by something!"

"Run on to camp, then," said my friend. "Fly, and I'll be after you with all the speed I can. Scarify the place when you reach the camp."

I saw the government surveyor next day, and he assured me that even as he spoke he saw the man's eyes glazing. When he arrived, he found that the poor fellow had scarified his own leg, but was dying fast. Two days before this, the surveyor had been in Brisbane, and had been entrusted with a bottle of excellent cognac for me. A shower of rain had prevented its transmission from his camp to mine, and he now poured brandy down the throat of the dying man. The poor fellow was almost a teetotaler, and yet the bottle of brandy had no more effect than so much water. Meanwhile, the surveyor despatched a man on a fleet horse to a neighbouring station for more spirits, and, by the time the brandy was exhausted, the messenger arrived with a case bottle of gin. In a few minutes the patient began to show some liveliness, and to talk with vivacity; but not until he had taken the last drop of the gin did he exhibit the slightest sign of inebriation. The instant that he *did* show signs of it, the surveyor felt that he was saved. The surveyor acted nobly. For a whole hour he persisted in sucking the wound of this poor man, whose leg was not over-clean. When next day I saw the patient, he had quite recovered.

The very best thing in the world for snake bites is strong liquor anonimie applied to the wound, and a dilution of the same taken internally. Next to this is a thorough internal saturation by ardent spirits.

A medical gentleman, in conjunction with myself, made experiments of the effects of snake bites on rabbits. One rabbit, a magnificent specimen, ate heartily after being bitten by a diamond snake. We began to think that the reptile must have expended his venom before the trial, when all at once the rabbit, which was eating a lettuce, uttered a squeak, and fell dead without a quiver. This was about ten minutes after the bite.

A friend of mine put a whip-snake into a bottle, buried it between three and four feet in the earth, and kept it there undisturbed during the winter months. When spring was well advanced he took it out, uncorked the bottle, and the beast, which had appeared to be dormant, sprang up at him with such speed that he had a very narrow escape.

The carpet snake of Queensland is a species of boa, and is venomless. I ought to know this well, for about five years ago I was skinning a monstrous one which I thought dead, when it fastened upon my fingers, and bit me very severely in three places, drawing blood copiously. I shall never forget the looks of my men, and their rapid production of any amount of

knives to cut off the finger on the spot. I laughed at their dolorous appearance, wrapped my hand in a handkerchief, and finished the operation of skinning, to their utter amazement.* Nothing can persuade even the most experienced bushmen that any snake can be harmless.

About four years ago I witnessed a battle-royal between my son and a carpet-snake. Both showed great determination. My boy was only twelve years old; but he was more than a match for the snake, so I would not interfere. He had picked up a short stick, and after combatting for about a quarter of an hour, he succeeded in breaking the brute's back, and thus rendered it an easy prey. It measured eleven feet two inches. A very large opossum was found in its stomach, and in a perfect state of preservation. The last snake fight I had took place a short time since in the bed of a dry creek that runs into the Thomson river. I was riding along carelessly, when all at once I saw an enormous brown snake wriggling between my horse's legs. Now the brown snake is a thing of horror, so I tried to back my horse with all my strength, but the attempt was useless, so I gave him the spur, and he went over it. I then dismounted, seized a stick which broke at the first blow, and by this time the snake was ascending the steep bank. He was on the point of getting away, when I made a fiercer blow with the fragment that remained in my hand, and broke his back, but it was near the tail, and the beast was able to turn round and make almost a vertical blow at me from above. I don't think I ever in my life experienced such a feeling of alarm as I did during the half second of its approach. I remember seeing its devilish head level with my face, and I remember striking out with my stick, but how I escaped I know not to this hour; however, when my staff came up they found me skinning it. I never saw a larger brown snake; it measured more than six feet in length, but in girth it was immense.

A great deal has been said of the instinctive dread of snakes which is exhibited by four-footed animals. This does not accord with my experience, as I know of dogs and cats having a great liking for killing them; and I have never yet had a horse that showed the slightest alarm even while quite close to them. Once my favourite saddle-horse actually "squashed" a large black snake which was lying coiled up on the road, and I did not know it until I got a yard or two beyond the spot.

It is impossible for a stranger to pronounce upon every snake he may come across; still, it may be useful to give a few hints which can be fully understood by every one. Whenever you see a snake with a neck, that is, with a hollow behind the head on both sides, and combined with this, a thin tapering tail, be assured that snake is non-venomous; but when you see a snake with no neck, and, combined with this, a stumpy tail, that snake is in the highest degree venomous.

DAVY JONES, JUNIOR.

BY DUTTON COOK.

CHAPTER IV.

About nine o'clock the next night, a sudden noise made Mrs. Barford start so much—she was by no means a person given to starting—that she dropped and broke a jug she was filling with hot water from the bar-fire.

"Why, God bless me!" she cried; "what can have happened? As I'm a living woman there's been another shot fired, on Block's wharf. I heard the report distinctly. Please God no harm's happened to old Block! And what's come to my nerves, I wonder? I've broken my jug. I never did such a thing before in all my life. My best jug too."

A few minutes, and Davy Jones comes running into the Travellers Joy, breathless and pale and trembling all over.

"Is the boy mad?" demanded Mrs. Barford. He was clutching her arm very tightly.

"Oh! please Mrs. Barford, will you come di-

* The length of this snake (I have the skin yet) was twelve feet and a half.

rectly," he gasped. "The master's been shot by some villain outside on the wharf; and Miss Nancy—it will kill her—it will kill her! Help her, please help her!" As he spoke, Davy tottered, threw up his hands, and, but for Mrs. Barford's aid, would have fallen on the floor on the bar in a fainting fit.

She dashed cold water on his face and poured brandy into his mouth.

"Poor lad, how deathly white he looks! And he weighs a mere nothing. Chafe his hands Betsy—he'll come round in a minute." She had taken him up in her arms—she was a strong woman—as though he had been a tiny child, and carried him to a sofa that stood at the end of the room. She had disliked the boy previously, holding him very cheaply, but she couldn't have been more tender with him now had she been his mother. In truth, a woman's heart beat within Mrs. Barford's sturdy and substantial frame. And it was noticeable, that from the time when Davy Jones had fainted in her arms she took up with milder notions concerning him; left off calling him "a limb," seemed rather to pity than to censure him, and in some sort constituted herself his friend and protectress. She was satisfied, probably, that his emotion at the troubles afflicting his master's house was the result of genuine sympathy and sorrow.

Presently he had recovered sufficiently to accompany her to Mr. Block's.

A strange scene presented itself in the ship-breaker's parlour fronting the river. Mr. Block frightfully pale and weak, lay stretched upon the floor, his head propped up by pillows. Mr. Jasper, the medical man, looking very grave indeed, was in attendance, rendering such aid as was possible. Close beside him stood Mr. Starkie, who seemed to be almost paralysed by anxiety and alarm. Miss Block, with a face like a ghost, was on her knees by the side of her father, bathing his temples with vinegar, the while she with difficulty restrained herself from swooning away.

It was whispered that poor old Mr. Block had not long to live. A lawyer had been sent for to make his will, and a messenger had been despatched to Bow Street to give information to the police authorities of the crime that had been perpetrated. The shot had taken effect in the left lung. Whenever the wounded man attempted to speak his mouth filled with blood. As a measure of relief, and possibly because it was held at that time a proper operation to perform in almost all cases demanding medical aid, Mr. Jasper had advised that his patient should be bled in the arm. This had been accomplished amidst a strange and awful silence. The sufferer, much weakened, was by this means enabled to utter a few words, but only at long intervals, and in a whisper that was just audible.

A justice of the peace was brought in to receive the deposition of the dying man. He had but a simple statement to make.

"God knows," he gasped, "I never injured any man so as to lead him to take my life like this."

"Truer words were never spoken," murmured Mrs. Barford. And then she whispered to Davy, while the tears filled her own eyes, "Don't cry my lad. He's going to a better world than this."

He had been sitting all the evening in his parlour facing the river, Mr. Block deposed. He had been going through various papers and books of account with his partner, Godfrey Starkie. Once or twice he had been left alone while Starkie, in aid of their examination, had gone to fetch further papers from the offices on the other side of the house. They had had tea together in the parlour. At Mr. Block's desire, Starkie had gone to bring in the cash-book of the past year; he had not been gone two minutes when Mr. Block saw the window raised a few inches from the outside; a hand was thrust into the room. Then came a flash, the report of a pistol, and he found himself struck in the side. It was the work of a moment, and so strange and sudden, he said, that it seemed like a dream. He hardly knew what had happened, or how it had happened. He had nothing more to say, Did he suspect any one?

No, he did not know whom to suspect.

Did he notice anything remarkable about the hand?

As far as he could see it was a white hand.

As the deponent gave this answer, a police officer standing by suddenly grasped the boy Davy by the wrist and held up his hand towards the light. He dropped it instantly, with an air of disappointment. The boy's hand was black with tar—not a new soil, for the tar was quite dry. Mrs. Barford, with a fierce look, drew the boy closer to her.

The lawyer wrote out rapidly a short will. Mr. Block bequeathed the whole of his property to his only daughter, and appointed his friend Godfrey Starkie to be his executor. He requested in a feeble tone that they would lift him up that he might sign the will. Mr. Jasper and Starkie together raised him to a sitting posture. Just then he was seized with a shivering fit, and for some minutes was unable to hold his pen between his fingers. At last he succeeded in affixing a very tremulous signature to the document the lawyer had prepared. Then, with a faint cry, "My poor Nancy, may God protect her!" he fell back upon the pillows, the blood streaming from his mouth.

"All is over!" said the doctor, after a slight pause. "Look to Miss Block, some one."

Upon the order of the magistrate, the Bow Street officers took possession of the house, Miss Block, more dead than alive, was placed under the protection of Mrs. Barford, and conveyed to the Traveller's Joy, to remain there until after the inquest, or until her nearest relatives could be communicated with.

The police constable who had examined Davy's hand seemed now struck by a new idea. Suddenly and dexterously he seized the boy by the ankle, at the risk of throwing him down, and held his foot towards the light. His shoes were covered with the thick yellow clay of the wharf.

"Haven't I been at work in the wharf all the day long?" demanded the boy.

"You must hand those shoes over to me my fine fellow," said the constable. "I'll find you a pair to wear instead."

With angry, tearful eyes, Davy glared round at the feet of the by-standers, in hopes, possibly that some other shoes might be found in a state as suspicious as his own. He found none, however. It was noticed that he had looked particularly at the shoes worn by Mr. Starkie. However, Mr. Starkie's shoes were as bright and clean, and his ribbed cotton stockings as brilliantly white as ever. It was clear that he had not been out on the wharf that evening.

An inquest was held upon the body of Mr. Block. The jury returned a verdict of "Willful murder against some person or persons unknown." An attempt was made to bring the crime home to the apprentice of the murdered man. A satisfactory *alibi* was proved, however. Davy Jones was in conversation with Miss Nancy Block when the pistol shot was heard. Miss Block, in deep mourning and painfully distressed, came forward as a witness on his behalf. It was said very generally that her testimony had saved the boy's neck from the gallows; or, at any rate, had prevented his being forthwith committed to prison to take his trial for murder. The evidence against him amounted to little more than suspicion, joined to his ill-repute in the neighbourhood as a mischievous and evilly-disposed boy.

"And even if I hadn't been at your side at the moment, you'd never have thought it was me that took the master's life—surely you never would, Miss Nancy?" he said.

"No, Davy, my poor boy, indeed I never could have thought of such a thing. But, oh, Davy, if we could but bring the murderer to justice!"

"I loved the master. I haven't worked for him as I ought, I know. I feel it now. I'm almost as bad a boy as they say I am. But God knows I'd never hurt a hair of his head! I'd have given my life for his, and welcome. I'd give it now to spare you pain, Miss Nancy; you know I would. And I'll never rest till I've found the poor master's murderer."

Meanwhile, Davy had been dismissed the wharf—bidden, indeed, somewhat angrily, to show his face no more upon the premises. Mr. Starkie stated he did not require the services of his late partner's apprentice—a worthless boy, of idle and mischievous inclination, to say the best of him. For a time he was subsisting on the bounty of Mrs. Barford, of the Traveller's Joy.

CHAPTER V.

The mysterious murder of Mr. Block occasioned a great stir and commotion. The Government of the day offered a large reward for the discovery and conviction of the murderer, while a free pardon was promised to anyone privy to the crime, not being the actual assassin, who would aid the administration of justice by turning King's evidence. Crowds from all parts visited the scene of the Rotherhithe tragedy. Much sympathy was expressed for the daughter of the unfortunate man; but for a time all attempts to elucidate the mystery remained ineffectual. The officers of the law were said to be certainly baffled and at fault.

With many people the apprentice Davy Jones was still an object of grave suspicion. The story of that other apprentice George Barnwell, the subject of Mr. Lillo's admirable play, was frequently quoted and sagaciously commented on as being singularly apposite to the present case. The police constable who, on the night of the murder, had made so close an examination of Davy's hands and feet, clung to his theory of the boy's guilt with singular pertinacity. Every small piece of evidence he could collect he sought to twist and shape and fit into this view of the affair. He was forever hanging about the Traveller's Joy, listening to the talk there, smoking his pipe and taking his glass, in a very friendly and pleasant way, but with his eyes incessantly watching every movement of Davy Jones. Mrs. Barford, for the entertainment of guests, oftentimes strangers now, drawn by curiosity from distant parts of London, would relate her share in the events of that dreadful evening. She went into much detail in her recital. "I shall never forget," she said one night, "how the poor soul shivered and let fall his pen, when they were lifting him up to sign his will. I fancy that the sight of Mr. Starkie's white hands reminded him somehow for the moment of the hand he had seen at the window." To a close observer it might have occurred that the Bow Street officer was struck by this fancy of Mrs. Barford's and took a mental note of it. His manner towards the boy underwent a change from that time; and he was said to have been seen shortly afterwards in close confabulation with Mr. Block's lawyer and Mr. Jasper the doctor, who took a keen interest in the case, and yet were both regarded as friends and patrons of Davy Jones, and had never for one moment credited his guilt.

Miss Block, her health much shattered, and her grief unspeakably great, remained under the shelter of Mrs. Barford's roof. It was reported that she had determined not to quit the neighbourhood until justice had been done upon her father's murderer. She was not left too well provided for, people said. The late Mr. Block's affairs were not in nearly so prosperous a state as had been imagined. The business was carried on by the surviving partner, who, it was rumoured, had been paying his addresses for some time to Miss Block. Of course an immediate marriage was not to be thought of; but it was generally esteemed desirable for Miss Block's interests that she should eventually become Mrs. Starkie. In such wise the manifest difficulties of her situation would be satisfactorily adjusted. Many of Miss Block's friends, therefore, counselled her by all means to favour Mr. Starkie's suit; presuming that he was presenting himself as a suitor. Such chances, they averred, did not occur every day; and should, accordingly, when they did occur, be appreciated and made the most of, especially by people "without features," and, as it now appeared, without fortune either. To reject the offer of marriage of a man like Mr. Starkie, supposing that he ever was weak enough to make such an offer, was a proceeding that would be characterised by Miss Block's friends

only as a sort of "lying in the face of Providence." It was in vain that Miss Block represented that she did not want advice of that, or indeed, of any kind. Miss Block's friends knew better what was good for her than she knew herself so they persisted in giving her advice, which was, indeed, all they did give her, and was, after all, not a gift of a very costly or valuable nature. If it had been, Miss Block's friends probably, would not have been quite so liberal with it.

