

pocket a card, which bore the name of a titled landed proprietor.

"You will find the head waiter in the dining-room, and he will tell you the number of my room," he continued. "I should give it to you now, only I have forgotten it. You would oblige me by letting me have the money in large bills. I find gold too inconvenient in travelling.

"Certainly; I shall do as you wish," said the banker, who seemed to forget that politeness required him to give his card or his name in return. "To-morrow at twelve, then, at the Black Eagle."

"That is what we agreed upon."

"All right, and you will not go to the money-changer's again?"

"No, why should I?" replied the stranger, with indifference, while Roland looked at him searchingly.

"I thought you might feel under obligations to tell him that you had sold the bills."

"Would you have any objection to my doing so?"

"I should, indeed; for that gentleman is a friend of mine, and would probably take it amiss that I had deprived him of the small profit he might have made."

"I understand! Make your mind easy. I shall not go to him again if you keep your word."

"You may depend upon that. Good-bye!" said Roland, lifting his hat as he turned away.

The stranger looked after him for a while. A mocking, triumphant smile played about his lips.

"The trap is set," he muttered, "and he'll walk into it, blindfold. Patience! Only a short time longer!"

He took a snuff-box from his pocket, and in the loud way in which he refreshed himself with a pinch, his closer friends would have recognised in him, spite of his fur lined coat, wig and spectacles, Peter Martin, secret official of the criminal police.

(To be continued.)

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**A FEW INCHES OF PLAIN ENGLISH.**

NOWADAYS men are doing all sorts of wonders by means of electricity, both in mechanics and in chemistry. I see by the papers that they expect to be able to produce real diamonds by it. Perhaps they may; marvels never cease. But we will wait till they do before we crow over that job. Up to this time, anyway, everything that is both valuable and useful is the fruit of hard work. Even diamonds are mostly got out of rocky mines. And, within reasonable limits, it is good for us to have to work. Ten shillings honestly earned is better for a man than twenty in the shape of a legacy.

The best condition of things for any country would be when fair wages could be earned straight along, without loss or deduction for any reason. But in the present aspect of human affairs this is impossible. Whose fault it is we cannot now discuss.

One source of loss, however, is plain enough, and some remedy for it ought to be found. In England and Wales every working man averages ten days of illness per year, making the total loss of wages from this cause about £16,000,000 a year. We are talking of the average, you see. But inasmuch as all working-men are not ill every year, this average does not fairly show the suffering and loss of those who are ill. In any given year many will lose no time at all, while others may lose individually from ten days to six months each. No charity, no savings, no income from clubs, etc., can make up for this—even in money alone to say nothing of the pain and the misery.

Alluding to an experience of his in 1888 Mr George Lagdon says, "I had to give up my work." How this came to pass he tells us in a letter dated from his home in White House Road, Stebbing, near Dunmow, August 24, 1892. He had no inherited disease or weakness, so far as he knew, and was always strong and well up to April of that year—1888. Then his strength and energy began to leave him. He felt tired, not as from work, but as from power gone out of him through some bodily failure. He sat down to his meals, but not with his old eagerness and relish. There was a nasty copper-like taste in his mouth, his teeth and tongue were covered with slime, and his throat clogged with a kind of thick phlegm, difficult to 'hawk up' and eject.

He also speaks of a nagging pain in the stomach, flatulency, and much palpitation of the heart as having been among his symptoms. As the ailment—whatever it was—progressed he began to have a hacking cough which, he says, seemed as if it must shake him to pieces. He could scarcely sleep on account of it. One of the most alarming features of his illness, how-

ever, were the night sweats, for the reason that they showed the existence of a source of weakness which must soon, unless arrested, end in total prostration. In fact he was obliged to give up his work altogether. To him—as to any once active man—this was like being buried alive.

One doctor whom Mr Lagdon consulted said he was consumptive, and it did indeed look that way. "For twelve weeks," he says, "I went on like this, getting weaker and weaker, and having reason to believe that it would end in my taking the one journey from which no traveller returns."

"It was now July—summer time, when life to the healthy is so pleasant and full of hope. At this time my sister-in-law got from Mr Linsella (Stebbing) a medicine that I had not tried yet. After having tried one bottle I felt better, and when I had used the second I was cured, and have not lost an hour's work since."

The reader will notice that between the date of his taking this medicine and the date of his letter there is an interval of four years. We may, therefore, infer that his cure was real and permanent. The medicine, by the way, was Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. It is not likely he will forget its name nor what it did for him. His disease was indigestion and dyspepsia, the deadly enemy of every labouring man or woman under the sun, no matter what they work at or work with—hands, brains, or both.

