

She finished her letter and posted it, and then came in to see how Edbert was, and found him lamenting to Aileen his inability to fulfil Mr Rait's commission. And 'he seemed so anxious to get it for the professor,' he lamented.

'I don't see at all why you and I should not go, Aileen,' said Bethia. 'Papa did not want us to go when he thought Edbert could, but I am sure he would rather we got it than not go at all. We are not children; we can be trusted not to go into danger.'

'Yes, do go!' exclaimed Edbert. 'I'll explain the exact spot, and you cannot mistake it.'

Aileen, too, thought there could be no harm in going as Mr Rait appeared so desirous to obtain the shell. Accordingly, after lunch, the girls, after particular instructions from Edbert, started on their search. They followed the path along the top of the cliffs, now receding from the water, and then carrying them to the overhanging brink of bold headlands. They passed one bay after another, till finally they stopped at the spot Edbert had described to them, and looked down at the short strip of sand below.

'Are you sure this is the place?' asked Bethia, doubtfully. 'I thought it was much more unget-at-able than this. Why, this is a very easy descent.'

'Edbert told me it was quite easy,' answered Aileen. 'He could not understand why Mr Rait made such a fuss about it.'

'It was his care for me,' answered Bethia, and Aileen has told me she can never forget the look of satisfied love on her face. A very sweet face hers always was, poor little Bethia! but generally far too sad; such a pathetic look in the lovely eyes. But on this day Aileen says her face was bright, her eyes dancing with fun, and her manner animated as she gaily talked of future pleasures, and merrily wondered over what their lives would be. She had been growing more light-hearted each day of that month, and losing her old manner. The sea air and out-of-door life seemed to make her younger day by day, but on this last day she was gayest of all.

'I really believe my father is fond of me,' she had told Aileen that morning. 'I used to doubt it, but now I think he is. In his last letter he plans all sorts of delights—a long trip on the Continent, travelling about and seeing all the places one reads of, just we two alone. He says he won't require any other company.'

'What is to become of Edbert, then?' Aileen asked.

'Oh, he doesn't mention him, but I suppose he will send him to school.'

'Now for the descent,' said Bethia, after the girls had stood for a few minutes at the top of the cliff looking at the view.

They rapidly descended till close to the bottom. Aileen suddenly spied a plant she had long desired to possess growing in a crevice of the rock, and instantly went down on her knees and began trying to uproot it.

'I'll go on and get the shell,' exclaimed Bethia, 'while you secure your plant.'

She hurried on. Aileen, who was kneeling with her back to the beach, suddenly heard a wild scream of terror, and, springing to her feet, faced round, and, horror struck, beheld Bethia sinking in the sand. She uttered a piercing scream and sprang forward, but stayed her steps at Bethia's cry.

'Don't come! don't come! Call someone to help me out!'

The rest of that time is a nightmare to Aileen. She is conscious that she sought wildly to reach her friend, but even kneeling on the edge of the quicksand and stretching out her hand as far as she could, she was unable to touch Bethia's. She shouted continually, but no one heard. She looked for rope or stout sticks, but there was none, and still her friend was sinking before her eyes. She climbed the cliff, aided by the wings of love and fear, and, shouting for help at the top of her voice, ran along the path. Then a feeble cry from her friend below reached her ears, and she caught sight of a man running towards her.

'Oh, come! come!' she cried, and flew down the cliff, followed by the man.

Alas! as they reached the foot, the unintended victim of a man's avaricious hatred closed her eyes on this world which had most of her life been a 'vale of tears' to her and opened them, let us trust, on a world where she will be rewarded for all her suffering in this.

Poor Aileen was brought home by the man who had witnessed with her her friend's end, and that night she was raving in brain fever. Her mother and I were telegraphed for, but it took months of tenderest care, and after her health improved, years of easy travelling to restore her even to the shadow of her former bright self, and I fear the memory of that terrible episode will never be effaced from her mind.

We were so absorbed in our daughter that it was long before we thought of Mr Rait. Then we learned that on hearing of his daughter's fearful end he had fled the country. But the shock had unhinged his brain, and when he reached Calais he was raving. In his delirium he betrayed his deep-laid plan for getting rid of his ward by decoying him into the quicksand, the existence of which he knew well. In the event of Edbert's death without issue Mr Rait would have succeeded to the Birchfield property. But the innocent child was the victim of her father's sin, and on that father himself descended the curse of insanity.

Mr Drill undertook the charge of Edbert Mawdeley, and we hear occasionally of and from him. He has turned out a fine young fellow, I believe, but Aileen has never had the courage to look on his face since that fearful day when Bethia went forth gay and light hearted to meet her fate.

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PERLES SOAP.—This celebrated soap, which is now well known and appreciated by housewives, can be obtained from the agent, ROBERT NEW, Victoria-street, at reduced prices, viz:—Perles Soap, large bar, 8d per bar; 3 bars, 1s 9d; Perles Cold Water Soap, 6d per bar; 3 bars, 1s 6d. Special quotations to large buyers.—Raw's Grocery Store, Victoria-street, Auckland.—ADVT.