CHAPTER VI

Miss Block occupied a quiet upper chamber in Mrs. Buford's house, commanding a view of the river, and of the wharf-premises of her father. Late one night, when she could not sleep for thinking of her sorrows, and of certain events that had happened that day, she was startled by the sound as of people talking under her window. In some alarm she rose quietly and looked forth. It seemed to her that there were two figures moving in the wharf below. As she became more accustomed to the dim light, she perceived that one was a burly man in top boots, who carried a dark lantern. It was the Bow Street officer. The other was surely Davy Jones, yet in such a guise that he was hardly to be recognised.

He was but half dressed, and black as ink from head to foot. A rope was tied round his waist, and the line was held by his companion as a measure of precaution, while the boy was wading, and plunging, and searching in the dark mud of the wharf. Again and again he seemed in danger of sinking below the surface, when immediately he was drawn out by the officer. For some time the labours of the pair seemed to be in vain. They stopped for some minutes to regain breath and to rest.

"It's lucky I never was afraid of dirt," the apprentice was heard to say, in a low voice. "Now, I'll go in again, the tide will be in upon us very shortly. Hullo! my foot struck against something—a stone? no, not a stone. I've lost it—no, I have it."

He was drawn in presently, bearing a small dark object in his hand. The officer was seen to examine it carefully by the light of his lantern.

"Hist! David. Is that you?" said Miss Block.

"I must see you,—I must speak to you, as soon as may be. Come round to the front door, I'll let you in."

"Shall I come as I am? I'm half smothered in mud, Miss Nancy."

"What does that matter?"

Miss Block went down softly to the street-door of the Traveller's Joy. In a minute David presented himself,—a dreadful object,—very wet, and slimy, and muddy, with an old sack thrown over his shoulders. Yet Miss Block did not shrink from him.

"I want to warn you of danger, Davy. Keep out of Mr. Starkie's sight. Don't let him see you about the wharf. He has been threatening you—he has been threatening me. He is very angry with us both. He avows we are in league together. He says that I care for—that I love you Davy."

"How dare he insult you, Miss Nancy?" quoth David, simply.

"I have rejected his suit, and he is mad with rage against me,—and against every one I—care for. He says a word from him would send you to the gallows. He threatens to make oath before the magistrates that you were not by my side when the shot was fired, and that I forswore myself at the inquest in order to screen you. He will be avenged on both of us, he says. So take care, Davy, what you do. He is a bad and unscrupulous man. I did not think so once, I own, but I know it now too well. Take care then, Davy. But go now, you are wet through, you will catch your death of cold. I ought not to have kept you so long. God bless you, Davy."

"I haven't been labouring in vain, Miss Nancy," said David, cheerily, as he hurried off.

The next morning Mr. Starkie presented himself at Bow Street. He had a statement to make, he said, in reference to the late tragedy at Rotherhithe. His name was Godfrey Starkie, partner of the deceased shipbreaker.

"The very man we want," said a constable "Quick with the hand-cuffs, Jem. I arrest you, Godfrey Starkie, on the charge of wilful murder of the late Sampson Block of Rotherhithe."

The prisoner started, but recovered himself immediately. "You shall pay dearly for this," he said, indignantly. "Bring me to trial as soon as may be. I'll wager a hundred pounds I am acquitted and ride home from the assizes in a post-chaise and four."

CHAPTER VII.

THE arrest of Mr. Starkie occasioned much surprise. Some were inclined to vote the proceeding a desperate attempt on the part of the authorities at all costs to demonstrate their activity and to seem to be doing something. Others laughed outright at the utter absurdity of the business. There was no case against Mr. Starkie; there could be no case against him. There was not a tittle of evidence to connect him with Mr. Block's death. Why, but a few nights before that sad event, his own life had been attempted! Besides, what possible motive could he have for taking the life of his partner and friend? The man who commits a crime must have a motive, it was argued. What motive was there to induce Mr. Starkie to perpetrate a murder? people asked, again and again; paused for a reply, and got none—at least, none that they could consider at all sufficient or satisfactory. He was without any such motive, they determined; and, therefore, he must be innocent, and the real murderer must be sought for in some other quarter.

Nevertheless, in spite of all the arguments about "motive," opinions adverse to the prisoner gradually arose. In the minds of many people the mere fact that a charge is brought against a man is quite sufficient for his conviction and condemnation. Mr. Starkie's neighbours began at last to ask themselves what they really knew about him: and this, it seemed, amounted to little enough. He had come among them with some suddenness. No one was acquainted with his antecedents. He was well-behaved, and comely-looking, and of industrious habits; but always reserved and taciturn. He never spoke of his own affairs; he appeared to have no relations or personal friends. Yet he certainly had been implicitly trusted by his late partner, who had set store upon his services, and was always supposed to entertain a high opinion of him. By-and-by it oozed out that the case against him gained strength every day. Thereupon many were found to declare that they had never liked him from the first, and had said all along that he knew more about Sampson Block's death than he cared to tell.

The trial took place at the Surrey Sessions held in Horsemanor Lane, Southwark, before the Lord Chief Baron Sir Archibald Macdonald. The celebrated counsellor, Mr. Garrow, appeared on the part of the Crown. The prisoner was assisted by a junior barrister to cross-examine witnesses, and to argue any points of law that might arise in the course of the trial. It was not, it may be noted, until many years later, that advocates were permitted to appear on behalf of accused persons, and to address the jury as to the facts of the case before them.

The evidence of the witnesses called for the Crown, in regard to the manner of Mr. Block's death, though of course more fully stated, differed little in effect from the narrative which has been already laid before the reader. But the case for the prosecution involved certain peculiarities to which brief allusion may be made. Mr. Garrow's theory of the prisoner's guilt necessitated proof in the first instance that sufficient motive existed to induce Starkie to take his partner's life, and secondly, that it was impossible that any other man but Starkie could have been guilty of the murderous deed. It followed as a part of this theory, that the attempt upon his own life which was alleged by Starkie to have been made some nights previous to the murder of Mr. Block, was entirely fictitious, and that he had himself fired a pistol at the wall of Mr. Block's parlour, in order to avert suspicion, and to give rise to a charge against some other

person when the time arrived for his committing the crime he had already in contemplation.

The court was crowded to excess. Royal dukes with unintellectual facial angles were accommodated with seats upon the Bench. Illustrious foreigners were in attendance to instruct themselves concerning English forms of trial for murder. Rank and fashion besieged the doors of the Sessions House in vain attempts to obtain admission to the already overcrowded court. The prisoner was plainly dressed in dark-coloured clothes, and perfect composure marked his countenance and manner during the greater part of the trial. His handsome face and quiet bearing attracted admiration and sympathy, particularly from the female portion of the audience. Mr. Garrow's opening oration was listened to with wrapt attention. It was the general opinion that the case, though indirect and depending greatly upon circumstantial evidence, was yet strong against the accused.

With regard to the motive inducing the prisoner to take the life of his partner, Mr. Garrow said: "There has been much talk on this head, gentlemen. We have heard a great deal as to the absence of motive on the part of the prisoner at the bar. But, let me remind you, Gentlemen of the Jury, that the temptation which leads a man to commit a crime, is not necessarily or in every instance a great one. I shall show you, however in the course of the present case, how keen an interest the accused had in the death of this most unfortunate and deeply lamented Mr. Block. I shall show you how the prisoner at the bar first came upon the scene—a penniless adventurer—beseeching that he might be employed in any way, upon any terms, however humble, so that he might earn sufficient to allay the pangs of his hunger. I shall show you how he gradually and insidiously crept into the confidence of his benefactor, and how basely he abused that confidence. I do not deny him the possession of abilities—but would to God, gentlemen, that he had employed them to a better purpose! I shall show you how his kind and unsuspecting employer became in time his dupe and his victim. How by an artful system of forgeries and falsification of accounts, he induced Mr. Block to believe in the depreciation of his business to a considerable extent (professional accountants and experts will give evidence on these points which will not fail to carry conviction to the minds of every one of you)—and then persuaded the deluded gentleman to admit him, the prisoner at the bar, to a share in the profits of his trade, and to promote him from the position of servant and clerk to that of equal and partner. But, gentlemen, Mr. Block was sufficiently a man of business to require that a consideration for this arrangement, so advantageous to the prisoner, should be paid to him. The prisoner represented that he had friends prepared to advance him the necessary funds, and accordingly lodged in the hands of Mr. Block a bill—which will be put in evidence—for the amount of one thousand pounds, which he had made payable at the banking house of Messrs. Percival, of Lombard Street. I shall show you that the story as to his monied friends was entirely false; that he had no account at that banking house; no relations whatever with those bankers. I shall show you that he had no means, and that he had attempted no arrangement to meet that bill. I shall show you that that bill became due on the very day of Mr. Block's death. Is it not probable, gentlemen, is it not evident, that his failing to meet that bill would induce distrust and disquiet, inquiry and investigation, until the whole scheme of his fraud and his imposture would be discovered and disclosed, and fall to the ground like a house built with cards? Gentlemen, alarmed at the perilous position in which he stood, he resolved that his forgeries should remain undiscovered; that Mr. Block should never know that the bill had not been met, but should rather perish in that sudden and frightful and barbarous manner with which you have been already made acquainted. Gentlemen, I shall prove all this by the clearest and most direct testimony, and then I shall ask you, whether I have not indeed shown you that motive sufficient existed to induce a heartless and

reckless man, such as the prisoner at the bar, to plan the destruction of his fellow creature, and to carry out that plan to its full and most fearful end."

A model of Mr. Block's house and premises was produced in court, and the impossibility of any escape by means of the river or over the palisades on either side of the wharf was plainly demonstrated. It seemed clear that the murder must have been committed by some one who was an inmate of Mr. Block's house at the time. As the case proceeded, the web of evidence drew very tightly and closely round the prisoner. Mr. Garrow proceeded to consider the manner in which the crime had been effected.

"The weapon," he said, "with which, according to the theory of the prosecution, the crime was perpetrated, will be produced in court before you: a pocket-pistol recovered in the presence of a police officer, by one David Jones, the apprentice of the deceased—recovered I say after infinite pains and difficulty from the thick mud of the river." (Great sensation in court at the mention of this fact.) "The apprentice, moved by the circumstance of his having been at one time himself an object of suspicion, or as I would rather believe, by a sincere desire that the murderer of his kind and good master should be discovered and brought to justice, at the risk of his own life sought and found the weapon now before you, in the deep mud of the river. I shall be able to prove to you that this pistol was seen to be in the possession of the prisoner at the bar only a short time before the night of the murder." Further upon this fact the learned counsel dwelt for some time, and then proceeded. "And now, gentlemen, we approach the final catastrophe, the last few minutes of Mr. Block's life on this earth. The prisoner, as it appears by the deposition of Mr. Block, quitted the room facing the river, to bring a particular book from another part of the house. Now, mark, gentlemen—he did not return with the volume required. Why? Because, before he could obtain it, he was disturbed and brought back by the sound of the pistol-shot? Not so, gentlemen. Rather because he had quitted the house stealthily—to creep to the window looking on to the wharf, to raise it from the outside, to thrust in his white hand," (it was noticed here that the prisoner quickly withdrew from public notice his hands, which had previously been resting in front of him on the ledge of the dock), to take deliberate aim, and to discharge his deadly weapon at the unfortunate deceased. But we shall be told that his shoes were afterwards noticed not to be soiled, as they must have been soiled had he stood but for a moment in the thick, soft clay of the wharf. The explanation is very simple. *He slipped off his shoes at the door. He stood in his stockinged feet while he accomplished his murderous task—then flung away his pistol, deep, as he fancied, in the river mud—returned within doors, resumed his shoes, and affected ignorance and innocence of what had happened. Gentlemen, the ribbed white cotton stockings worn by the prisoner on that fatal night, have been found secreted in his chamber. They will be produced in court, and properly identified by disinterested witnesses. And your attention will be drawn to the fact that they are soiled and stained as only stockings could be soiled and stained which had been worn without shoes on the wet, soft, yellow clay of the wharf of the unfortunate Mr. Block."*

An extraordinary excitement followed this minute statement of the probable manner in which the murder had been perpetrated.

The case for the Crown was fairly borne out by the evidence adduced.

The prisoner, when called upon for his defence, seemed to be overwhelmed by the weight of the case against him. He contented himself with protestations, again and again repeated, of his entire innocence of the charge brought against him. He described it as a conspiracy to destroy him. He stated that the death of his partner, so far from being a profit to him, had involved him in ruin and bankruptcy; and that he was not so destitute of worldly means but that he could have met the bill for a thousand pounds if he had thought proper to do so, and if Mr. Block

had not consented to the payment of the bill being deferred. He denied that the pistol found in the river had ever been seen in his possession. Amidst some murmuring in court, suppressed with difficulty by the ushers, he declared that "those who had the pistol knew best where to find it," and he boldly accused Davy Jones of the murder of his master, and charged Miss Block with complicity in the crime. "Had the apprentice," he demanded, "no interest in his master's death? Was not the apprentice the lover of his master's daughter? Could he have hoped to win her during his master's life, or in any other way but by his master's death? And for the daughter, was it to be wondered at that she should prefer her lover to her father? Had not the jury heard before of such daughters? What was an old man's life compared to a young man's love? To what would a woman not consent when her lover implored her?" The judge even interposed to assure the prisoner that observations of this kind would rather injure than assist his cause. The indignation against him in court hardly knew bounds. "So I am to be sacrificed to preserve the reputation of an unnatural daughter!" he exclaimed. But he proceeded with greater caution afterwards. He ridiculed the notion of convicting him by reason of his soiled stockings. Of course there were stockings soiled with clay to be found in his possession. Why not? Was he not a shipbreaker? Did not his business take him constantly into the mire and clay of his wharf? Did men's lives depend on the state of their stockings? Surely it was not upon such evidence the jury would consign him to the scaffold. In such case who was safe? Then there had been talk of white hands. White hands, forsooth! since when, he wanted to know, had a fair complexion been a hanging matter? Besides—it was altogether monstrous!—would not any hand look white, thrust out of the darkness of the night into a lighted room? What dependence was to be placed upon the dim vision of an invalid? But white or black, it was nothing to him, and but that the murdered man's daughter had sworn herself, determined that he should hang rather than that her lover should be brought to justice, he could have satisfied the jury that he was at the back of the house, and not at the front, when the fatal shot was fired, and therefore that it was not possible he could have been the assassin of the late Mr. Block.

He ended his peroration, as he had begun his speech, by assuring the court of his absolute innocence, and then called several witnesses to testify to his general humanity and good conduct.

The Chief Baron summed up the evidence distinctly and impressively; but, it was said in court, strongly against the accused.

The jury, without quitting their box, found a verdict of "GUILTY."

The presence of mind of the prisoner now seemed wholly to abandon him. He was as one insane from terror. He interrupted the judge in passing sentence, with protestations of his innocence, with cries, shrieks, threats, and imprecations. He besought Miss Block to save him; on his knees he implored Davy Jones to say a good word for him. He clung to the spikes in front of the dock, praying the jury to reconsider their verdict, and to spare his life. The Chief Baron's sentence was hardly audible for the agonised screams of the prisoner. It was a terrible and a sickening spectacle. Only by employing forcible means could the wretched man be removed from the court and be conveyed back to prison.

