

The Idler, Volume III., Issue XIII., February 1893 eBook

The Idler, Volume III., Issue XIII., February 1893

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| The Idler, Volume III., Issue XIII., February 1893 eBook..... | 1 |
| Contents..... | 2 |
| Table of Contents..... | 5 |
| Page 1..... | 6 |
| Page 2..... | 8 |
| Page 3..... | 9 |
| Page 4..... | 11 |
| Page 5..... | 13 |
| Page 6..... | 15 |
| Page 7..... | 17 |
| Page 8..... | 19 |
| Page 9..... | 21 |
| Page 10..... | 23 |
| Page 11..... | 24 |
| Page 12..... | 26 |
| Page 13..... | 27 |
| Page 14..... | 28 |
| Page 15..... | 29 |
| Page 16..... | 30 |
| Page 17..... | 32 |
| Page 18..... | 33 |
| Page 19..... | 35 |
| Page 20..... | 37 |
| Page 21..... | 39 |
| Page 22..... | 41 |

| | |
|--------------|----|
| Page 23..... | 43 |
| Page 24..... | 45 |
| Page 25..... | 47 |
| Page 26..... | 49 |
| Page 27..... | 51 |
| Page 28..... | 53 |
| Page 29..... | 55 |
| Page 30..... | 56 |
| Page 31..... | 57 |
| Page 32..... | 58 |
| Page 33..... | 59 |
| Page 34..... | 60 |
| Page 35..... | 61 |
| Page 36..... | 62 |
| Page 37..... | 63 |
| Page 38..... | 65 |
| Page 39..... | 66 |
| Page 40..... | 67 |
| Page 41..... | 68 |
| Page 42..... | 69 |
| Page 43..... | 71 |
| Page 44..... | 73 |
| Page 45..... | 74 |
| Page 46..... | 75 |
| Page 47..... | 76 |
| Page 48..... | 78 |

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Page 49..... | 80 |
| Page 50..... | 82 |
| Page 51..... | 84 |
| Page 52..... | 86 |
| Page 53..... | 88 |
| Page 54..... | 89 |
| Page 55..... | 90 |
| Page 56..... | 91 |
| Page 57..... | 93 |
| Page 58..... | 95 |
| Page 59..... | 97 |
| Page 60..... | 99 |
| Page 61..... | 100 |
| Page 62..... | 101 |
| Page 63..... | 103 |
| Page 64..... | 104 |
| Page 65..... | 105 |
| Page 66..... | 107 |
| Page 67..... | 108 |
| Page 68..... | 109 |
| Page 69..... | 110 |
| Page 70..... | 111 |
| Page 71..... | 112 |
| Page 72..... | 114 |

Table of Contents

| Section | Table of Contents | Page |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------|
| Start of eBook | | 1 |
| CHEATING THE GALLOWS. | | 1 |
| CHAPTER I. | | 1 |
| CHAPTER II. | | 3 |
| CHAPTER III. | | 5 |
| CHAPTER IV. | | 6 |
| CHAPTER V. | | 7 |
| CHAPTER VI | | 9 |
| CHAPTER VII. | | 10 |
| NOVEL NOTES. | | 18 |
| PART X. | | 18 |
| THE SKATER. | | 28 |
| MY SERVANT ANDREAS | | 28 |
| TOLD BY THE COLONEL. | | 37 |
| X. | | 37 |
| A BLIND BEGGARMAN | | 48 |
| CHURCH AND STAGE. | | 52 |
| THAT BEAST BEAUTY. | | 56 |
| PEOPLE I HAVE NEVER MET | | 62 |
| THE IDLERS CLUB | | 62 |

Page 1

CHEATING THE GALLOWS. BY I. ZANGWILL.

My first novel.—The Trail of the serpent.
By miss M. E. Braddon.

Novel notes.
By Jerome K. Jerome.

The skater.
By William Canton.

My servant Andreas.
By Archibald Forbes.

Told by the Colonel.—
X. A matrimonial romance.
By W. L. Alden.

“Lions in their dens.”—
II. George Grossmith and the humour of him.
By Raymond BLATHWAYT.

A blind beggarman.
By Frank Mathew.

Church and stage.—A review of Henry Irving.
By the Rev. Dr. Joseph Parker.

That beast beauty.
By Kirby Hare.

People I have never met.—Mrs. Humphry Ward.
By Scott Rankin.

The idlers club
Is Love a Practical Reality or a Pleasing Fiction?

* * * * *

CHEATING THE GALLOWS.

By I. Zangwill.

Illustrations by GEO. Hutchinson.

CHAPTER I.

Curious couple.

[Illustration: *The corpse washed up by the river.*]

They say that a union of opposites makes the happiest marriage, and perhaps it is on the same principle that men who chum are always so oddly assorted. You shall find a man of letters sharing diggings with an auctioneer, and a medical student pigging with a stockbroker's clerk. Perhaps each thus escapes the temptation to talk "shop" in his hours of leisure, while he supplements his own experiences of life by his companion's.

[Illustration: *Tom Peters.*] [Illustration: *Everard G. Roxdal.*]

There could not be an odder couple than Tom Peters and Everard G. Roxdal—the contrast began with their names, and ran through the entire chapter. They had a bedroom and a sitting-room in common, but it would not be easy to find what else. To his landlady, worthy Mrs. Seacon, Tom Peters's profession was a little vague, but everybody knew that Roxdal was the manager of the City and Suburban Bank, and it puzzled her to think why a bank manager should live with such a seedy-looking person, who smoked clay pipes and sipped whiskey and water all the evening when he was at home. For Roxdal was as spruce and erect as his fellow-lodger was round-shouldered and shabby; he never smoked, and he confined himself to a small glass of claret at dinner.

Page 2

It is possible to live with a man and see very little of him. Where each of the partners lives his own life in his own way, with his own circle of friends and external amusements, days may go by without the men having five minutes together. Perhaps this explains why these partnerships jog along so much more peaceably than marriages, where the chain is drawn so much tighter, and galls the partners rather than links them. Diverse, however, as were the hours and habits of the chums, they often breakfasted together, and they agreed in one thing—they never stayed out at night. For the rest Peters sought his diversions in the company of journalists, and frequented debating rooms, where he propounded the most iconoclastic views; while Roxdal had highly respectable houses open to him in the suburbs, and was, in fact, engaged to be married to Clara Newell, the charming daughter of a retired corn merchant, a widower with no other child.

[Illustration: *Asked twenty-five per cent. More.*]

Clara naturally took up a good deal of Roxdal's time, and he often dressed to go to the play with her, while Peters stayed at home in a faded dressing-gown and loose slippers. Mrs. Seacon liked to see gentlemen about the house in evening dress, and made comparisons not favourable to Peters. And this in spite of the fact that he gave her infinitely less trouble than the younger man. It was Peters who first took the apartments, and it was characteristic of his easy-going temperament that he was so openly and naively delighted with the view of the Thames obtainable from the bedroom window, that Mrs. Seacon was emboldened to ask twenty-five per cent. more than she had intended. She soon returned to her normal terms, however, when his friend Roxdal called the next day to inspect the rooms, and overwhelmed her with a demonstration of their numerous shortcomings. He pointed out that their being on the ground floor was not an advantage, but a disadvantage, since they were nearer the noises of the street—in fact, the house being a corner one, the noises of two streets. Roxdal continued to exhibit the same finicking temperament in the petty details of the *menage*. His shirt fronts were never sufficiently starched, nor his boots sufficiently polished. Tom Peters, having no regard for rigid linen, was always good-tempered and satisfied, and never acquired the respect of his landlady. He wore blue check shirts and loose ties even on Sundays. It is true he did not go to church, but slept on till Roxdal returned from morning service, and even then it was difficult to get him out of bed, or to make him hurry up his toilette operations. Often the mid-day meal would be smoking on the table while Peters would smoke in the bed, and Roxdal, with his head thrust through the folding doors that separated the bedroom from the sitting-room, would be adjuring the sluggard to arise and shake off his slumbers, and threatening

Page 3

to sit down without him, lest the dinner be spoilt. In revenge, Tom was usually up first on week-days, sometimes at such unearthly hours that Polly had not yet removed the boots from outside the bedroom door, and would bawl down to the kitchen for his shaving water. For Tom, lazy and indolent as he was, shaved with the unfailing regularity of a man to whom shaving has become an instinct. If he had not kept fairly regular hours, Mrs. Seacon would have set him down as an actor, so clean shaven was he. Roxdal did not shave. He wore a full beard, and, being a fine figure of a man to boot, no uneasy investor could look upon him without being reassured as to the stability of the bank he managed so successfully. And thus the two men lived in an economical comradeship, all the firmer, perhaps, for their mutual incongruities.

[Illustration: *For his shaving water.*]

CHAPTER II.

A woman's instinct.

[Illustration: *"Tom shambled from the sitting-room."*]

It was on a Sunday afternoon in the middle of October, ten days after Roxdal had settled in his new rooms, that Clara Newell paid her first visit to him there. She enjoyed a good deal of liberty, and did not mind accepting his invitation to tea. The corn merchant, himself indifferently educated, had an exaggerated sense of the value of culture, and so Clara, who had artistic tastes without much actual talent, had gone in for painting, and might be seen, in pretty toilettes, copying pictures in the Museum. At one time it looked as if she might be reduced to working seriously at her art, for Satan, who finds mischief still for idle hands to do, had persuaded her father to embark the fruits of years of toil in bubble companies. However, things turned out not so bad as they might have been, a little was saved from the wreck, and the appearance of a suitor, in the person of Everard G. Roxdal, ensured her a future of competence, if not of the luxury she had been entitled to expect. She had a good deal of affection for Everard, who was unmistakably a clever man, as well as a good-looking one. The prospect seemed fair and cloudless. Nothing presaged the terrible storm that was about to break over these two lives. Nothing had ever for a moment come to vex their mutual contentment, till this Sunday afternoon. The October sky, blue and sunny, with an Indian summer sultriness, seemed an exact image of her life, with its aftermath of a happiness that had once seemed blighted.

Everard had always been so attentive, so solicitous, that she was as much surprised as chagrined to find that he had apparently forgotten the appointment. Hearing her astonished interrogation of Polly in the passage, Tom shambled from the sitting-room in

his loose slippers and his blue check shirt, with his eternal clay pipe in his mouth, and informed her that Roxdal had gone out suddenly earlier in the afternoon.

Page 4

"G-g-one out," stammered poor Clara; all confused. "But he asked me to come to tea."

"Oh, you're Miss Newell, I suppose," said Tom.

"Yes, I am Miss Newell."

"He has told me a great deal about you, but I wasn't able honestly to congratulate him on his choice till now."

Clara blushed uneasily under the compliment, and under the ardour of his admiring gaze. Instinctively she distrusted the man. The very first tones of his deep bass voice gave her a peculiar shudder. And then his impoliteness in smoking that vile clay was so gratuitous.

"Oh, then you must be Mr. Peters," she said in return. "He has often spoken to me of you."

"Ah!" said Tom, laughingly, "I suppose he's told you all my vices. That accounts for your not being surprised at my Sunday attire."

She smiled a little, showing a row of pearly teeth. "Everard ascribes to you all the virtues," she said.

"Now that's what I call a friend!" he cried, ecstatically. "But won't you come in? He must be back in a moment. He surely would not break an appointment with *you*." The admiration latent in the accentuation of the last pronoun was almost offensive.

She shook her head. She had a just grievance against Everard, and would punish him by going away indignantly.

"Do let *me* give you a cup of tea," Tom pleaded. "You must be awfully thirsty this sultry weather. There! I will make a bargain with you! If you will come in now, I promise to clear out the moment Everard returns, and not spoil your *tete-a-tete*." But Clara was obstinate; she did not at all relish this man's society, and besides, she was not going to throw away her grievance against Everard. "I know Everard will slang me dreadfully when he comes in if I let you go," Tom urged. "Tell me at least where he can find you."

"I am going to take the 'bus at Charing Cross, and I'm going straight home," Clara announced determinedly. She put up her parasol in a pet, and went up the street into the Strand. A cold shadow seemed to have fallen over all things. But just as she was getting into the 'bus, a hansom dashed down Trafalgar Square, and a well-known voice hailed her. The hansom stopped, and Everard got out and held out his hand.



"I'm so glad you're a bit late," he said. "I was called out unexpectedly, and have been trying to rush back in time. You wouldn't have found me if you had been punctual. But I thought," he added, laughing, "I could rely on you as a woman."

"I was punctual," Clara said angrily. "I was not getting out of this 'bus, as you seem to imagine, but into it, and was going home."

"My darling!" he cried remorsefully. "A thousand apologies." The regret on his handsome face soothed her. He took the rose he was wearing in the button-hole of his fashionably-cut coat and gave it to her.

"Why were you so cruel?" he murmured, as she nestled against him in the hansom. "Think of my despair if I had come home to hear you had come and gone. Why didn't you wait a moment?"

Page 5

[Illustration: “*She nestled against him.*”]

A shudder traversed her frame. “Not with that man, Peters!” she murmured.

“Not with that man, Peters!” he echoed sharply. “What is the matter with Peters?”

“I don’t know,” she said. “I don’t like him.”

“Clara,” he said, half sternly, half cajoling, “I thought you were above these feminine weaknesses; you are punctual, strive also to be reasonable. Tom is my best friend. From boyhood we have been always together. There is nothing Tom would not do for me, or I for Tom. You must like him, Clara; you must, if only for my sake.”

“I’ll try,” Clara promised, and then he kissed her in gratitude and broad daylight.

“You’ll be very nice to him at tea, won’t you?” he said anxiously. “I shouldn’t like you two to be bad friends.”

“I don’t want to be bad friends,” Clara protested; “only the moment I saw him a strange repulsion and mistrust came over me.”

“You are quite wrong about him—quite wrong,” he assured her earnestly. “When you know him better, you’ll find him the best of fellows. Oh, I know,” he said suddenly, “I suppose he was very untidy, and you women go so much by appearances!”

“Not at all,” Clara retorted. “’Tis you men who go by appearances.”

“Yes, you do. That’s why you care for me,” he said, smiling.

She assured him it wasn’t, and she didn’t care for him so much as he plumed himself, but he smiled on. His smile died away, however, when he entered his rooms and found Tom nowhere.

“I daresay you’ve made him run about hunting for me,” he grumbled.

“Perhaps he knew I’d come back, and went away to leave us together,” she answered. “He said he would when you came.”

“And yet you say you don’t like him!”

She smiled reassuringly. Inwardly, however, she felt pleased at the man’s absence.

CHAPTER III.

Polly receives A proposal.

[Illustration: "*Carrying on with Polly.*"]

If Clara Newell could have seen Tom Peters carrying on with Polly in the passage, she might have felt justified in her prejudice against him. It must be confessed, though, that Everard also carried on with Polly. Alas! it is to be feared that men are much of a muchness where women are concerned; shabby men and smart men, bank managers and journalists, bachelors and semi-detached bachelors. Perhaps it was a mistake after all to say the chums had nothing patently in common. Everard, I am afraid, kissed Polly rather more often than Clara, and although it was because he respected her less, the reason would perhaps not have been sufficiently consoling to his affianced wife. For Polly was pretty, especially on alternate Sunday afternoons, and when at ten p.m. she returned from her outings, she was generally met in the passage by one or other of the men. Polly liked to receive the homage of real gentlemen, and set her white cap at all indifferently. Thus, just before Clara knocked on that memorable Sunday afternoon, Polly, being confined to the house by the unwritten code regulating the lives of servants, was amusing herself by flirting with Peters.

Page 6

"You *are* fond of me a little bit," the graceless Tom whispered, "aren't you?"

"You know I am, sir," Polly replied.

"You don't care for anyone else in the house?"

"Oh no, sir, and never let anyone kiss me but you. I wonder how it is, sir?" Polly replied ingenuously.

"Give me another," Tom answered.

She gave him another, and tripped to the door to answer Clara's knock.

[Illustration: *Polly and Roxdal.*]

And that very evening, when Clara was gone and Tom still out, Polly turned without the faintest atom of scrupulosity, or even jealousy, to the more fascinating Roxdal, and accepted his amorous advances. If it would seem at first sight that Everard had less excuse for such frivolity than his friend, perhaps the seriousness he showed in this interview may throw a different light upon the complex character of the man.

"You're quite sure you don't care for anyone but me?" he asked earnestly.

"Of course not, sir!" Polly replied indignantly. "How could I?"

"But you care for that soldier I saw you out with last Sunday?"

"Oh no, sir, he's only my young man," she said apologetically.

"Would you give him up?" he hissed suddenly.

Polly's pretty face took a look of terror. "I couldn't, sir! He'd kill me. He's such a jealous brute, you've no idea."

"Yes, but suppose I took you away from here?" he whispered eagerly. "Somewhere where he couldn't find you—South America, Africa, somewhere thousands of miles across the seas."

"Oh, sir, you frighten me!" whispered Polly, cowering before his ardent eyes, which shone in the dimly-lit passage.

"Would you come with me?" he hissed. She did not answer; she shook herself free and ran into the kitchen, trembling with a vague fear.



CHAPTER IV.

The crash.

One morning, earlier than his earliest hour of demanding his shaving water, Tom rang the bell violently and asked the alarmed Polly what had become of Mr. Roxdal.

"How should I know, sir?" she gasped. "Ain't he been in, sir?"

"Apparently not," Tom answered anxiously. "He never remains out. We have been here three weeks now, and I can't recall a single night he hasn't been home before twelve. I can't make it out." All enquiries proved futile. Mrs. Seacon reminded him of the thick fog that had come on suddenly the night before.

"What fog?" asked Tom.

"Lord! didn't you notice it, sir?"

"No, I came in early, smoked, read, and went to bed about eleven. I never thought of looking out of the window."

"It began about ten," said Mrs. Seacon, "and got thicker and thicker. I couldn't see the lights of the river from my bedroom. The poor gentleman has been and gone and walked into the water." She began to whimper.

Page 7

"Nonsense, nonsense," said Tom, though his expression belied his words. "At the worst I should think he couldn't find his way home, and couldn't get a cab, so put up for the night at some hotel. I daresay it will be all right." He began to whistle as if in restored cheerfulness. At eight o'clock there came a letter for Roxdal, marked "immediate," but as he did not turn up for breakfast, Tom went round personally to the City and Suburban Bank. He waited half-an-hour there, but the manager did not make his appearance. Then he left the letter with the cashier and went away with anxious countenance.

That afternoon it was all over London that the manager of the City and Suburban had disappeared, and that many thousand pounds of gold and notes had disappeared with him.

[Illustration: "*Scotland yard opened the letter.*"]

Scotland Yard opened the letter marked "immediate," and noted that there had been a delay in its delivery, for the address had been obscure, and an official alteration had been made. It was written in a feminine hand and said: "On second thoughts I cannot accompany you. Do not try to see me again. Forget me. I shall never forget you."

There was no signature.

Clara Newell, distracted, disclaimed all knowledge of this letter. Polly deposed that the fugitive had proposed flight to her, and the routes to Africa and South America were especially watched. Some months passed without result. Tom Peters went about overwhelmed with grief and astonishment. The police took possession of all the missing man's effects. Gradually the hue and cry dwindled, died.

CHAPTER V.

Faith and unfaith.

"At last we meet!" cried Tom Peters, while his face lit up in joy. "How are you, dear Miss Newell?" Clara greeted him coldly. Her face had an abiding pallor now. Her lover's flight and shame had prostrated her for weeks. Her soul was the arena of contending instincts. Alone of all the world she still believed in Everard's innocence, felt that there was something more than met the eye, divined some devilish mystery behind it all. And yet that damning letter from the anonymous lady shook her sadly. Then, too, there was the deposition of Polly. When she heard Peters's voice accosting her all her old repugnance resurged. It flashed upon her that this man—Roxdal's boon companion—must know far more than he had told to the police. She remembered how Everard had spoken of him, with what affection and confidence! Was it likely he was utterly ignorant of Everard's movements? Mastering her repugnance, she held out her hand. It might be well to keep in touch with him; he was possibly the clue to the mystery. She noticed

he was dressed a shade more trimly, and was smoking a meerschaum. He walked along at her side, making no offer to put his pipe out.

Page 8

"You have not heard from Everard?" he asked. She flushed. "Do you think I'm an accessory after the fact?" she cried.

"No, no," he said soothingly. "Pardon me, I was thinking he might have written—giving no exact address, of course. Men do sometimes dare to write thus to women. But, of course, he knows you too well—you would have put the police on his track."

"Certainly," she exclaimed, indignantly. "Even if he is innocent he must face the charge."

"Do you still entertain the possibility of his innocence?"

"I do," she said boldly, and looked him full in the face. His eyelids drooped with a quiver. "Don't you?"

"I have hoped against hope," he replied, in a voice faltering with emotion. "Poor old Everard! But I am afraid there is no room for doubt. Oh, this wicked curse of money—tempting the noblest and the best of us."

[Illustration: "*She did not repulse him.*"]

The weeks rolled on. Gradually she found herself seeing more and more of Tom Peters, and gradually, strange to say, he grew less repulsive. From the talks they had together, she began to see that there was really no reason to put faith in Everard; his criminality, his faithlessness, were too flagrant. Gradually she grew ashamed of her early mistrust of Peters; remorse bred esteem, and esteem ultimately ripened into feelings so warm, that when Tom gave freer vent to the love that had been visible to Clara from the first, she did not repulse him.

It is only in books that love lives for ever. Clara, so her father thought, showed herself a sensible girl in plucking out an unworthy affection and casting it from her heart. He invited the new lover to his house, and took to him at once. Roxdal's somewhat supercilious manner had always jarred upon the unsophisticated corn merchant. With Tom the old man got on much better. While evidently quite as well informed and cultured as his whilom friend, Tom knew how to impart his superior knowledge with the accent on the knowledge rather than on the superiority, while he had the air of gaining much information in return. Those who are most conscious of defects of early education are most resentful of other people sharing their consciousness. Moreover, Tom's *bonhomie* was far more to the old fellow's liking than the studied politeness of his predecessor, so that on the whole Tom made more of a conquest of the father than of the daughter. Nevertheless, Clara was by no means unresponsive to Tom's affection, and when, after one of his visits to the house, the old man kissed her fondly and spoke of the happy turn things had taken, and how, for the second time in their lives, things

had mended when they seemed at their blackest, her heart swelled with a gush of gratitude and joy and tenderness, and she fell sobbing into her father's arms.