Is it necessary to draw a 'moral'—school-book style—from these facts? No, it is not. We have talked plain English, and that is enough.

**A WORRYING HOME.**

IT was a pleasant room in a pleasant house. Not large, not stately, not elegant, but with all that conduces to comfort, and much to gratify the taste. Well-chosen books turned to the eye their tempting titles from well-filled shelves; pretty pictures hung upon the walls; easy chairs wooed to comfort and rest when weary in mind or body, everything bespoke, if not wealth, at least of circumstances that should preclude anxiety.

Anxiety was, however, the normal condition of the family. Whether both father and mother were born with that temperament, or it was the result of association on the part of one or the other, or both, I do not know. Certainly the disposition grew as the years passed, until what might have been a pleasant home was anything but restful and tranquil. Uncomfortable as it was, there was an element of the ludicrous to the looker-on in this constant peering out for misfortune. The wonder was that anything was ever accomplished successfully. Here is a specimen of the way they took life:

"My dear, I have concluded to sell the bill property to Mr Bates. It is expensive to keep up and he offers a good price, so I've made up my mind to let it go."

Instantly an anxious look overspread the wife's face.

"Well, do as you think best, but I don't believe he'll ever pay for it, and you will have all the bother for nothing."

"Yes, I know, that would be just my luck, but I might as well do that as to let it lie and bring us in nothing. It does seem sometimes as if we would end in the poorhouse."

A long-drawn sigh was her reply to this cheerful announcement.

Now there was not the slightest prospect or danger of such a termination of affairs and both knew it, but it seemed to be a luxury to hug gloomy thoughts to their bosoms. Both knew, too, in regard to the matter spoken of, that Mr Bates was an honest, well-to-do business man, who was no more likely to fail in keeping his agreements than the great majority, and yet their words indicated a strong doubt of his ability and desire to fulfil an obligation.

This sort of spirit ran through everything. Did they start out for a ride, they knew it would rain before they got back; or the horse would fall lame, or run away; or they would catch their 'death of cold,' or miss that they were going to see. I think they would believe it to be their luck for the Alps to hide away from them when they were sailing across the ocean to take a look at their hoary heads.

The same thing was visible in the smallest details of every-day life. The mother never allowed the children to leave her side without overwhelming them with 'don'ts' with regard to their conduct. Were they gone a few minutes over time she was sure something horrible had happened, and they would never come back alive. When they did return happy and rollicking, full of the good time they had enjoyed, reproaches and scoldings dimmed their pleasure, and often aroused them to impatience and anger.

Strange, strange indeed, that those parents could not see the bitter wrong they were doing in thus poisoning the faith of their children, sowing the seeds of doubt, which were sure to grow and blossom into fear and distrust in the existence of any

good. To such children the Infinite Father comes to seem some inexorable, terrible power which spends its time in thwarting the designs of the beings He has created. Such a training makes the most ardent covards of little ones. Better never say a word of caution than to meet them at every step with a fear that they are coming to grief.

In fact, these things are all habit far more than we are willing to allow. It is the easiest thing in the world, unfortunately, to see the dark side when we are determined to do so, and the persistent looking for it amounts to that. If people were as strenuous in their expectations of good as they are of ill, the sum of happiness would be far greater.

**'RETURNED, WITH THANKS.'**

(BY JOEL BENTON.)

ONE of the most pathetic things in the relation subsisting between editor and contributor is found in the brief but expressive legend, 'Returned, with thanks.' To the literary aspirant who is just beginning what he hopes will prove a remunerative, if not a famous career, it comes as a stunning shower-bath, dashing his pretty dream to the ground, and sometimes dextering him from further pursuit of it. He supposes the experience is peculiar to himself. He possesses much conceit, he is likely to be affronted; but if he is both sensitive and modest, the blow either dazes or crushes him, at least temporarily.

That he who writes will be sensitive is not only certain; it is also a voucher, for one part at least, of the successful author's equipment. For the literary choir is not less irritable and discordant over things that yield dissatisfaction than is the musical one, concerning which this condition has been condensed into a proverb. As to modesty, few writers possess it in excess; or if they do at the outset of their career, time and experience soon relieve them of so troublesome a trait.

But editors do not wish to be cruel or hardhearted, however much they may seem so to the unprepared and unfledged writer. The very best and most famous of them have often told me that one of the saddest and most thankless duties they have to perform, is to return a contribution that for some good reason does not prove to be available. When I once wrote some verses treating this necessity humorously, I had to apply to three editors in succession before I could get them printed, the first two assuring me sorrowfully that the matter was quite too serious to be treated with levity. And Mr Curtis, in his delightful 'Easy Chair,' has given us over and over again his confirmation of this editorial sympathy. How often, and with what inimitable grace and tenderness has he written to some typical contributor of the limitations set upon a great periodical or magazine. What soothing emollients he has poured out on the disturbed writer's bruised heart.

