

PUZZLE COMPETITION.

WITCHING WOMEN OF HISTORY.

In these attempts are worthy of a better cause. But escapes from prison are not quite so frequent now as they used to be:—

Most modern prisons are so securely built, and generally so well guarded, that the chances of escape are altogether against the prisoner. French prison officials assert that escapes are impossible from La Grande Roquette, the great convict depot near Paris la Chaise, the scene too of the last drama on the now rare occasions when the guillotine is brought into play. The argument that La Grande Roquette is inexpressible is negative, and based mainly on the fact that no one as yet has left it except those legitimately through the prison gates—not even Blin, the most famous prison-breaker of modern times, who had made thirty escapes before 1844, and who was successfully held at La Roquette. It was said of Blin that he could penetrate arches, run along sloping roofs, fly down to the ground like a bird, lift the stone flags of his cell flooring, or scratch his way out underground with his nails alone. His greatest feat, as told by himself, was at one of the *bagnes*, where he was buried in the ditch by his comrades, and took into his hiding-place with him provisions for several days, and tools to regain the surface as soon as the alarm had blown over. But he was speedily misad, and his whereabouts surmised. The Commissary thereupon ordered the floodgates to be opened and the drains and water-courses flushed, intending to drown or drive him out. The incoming tide swelled the torrent of sewage, and Blin found himself up to his neck in water. He escaped only by a miracle, and by next morning was six miles from the *bagne*. He hid the second night in the bushes; then, having no clothing but that of the prison, he attacked the first passer by, and "with strange forbearance," as he puts it, robbed him only of his clothes. "I might have killed him. I never thought of it. I—branded as the most abject being, abused, disgraced, despised—I only asked to be put on the right road to Blaye." This was after he had forcibly stripped his victim of all he wore. The third night, driven by hunger, he begged for bread at a house, where the stolen garments betrayed him. He was arrested, bound hand and foot, and restored to the *bagne*. "For the thirtieth and last time I had failed," he told the chaplain of La Roquette. "Now I have no hope; this prison is too strong."

A CLEVER CONTRIVANCE.

Here is a story of a successful escape from prison. It was effected from Dartmoor by one of the old prisoners of war. Many of these men were clever artisans, and their services were frequently employed in building. Once a rectory was being built by these prisoners, and they adopted a very clever expedient for the escape of one of their number:—

They had reached that part of the work which consisted in fixing a chimney-flue, and when the stones had been carried up a certain height an inner recess was left large enough to hold a man standing upright. The outer face of the flue was continued upward, but only with thin stone especially selected for the purpose, and easily removable. After six feet had been gained the strong work was resumed; the flue was made the proper thickness, and the stones rendered in good mortar. Care was taken to leave air and eyelet holes for breathing and observation in the six feet of thin wall. One afternoon the intending fugitive entered the flue, and took up his quarters in the above-mentioned recess, while his comrades went on with their work above. They worked so well and with so much skill that they were particularly commended by their foreman, who complimented them highly on the excellent face put upon the flue. The man in hiding was not missed until after the party had left work; but his absence was then discovered at evening roll call. A thorough search was then made of the rectory-house inside and out, but the smooth surface of the walls negated all idea of a practicable hiding place. A number of vigorous bayonet-thrusts were made up the freshly built flue, but without betraying or injuring the man inside, and the search was abandoned. It was believed the prisoner had absconded during the day, having successfully eluded the vigilance of the sentries posted in a cordon round the house. At nightfall, however, the immured man, finding all quiet, attacked the green masonry at its thinnest part, and, extricating himself without difficulty, made off unobserved. The state of the flue on the following morning pointed clearly to the method by which he had effected his escape.

Want of space alone prevents our giving more extracts from this able, thoughtful, and deeply interesting book, which we heartily recommend to all sorts and conditions of readers. It is as full of information, of interest, of human nature, and real humour as an egg is full of meat, and it contains enough elements of romance, exciting stories, and wonderful adventures to furnish forth the plots of a dozen ordinary novels. His many years of prison rule and contact with prisoners have not deprived Major Griffiths of his kindly disposition, his appreciation of humour, and his faith in human nature. His book is well written and is well worth reading by all of two great classes—those who have been in prison and those who have not.

A NOTE ABOUT WATER.

WHERE does all the water in the sea come from? is a question that many a small boy has asked his father, and which many a father has found himself utterly unable to answer. Some idea of where it comes from may be gathered from a glance at the following table of the hourly quantity of water discharged into the sea annually by some of the best-known rivers of the world. It was compiled by an expert, and may be accepted as accurate:

River.	Million cubic feet per hour.	River.	Million cubic feet per hour.
Amazon	3,700	Nile	560
La Plata	3,100	Rhine	230
Mississippi	2,079	Elbe	100
Volga	1,150	Seine	80
Brachio	960	Thames	40
Ganges	700		

This, of course, throws the question back a step. The question becomes, where does the water in the rivers come from? When that is answered by the statement that it comes from the hills, we have gone about as far as we can go. Water is an element, and what its original source may be, no man knows.