[Illustration: "*With Tom the old man got on much better.*"]

Page 9

Tom calculated that he made a clear five hundred a year by occasional journalism, besides possessing some profitable investments which he had inherited from his mother, so that there was no reason for delaying the marriage. It was fixed for May-day, and the honeymoon was to be spent in Italy.

CHAPTER VI

THE DREAM AND THE AWAKENING

But Clara was not destined to happiness. From the moment she had promised herself to her first love's friend old memories began to rise up and reproach her. Strange thoughts stirred in the depths of her soul, and in the silent watches of the night she seemed to hear Everard's accents, charged with grief and upbraiding. Her uneasiness increased as her wedding-day drew near. One night, after a pleasant afternoon spent in being rowed by Tom among the upper reaches of the Thames, she retired to rest full of vague forebodings. And she dreamt a terrible dream. The dripping form of Everard stood by her bedside, staring at her with ghastly eyes. Had he been drowned on the passage to his land of exile? Frozen with horror, she put the question.

"I have never left England!" the vision answered.

Her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

"Never left England?" she repeated, in tones which did not seem to be hers.

The wraith's stony eyes stared on, but there was silence.

"Where have you been then?" she asked in her dream.

"Very near you," came the answer.

"There has been foul play then!" she shrieked.

The phantom shook its head in doleful assent.

"I knew it!" she shrieked. "Tom Peters—Tom Peters has done away with you. Is it not he? Speak!"

"Yes, it is he—Tom Peters—whom I loved more than all the world."

Even in the terrible oppression of the dream she could not resist saying, woman-like:

"Did I not warn you against him?"

The phantom stared on silently and made no reply.

“But what was his motive?” she asked at length.

“Love of gold—and you. And you are giving yourself to him,” it said sternly.

“No, no, Everard! I will not! I will not! I swear it! Forgive me!”

The spirit shook its head sceptically.

“You love him. Women are false—as false as men.”

She strove to protest again, but her tongue refused its office.

“If you marry him, I shall always be with you! Beware!”

The dripping figure vanished as suddenly as it came, and Clara awoke in a cold perspiration. Oh, it was horrible! The man she had learnt to love, the murderer of the man she had learnt to forget! How her original prejudice had been justified! Distracted, shaken to her depths, she would not take counsel even of her father, but informed the police of her suspicions. A raid was made on Tom’s rooms, and lo! the stolen notes were discovered in

Page 10

a huge bundle. It was found that he had several banking accounts, with a large, recently-paid amount in each bank. Tom was arrested. Attention was now concentrated on the corpses washed up by the river. It was not long before the body of Roxdal came to shore, the face distorted almost beyond recognition by long immersion, but the clothes patently his, and a pocket-book in the breast-pocket removing the last doubt. Mrs. Seacon and Polly and Clara Newell all identified the body. Both juries returned a verdict of murder against Tom Peters, the recital of Clara's dream producing a unique impression in the court and throughout the country. The theory of the prosecution was that Roxdal had brought home the money, whether to fly alone or to divide it, or whether even for some innocent purpose, as Clara believed, was immaterial. That Peters determined to have it all, that he had gone out for a walk with the deceased, and, taking advantage of the fog, had pushed him into the river, and that he was further impelled to the crime by love for Clara Newell, as was evident from his subsequent relations with her. The judge put on the black cap. Tom Peters was duly hung by the neck till he was dead.

[Illustration: "*Identified the body.*"]

CHAPTER VII.

Brief resume of the culprit's confession.

When you all read this I shall be dead and laughing at you. I have been hung for my own murder. I am Everard G. Roxdal. I am also Tom Peters. We two were one. When I was a young man my moustache and beard wouldn't come. I bought false ones to improve my appearance. One day, after I had become manager of the City and Suburban Bank, I took off my beard and moustache at home, and then the thought crossed my mind that nobody would know me without them. I was another man. Instantly it flashed upon me that if I ran away from the Bank, that other man could be left in London, while the police were scouring the world for a non-existent fugitive. But this was only the crude germ of the idea. Slowly I matured my plan. The man who was going to be left in London must be known to a circle of acquaintance beforehand. It would be easy enough to masquerade in the evenings in my beardless condition, with other disguises of dress and voice. But this was not brilliant enough. I conceived the idea of living with him. It was Box and Cox reversed. We shared rooms at Mrs. Seacon's. It was a great strain, but it was only for a few weeks. I had trick clothes in my bedroom like those of quick-change artistes; in a moment I could pass from Roxdal to Peters and from Peters to Roxdal. Polly had to clean two pairs of boots a morning, cook two dinners, &c., &c. She and Mrs. Seacon saw one or the other of us every moment; it never dawned upon them they never saw us *both together*. At meals I would not be interrupted, ate off two plates, and conversed with

Page 11

my friend in loud tones. At other times we dined at different hours. On Sundays he was supposed to be asleep when I was in church. There is no landlady in the world to whom the idea would have occurred that one man was troubling himself to be two (and to pay for two, including washing). I worked up the idea of Roxdal's flight, asked Polly to go with me, manufactured that feminine letter that arrived on the morning of my disappearance. As Tom Peters I mixed with a journalistic set. I had another room where I kept the gold and notes till I mistakenly thought the thing had blown over. Unfortunately, returning from here on the night of my disappearance, with Roxdal's clothes in a bundle I intended to drop into the river, it was stolen from me in the fog, and the man into whose possession it ultimately came appears to have committed suicide. What, perhaps, ruined me was my desire to keep Clara's love, and to transfer it to the survivor. Everard told her I was the best of fellows. Once married to her, I would not have had much fear. Even if she had discovered the trick, a wife cannot give evidence against her husband, and often does not want to. I made none of the usual slips, but no man can guard against a girl's nightmare after a day up the river and a supper at the Star and Garter. I might have told the judge he was an ass, but then I should have had penal servitude for bank robbery, and that is worse than death. The only thing that puzzles me, though, is whether the law has committed murder or I suicide.

* * * * *

My First Novel.

The Trail of the serpent.

By miss M. E. Braddon.

Illustrations by miss F. L. Fuller.

My first novel! Far back in the distinctness of childish memories I see a little girl who has lately learnt to write, who has lately been given a beautiful brand new mahogany desk, with a red velvet slope, and a glass ink bottle, such a desk as might now be bought for three and sixpence, but which in the forties cost at least half-a-guinea. Very proud is the little girl, with the Kenwigs pigtails, and the Kenwigs frills, of that mahogany desk, and its infinite capacities for literary labour, above all, gem of gems, its stick of variegated sealing-wax, brown, speckled with gold, and its little glass seal with an intaglio representing two doves—Pliny's doves perhaps, famous in mosaic, only the little girl had never heard of Pliny, or his Laurentine Villa.

[Illustration: *Lichfield house, Richmond.*]

Armed with that desk and its supply of stationery, Mary Elizabeth Braddon—very fond of writing her name at full-length, and her address also at full-length, though the word “Middlesex” offered difficulties—began that pilgrimage on the broad high road of fiction, which was destined to be a longish one. So much for the little girl of eight years old, in the third person, and now to become strictly autobiographical.

Page 12

My first story was based on those fairy tales which first opened to me the world of imaginative literature. My first attempt in fiction, and in round-hand, on carefully pencilled double lines, was a story of two sisters, a good sister and a wicked, and I fear adhered more faithfully to the lines of the archetypal story than the writer's pen kept to the double fence which should have ensured neatness.

[Illustration: *The hall.*]

The interval between the ages of eight and twelve was a prolific period, fertile in unfinished MSS., among which I can now trace a historical novel on the Siege of Calais—an Eastern story, suggested by a passionate love of Miss Pardoe's Turkish tales, and Byron's "Bride of Abydos," which my mother, a devoted Byron worshipper, allowed me to read aloud to her—and doubtless murder in the reading—a story of the Hartz Mountains, with audacious flights in German diablerie; and lastly, very seriously undertaken, and very perseveringly worked upon, a domestic story, the outline of which was suggested by the same dear and sympathetic mother.

Now it is a curious fact, which may or may not be common to other story-spinners, that I have never been able to take kindly to a plot—or the suggestion of a plot—offered to me by anybody else. The moment a friend tells me that he or she is desirous of imparting a series of facts—strictly true—as if truth in fiction mattered one jot!—which in his or her opinion would make the ground plan of an admirable, startling, and altogether original three-volume novel, I know in advance that my imagination will never grapple with those startling circumstances—that my thoughts will begin to wander before my friend has got half through the remarkable chain of events, and that if the obliging purveyor of romantic incidents were to examine me at the end of the story, I should be spun ignominiously. For the most part, such subjects as have been proposed to me by friends have been hopelessly unfit for the circulating library; or, where not immoral, have been utterly dull; but it is, I believe, a fixed idea in the novel-reader's mind that any combination of events out of the beaten way of life will make an admirable subject for the novelist's art.

[Illustration: *The Staircase.*]

My dear mother, taking into consideration my tender years, and perhaps influenced in somewise by her own love of picking up odd bits of Sheraton or Chippendale furniture in the storehouses of the less ambitious second-hand dealers of those simpler days, offered me the following *scenario* for a domestic story. It was an incident which, I doubt not, she had often read at the tail of a newspaper column, and which certainly savours of the gigantic gooseberry, the sea-serpent, and the agricultural labourer who unexpectedly inherits half-a-million. It was eminently a Simple Story, and far more worthy of that title than Mrs. Inchbald's long and involved romance.

Page 13

An honest couple, in humble circumstances, possess among their small household gear a good old easy chair, which has been the pride of a former generation, and is the choicest of their household gods. A comfortable cushioned chair, snug and restful, albeit the chintz covering, though clean and tidy, as virtuous people's furniture always is in fiction, is worn thin by long service, while the dear chair itself is no longer the chair it once was as to legs and framework.

Evil days come upon the praiseworthy couple and their dependent brood, among whom I faintly remember the love interest of the story to have lain; and that direful day arrives when the average landlord of juvenile fiction, whose heart is of adamant and brain of brass, distrains for the rent. The rude broker swoops upon the humble dovecot; a cart or hand-barrow waits on the carefully hearth-stoned door-step for the household gods; the family gather round the cherished chair, on which the rude broker has already laid his grimy fingers; they hang over the back and fondle the padded arms; and the old grandmother, with clasped hands, entreats that, if able to raise the money in a few days, they may be allowed to buy back that loved heirloom.

[Illustration: *The dining room.*]

The broker laughs the plea to scorn; they might have their chair, and cheap enough, he had no doubt. The cover was darned and patched—as only the virtuous poor of fiction do darn and do patch—and he made no doubt the stuffing was nothing better than brown wool; and with that coarse taunt the coarser broker dug his clasp-knife into the cushion against which grandfatherly backs had leaned in happier days, and lo! an avalanche of banknotes fell out of the much-maligned horse-hair, and the family was lifted from penury to wealth. Nothing more simple—or more natural. A prudent but eccentric ancestor had chosen this mode of putting by his savings, assured that, whenever discovered, the money would be useful to—somebody.

So ran the *scenario*: but I fancy my juvenile pen hardly held on to the climax. My brief experience of boarding school occurred at this time, and I well remember writing “The Old Arm Chair” in a penny account book, in the schoolroom of Cresswell Lodge, and that I was both surprised and offended at the laughter of the kindly music-teacher who, coming into the room to summon a pupil, and seeing me gravely occupied, enquired what I was doing, and was intensely amused at my stolid method of composition, plodding on undisturbed by the voices and occupations of the older girls around me. “The Old Arm Chair” was certainly my first serious, painstaking effort in fiction; but as it was abandoned unfinished before my eleventh birthday, and as no line thereof ever achieved the distinction of type, it can hardly rank as my first novel.

[Illustration: THE DRAWING-ROOM.]

Page 14

There came a very few years later the sentimental period, in which my unfinished novels assumed a more ambitious form, and were modelled chiefly upon *Jane Eyre*, with occasional tentative imitations of Thackeray. Stories of gentle hearts that loved in vain, always ending in renunciation. One romance there was, I well remember, begun with resolute purpose, after the first reading of *Esmond*, and in the endeavour to give life and local colour to a story of the Restoration period, a brilliantly wicked interval in the social history of England, which, after the lapse of thirty years, I am still as bent upon taking for the background of a love story as I was when I began “Master Anthony’s Record” in *Esmondese*, and made my girlish acquaintance with the Reading-room of the British Museum, where I went in quest of local colour, and where much kindness was shown to my youth and inexperience of the book world. Poring over a folio edition of the State Trials at my uncle’s quiet rectory in sleepy Sandwich, I had discovered the passionate romantic story of Lord Grey’s elopement with his sister-in-law, next in sequence to the trial of Lawrence Braddon and Hugh Speke for conspiracy. At the risk of seeming disloyal to my own race, I must add that it seemed to me a very tinpot order of plot to which these two learned gentlemen bent their legal minds, and which cost the Braddon family a heavy fine in land near Camelford—confiscation which I have heard my father complain of as especially unfair—Lawrence being a younger son. The romantic story of Lord Grey was to be the subject of “Master Anthony’s Record,” but Master Anthony’s sentimental autobiography went the way of all my earlier efforts. It was but a year or so after the collapse of Master Anthony, that a blindly-enterprising printer of Beverley, who had seen my poor little verses in the *Beverley Recorder*, made me the spirited offer of ten pounds for a serial story, to be set up and printed at Beverley, and published on commission by a London firm in Warwick Lane. I cannot picture to myself, in my after-knowledge of the bookselling trade, any enterprise more futile in its inception or more feeble in its execution; but to my youthful ambition the actual commission to write a novel, with an advance payment of fifty shillings to show good faith on the part of my Yorkshire speculator, seemed like the opening of that pen-and-ink paradise which I had sighed for ever since I could hold a pen. I had, previously to this date, found a Maecenas in Beverley, in the person of a learned gentleman who volunteered to foster my love of the Muses by buying the copyright of a volume of poems and publishing the same at his own expense—which he did, poor man, without stint, and by which noble patronage of Poet’s Corner verse, he must have lost money. He had, however, the privilege of dictating the subject of the principal poem, which was to sing—however feebly—Garibaldi’s Sicilian campaign.

[Illustration: THE EVENING ROOM.]

Page 15

The Beverley printer suggested that my Warwick Lane serial should combine, as far as my powers allowed, the human interest and genial humour of Dickens with the plot-weaving of G. W. R. Reynolds; and, furnished with these broad instructions, I filled my ink bottle, spread out my foolscap, and, on a hopelessly wet afternoon, began my first novel—now known as “The Trail of the Serpent”—but published in Warwick Lane, and later in the stirring High Street of Beverley, as “Three Times Dead.” In “Three Times Dead” I gave loose to all my leanings to the violent in melodrama. Death stalked in ghastliest form across my pages; and villainy reigned triumphant till the Nemesis of the last chapter. I wrote with all the freedom of one who feared not the face of a critic; and, indeed, thanks to the obscurity of its original production, and its re-issue as the ordinary two-shilling railway novel, this first novel of mine has almost entirely escaped the critical lash, and has pursued its way as a chartered libertine. People buy it and read it, and its faults and follies are forgiven as the exuberances of a pen unchastened by experience; but faster and more facile at that initial stage than it ever became after long practice.

[Illustration: THE SMOKING-ROOM.]

I dashed headlong at my work, conjured up my images of horror or of mirth, and boldly built the framework of my story, and set my puppets moving. To me, at least, they were living creatures, who seemed to follow impulses of their own, to be impelled by their own passions, to love and hate, and plot and scheme of their own accord. There was unalloyed pleasure in the composition of that first story, and the knowledge that it was to be actually printed and published, and not to be declined with thanks by adamantine magazine editors, like a certain short story which I had lately written, and which contained the germ of “Lady Audley’s Secret.” Indeed, at this period of my life, the postman’s knock had become associated in my mind with the sharp sound of a rejected MS. dropping through the open letter-box on to the floor of the hall, while my heart seemed to drop in sympathy with that book-post packet.

[Illustration: THE LIBRARY.]

Short of never being printed at all, my Beverley-born novel could have hardly entered upon the world of books in a more profound obscurity. That one living creature ever bought a number of “Three Times Dead” I greatly doubt. I can recall the thrill of emotion with which I tore open the envelope that contained my complimentary copy of the first number, folded across, and in aspect inferior to a gratis pamphlet about a patent medicine. The miserable little wood block which illustrated that first number would have disgraced a baker’s whitey-brown bag, would have been unworthy to illustrate a penny bun. My spirits were certainly dashed at the technical shortcomings of that first serial, and I was hardly surprised when I was informed a few weeks later, that

Page 16

although my admirers at Beverley were deeply interested in the story, it was not a financial success, and that it would be only obliging on my part, and in accordance with my known kindness of heart, if I were to restrict the development of the romance to half its intended length, and to accept five pounds in lieu of ten as my reward. Having no desire that the rash Beverley printer should squander his own or his children's fortune in the obscurity of Warwick Lane, I immediately acceded to his request, shortened sail, and went on with my story, perhaps with a shade less enthusiasm, having seen the shabby figure it was to make in the book world. I may add that the Beverley publisher's payments began and ended with his noble advance of fifty shillings. The balance was never paid; and it was rather hard lines that, on his becoming bankrupt in his poor little way a few years later, a judge in the Bankruptcy Court remarked that, as Miss Braddon was now making a good deal of money by her pen, she ought to "come to the relief" of her first publisher.

[Illustration: MISS BRADDON'S FAVOURITE MARE.]

And now my volume of verses being well under weigh, I went with my mother to farmhouse lodgings in the neighbourhood of that very Beverley, where I spent, perhaps, the happiest half-year of my life—half a year of tranquil, studious days, far from the madding crowd, with the mother whose society was always all sufficient for me—half a year among level pastures, with unlimited books from the library in Hull, an old farm-horse to ride about the green lanes, the breath of summer, with all its sweet odours of flower and herb, around and about us: half a year of unalloyed bliss, had it not been for one dark shadow, the heroic figure of Garibaldi, the sailor soldier, looming large upon the foreground of my literary labours, as the hero of a lengthy narrative poem in the Spenserian metre.

My chief business at Beverley was to complete the volume of verse commissioned by my Yorkshire Maecenas, at that time a very rich man, who paid me a much better price for my literary work than his townsman, the enterprising printer, and who had the first claim on my thought and time.

[Illustration: THE ORANGERY.]

With the business-like punctuality of a salaried clerk, I went every morning to my file of the *Times*, and pored and puzzled over Neapolitan revolution and Sicilian campaign, and I can only say that if Emile Zola has suffered as much over Sedan as I suffered in the freshness of my youth, when flowery meadows and the old chestnut mare invited to summer idlesse, over the fighting in Sicily, his dogged perseverance in uncongenial labour should place him among the Immortal Forty. How I hated the great Joseph G. and the Spenserian metre, with its exacting demands upon the rhyming faculty. How I

hated my own ignorance of modern Italian history, and my own eyes for never having looked upon Italian landscape, whereby historical

Page 17

allusion and local colour were both wanting to that dry-as-dust record of heroic endeavour. I had only the *Times* correspondent; where he was picturesque I could be picturesque—allowing always for the Spenserian straining—where he was rich in local colour I did my utmost to reproduce his colouring, stretched always on the Spenserian rack, and lengthened out by the bitter necessity of finding triple rhymes. Next to Guiseppe Garibaldi I hated Edmund Spenser, and it may be from a vengeful remembrance of those early struggles with a difficult form of versification, that, although throughout my literary life I have been a lover of England's earlier poet, and have delighted in the quaintness and *naivete* of Chaucer, I have refrained from reading more than a casual stanza or two of the "Faery Queen." When I lived at Beverley, Spenser was to me but a name, and Byron's "Childe Harold" was my only model for that exacting verse. I should add that the Beverley Maecenas, when commissioning this volume of verse, was less superb in his ideas than the literary patron of the past. He looked at the matter from a purely commercial standpoint, and believed that a volume of verse, such as I could produce, would pay—a delusion on his part which I honestly strove to combat before accepting his handsome offer of remuneration for my time and labour. It was with this idea in his mind that he chose and insisted upon the Sicilian Campaign as a subject for my muse, and thus started me heavily handicapped on the racecourse of Parnassus.

[Illustration: MISS BRADDON'S COTTAGE AT LYN DHURST.]

The weekly number of "Three Times Dead" was "thrown off" in brief intervals of rest from my *magnum opus*, and it was an infinite relief to turn from Garibaldi and his brothers in arms to the angels and the monsters which my own brain had engendered, and which to me seemed more alive than the good great man whose arms I so laboriously sang. My rustic pipe far better loved to sing of melodramatic poisoners and ubiquitous detectives; of fine houses in the West of London, and dark dens in the East. So the weekly chapter of my first novel ran merrily off my pen while the printer's boy waited in the farm-house kitchen.

Happy, happy days, so near to memory, and yet so far. In that peaceful summer I finished my first novel, knocked Garibaldi on the head with a closing rhapsody, saw the York spring and summer races in hopelessly wet weather, learnt to love the Yorkshire people, and left Yorkshire almost broken-heartedly on a dull gray October morning, to travel Londonwards through a landscape that was mostly under water.

And, behold, since that October morning I have written fifty-three novels; I have lost dear old friends and found new friends, who are also dear, but I have never looked on a Yorkshire landscape since I turned my reluctant eyes from those level meadows and green lanes where the old chestnut mare used to carry me ploddingly to and fro between tall, tangled hedges of eglantine and honeysuckle.

Page 18

[Illustration: MISS BRADDON'S INKSTAND.]

* * * * *

NOVEL NOTES.

BY JEROME K. JEROME.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. GUELICH AND J. GREIG,

PART X.

[Illustration: "DISCUSSION AT OUR LAST MEETING."]

The final question discussed at our last meeting had been: What shall our hero be? MacShaugnassy had suggested an author, with a critic for the villain. Brown's fancy was an artist. My idea was a stockbroker, with an undercurrent of romance in his nature. Said Jephson, who has a practical mind, approaching at times the commercial: "The question is not what we like, but what the female novel-reader likes."