There was no hope of mercy for him. No attempt was made to intercede for him and obtain a modification of his sentence.

The trial was on a Saturday. On the following Tuesday, Godfrey Starkie suffered the extreme penalty of the law in Horsemonger Lane, an extraordinary crowd being present at the scene.

His body, according to the custom of the period, was afterwards conveyed to Surgeon's Hall for dissection.

CHAPTER VIII.

Davy Jones had been complimented by the court on his conduct and the manner in which he had given his evidence. A subscription was set on foot for his benefit, by way of recognition of his meritorious behaviour, and a considerable amount realised.

"How brave you were, Davy!" said Miss Block.

"I don't know that I did more than any other boy would have done, Miss Nancy."

"How much I owe you, you will never know, Davy. To think that I—But no, no, no! I never could have loved that dreadful man!"

"I may kiss your hand now, Miss Nancy?" he asked, simply.

"Davy, my dear Davy! What are you talking about?"

She flung her arms round his neck.

Davy Jones, Junior, like the distinguished person after whom he had been designated—like Davy Jones, Senior, in point of fact—was not so black as he had been painted, nor so black as he had painted himself. Just as all is not gold that glitters, so all is not clean that seems so at first sight. It is necessary to examine below the surface as well as above before deciding an opinion.

[Concluded]

THE PRESS AT SEA.

BY the above title is not intended any audacious reflection upon the errors of the Fourth Estate—no malicious hint at the labyrinth in which it occasionally finds itself, either through want of information, or—which is more often the case—through a superabundance of it: we simply refer to newspapers printed and published on shipboard. These are among the 'things not generally known,' even to the reading public, while many stay-at-home folk, it is probable, may not even have heard of them. Nevertheless, in not a few of our large, long-voyaging, clipper-ships, it is customary, among other efforts to relieve the tedium of sailing across half the world, to publish a weekly newspaper. Some person of talent among the passengers undertakes to edit it; its literary contributors are volunteers from all parts of the ship—Saloon, Second Cabin, Intermediate, and Steerage; the captain generally favours it with quotations from his Log, and prognostications, eagerly devoured, of the probable duration of the voyage; and the medical officer promulgates in it his bulletins of health. The events that occur on board the ship itself—which have, of course, a public interest they would not possess on land—are duly chronicled, as well as any external incidents, such as speaking with other vessels, sighting icebergs, or catching of sharks. There is a Serial Novel—without which, how is it possible, in these days, to keep anything afloat!—and a Poet's Corner, for those whose *Muse has not been prostrated* by sea-sickness.

There is such an ocean newspaper now lying before us; it was printed, we suppose, for what may be called 'private circulation,' and not intended for landsmen's eyes; but still, we bought it at a London book-stall, and therefore may consider it the reverse of sacred. Moreover, it is very creditable to all concerned, and requires no unfavourable remarks. Under these circumstances, we need not conceal its genuine title:

THE LIGHTNING GAZETTE AND OCEAN ADVERTISER—Published on board the celebrated Black Ball Clipper-ship Lightning, on her Voyage from Melbourne to Liverpool, 1861—1862.

It is a double-column quarto journal, at first confined to two pages, but following the custom of and newspapers which have secured popularity, gradually increasing to three, and even four. Its price is nowhere mentioned, and from an observation in its own columns—namely, 'that the proprietors are not hampered by the vile consideration of whether the speculation will "pay" —we must conclude that the *Gazette* was gratuitous. If this was really the case, we may honestly say, that we have often paid money for much worse newspapers on shore. The chief interest of it, however, to our own readers, will

be undoubtedly the insight it gives us into 'life on the ocean wave, not the attic salt of its literature, but the smack of the salt-sea that pervades it from beginning to end. This is especially the case with the advertisements of the *Lightning Gazette*. These are very various, and range from the notices of the times of holding Divine Service down to proposed matches at whist and drafts, but they are all unearthly and marine. The first number is published on 13th December, a fortnight after they leave Melbourne; and even at that early date, the day of arrival in England affords matter for very liberal speculation:

SPORTING.—Liberal Odds laid against any one winning the Day of first seeing Land in Great Britain. Apply to F. Hospital (?), 11th December, 1861.

Scarcely any odds upon such an extremely problematical event could, we should think, be called 'liberal,' but there are doubtless many gentlemen from the gold-diggings on board who are inclined for a little gambling, and perhaps the advertiser imagines that his being 'in hospital' may induce the tender-hearted to take his bet. Again:

ADVERTISEMENT: Sweepstakes of 5s. each; 20 Members; to guess the Date of Arrival of the *Lightning*, first Land of Great Britain seen to be considered the winning Day. To commence from the 7th, and extend to the 30th day. Chooser of the winning Day to receive £4, the Day before, £1.

Setting aside the innocent excitement involved in the risk of these few shillings, what a touching picture of the hopes and fears of all on board does this advertisement suggest! As they get nearer to their native land, there are allusions enough to 'dear old England' and 'the old folks at home,' but even now, at the very beginning of the long voyage, what an indication does this proposal afford of the thoughts which are at work in all hearts! The inmates of this floating town are most of them returning home after years of absence in the under-world; some have been successful in getting that which they left their native land to procure, others, perhaps, are returning as poor as they departed; but all of them are expecting to meet with some much-loved faces, from which they have been parted by years of time, and a thousand leagues of sea; 'father or mother, sister or brother,' or haply 'a nearer one yet, and a dearer one' than all other, are waiting for them upon the other side of the Earth with longing eyes.

Nevertheless, in the meantime, let us enjoy ourselves, and pass the days as quickly as may be:

WHIST.—A Match may be arranged for, by communicating with X. Y. Z., *Gazette* Office.

DRAFTS.—The Undersigned is open to play any Gentleman on Board the best of two Games, for a stake not exceeding Five Shillings, open for seven Days. Replies to be forwarded to me, care of the Publisher of the *Gazette*.—**BERTRAND WOOD**, Fore-cabin.

But there are other propositions for 'killing the enemy' in a less objectionable way than by the 'Greek-fire' of gambling:

A Singing Class, for the Theory and Practice of Vocal Music, will be commenced early. Course of Lessons 6.

Again:

LECTURE.—On an early evening; due notice will be given. The Life and Writings of Sir Walter Scott. Captain Clarke will kindly allow the use of a portion of the Deck for the purpose.

And again:

CONCERT.—Free in the Stowage upon Monday Evening, at 3 P.M.,

with a programme of songs which are very decidedly nautical.

Nay, instruction as well as entertainment is proffered to those who do not wish, in spending time, to lose

SHORTHAND.—An experienced Teacher will take a few Pupils. Teaches Phonography; the best System extant. Apply early

But it must be acknowledged that what the majority of the *Lightning* public seems in need of is Excitement, a desire which animates the sternest moralist after a fortnight at sea. Therefore, although *Auction Sales* are among the advertisements, and there is an auctioneer with a

local habitation in the Fore-cabin, *Raffles* are more frequently advertised than anything else. It appears not improbable, too, that some of the passengers may have been a little hard-up, since 'Gold Brooches,' 'Gold Rings' and articles of personal adornment are the usual prizes to be contended for. Books, as might be expected, are valuable on board our clipper, and when a gentleman has lost his favourite and, perhaps, only volume, he publishes the fact:

LOST.—Harry Ogilvey, or the Black Dragon, a Novel Finder will oblige by returning it to Mr. Freeman, Second Cabin.

LOST.—The Rectory Guest, and Tales of the Irish Peasantry. And again:

LONGFELLOW'S POEMS.—Wanted, loan of a Copy.

Some advertisers do not hesitate to affirm that their property could not have got away without hands:

STOLEN.—Reward of 5s. Stolen off 1 Clothes-blue S in the Main Hatch-house, a white Singlet (something nautical, we conclude), bound with Blue round the Neck and Arms Gray ditto, bound with Blue round Neck, and Pair White Drawers. Apply, Star-board Side of Fore-castle.

There is also a suggestive advertisement inserted by the *We of the Lightning Gazette* himself

PADLOCK.—Wanted, by the Editor of the *Gazette*. Apply early

The miscellaneous advertisements are particularly characteristic

JEMMY DUCKS asks us to intimate that he is going to open a Menagerie forward, at an early date; where will be seen a White Nanny Goat, a real Milch Cow, Mossoké (?) and a few Laughing Jackasses.

TWO PUZZLES, named the Oak of Old England and the Chinese Ring Puzzle, have been placed in the hands of Mr. Freeman, to afford Passengers the opportunity of trying them.

DANCING.—The increased Accommodations of the Second and Fore Cabins afford capital space for the Admirers of the Terpsichorean Art: and we understand that arrangements for a Hop are on the tapis.

Dancing for ladies and gentlemen who possess what are called good 'sea-legs' we can imagine to have taken place on board our Clipper; but we confess that the next advertisement astonishes us:

FOOTBALL.—A very exciting Match was played on Wednesday afternoon on the weather-side of the Ship. The result was a drawn Battle, each Party kicking two Hails. Such manly amusements greatly tend to keep up the Health of all during the present rainy Weather.

Divine service has always a prominent place in the notices of Coming Events, and pains are taken to inform the public that 'the proceedings are of an entirely unsectarian character':

Religious Service will be held (D.V.)—[These letters are, curiously enough, only inserted here; the editor seems to have no doubt about the D.V. with respect to the Concerts and the Football]—in the Second Cabin at 10½ A.M. All disposed to join are respectfully requested to attend. Please bring Prayer-books and Bibles.

In warm latitudes, these services are held on deck, and of one of them the editor is so good as to say that the arrangements—a fine large awning overhead, and the Union-jack placed over the skylight to form a reading-desk—were highly satisfactory, and the Service the pleasantest we have ever enjoyed on shipboard.

The advertisements are sometimes of a facetious nature, such as—'Wanted, a Fair Wind to Liverpool. Apply to the Passengers generally.' And there are always some riddles or rebuses 'to be answered in our next.' But in the following case, it is difficult to know—for gold-diggers are very funny people—whether the advertiser is in jest or earnest:

MATRIMONIAL.—Wanted, Introduction to a Lady under Thirty Years of Age, with a view to Connubial Felicity. Advertiser stands Six Feet high in his Stockings, is passing well in looks, and able to provide a comfortable home. As he is in a hurry, has made up his mind not to be hypercritical as to the personal charms of any Lady disposed to be his cara sposa. Apply to L., care of the Publisher of the *Gazette*.—**EARLY.**

We are very much afraid that the reply to this notice, in the next week's number, is written by

some wag, and not a *bond-fide* acceptance of the above tempting offer:

MATRIMONIAL.—If the Gentleman who advertised under this head in the last *Gazette* will parade the deck, weather-side, from Saloon Galley to the Fore-cabin, on Saturday next, between 8 and 9 o'clock in the evening, M-y J-e will press his hand, as a proof of the sincerity of her affection for any gentleman who stands Six Feet in his Shoes. Wear a green waistcoat N B—Passengers are requested not to intrude on the above locality at the time named.—**INAMORATA.**

in great contrast to such jokers as the preceding, there are some contributors who insist on Science being represented in 'our columns' by a series of mathematical questions, which are printed side by side with the conundrums, and like them, answered in the next weekly number—probably by the propounders themselves.

What is the weight on each square foot of the sails of the 'Lightning,' when the wind travels at the rate of 45 miles an hour? Why does it walk in opposition to the laws of gravitation? What creates and destroys notions?

There are some useful hints given with respect to behaviour on board, perhaps suggested by the captain himself, and for which the *Gazette* offers a very convenient channel:

Smoking 'tween Decks.—This practice, which was rather too general, is now wisely abandoned by the sensible portion of the passengers. Besides the disagreeable smell to ladies, it vitiates the air, and incurs the danger of fire.

Parties who visit Love Lane (Where can this be?) are requested to beware of the paint, especially those who are in the habit of stretching themselves on the deck, to the great inconvenience of the crew when working the ship.

Haul the Bow line—We are glad to see the alacrity with which the passengers generally respond to the call of the officers when invited to give a pull at 'the Liverpool Rope.' This is advantageous to both parties, for while bringing us nearer 'Home, sweet Home,' the exercise is conducive to health. Considering the many fatigues and dangers to which 'Poor Jack' is necessarily exposed, he would be a sorry fellow who would refuse to lend a hand. . . . It will be seen that he who shews the greatest promptitude in this matter shall not leave the ship without a song in his honour, or being rated a jolly good fellow.

The 'Passenger Watch,' as it was called, seems, however, to have needed no appeal to its sense of duty. When approaching warm latitudes, the attention of all is drawn to the increased necessity for cleanliness and exercise; nor does the medical officer fail in every number to publish the state of the general health, with suggestions for its improvement. There are, however, throughout the voyage but two *Obituaries*. One narrates the decease of a poor little baby, who 'died thirty-six hours after birth, and was buried by the sailmaker.' The other records the loss of a pet kangaroo;

Press of matter in No 6 obliged us to omit noticing the death of 'Joey,' belonging to the Brothers Barry, passengers. This occurred on Sunday morning, and was apparently caused by the heat and closeness of the berth. Poor 'Joey' was a great favourite with the passengers, and hopped and skipped among the children like one of themselves.

When the ship has passed—at however great a distance—any land, such as the Diego Ramirez Islands, to see whose unattractive shores 'there was a general rush on deck, the sick, the wounded, and the aged turning out to a man,' there is a short description of the locality in the *Gazette*. Every incident, indeed, that breaks the monotony of the weary voyage is most carefully chronicled:

Icebergs.—An unusually large number of these 'illustrious strangers' has come across our horizon during the last nine or ten days. . . . It is interesting to see them, but more agreeable when they are a long way off.

The good ship was menaced by the ice of the South Pacific for no less than two thousand seven hundred miles of her course. The greatest event, however, that occurred on the voyage was the speaking with the *Star of India*, thirty-one days out from Liverpool, who brings the news of the death of Prince Albert, and the probability of war between England and the United States. This last causes 'great activity in the *Lightning Arsenal*,' and the 'getting of the two cannonades into working-order.'

Of the poems of the *Gazette* we cannot speak in very high terms, but in the serial novel—a tale of Australian life—there is introduced an incident (which really occurred in the colony of

Port Philip, now Victoria) of a character terrible enough to gratify the strongest appetite for sensation. It narrates how a human corpse was found tied to a tree in a forest, half-devoured by lawks and crows, who had already pecked out its eyes; and in the pocket of this unfortunate wretch a letter (afterwards published in the *Melbourne Argus*.) which ran as follows, "We hope that while I am writing, you are on your way back to those who, night and morning, remember you in their prayers. Take care of your health, my beloved child; and of all things, avoid damp feet. Remember how delicate you used to be, and wear worsted stockings in all weathers. The motives that induced you to go in pursuit of gold need not prolong your stay in Australia, as the deaths of your uncles, William and John, have rendered us perfectly independent. Come home at once on receipt of this, my darling boy, and gladden the eye of your fond mother. CARU—(the rest of the signature being torn off).