It is not you, Ralph, or you, Rebecca, he has said in effect, that are necessarily at fault. Doubtless your piece is of the very best description, and we publish often, as you so feelingly allege, those no better or not so good. But then, there are reasons and reasons which you would soon see if you were the editor. The very first is the limitation of our space; another is the frequency with which we have already treated your topic or a line of topics into which it falls; another is its length; and so on to the end of a long list, not one of which rebuts the assumption that the unfortunate article is a capital one, and every way worthy of being embalmed in the choicest type.

It is a mistake, then, for the literary aspirant to imagine that his returned manuscript has committed any offence, or that his muse, if he has strided Pegasus, cannot soar. What he must do is to sail forth with it again and again, until it reaches a favoured port, which it will surely do if it has the requisite merit, somewhere and at some date. President Lincoln used to say, when he was trying faithfully and with great diligence to place the various able men who were presented to him for the civil service, and for the army, that it was a very difficult matter to get the square pegs in the round holes and the round pegs in the square ones. And it is just this difficulty that confronts the writers for periodicals and magazines. No matter how experienced he may be, he will often fail before he brings his commodity to the market which waits for it.

Does the literary aspirant suppose that the great names in authorship, whose fame is now secure and whose emolument he would fain covet for his own wares, were not also baffled as he is by 'Returned with thanks'? If he does, he supposes wrongly. These are words that were as familiar to Thackeray and Carlyle as they are to you. Nothing in Thackeray's early period took the English press with more storm and triumph than his brilliant and sparkling 'Yellowplush Papers.' Yet, when he offered them, or matter of their kind, to the *Edinburgh Review*, the editor of that

publication employed his blue pencil and scissors relentlessly. The 'Yellowplush Papers' he did not print at all, and they were only sent successfully to *Fraser's Magazine*, where they began their career.

Carlyle had treatment of the same sort. Upon his articles when used, even Jeffrey employed an editorial surgery of cutting out and writing in, that would have irritated a much less sensitive writer than he was, 'till Carlyle must have been more than mortal if he did not use stronger language than he put upon paper.' When it was all done, Jeffrey concluded that 'Carlyle would not do' for the *Edinburgh Review*. But as Jeffrey's 'would not do' did not snuff out the muse of Wordsworth, to which it was likewise applied, so it did not seriously impede Carlyle's success.

Any number of writers besides these, both English and American, have seen their best work ornamented by 'Returned, with thanks.' The decision it implies, therefore, is not necessarily a critical one at all. It may be critical, but the chances are it is not. Only the other day, in speaking of poetry, the editor of one of our most famous magazines said to me: 'You would be surprised to see the kind of poems I reject, and the number of them.' 'Of course,' said I, 'every editor gets a mountain of chaff for one kernel of wheat.' 'No,' said he, 'I do not mean that; I refer to the multitude of excellent and appealing ones that I cannot possibly make room for.'

A friend of mine who writes well for various periodicals, keeps all the editorial refusals that have come to him in a special scrap-book. This may promote humility, or, if not that, good humour. It shows, at any rate that the refusal is no cause for chagrin or discouragement. An English writer said, many years ago: 'I have had manuscripts returned again and again, but they have always found a publisher in the end, and I have an impression which is, I believe, shared by many public writers that the best article are those that are returned the most successful, and, to compare small things with great, that it is notorious, has been the case with two or three historical works, and works of fiction, which, before they were published, were metaphorically scored all over by the publisher's readers with this words, "Returned, with thanks."'

—Ladies Home Journal.

At the barber's—Absent-minded man sitting down to have his hair cut: 'Excuse me, but I'll keep my hat on. It's rather draughtily in here.'

No need to have asked—'Did Jobley leave a will?' 'Leave a will? Great guns, man! he didn't have any. He—he was married, you know.'

A Scotchman, visiting a churchyard with a friend, pointing to a shady, quiet nook, said, 'This is the spot where I intend being laid if I'm spared.'

'Some people,' remarked the cannibal chief, as he passed his plate for a second supply, 'have a mission in life, while others only have a missionary.'

STREWED STRAWBERRIES.—Boil a quarter of a pound of sugar with a glass of water till it becomes a very strong syrup. Take care to skim it well, and have ready some fine strawberries, not too ripe. Pick, wash, and well drain them, put them into the syrup, and take it from the fire, that the strawberries may settle for a moment. Then let them boil up once, and take them out quickly, lest they should not remain whole.

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