"That is so," agreed MacShaugnassy. "I propose that we collect feminine opinion upon this point. I will write to my aunt, and get from her the old lady's view. You," he said, turning to me, "can put the case to your wife, and get the young lady's ideal. Let Brown write to his sister at Newnham, and find out whom the intellectual maiden favours, while Jephson can learn from Miss Medbury what is most attractive to the common-sensed girl."

This plan we had adopted, and the result was now under consideration. MacShaugnassy opened the proceedings by reading his aunt's letter. Wrote the old lady:

"I think, if I were you, my dear boy, I should choose a soldier. You know your poor grandfather, who ran away to America with that *wicked* Mrs. Featherly, the banker's wife, was a soldier, and so was your poor cousin Robert, who lost eight thousand pounds at Monte Carlo. I have always felt singularly drawn towards soldiers, even as a girl; though your poor dear uncle could not bear them. You will find many allusions to soldiers and men of war in the Old Testament (see Jer. 48,14). Of course one does not like to think of their fighting and killing each other, but then they do not seem to do much of that sort of thing nowadays."

"So much for the old lady," said MacShaugnassy, as he folded up the letter and returned it to his pocket. "What says culture?"

[Illustration: BROWN READ AS FOLLOWS.]

Brown produced from his cigar-case a letter addressed in a bold round hand, and read as follows:

“What a curious coincidence! A few of us were discussing this very subject last night in Millicent Hightopper’s rooms, and I may tell you at once that our decision was unanimous in favour of soldiers. You see, my dear Selkirk, in human nature the attraction is towards the opposite. To a milliner’s apprentice a poet would no doubt be satisfying; to a woman of intelligence he would be an unutterable bore. The man of brain is not for the woman of brain. What the intellectual woman requires in man is not something to argue with, but something to look at. To an empty-headed woman I can imagine the soldier

Page 19

type proving vapid and uninteresting; to the woman of mind he represents her ideal of man—a creature strong, handsome, well-dressed, and not too clever.”

“That gives us two votes for the army,” remarked MacShaugnassy, as Brown tore his sister’s letter in two, and threw the pieces into the waste-paper basket. “What says the common-sensed girl?”

“First catch your common-sensed girl,” muttered Jephson, a little grumpily, as it seemed to me. “Where do you propose finding her?”

“Well,” returned MacShaugnassy, “I looked to find her in Miss Medbury.”

As a rule, the mention of Miss Medbury’s name brings a flush of joy to Jephson’s face; but now his features wore an expression distinctly approaching a scowl.

“Oh!” he replied, “did you? Well, then, the common-sensed girl loves the military, also.”

“By Jove!” exclaimed MacShaugnassy, “what an extraordinary thing. What reason does she give?”

“That they look so nice when they’re dressed, and that they dance so divinely,” answered Jephson, shortly.

“Well, you do surprise me,” murmured MacShaugnassy, “I am astonished.”

Then to me he said: “And what does the young married woman say? The same?”

“Yes,” I replied, “precisely the same.”

“Does *she* give a reason?” he asked.

“Oh, yes,” I explained; “because you can’t help liking them.”

There was silence for the next few minutes, while we smoked and thought. I fancy we were all wishing we had never started this enquiry.

That four distinctly different types of educated womanhood should, with promptness and unanimity quite unfeminine, have selected the soldier as their ideal, was certainly discouraging to the civilian heart. Had they been nursemaids or servant girls, I should have expected it. The worship of Mars by the Venus of the white cap is one of the few vital religions left to this devoutless age. A year or two ago I lodged near a barracks, and the sight to be seen round its huge iron gates on Sunday afternoons I shall never forget. The girls began to assemble about twelve o’clock. By two, at which hour the army, with its hair nicely oiled and a cane in its hand, was ready for a stroll, there would



be some four or five hundred of them waiting in a line. Formerly they had collected in a wild mob, and as the soldiers were let out to them two at a time, had fought for them, as lions for early Christians. This, however, had led to scenes of such disorder and brutality, that the police had been obliged to interfere; and the girls were now marshalled in *queue*, two abreast, and compelled, by a force of constables specially told off for the purpose, to keep their places and wait their proper turn.

At three o'clock the sentry on duty would come down to the wicket and close it. "They're all gone, my dears," he would shout out to the girls still left; "it's no good your stopping, we've no more for you to-day."

Page 20

“Oh, not one!” some poor child would murmur pleadingly, while the tears welled up into her big round eyes, “not even a little one. I’ve been waiting *such* a long time.”

“Can’t help that,” the honest fellow would reply, gruffly, but not unkindly, turning aside to hide his emotion; “you’ve had ’em all between you. We don’t make ’em, you know: you can’t have ’em if we haven’t got ’em, can you? Come earlier next time.”

[Illustration: “NOW THEN, PASS ALONG.”]

Then he would hurry away to escape further importunity; and the police, who appeared to have been waiting for this moment with gloating anticipation, would jeeringly hustle away the weeping remnant. “Now then, pass along, you girls, pass along,” they would say, in that irritatingly unsympathetic voice of theirs. “You’ve had your chance. Can’t have the roadway blocked up all the afternoon with this ’ere demonstration of the unloved. You’ll have to put up with your ordinary young men for to-day. Pass along.”

In connection with this same barracks, our charwoman told Amenda, who told Ethelbertha, who told me a story, which I now told the boys.

Into a certain house, in a certain street in the neighbourhood, there moved one day a certain family. Their servant had left them—most of their servants did at the end of a week—and the day after the moving-in an advertisement was drawn up and sent to the *Chronicle* for a domestic. It ran thus:

WANTED GENERAL SERVANT, in small family of eleven. Wages, L6; no beer money. Must be early riser and hard worker. Washing done at home. Must be good cook, and not object to window-cleaning. Unitarian preferred.—Apply, with references, to A. B., &C.

That advertisement was sent off on Wednesday afternoon. At seven o’clock on Thursday morning the whole family were awakened by continuous ringing of the street door bell. The husband, looking out of window, was surprised to see a crowd of about fifty girls surrounding the house. He slipped on his dressing-gown and went down to see what was the matter. The moment he opened the door, fifteen of them charged tumultuously into the passage, sweeping him completely off his legs. Once inside, these fifteen faced round, fought the other thirty-five or so back on to the door-step, and slammed the door in their faces. Then they picked up the master of the house, and asked him politely to conduct them to “A. B.”

[Illustration: “SURPRISED TO SEE ABOUT FIFTY GIRLS.”]

At first, owing to the clamour of the mob outside, who were hammering at the door and shouting curses through the keyhole on those inside, he was too confused to understand anything, but by dint of great exertion they succeeded at length in explaining

to him that they were domestic servants come in answer to his wife's advertisement. The man went and told his wife, and his wife said she would see them, one at a time.

Page 21

Which one should have audience first was a delicate question to decide. The man, on being appealed to, said he would prefer to leave it to them. They accordingly discussed the matter among themselves. At the end of a quarter of an hour, the victor, having borrowed a packet of pins and a looking-glass from our charwoman, who had slept in the house, went upstairs, while the remaining fourteen sat down in the hall, and fanned themselves with their bonnets.

"A. B." was a good deal astonished when the first applicant presented herself. She was a tall, genteel-looking, well-dressed girl. Up to yesterday she had been head housemaid at Lady Stanton's, and before that she had been under-cook for two years to the Duchess of York.

"And why did you leave Lady Stanton?" asked "A. B."

"To come here, mum," replied the girl.

The lady was puzzled.

"And you'll be satisfied with six pounds a year?" she asked.

"Certainly, mum, I think it ample."

"And you don't mind hard work?"

"I love it, mum."

"And you're an early riser?"

"Oh yes, mum, it upsets me stopping in bed after half-past five."

"You know we do the washing at home?"

"Yes, mum. I think it so much better to do it at home. Those laundries ruin good clothes. They're so careless."

"Are you a Unitarian?" continued the lady.

"Not yet, mum," replied the girl, "but I should like to be one."

The lady took her reference, and said she would write her.

"I do hope you will give me a trial, mum," pleaded the girl, as she rose to go; "I would try so hard to give you satisfaction."

The next applicant offered to come for three pounds—thought six pounds too much. She also expressed her willingness to sleep in the back kitchen: a shakedown under the sink was all she wanted. She likewise had yearnings towards Unitarianism.

The third girl did not require any wages at all—could not understand what servants wanted with wages—thought wages only encouraged a love of foolish finery—thought a comfortable home in a Unitarian family ought to be sufficient wages for any girl.

This girl said there was one stipulation she should like to make, and that was that she should be allowed to pay for all breakages caused by her own carelessness or neglect. She objected to holidays and evenings out on principle; she held that they distracted a girl from her work.

[Illustration: “MET THE NEXT DOOR LADY ON THE DOOR-STEP.”]

The fourth candidate offered a premium of five pounds for the place; and then “A.B.” began to get frightened, and refused to see any more of the girls, convinced that they must be lunatics from some neighbouring asylum out for a walk.

Later in the day, meeting the next door lady on the door-step, she related her morning’s experiences.

“Oh, that’s nothing extraordinary,” said the next door lady; “none of us on this side of the street pay wages; and we get the pick of all the best servants in London. Why, girls will come from the other end of the kingdom to get into one of these houses. It’s the dream of their lives. They save up for years, so as to be able to come here for nothing.”

Page 22

"What's the attraction?" asked "A. B.," more amazed than ever.

"Why, don't you see," explained the next door lady, "our back windows open upon the barrack yard. A girl living in one of these houses is always close to soldiers. By looking out of window she can always see soldiers; and sometimes a soldier will nod to her, or even call up to her. They never dream of asking for wages. They'll work eighteen hours a day, and put up with anything just to be allowed to stop."

"A.B." profited by this information, and engaged the girl who offered the five pounds premium. She found her a perfect treasure of a servant. She was invariably willing and respectful, slept on a sofa in the kitchen, and was always contented with an egg for her dinner.

[Illustration: "A SOLDIER'S ARM ROUND THE WAIST."]

The truth of this story I cannot vouch for. Myself, I can believe it. Brown and MacShaugnassy made no attempt to do so, which seemed unfriendly. Jephson excused himself on the plea of a headache. I admit there are points in it presenting difficulties to the average intellect. As I explained at the commencement, it was told to me by Ethelbertha, who had it from Amenda, who got it from the charwoman, and exaggerations may have crept into it. The following, however, were incidents that came under my own personal observation. They afforded a still stronger example of the influence exercised by Tommy Atkins upon the British domestic, and I therefore thought it right to relate them also to the boys.

"The heroine of them," I said, "is our Amenda. Now, you would call her a tolerably well-behaved, orderly young woman, would you not?"

"She is my ideal of unostentatious respectability," answered MacShaugnassy.

"That was my opinion also," I replied. "You can, therefore, imagine my feelings on passing her one evening in the Folkestone High Street with a Panama hat upon her head (my Panama hat), and a soldier's arm round her waist. She was one of a mob, composed of all the unoccupied riff-raff of Folkestone, who were following the band of the Third Berkshire Infantry, then in camp at Sandgate. There was an ecstatic, far-away look in her eyes. She was dancing rather than walking, and with her left hand she beat time to the music."

"I should say you were suffering from a mild attack of D.T. when you saw all that," said MacShaugnassy.

"So I might have thought myself," I said; "but Ethelbertha was with me at the time, and she saw it too. We stared after the procession until it had turned the corner, and then we stared at each other."

“‘Oh, it’s impossible,’ said Ethelbertha to me.

“‘But that was my hat,’ I said to Ethelbertha.

“The moment we reached home Ethelbertha looked for Amenda, and I looked for my hat. Neither were to be found.

[Illustration: “AND HUNG MY HAT UP.”]

“Nine o’clock struck, ten o’clock struck. At half-past ten, we went down and got our own supper, and had it in the kitchen. At a quarter-past eleven, Amenda returned. She walked into the kitchen without a word, hung my hat up behind the door, and commenced clearing away the supper things.

Page 23

“Ethelbertha rose, calm but severe.

“‘Where have you been, Amenda?’ she enquired.

“‘Gadding half over the county with a lot of low soldiers,’ answered Amenda, continuing her work.

“‘You had on my hat,’ I added, somewhat gloomily. It was not the right view to take of the case, I know, but, personally, that fact grieved me more than all the other incidents in the proceeding put together, sad though I felt these to be. It was an expensive hat, and Ethelbertha said it suited me (there are not many that do). After seeing it that night on Amenda’s head, my pride in it was gone.

“‘Yes, sir,’ replied Amenda, still continuing her work, ‘it was the first thing that came to hand. What I’m thankful for is that it wasn’t missis’s best bonnet.’

“Whether Ethelbertha was mollified by the proper spirit displayed in this last remark, I cannot say, but I think it probable. At all events, it was in a voice more of sorrow than of anger that she resumed her examination.

“‘You were walking with a soldier’s arm around your waist when we passed you, Amenda?’ she observed interrogatively.

“‘I know, mum,’ admitted Amenda, ‘I found it there myself when the music stopped.’

“Ethelbertha looked her enquiries. Amenda filled a saucepan with water, and then replied to them.

“‘I’m a disgrace to a decent household,’ she said; ‘no mistress who respected herself would keep me a moment. I ought to be put out on the doorstep with my box and a month’s wages.’

“‘But why did you do it then?’ said Ethelbertha, with natural astonishment.

“‘Because I’m a helpless ninny, mum.’ There was no trace of bitterness or passion in Amenda’s tones. She spoke in the calm, even voice of a person stating facts.

“‘I can’t help myself,’ she went on; ‘if I see soldiers I’m bound to follow them. It runs in our family. My poor cousin Emma was just such another fool. She was engaged to be married to a quiet, respectable young fellow with a shop of his own, and three days before the wedding she ran off with a regiment of marines and married the colour-sergeant. That’s what I shall end by doing. I’ve been all the way to Sandgate with that lot you saw me with, and I’ve kissed four of them—the nasty wretches. I’m a nice sort of girl to be walking out with a respectable milkman.’



“She was so deeply disgusted with herself that it seemed superfluous for anybody else to be indignant with her; and Ethelbertha changed her tone and tried to comfort her.

““Oh, you’ll get over all that nonsense, Amenda,’ she said, laughingly; ‘you see yourself how silly it is. You must tell Mr. Bowles to keep you away from soldiers.’

““Ah, I can’t look at it in the same light way that you do, mum,’ returned Amenda, somewhat reprovably; ‘a girl that can’t see a bit of red marching down the street without wanting to rush out and follow it ain’t fit to be anybody’s wife. Why I should be leaving the shop with nobody in it about twice a week, and he’d have to go the round of all the barracks in London, looking for me. I shall save up and get myself into a lunatic asylum, that’s what I shall do.’

Page 24

“Ethelbertha began to grow quite troubled. ‘But surely this is something altogether new, Amenda,’ she said; ‘you must have often met soldiers when you’ve been out in London?’

“‘Oh, yes, one or two at a time, walking about anyhow, I can stand that all right. It’s when there’s a lot of them all together with a band that I lose my head.’

[Illustration: “‘WHEN THERE’S A LOT OF THEM WITH A BAND, I LOSE MY HEAD.’”]

“‘You don’t know what it’s like, mum,’ she added, noticing Ethelbertha’s puzzled expression; ‘you’ve never had it. I only hope you never may.’

“We kept a careful watch over Amenda during the remainder of our stay at Folkestone, and an anxious time we had of it. Every day some regiment or other would march through the town, and at the first sound of its music Amenda would become restless and excited. The Pied Piper’s reed could not have stirred the Hamelin children deeper than did those Sandgate bands the heart of our domestic. Fortunately, they generally passed early in the morning when we were indoors, but one day, returning home to lunch, we heard distant strains dying away upon the Hythe Road. We hurried in. Ethelbertha ran down into the kitchen; it was empty!—up into Amenda’s bedroom; it was vacant! We called. There was no answer.

“‘That miserable girl has gone off again,’ said Ethelbertha. ‘What a terrible misfortune it is for her. It’s quite a disease.’

“Ethelbertha wanted me to go to Sandgate camp and enquire for her. I was sorry for the girl myself, but the picture of a young and innocent-looking man wandering about a complicated camp, enquiring for a lost domestic, presenting itself to my mind, I said that I’d rather not.

“Ethelbertha thought me heartless, and said that if I would not go she would go herself. I replied that I thought one female member of my household was enough in that camp at a time, and requested her not to. Ethelbertha expressed her sense of my inhuman behaviour by haughtily declining to eat any lunch, and I expressed my sense of her unreasonableness by sweeping the whole meal into the grate, after which Ethelbertha suddenly developed exuberant affection for the cat (who didn’t want anybody’s love, but wanted to get under the grate after the lunch), and I became supernaturally absorbed in the day-before-yesterday’s newspaper.

[Illustration: “‘WHO LOCKED YOU IN THERE?’”]

“In the afternoon, strolling out into the garden, I heard the faint cry of a female in distress. I listened attentively, and the cry was repeated. I thought it sounded like Amenda’s voice, but where it came from I could not conceive. It drew nearer, however,

as I approached the bottom of the garden, and at last I located it in a small wooden shed, used by the proprietor of the house as a dark room for developing photographs.

“The door was locked. ‘Is that you, Amenda?’ I cried through the keyhole.

Page 25

“‘Yes, sir,’ came back the muffled answer. ‘Will you please let me out; you’ll find the key on the ground near the door.’

“I discovered it on the grass about a yard away, and released her. ‘Who locked you in there?’ I asked.

“‘I did, sir,’ she replied; ‘I locked myself in, and pushed the key out under the door. I had to do it, or I should have gone off with those beastly soldiers.’

“‘I hope I haven’t inconvenienced you, sir,’ she added, stepping out; ‘I left the lunch all laid.’”

Amenda’s passion for soldiers was her one tribute to sentiment. Towards all others of the male sex she maintained an attitude of callous unsusceptibility, and her engagements with them (which were numerous) were entered into or abandoned on grounds so sordid as to seriously shock Ethelbertha.

When she came to us she was engaged to a pork butcher—with a milkman in reserve. For Amenda’s sake we dealt with the man, but we never liked him, and we liked his pork still less. When, therefore, Amenda announced to us that her engagement with him was “off,” and intimated that her feelings would in no way suffer by our going elsewhere for our bacon, we secretly rejoiced.

[Illustration: “HER ENGAGEMENT WAS ‘OFF.’”]

“I am confident you have done right, Amenda,” said Ethelbertha; “you would never have been happy with that man.”

“No, mum, I don’t think I ever should,” replied Amenda. “I don’t see how any girl could as hadn’t got the digestion of an ostrich.”

Ethelbertha looked puzzled. “But what has digestion got to do with it?” she asked.

“A pretty good deal, mum,” answered Amenda, “when you’re thinking of marrying a man as can’t make a sausage fit to eat.”

“But, surely,” exclaimed Ethelbertha, “you don’t mean to say you’re breaking off the match because you don’t like his sausages!”

“Well, I suppose that’s what it comes to,” agreed Amenda, unconcernedly.

“What an awful idea!” sighed poor Ethelbertha, after a long pause. “Do you think you ever really loved him?”

“Oh, yes,” said Amenda, “I loved him right enough, but it’s no good loving a man that wants you to live on sausages that keep you awake all night.”

“But does he want you to live on sausages?” persisted Ethelbertha.

“Oh, he doesn’t say anything about it,” explained Amenda; “but you know what it is, mum, when you marry a pork butcher: you’re expected to eat what’s left over. That’s the mistake my poor cousin Eliza made. She married a muffin man. Of course, what he didn’t sell they had to finish up themselves. Why, one winter, when he had a run of bad luck, they lived for two months on nothing but muffins. I never saw a girl so changed in all my life. One has to think of these things, you know.”

Later on, she engaged herself to a solicitor’s messenger. She did this—as she frankly avowed to Ethelbertha—to assist her family, who were prosecuting some petty law case at the time. He was a smart, steady man, a great favourite with his employers, and, out of kindly feeling towards him, they did the business for Amenda’s father, charging only “out-of-pockets.”

Page 26

[Illustration: "GAVE HER A COCOANUT."]

Six months after the case was ended, she broke off the match. She said that, on reflection, she could not help seeing what an advantage he would have over her—he being in a solicitor's office, with the law at his fingers' ends—should she ever find it necessary to summons him.

"But, my good girl," said Ethelbertha, quite distressed, "one doesn't marry a man with the idea of subsequently summoning him!"

"No, mum," said Amenda, "one always hopes one will never need to, I'm sure, but it's just as well to be prepared. I knew a girl, when I was in service at Hastings, that loved a printer, and they were both going to commit suicide because her parents didn't want 'em to marry; and now he costs her four shillings a month regular in summonses. It's no good shutting one's eyes to things, mum."

But the most shamefully mercenary engagement that I think Amenda ever entered into was one with a 'bus conductor. We were living in the North of London then, and she had a young man, a cheesemonger, who kept a shop in Lupus Street, Chelsea. He could not come up to her because of the shop, so once a week she used to go down to him. One did not ride ten miles for a penny in those days, and she found the fare from Holloway to Victoria and back a severe tax upon her purse. The same 'bus that took her down at six brought her back at ten. During the first journey the 'bus conductor stared at Amenda; during the second he talked to her, during the third he gave her a cocoanut, during the fourth he proposed to her, and was promptly accepted. After that, Amenda was enabled to visit her cheesemonger without expense.

[Illustration: "I DESIRE SHARING CROSS."]

He was a quaint character himself, was this 'bus conductor. I often rode with him to Fleet Street. He knew me quite well (I suppose Amenda must have pointed me out to him), and would always ask me after her—aloud, before all the other passengers, which was trying—and give me messages to take back to her. Where women were concerned he had what is called "a way" with him, and from the extent and variety of his female acquaintance, and the evident tenderness with which the majority of them regarded him, I am inclined to hope that Amenda's desertion of him (which happened contemporaneously with her jilting of the cheesemonger) caused him less prolonged suffering than might otherwise have been the case.

He was a man from whom I derived a good deal of amusement one way and another. Thinking of him brings back to my mind a somewhat odd incident.



One afternoon, I jumped upon his 'bus in the Seven Sisters Road. An elderly Frenchman was the only other occupant of the vehicle. "You vil not forget me," the Frenchman was saying as I entered, "I desire Sharing Cross."

"I won't forget yer," answered the conductor, "you shall 'ave yer Sharing Cross. Don't make a fuss about it."