We trust that this portion of the serial appeared while the *Lightning* was in a warm latitude, for we never read anything more adapted for freezing the blood: and let us hope that it was owing to its depressing effect upon two of its readers, and not from any constitutional cowardice, that the following paragraph made its appearance in next week's *Gazette*:

A Man (not) Overboard.—During the hurricane of Wednesday night, two of the sailors were missed, and search was made for them for some hours without success. About 8 in the morning, the youngest turned up, and was severely reprimanded; but as the 'bullock-driver' did not show, all made up their minds that he had gone overboard during the hurricane. About 5 in the afternoon, the passengers in the fore-cabin were startled by his appearance among them, rubbing his eyes, and begging a drink of tea. On showing himself on deck, he was severely dealt with—as he deserved to be—by the men whom he had left to do his work.

The editor concludes by offering some excuse for the poor wretch, in there having been such incessant work for the last seventy-two hours, and, indeed, his desire to promote good feeling among all classes on board the ship is evidenced in every number. He is even careful to acquaint the public with the relief from toothache which he has experienced from taking a certain medicament of their fellow passenger, Mr. John Anderson, to whom he refers all suffering from a like complaint. Indeed, throughout his labours, we feel sure he can have offended nobody, with the exception of those unavoidable foes, the Rejected Contributors. From the moment our friend the carpenter placed that letter-box for contributions in a convenient part of the ship, the editor of course began to have his enemies. It was doubtless one of these Rejected Ones who, smarting under his disappointment—for what is the *sprete injuria formæ* of a woman compared to that—and jealous of the popularity of the *Gazette*, started in rivalry the *Lightning Times*. Our editor is civil and conciliatory even then, at least with respect to the first number, for 'although,' he remarks, 'it may be questioned whether eighty passengers offer a fair field for the successful publication of two weekly newspapers, yet,' adds he, with something akin to chivalry, 'no doubt a successful competition for the favour of the *Lightning* community will tend to improvement in all respects.' But the appearance of the second number of the *Times* is too much for him; and the good ship becomes even as the borough of Eatonswill, so terribly do the rival editors belabour one another.

WANTED. Somebody to write and publish sufficient nonsense to form a reply to the Article in No. 3 of the *Lightning Times*, as the *Gazette* has other business to do.

We are not surprised at ANYTHING that appears in the *Times*, &c. &c. &c., and so on until the eighth number, when our editor has the pleasing task of recording his rival's demise in the *Obituary*.

Except this not unnatural triumph, there is nothing throughout the existence of the *Lightning Gazette*—which lives, by the by, longer than some land newspapers we have known—which needs to be repented of down to its last day of issue, when the Old Head of Kinsale first looms in sight, and the raffles and the bets are

all decided. The final number is devoted to a very pleasant notice of the address voted by the passengers to Captain Clarke and the other officers of the ship, and then the types of the *Gazette* and the great ship's company are broken up together.

THE CHILD-QUEEN.

Blow, brazen trumpets, blow your best!
Ye red-checked trumpeters sound loud!
Blow clear and shrill, and fierce and proud!
Blow north and south, and east and west!

II.

See how the pliant courtiers bend,
Like willows when the wind is high,
Like poplars when the wind comes by.
When will this bowing ever end?

III.

And mark the snowy feathers float
Down the long pict'ured corridors.
Across the antechamber floors,
Hurried by many a clarion's note.

IV.

The rolling satins how they shimmer,
The tabards glisten, dowered with gold;
The bright silks rustle, fold on fold,
The pages gather in a hunc.

V.

Here comes the wily chancellor—
His old cheeks puckered with a smile,
And here the minister, all guile,
Bowling and bowing o'er and o'er.

VI.

And after them the courtier crowd,
The lords and ladies perfumed gay,
No hawthorn bush that blooms in May
Exhales more sweetness to the cloud.

VII.

And in the midst of all this pomp
A little gentle child there comes,
Who smiles to hear the rolling drums,
And laughs to hear the noisy tramp.

VIII.

All faces turn to her, as turn
The sunflower blossoms to the glow,
While the leaves, all wind-driven, blow,
The youthful cheeks with pleasure burn.

IX.

No warrior fresh from crimson war
This concourse greets; for hark! a shout
Blows through all the clamorous rout,
"The Queen of France and of Navarre!"

WALTER THORNHURY.

BIRDS OF PREY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c.

(Continued from page 391.)

Book the Seventh.

CHARLOTTE'S ENGAGEMENT.

CHAPTER I.—"IN YOUR PATIENCE YE ARE STRONG."

Miss Halliday returned to the Gothic villa at Bayswater with a bloom on her cheeks, and a brightness in her eyes, which surpassed her wonted bloom and brightness, fair and bright as her beauty had been from the hour in which she was created to charm mankind. She had been a creature to adore even in the first dawn of infancy, and in her christening-hood and toga of white satin had been a being to dream of. But now she seemed invested all at once with a new loveliness—more spiritual, more pensive, than the old.

Might not Valentine have cried, with the rapturous pride of a lover: "Look at the woman here with the new soul!" and anon. "This new soul is mine!"

It was love that had imparted a new charm to Miss Halliday's beauty. Diana wondered at the subtle change as her friend sat in her fa-

avourite window on the morning after her return, looking dreamily out into the blossomless garden, where evergreens of the darkest and spikiest character stood up stern and straight against the cold grey atmosphere.

Diana had welcomed her friend in her usual reserved manner, much to Charlotte's discomfiture. The girl so yearned for a confidante. She had no idea of hiding her happiness from this chosen friend, and waited eagerly for the moment in which she could put her arms round Diana's neck and tell her what it was that had made Newhall so sweet to her during this particular visit.

She sat in the window this morning thinking of Valentine, and languishing to speak of him, but at a loss how to begin. There are some people about whose necks the arms of affection can scarce entwine themselves. Diana Paget sat at her eternal embroidery-frame, picking up beads on her needle with the precision of some self-feeding machine. The little glass beads made a hard clicking sound as they dropped from her needle,—a very frosty, unpromising sound, as it seemed to Charlotte's hyper-sensitive ear.

There had been an unwonted reserve between the girls since Charlotte's return,—a reserve which arose, on Miss Halliday's part, from the contest between girlish shyness and the eager desire for a confidante; and on the part of Miss Paget, from that gloomy discontent which had of late possessed her.

She watched Charlotte furtively as she picked up her beads,—watched her with wondering eyes, unable to comprehend the happiness that gave such spiritual brightness to her eyes. It was not the old gaiety of heart which had made Miss Halliday's girlhood so pleasant. It was the thoughtful, serene delight of womanhood.

"She can care very little for Valentine," Diana thought, "or she could scarcely seem so happy after such a long separation. I doubt if these bewitching women who enchant all the world know what it is to feel deeply. Happiness is a habit with this girl. Valentine's attentions were very pleasant to her. The pretty little romance was very agreeable while it lasted, but at the first interruption of the story she shuts the book, and thinks of it no more. O, if my Creator had made me like that! If I could forget the days we spent together, and the dream I dreamt!"

That never-to-be-forgotten vision came back to Diana Paget as she sat at her work, and for a few minutes the clicking sound of the beads ceased, while she waited with clasped hands until the shadows should have passed before her eyes. The old dream came back to her like a picture, bright with colour and light. But 'no airy habitation which she had built for herself of old was no "palace lifting to Italian heavens its marble roof." It was only a commonplace lodging in a street running out of the Strand, with just a peep of the river from a trim little balcony. An airy second-floor sitting-room, with engraved portraits of the great writers on the newly-papered walls: on one side an office-desk, on the other a work-table. The unpretending shelter of a newspaper hack, who lives *à jour la journée*, and whose wife must achieve wonders in the way of domestic economy in order to eke out his modest earnings.

This was Diana Paget's vision of Paradise, and it seemed only the brighter now that she felt it was never to be anything more than a supernal picture painted on her brain.

After sitting silent for some little time, eager to talk, but waiting to be interrogated, Charlotte was fain to break silence.

"You don't ask me whether I enjoyed myself in Yorkshire, Di," she said, looking shyly down at the little bunch of charms and lockets which employed her restless fingers.

"Didn't I, really?" replied Diana, languidly; "I thought that was one of the stereotyped inquiries one always made."

"I hope you wouldn't make stereotyped inquiries of me, Diana."

"No, I ought not to do so. But I think there are times when one is artificial even with one's best friends. And you are my best friend,

Charlotte. I may as well say my only friend," the girl added with a laugh.

"Diana," cried Charlotte, reproachfully, "why do you speak so bitterly? You know how dearly I love you. I do indeed, dear. There is scarcely anything in this world I would not do for you. But I am not your only friend. There is Mr Hawkehurst, whom you have known so long."

Miss Halliday's face was in a flame, and although she bent very low to examine the golden trumpey hanging to her watch-chain, she could not conceal her blushes from the eyes that were so sharpened by jealousy.

"Mr. Hawkehurst!" cried Diana, with unspeakable contempt. "If I were drowning, do you think he would stretch out his hand to save me while you were within his sight? When he comes to this house—he who has seen so much poverty, and misery, and shame, and—happiness with me and mine—do you think he so much as remembers my existence? Do you think he ever stops to consider whether I am the Diana Paget who was once his friend and confidante and fellow-wayfarer and companion? or only a lay figure dressed up to fill a vacant chair in your drawing-room?"

"Diana!"

"It is all very well to look at me reproachfully, Charlotte. You must know that I am speaking the truth. You talk of friendship. What is that word worth if it does not mean care and thought for another? Do you imagine that Valentine Hawkehurst ever thinks of me, or considers me?"

Charlotte was fain to keep silence. She remembered how very rarely in all those long afternoons at Newhall farm the name of Diana Paget had been mentioned. She remembered how, when she and Valentine were mapping out the future so pleasantly, she had stopped in the midst of an eloquent bit of word-painting descriptive of the little suburban cottage they were to live in, to dispose of Diana's fate in a sentence:

"And dear Di can stop at the Villa to take care of mamma," she had said, whereupon Mr. Hawkehurst had assented with a careless nod, and the description of the ideal cottage had been continued.

Charlotte remembered this now with extreme contrition. She had been so supremely happy, and so selfish in her happiness.

"O, Di," she cried, "how selfish happy people are!" And then she stopped in confusion, perceiving that the remark had little relevance to Diana's last observation.

"Valentine shall be your friend, dear," she said, after a pause.

"O, you are beginning to answer for him already!" exclaimed Miss Paget with increasing bitterness.

"Diana, why are you so unkind to me?" Charlotte cried passionately. "Don't you see that I am longing to confide in you? What is it that makes you so bitter? You must know how truly I love you. And if Mr. Hawkehurst is not what he once was to you, you must remember how cold and distant you always are in your manner to him. I am sure, to hear you speak to him, and to see you look at him sometimes, one would think he was positively hateful to you. And I want you to like him a little for my sake."

Miss Halliday left her seat by the window as she said this, and went towards the table by which her friend was sitting. She crept close to Diana, and with a half-frightened, half-caressing movement, seated herself on the low ottoman at her feet, and, seated thus, possessed herself of Miss Paget's cold hand.

"I want you to like Mr. Hawkehurst a little, Di," she repeated, "for my sake."

"Very well, I will try to like him a little, for your sake," answered Miss Paget in a very unsympathetic tone.

"O, Di! tell me how it was he offended you."

"Who told you that he offended me?"

"Your own manner, dear. You could never have been so cold and distant with him—having known him so long, and endured so many

troubles in his company—if you had not been deeply offended by him."

"That is your idea, Charlotte, but, you see, I am very unlike you. I am fitful and capricious. I used to like Mr Hawkehurst, and now I dislike him. As to offence, his whole life has offended me; just as my father's life has offended me, from first to last. I am not good and amiable and loving, like you, but I hate deceptions and lies, above all, the lies that some men traffic in day after day."

"Was Valentine's—was your father's life a very bad one?" Charlotte asked, trembling palpably, and looking up at Miss Paget's face with anxious eyes.

"Yes, it was a mean false life,—a life of trick and artifice. I do not know the details of the schemes by which my father and Valentine earned their daily bread—and my daily bread, but I know they inflicted loss upon other people. Whether the wrong done was always done deliberately and consciously upon Valentine's part, I cannot say. He may have been only a tool of my father's. I hope he was, for the most part, an unconscious tool."

She said all this in a dreamy way, as if uttering her own thoughts, rather than seeking to enlighten Charlotte.

"I am sure he was an unconscious tool," cried that young lady with an air of conviction, "it is not in his nature to do anything false or dishonourable."

"Indeed! you know him very well, it seems," said Diana.

Ah, what a tempest was raging in that proud, passionate heart! what a strife between the powers of good and evil! Pitying love for Charlotte, tender compassion for her rival's childlike helplessness, and unutterable sense of her own loss.

She had loved him so dearly, and he was taken from her. There had been a time when he almost loved her—almost! Yes, it was the remembrance of that which made the trial so bitter. The cup had approached her lips, only to be dashed away for ever.

"What did I ask in life except his love?" she said to herself. "Of all the pleasures and triumphs which girls of my age enjoy, is there one that I ever coveted? No, I only sighed for his love. To live in a lodging-house parlour with him, to sit by and watch him at his work, to drudge for him, to bear with him—this was my brightest dream of earthly bliss; and she has broken it!"

It was thus Diana argued with herself, as she sat looking down at the bright creature who had done her this worst, last wrong which one woman can do to another. This passionate heart, which ached with such cruel pain, was prone to evil, and to day the scorpion Jealousy was digging his sharp tooth into its very core. It was not possible for Diana Paget to feel kindly disposed towards the girl whose unconscious hand had shattered the airy castle of her dreams. Was it not a hard thing that the bright creature, whom everyone was ready to adore, must needs steal away his one heart?

"It has always been like this, thought Diana. The story of David and Nathan is a parable that is perpetually being illustrated. David is so rich—he is lord of incalculable flocks and herds, but he will not be content till he has stolen the one little ewe lamb, the poor man's pet and darling."

"Diana," said Miss Halliday very softly, "you are so difficult to talk to this morning, and I have so much to say to you."

"About your visit, or about Mr. Hawkehurst?"

"About—Yorkshire," answered Charlotte, with the air of a shy child who has made her appearance at dessert, and is asked whether she will have a pear or a peach.

"About Yorkshire!" repeated Miss Paget, with a little sigh of relief. "I shall be very glad to hear about your Yorkshire friends. Was the visit a pleasant one?"

"Very, very pleasant!" answered Charlotte, dwelling tenderly on the words.

"How sentimental you have grown, Leota! I think you must have found a forgotten shelf

of Minerva Press novels in some cupboard at your aunt's. You have lost all your vivacity."

"Have I?" murmured Charlotte, "and yet I am happier than I was when I went away. Whom do you think I met at Newhall, Di?"

"I have not the slightest idea. My notions of Yorkshire are very vague. I fancy the people amiable savages; just a little in advance of the ancient Britons whom Julius Cæsar came over to conquer. Who did you meet there? Some country squire, I suppose, who fell in love with your bright eyes, and wished you to waste the rest of your existence in those northern wilds."