WE continue this week our series of original word puzzles, and we invite all our readers, young and old, to forward solutions in accordance with the regulations given below. As an encouragement to them to do so we offer the following prizes:—For the greatest number of correct solutions—

WEEKLY, 5s. MONTHLY, 20s.

RULES.

- (1) The coupon published on the cover of every copy of the GRAPHIC must in all cases be filled in and returned with the solution.
- (2) No competitor will be allowed to win two weekly or monthly prizes in succession. He may, however, after winning a weekly prize send in answers the following week to be credited to him on account of the monthly prize.
- (3) Competitors must send their real names and addresses, together with the *nom de plume* they intend using throughout the competition.
- (4) All answers must be clearly written and numbered in accordance with the numbers attached to the puzzles. They must be addressed to "The Puzzle Editor, GRAPHIC Office, Auckland," and reach the office not later than the date specified in this column week by week.

ANSWERS TO PUZZLE COMPETITION NO. IV.

(March 17th.)

SQUARE WORDS.

- (1) *Crib, rare, iris, best.*
 - (2) *Fire, idea, fens, edge.*
 - (3) *Linen, image, navy's, Egypt, nests.*
- DOUBLE ACROSTIC.
Gladstone, Rosebery, Gormanston, Loo, Alps, Dawdle, South, Title, friends, Weekly, Enemy.

TRANSPOSED PROVERBS

- (6) *Time and tide wait for no man.*
 - (7) *It is a lot to better than no bread.*
 - (8) *Better late than never.*
- CONUNDRUM.—*Grocer.*

RESULTS.

*Notabene, *Novice, *Blenheim, *Franceis, 9; *Doris, *Eclair, *Sphinx, *Kate, 8; *Erems, 8; *Rapee, *Cortley, 7; *Leslie, *The Digger, 6½.

Correct solutions to the whole of the puzzles were forwarded this week by four competitors. We have awarded the prize to Miss Phyllis C. Baker, of Grafton Road, Auckland, who correctly supplied the whole of the lights to the double acrostic, 'Blenheim' and 'Franceis,' giving *Apennines* in place of *Alps*, and her solutions reaching us in advance of those of 'Novice,' who was otherwise equally successful. Owing to the misprint of *close* for *closely* in this puzzle, we have accepted the word near in every case. 'Kate' receives a mark for her answer to the conundrum: 'A labourer, because he would get hire every day.'

MONTHLY PRIZE.—Our first monthly prize goes to D. Stewart, care of Burns and Co., Customs-street, who secured 29½ marks out of a possible 43. We have forwarded Mr Stewart a postal note for £1.

NOTE.—Answers to Puzzle Competition No. V. are due on April 2nd, and not March 26th, as stated.

PUZZLE COMPETITION.

NO. VI.

(Answers to reach the office not later than April 9th.)

SQUARE WORDS.

- (1) She was the second of my heart,
And of my first the only joy;
But now her third beneath my tent
Sleeps on, and tears mine eyes employ.
- (2) Fright. The soul. A river in Africa. I thaw. Menu.
(3) Make a square word of a r u c e r, using three of the letters twice.

CRYPTOGRAM.

Six gberhy pal kxytzye zxbx,
Juo ep ob ale vp slvz!
Opyx elzb tv npx vp qlvz
Kyz opy hio vzlo obx uxbx lnteb,
Zp keyvu lnc rnzooz vhteb
Loo tp le elva.

ANAGRAMS (French poets).

- (5) Villain of scorn.
- (6) Let me not cram.
- (7) A dinner cheer.
- (8) Do Ned's tidier.
- (9) Ponder, Sir Reader!

DOUBLE ACROSTIC (Five letters long).

- (11) In primis read a human need,
Whereby my life endures;
In finis, too, a natural brew,
Essential unto yours.

The wind did first my second's top,
The red flowers fell to earth.
The sun out of my third came up,
And said the day had birth.

CONUNDRUM.

- (12) Why is the letter Q the most deceitful in the alphabet?

SQUARE WORD.—The following is a sample of a square word. It will be observed that every word can be read two ways—horizontally and perpendicularly. The puzzle is a 10 x 10 grid. A fish, a succulent plant, to bellow, saucy. F O A R
 In this case there are four words to be supplied, therefore p e r t
 each word must be of four letters.

At the Royal Academy in London there are the portraits of three women—Lady Hamilton, Mrs Jordan, and Sophie Arnould. The lovely Emma is a type of rustic beauty at its best—not refined—likely to become coarse. Mrs Jordan shows, behind a charming face, intellect, wit, cleverness, and a gentle heart. Sophie Arnould shows greater wit, greater cleverness, and a heart not so gentle, perhaps. On each of the faces there is in addition, unmistakably, the same quality, rare and wonderful. It is the quality for which there is no other word than witchery. These were all three witches, but instead of being burned at the stake they set fire to every masculine heart that approached them.