Page 27

"That's the third time 'ee's arst me not to forget 'im," he remarked to me in a stentorian aside; "'ee don't giv' yer much chance of doin' it, does 'ee?"

At the corner of the Holloway Road we drew up, and our conductor began to shout after the manner of his species: "Charing Cross—Charing Cross—'ere yer are—Come along, lady—Charing Cross."

The little Frenchman jumped up, and prepared to exit; the conductor pushed him back.

"Sit down and don't be silly," he said; "this ain't Charing Cross."

The Frenchman looked puzzled, but collapsed meekly. We picked up a few passengers, and proceeded on our way. Half a mile up the Liverpool Road a lady stood on the kerb regarding us as we passed with that pathetic mingling of desire and distrust which is the average woman's attitude towards conveyances of all kinds. Our conductor stopped.

"Where d'yer want to go to?" he asked her severely—omnibus conductors have a manner of addressing all pedestrians as though they were lost children or suspicious loiterers—"Strand—Charing Cross?"

[Illustration: "THE CONDUCTOR COLLARED HIM."]

The Frenchman did not hear or did not understand the first part of the speech, but he caught the words "Charing Cross," and bounced up and out on to the step. The conductor collared him as he was getting off, and jerked him back savagely.

"Carnt yer keep still a minute," he cried indignantly; "blessed if you don't want lookin' after like a bloomin' kid."

"I vont to be put down at Sharing Cross," answered the little Frenchman, humbly.

"You vont to be put down at Sharing Cross," repeated the other bitterly, as he led him back to his seat. "I shall put yer down in the middle of the road if I 'ave much more of yer. You stop there till I come and sling yer out. I ain't likely to let yer go much past yer Sharing Cross, I shall be too jolly glad to get rid o' yer."

The poor Frenchman subsided, and we jolted on. At "The Angel" we, of course, stopped. "Charing Cross," shouted the conductor, and up sprang the Frenchman.

"Oh, my Gawd," said the conductor, taking him by the shoulders and forcing him down into the corner seat, "wot am I to do? Carnt somebody sit on 'im?"

[Illustration: "'BLESSED IF I DIDN'T RUN HIM ON TO VICTORIA.'"]

He held him firmly down until the 'bus started, and then released him. At the top of Chancery Lane the same scene took place, and the poor little Frenchman became exasperated.

"He keep on saying Sharing Cross, Sharing Cross," he exclaimed, turning to the other passengers; "and it is *not* Sharing Cross. He is fool."

"Carnt yer understand," retorted the conductor, equally indignant; "of course I say Sharing Cross—I mean Charing Cross, but that don't mean that it *is* Charing Cross. That means that—" and then perceiving from the blank look in the Frenchman's face the utter impossibility of ever making the matter clear to him, he turned to us with an appealing gesture, and asked:

Page 28

“Does any gentleman know the French for ‘bloomin’ idiot’?”

A day or two afterwards, I happened to enter his omnibus again.

“Well,” I asked him, “did you get your French friend to Charing Cross all right?”

“No, sir,” he replied, “you’ll ’ardly believe it, but I ’ad a bit of a row with a policeman just before I got to the corner, and it put ’im clean out o’ my ’ead. Blessed if I didn’t run ’im on to Victoria.”

(To be continued.)

* * * * *

THE SKATER.

BY WILLIAM CANTON. ILLUSTRATED BY A. L. BOWLEY.

[Illustration]

O'er glassy levels of the mere
She glides on slanting skate;
She loves in fairy curves to veer
And weave her figure eight.
Bright flower in fur, I would thy feet
Could weave my heart and thine, my sweet,
Thus into one glad life complete!
Harsh winter, rage thy rudest:
Freeze, freeze, thou churlish sky;
Blow, arctic wind, thy shrewdest—
What care my heart and I!

* * * * *

MY SERVANT ANDREAS

BY ARCHIBALD FORBES.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FREDERIC VILLIERS.

[Illustration: “ANDREAS.”]



I think it quite likely that some of my young American friends, about ten months ago, were burning to have an opportunity of accompanying General Miles down the Pacific coast, and of describing in glowing sentences to their countrymen at home how Uncle Sam's young man turned to flight the Chilian insurrectionists, who were breathing out threatening and slaughter against the great Northern Republic. There is an undoubted fascination in the picturesque and adventurous life of the war correspondent. One must, of course, have a distinct bent for the avocation, and if he is to succeed he must possess certain salient attributes. He must expose himself to rather greater risks than fall to the lot of the average fighting man, without enjoying any of the happiness of retaliation which stirs the blood of the latter; the correspondent must sit quietly on his horse in the fire, and, while watching every turn in the battle, must wear the aspect as if he rather enjoyed the storm of missiles than otherwise. When the fighting is over, the soldier, if not killed, generally can eat and sleep; ere the echoes of it are silent, the correspondent of energy—and if he has not energy he is not worth his salt—must already be galloping his hardest towards the nearest telegraph wire, which, as like as not, is a hundred miles distant. He must "get there," by hook or by crook, in a minimum of time; and as soon as his message is on the wires, he must be hurrying back to the army, else he may chance to miss the great battle of the war. The correspondent must be most things to all men; he must have the sweet, angelic temper of a woman, be as affable as if he were running for office, and at the same time be big and ugly enough to impress the conviction that it would be extremely unwise to take any liberties with him.

Page 29

The career, no doubt, has some incidental drawbacks. No fewer than five British correspondents were killed in the recent campaigns in the Soudan. General Sherman threatened to hang all the correspondents found in his camp after a certain day, and General Sherman was the kind of man to fulfil any threat he made. I suppose there was no correspondent taking part in the Franco-German and Russo-Turkish wars who was not in custody over and over again on suspicion of being a spy. I have been a prisoner myself in France, Spain, Servia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Russia, Roumania and Bulgaria; and I may perhaps venture to remark in passing that I cannot recommend any of these countries from this point of view. But the casual confinements, half irritating, half comic, to which he may be subjected, do not bother the war correspondent of the old world nearly as much as do the foreign languages which, if he is not a good linguist, hamper him every hour of every day. He really should possess the gift of tongues—be conversant with all European languages, a neat assortment of the Asiatic languages, and a few of the African tongues, such as Abyssinian, Ashantee, Zulu, and Soudanese. But how few in the nature of things can approximate this polyglot versatility. Often in Eastern Europe, and in Afghanistan, I have envied Messrs. Swinton, Smalley, Whitelaw Reed, and the other notable war correspondents of the American Civil War, in that they had not the difficulties of outlandish tongues to contend with. I own myself to be a poor linguist, and have many and many a time suffered for my dullness of what the Scotch call “up-take.” It is true that I was fairly conversant with French and German, and could express my wants in Russian, Roumanian, Bulgarian, Spanish, Turkish, Hindustanee, Pushtoo, and Burmese, every word of which smatterings I have long since forgotten. But the truth is that the poorest peoples in the world in acquiring foreign languages are the English and the French; the readiest are the Russians and Americans. It was, after a fashion, a liberal education to listen to the fluency in some half-dozen languages of Poor McGahan, the “Ohio boy,” who graduated from the plough to be perhaps the most brilliant war correspondent of modern times. His compatriot and colleague, Frank Millet, who has fallen away from glory as a war correspondent, and has taken to the inferior trade of painting, seemed to pick up a language by the mere accident of finding himself on the soil where it was spoken. In the first three days, after crossing the Danube into Bulgaria, Millet went about with book in hand, gathering in the names of things at which he pointed, and jotting down each acquisition in the book. On the fourth day he could swear in Bulgarian, copiously, fervently, and with a measure of intelligibility. Within a week he had conquered the uncouth tongue. As he voyaged lately down the Danube from source to mouth, charmingly describing the scenic panorama of the great river in the pages of *Harper*, those of you who have read those sketches will not have failed to notice how Millet talked to German, Hungarian, Servian, Bulgarian, Roumanian, and Turkish, each in his own tongue, those diverse languages having been acquired by him during the few months of the Russo-Turkish war.

Page 30

[Illustration: "MACGAHAN AND FRANK MILLET."]

By this time, you may be wondering just where "Andreas" comes in. Perhaps I have been over long in getting to my specific subject; but I will not be discursive any more. It was at the *table d'hote* in the Serbische Krone Hotel, in Belgrade, where I first set eyes on Andreas. In the year 1876, Serbia had thought proper to throw off the yoke of her Turkish suzerain, and to attempt to assert her independence by force of arms. But for very irregularly paid tribute she was virtually independent already, and probably in all Serbia there were not two hundred Turks. But she ambitiously desired to have the name of as well as the actuality of being independent; the Russians helped her with arms, officers, and volunteer soldiers; and when I reached Belgrade, in May of the year named, there had already been fighting, in which the Servians had by no means got the worst. No word of the Servian tongue had I, and it was the reverse of pleasant for a war correspondent in such plight to learn that outside of Belgrade nobody, or at least hardly anybody, knew a word of any other language than the native Servian. As I ate, I was being attended by a very assiduous waiter, whose alertness and anxiety to please were very conspicuous. He was smart with quite un-Oriental smartness; he whisked about the tables with deftness; he spoke to me in German, to the Russian officers over against me in what I assumed was Russian, to the Servians dining behind me in what I took to be Servian. I liked the look of the man; there was intelligence in his aspect. One could not call him handsome, but there was character in the keen black eye, the high features and the pronounced chin, fringed on either side by bushy black whiskers.

[Illustration: "ANDREAS AS A FORAGER."]

I had brought no servant with me; the average British servant is worse than useless in a foreign country, and the dubiously-polyglot courier is a snare and a deception on campaign. I had my eye on Andreas for a couple of days, during which he was of immense service to me. He seemed to know and stand well with everyone in Belgrade; it was he, indeed, who presented me in the restaurant to the Prime Minister and the Minister for War, who got together for me my field necessities, who helped me to buy my horses, and who narrated to me the progress of the campaign so far as it had gone. On the third day I had him in my room and asked whether he would like to come with me into the field as my servant. He accepted the offer with effusion; we struck hands on the compact; he tendered me credentials which I ascertained to be extremely satisfactory; and then he gave me a little sketch of himself. It was somewhat mixed, as indeed was his origin. Primarily he was a Servian, but his maternal grandmother had been a Bosniak, an earlier ancestress had been in a Turkish harem, there was a strain in his blood of the Hungarian zingane—the gipsy of Eastern Europe, and one could not look at his profile without a suspicion that there was a Jewish element in his pedigree. "A pure mongrel," was what a gentleman of the British Legation termed Andreas, and this self-contradictory epithet was scarcely out of place.

Page 31

Andreas turned out well. He was as hardy as a hill-goat, careless how and when he ate, or where he slept, which, indeed, was mostly in the open. It seemed to me that he had cousins all over Servia, chiefly of the female persuasion, and I am morally certain that the Turkish strain in his blood had in Andreas its natural development in a species of *fin-de-siecle* polygamy. Sherman's prize "bummer" was not in it with Andreas as a forager. At first, indeed, I suspected him of actual plundering, so copiously did he bring in supplies, and so little had I to pay for them; but I was not long in discovering that all kinds of produce were dirt cheap in Servia, and that as I could myself buy a lamb for a quarter, it was not surprising that Andreas, to the manner born, could easily obtain one for half the money. He was an excellent horsemaster, and the stern vigour with which he chastised the occasional neglect of the cousin whom he had brought into my service as groom, was borne in upon me by the frequent howls which were audible from the rear of my tent. There was not a road in all Servia with whose every winding Andreas was not conversant, and this "extensive and peculiar" knowledge of his was often of great service to me. He was a light-weight and an excellent rider; I have sent him off to Belgrade with a telegram at dusk, and he was back again by breakfast time next morning, after a gallop of quite a hundred miles.

No exertion fatigued him; I never saw the man out of humour; there was but one matter in regard to which I ever had to chide him, and in that I had perforce to let him have his own way, because I do not believe that he could restrain himself. He had served the term in the army which is, or was then, obligatory on all Servians; and on the road or in camp he was rather more of a "peace at any price" man than ever was the late Mr. John Bright himself. When the first fight occurred, Andreas claimed to be allowed to witness it along with me. I demurred; he might get hit; and if anything should happen to him, what should I do for a servant? At length I gave him the firm order to remain in camp, and started myself with the groom behind me on my second horse. The fighting occurred eight miles from camp, and in the course of it, leaving the groom in the rear, I had accompanied the Russian General Dochtouroff into a most unpleasantly hot place, where a storm of Turkish shells were falling in the effort to hinder the withdrawal of a disabled Servian battery. I happened to glance over my shoulder, and lo! Andreas on foot was at my horse's tail, obviously in a state of ecstatic enjoyment of the situation. I peremptorily ordered him back, and he departed sullenly, calmly strolling along the line of Turkish fire. Just then, Tchernaeff, the Servian Commander-in-Chief, had, it seemed, ordered a detachment of infantry to take in flank the Turkish guns. From where we stood I could discern the Servian soldiers hurrying forward close under the fringe of a wood near the

Page 32

line of retirement along which Andreas was sulking. Andreas saw them too, and retreated no step further, but cut across to them, snatching up a gun as he ran, and the last I saw of him was while he was waving on the militiamen with his billycock, and loosing off an occasional bullet, while he emitted yells of defiance against the Turks, which might well have struck terror into their very marrow. Andreas came into camp at night very streaky with powder stains, minus the lobe of one ear, uneasy as he caught my eye, yet with a certain elateness of mien. I sacked him that night, and he said he didn't care, and that he was not ashamed of himself. Next morning, as I was rising, he rushed into the tent, knelt down, clasped my knees, and bedewed my ankles with his tears. Of course I reinstated him; I couldn't do without him, and I think he knew it.

[Illustration: "SNATCHING UP A GUN AS HE RAN."]

But I had yielded too easily. Andreas had established a precedent. He insisted, in a quiet, positive manner, on accompanying me to every subsequent battle; and I had to consent, always taking his pledge that he would obey the injunctions I might lay upon him. And, as a matter of course, he punctually and invariably violated that pledge when the crisis of the fighting was drawing to a head, and just when this "peace at any price" man could not control the bloodthirst that was parching him.

One never knows how events are to fall out. It happened that this resolution on the part of Andreas to accompany me into the fights once assuredly saved my life. It was on the day of Djunis, the last battle fought by the Servians. In the early part of the day there was a good deal of scattered woodland fighting in front of the entrenched line, which they abandoned when the Turks came on in earnest. Andreas and I were among the trees trying to find a position from which something was to be seen, when all of a sudden I, who was in advance, plumped right into the centre of a small scouting party of Turks. They tore me out of the saddle, and I had given myself up for lost—for the Turks took no prisoners, their cheerful practice being to slaughter first and then abominably to mutilate—when suddenly Andreas dashed in among my captors, shouting aloud in a language which I took to be Turkish, since he bellowed "Effendi" as he pointed to me. He had thrown away his billycock and substituted a fez, which he afterwards told me he always carried in case of accidents, and in one hand he waved a dingy piece of parchment with a seal dangling from it, which I assumed was some obsolete firman. The result was truly amazing, and the scene had some real humour in it. With profound salaams, the Turks unhandled me, helped me to mount, and, as I rode off at a tangent with Andreas at my horse's head, called after me what sounded like friendly farewells. When we were back among the Russians—I don't remember seeing much of the Servians later on that day—Andreas explained that he had passed

Page 33

himself for the Turkish dragoman of a British correspondent whom the Padishah delighted to honour, and that, after expressing a burning desire to defile the graves of their collective female ancestry, he had assured my captors that they might count themselves as dead men if they did not immediately release me. To his ready-witted conduct I undoubtedly owe the ability to write now this record of a man of curiously complicated nature.

When the campaign ended with the Servian defeat at Djunis, Andreas went back to his headwaitership at the *Serbische Krone* in Belgrade. Before leaving that capital I had the honour of being present at his nuptials, a ceremony the amenity of which was somewhat disturbed by the violent incursion into the sacred edifice of sundry ladies all claiming to have prior claims on the bridegroom of the hour. They were, however, placated, and subsequently joined the marriage feast in the great arbour behind the *Krone*. Andreas faithfully promised to come to me to the ends of the earth on receipt of a telegram, if I should require his services, and he were alive.

[Illustration: "ANDREAS DASHED IN AMONG MY CAPTORS."]

Next spring the Russo-Turkish war broke out, and I hurried eastward in time to see the first Cossack cross the Pruth. I had telegraphed to Andreas from England to meet me at Bazias on the Danube below Belgrade. Bazias is the place where the railway used to end, and where we took steamer for the Lower Danube. Andreas was duly on hand, ready and serviceable as of old, a little fatter, and a trifle more consequential than when we had last parted. He was, if possible, rather more at home in Bucharest than he had been in Belgrade, and recommended me to Brofft's Hotel, in comparison with which the charges of the Brunswick in New York are infinitesimal. He bought my wagon and team, he found riding horses when they were said to be unprocurable, he constructed a most ingenious tent, of which the wagon was, so to speak, the roof-tree, he laid in stores, arranged for relays of couriers, and furnished me with a coachman in the person of a Roumanian Jew who he one day owned was a distant connection, and whose leading attribute was, that he could survive more sleep than any other human being I have ever known. We took the field auspiciously, Mr. Frederic Villiers, the war artist of the *London Graphic*, being my campaigning comrade. Thus early I discerned a slight rift in the lute. Andreas did not like Villiers, which showed his bad taste, or rather, perhaps, the narrowness of his capacity of affection; and I fear Villiers did not much like Andreas, whom he thought too familiar. This was true, and it was my fault; but really it was with difficulty that I could bring myself to treat Andreas as a servant. He was more, in my estimation, in the nature of the confidential major-domo, and to me he was simply invaluable. Villiers had to chew his moustache, and glower discontentedly at Andreas.

Page 34

I had some good couriers for the conveyance of despatches back across the Danube to Bucharest, whence everything was telegraphed to London; but they were essentially fair-weather men. The casual courier may be alert, loyal, and trustworthy; he may be relied on to try his honest best, but it is not to be expected of him that he will greatly dare and count his life but as dross when his incentive to enterprise is merely filthy lucre. But I could trust Andreas to dare and to endure—to overcome obstacles, and, if man could, to “get there,” where, in the base-quarters in Bucharest, the amanuenses were waiting to copy out in round hand for the foreign telegraphist the rapid script of the correspondent scribbling for life in the saddle or the cleft of a commanding tree while the shells were whistling past. We missed him dreadfully when he was gone—even Villiers, who liked good cooking, owned to thinking long for his return. For, in addition to his other virtues, Andreas was a capital cook. It is true that his courses had a habit of arriving at long and uncertain intervals. After a dish of pungent stew, no other viands appearing to loom in the near future, Villiers and myself would betake ourselves to smoking, and perhaps on a quiet day would lapse into slumber. From this we would be aroused by Andreas to partake of a second course of roast chicken, the bird having been alive and unconscious of its impending fate when the first course had been served. No man is perfect, and as regarded Andreas there were some petty spots on the sun. He had, for instance, a mania for the purchase of irrelevant poultry, and for accommodating the fowls in our wagon, tied by the legs, against the day of starvation, which he always, but causelessly, apprehended. I do not suppose any reader has ever had any experience of domestic poultry as bedfellows, and I may caution him earnestly against making any such experiment.

I do not know whether it is a detraction from Andreas’s worth to mention that another characteristic of his was the habit of awaking us in the still watches of the night, for the purpose of imparting his views on recondite phases of the great Eastern question. But how trivial were such peccadilloes in a man who was so resolute not to be beaten in getting my despatch to the telegraph wire, that once, when three pontoons of the bridge across the Danube were sunk, he crossed the gap hand over hand by the hand-rope, sloshing down with the current as the slack of the rope gave to his weight! Andreas became quite an institution in the Russian camp. When Ignatieff, the Tsar’s intimate, the great diplomatist who has now curiously fizzled out, would honour us by partaking sometimes of afternoon tea in our tent, he would call Andreas by his name and call him “Molodetz”—the Russian for “brave fellow.” In the Servian campaign Dochtouroff had got him the Takova cross, which Andreas sported with great pride, and Ignatieff used to tell him that the Tsar was seriously

Page 35

thinking of conferring on him the Cross of St. George, badinage which Andreas took as dead earnest. MacGahan used gravely to entreat him to take greater care of his invaluable life, and hint that if any calamity occurred to him, the campaign would *ipso facto* come to an end. Andreas knew that MacGahan was quizzing him, but it was exceedingly droll how he purred and bridled under the light touch of that genial humourist, whose merits his own countrymen, to my thinking, have never adequately recognised. The old story of a prophet having scant honour in his own country.

[Illustration: "CROSSED THE GAP HAND OVER HAND."]

After the long strain of the desperate but futile attack made by the Russians on Plevna in the early part of the September of the war, I fell a victim to the malarial fever of the Lower Danube, and had to be invalided back to Bucharest. The illness grew upon me, and my condition became very serious. Worthy Andreas nursed me with great tenderness and assiduity in the lodgings to which I had been brought, since they would not accept a fever patient at Brofft's. After some days of wretchedness I became delirious, and, of course, lost consciousness; my last recollection was of Andreas wetting my parched lips with lemonade. When I recovered my senses, and looked out feebly, there was nobody in the room. How long I had been unconscious I had no idea. I lay there in a half stupor till evening, unable from weakness to summon any assistance. In the dusk came the English doctor who had been attending me. "Where is Andreas?" he asked. I could not tell him. "He was here last night," he said; "you have been delirious for seven days." The woman of the house was summoned. She had not seen Andreas since the previous night, but, busy about her own domestic affairs, had no suspicion until she entered the room that Andreas was not with me still.

Andreas never returned. It appeared that he had taken away all his belongings. One day, when gradually mending, I put my hand under the pillow with intent to find my watch, which was an heirloom, and wind it up. I could find no watch. No more could I find the bag of ducats which was alongside the watch before I lost my senses. Search was made throughout the room without success, and, with whatever reluctance to believe a thing so utterly unlikely, I could not refrain from the conviction that Andreas must have carried off both money and watch. The thought caused a relapse, but at length I attained convalescence, and was able to drive out. But the doctor was firm that during the now imminent winter I was not to return to the field. Fortunately, my able colleagues, MacGahan and Millet, were there; and I was therefore the less distressed by Dr. —'s peremptory sentence on me. I was condemned to return to England as soon as I should be strong enough to travel.