Miss Paget was not a woman to bare her wounds for the scrutiny of the friendliest eyes. Let the tooth of the serpent bite never so keenly, she could meet her sorrows with a bold front. Was she not accustomed to suffer—she, the scapegoat of defrauded nurses and indignant landladies, the dependent and drudge of her kinswoman's gynæceum, the despised of her father? The flavour of these waters was very familiar to her lips. The draught was only a little more acrid, a little deeper, and habit had enabled her to drain the cup without complaining, if not in a spirit of resignation. To-day she had been betrayed into a brief outbreak of passion; but the storm had passed, and a more observant person than Charlotte might have been deceived by her manner.

"Now you are my own Di again," cried Miss Halliday; "somewhat cynical at the best of times, but always candid and true."

Miss Paget winced ever so little as her friend said this.

"No, dear," continued Charlotte, with the faintest spice of coquetry; "it was not a Yorkshire squire. It was a person you know very well; a person we have been talking of this morning. O, Di, you must surely have understood me when I said I wanted you to like him for my sake!"

"Valentine Hawkehurst!" exclaimed Diana.

"Who else, you dear obtuse Di!"

"He was in Yorkshire?"

"Yes, dear. It was the most wonderful thing that ever happened. He marched up to Newhall gate one morning in the course of his rambles, without having the least idea that I was to be found in the neighbourhood. Wasn't it wonderful?"

"What could have taken him to Yorkshire?"

"He came on business."

"But what business?"

"How do I know? Some business of papa's or of George Sheldon's, perhaps. And yet that can't be. He is writing a book, I think, about geology or archæology—yes, that's it, archæology."

"Valentine Hawkehurst writing a book on archæology?" cried Miss Paget. "You must be dreaming, Charlotte."

"Why so? He does write, does he not?"

"He has been reporter for a newspaper. But he is the last person to write about archæology. I think there must be some mistake."

"Well, dear, it may be so. I didn't pay much attention to what he said about business. It seemed so strange for him to be there, just as much at home as if he had been one of the family. O, Di, you can't imagine how kind aunt Dorothy and uncle Joe were to him! They like him so much—and they know we are engaged."

Miss Halliday said these last words almost in a whisper.

"What!" exclaimed Diana, "do you mean to say that you have promised to marry this man, of whom you know nothing but what is unfavourable?"

"What do I know in his disfavour? Ah, Diana, how unkind you are! and what a dislike you must have for poor Valentine! Of course, I know he is not what people call a good match. A good match means that one is to have a pair of horses, whose health is so uncertain that I am sure their lives must be a burden to them, if we may judge by our horses; and a great many servants who are always conducting themselves in the most awful manner, if poor mamma's experience is any criterion, and a big expensive house, which nobody can be prevailed on to dust. No, Di; that is just the kind of life

I hate. What I should like is a dear little cottage at Highgate or Wimbledon, and a tiny, tiny garden, in which Valentine and I could walk every morning before he began his day's work, and where we could drink tea together on summer evenings—a garden just large enough to grow a few rosebushes. O, Di! do you think I want to marry a rich man?"

"No, Charlotte, but I should think you would like to marry a good man."

"Valentine is good. No one but a good man could have been so happy as he seemed at Newhall farm. That simple country life could not have been happiness for a bad man."

"And was Valentine Hawkehurst really happy at Newhall?"

"Really—really—really! Don't try to shake my faith in him, Diana; it is not to be shaken. He has told me a little about the past, though I can see that it pains him very much to speak of it. He has told me of his friendless youth, spent amongst unprincipled people, and what a mere waif and stray he was until he met me. And I am to be his pole-star, dear, to guide him in the right path. Do you know, Di, I cannot picture to myself anything sweeter than that—to be a good influence for the person one loves. Valentine says his whole nature has undergone a change since he has known me. What am I that I should work so good a change in my dear one? It is very foolish, is it not, Di?"

"Yes, Charlotte," replied the voice of reason from the lips of Miss Paget, "it is all foolishness, from beginning to end, and I can foresee nothing but trouble as the result of such folly. What will your mamma say to such an engagement? or what will Mr. Sheldon say?"

"Yes, that is the question," returned Charlotte very seriously. "Dear mamma is one of the kindest creatures in the world, and I'm sure she would consent to anything rather than see me unhappy. And then, you know, she likes Valentine very much, because he has given her orders for the theatres, and all that kind of thing. But, whatever mamma thinks, she will be governed by what Mr. Sheldon thinks, and of course he will be against our marriage."

"Our marriage! It was a settled matter, then—a thing that was to be sooner or later, and there remained only the question as to how and when it was to be. Diana sat like a statue, enduring her pain. So may have suffered the Christian martyrs in their death agony; so suffers a woman when the one dear hope of her life is reft from her, and she dare not cry aloud.

"Mr. Sheldon is the last man in the world to permit such a marriage," she said presently.

"Perhaps," replied Charlotte, "but I am not going to sacrifice Valentine for Mr. Sheldon's pleasure. Mr. Sheldon has full power over mamma and her fortune, but he has no real authority where I am concerned. I am as free as air, Diana, and I have not a penny in the world. Is not that delightful?"

The girl asked this question in all good faith, looking up at her friend with a radiant countenance. What irony there was in the question for Diana Paget, whose whole existence had been poisoned by the lack of that sterling coin of the realm which seemed such sordid dross in the eyes of Charlotte!

"What do you mean, Charlotte?"

"I mean, that even his worst enemies cannot accuse Valentine of any mercenary feeling. He does not ask me to marry him for the sake of my fortune."

"Does he know your real position?"

"Most fully. And now, Diana, tell me that you will try to like him, for my sake, and that you will be kind, and will speak a good word for me to mamma by and by, when I have told her all."

"When do you mean to tell her?"

"Directly, or almost directly. I scarcely know how to set about it. I am sure it has been hard enough to tell you."

"My poor Charlotte! What an ungrateful wretch I must be!"

"My dear Diana, you have no reason to be grateful. I love you very dearly, and I could not live in this house without you. It is I who

have reason to be grateful, when I remember how you bear with mamma's fidgetty ways, and with Mr. Sheldon's gloomy temper, and all for love of me."

"Yes, Lotta, for love of you," Miss Paget answered with a sigh, "and I will do more than that for love of you."

She had her arm round her happy rival's beautiful head, and she was looking down at the sweet upturned face with supreme tenderness. She felt no anger against this fair enslaver who had robbed her of her little ewe lamb. She only felt some touch of anger against the Providence which had decreed that the lamb should be so taken.

No suspicion of her friend's secret entered Charlotte Halliday's mind. In all their intercourse Diana had spoken very little of Valentine and in the little she had said there had been always the same half-bitter, half-disdainful tone. Charlotte in her simple candour accepted this tone as the evidence of Miss Paget's aversion to her father's protégé.

"Poor Di does not like to see her father give so much of his friendship to a stranger, while she is neglected," thought Miss Halliday; and having once jumped at this conclusion, she made no further effort to penetrate the mysteries of Diana's mind.

She was less than ever inclined to speculation about Diana's feelings now that she was in love, and blest with the sweet consciousness that her love was returned. Tender and affectionate as she was, she could not quite escape that taint of egotism which is the ruling vice of fortunate lovers. Her mind was not wide enough to hold much more than that one image, which demanded so much space.

CHAPTER II. MRS. SHELDON ACCEPTS HER DESTINY.

Miss Halliday had an interview with her mother that evening in Mrs. Sheldon's dressing-room, while that lady was preparing for rest, with considerable elaboration of detail in the way of hair-brushing, and putting away of neck-ribbons and collars and trinkets in smart little boxes and handy little drawers, all more or less odorous from the presence of dainty satin-covered sachets. The sachets, and the drawers, and boxes, and trinkets were Mrs. Sheldon's best anchorage in this world. Such things as these were the things that made life worth endurance for this poor weak little woman; and they were more real to her than her daughter, because more easy to realise. The beautiful light-hearted girl was a being whose existence had been always something of a problem for Georgina Sheldon. She loved her after her own feeble fashion, and would have jealously asserted her superiority over every other daughter in the universe, but the power to understand her or to sympathise with her had not been given to that narrow mind. The only way in which Mrs. Sheldon's affection showed itself was unquestioning indulgence and the bestowal of frivolous gifts, chosen with no special regard to Charlotte's requirements, but rather because they happened to catch Mrs. Sheldon's eye as they glittered or sparkled in the windows of Bayswater repositories.

Mr. Sheldon happened to be dining out on this particular evening. He was a guest at a great City feast, to which some of the richest men upon 'Change had been bidden, so Miss Halliday had an excellent opportunity for making her confession.

Poor Georgy was not a little startled by the avowal.

"My darling Lotta," she screamed, "do you think your papa would ever consent to such a thing?"

"I think my dear father would have consented to anything likely to secure my happiness, mamma," the girl answered sadly.

She was thinking how different this crisis in her life would have seemed if the father she had loved so dearly had been spared to help and counsel her.

"I was not thinking of my poor dear first husband," said Georgy. This numbering of her husbands was always unpleasant to Charlotte. It seemed such a very business-like mode of

description to be applied to the father she so deeply regretted.

"I was thinking of your step-papa," continued Mrs. Sheldon. "He would never consent to your marrying Mr. Hawkehurst, who really seems to have nothing to recommend him except his good looks and an obliging disposition with regard to orders for the theatres."

"I am not bound to consult my step-father's wishes. I only want to please you mamma."

"But, my dear, I cannot possibly consent to anything that Mr. Sheldon disapproves."

"Oh, mamma, dear, kind mamma, do have an opinion of your own for once in a way! I dare say Mr. Sheldon is the best possible judge of everything connected with the Stock Exchange and the money market, but don't let him choose a husband for me. Let me have your approval, mamma, and I care for no one else. I don't want to marry against your will. But I am sure you like Mr. Hawkehurst." Mrs. Sheldon shook her head despondingly.

"It's all very well to like an agreeable young man as an occasional visitor," she said, "especially when most of one's visitors are middle-aged city people. But it is a very different thing when one's only daughter talks of marrying him. I can't imagine what can have put such an idea as marriage into your head. It is only a few months since you came home from school; and I fancied that you would have stopped with me for years before you thought of settling."

Miss Halliday made a wry face.

"Dear mamma," she said, "I don't want to 'settle.' That is what one's housemaid says, isn't it, when she talks of leaving service and marrying some young man from the baker's or the grocer's? Valentine and I are not in a hurry to be married. I am sure, for my own part, I don't care how long our engagement lasts. I only wish to be quite candid and truthful with you mamma, and I thought it a kind of duty to tell you that he loves me, and that—I love him—very dearly."

These last words were spoken with extreme shyness.

Mrs. Sheldon laid down her hair-brushes while she contemplated her daughter's blushing face. Those blushes had become quite a chronic affection with Miss Halliday of late.

"But, good gracious me, Charlotte," she exclaimed, growing peevish in her sense of helplessness, "who is to tell Mr. Sheldon?"

"There is no necessity for Mr. Sheldon to be enlightened yet awhile, mamma. It is to you I owe duty and obedience—not to him. Pray keep my secret, kindest and most indulgent of mothers, and—ask Valentine to come and see you now and then."

"Ask him to come and see me, Charlotte! You must know very well that I never invite anyone to dinner except at Mr. Sheldon's wish. I am sure I quite tremble at the idea of a dinner. There is such trouble about the waiting, and such dreadful uncertainty about the cooking. And if one has it all done by Birch's people, one's cook gives warning next morning," added, poor Georgy, with a dismal recollection of recent perplexities. "I am sure I often wish myself young again, in the dairy at Barlingford, making matrimony cakes for a tea-party, with a ring and a fourpenny-piece hidden in the middle. I'm sure the Barlingford tea-parties were pleasanter than Mr. Sheldon's dinners, with those solemn City people, who can't exist without clear turtle and red mullet."

"Ah, mother dear, our lives were altogether happier in those days. I delight in the Yorkshire tea-parties, and the matrimony cakes, and all the talk and laughter about the fourpenny-piece and the ring. I remember getting the fourpenny-piece at Newhall last year. And that means that one is to die an old maid, you know. And now I am engaged. As to the dinners, mamma, Mr. Sheldon may keep them all to himself and his City friends. Valentine is the last person in the world to care for clear turtle. If you will let him drop in sometimes of an afternoon—say once a week or so—when you, and I, and Diana are sitting at our work in the drawing-room, and if you will let him

hand us our cups at our fire-o'clock tea, he will be the happiest of men. He adores tea. You'll let him come, won't you, dear? O, mamma I feel just like a servant who asks to be allowed to see her 'young man.' Will you let my young man come to tea, once in a way?"

"Well, Charlotte, I'm sure I don't know," said Mrs. Sheldon, with increasing helplessness. "It's really a very dreadful position for me to be placed in."

"Quite appalling, is it not, mamma? But then I suppose it is a position that people afflicted with daughters must come to sooner or later."

"If it were the mere civility of asking him to tea," pursued poor Georgy, heedless of this slipshod interruption, "I'm sure I should be the last to make any objection. Indeed, I am under a kind of obligation to Mr. Hawkehurst, for his polite attention has enabled us to go to the theatres very often when your papa would not have thought of buying tickets. But then, you see, Lotta, the question in point is not his coming to our five o'clock tea—which seems really a perfect mockery to any one brought up in Yorkshire—but whether you are to be engaged to him."

"Dear mamma, that is not a question at all, for I am already engaged to him."

"But Charlotte—"

"I do not think I could bring myself to disobey you, dear mother," continued the girl, tenderly, "and if you tell me of your own free will, and acting on your own conviction, that I am not to marry him, I must bow my head to your decision, however hard it may seem. But one thing is quite certain, mamma. I have given my promise to Valentine, and if I do not marry him, I shall never marry at all, and then the dreadful augury of the fourpenny-piece will be verified."

Miss Halliday pronounced this determination with a decision of manner that quite overawed her mother. It had been the habit of Georgy's mind to make a feeble protest against all the mutations of life, but in the end to submit very quietly to the inevitable, and since Valentine Hawkehurst's acceptance as Charlotte's future husband seemed inevitable, she was fain to submit in this instance also.

Valentine was allowed to call at the Lawn, and was received with a feeble, half-plaintive graciousness by the lady of the house. He was invited to stop for the five-o'clock tea, and availed himself rapturously of this delightful privilege. His instinct told him what gentle hand had made the meal so dainty and home-like, and for whose pleasure the phantasmal pieces of bread-and-butter usually supplied by the trim parlour-maid had given place to a salver loaded with innocent delicacies in the way of pound-cake and apricot jam.

Mr. Hawkehurst did his uttermost to desorbse so much indulgence. He scoured London in search of free admissions for the theatres, hunting "Ragamuffins and members of the Gibber Club, and other privileged creatures, at all their places of resort. He watched for the advent of novels adapted to Georgy's capacity—lively records of croquet and dressing and love-making, from smart young Amazons in the literary ranks, or deeply interesting romances of the sensation school, with at least nine deaths in the three volumes, and a comic housemaid, or a contumacious "Buttons," to relieve the gloom by their playful waggeries. He read Tennyson or Owen Meredith, or carefully selected 'bits' from the works of a younger and wilder bard, while the ladies worked industriously at their prie-dieu chairs, or Berlin broches, or Shetland convrepieds, as the case might be. The patroness of a fancy fair would scarcely have smiled approvingly on the novel effect in *crochet a trecoiler* produced by Miss Halliday during these pleasant lectures.