IS HE RICH?

A STRANGER comes into the town and takes up his residence.

Naturally enough people talk over the circumstance, and inquire concerning the personal attributes of the young man.

Is he rich? This is the all-important question. It is a chance if anybody inquires concerning his character. Characters belong only to servants or governesses. What does a rich young man want with a character?

Pretty, pure young girls ask the question; and, when the affirmative response comes, visions of stately mansions, and costly furniture, and gilded carriages flit before their imaginations, not to mention Paris bonnets, and Lyons velvets, and diamonds like the Kohinoor. And these innocent little darlings are quite ready to sacrifice Charles, or Sam, or Thomas, for the sake of the new-comer, who is rich.

Old ladies ask the monotonous question, and wipe their spectacles in ecstasy when they learn that he is rich. Their glance affectionately at their marriageable daughters, and at once set themselves to work to get up a party for the young man, who must feel so lonely among a community of entire strangers.

Bless their tender and charitable old hearts! It is beautiful to think of so much goodness embodied in these female patriachs, but it seems a little strange that they never get up parties for any of the hundreds of poor young men who wander lonely and forlorn the streets of our great cities.

Portly papas ask the question, and twirl their gaudy watch-seals, and ask Brown to introduce them, because forsooth, young men need encouragement, and 'it is deuced unpleasant not to know anybody.'

And, while they look over their bank accounts, they think how convenient would be a rich son-in-law in case of a breaking down of some 'corner,' or a financial crisis. Is he rich?

The door of society is flung open at once to him if he is rich. Gold is the open sesame to the gilded portals, whose curtains never unfold to the man who counts his pounds by the score. The silken robes of wealth do not care to touch the floating rags of poverty.

The rich young man is received without question. No matter though his hands be red with the crime of extortion—though he may have taken bread from the mouths of the fatherless, and crushed the heart of the widow in the dust—if he has staked his gold at the gaming-table, blasphemed the name of the God who created him, hardened his brain by the foul stuff called alcohol, and betrayed the woman who loved him, it is no hindrance to his success in what we call society.

'THE ROMANCE OF A SPANI.'

FRANCE'S occupations in Africa are little understood by those who simply read that troops are stationed in certain places, and advances are made into the interior occasionally by the soldiers to suppress tribal disputes or to contend against the cruel and barbarous natives who rebel against foreign control. The life of a soldier is of little moment to those who watch the advances of Europeans in the Dark Continent, and the trials endured and the barracks life which is led are almost hidden secrets. Pierre Loti has given the public some idea of those minor details of occupation in a country where solitudes spread everywhere with a sad monotony, without a vestige of life—only the moving sand hills, the boundless horizons and the blazing light of the sun.

This is on the coast of Africa, after passing the southern extremity of Morocco, and at the Saint Louis of the Senegal, the capital of Senegambia, where there is no fruit, nothing but the arachis and the bitter pistachio. In the sad autumns there are great hot plains, gloomy and desolate, and withered herbs and stunted palms, and vultures, bats and lizards. But there are wonderful fish in the river Senegal. 'The women carry on their heads baskets full of them and the young black girls return to their longings crowned with crawling fishes pierced through the gills. The life at St. Louis is dreary and monotonous and the idle cavalier or spahi seeks pleasure where he can find it, and it is not strange that a cabaret should be visited, where wild bacchanalian orgies are held and where the morning finds the floor covered with broken glasses and bottles, and here and there a soldier in a sea of beer and alcohol. Occasionally a march is made where great marshes, covered with the dreary vegetation of mangroves, are passed, and stunted trees and pools of stagnant water covered with thick white vapour and the air heavy with the sickening odour, and everywhere skeletons and decaying bodies of camels and at night the jackal and hyena's sharp cries.

In the month of May come the first rains and the tornado, when the skies are terrible and the rain is torrential, and a grand confusion among the unsheltered human beings and horses and other domestic animals with the elements make a pandemonium of noises. But nature is rejuvenated. The celebrations then come of the fleeting and feverish spring time and the native marriages. It is the return of butterflies and of life. The gypsies, native minstrels, strike their tam-tams and the wild and voluptuous dances are held and the drinking of the kouas-kouas, made from coarse meal of millet, which is beaten with pestles in mortars, follows. These scenes are always noisy, and to the European disgusting at first, but the constant witnessing of them wears off the edge of civilized criticism, and something like music is found in the droning of the Nubians and the wild beating of the tam-tams.

It is in such a country where have been exiled so many young soldiers, whose return to their native country, while an oft-repeated dream, has never been realised. Their bones were left to bleach upon the arid sands.

The only rich man is he that lives upon what he has, owes nothing, and is contented; for there is no sum of money or quantity of estate that can denote a man rich, since no man is truly rich till he has not so much as perfectly satiates his desire of having more. The desire of more is want, and want is poverty.