Page 36

When I had to leave the Plevna front, my colleagues temporarily took charge of my field equipment. But I had brought back to Bucharest my best riding horse, and during my illness he had been standing at livery in the stables of the English Tramway Company. Determining now on the melancholy necessity of selling an animal which had on many a hard day and many a long night-ride served me staunchly, I drove to the stables, and instructed the manager to sell my horse. "Your horse!" he exclaimed, in evident surprise; "your horse was sold weeks ago! Your man, Andreas, came here with a message that we were to dispose of it; and I sold it next day to General Todleben on his way through Bucharest to take the command before Plevna. It fetched a good price, 105 ducats, more than you gave for it; Andreas called for the money, and, of course, I gave it to him."

So Andreas was thief and rogue—deliberate thief and rogue. I was angry, but I was yet more heart-sorry that so fine and true a native should have thus fallen. Just as I was leaving Bucharest for England, a letter came to me from a friend in Galatz, a commercial city of Roumania, near the mouth of the Danube. Its P.S. only is worth quoting. "So you have parted with your man, Andreas. I thought from what you had told me that you would retain him for life. He is here now, I saw him drunk in the street yesterday. He told Kennedy that he believed you were dead."

[Illustration: "ANDREAS DROPPED ON HIS KNEES."]

I went straight to Galatz, a long half-day's journey. Andreas was not hard to find; he was smoking in the "Concordia" saloon. I saw him before he saw me; he had a furtive air, he was pallid and his lips twitched; he looked to me on the verge of *delirium tremens*. I approached him from behind, and uttered the one word, "Andreas!" At the word, he started as if he had been shot, spun round, dropped on his knees, with his hands raised beseechingly, and cried in a broken voice, "Before God, master, I thought you were dead, else I should never have done it! I have not had a happy moment since I threw away my good name—I could not go home! Kill me, send me to prison, punish me how you choose. I shall rejoice to suffer!" And the poor wretch grovelled before me on his stomach.

I had meant to punish him; but he was too broken for chastisement. I could not send to prison the man who had saved my life among the pine-trees of Djunis. I wonder if he really thought me dead—not that, if so, his act was thereby materially palliated. And I thought of two little sentences which my mother taught me when I was a child: "Judge not that ye be not judged," and "Lead us not into temptation." I pulled the man on to his feet and grasped his hand, then with the words, "Give me my father's watch—good-bye, Andreas. I shall remember all the good in you, and forget those last bad days." I turned from him, and quitted the "Concordia" with a lump in my throat that I could not swallow down.

Page 37

* * * * *

TOLD BY THE COLONEL.

X.

A MATRIMONIAL ROMANCE.

BY W. L. ALDEN.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY R. JACK.

“And by the way,” continued the Colonel, “a curious thing about this Josiah Wilson was that he was married for fifteen years and never had any wife whatever.”

The Colonel had begun a story concerning one Josiah Wilson, which promised to be interesting, but his incidental allusion to Mr. Wilson’s matrimonial experience awakened our curiosity, and we begged him to interrupt his narrative long enough to tell us how it came to pass that Josiah was a married man who never had a wife.

[Illustration: “HOWLED FOR HELP.”]

“The marriage laws in the United States,” said the Colonel, giving his chair an increased tilt backwards, which was his usual way of beginning a fresh anecdote, “are as peculiar in their way as are the divorce laws. You would think to look at them that they would permit anybody to marry anybody else in any way that either of them might choose, but for all that they sometimes make it impossible for a man or a woman to get married. There was a couple who intended to be married in a balloon, which is a style of lunacy that is quite fashionable in some parts of the country, though I can’t see why a man should want to risk his neck in a balloon on his wedding day unless it is that it takes so much courage to be married at all that a man forgets all about such minor dangers as are connected with ballooning. The bride, the minister, and two witnesses of assorted sexes went up in the balloon at the appointed time, and, naturally, the bridegroom intended to go with them, but he accidentally caught his foot in a neglected guy-rope, and went up head downwards about twenty feet below the car. The party in the balloon could not haul him up because they could not get hold of the rope, and the bride would not consent to give up the trip, because the groom had always been a little shy, and she was afraid that, if she let him go this time, she might not be able to land him again. So the parson went on with the ceremony, and the groom made most of his responses in bad language, and howled for help when he wasn’t swearing. When the ceremony was over, the aeronaut managed to land the balloon without seriously damaging the bridegroom, but when, a year or two afterwards, the bride wanted to get her divorce, the court held that there had never been any marriage, for the reason that both the groom

and the bride had not appeared together in the presence of the officiating minister, and that, furthermore, there was no provision in the law which would permit a man to be married upside down.

[Illustration: "SMITH'S BULL-DOG."]

Page 38

“But to get back to Josiah Wilson. He lived in Indiana, close to the boundary line between that State and Illinois, and he courted Melinda Smith, a young woman who lived a little way up the mountain side with her father and three brothers. The girl was anxious to be married, but her family was dead against it. You see Josiah was a Republican and a Methodist, while the Smiths were Democrats and Baptists, and, naturally, they hated each other like poison, and one night as old man Smith and Josiah met on their way to rival prayer meetings, they exchanged revolver shots, without, however, doing any harm. Then once Josiah had most of the calf of his leg taken off by the Smiths’ bull-dog, and twice the Smith boys came into the sitting-room where Josiah was calling on Melinda, and suggested to him with their shot-guns that he had better go home. Gradually Josiah and Melinda came to the conclusion that her family was resolved to discourage the match, so they determined to elope and be married without the knowledge or consent of anybody.

“One dark night Josiah carried a ladder and planted it under Melinda’s window. He had advised her to walk out of the front door, which was always left unlocked at night, but she refused, saying that if she was going to elope she should do it in the proper way, and that if Josiah had no respect for her, she had some little respect for herself. She climbed down the ladder with a good deal of difficulty, because she insisted that Josiah should help her, and also that he should stand forty yards away, for reasons connected with her ankles, and he found it rather trying to follow out these contradictory orders. However, Melinda reached the ground at last, and the pair started in a carriage that had been waiting just around a bend in the road, in company with the Methodist minister. Their plan was to drive to the next town and there to be married, but it happened that one of the Smith boys, being restless, got up in the night, and, looking out of the window, saw the ladder standing at Melinda’s window. In about twenty minutes after the young people had started, the whole Smith family and their shot-guns were following the runaways in a waggon, and gaining on them fast.

“The Methodist minister, whose hearing was unusually good, heard the sound of hoofs before Josiah noticed it, and told the young people that there was not the least doubt that they were pursued, and would be overtaken in a very few minutes. ‘And then, you know,’ he added, ‘the chances are that, being Baptists, they will shoot first, and ask for explanations afterwards. The only thing for us to do is to get the marriage ceremony over before they come up. Then they will see that opposition is of no use, and will listen to reason.’

[Illustration: “THEY WERE MARRIED.”]

Page 39

“Josiah and Melinda at once consented, and the parson, noticing a little clearing in the woods on the left hand side of the road, and a flat sort of tombstone standing in the middle of it, said that he would stand on that stone and marry his young friends so quick that it would make their hair curl. He was particularly glad to meet with a handy tombstone, for he said that a tombstone was the next thing to a church, and that to be married by the side of a tomb would be almost as solemn as to be married in a minister’s study. So the party hastily descended; the parson mounted the stone; Josiah and Melinda joined hands in front of him, and they were married, and the parson had kissed the bride and pocketed his fee just as the Smiths’ waggon drove up and the Smith boys cocked their guns and covered the party. But the parson was wide awake. He had his revolver out and old man Smith covered before anybody had taken aim at him, but, instead of shooting, he remarked that he was a minister of the blessed gospel of peace; that there was no necessity for bloodshed, and that he would blow a hole through old Smith unless the Smith boys lowered their weapons and consented to argue the matter. ‘The fact is, Colonel Smith,’ said the parson, ‘you’re too late. The young people are legally married, and the sooner you accept the situation the better. I married them not two minutes ago, standing on that identical tombstone.’

[Illustration: “‘YOU’LL COME STRAIGHT HOME WITH ME.’”]

“Colonel Smith was a lawyer, and the sharpest one in that part of the country. He saw the force of the minister’s remarks, so he told the boys to put up their guns, and he shook hands with the minister. Then he inquired, in a careless sort of way, where Josiah and Melinda had stood while they were being married. The parson showed the footprints of the bride and groom, and then Colonel Smith turned to Melinda and said, ‘You’ll come straight home with me. There hasn’t been any marriage yet. That stone is the boundary mark between Indiana and Illinois, and you were standing in Indiana and that other idiot was standing in Illinois when the parson tried to marry you. Nobody can marry in two States at the same time, and I shan’t recognise the pretended marriage till a court of law compels me to do so, which will be never. I hope this will teach you the folly of fooling with Methodism. When you want to get married next time try a Baptist minister, who will know the difference between a tombstone and a boundary mark.’ There were too many Smiths, and they were too well armed to be reasoned with successfully, so the upshot was that Melinda went home with her family, and Josiah and the parson went to see a lawyer.

Page 40

“The next day Josiah brought a suit for divorce against Melinda. It was a friendly suit, you understand, and his only object was to test the question of the validity of his marriage, for, of course, no man can get a divorce unless he first proves that he is married. Old man Smith conducted the case on his side, and a lawyer named Starkweather, who is now a member of the Illinois Legislature, appeared for Josiah Wilson. Colonel Smith argued that while the parson who conducted the alleged marriage ceremony could undoubtedly have married a couple in the State of Indiana, he could not marry a woman in Indiana to a man in Illinois, for the reason that the man and the woman could not be in the same place while they were in two different commonwealths, and that hence Josiah and Melinda had not legally appeared together before the officiating minister. Furthermore, he argued that the minister at the time of the pretended marriage was standing neither in Indiana nor in Illinois, but on the boundary line; that the statute defined the boundary line as ‘an imaginary line’ running from such and such a point to such and such a point, and that a minister who stands in a purely imaginative locality stands virtually nowhere, and hence cannot perform any function of his calling.

“On the other hand, Josiah’s lawyer claimed that the minister had married Melinda Smith in the State of Indiana; that consequently she must have been married to somebody, and that that somebody was unquestionably Josiah Wilson. As to the point that the minister stood in an imaginary locality because, as was alleged, he stood on the boundary line, the lawyer maintained that it was a physical impossibility that a minister weighing two hundred and fifty pounds could stand in a purely imaginative place. Moreover, he was prepared to prove that, while performing the ceremony, at least one of the minister’s feet was in the State of Indiana, which was sufficient to make him legally present in that State.

“The arguments lasted three days, and the court before which it was tried, consisting of three judges, took all the third day to deliver its verdict. It decided that Melinda Smith was legally married to some person unknown, though not to Josiah Wilson, and that Josiah Wilson was also married to some unknown woman, who was not Melinda Smith, whoever else she might be; that no marriage between the plaintiff and the defendant had ever taken place, and that no divorce could be granted, but that if either of them married anyone else, he or she would be guilty of bigamy.

[Illustration: “SHE WAS A GOOD DEAL CAST DOWN.”]

Page 41

"The Smiths, with the exception of Melinda, were delighted with the decision, for it made it reasonably certain that Josiah could never be recognised as her husband. She was a good deal cast down about it, for, like every other Indiana girl, she had looked forward to being married and divorced as the natural lot of woman. Now it appeared that she was married, but in such an unsatisfactory way, that she could never have a husband, and never be divorced from anyone. As for Josiah, he was furious, but there was no help for it, the law was against him, and, as a law-abiding man, he was obliged to respect it, especially as he could not hope to kill off all four of the Smiths, if he decided to make a family feud of it; he himself having no family whatever, and no one to help him to keep up his end of the feud.

"For the next fifteen years Josiah lived a single man except in name, and Melinda mourned her hard fate and kept house for her father and brothers; but one day Josiah's lawyer, who was by this time in the Legislature, came to him and offered to have his marriage to Melinda made legal in all respects for five hundred dollars. The lawyer was so certain that he could do this that he was willing to wait for his pay until after he had gained a verdict, and Josiah, after a little bargaining such as every self-respecting man would have made, in his place, consented to the lawyer's terms. It seems that the lawyer had accidentally discovered that there had been a mistake in the survey of part of the boundary line between Indiana and Illinois, and at the very place where Josiah and Melinda were married, A rectification of this mistake would move the line ten feet west, and so place the spot where the pair stood during their wedding entirely within the state of Indiana. The proper steps to obtain the rectification of the boundary were taken, and it was rectified. Then Melinda in her turn began a suit for divorce against Josiah, and had no difficulty in proving the marriage and in obtaining a decree. Josiah paid the lawyer his five hundred dollars, and was overjoyed at being finally able to call his Melinda his own. But he met with a little disappointment. Now that Melinda had obtained her divorce she thought she might as well live up to it, and marry a fresh husband. So she married the Methodist minister, who had just lost his third wife, and lived happily ever afterwards.

[Illustration: "OFFERED TO HAVE HIS MARRIAGE MADE LEGAL."]

"It was just after this that Josiah, being perhaps made a little reckless by his disappointment, became involved in the affair that I was going to tell you about when you interrupted me, and wanted to hear about his marriage. Matrimony is a mighty curious thing, and you can never tell precisely how it is going to turn out. That is one reason why I was never married but once, though I spent ten years of my life in Chicago, and had friends at bar who stood ready to obtain divorces for me at any moment and without a dollar of expense."

Page 42

* * * * *

[Illustration: IDLERS.]

* * * * *

“LIONS IN THEIR DENS.”

No. II.—GEORGE GROSSMITH AND THE HUMOUR OF HIM.

BY RAYMOND BLATHWAYT.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GEO. HUTCHINSON.

(Photographs by Messrs. Fraddle and Young and Alfred Ellis.)

[Illustration: MR. GEORGE GROSSMITH.]

A little, slight man, with a thin, clever, mobile, clean-shaven face, a sharp inquisitive nose surmounted by a perpetual pair of *pince-nez*, and a rather sarcastic mouth, from which wit and humour as light and airy as the cigarette smoke which accompanied each remark continually flowed.

Mr. George Grossmith, the well-known actor and society clown.

He stands on the hearthrug of his own special sanctum in his handsome house in Dorset Square, with his back to the fire, cigarette in his mouth, his hands now in his pockets, now waving in the air, as he vivaciously tells me the story of his busy, energetic and wonderfully interesting life.

[Illustration: MRS. GEORGE GROSSMITH.]

“I was born,” said he, “in 1847. I come of a family of actors and reciters. My father, whose portrait you see there on the wall, was a well-known lecturer and entertainer. Sixty or seventy years ago my uncle created a great sensation as a child actor, and he was commonly known as the ‘celebrated infant Roscius.’ Come out into the hall,” continued the lively little entertainer, “and I will show you some old engravings which represent him in his favourite characters. Then my brother Weedon, as you know, is, of course, a well-known actor, as well as a clever artist, and part author with myself of several sketches which have appeared in *Punch*. My eldest son now begins to display the family tendency to a most alarming extent. For my own part, I started my career as a reporter at Bow Street Police Court, a training which I have found invaluable in many respects ever since. My subsequent history as actor and society clown is so well known that I need not trouble you with it any further.”

"I suppose you find the taste of your audiences has gone up considerably within the last twenty years, do you not?"

"Why, yes," he replied. "They wouldn't stand to-day what they used to roar at then. My music is quite elaborate compared with the two or three chords which easily satisfied people in the sixties and early seventies. Listen to this," continued my host, as he sat down to the *piano* and struck a couple of very simple chords. Then he glided softly into what he termed a modern accompaniment. It was all the difference between "Ten Little Niggers" and a slumber song of Schubert.

[Illustration: MR. GROSSMITH'S HOUSE.]

"And do you find the public very critical?"

Page 43

"Well," he replied, with a smile, "they are very kind. It is your professional critic who is severe, though I can honestly say they invariably treat me well. Criticism up to a certain point is good enough. Beyond that point it is absolutely disabling to me. My father was a very severe critic. When we went out together he used to take the first half-hour, and then go to the back of the hall and criticise me. But it so hampered me by causing me to think of and consider every pose that I had to beg of him to desist. And then again, as regards criticism, I always think—it may be very conceited on my part—that I know a great deal more what the public want than my critics do. I declare to you I should have to take everything out of my sketches if I attempted to carry out all the suggestions that are made to me. I can absolutely feel the public pulse after so many years upon the platform. I am almost always right. When I first started 'See me Dance the Polka' it fell quite flat. I gave it up, although I felt sure it ought to go. The public then demanded it, and it went with a swing. The public had changed its mind. Not I."

[Illustration: THE DINING ROOM.]

"And how do you prepare your sketches?" said I, as Mr. Grossmith lit another cigarette, and took up his position on the hearthrug again.

"Anyhow and anywhere the idea comes to me for a sketch. I am seated in a railway train, and I think of a sea-side sketch. I close my eyes and try to recall every single feature of interest on a crowded fashionable beach in the height of the season. Nothing is too unimportant. The way in which an old lady settles herself comfortably into her chair, the manner in which a man, especially a shy man, walks into the room, all these things, slightly exaggerated, but still true to nature, are immensely appreciated. First I have the idea, then I elaborate, sometimes for months, then I produce on the stage, and the people say, 'How remarkable it is you should invent all this on the spur of the moment!' That, of course, is a great compliment. The song-writing is always amusing," continued Mr. Grossmith, as he placed in my hand a little notebook in which were suggestions and elaborations innumerable. One thing I noticed, which he himself had condemned, but which was decidedly amusing, although it has never been allowed to see the light of day:

[Illustration: THE DRAWING-ROOM.]

"I've been engaged to many,
Quite a score of times at least;
I don't think I with safety *can* say
Where I met my first *fiancee*.
Oh! 'tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all;
So I may say I have loved and *lost a lot*,
And my fickleness has *cost a lot*."

“Ah!” said Mr. Grossmith, as he leaned over me and saw what I was reading; “my better judgment told me that was not good enough for the public.”

Page 44

Then came a pencilled note in this little book, "You can take a horse to water, but can't make him drink." "That gave me an idea," cried Mr. Grossmith, as he sprang to his feet. "You can take a boy to the piano, but you can't make him play.' Thought I to myself, that would make a capital sketch. And here is how I set about it," continued he, as he proceeded to illustrate his remarks. "Imagine a little fellow in the corner there. I then begin in dumb show to encourage him to come to the piano. 'Come on, my boy; you know you can play that pretty piece you played yesterday. Come on, there's a good fellow!' Wonderful what you can do with persuasion! He refuses. I attempt to lead him to the piano. He won't budge an inch. I carry him under my arm and seat him in front of the instrument, the audience roaring all the time. At last his mistakes are so many and so ridiculous, I lose all patience and catch him a mighty box upon the ears! Tableau!! Of course there is no boy on the platform at all, I am quite alone, but I have so thoroughly lost myself in my imagination that people have declared years after, 'Oh! but I am quite sure you had a boy with you; why, don't you remember how you boxed his ears?'"

[Illustration: "I ENCOURAGE HIM."] [Illustration: "I ATTEMPT TO LEAD HIM."]
[Illustration: "I CARRY HIM."] [Illustration: "I LOSE ALL PATIENCE."]

No less marvellous than his power of acting is his power of mimicry. "I will show you how I do Irving," said he, and in a moment the little man had ruffled his hair, had assumed to the life not only Irving's peculiar gait, but, even more remarkable still, had managed to secure almost exactly the very expression of the great tragedian's face.

[Illustration: "HOW I DO IRVING."]

"Then again, I find it a good idea to take up some craze or topic of the moment. 'The Drama on Crutches' I wrote when the craze first arose amongst the aristocracy for going on the stage. One of the sketches which you will find outlined in that little notebook is entitled, 'Is Music a Failure?' and I endeavoured to answer the question by showing how popular it is among all classes of the community." I will quote pretty freely from this outlined sketch, as it will give my readers an idea, better than anything else would do, of the manner in which Mr. Grossmith prepares his delightful sketches.

"I am not going to treat the subject seriously," he writes, "but in my own particular, impertinent way. The question often arises—are we a musical nation? The foreigners think we are not. But where in the wide, wide world is there a country where you will hear so many organs and German bands? Where is the country, excepting ours, that can appreciate the concertina? Where, except in England, can you hear that delightful combination of harp and cornet outside a house of refreshment? The prejudice of other nations is distressing; and as for their ignorance, why, I don't suppose Italy and Germany have even heard of the ocarino and the Jew's harp."

Page 45

And so the sketch runs on, until, in speaking of the universal manner in which music is appreciated in England by all classes, Mr. Grossmith goes on to say: "We have made rapid strides, so have our servants. They don't know how to dust the piano, but they can play it. Everybody plays the piano, from the Peerage to the School Board. Then look how music has crept into our homes and social circles. Besides the piano, the mother and daughters play the banjo, the son plays the first fiddle, and the father the second fiddle—as usual. I know of a Lord Mayor who plays the trombone, a clergyman who plays the big drum—that's a nice unpretentious, giddy instrument!—and I know of any number of members of Parliament who blow their own trumpets!!" And so the notes go brightly on through many pages.

[Illustration: THE STUDY.] [Illustration: MR. WEEDON GROSSMITH.]