"The rows will come wrong," she said piteously, "and Tennyson's poetry is so very absorbing!"

Mr. Hawkehurst showed himself to be possessed of honourable, not to say delicate, feelings in his new position. The Gothic villa was his paradise, and the gates had been freely opened to admit him whenever he chose to come.

Georgy was just the sort of person from whom people take ells after having asked for inches; and once having admitted Mr. Hawkehurst as a privileged guest, she would have found it very difficult to place any restriction upon the number of his visits. Happily for this much-perplexed matron Charlotte and her lover were strictly honourable. Mr. Hawkehurst never made his appearance at the Villa more than once in the same week, though the "once a week or so" asked for by Charlotte might have been stretched to a wider significance.

When Valentine obtained orders for the theatre, he sent them by post, scrupulously refraining from making them the excuse for a visit.

"That was all very well when I was a freebooter," he said to himself, "only admitted on sufferance, and liable to have the door shut in my face any morning. But I am trusted now, and I must prove myself worthy of my future mother-in-law's confidence. Once a week! One seventh day of unspenkable happiness—bliss without alloy! The six other days are very long and dreary. But then they are only the lustres setting in which that jewel the seventh shines so gloriously. Now, if I were Waller, what verses I would sing about my love! Alas, I am only a commonplace young man, and can find no new word in which to tell the old sweet story."

If the orders for stalls and private boxes were not allowed to serve as an excuse for visits, they at least necessitated the writing of letters, and no human being, except a lover, would have been able to understand why such long letters must needs be written about such a very small business.

PRUSSIA AND FRANCE.

HOSTILE passions, interested speculations, and a deplorable credulity, are constantly compelling the Emperor of the French to protest that his empire is peace. The world has so strange a mental constitution that it obstinately connects great and increasing military strength with serious warlike probabilities. You may quote old classics and modern imperialists to prove that nothing contributes to peace so much as to go armed to the teeth. Public opinion cannot be so persuaded, and it must be admitted that public opinion has the materials for a very wide induction leading to a precisely opposite conclusion. Perhaps it is quite as well, whether peace is really in danger or not, that it should be supposed insecure when France or any other great military monarchy makes special military preparations. Till Europe fairly perceives that you cannot purchase the blessings of peace by a war expenditure, that expenditure is not likely to cease. It has the double advantage of support from those who wish for war and acquiescence from those who wish for peace, and while this continues, must possess a strong grasp upon the financial policy of every State. The French exchequer was very much under its sway even when the pacific Fould was Minister. At present the purse-strings are held by M. Rouher, who, though a very enlightened judge of the sources of national wealth, is by no means an economist in its expenditure, so far as military objects are concerned. Moreover, he is too devoted to the Emperor's ideas to hesitate, on financial grounds, at any expense which is necessary to give them effect. Intervals of quietude there may be; good faith towards England there may be, continuous development of industrial production there may be; there may even be a readiness on each particular question as it arises to avoid exorbitant demands. But the idea that the Empire would decay if its military prowess were forgotten is never lost sight of. So long as it is kept in view, the peace of Europe can never be considered safe. Even the absence of "questions" would be a worthless guarantee. But there are questions. Above all, there is the great question of Prussian progress and ascendancy. With this huge and overhanging mountain in view, who can call the landscape a smiling one? The

note in the *Moniteur* draws a fancy picture of it that would do credit to an estate agent, but public opinion, like another Martin Chuzzlewit, looks abroad upon the Eden and finds the prospect anything but paradisaic. The tone in which the French papers discuss the subject is certainly not worthy of any great occasion. The *Patrie*, for example, says that neither France nor Prussia wants to go to war, but that a few papers in each country want to bring about that result. Perhaps they do; but sparks are useless where there is neither tinder, touch-paper, nor gunpowder. If the countries want to fight they would do it in spite of the newspapers. If they do not want to fight, all the able editors in the world could not make them. To lay so much stress on the war feeling being confined to the newspapers is very like saying that Fenian outbreaks may be allowed full swing in Ireland because very few Irishmen are in favor of abolishing property, as the Fenians are said to be. That is, any effectual cry for war in either country is not yet true, but that there is a feeling equally strong in both which would become fiercely warlike upon a very small occasion is indubitable. The Paris press, moreover, seems about as adroit as Lord Stanley was in the earlier passages of his Luxembourg correspondence in using language likely, while directed against war, to enlist on the side of war the *amour propre* of Prussia. For example, the journal from which we have already quoted takes the trouble to put side by side the risks which France and Prussia would incur by going to war with each other, the object being to prove the unlikelihood of such contingencies being willingly encountered. What are they? France could not undertake a war against Prussia except in the event of aggression and flagrant violation of her rights, without sacrificing her generous influence over democratic Europe. Well, no doubt that is a very precious, though a rather impalpable possession. But would any such risk be really run? We fear not. Count Bismarck is a great man and has done a great work. "It was a clear prophecy," says Mr. Carlyle, or his double, in the new number of *Macmillan*, "that Germany would either become honorably Prussian, or go to gradual annihilation; but who of us expected that we ourselves, instead of our children's children, should live to behold it; that a magnanimous and fortunate Herr Von Bismarck, whose dispraise was in all the newspapers, would to his own amazement find the thing now doable, and would do it, the essential of it, in a few of the current weeks?" This passage expresses the general marvel, but there is no such general recognition yet of the necessity of what Bismarck did; nor is the all but unanimous will and wish of Germany which Bismarck carried out incorporated with the general democratic creed of Europe. To make offensive war upon North Germany would be a great crime, and the *Patrie* rightly perceives that it would be an affront and violence to democracy; but it is by no means likely that at present democratic opinion would so regard it. The risk, then, which the French journal thinks the Emperor would run by going to war is really a chimerical one. But what peril is placed in apposition with it as incurred by Prussia if, under any circumstances, she were to make war on France? Nothing less than the certain loss of the fruits of fifty years' political efforts and three months' sanguinary victories. Now if this were a true account of the stakes, the statement would hardly prevent a high-spirited nation from trying its fate, and if it be an untrue and extravagant account of them, it can have no other result than to inflame the Prussian mind to the extent to which it obtains notice amongst King William's subjects. And the *Patrie*, to hint that its preferences are not quite so pacific as might be supposed, takes occasion to tell us that Francis Joseph is coming to Biarritz with Napoleon III., and that "not Count Bismarck, but Baron Reust," will be there on a visit at the same time. Baron Reust is the one man in Europe who is most eager and most able to challenge Bismarck's power and success. Meanwhile, what is the tone of the Berlin press? The *Kreuz Zeitung*, under its new name, has just given us the opportunity of judging in what

spirit French demonstrations are regarded in the Prussian capital. The Berlin journal is Bismarckian in its frankness, and makes no pretence that warlike expressions in France signify no general or extensive concurrence of opinion. "M. Dupin, in his late speech," says the *Gazette*, "expressed the feelings of a large proportion of the French people. Moreover, his words might almost lead Denmark to imagine that France was about to make war upon Prussia for the rights of the Slesvigers. Therefore the representative of Prussian policy does not hesitate to say in what light the Duchy acquisitions of Prussia are regarded. If any other nation is prepared to treat the possession of them by Prussia as the consequence of intrigues, Prussia is ready to fight for it as the result of a just war provoked by the systematic oppression of Denmark. Prussia admits that, by the Prague Treaty, she is bound to Austria to cede to Denmark, upon a free vote of the inhabitants, the northern districts of Slesvig. But for all that, Prussia will not hand back to Danish arbitrariness and fanaticism Germans for whose liberation German blood has flowed. No, not even if in France such an unjust demand should be raised." There is the true Bismarck ring in this; and the writer goes on to draw an ominous distinction between this question and that of Luxembourg. The latter was more international than national, the latter is national entirely, and not international at all. "Slesvig is a Prussian province, and cannot be disposed of by a conference." This is clearly exclaiming, "Come and take it." And for anything any of us can tell, Napoleon III. and Baron Beust will resolve at Biarritz to take up the glove so impetuously thrown down. Whether war is probable or not it were difficult to say; that opportunities for it are prominently present, all of us can perceive. Probably, the French Emperor would prefer peace; but to have it safely he must get Prussia to assume a conciliatory and deprecatory tone. And this is precisely the last concession Bismarck or his *entourage* will make to the Napoleonic susceptibilities. We do not say war is coming, but no other eventual issue is conceivable if France persists in endeavouring to neutralize Prussian aggrandisement by swagger and to disarm Prussian resentment by pacific protestations.

PROLL. A MYSTERY.

In the last will and testament of Mr. John Smith of Allsop-terrace, Halifax (the instrument may be consulted by the incredulous at the usual expense of a shilling and patience), will be found a paragraph to the following effect:

"Also, I give and bequeath to 'Proll, whatever or whomsoever that may prove to be, his or her heirs or legal representatives, the sum of three thousand pounds Three per Cent Consolidated Bank Annuities, desiring that my executors, hereinafter named, shall make every reasonable effort for the discovery of the aforesaid 'Proll, his or her, &c.; which efforts shall comprise an advertisement, thrice repeated, in a leading London journal, as well as the local papers of Liverpool and Birmingham. And, in default of such efforts proving successful within a year and a day, then my said executors shall expend the fund aforesaid in the purchase of some sufficient tokens for the reward of any remarkable deeds of personal prowess, which shall be and occur within three years of my decease."

The singular wording of this bequest created much local interest at the time, and attracted an unusual amount of attention to the character and history of a harmless little man who might have otherwise slipped out of this bustling world as noiselessly as he had dwelt in it.

Mr. John Smith was the only son of a Halifax apothecary, who left him at his death, which did not occur until the "boy" was past forty, the possessor of an income of five hundred pounds a year. John had been destined (in his cradle) for his father's profession, but nature, in the form of a peculiarly timid and susceptible temperament, raised such objections, that the project had to be abandoned, and trout fish-

ing in summer, and snipe-shooting in winter, formed the leading occupations of the young man's life, until these sports were interrupted, for a season, by the decease of his respected sire, and the consequent duty of looking into his own affairs. This discharged, Mr. John returned to the snipe and trout with undiminished ardour.

The change in his habits was, indeed, so slight as to be hardly perceptible. Even the two old servants, husband and wife, who had, from time immemorial to him, formed the domestic establishment, and whom he (John) had, from kindly motives, dismissed, superannuated, with a handsome allowance, insisting that Master John was not getting on nicely without them, came quietly back, dismissed, without the slightest ceremony, the provisional maid, and resumed their accustomed duties with all the vigour of youth!

John Smith has been described, by a gentleman who lived in his immediate neighbourhood, as an under-educated but well-mannered little man, with a pug nose, watery eyes, and a funny little flickering smile, which seemed to have been caught from the ripple of the brook over which it had been his delight to hang since boyhood.

Take John Smith altogether, body and mind, he was perhaps the very last individual in the world to whom anything romantic or mysterious was likely to attach. And yet John Smith had a romance and a mystery; and (like a queer little parenthesis in the social annals of the world) here we chronicle the same, taking up the history about two years subsequent to the commencement of John's orphanhood.

Although Mr. Smith had never been in the habit of giving regular dinner-parties, it was a frequent custom with him to invite two or three of his chief gossips to partake of a brace of Wandle trout, most of which, weight, condition, disposition, and all, were (while yet in their native element) so well known to that experienced fisherman, that it must have been like dimming the circle of his personal acquaintance to dine upon them. These, with a neck of mutton and any pretty little tiny kickshaw, such as Justice Shallow with commendable judgment delegated to his cook, formed a light and pleasant banquet, which left the intellect clear, and temper sweet, for the rubber of threepenny whist that wound up the evening.

It was on one of these festive occasions that attention was drawn to the first of a series of remarkable objects, which seemed altogether out of keeping with the modest adornments of the Smith mansion. It was a massive silver chalice, of most beautiful workmanship, displaying three compartments, on which were represented scenes from the "tauro-machia," or classic bull fights. It stood upon a blue-velvet-covered pedestal, beneath a glass case, which, while it permitted a full inspection of the masterly devices on its gleaming sides, protected the exquisite object from dust or soil.

"Hallo, Jack, that's a fine thing!" remarked friend number one, suddenly awaking, as it seemed, to the merit of the "thing" to which he had been sitting opposite for half an hour, "I must put on my specs for this. Magnificent, by jingo! Look at it, Gripper. *Toro—what?* Was this your father's, Jack?"

Mr. Smith coloured and hesitated.

"Well, no. My father he didn't seem to care much about them sort of things, but, I say, Gripper, just you try that brown sherry. Join us, Peters, will you?"

"If I were to be guilty of the vulgarity of appraising a man's property at his own table," said Mr. Slade, the curate, "I should be disposed to affirm that the individual who became possessed of that chalice at anything under three hundred and fifty pounds, was a lucky fellow."

"Where upon earth did he get it?" said friend number three to friend number four. "I didn't give our host credit for tastes of this kind."

"Aha! There's a mystery, I take it, about that chalice," remarked the ungrateful Gripper, who, even while swallowing the brown sherry, intended to silence him, had noticed the embarrassment of the little host. "I must examine

more minutely," and he stretched out his hand towards the cup.

Smith caught him nervously by the sleeve. "Not for worlds, old fellow! Let it alone, can't you?" he gasped, and sank into his chair with a perceptible shiver. Mr. Slade adroitly turned the conversation.

Several months passed, yet the surprise created by Mr. Smith's purchase had not wholly subsided when a second and yet more costly object made its appearance in the drawing-room at Allsop-terrace. This time it was a gigantic vase, than which may be seen (especially in Germany) many baths of smaller dimensions. It was composed of about equal quantities of gold and silver, and was, like its predecessor, surrounded with devices of the rarest mould—the subjects in this case, being suggestive of stirring incidents of the chase, or war. The rich cover was crested with the design of a matador (in solid gold) giving the finishing touch to a white Andalusian bull in a frenzy of silver. It must have been worth, at the very lowest estimate, a thousand guineas.

Mr. Smith was as reticent and as embarrassed as ever, and his friends had to fall back entirely on conjecture.

What in the world did it mean? Could the donor have been some grateful patient of the deceased apothecary? But no: for why conceal what would be so honourable to all the parties concerned? Could it be that a sudden monomaniacal passion for objects of this description had possessed John Smith even to the absorption of full two years' income in a single purchase? Hardly that, for he was sane and shrewd enough in others things. And, besides, how would the timid, nervous little gentleman have been able to summon the courage and decision required to complete such a bargain? The curiosity on the subject grew almost into pain.

"Come now, you know; tell us, old fellow, where these gold and silver mines of yours are situated?" inquired the somewhat rough-mannered Mr. Gripper, adopting that frank tone which, indeed, was fairly his own, but was intended, on this occasion, to invite a corresponding frankness.

"I—I don't know what you mean," replied Mr. Smith, the fan smile flickering in and out of his irresolute face, like a damp wick that will not ignite kindly.

"Now, I'll tell you what, my friend," resumed Mr. Gripper, setting his teeth in the truculent manner which always warned his interlocutors that he was going to say something very unpleasant indeed, "I see at all!"

Mr. Smith looked disturbed, but it was not the agitation of one whose secret is on the point of being discovered. On the contrary, it was with something that seemed like curiosity, that he ejaculated, with unusual emphasis:

"Then wh—what the devil is it?"