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WAIFS AND STRAYS.

TIME is the rider that breaks youth.

Employment for women—Matchmaking.

Two is company—three is being chaperoned.

Grown people feel the truth, but it is the children who tell it.

A woman forgets when she forgives; a man forgives when he forgets.

A church barn is like a bad scrape. It's easier to get into it than it is to get out.

If you would be capable, cultivate your mind; if you would be loved, cultivate your heart.

When a man starts out to a lecture he puts on a dress suit. When a woman starts out to lecture she puts on a nightgown.

It is a good plan never to become well acquainted with the people who have been held up to you as shining examples.

Probably one reason why a woman's sins are never forgiven is that she never claims that she was drunk when they were committed.

She: 'You should introduce a little change in your style of dancing.' He: 'How do you mean?' She: 'You might occasionally step on my left foot; the right has had enough.'

True happiness never flows into a man, but always out of him. Hence, heaven is sometimes found in cottages and hell in palaces. Heaven itself is more internal than external.

A common error of men and women is to look for happiness outside of useful work. It has never been found when thus sought, and never will be while the sun revolves and the earth stands.

EVERYTHING PROVIDED FOR.—Guest: 'I'm glad there's a rope here in case of fire; but what is the use of putting a Bible in the room in such a prominent position?' Bell Boy: 'Dat an intended foh use, sah, in case de fire am too far advanced foh yuh to make yuh escape, sah.'

THE INDIAN'S PHYSIQUE.—Dr. Winder of California, who has been among the Indians for thirty years, says that no white man can hope to equal their physical development. They do not train, but are born that way, and the average Indian boy of fifteen can stand more fatigue than an athlete among the white men. Small-pox and bullets are about the only things which can kill them.

There is always one disadvantage in keeping very closely to the fashion, and that is that one is the surer to be soon notably out of fashion. This is a fact that people in moderate circumstances should take to heart. It will prevent their wearing *outré* styles which are stamped openly with the season to which they belong, and are not to be mistaken. They cannot be carried over to next year.

THE USE OF SLEEP.—The question is often asked, 'How long can a man live without sleep?' The victim of the Chinese 'waking torture' seldom survives more than ten days. Those condemned to die by the waking torture are given all they wish to eat and drink, but sleep is denied them. Whenever the poor victim closes his eyes he is jabbed with spears and sharp sticks until he is awake. There is no torture more horrible.

THE 'HAPPY DESPATCH'.—'Hari-kari,' or 'the happy despatch,' was a Japanese method of execution. When an official of rank was condemned to death, a sword was sent to him; he took leave of his family, performed certain religious rites, and then plunged the sword into his bowels, drawing it down and across. If a gentleman had been insulted, he would commit hari-kari on the doorstep of his enemy; who, by the Japanese code of honour, was compelled to do the same. Only old-fashioned persons perform the 'happy despatch' nowadays in Japan; it has been shelved along with many other old customs of that empire.

MARRIAGE OF CORPSES.—A Chinese girl, recently deceased, was married to a dead boy in another village. It not infrequently happens that the son in the family dies before he is married, and that it is desirable to adopt a grandson. The family cast about for some young girl who has also died recently, and a proposition is made for the union of the two corpses in the bonds of matrimony. If it is accepted there is a combination of a wedding and a funeral, in the process of which the deceased bride is taken by a large number of bearers to the cemetery of the other family and laid beside her husband. In this case the real motive for the ceremony is the desire to have a showy funeral at the expense of another family.

DEMORALIZING A BRASS BAND.—One of the most annoying and at the same time amusing sights ever witnessed was a scene on a river excursion recently. There was a brass band on board the boat, and while the band was in the middle of a grand piece of music a small boy secured a conspicuous position in front of the players and began sucking a lemon. He acted so as to attract the attention of several of the players who seemed to be unable to avoid watching theurchin as he pulled away at the sour fruit. Now every one knows how the sight of a lemon will make one's mouth water, and that is just what the musicians wish to avoid. The harder the boy sucked the lemon the more water became the mouths of the players, and finally they had to stop to clean their instruments, and the leader of the band had the boy removed.

HOW HIGH CAN MAN LIVE?—A traveller states that in Thibet he has lived for months together at a height of more than 15,000 feet above sea level and that the result was as follows: 'His pulse, at the normal height only 65 beats per minute, seldom fell below 100 beats per minute during the whole time he resided at that level. His respirations were often twice as numerous in the minute as they were in the ordinary level. A run of 100 yards would quicken both pulse and respiration more than a run of 1,000 yards at sea level, and he found that the higher the level the greater the difficulty of running or walking fast. He crossed the Guria Mandhata mountains at a height of 20,000 feet, and found that he had the utmost difficulty in getting his breath fast enough. The native guides of the mountains suffered equally as much as the visitor.'