"This," explained my host, "is a fair specimen of the method I employ in preparing a drawing-room sketch. As a rule, my audiences of that class are capital. I always love a well-dressed audience, it is so cheerful. You mayn't perhaps get as much applause as you do from the sixpenny gallery, but then applause often spoils your point. Once, however, I remember singing at a private house in the country to an odd assortment of people. I was informed that the party followed a wedding which had taken place in the morning. If it had followed a funeral it could not have been more gloomy and depressed than it was. I played the piano and the fool for three-quarters of an hour, and anything more dismal than the result it would be impossible to conceive. A temptation seized me suddenly, and I said: 'Ladies and gentlemen,—I am going to reveal to you a secret. Pray don't let it go any further. This is supposed to be a comic entertainment. I don't expect you to laugh at it in the least; but if, during the next sketch, you would only once oblige me with a society smile, it would give me a great deal of encouragement.' The audience for a moment were dumbfounded. They first began to titter, then to laugh, and actually to roar, and for a time I could not proceed with the sketch. They were transformed into a capital and enthusiastic audience, and the hostess told me that both her guests and herself were most grateful to me. I am sometimes amused with the little eccentricities of people who wish to secure my services for their parties. A gentleman once wrote to me to entertain some friends of his, and, added he, 'I trust that your sketches are strictly *comme il faut*, as I have several young daughters.' I was so immensely tickled by this that, rightly or wrongly, I replied that my entertainments *were* as they should be, for I was recently married, and hoped myself to have several young daughters. He wrote thanking me for this assurance, and I was to consider myself accordingly engaged. There is a story I tell in my book which will bear repetition: A young gentleman

Page 46

once called upon me. He explained that he was acting as a sort of ambassador for a friend of his, Mrs. —, of Mayfair, who wished me to dine at her house. I replied that I had not the honour of the lady's acquaintance, and, though appreciating her kind invitation, I did not see how I could very well avail myself of it. He said that Prince Somebody or other and La Comtesse de So-and-so would be dining there, and Mrs. — would be so pleased if I would join the party, and sing a little song after dinner. 'Oh,' I said, 'if Mrs. — wishes to engage me professionally, that is another matter, and if I am at liberty, I will come with much pleasure.' 'Well,' said the ambassador, 'I fancy Mrs. — is under the impression that if she includes you in her dinner party it is an understood thing that you sing afterwards.' 'I am afraid I do not understand that,' I said. 'It would not pay me to do so. I only consume about ten shillings worth of food and wine, and my terms are more than that.' There," said Mr. Grossmith, "could you have believed that anyone would have been so inconceivably mean and caddish?"

[Illustration: OLD ENGRAVINGS.] [Illustration: MR. GEORGE GROSSMITH.]
[Illustration: MR. GEO. GROSSMITH, JUN.]

"I have had some curious experiences on tour," he went on. "That is hard work, if you like. I have gone a four months' tour without missing a night. It takes it out of one terribly. But it is very paying work. In the South of England I have made as much as £300 a week. My friends tried to frighten me as to the apathy of my Scotch audiences; as a matter of fact, I have no better audiences anywhere. I like performing to country audiences. I am never nervous as I am apt to be at St. James's, where there are a number of my friends. And it is on my country tours that I have many curious experiences. Amateurs invariably call at the hotel to see me, and to ask my advice as to their powers of recitation. Some are quite hopeless, and I haven't the heart to condemn them utterly, or to go beyond 'I tell you quite candidly, since you ask me, that I have heard better.' As a rule they are very quiet and modest, but now and again one encounters some fearful specimens. I remember once at a country town, which we will call Mudborough, a flashy young cad, in a very loud suit, called to see me with a parcel under his arm. He had come, he told me, to learn my opinion of his singing. He further informed me that he was known as 'the Mudborough Grossmith.' He didn't have the courtesy to take off his hat; he walked up and down my room, whistling, singing, and handing me over now and again specimens of his powers as a water-colour painter. I looked at them. At last, tired of the idiot and his airs, I said, 'I hope your musical sketches are better than your water-colour sketches.' Nothing, however, could snub this fellow. He proceeded straightway to sing me an improved version of 'See me Dance the Polka.' 'Do your audience like it?' I asked. 'I

Page 47

should think they did,' he replied; 'I will let you have that last verse if you like.' I thanked him sarcastically, and at last he withdrew. I have, however, come across some real talent in this way. For instance, that admirable actor and entertainer, Eric Lewis, is a *protege* of mine, and you could not have a better man than he. Another amusing incident occurred at Southsea. My secretary was in a shop one day, and he overheard three ladies discussing the respective merits of Corney Grain and myself. Two of them were for Corney Grain and one was for me. Finding at last that the odds were too strong for her, she departed with this final shot: 'Well, never mind, Mr. Corney Grain can't jump on to a piano,' referring to my imitation of Minnie Palmer."

[Illustration: "A FLASHY YOUNG CAD, IN A VERY LOUD SUIT."]

Replying to a question I put to him as to his theatrical experiences, Mr. Grossmith told me that it was in the November of 1877 that he received the following letter:—

"Beefsteak Club,

"King William Street,

"Tuesday Night.

"Dear Mr. Grossmith,—Are you inclined to go on the stage for a time? There is a part in the new piece I am doing with Gilbert which I think you would play admirably. I can't find a good man for it. Let me have a line, or come to Albert Mansions to-morrow, after 4; or Thursday, before 2.30.

"Yours sincerely,

"ARTHUR SULLIVAN."

[Illustration]

[Illustration]

"This was a great moment in my life, although at the time my father, whose good judgment I valued much, was of opinion that I was not very successful as an actor. Sullivan, however, who had heard me give a musical sketch at a dinner party, was of the contrary opinion, and felt sure that I should suit him. It appears he and Arthur Cecil were both writing letters at the Beefsteak, when the former said, 'I can't find a fellow for this opera.' Cecil said, 'I wonder if Grossmith—' Before he had finished the sentence, Arthur Sullivan said, 'The very man!' And so I was engaged. I am much indebted to these two Arthurs," continued the bright little man with a laugh. "I reverence the very name of Arthur. I remember when Gilbert wanted to engage me for the part of *John*

Wellington Wells, though I saw the part would suit me to perfection, I said to him, 'I should have thought you required a fine man with a fine voice for the part of a magician.' I can still see Gilbert's humorous expression as he replied, 'That is just what we *don't* want.' I played *Sir Joseph Porter* in 'Pinafore' every night for nearly two years. Long runs don't affect the nerves of the actors nearly as much as they affect the performance. Constant repetition begets mechanism, and that is a terrible enemy to contend against. I make a point of playing my best to a bad house; for it is a monstrous thing to slur through one's work because the stalls are empty, and thereby punish those who *have* come for the fault of those who *have not*. Still, I repeat it, constant repetition is a dreadful thing. Fancy playing 'Pinafore,' as I did, for 700 nights without missing a single performance!"

Page 48

[Illustration] [Illustration]

As he said this Mr. Grossmith led the way out of the room in which we had been talking, and which he told me was his own special sanctum, “into which no one is ever allowed to come except my wife, for anyone rushing in here when I was composing or thinking out a sketch would inevitably drive every single idea from my head,” and we went upstairs together. Here in the drawing-room he set himself down to a spinet which bore the date of 1770, and he struck a few exceedingly sweet-sounding, if slightly tinkling, chords from it. “And this,” said he, “is the oldest *Broadwood* in England. You can see for yourself the date—1795.” Downstairs he showed me a beautiful model of a steam engine, upon which he was enabled to ride, and which he could drive himself. “I thoroughly understand locomotives,” said he, as he pointed to a shelf full of all the works upon the subject which he had been able to discover.

* * * * *

A BLIND BEGGARMAN

BY FRANK MATHEW.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. PEGRAM.

“Left dark among mine enemies.”

Long ago, the Fairies often stole children; they chose the prettiest, and carried them to Fairyland—the Kingdom of Tyrnanoge,—leaving hideous Changelings instead. In those days no man had call to be ashamed of his offspring, since if a baby was deformed or idiotic it was known to be a Changeling.

[Illustration: “THE PIG WAS A FRIENDLY ANIMAL.”]

It is sixty years now since old Mike Lonergan, who lived in a hovel in Moher Village, was robbed of his child. It was his wife first found out the theft, for she had seen her unborn son in a dream, and he was beautiful; so when she saw the sickly and ugly baby, she knew that he was not hers, and that the Fairies had stolen the child of her dream. Many advised her to roast the Changeling on the turf-fire, but the White Witch of Moher said it would be safer to leave him alone. So the child Andy grew up as a stranger in his father’s hovel and had a dreary time of it, he got little food and no kindness. The Lonergans gave him neither offence nor welcome, hoping that he might see fit to go home to Tyrnanoge and yet bear them no grudge. He grew up an odd wizened little wretch, and everyone shunned him. The children loathed him because they were afraid of him, so they hooted him from a distance, or stoned him from behind walls.

Indeed, at this time his only ally was the pig that lived in one corner of the hovel. The pig was a friendly animal, his front half was a dull white and the other half black, and this gave him a homely look as if he was sitting in his shirt-sleeves. Andy would shrink into the corner, and sit cuddled there with one arm round the pig's neck. Old Mike Lonergan took to drink, and spent every evening at the Shebeen—small blame to him—for how could a man be expected to stay at home with a Changeling sitting in a corner and staring at him?

Page 49

When the pig was driven to the Fair at Ennistimon, Andy was left friendless, and then—in all winds and weather—was to be found on the Cliffs of Moher. Sometimes he stopped out all night, till hunger would bring him back when the Lonergans were rejoicing at his disappearance. He knew every inch of the Cliffs, and spent half his time lying on the edge of the grey precipice, looking down at the sea, six hundred feet below, or watching the clouds of sea-birds; he found new paths down the cliff-side and clambered like a goat; he knew where the gulls nested, but never robbed them, and the caves where the seals lived, and the seals shouldered their way through the water close by him, looking at him with soft eyes.

When he was about fourteen, the Famine Year came; fever and “The Hunger” swept Clare. The fever took Lonergan and his wife, and they were buried in the dead-pit at Liscannor; it left Andy, but it left him blind. Then the neighbours began to have their doubts whether he was a Changeling after all; for the Fairies are faithful, and who ever heard of a Changeling being left blind and penniless? If he was only mortal he had been cruelly treated, so to make amends they gave him the fiddle that had belonged to the “Dark” Man—that is the blind man—of St. Bridget’s Well, who had lately starved. There was still a feeling that he was unfit for a Holy Well, so he took up a post at the Liscannor Cross-roads, and there levied a toll on passers with the professional heart-broken cry:

“Remember the Dark Man! For God’s sake, remember the Dark Man!”

* * * * *

For nearly twenty years Andy haunted the Cross-roads, he came to be honoured as one of the institutions of Moher, though the folk considered there was much that was uncanny about him, he was so silent, and he hated the smell of whisky. Now those were the times when Cornelius Desmond ruled Moher in the old open-handed haphazard way, never troubling penniless tenants. But “Corney” died and the daisies grew over him, so the estate was managed by an agent who made short work of paupers, and evicted “Dark” Andy from his ancestral hovel. Andy did not seem to know his misfortune. He spent the day of the eviction, as usual, at the Cross-roads, and came back at night to a ruin. His neighbour, Larry Ronan the blacksmith, was grieved to see that he took the change as a matter of course, and that after groping in the four corners of the cabin he sat on the window-ledge as if unaware that nothing was left of his home but the walls.

Next day it was rumoured that Bridget McCaura, of Moher Farm, had sheltered Dark Andy. Bridget was a warm woman, a “woman of three cows,” a masterful old maid, who in her time had refused many a pretty fellow, perhaps because she suspected them of hankering after her live stock, her poultry, and her sixty acres of rocks. Then the old parish priest, Father Peter Flannery, rode over to see her. Bridget was called out of her house to speak to him; he was afraid to dismount. She stood in the narrow gateway in

front of her farm, with her arms akimbo, ready to defend her home against all comers. Peter's heart trembled; he has a great dread of angry women.

Page 50

"Is it thrue?" he asked—and was so frightened that he looked even sterner than usual—"is it thrue what I'm afther hearing, Bridget McCaura, that ye've taken the Dark Man, Loneran, to live with ye—to live in the Farm?"

"Is it thrue? 'Tis so," said Bridget.

"But ye're not going to keep him, are ye now?"

"Keep him? I am that," said Bridget.

Peter screwed up his courage and told her warily, that though it was well-meant of her, and "'tis you have the kind warm heart, Bridget me dear," still, that propriety forbade it.

He was afraid to look at her as he spoke. Bridget was purple.

"What! a misfortnit ould omadhaun the likes of that?" she cried.

"I know, I know," said Peter (this is a pet phrase of his and usually means that he does not know). "I know, I know, but 'tis because ye're a lone woman, tell me now are ye listening to me? If ye'd been married now, 'twould have been another thing."

"Married!" cried Bridget with infinite scorn—"Married! If that's all, I'll marry the craythur to-morrow!"

And so Dark Andy was married to the richest woman in Moher. He seemed indifferent; as for Bridget, she had made up her mind to shelter him, and there was an end of it, she took pleasure in astounding her neighbours.

[Illustration: "I'LL MARRY THE CRAYTHUR TO-MORROW!"]

There was never such excitement in Clare as when those banns were read. Everyone saw that poor Bridget McCaura—"dacint woman"—had been bewitched. All the old stories about Dark Andy came to life, there was no room for doubt now, and the bravest unbelievers trembled before him. There was many a woman would never hear his name without crossing herself, and he got the credit of every misfortune between Kilkee and Kinvarra, though some doubted whether a blind man could have the Evil Eye. It was felt that he should be asked to give up his post by the Cross-roads, since it was inconvenient for the neighbours to have to climb two stone walls to avoid passing him. However, no one could be found to suggest this to him, so he still sat there daily, for he liked to feel that he was earning his own livelihood.

* * * * *

One rough afternoon during my first visit to Clare I was caught in a storm of rain, and took refuge at the Liscannor Cross-roads under a thick clump of trees that are stunted



and bent eastward by cowering from the sea-wind. As I reached them I heard a shrill cry, "Remember the Dark Man!" Then I saw the blind beggarman sitting huddled in a ragged great-coat so much too big for him that till he stood up I did not see how tiny he was. He had a doleful peaked face, set in a shock of grey hair. By him sat a little brown dog—the queerest of mongrels—with a tin can tied round his neck.

Andy was friendly that day, and talked eagerly in a shrill, stammering voice. I found later that he was wretched in still weather, and loved the malicious rush of the rain; he was happiest when the wind rattled in his ears and the rain whipped his face. "Call that rain?" he said, "sure th' air is flooded, an' ye might as well swim as walk."

Page 51

Many times after that I went out of my way on my long solitary walks to pass the Cross-roads, but as often as not he was glum and silent, and then Bonaparte, sharing his mood, would growl like a small thunderstorm. The seat was well chosen, for the cowering trees are like a shed over it, and there is a pleasant landscape in front (though that mattered little to Andy), a landscape of dim green moors—with brown stains on them where sedge grows and black shadows where bushes huddle in clefts—chequered by a grey net of low walls, dotted with the white gables of cabins, and framed by a wavering line of hills.

Sometimes I found him playing his fiddle to keep himself company, but he stopped when he heard me, and, to tell the truth, I was glad of it, for his playing was uncanny. Sometimes I met him shambling along the brink of the Cliffs—a grotesque little figure, with his old shapeless hat, his huge coat flapping behind him, and the mighty blackthorn he carried—he knew the ground so well that he walked as if he could see (indeed, he saw more than I could, for while to me the breakers were only streaks of light, he spoke as if he was close to them on the wet weedy rocks), or I came on him lying by the edge, listening to the grumbling of the breakers and the cries of the gulls.

[Illustration: “LISTENING TO THE GRUMBLING OF THE BREAKERS AND THE CRIES OF THE GULLS.”]

Mostly he was unsociable, he shrank from his neighbours because they had been cruel to him when they were children, and the dislike was more than returned; yet I think that, but for the loneliness of his whole life, he would have been friendly enough. No one knew more of folklore—I think he half believed that he was a Changeling, and found comfort in the thought of that former life when he was one of the merry “Little Good People”—and sure old Mike Lonergan and his wife ought to have known best. He knew the ways of every ghost in the county, and it was even said that he was on speaking terms with the Headless Man who haunted Liscannor. Of course he knew all about Fairies. When the fallen leaves scurried past his feet he knew that the “Little Good People” were playing football, when the wind whispered in the leaves overhead he heard them chatting, and when it whined in the creaking bare branches, heard the poor little folk crying with cold and bewailing the days when they found shelter by snug firesides and sat there unseen but not unwelcome. Once, before the world grew hard, they gathered in the cabins, and the roughest fare grew pleasanter, the saddest hearts lighter, from their good wishes; but no one cares for them now, and they cannot rest in unfriendly houses.

[Illustration: “HE WAS ON SPEAKING TERMS WITH THE HEADLESS MAN OF LISCANNOR.”]

As he grew older, he talked more of them, grew more moody and restless, could not sit quiet while the wind was up, and spent night after night out of doors. My friend Father

Peter Flannery, who is my chief authority for this history, told me that often, riding on his sick calls in stormy weather, he met Andy staggering along the rough roads.

Page 52

Last year on November Eve—the night when the Fairies have power, and the dead wake and dance reels with them—the blind beggarman started out from the Farm. An Atlantic gale was shattering seas against the Cliffs, the air was salt with foam, and throbbed with the pulse of the breakers. Bridget tried in vain to stop him; he said the “Little Good People” were calling him. She watched him disappear into the darkness, the whimpering of his fiddle died into the shrieks of the wind. “‘Tis a quare divil, he is,” she said, “God help him!”

Once in the night she thought she heard a snatch of the “Fairies’ Reel”; but Andy never came back. Next morning they found Bonaparte whining on the edge of the Cliffs; there was no sign of his master. He must have gone over the Cliffs in the darkness, but the waves gave no token.

Some folk in Moher believe that the Fairies took back their child, and that the old blind fiddler lives now in the Kingdom of Tyrnanoge, and makes music for their dances in that enchanted country where the old grow young and the blind see. Some say that he still haunts the Cross-roads, and only a week ago, Larry Ronan, coming back at night from Ennistimon Fair, saw a black shadowy figure under the black trees, and heard a heart-broken voice cry “Remember the Dark Man!” Larry’s natural surprise at this accounted for his being found next morning asleep in the ditch. But it is agreed in Moher that Andy left life on November Eve, whether he became the playfellow of the Fairies or the plaything of the waves.

* * * * *

CHURCH AND STAGE.

A REVIEW OF HENRY IRVING,

BY THE REV. DR. JOSEPH PARKER.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM F. BARNARD AND J. BERNARD PARTRIDGE.

[Illustration: MR. IRVING AS “HAMLET.” (*From the Portrait by EDWIN LONG.*)]

[Illustration: MR. IRVING AS “DIGBY GRANT” IN “TWO ROSES.”]

The innumerable reviews of Mr. Irving by literary and artistic experts have left room enough for an amateur estimate by a man who is accustomed to regard human life mainly from a religious standpoint. A complete review of the Stage by the Pulpit could hardly be the work of a single pen; for my own part, therefore, I can only make a very small contribution to such a review by indicating a few points which have occurred to me in the study of one particular actor. At once, however, the question arises, Is Mr. Irving a man who can be thus summarily characterised? In a dramatic sense, are there not

many Mr. Irvings? When a man can act “The Two Roses” and “The Dead Heart” with equal effect, when he can at will be as vulgar as *Robert Macaire*, or as dignified as *Cardinal Wolsey*; when he can be either as young as Hamlet or as old as Lear, the inquiry as to his plurality becomes natural and pertinent. For my part, I rank Mr. Irving the comedian above Mr. Irving the tragedian, just as I

Page 53

rank Nature above Art: each may be highest in its own way, yet the one may have a charm which the other cannot boast. Mr. Irving's tragedy sometimes requires working up, but his comedy is spontaneous and immediate. The needful working up of tragedy is no fault of the actor. Tragedy should hardly ever begin at once. The murder may come too soon. Premature rage is followed by untimely laughter. *Digby Grant* begins at once, and can be his best self in the very first sentence, but *Macbeth* must move towards his passion by finely-graded ascents. In Mr. Irving's exquisite representation, *Macbeth's* anxieties and perturbations, his rapid alternations of courage and cowardice, make delicate but obvious record of themselves in deepening the grey of his hair, and ploughing more deeply the lines of his face. A comedy may be judged scene by scene, almost sentence by sentence, but a tragedy can be truly estimated only when viewed in final perspective.

[Illustration: "A LITTLE CHEQUE." (MR. IRVING AS "DIGBY GRANT" IN "TWO ROSES.")]

Judged by this test, I have no hesitation in regarding Mr. Irving's *King Lear* as the finest creation of his genius. This is an instance in which the actor creates the piece. Shakespeare is, as a poet and playwright, at his worst in "King Lear." Yet his accessories are wonderful in variety and suggestiveness. Only Shakespeare could have created the heath, and have so ordered the old King's passion, as to make his madness part of the very thunder and lightning. That was Shakespeare's magnificent conception, and Mr. Irving's rendering is worthy of its tempestuous grandeur. How to talk up to the storm, how to pierce the tumult with the cries of human distress, how to escape the ridiculous and the incongruous, how to be a King on the desolate heath, and to make the royalty gleam through the angry darkness, were the problems, and Mr. Irving solved them one and all, even with redundance of faculty and skill. At the end of the heath scene the man is more remembered than the storm. It has been objected that in the first scene Mr. Irving's *Lear* is too old and feeble. I venture to think otherwise. I further venture to think that the King's age and the King's imbecility have both been accurately appreciated. A man at eighty, a man athirst for flattery, a man who would pay a kingdom in exchange for adulation, must have outlived all that is best and strongest in human nature. He comes upon the stage as a wreck. His vanity has eaten up his sagacity, so that she, *Goneril* or *Regan*, who can flatter most, can lie most, and can play the devil best, shall fare most lavishly at his hands. Is it not well partly to excuse these excesses of self-valuation by such mitigations as can be found in the infirmity of old age? Even in an elderly man they would have been treated with contempt; they could only be endured in one whose eighty years had been doubled by the hardness of his life lot.

Page 54

In “Henry VIII.” Mr. Irving had little to do. In that play the labour and the glory fell upon another, to the infinite delight of the public. In “Lear,” Mr. Irving has everything to do. From beginning to end there is only one character. Even the fascinating *Cordelia* is but a silver cloud on the far horizon. “The King is coming” is the cry of the play. His madness is more, as to display and effect, than the sense of all the others. The scene is stiff and cold until his wild hair is observed to approach the front, and then the whole spectacle is alight with feeling and purpose. The other actors are not to blame that, to a large extent, they are thrown into the shade; indeed, they are to be warmly congratulated upon their self-suppression and their passive sympathy. It is a hard task to play the part of two heartless and treacherous daughters, and a pitiful fate to have to represent the villainy of *Edmund*, yet all this was admirably done. It cannot be an easy thing to come forward to play the villain well, for the better the dramatic villain is played the more is the actor compelled to recognise in his execration the exact degree of his success. So admirably can Mr. Irving himself play the villain, that it is difficult to believe that any godparents ever, on his unconscious behalf, renounced the poms and vanities of this wicked world.