There's a woman, and a woman with money, you lucky dog, in the case."

"In what case? Where?" gasped Mr. Smith, in sudden terror.

"In love with you, that's all!"

Mr. Smith turned deadly pale. His hair, had its constitution permitted, would have assumed an erect position.

"Heaven forbid! In love with me? What ever have I done? Come, Gripper, you're always ready with your chaff, ain't you, now?" said poor little Smith, almost piteously. "Say you're a quizzing, now."

"Truth, John, is kindest," replied the inflexible Gripper. "It is my painful duty to arouse you to the fact that you have, wittingly or otherwise (I am not your judge), ensnared the affection of some confiding woman, with a good balance at her banker's, whose homage, in the form of gifts, you, with a baseness of which I should have believed you incapable, do not scruple to accept, intending, all the while, to—to—in fact," concluded Mr. Gripper, shortly, "to throw her over."

"Over what? Who? Which? What are you talking about?" stammered poor Smith.

"I wish, Gripper, you wouldn't be such a fool!"

"Poo, sir?"

"And don't talk so loud, please," continued

'the other, looking nervously round "You do 't know who might hear, and, perhaps believe your chaff, for it is chaff, now, ain't it? Come, be neighbours, now, and don't let's have no more of this."

"That will wholly depend upon the course I see you adopt," said Mr. Gripper, guardedly. (He was a good natured man, and loved a joke, but his serious manner, and a gloomy look he had the gift of assuming at pleasure, frequently imposed upon his friends.) "Now, sir, unless you think fit to communicate the whole of this nefarious plot to me, I will not answer for what, as a matter of honour and humanity, I may not feel bound to do."

"Plot? Whose plot? Why do you talk to me as if I was a Guy Fawkes?" pleaded poor Smith, in a tone of such distress that Mr. Gripper all but abandoned his joke.

"From whence come these magnificent presents? And why, sir, do you colour and hesitate when questioned on the matter?" retorted Gripper, sternly. "No one suspects you of having stolen them. As 'tittle could you afford to become their purchaser; and where the deuce you came by the judgment to select them, if your funds permitted, is the greatest mystery of all. There is but one solution; that, sir, which I have suggested. As man to man, I demand—yes, demand—an explanation."

Mr. Gripper folded his arms, and called up a frown of extraordinary gloom.

Perhaps he overdid it a little. Perhaps a dim consciousness that Mr. Gripper had no more business with the matter than the Tycoon of Japan, awoke, in the gentle bosom of poor little Smith, the slumbering man. At all events, with an energy he was never known to display before or since, he confronted his scowling friend, and, making the most of the niggard stature meted out to him, boldly replied:

"Then, sir, I refuse; and the sooner you can make it convenient to quit my house the better."

"Quit your house?" cried Mr. Gripper, dismissing his frown and joke together. "Not till I have shaken hands with one of the heartiest and pluckiest fellows in the whole range of my acquaintance. By Jove, Smith, what a spitfire you are becoming."

"Think so?" said Mr. Smith, rubbing his hands, and at once returning to good humour.

"Couldn't you see that I was only chaffing you?" asked his friend; and, shortly after, took his leave, much disgusted at not having been able to discover the secret.

Greater surprises were in store. Mr. Slade, who was rather near sighted, was entering one evening his friend's always open hall door, when he was startled by a flash of steel and gold, and a tall menacing figure, armed with a glittering lance, seemed to be about to make a target of his breast. Mr. Slade recoiled instinctively back against the door, and then perceived that his assailant was only the case of a warrior; being, in fact, a magnificent suit of Milan armour—silken surcoat and all, complete—and which, being placed across a mighty block of wood, in default of a steed, represented a knight in the tilt-yard in act to charge. A diadem encircling the wrought helm, denoted that this costly equipment had enclosed the limbs of some chivalrous prince in ages passed away.

The good curate was still rubbing his eyes, and marvelling at such an object encountered in such a place, when Mr. Smith bustled in.

"Why, Smith, what have you got here? My good friend, this is a treasure indeed!"

"Ah! I thought you'd like my Lazy Sally, and was 'oping you'd look in," replied the virtuoso. "There, you needn't go too close. It looks 'alf as well again at a distance," he added, nervously.

"Your Lazy Sally!" ejaculated Slade. "Why do you call it so?"

"Cause that's its name," retorted Mr. Smith. "Look 'ere!" and he pointed to a device and legend on the shield borne by the kingly champion.

Short-sighted Mr. Slade put on his glasses, and made out, for device, a bull's head and neck encircled by a broken chain, and, for motto, the well-known words in which the

marshal of a tournament gave signal to engage: "Laissez aller."

"Lazy Sally! I said so," exclaimed the lover of art. "I wish it wasn't quite so big, though. Where ever it's to stand—"

"Why, Smith, you are collecting quite a museum?" remarked the curate. "You will want a custodian shortly."

Well; I don't think it'll come to that," said Smith. "I shan't outrun the constable."

Mr. Slade laughed, and observed that his friend had slightly mistaken his meaning.

The curate's prophecy seemed likely to come true. Other objects of art continued to arrive at uncertain intervals, until not a room in the house but could boast of at least one rich and beautiful specimen, selected by a taste as pure as the expenditure it must have involved was liberal. Mr. Smith's collection arrived at the value of, at least, fifteen thousand pounds; and it was not unusual for persons in the county, who delighted in such things, to travel considerable distances to visit the accomplished proprietor, and congratulate him on his acquisitions and the refined art-knowledge which dictated their selection. The suit of Milan armour was an especial attraction, and was rendered more interesting by the circumstance that an inscription had been discovered on the breast-plate beneath the surcoat. It had, however, been purposely obliterated, and now only conveyed a suspicion that it had been in modern English without affording any clue to its significance.

Thus matters went on, until the "unmoved Fates," who spare the harmless as little as the oppressor, knocked at the quiet door in Allsop terrace, and imperatively demanded the body of Mr. John Smith.

The pretence was this. One day, towards the closing of the trout-season, when your sworn piscator grows keen and jealous of his diminishing sport, Mr. Smith—while in the heat of a life-and-death contest with a four-hound patriarch, whose time (John felt) was more than up—slipped down the bank, and into a deep pool.

He was, it is true, rescued by some husbandmen and fished up, not only alive, but victorious, still holding to his prize. But the results were serious. The poor little man caught a cold that sets its fangs in his delicate chest, and ultimately sucked away his life.

When conscious of his approaching end, he sent for his friend Slade, and requested him to allow himself to be named co-executor with their gossip, Tom Gripper, to carry out, among other things, a purpose he had greatly at heart. It need hardly be said that his old friend consented, and, thereupon, John Smith disburdened his mind of a little romance of private life, which may possibly be held not unworthy of a page in these records of the rolling year.

About twelve years before, and about three years subsequent to his father's death, John received a mysterious consignment, which, being opened, revealed that exquisite silver chalice which first attracted his neighbour's curiosity. A card accompanied it, on which, in a beautiful female hand, were written these words:

"To J. S. From the deeply grateful and admiring Proll."

And, in plain but unobtrusive characters, below the rim of the chalice, was engraven:

"To the intrepid Smith."

Perplexed in the extreme, John carefully laid up the chalice, hoping that the mystery would in some manner elucidate itself, and not without fear that he might be suddenly called upon to account for appropriating what was certainly intended for another of his by no means uncommon name. And "Proll," who on earth was "Proll? Was it Proll? Yes. There was no mistake as to the spelling. Proll might have been more natural, more familiar. No. Proll it was.

All doubts, however, were dispelled by the alarming receipt of the second present, the vase, accompanied by a note from "Proll," expressing her regret that Mr. Smith's modesty—a quality that always attends true courage—should have deterred him from exhibiting to his friends the former testimony of her gratitude and enthusiastic admiration. "I know you," Proll con-

cluded, "John Smith, of 9, Allsop-terrace, though you know not me. And your Proll, your grateful but invisible protectress, Proll, will I remain until my dying day."

"Whatever I've done for to make anybody so grateful," said poor little Smith, his wan smile wanner than ever, "I can't understand."

Slade could not help him on this point, so, to turn the conversation, asked his friend why he had evinced so marked a disinclination to having Proll's gifts closely examined?

John seemed embarrassed for a moment, then he said:

"Well it don't matter now; so here's the truth. Some of my friends—not you, Slade" (affectionately pressing his hand), "ave been in the habit of chaffing me 'cause I was a nervous sort of timid chap, and these cups and things of Proll's seemed as if they was a-chaffing too. Every one of them, you see's talking of my courage, my 'ardihood and so forth. There's a matter on ca. h. On the vase was written, 'To the brave devoted Smith.' On the stomach of that armour, was 'Tribute to death-defying 'ardihood, in the person of the noble-arsed Smith.' And so 'tis in all of 'em. Somehow, though I couldn't bring myself to believe that Proll was laughing at me in her sleeve, I knew it would set those fellows off, so I scratched out the writing on the armour's stomach, and wouldn't let no one look too close at 'other things, you see. Now, what I want you for to do is this," continued the invalid, raising himself on the pillow. "O' course, this is all gammon. Proll must be a lunatic. I never did her any service. How could I, as have lived quiet here, since I was born? I feel as if I'd been taking money and gimcracks all my life from Proll's family, which may want 'em. There may be old Prolls, or little Prolls, or, in short, my good friend, I have made up my mind to leave a thumping legacy to Proll, at all events, and you must find her out if you can. I know you will try. And if you can't," concluded the speaker, faintly, for he was getting wearied with his long speech, "there shall be a clause providing rewards for other brave chaps like me, you know," he smiled, "so that, perhaps, somehow, after all, the right J. S. may come in for one of Proll's pretty thingumbobs."

Later the same evening, as Slade again sat beside his friend, awaiting the solicitor who was to receive instructions for the intended legacy, the curate quietly revived the subject of Proll's mysterious gifts.

"You are quite certain—think, now, John—that you have never been in a position to render some extraordinary and timely service to this Proll?"

"Never, on my word," said Mr. Smith, emphatically.

"It is very singular," resumed Mr. Slade, pondering. "Do you know—but tell me, first, has any event of real importance, such, I mean, as would remain among the best-remembered incidents of an ordinary experience, ever occurred to you, that might, indirectly, perchance, connect itself with this enigma? Think."

John reflected.

"Except that—in June, 'forty-two—I landed—"

"Yes?" cried his friend, eagerly, observing that he paused. "You landed. How? Where?"

"In the pool, below the weir," replied Mr. Smith, faintly. "I landed him—in twenty minutes—with a single gut—brown partridge fly. He weighed nine pounds and a hounce!"

Mr. Slade fell into another reverie. Suddenly he resumed:

"It occurs to me, Smith, as not a little remarkable, that every one of these mysterious offerings contains some reference to an ox."

"A hox?" ejaculated the invalid. "Hox?"

"Or bull. It is an ancient sacrifice, a bull-fight in the arena, or even a crest or device, as in the armour instance. Now that, to my mind, has a decided significance. Did you ever—say, in your reckless youth, my friend—have a misunderstanding with a bull?"

"I!" exclaimed poor Smith. "Slay, though. With a hox, I 'nd."

"Ha!" said the curate, brightening up: "how was that?"

"I was a walking quietly down Hollow-cross-lane, when there came a bellinging behind me; and a man rushed past, crying out that a infuriated fox had broke out, and was coming down the lane! I heard him tramping, and ran on; but there was a quickset hedge on each side, and no gate. So I made a tremendous leap, and got over."

"And were in safety?"

"Why, no," replied Mr Smith. "The aggravating beast had previously adopted a similar course, and was in the field before me. I saw his great broad forehead, heard a shriek (but whether 'twas my own voice or somebody else's, I'm afeared to say), and, being knocked down insensible, knew nothing more, till I woke in my own 'ouse, with Hannah bathing my 'ed."

"Then the matter is as unaccountable as ever," remarked the curate, with a disappointed sigh.

The conversation was never renewed, for poor little Smith was beginning to sink, and two short days comprised all that was left of his inoffensive life.

More than scrupulously did the friendly executors endeavour to fulfil the duty imposed on them; but their quest of Proll was unsuccessful. They had ceased the hopeless inquiry, and had begun to consult as to the best mode of carrying out the alternative measure provided by the will, when, one morning, a visitor sent in his card to Mr. Slade.

"Colonel Commerell."

The colonel, who appeared about forty-five, and whose countenance was bronzed by an Indian sun, was a man of stately presence, and frank, yet gentlemanly manner.

"I am just returned, sir," he said, "from a long period of foreign service, during the latter part of which my communications with home have been somewhat irregular. My attention has only now been directed to your advertisement, addressed to 'Proll.'"

"God bless me! are you Proll?" exclaimed the curate, starting from his seat.

The colonel laughed.

"Well, no," he replied. "My wife is. At her desire I am here to explain what, judging from the terms of your advertisement, has remained too long a mystery. So, poor Mr. Smith is gone? Well! Peace to the brave."

"Ehem," said Mr. Slade. "To be sure. Yes."

"It was an act, sir," said the colonel, enthusiastically, "worthy of the brightest age of chivalry."

"You don't say—that is, do you think so?" said Mr. Slade, cautiously.

"Indeed I do. But let me relate, in a few words, what you don't know of this matter."

("You might relate what I do in fewer still," thought Mr. Slade.)

"When I was a jolly young cornet," continued his visitor, "I had the good hap to engage the affections of one who—God be praised!—is still the blessing of my home. She was an only child: heiress in prospect, of very great wealth. Her father looked to unite her to a member of the noble house with which he was already distantly connected, and, having some suspicion of our attachment, hurried Rosina off, for a time, to the residence of a relative who lived in a sequestered neighborhood three miles from hence. Singularly enough, my regiment was ordered into this very district. Quite as remarkable was it, that my wife's father never knew of that coincidence. So palpable an interposition of fate was not to be neglected. We met as often as possible. Show myself I dared not in the quiet walks of Copfold. So Rosina mounted a rough pony, made over to her by her aunt for excursions beyond the park limits, and flew across to meet me in the willow meadows, near Hollow-cross Farm.

"On one of these occasions she had tied up her pony in the little copse, and was tripping across a field, when she was alarmed by distant shouts, and, turning, found herself within twenty yards of a furious bullock, which had plunged through a gap in the hedge, and was raking

directly for her. She had given herself up for lost, when a man—a little man, too—with a desperate bound, cleared the hedge, and threw himself between her and the raging animal! That prompt and generous action probably saved her life. She was preserved. So was he! for the farm people were at hand, and Rosina, from behind the hedge, could perceive that, though knocked down, her champion was not gored, and was receiving all the assistance his case demanded.

Well, sir the interposition of friends reconciled Rosina's father to my suit. We were married, my wife receiving a magnificent dowry. One of the first uses she made of it was to commence that series of grateful offerings, which doubtless reached their destination. The mystery was rendered necessary by my wife's unwillingness to let it be known how indifferently that dear old lady at Copfold had fulfilled the office of her keeper. Hence, she adopted for her name a nursery appellation, which has, you will observe, about as striking a resemblance to the real one, as such pet names usually bear. Poor, gallant Smith! Well, well! The remembrance of such an act of heroism may—modest as he was—have brought with it a certain sense of satisfaction. Yet, had any one whispered so much in his dying ear, he would probably have faltered out: 'Merely my duty.'