And what is the secret of this gift? It is certainly not faultless beauty, for it is a perfectly comprehensible paradox that as a rule the women who have been noted for the fascination of their beauty were not pretty women at all. Anne Boleyn had many plastic defects. The Duchess of Burgundy, who lit up the old age of Louis XIV. and the Court of Versailles, and neutralised the morose influence of Mme. de Maintenon, had a gottrons neck and decayed front teeth, yet she was proclaimed a beauty. Marguerite de Valois, with whom most of the prominent Frenchmen of her day were at some time or another desperately in love, had heavy cheeks, too prominent eyes, and a thick, hanging under lip. The last Duchess de Barri would not have been allowed to so much as compete at beauty show had she presented herself *incognito*. Sir Walter Scott, who was close to her at mass in the Tuilleries Chapel, wrote in his diary that she was plain, and that her eyes were not fellows.

At what age is this charm most subtle? Swift wrote with cruel candour of Stella's fading charms, and sent her as a birthday gift a rhymed 'Receipt to Restore Her Lost Youth' at a period we should consider the prime of life. The caustic Dean of St. Patrick's wondering

How angels look at thirty-six

proves a sharp contrast to the more modern writer, George Lewes, who in his 'Life of Goethe' speaks of 33 as the fascinating period in a woman's life, being that in which he considered her to have reached the full development of her powers of mind and body. And 33 was the age at which Franz von Stein proved dangerous to the heart of the poet who had survived the more youthful charms of a Gretchen, a Charlotte and a Lili.

It is impossible to read the descriptions of salon life in Paris without realising the immense power of such women as Mme. de Rambouillet, Mme. deffand, who could tolerate anything but the commonplace. Mme. Necker, her brilliant daughter, Mme. de Stael, and her cherished friend, Mme. d'Houdetot, exercised in literary, social, and political matters.

It is interesting to see how the age of the heroine of the modern novel differs from that of older writers. Out of thirty of Scott's heroines sixteen are described as under 20, three as over 20, and only one, Amy Robsart, is a heroine 'of an uncertain age,' since she is historically a middle-aged matron, and fictitiously a youthful bride. But the conspicuous character of the modern novel is a woman, not a girl, who has lived and experienced much, and not unfortunately is married, before the story introduces her as its central figure.—WALTER BESANT.

STRANGER THAN FICTION.

PROFESSOR C. STEWART, in a recent lecture at the London Institute, carried his audience off to the verdurous forests of tropical America in a description of the life and habits of the leaf cutting ants. They dwell in tumuli, at a depth of 5ft or 6ft below the surface of the earth. Each of the chambers there found is about two thirds full of what is apparently brown snuff, in the midst of which swarms of small ants are busily running about engaged in their duties. The 'snuff,' however, is nothing else than a compost formed by masticating the leaves of trees. The leaves are not used as food. The compost is used for the purpose of growing on its surface a special kind of fungus, which is the special food of the ant, and that with which in particular it feeds its young. A crop of fungus is kept in perpetual cultivation on the leaf mould soil. The eggs, after they are hatched by the queen ant, are tended with marvellous devotion by a special race of small ants. The fully-grown chrysalis is assisted out of its case with the greatest affectionate care; each limb as it is presented is carefully and affectionately 'massaged' and shampooed. The newly born infant is carefully tended in its first toddling steps until it can bite off and eat fungus on its own account. Equally marvellous are the ways of the much larger and more powerful class which goes forth in a continual stream, climbs trees, bites off whole leaves, and carries them back to the caravans for mastication by the nursing ants. The stream of harvesters is superintended and directed by one or two powerful fellows, who do not work themselves, but merely direct the labour of others. Even 'division of labour' is understood by these creatures. One gang will remain up in the trees chopping off the leaves; another will effect the removal of the fallen material from the ground beneath. Perhaps the most human feature about the nursing community is that they get an occasional 'day out' for exercise, amusing themselves during their holiday by running about the ground and occasionally taking a ride home on the top of some leaf borne by their larger and more powerful kindred. Naturally, the professor pointed out, the foliage was devastated terribly by them. But there is, it appears, one species of acacia which defies their attacks by a device which it appears to have developed on its own account. This device, which was described in a series of excellent illustrations, is nothing less than keeping a special breed of ants, housed and fed on the branches, which fiercely repel any of the leaf eating intruders. The acacia has 'developed' special houses for the protecting ants, distils plenty of honey and oil, and also provides fountains of nitrogenous or flesh-forming nutriment on the points of its leaves. There is everything an ant requires from birth to death on a single branch, and all without injuring the plant itself. The virulence of these ants in repelling the attacks of other ants was described as intense.