In many minor parts—or along the subsidiary lines of great parts—Mr. Irving’s subtlest power comes into effective play. Who, for example, can be more gentle or more graceful with a little child? Who could hug the “fool” more fondly than old *King Lear*? Then recall his wonderful recognitions of old friends. When, in “The Dead Heart,” he is liberated from the Bastille, how old times slowly but surely dawn into consciousness, and how quickly the dawn hastens into the noontide of the tenderest fellowship and highest festival of joy. It is verily a resurrection. After eighteen years’ entombment this political Lazarus comes forth to liberty, to leadership, to dominance.

In “Lear,” there are two wonderful instances of recognition, the recognition of *Gloster* and of *Cordelia*. *Gloster* is blind and bandaged. *Cordelia* has been long out of sight—if not in actual days yet in depth of feeling—and the King himself is demented. Little by little things shape themselves in the memory and fancy of the King. There is something confusedly familiar in the voice of *Gloster* which, tone by tone, settles into recognition. In the case of *Cordelia* the father gradually subdues the King, and instinct takes the place of reason; then, in a fine strain, comes the identification:

“Do not laugh at me,
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia.”

Page 55

The utterance of these words by Mr. Irving is simply thrilling. The tones, the glances, the approach, the embrace, lift up the words into new light, keen and tender as the brightness of a summer morning. The words themselves are by no means striking, are, indeed, the merest commonplace, but, uttered with the natural pathos of a consummate actor, they carry the play to its most subduing climax. The humanity and the genius satisfy expectation in its most eager and jealous temper. Failure at that point would have ruined the play. Which was better, *Lear* or *Cordelia*, in that critical action? We must first settle, Which is better, the star of morning or the morning star?

[Illustration: MR. IRVING AS "KING LEAR." (FROM THE LYCEUM SOUVENIR.)]

* * * * *

As I opened this brief review with a reference to the religious standpoint, it may be well now to ask how the Church is to regard the Stage as an educational institution? The Stage cannot be put down. It responds to an instinct which is ineradicable, and which need not be ignoble. The parables of the New Testament are the sublimest recognition of that instinct. The drama is older than the theatre. Much of the greatest preaching has been dramatic, by which I mean that it has touched human life through the medium of story and parable, coloured and toned by a living fancy. Sometimes, too truly, the dramatic in preaching has degenerated into impossible anecdotes, most of them originating in the Far West of America, yet even such anecdotes testify to the overpowering force of the dramatic instincts when limited to their most vulgar conditions. My submission is, that a properly-conducted stage might be the most powerful ally of the pulpit. I advance upon this submission, and contend that the function of the preacher is infinitely superior to the function of the actor. Whatever the preacher has to say that is distinctive he can trace to what he believes to be a Divine and authoritative origin. I hold the great preacher to be a spiritual medium. In his next evolution he will simply tell the people whatever may have been given him in the same hour to say. This does not mean that indolence will supersede industry. Through the indolent man God sends no messages. The true prophet will always be preparing himself. By learning, by meditation, by self-discipline, the true prophet will prepare his heart for the incoming of the Eternal Spirit, and the glory of Heaven will be as a fire on the altar of the honest heart. Art preachers we have had in too great abundance. Mechanical talkers have brought upon the pulpit the disrepute of dulness. The age now waits for the messenger in whose loving heart there is the glow and the radiance of divinest sympathy. The great actor himself would be the first to admit that the preacher cannot trace his own public secondariness to the poverty of his themes. Where the preacher falls behind the actor, it is because the preacher does not realise the majesty and the tenderness, the vehemence and the urgency, of his own message.

Page 56

* * * * *

THAT BEAST BEAUTY.

BY KIRBY HARE.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERNEST M. JESSOP.

I was a man born to misfortune. In fact, my first misfortune, the death of my father, happened three months before I came into the world. When I did duly appear, and was giving a proper howl of disgust, a fresh misfortune fell upon me; my mother departed to join my father, leaving me in the lurch in a vale of unavailing tears. I should have preferred going with my family to that blessed Utopia where there are neither births, deaths, marriages, divorces, breaches of promise, nor return tickets; only, unfortunately, I was not invited. So I became a posthumous orphan, soothed by Daffy's elixir and the skim-milk of human kindness. The milk was none too sweet, human kindness did not spare the rod, and I firmly believe it was Daffy's elixir that turned my hair red. However, I grew up at length into stand-up collars and tail coats, and at the age of seventeen springs was adopted (on trial) by a maiden aunt of seven-and-forty autumns. Like a gleam of sunshine hope flashed into my loveless life, lighting up my path to fortune. But it was only the glimmer of an *ignis fatuus*, which led me into a quicksand and snuffed itself out in a fog.

[Illustration: A PROPER HOWL OF DISGUST.]

[Illustration: HIS MAIDEN AUNT.]

My relative had plenty of money, and plenty of other equally good qualities in the long run, no doubt; but the period of my adoption was too short to make sure of either the one or the other. If the wealthy maiden was really a worthy soul she did not let her nephew know it. Corporeally she was angular and iron-grey, with a summary tongue and wintry temper, chastened by a fondness for feline favourites. Unluckily, I was always falling foul of the latter, and my aunt continually fell foul of me in consequence. Crabbed age and youth could not live together in our case on account of cats. Age, as represented by the mature virgin, adored the brutes; youth, in the shape of a sprouting hobbledohoy, abhorred them altogether, and one evil minded black Tom in particular. My aunt called him Beauty, in happy ignorance that all her household called him a Beast. I admire beauty in the abstract; I also like it in the concrete; and in the concreted form of youthful feminine humanity I love it. But that feline black Beauty was the most outrageous misnomer unchanged. I had tried to hang him several times, down in the cellar in the dead of night; but his patent cast-iron neck set suspensory science at defiance, and Beauty triumphantly refused to give up the ghost. At first, he kicked and fought against it lustily, and yelled murder with all his might; but after a little practice the

malefactor acted more philosophically, regarding the performance quite as part of his nocturnal programme. He never allowed it to make him late for breakfast, nor take away his appetite. Each morning, after execution, the moment the bell rang for prayers, in marched Beauty with a swollen head well on one side, growling anathemas from somewhere round the corner all prayer-time; after which the escaped convict devoured breakfast with the voracity of a stiffnecked cannibal.

Page 57

[Illustration: ONE EVIL-MINDED BLACK TOM.]

[Illustration]

Finding the beast utterly unhangable, I determined to try drowning. My nature is by no means a cruel one, quite the reverse; but Beauty's cup of iniquity had long been full to the brim, and running over into the saucer. He had gulped down my canaries like pills, poached my pigeons, fricasseed my rabbits, and made himself an abominable beast generally; and had now committed a crime that capped everything.

My cock bantam, which had won first prize at the Slocum-Pogis poultry show, mysteriously disappeared. Jim, the gardener's boy, and I hunted everywhere without finding any trace till we sighted Beauty. The beast was seated on my verbena bed, with fearfully distended stomach, waving my poor little bantam's tail feathers from between his teeth. Had I been an ancient Egyptian high priest, and Beauty at the top of the tree of holy cats, his diabolical godship should have been made into a mummy instant. As things were, he had to be drowned forthwith.

[Illustration: AT A CABINET COUNCIL IN THE COAL CELLAR.]

At a cabinet council in the coal cellar, composed of the cook, footman, Jim, and myself, all the executive details were arranged; my aunt being, of course, kept in happy ignorance of our intentions. As soon as my respected relative uttered the preliminary snore of her afternoon siesta, Beauty made an involuntary exit out of the house, all the lower doors and windows having been carefully fastened. Then commenced a silent cat-hunt, a serio-comic drama in dumb show, with a crowded audience breathlessly gazing from the windows. The scenery was a series of dissolving views, beginning on a flower-decked lawn, and ending at a mill-pool a mile or so away from the audience. Beauty played leading actor with considerable activity, notwithstanding the drawback of being handicapped with an undigested bantam. He flew over dozens of flower-beds, through all the outhouses, over the stable, out into the park, up and down all the tallest trees, and all over the country, till he took refuge in the deserted old mill. There we wriggled him into an ancient sack, and tied him up in the harmonious company of a couple of brickbats. Then we committed the body to the deep. The burial service was short, but hearty. "One—two—three, and away!" sung out in unison, was the special form for the occasion, accompanied by Beauty's farewell blessing as we "awayed" him into the silent depths of the mill-dam. There was a splash, a shrill cry from a frightened moorhen, a short jubilate from Jim, to which I piously added "amen," and all was over. Jim ran home with half-a-sovereign in his pocket, while I walked back to dress for dinner. On the stairs I met my aunt, already in evening array, and looking hungry. I knew the sign, and stealthily tried to vanish, vainly.

[Illustration: IN THE DESERTED OLD MILL.]

“Late again, Samuel!” she remarked, with a freezing spectacle-gleam that fixed me to the stair-carpet—my right foot two steps above the left. “You have just come in, I suppose. Have you seen Beauty?”

Page 58

[Illustration: "LATE AGAIN, SAMUEL!"]

Horror! Could she suspect anything? I felt my face growing the colour of my hair, and my tongue frozen solid.

"Can't you answer?" she went on wrathfully. "And can't you stand up straight?"

I pulled my legs together and commenced to stammer.

"I—I saw Beauty out—outside, aunt, in the garden," I managed to mutter.

"Which way was he going?"

"Why, I think he was running towards the house, aunt."

[Illustration: THIRTY MILES AN HOUR.]

And then the remembrance of how he was running—thirty miles an hour, with tail on end and ears flat to his head, with Jim and my long-legged self racing in rear—made me choke with laughter I was forced to swallow. But my aunt's eyes were on me, and her gold-rimmed barnacles blazed through me, so I suffocated in silence.

"Don't stand making faces like an idiot. Go and dress, and be quick," snapped my loving relative, as she marched away downstairs and I flew to the region above.

My bedroom door was partly open, and I dashed in hastily, pulling off my things as I went.

[Illustration: DRESSING FOR DINNER.]

My evening clothes were laid out ready on the bed, and—what was that on my shirt?—a black mass of—something moving!—some animal! Why, heavens and earth, it was the ghost of—that beast Beauty! It was Beauty himself! I ran for the poker; Beauty rushed out of the door. Confound that rotten old sack!

I was late for dinner, and found Beauty seated in my chair, sleek and dry, with a ravenously whetted appetite. My aunt was so pleased with her favourite's improved appearance that she became quite affable, even to me. I was informed that as I had not been looking well lately I might go for a few days' change to the seaside; the salubrious air of Muddiford-on-the-Ooze would just suit me. What a blessing! To have escaped from those ice-gleaming spectacles and from that resuscitated beast Beauty I would gladly have gone to Jericho, much more to Muddiford-on-the-Ooze. Then my aunt continued her course of instructions, with the nearest approach to a smile I had ever seen on her face.

[Illustration: A SHOW AT MUDDIFORD-ON-THE-OOZE.]

“You will enjoy yourself, I am sure, Samuel, and you will also be able to show what pains you can take to please me,” she said, sipping her first glass of Burgundy with approving relish. “There is to be a show at Muddiford the day after to-morrow, at which I intend exhibiting, and you will be able to manage everything for me; so mind you are careful to do your best.”

“I shall be most delighted,” I declared gushingly. “What show is it? And what can I have the pleasure of taking charge of for you, my dear aunt?”

“It’s the Grand All-England Cat Show, and you will take Beauty; and I shall be greatly disappointed if you do not bring me back the first prize. So be on your best behaviour, Samuel, or perhaps you may live to regret it.”

Page 59

My jaw dropped, and I thought I should have slid under the table. Good heavens! It was that beast Beauty who was to go for a holiday, while I was to act as the infernal fiend's keeper! O my prophetic soul—my aunt! But there was no help for it; I was bound in bonds of gold.

On the following day, Beauty and I were duly driven to the station, the former being luxuriously nested in a small hamper specially furnished for the occasion. About half-way on the road, just as we had mounted a long, steep hill, the cat managed to roll his residence from the stern of the dog-cart and trundle himself half-way home again. Luckily, he screeched blue murder at the tip-top of his voice, or we might not have missed the beast. As it was, his cyclical retrogression made us just too late for the train, and we had to wait two hours for the next. So I seated myself on the hamper—like Patience on the proverbial monument—and beheld the coachman depart homewards, with a sympathetic hat-touching salute, leaving me with a gloomy conviction of coming misfortune. The train, when it did arrive, was tolerably empty, and I secured a vacant first-class. For a time all went happily; then the cat commenced groaning.

[Illustration: SEATED MYSELF ON THE HAMPER.]

My aunt having solemnly ordered me to give the brute dinner, I now prepared to stop his mouth with cold chicken. While I was cautiously unfastening the hamper lid, Beauty remained quiet as a dormouse; and then he proceeded personally to assist the unfastening, with a vengeance. There was a bouncing volcanic eruption, a blood-curdling howl, a mixed-up whirling round the carriage, and then—smash!—bang through the window went Beauty!—leaving me doubled up on the seat, holding out half a chicken. It was a forty-feline-power hurricane, while it lasted; and drops of perspiration trickled down my nose on to the chicken, at which I sat stupidly staring. After a dazed pause I staggered to the broken window and looked out. There was Beauty, with a perpendicular tail like a young fir-tree, going like great guns in exactly the wrong direction. We had just come through a long tunnel, and the last I saw of my aunt's pet demon was as he dived headlong into its Hades-like mouth. And I had to take home first prize for him from the Grand All-England Cat Show!

[Illustration: LEAVING THE RAILWAY CARRIAGE.]

[Illustration: INTO ITS HADES-LIKE MOUTH.]

[Illustration: INCIPIENT CATALEPSY.]

When the 4.40 down express arrived at Muddiford-on-the-Ooze station, an auburn-haired youth limply emerged from a first-class carriage. In his arms he bore a basket, and his grey-green eyes gleamed with incipient catalepsy. Yes, such would undoubtedly have been my description had I posed as the momentary hero of a penny

novelette. I forgot all about my luggage, imbecilely clinging to the late habitation of the lost beast Beauty, wandering I knew not why nor whither.

Page 60

Outside the station, round a quiet corner, my steps were arrested by the surprising sight of—Beauty!—the very identical devil himself! There stood the unhangable, undrownable, hurricane-creating beast, looking as serene as a newly-born black cherub, washing his fiendish face! I approached on tiptoe, breathlessly, with the basket behind my back and the half chicken extended as a peaceable card of introduction. He scented it instantly—my aunt always keeping Beauty’s tit-bits until sufficiently gamey to suit his highly epicurean taste.

[Illustration: WASHING HIS FIENDISH FACE!]

With a finishing toe-touch to his whiskers, he amicably trotted up to me and—yes!—actually rubbed against my new trousers! What could have happened to him! Had his run through the tunnel turned him out virtuous? And how could he possibly have got here? Experience has shown that a leopard can change his spots, and a negro can grow spotted; but could a diabolical cat become even as a sucking dove and fly over twelve miles all in the space of twenty minutes? Impossible! So I put on a pair of folder-glasses and scrutinised this new arrival doubtingly. No; it was *not* Beauty—not nearly ugly enough. It was a twin, but larger, blacker, sleeker, a million times more amiable, and very much fatter. Ah!—ha, ha!—hurrah!—happy thought! Why not? I would. And, thereupon, I instantly did it.

Placing the basket gently on the ground, I opened the lid and put in the cold chicken, when lo! in jumped the amiable twin. Half an hour later that basket, that heaven-descended twin, and that successful chicken, were safely deposited in custody of the cat-show steward, with the errant Beauty’s entry ticket affixed. If the steward had never seen the real original he would never discover the difference; and if he did happen to be acquainted with the genuine article he could but think that the beast was surprisingly improved, and might even award it first prize for having turned over such a notable new leaf. And for the same reason, my aunt ought to be highly delighted at her favourite’s favourable transformation. My heart was lightened of its oppressive troubles, as my hands were free from their feline load. With a hearty appetite I ate an excellent dinner at the hotel, went to the theatre, and turned into bed thankful for all fortune’s favours.

[Illustration: I ATE AN EXCELLENT DINNER.]

During the two following days, carefully steering clear of the cat-show, I enjoyed my freedom gaily, and had—what our three-thousand-miles-removed cousins would call—real good time. On the third morning a letter arrived from my aunt, with an enclosure which for the first moment I took to be a big cheque—a grateful offering, as I hoped, for services skilfully performed. However, it proved to be merely a second letter, in writing that was strange to me, and which with some curiosity I proceeded to peruse. As I unfolded the sheet, a vision suddenly crossed my mind of that

Page 61

savage beast Beauty; a chilly shiver shot through my marrow, and I sent the waiter for soda and brandy. It was an awful thought of what that unkillable cat might do! There he was, rampaging over a civilised country populated with children and lambs, and other unprotected innocents, half mad, perhaps, with hunger, where neither canaries nor pigeons, rabbits or cold chicken were grabbable. What desperate murders he might commit! And should I be held responsible? Here the timely arrival of the waiter helped to raise my spirits by a strong dose of B. and S., and I began the enclosed letter.

[Illustration: WHAT DESPERATE MURDERS HE MIGHT COMMIT!]

It was headed from the cat-show secretary's office. Why, of course, that charming twin had got first prize, no doubt. Let us see. "Dear Madam," so ran the official note, "I beg to call your attention to what I imagine must, in some way, have been an oversight. Your cat, described on the entrance form as 'a black male, named Beauty,' which was, on the evening of its arrival, placed in the class pertaining to the descriptive form, was found this morning to have presented us with four remarkably fine kittens. This, of course, necessitated the family's removal from the male cat class. I have much pleasure in being able to inform you that both mother and kittens are in the best of health, and will be carefully attended upon. If you will kindly forward your instructions respecting their disposal, I shall be greatly obliged." That was the note, and wildly did the letters dance before my eyes.

[Illustration: FOUR REMARKABLY FINE KITTENS.]

[Illustration: GASPING FOR BREATH.]

Having saved myself from fainting by finishing the B. and S., I sat for some minutes gasping for breath. Then I rubbed my eyes and reread that awful epistle. Yes—it was so—in solemn, sober black ink! Beauty's twin had got four fine kittens! Great Jehoshaphat! How could I ever get over those confounded kittens! It was too late to murder them. And my aunt—but stop! Let me read her letter; it might suggest something—some feline legerdemain method of conjuring four fine kittens into a first prize black male cat. So here goes. And this is how it went: "I always considered you to be a fool, Samuel, but nothing worse, until now. Unless the enclosed letter is immediately fully explained, and the matter set right, I shall plainly let you know what I do think of you now, and act accordingly. See the secretary, and telegraph me the result at once." Not much hope in that, worse luck; only a limited respite.

[Illustration: WENT FISHING.]

Page 62

Away I went to the show, saw the secretary—from a safe distance—and immediately telegraphed: “Have seen the secretary. Hard at work setting matters right. Awfully sorry.” Then I hired a boat, and went fishing for the rest of the day. In the evening I wired: “Beauty must have got changed. Cats now all going home. Found clue and am following up. All right shortly.” But my aunt’s patience had expired. Next morning came a curt note saying she would at once join me, and either rescue Beauty or settle that secretary. How could I ever face those searching spectacles! I fled. From a lonely spot on the wilds of Dartmoor I wired: “Am following clue sharp. Getting close up. Good news next time.” Back came an answer: “Shall be with you to-morrow at noon.” At noon next day, I boarded the mail packet Tongariro, bound from Plymouth to New Zealand.

[Illustration: OFF TO NEW ZEALAND.]

* * * * *

PEOPLE I HAVE NEVER MET

BY SCOTT RANKIN.

MRS. HUMPHRY WARD.

[Illustration]

“You can do nothing by despising the past and its products; you also can do nothing by being too much afraid of them.... Be content to be a new ‘sect,’ ‘conventicle,’ or what not, so long as you feel that you are *something*, with a life and purpose of its own, in this tangle of a world.”—*Robert Elsmere*.

* * * * *

THE IDLERS CLUB

Is Love a Practical Reality or a Pleasing Fiction?

[Sidenote: Mrs. Lynn Linton thinks there is no doubt as to Love’s reality.]

Of the desperate reality of the passion there is no doubt; of the intrinsic value of the thing beloved there may be many. The passion for which men and women have died stands like a tower four-square to all the winds of heaven; but how far that tower has been self-created by fancy, and how much is objectively real, who is the wise man that can determine? What is Love? We know nothing of its source. Sense and sex cannot wholly explain its mystery, else would there be no friendship left among us; and elective

affinity is but a dainty carving on the chancel stalls. The loveliness which makes that special person the veritable Rose of the World to us exists but in our imagination. It is no rose that we adore—only at the best a bedeguar, of which the origin is a disagreeable little insect. We believe in the exquisite harmony of those atoms which have arranged themselves to form the thing we love. And we marry our human ideal, expecting the unbroken continuance of that harmony. But the discord comes; colours clash; the jarring note spoils the chord; the idol once accepted as of gold and precious stones, proves to be only common clay, thinly gilt. The diamonds are paste; the pearls are beads of glass filled with shining fishes'

Page 63

scales; and the love which we thought would be a practical reality for life, is nothing but a pleasing fiction, good for its day, and now dead and done with. The lover sees nothing as it is. Life is distorted between jealousy and admiration, and the plain teaching of common-sense is as little understood as the conditions of the fourth dimension or the poetic aspirations of the Simian tongue. The adored is not a real person; the happiness anticipated is not practical nor practicable. Both are on all-fours with the substantiality of a cloud and the serviceable roadway of a rainbow. Custom, familiarity, daily habits are the sole tests by which the reality of the thing beloved can be tried—the reality of the thing beloved and consequent validity of love. Before these tests are applied, the whole affair is as a fairy dream born of the perfume and the mystery of night. With the clear cold breath of morning the dream vanishes, but—what is left? The sigh of the vanishing god?—a tear on the cheek of Psyche?—the loathing of the man who finds Melusine a serpent rather than a woman?—or the peaceful joy of the child who dreams of angels and wakes in its mother's arms?—of those who sleeping on the ocean wake to find themselves safe in port?

* * * * *

[Sidenote: "Rita" thinks Love is beautiful and wise.]