Mr. Slade coughed.

"Courage, colonel, I have heard, is constitutional, and—"

"I don't know about that," returned the colonel. "For my own part, though I have seen a shot or two, and stood my ground no worse, I hope, than others;—if I saw a mad bull preparing to charge, hang me if I shouldn't be inclined to turn tail, provided there was cover at hand!" And the colonel looked as little like a man who would keep his word herein, as he could well look.

"I am at least certain," said Mr. Slade, in a low voice, "that had our departed friend been more fully sensible of the service he had rendered, he would have felt deeply grateful for having been the instrument of so providential a deliverance."

"As meek as he was intrepid, eh?" said Colonel Commerell. "A beautiful combination! And now let me complete my mission. Proll, that is Mrs. Commerell, positively refuses to hear of 'anything to her advantage,' resulting from Mr. Smith's will, save the gratification of knowing that the brave fellow remembered her. Your solicitor, whom I saw in my way hither, favoured me with a copy of the codicil. My wife will most gladly co-operate with you in carrying out the admirable object of rewarding deeds of self-devotion. It is a thing we rarely do in England, where but—no matter to what extreme it be carried—is popularly though I think erroneously, believed to provide its own reward."

DECALCOMANIE.

THIS process is rapidly taking its place among the most useful inventions of the present age. Its range of application is found to be as wide as the art of painting itself. Decalcomanie, as many of our readers are doubtless aware, consists in transferring instantly coloured pictures to wood, glass, china, silk, leather, &c., by means of cement, water, and varnish. The designs are printed on paper so prepared that, after they are cemented and laid on the article intended to be decorated, they may be easily removed by means of a damp cloth or sponge the coloured design remaining upon the article. The paper may be easily removed with the aid of pincers or the blade of a pen-knife, and the picture will be found transferred to the article, and in exact imitation of the most beautiful painting by hand. The variety of designs is very great, including flowers, birds, figures, landscapes, heads, &c., in every style. Many of the designs are exceedingly beautiful. The ingenious artists and printers of Paris have copied with wonderful skill some of the best pieces of the painters of this and of the last century. As

a pleasing occupation for ladies and gentlemen, the work is one of the most useful and beautiful of the elegant arts now so much pursued. To excel in the art a previous proficiency in drawing or painting is not needed. What a beginner must avoid, is the too copious use of the various materials. If these are sparingly and carefully applied, there is much more chance of success than if the picture were too much cemented or too much damped, for then portions of it might come away, and so spoil the appearance and completeness of it. With these cautions, the process is so simple and easy, that failure in performing it is almost impossible. Cleanliness, and the comparatively small cost of the materials used, also recommend it to the attention of those who have leisure, either for amusement or purposes of profit, as it is difficult to say what ornamental article may not be thus decorated, from the panels of a room to the tiny articles upon the dressing-table. We enumerate a few articles which can be easily and advantageously decorated. Vases, trinket-stands, and other ornaments, of white china, tea and coffee services in china or earthenware, desert services, flower pots, urn and jug-stands, straw dinner mats, silk or cloth sofa cushions, scent bags, slippers, hand screens, ribbons, articles in warp, book-covers, &c., &c.

To the carriage-painter and house-decorator, and to every one engaged in similar occupations, this art offers a complete substitute for the costly process of hand-painting for panels of rooms, sleighs or carriages, and other portions of his work which require artistic embellishment.

Messrs. Prowse & Brother, Great St. James Street, have just now on view in their store a variety of refrigerators and other articles decorated by this process in a style infinitely superior to the usual hand-work, and at a mere fractional part of the cost.

Every material and preparation necessary for carrying out to perfection the art of decalcomanie may be had of John M. Bell, 423 Notre Dame Street. With the materials, Mr. Bell will be pleased to give any other information which may be required on the subject.

SCIENTIFIC AND USEFUL.

To make whitewash which will not rub off, add to it a little sugar or molasses.

The application of fish oil to leather kills the substance, and is the prime cause of the gum found on the surface.

To wash calico without its fading, infuse three gills of salt in four quarts of water; put the calico in while hot, and leave it till cold, and in this way the colours are rendered permanent, and will not fade by subsequent washing.

Great efforts are being made in France to introduce steam trains on common roads, for the transport both of goods and passengers, and a company has been formed to carry out the plan on a large scale. Some experiments have been tried in Paris, Nantes, and elsewhere; and the Universal Exhibition, where there is a large collection of traction and other engines, of nearly all nations, has given a fresh impulse to the movement.

FRENCH WASHING MACHINERY.—The linen of several hotels and cafés in Paris is washed at the rate of 40,000 pieces a day, at the Blanchisserie de Courcelles, three miles or so from the St. Lazare terminus of the western Railway. The linen is boiled with soap and soda, and then washed in hollow wheels, rinsed, partly dried by centrifugal machines, and for the rest in hot-air ovens, which carry off nearly three pounds of moisture per pound of coal burnt. It is finally ironed between polished rollers, and then returned to Paris.

Ramie, or *Boehmeria tenacissima*, of Java, is a remarkable textile. It is said that this exotic is at present flourishing in a large plantation in Mexico, and naturalists who have nursed it and experimented upon it for the last twenty-three years, state that its fibre is stronger than hemp, as fine and white and twice as durable as linen, and more productive than cotton. In 1865 M. Roelz exported and sold in England more than

5000 lbs. of the staple at double the price of the best quality of cotton. Its beautiful fabrics are displayed in the Paris Exhibition.

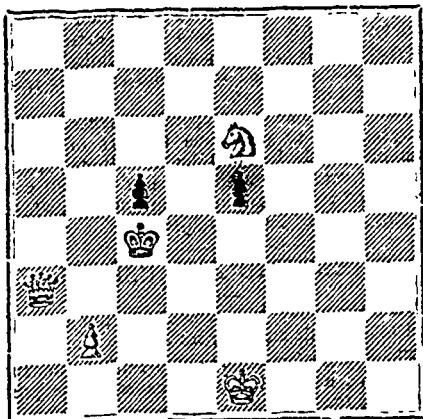
VALUE OF THE POTATO.—There is no other vegetable food, except wheat bread, of which so much can be said in its favour as the potato. Its merits, however, vary much with the kind of seed, the period of maturity, and the soil in which it is grown. That kind should be preferred which becomes mealy on boiling. It is not material in reference to nourishment whether the potatoes are boiled or roasted. In point of economy and convenience, however, it has been found better to boil than to roast them; for while the loss in boiling upon 1 lb. of potatoes scarcely exceeds half an ounce, that in the most careful roasting is 2 oz. to 3 oz. It is also more economical to cook them in their skins, and to peel them immediately before they are eaten.

CHIESS.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

B. N. C.—Please send solution of the position you recently enclosed. Solution of Problem 79 was O. K. J. C. LONDON, ONT.—The Problem is under examination. Shall be glad to hear from you again. L. M.—QUEBEC. We cannot give a definite reply at present.

PROBLEM, No. 83. BY J. J. WATTS. BLACK.



WHITE. White to play and Mate in three moves.

SOLUTION OF PROBLEM, No. 81.

- WHITE. 1 R on Q Kt sq to Q B sq. } Any move. 2 R on Q B sq to B 5. 3 Q Mates. BLACK.

Lively little partie between Herren Hirschfeld and Mayet.

REV LOPEZ KT'S GAME.

- WHITE. (Hirschfeld.) 1 P to K 4. 2 K Kt to B 5. 3 K B to Kt 5. 4 K B to R 4. 5 P to Q 4. 6 Castles. 7 Q P takes P. 8 P to Q B 3. 9 K B to B 2. 10 K R to K sq. 11 Q Kt to Q 2 (b). 12 K B takes B. 13 Q takes K Kt. 14 P to K 6. 15 Q to K R 5 (d). 16 K B takes P. 17 Q takes Kt P (ch.). 18 K R to K 3. 19 K R to B 3 (ch). 20 Q B to Kt 6. BLACK. (Mayet) 1 P to K 4. 2 Q Kt to B 3. 3 P to Q R 3. 4 K R to B 3. 5 K Kt takes P. 6 K B to K 2. 7 Castles. 8 P to Q Kt 4. 9 P to Q 4. 10 Q B to R 4 (a). 11 K Kt takes Kt. 12 K Kt takes Kt (ch). 13 K R to K sq. 14 P to K B 3 (c). 15 P to K Kt 3. 16 R P takes B. 17 K to R sq. 18 P to K B 4. 19 K B to R 6.

And Herr Mayet resigned. (a) K Kt to Q B 4 would have been safer play. (b) Herr Hirschfeld selects the proper move to obtain an immediate advantage in position. (c) Fatal! K B to his 3 would have been more to the point. (d) The attack is now quite irresistible.

WITTY AND WHIMSICAL.

When do ladies resemble arrows?—When they are in a quiver.

The gas is reported to be so bad in Erie, that the man who puts it out has to take a lantern to find the posts.

Why should you judge the American people to be fond of perfumes?—Because they carry cents about them.

The greatest piece of absurdity we have heard of for some time is that of the artist who tried to tickle his palbot—Judy.

Said Tom, "Since I have been in France I have eaten so much veal that I am ashamed to look a calf in the face."—"I s'pose, sir, then," said a wag, "you shave without a glass?"

"What are you about?" inquired a lunatic of a cook, who was industriously picking the feathers from a fowl. "Dressing a chicken," answered the cook. "I should call that undressing," replied the crazy fellow.

A great punster was asked one evening, in company, to make an extempore pun. "Upon what subject?" he inquired. One of the party answered, "The Queen."—"Oh, sir," he replied, "the Queen is no subject."

An editor who was shaved in a barber's shop offered the barber a dime, which he refused. "Because," said he; "I understand dat you is an editor."—"Well, what of it?"—"Why; we never charge editors nuffin."—"But such liberality will ruin you."—"O, neber mind, we make it off de gemmen."—American Paper.

When Mr. Sheridan pleaded in court his own cause, and that of the Drury Lane Theatre, an Irish labourer, known amongst the actors by the name of Billy Brown, was called upon to give his evidence. Previous to his going into court, the counsellor, shocked at the shabby dress of the witness, began to remonstrate with him on this point—"You should have put on your Sunday clothes, and not think of coming into court covered with lime and brick-dust—it detracts from the credit of your evidence."—"Be cool, Mr. Counsellor," said Billy, "only be cool; you're in your working-dress, and I am in mine; and that's that."

The grass-plots in the college courts or quadrangles are the unblawed feet of the under-graduates. Some, however, are hardy enough to venture in spite of all remonstrance. A master of Trinity had often observed a student of his college invariably to cross the green, when, in obedience to the calls of his appetite, he went to hall to dine. One day the master determined to reprove the delinquent for invading the rights of his superiors, and for that purpose he threw up the sash, and called to the student, "Sir, I never look out of my window but I see you walking across the grass-plot."—"My lord," replied the offender instantly. "I never walk across the grass-plot but I see you looking out of your window." The master, pleased at the readiness of the reply, closed his window.

HABITS OF BIRDS.—Their feathers.

REJECTED LAYS.—Bad eggs.—Judy.

"GRATE" COMPANIONS.—The poker and the tongs.

MOTTO FOR THE MONEY-BOXES AT OUR HOSPITALS.—"When you're passing my way—drop in."—Fun.

GOOD, BUT NOT FOR EATING.—A wealthy bishop congratulated a poor curate on the good air which he breathed in his parish: to which the latter replied, "Yes, my lord, the air would be good enough if I could only live on it."

THE IRISH EDITOR'S BULL.—There is a story of an Irish newspaper editor who, being left without assistance in a busy time, found himself unable to cope with all the intelligence, late, later, and latest, that flowed in upon him; so that towards four in the morning, he wound up his night's work by penning a notice extraordinary in these words—"Owing to a most unusual pressure of matter, we are compelled to leave several of our columns blank!"

A HARD BED.—An old lady from the country slept one night lately in the house of a friend in town. Her bed happened to be a plain hard mattress, so much recommended as more healthy to lie upon than a bed of down. Next morning the old lady was asked how she had slept over-night. "No very weel," was the reply, "for my auld bones are sair wi' that hard bed o' yours."—"Oh, but Janet, do you not know that all the great physicians say that it is more healthy to sleep on beds as hard as a board?" replied the host. "Oh ay," said Janet; "an' I suppose that's what you toon's bodies ca' a Board o' Health."

A well-known American lawyer, who prides himself upon his skill in cross examining witnesses, had an odd-looking genius upon whom to operate. The witness was a shoemaker. "You say, sir, that the prisoner is a thief?"—"Yes, sir, 'cause why, she confessed it."—"An' you also swear she bound shoes for you subsequent to the confession?"—"I do swear, sir."—"Then"—giving a sagacious look at the court—"we are to understand that you employ dishonest people to work for you, even after their rascalities are known?"—"Of course; how else could I get assistance from a lawyer."

A WISE WITH TWO SIDES TO IT.—Sir Walter Scott, meeting an Irish beggar in the street, who importuned him for sixpence, the Great Unknown, not having one, gave him a shilling, adding, with a laugh, "Mind now, sir, you owe me sixpence."—"Och, sure enough," said the beggar, "and God grant you life till I pay you!"

VERBAL SLIPS.—There have been occasions when a little vanity has caused individuals, when before the public, to "lose their head" and control over their tongue. A slip of this sort, born of vanity, was once committed by Lord Camden. As he was coming out from St. James's at the end of a royal fete, Townsend, the police chief of all Court doings, called aloud, "Lord Camden's carriage!—Lord Camden's carriage!"—"Townsend," said my lord, in an undertone, to the great Bow Street runner, "the king has made me a marquis!"—"Oh!" exclaimed the police superintendent, as he turned round to the chariots and charioteers, "Lord Camden's carriage. The king has made him a marquis!"

The late Robert Taylor, a gentleman for many years connected with the Liverpool Press, had an inveterate penchant for writing epitaphs. Upon one occasion a few friends had met for the purpose of raising a subscription to assist a decayed tradesman, and amongst the company was a person who, by means of marriage, was a wealthy man, but who was so thorough a skinflint that he could not be prevailed upon to part with sixpence. During the evening, epitaph writing was mentioned, and Mr. John Stone, in a jocular way, requested Taylor to write his epitaph, which he did at once, and, to the astonishment of that gentleman, handed him the following impromptu:—

"At John Stone's heart Death drew his dart, But how was he astounded, When from the part the fatal dart, With fearful force rebounded! "Ho, ho!" quoth Death, and drew his breath, "My mighty power you mock it; But here's a blow shall lay you low," And he struck him in the pocket."

A man who stopped his paper, wrote to the editor: "I think folks ought to spend their munny for papur, my daddie diddend and everybody sed he was the most intelligent man in the country and had the smartest family of bois that ever dugged tatars."

I pressed her gentle form to me, and whispered in her ear, if when I was far, far away, she'd drop for me a tear? I paused for some cheering words, my throbbing heart to cool, and with her rosy-lips she said, "Oh, Ed, you're sich a fool?"

Sarah-nading extra—Vake, lady, vake! The moon is high, the twinklin' stars are beamin', while now and then across the sky, a meteor are streamin'.—Vake, Sally, vake! and look on me—avake, Squire Nubbins' daughter! If I'll have you and you'll have me—(by gosh! who threw that water?)