At one period of life, love is simply an emotion—the outcome of attraction, or the effect of that vague mystery which surrounds sex. In this emotional stage the *feeling* may be real enough, but the passion is an illusion. A girl is often more in love with Love than with an actual lover. The youth who beholds his ideal in the First Woman is in love with the woman herself who for the time (usually very brief) embodies that ideal. But to the girl and the youth comes an hour when they are humiliatingly conscious of study wasted on a prettily-bound work of fiction that for all use and purpose in life is quite valueless. The edifice of romance is constructed much on the same plan as a child's castle of cards, and deservedly shares the same fate. That is to say, the topmost card overbalances the whole structure. It is usually the hand of Reason that topples over Love's romantic tenement by crowning it with the card of Common Sense. When we find Love has become a practical reality, the discovery is often very unpleasant. We would rather not be unhappy if we had the choice. Unfortunately, we haven't, and find ourselves in that condition without exactly knowing how we drifted into it. Drifters often discover Love to be a very practical reality, because of unpleasant consequences. It is decidedly humiliating to find ourselves in the toils of a siren the very reverse of our high ideal of the personage who is to have the honour and glory of subjugating us. This is one of Love's amusing little ways of proving that ideals are really not important. The best and safest test of the reality of Love is to ask yourself how much you have

Page 64

suffered on account of it. I don't speak of such trifles as tears, heartaches, sleepless nights, fevers of jealousy and despair, sacrifices, or discomforts, but of *real* genuine self-torment and mental torture which only this passion is capable of inflicting on its victims. The most sceptical will acknowledge that its powers in this line are only excelled by its apparent animosity. To discover the life that completes and contents our own is not given to many of us poor mortals. Here and there some fortunate individuals have made that discovery—but they are rare—and not given to boasting on the subject; yet though worldly wise folk scoff at love as a myth, I question whether they could name any other passion of the heart which has occupied so important a place in the world's history, which has given life to all that is great and divine in art, or inspired such deeds of heroism, self-sacrifice, and martyrdom. Before its patient strength men have stood mute and wondering, and proud heads have bent in reverence, and stern eyes grown dim. For Love is beautiful, despite faults, and wise, despite follies. It alone of all human emotions can lift our souls heavenwards, and make even life's thorny path a thing of beauty.

* * * * *

[Sidenote: John Strange Winter's opinions.]

Love may be classed under several heads. The first, the great, the unattainable, the one-sided, and the worn-out. They are all real! What can be more real than the perhaps not very practical passion which first makes young hearts ache? What agony it is to *her* when *he* dances three times running with that horrid, stuck-up London girl, with her fashionable jargon, her languorous movements, just a turn or two, and then stop for as many minutes! First love is not often last love. *He* thinks *her* unreasonable to mind those dances, yet when a great love comes into her life, making her think of him as "just a boy," he suffers all, or nearly all, the pangs of a great passion. Unavailing pain! *She* has cast the die of her life, and past loves are shadows compared with the absorbing power that now grips her heart like a vice. Much may happen to the great love, but it is very real! A great love may merge into matrimony, and life may run on oiled wheels, and Darby and Joan may pass through the world, loving faithfully, and without digression, to the end. Or something may come between, and the great love may become the unattainable! It will not be the less real for that.

[Sidenote: The Unattainable.]

The unattainable has more in it of pathos than despair. Romance sweetens it, and the romance never dies. The tenderness of "what might have been" gives balm to many a suffering soul! The wife may be unhappy, neglected, heartsick, she may even loathe him whose name she bears, but she is often upholden by the thought that *he* would have been wholly different! A husband may know that he

Page 65

has married the wrong woman, yet he bears what is, because he cannot have *her* who would have made life all sunshine. Few pity the one-sided love, helpless, hopeless, and without justification as it is; yet it is very real to the lonely soul. The worn-out love is the very essence of sadness! It is heart-breaking to watch the efforts of a foolish heart to keep a love dying or already dead, to see love, which would once have made a paradise, poured out at the feet of one who is only bored and not even touched by it. Nothing is so dead as a dead love—yet, even *that* is real!

* * * * *

[Sidenote: Miss May Crommelin takes a professional view]

Can any sensible novelist hesitate? Does a shoe-maker depreciate leather? Would you saw off the tree-branch you sit on? Now, on this subject, anybody's opinion (full-grown) is as good as another's. Let the footman bring down word that love is the drawing-room topic, and the cook will cry out, "What do they know more about it than *us*?" Is it not a human feeling, call it instinct or no? Surely old Sally Jones has simpler feelings than the Dowager Countess; as much experience in this. Love is just as real as a rainbow on a wet day; as—as influenza. The first may be a "pleysing payne": the latter must be a very displeasing one. But there is little fiction about either to the victims. Well, suppose love a mere brain-fantasm; an odd survival when sensible folk have swept away beliefs in witchcraft, fairies, and the virtue of fire and faggot for the wicked ones who don't say their prayers the same way we do. *Still, was it not worth while to have invented it?* However the idea was evolved, just consider the glamour it throws over thorns and thistles, as we dig through life's long day of toil. As Trollope's stout widow says, when choosing her second: "It's a whiff of the rocks and the valleys." (So she had her marriage settlements tightly drawn up, to enjoy her romance comfortably.) Consider this epitaph—a real one—

"Poorly lived, and poorly died;
Poorly buried, and *nobody cried*."

Broach this subject of love to a circle after dinner, round a good fire. Everybody laughs! The young men and maidens look conscious. What they feel is as real to them as pleasure in music they hear; in the taste of wine. Yes, and far more—while it lasts. Some elders profess scorn, because their minds are so choked with years' dust of daily cares they have forgotten how they, too, once believed love real—while it lasted! Ay! there's the rub. You are told—truthfully—that love is strong as death: inconstant as every breeze. Some declare, for them—

"In the whole wide world there was but one."

Other as honest souls confess their hearts have known, since first love, “many other lodgers.” This seems clear, love is real to those who *give it*! Only they who care more to *get it*, call it moonshine and naughty names. Like figures on an Egyptian monument, each follows one who looks at another. Never one scorned, but has rejected a third.

Page 66

“As Pan loved Echo, Echo loved the satyr,
The satyr Lyda—and so the three went weeping.”

* * * * *

[Sidenote: Miss Quiller Couch wishes Love were a pleasing fiction.]

“Pleasing fiction,” forsooth; would that it were! It is a very real game, and the rules thereof are practical. I know it, for verily I myself have suffered. Let it not be understood, however, that it is as a “practical, real lover” that I have suffered. Not at all. It is that this order of beings walks abroad, and I am not of it, and I meet it, and I am pained, and I feel sorry. Could Love be but a pleasing fiction, how comfortable to sit aside and contemplate it—a trifle to talk of, a dainty to dally with, a joy to the juvenescent, a blessing to the book-writer, yet never an inconvenience. But it is a practical reality, and it has great effects. Why, I have seen good, healthy people, quite nice-tempered people, brought to a shadow by it and churned into so many pounds of incompetent irritability; so exacting about trifles, so fidgetty about catching the mail, and so careless of the health of the uninteresting majority. There was one man I knew down in a village, and he fell in love with a pretty girl—they mostly do that—but she would have nothing to say to him; and after every rejected proposal he went straight home and made a three-legged stool (he was a carpenter by trade, or perhaps it might have affected him differently). He was what one might call an importunate man, for he proposed nineteen times in all, and nineteen three-legged stools stood as silent witnesses of his importunity. He changed houses after the twelfth, for he found a sad joy in contemplating his handiwork as he sat at his lonely meals, and his first sitting-room was only twelve feet by eight. Finally, either because of his importunity, or because she disliked the thought that the wordless witnesses might fall into unsympathetic hands, the girl married the man, and scrubbed the stools nicely with soap and sand, and grew quite fond of them. And only once did she regret her surrender; and that was when it flashed across her one day that twenty would have been a prettier number: but she stifled that pain as years went on, and grew happy. Then there was Dante’s love for Beatrice, which caused him to sit down and write such a lot. Most remarkable persons seem to have produced something rather excellent as the outcome of their love. I know a naturally lazy and slightly dingy boy who endured a nice clean collar every day, and it cut his neck, and his soul abhorred it, for he told me so; and he spent from seventy-five to ninety minutes over his toilet every morning, while he loved, and he knew he could dress in four minutes and a quarter, for he had done it often. Love was a great beautifier. In this case I must admit that the lover suffered more than we outsiders, except that he became irritable in his cleanliness. Love should not be scorned, even if it is real and sometimes uncomfortably practical. It is very beautiful, and lovers make a pretty sight. What I protest is, that all creatures should be lovers—or *none*. It is the half-and-half state of the world which is irksome.

Page 67

* * * * *

[Sidenote: Morley Roberts hopes Love will some day be a pleasing reality]

Ah, my gentle cocksure friends, how well you all know Love, and how ready you are to say what it is, to cut it up, to carve it, to classify it, and generally to spread it out. We live in a world of lies, and conventions, the dead leavings of an ignorant past, bind us still. Some day, perhaps, when men and women are free, Love will be a pleasing reality. It can never be so in the majority of cases so long as we play at make-believe, and teach nothing that we have learned. The good man won't teach his sons; he leaves them to learn in the gutter. The good woman keeps her daughters ignorant. As it stands it is an evil to love anyone over-much. And when we love we love over-much, for Love has been repressed till it has got savage in the race. "La privation radicale d'une chose cree lexees." All the trouble comes from this—that we men have partially created women. But Nature had something to do with her compounding. That is, perhaps, a pity from the social point of view. For Nature can't be nice and comfortable. She is only kind when we go her way. Let us remember that Love is the foundation of the world. The very protoplasmic cells from which we sprang could love. The time will come, perhaps, when, having chipped away the lies and faced the truth, we shall find reality a thousand times more pleasing than any fiction. Love is something real and wonderful, and in a natural world we shall have passed through the blood-splashed gates of Passion and be calm. Now Love is tortured, for we love ignorantly. We are like shipwrecked folk on some strange land—we know not the fruits of the trees of it. We learn the poisons by experiment, and we let others learn. This is Love the Fiction. But some day when we awake we shall know what we now dream, and Love will be always the most precious flower that grows in the garden of the soul. It has the subtle fragrance of the heaven that is our own if we walk bravely in the world, desiring truth. Under its influence we discover ourselves. We build ships for new voyages, and burst into unknown waters with our Viking shields of victory ablaze in the morning sun. The air is sharp and keen, not foetid with poisonous lies; the waters are blue and beautiful; there are shining shores about us, and marvels of a new nature on every hand. We who were in the night, and of it, become vivid with the sun. Our atheism banishes the worshipped gods of evil that are no more extant in our dogmatic creed of joy. For Truth and Beauty have guided us hand in hand, and all they ask of us is to throw away the Law of Lies and to acknowledge that the two are one.

* * * * *

[Sidenote: Zangwill reviews the evidence.]

Page 68

The traces left by Love in life are so numerous and diverse that I am almost tempted to the hypothesis that it really exists. There seems to be no other way of accounting for the facts. When you start learning a new language you always find yourself confronted with the verb “to love”—invariably the normal type of the first conjugation. In every language on earth the student may be heard declaring, with more zeal than discretion, that he and you and they and every other person, singular or plural, have loved, and do love, and will love. “To love” is the model verb; expressing the archetype of activity. Once you can love grammatically there is a world of things you may do without stumbling. For, strange to say, “to love,” which in real life is associated with so much that is bizarre and violent, is always “regular” in grammar, and this without barring accident of any kind. For ancient and modern tongues tell the same tale—from Hebrew to street-Arabic, from Greek to the elephantine language that was “made in Germany.” Not only is “to love” deficient in no language (as *home* is deficient in French, and *Geist* in English), but it is never even “defective.” No mood or tense is ever wanting—a proof of how it has been conjugated in every mood and tense of life, in association with every variety of proper and improper noun, and every pronoun at all personal. Not merely have people loved unconditionally in every language, but there is none in which they would not have loved, or might not have loved, had circumstances permitted; none in which they have not been loved, or (for hope springs eternal in the human breast) have been about to be loved. Even woman has an Active Voice in the matter; indeed, “to love” is so perfect that, compared with it, “to marry” is quite irregular. For, while “to love” is sufficient for both sexes, directly you get to marriage you find in some languages that division has crept in, and that there is one word for the use of ladies and another for gentlemen only. Turning from the evidence enshrined in language to the records of history, the same truth meets us at any date we appoint. Everywhere “’Tis love that makes the world go round,” though more especially in ball-rooms. It is awful to think what would have happened if Eve had not accepted Adam. What could have attracted her if it was not love? Surely not his money, nor his family. For these she couldn’t have cared a fig-leaf. Unfortunately, the daughters of Eve have not always taken after their mother. The statistics of crime and insanity testify eloquently to the reality of love, arithmetic teaching the same lesson as history and grammar. Consider, too, the piles of love at Mudie’s! A million story-tellers in all periods and at all places cannot have told all stories, though they have all, alas! told the same story. They must have had mole-hills for their mountains, if not straw for their bricks. There are those who, with Bacon, consider love a variety of insanity; but it is more

Page 69

often merely a form of misunderstanding. When the misunderstanding is mutual, it may even lead to marriage. As a rule Beauty begets man's love, Power woman's. At least, so women tell me. But then, I am not beautiful. It must be said for the man that every lover is a species of Platonist—he identifies the Beautiful with the Good and the True. The woman's admiration has less of the ethical quality; she is dazzled, and too often feels, "If he be but true to me, what care I how false he be." The Romantic Love of the poets and novelists was of late birth; the savage and many civilisations knew it not, and philosophers explain that it could not be developed till Roman Law had developed the conception of Marriage as a Contract. Even to this day it is as rare as large paper editions of the books about it. Roughly speaking, I should say it would spring up here and there among all classes of the population, except poets and novelists. Romantic Love is the rose Evolution has grown on earthly soil. *Floreat!*

* * * * *

[Sidenote: Burgin thinks it all depends on the people who love.]

One morning the average man gets up, lights his pipe, roams round his rooms in all the ease of unshaven countenance and dressing-gown-clad form. Then he goes out, and meets *her*. There may be a hundred women in the room, or park, or tennis ground, wherever the tragedy (Love is a tragedy) commences. When the lights are low he comes back, and is low also. Wonders how men can be such brutes as to want dinner; thinks his life has been misspent; that he is unworthy to touch her hand; that he has wallowed in the fleshpots, and here is a way out of them. And if the man's nature be noble and sweet and true; if he has hitherto drifted adown the stream of circumstance because his fellows have also drifted; then, with the deepening tides of his passion, the old spirit of knight-errantry descends upon him with its mystic mantle of white samite. And slowly out of this deepening torrent of bewildered impulse and devotion is born a new man—a man with a soul—a man who can dare all things, do all things, endure all things, for the sake of the woman he loves. At the baptism of her touch he becomes whole, and shapes his life to noble ends. Even if he can't marry her, he is the better for his passion. Such a love endures until the leaves of the Judgment Book unroll; for it laughs to scorn the pitiful fools who boast of infidelity, the "male hogs in armour," as Kingsley calls them, who look upon women as toys, the sport of an idle moment, rather than the spiritual force which leavens the world, and makes it an endurable and joyous dwelling-place.

[Sidenote: And on the woman loved.]

Page 70

Of course, I was speaking of good women. I once heard a story about a bad woman—a woman of the world, who was very much amused at being taken seriously by a boy who loved her. “Tell me all about it,” she would say to him. “Explain what you feel, why you love me, why you believe in me. Don’t you see I’m courted and admired—a social force—that men flock round me everywhere I go?” “Oh, yes,” said the boy, “I see all that. But you’re an angel of goodness, and can’t help men liking you. If I lost faith in you, I’d kill myself.” “Ah,” she rejoined, “that’s what you all say. You would doubt me, and live on.” Then, one afternoon, he had good cause to doubt, inasmuch as her engagement to another man was announced. That evening she received a note from him: “Good-bye. If I lived on, I might doubt; it’s better to die and—believe!” They told her of the—the accident that night, and she wrote a touching little paragraph about it for the Society papers before dining out.

* * * * *

[Sidenote: Gribble generaliseth confidently.]

In a sense, of course, Love is necessarily a fiction, whether pleasing or otherwise; for illusion is of the essence of it. The lover, in fact, is like the artist who sees things through a temperament, and, by eliminating the irrelevant, builds up the ideal on the foundation of the real. Tityrus sees more in Amaryllis than his brother shepherds see, just as Mr. Whistler sees more in a November fog than is visible to the eye of the casual wayfarer who gets lost in it, and mingles profanity with his coughs, yet, granting this, the reality and completeness of the illusion does not admit of doubt. On no alternative hypothesis can the great majority of marriages be explained. If commonplace people saw each other as others see them, surely they would remain single all their lives. Yet most people are commonplace, and most people marry. The reality—the controlling over-mastering reality—of Love has to be assumed to make their behaviour intelligible.

[Sidenote: Having hasted from a wedding for the purpose.]

This point struck me forcibly the last time I was present at a wedding. It was a Jewish wedding, celebrated at the little synagogue behind the Haymarket. I had no acquaintance with anyone concerned in the ceremony, but had dropped in quite casually, having heard that Jewish weddings were picturesque. The one thing that impressed me more than anything else was the decided undesirability of both the bridegroom and the bride. That the bride was not comely goes for little. But her forehead indicated a limited range and low ideals; the corners of her mouth spoke of an irritable temper; her bearing was vulgar; her voice had a twang that made one long to take her by the shoulders and shake her violently. She was also escorted by gaudy female relatives, by looking at whom one could anticipate the awful possibilities of her maturity. As for the bridegroom, he was

Page 71

a Hebrew of the florid type. His waistcoat was protuberant; he had a red face with red whiskers sprawling all over it; he wore flash jewellery; his hair shone with pomatum; there was that in his bearing which indicated that he followed some sordid calling, such as pawnbroking, or the backing of horses on commission. Yet one could see that these two unattractive persons were really attracted by each other. A great and beautiful miracle had been performed; and the power which had performed it was that Love in which some profess to disbelieve.

* * * * *

[Sidenote: Frank Mathew displays his Ignorance.]

Ignorance—says some wiseacre—is the mother of eloquence, and I take it that the less one knows of Love the easier it is to write of it. I side with those who hold that the Love described by poets and other wordy people is mainly fanciful, a flattering picture, that the best school for such writing is an unhappy affection, and that no man can want better luck than to have his heart broken, and so be made proof against lovesickness. An unrequited love runs no risk of being dulled by the prose of life. A man so fortunate as to be jilted or rejected finds his Beloved remaining beautiful and young to him when her husband sees her an unwieldy and wearisome old woman. And when at times he grows sentimental—a bachelor's privilege—he can feel again the old hopes that he never found false, and see the old perfections that were never disproved. He has a life-companion who comes only when she is wanted, and then with a "smile on her face and a rose in her hair," whose voice is always gentle, to whom wrinkles are not necessary and bills are not known.

[Sidenote: And praises ugliness.]

I am one of those who prefer the luckless adorers in novels to the conquering heroes; and hold that the quality an ideal lover needs most is ugliness, so that he may honour beauty the more. Once I knew a boy who was uglier than sin, and who wrote a story—in a sprawling hand and on ruled paper—a wonderful story, telling how an unlovely but admirable Knight, worshipping a Princess, rode out to win her by great deeds, and how when he came back triumphant, the sight of her brought his unworthiness home to him so that he dared not claim her. And I knew another boy who was good-looking, and wrote a story (during study-time, of course, and by stealth) about a handsome hero who went to Court in fine clothes, and was worshipped by all the girls. I think now that he was the manlier, but that the first would have made the more devout lover. But the drawback of luckless adorers is that their constancy has not been tried by the ordeal of success. Many a fellow who lived loyal and heart-broken would have made an unfaithful husband.

* * * * *

[Sidenote: 'Q.' is surprised at his sister.]

Page 72

Love, no doubt, is a subject of popular interest, but a man is always staggered to find his sister holding an opinion upon it. If I remember rightly, in the days when Lilian Quiller Couch (then aged seven) did me the honour of playing Juliet to my Romeo, the interest was mainly acrobatic, Romeo descending the gardener's ladder head-foremost, while Juliet tilted her body as far over the nursery window-sill as she could manage without breaking her neck. We "cut" the love speeches. Two years later, indeed, my sister schemed to marry me to our common governess. There was no love on my side; so she turned over the Prayer-book, hoping to find "A man may not marry his governess" in the table of Forbidden Degrees. Such a prohibition (she well knew) would be a trumpet-call to my native spirit of disobedience. But I am convinced that even then the nature of true affection did not enter into her calculations. She merely counted on my marital influence to end or mend the French irregular verbs. I am delighted that, in these later days, she sees Love to be a "practical reality." For my part, I want a definition. Popular custom bestows the name of Love on a green sickness which is in fact a part of Nature's wise economy. I will expound. Almost all young men, say between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five, incline to consume much meat and do next to no work. Were there no corrective, it is clear that in a few years the face of the earth would be eaten bare as by locusts. But at this season Nature by the simplest stroke—the flush of a commonplace cheek, the warm touch of a commonplace hand—in a twinkling redresses the balance. Forthwith the ideal devourer of crops and herbs not only loses his appetite, but arising, smacks the earth with a hoe till the clods fly and the fields laugh with harvest. Thereon he mops his steaming brow, bedecks him with a bunch of white ribbons, and jogs jovially to church arm in arm with the pretty cause of all this beneficent disturbance. And the spectacle is mighty taking and commendable; but you'll excuse me for holding that it is not Love. It bears about the same relation to Love that Bumble-puppy bears to good whist. Among the eccentricities that make up the Average Man I find none more diverting than his complacent belief that he is, or has been, or will certainly some day be, in love. As a matter of fact, the capacity to love belongs to one man or woman in ten thousand. Listen to Matthew Arnold:

"But in the world I learnt, what there
Thou wilt too surely one day prove,
That will, that energy, though rare,
Are yet far, far less rare than love."

I go further and believe it rarer even than Genius. Indeed, the capacity to love, is a specialised form of genius. You understand that I am not commending it. Its possessors are often disreputable and almost always unhappy. Their recompense is that they, and they only, have seen the splendours of the passion, and vibrated to the shaking inner music of the sheep-boy's pipe.