

AT HOME WITH THE LADY EDITOR.

Under this heading I am very pleased to reply to all queries that are genuine and helpful to the querist and others. Kindly write on one side of the paper only, and address to the Lady Editor.

MAUDE L.—Certainly you may write to me. This column is open to anyone who has anything to ask in which she or he—if necessary—thinks I can be of any assistance. I can assure you that I quite enjoy reading some of the pleasant letters which reach me through this channel. But to reply to your question. I think I have several times remarked that the etiquette of mourning is immensely relaxed now. Why, I do not pretend to say, except that in some things we are more sensible than our progenitors. A flippant youth of my acquaintance says it is because life is too short to mourn long for one's hugely-increased circle of relations and friends. There is no need at all for a widow to wear her silk gauze veil or any crape on her dress when the second year is past. Yes, she may now wear a black lace bonnet, net, or straw trimmed with jet, and relieved with a tiny touch of white or pale mauve. In a month or two she may wear black velvet, either for coat or gown, but she must wear white and black or mauve, instead of colours a little longer yet.

BO-BEEP.—Yes, cards are 'a horrid bother.' At the same time, you know, they save a lot of 'bother' to the called-upon, for servants do not always remember names, and have an awkward habit of forgetting that anyone at all has called, whereas a card on the salver is indisputable proof of your visit. What did you say? Someone else might have left it! I must at once pass on to your query. Before leaving town leave p.p.c. cards on all your friends. Write p.p.c. in the lower corner. You should leave them yourself if possible; if not, send them by a servant. No, you must not send cards of inquiry by post. You can send them by a servant, but it looks more attentive to leave them yourself. The 'Thanks for kind inquiries' can certainly be posted. Send them when you have quite recovered. You may write the words at the top of your own visiting card, or get them printed.

MARTHA.—Recipes are printed in another column under that heading. Please address to that department. Thanks for your good wishes.

READER.—I think we shall have a review column shortly, and you will there find suitable books for reading. Yes, I do read a great deal, and have read 'Love or Money.' I thought it exceedingly interesting. Like you, I am glad the heroine reformed.

INVITED GUEST.—I fear if you have been formally invited to the wedding and have accepted, you will be supposed to send a present—that is, unless you can plead that you are going in an official capacity. I think our whole system of present-giving wants revising. Why should we, in this enlightened age, be compelled to give to all sorts of collections, subscriptions, testimonials, presents, etc., in which we have not the slightest personal interest? Some of the English papers made very severe remarks on the fearful tax under which society groans in the matter of giving presents to rich people who really do not want them. These very true remarks were evoked by the collections and subscriptions flooding the British Isles towards wedding presentations for the late suddenly stopped Royal marriage. I am decidedly an advocate for giving. I think each person ought to set apart a fifth, or at least a tenth of his or her income for church collections and charitable calls. Were this done, there would be only 'cheerful giving.' But I do strongly disapprove of our present pernicious plan of blackmailing, for it is that, for all sorts of subscriptions and presentations to people about whom we do not care a straw, and who do not care a straw whether we give them anything or not. I think when we women get into Parliament we must try and free society from this ridiculous incubus. Then we shall be able to afford to give presents to our real friends, not of necessity, and by compulsion for fear of being thought stingy, but from a genuine desire to give them pleasure, and to testify our regard for them. Quite a little sermon, is it not?

MRS M.—I think candidates for confirmation always look best in white. Let your two daughters' dresses be as simple as possible. It is warm, clean white cotton frocks could be used, or plain white muslin. But if it is cooler, white cashmere or nun's veiling would be appropriate. They must not wear hats or bonnets, but should have a pretty little tulle cap, with a little tulle ruche round it. Yes, they may have very simple, short tulle veils if you like, not quite over the face, or very little over it, and hanging nearly to the waist behind. No flowers at all. White gloves. Above all, let them have nothing about their dress in any way to distract their attention, or the attention of their fellow candidates from the solemnity of the promises they are making.

AUNTIE.—If you are taking care of your motherless little nephew there can surely be no harm in winning from him the frank confidence a boy often gives his mother. You are in her place, and should have her love. Only don't let him forget her.

NOT SO STRANGE.

An astute American woman is said to have remarked upon the astonishing precocity of the children in Paris. 'Why,' she said, 'the little things speak French as easily as an American child speaks English.'

The same woman, or another like her, lately remarked, as reported by an exchange:

'I often wonder how people manage to understand each other in France.'

'How absurd!' said another woman, rather impolitely.

'I don't think it absurd at all. Both my daughters speak French, and they can't understand each other.'

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FLAG BRAND PICKLES and SAUCE cannot be equalled HAWYARD BROS., Manufacturers. Christchurch.—(ADVT.)

HOW THE REDOUBT WAS TAKEN.

FROM THE FRENCH OF PROSPER MÉRIMÉE.

[Prosper Mérimée was born in 1803 and died in 1870. His father was painter—but Prosper started life upon a law's study. Before thirty he was made Inspector General of Historic Monuments, and in the pleasant occupation of this office he travelled over most of Europe, and afterwards described his travels in a book. Then he began to write short stories—among them 'Carmen,' which the opera founded on its plot has made a household word. These little masterpieces—he never tried his hand at a long tale—exquisite in style and full of life and action, gained his election to the French Academy. And he deserved his fame. He has the magic art which makes the things of fancy real as life itself, we know not how. 'How the Redoubt was Taken' is in length a very little story—but to read it is to be present with the storming party, in their mad rush to victory and death.]



FRIEND of mine, a soldier, who died in Greece of fever some years since, described to me one day his first engagement. His story so impressed me that I wrote it down from memory. It was as follows:—

I joined my regiment on September 4th. It was evening. I found the colonel in the camp. He received me rather brusquely, but having read the general's introductory letter he changed his manner, and addressed me courteously.

By him I was presented to my captain, who had just come in from reconnoitring. This captain, whose acquaintance I had scarcely time to make, was a tall, dark man, of harsh, repelling aspect. He had been a private soldier, and had won his cross and epaulettes upon the field of battle. His voice, which was hoarse and feeble, contrasted strangely with his gigantic stature. This voice of his he owed, as I was told, to a bullet which had passed completely through his body at the battle of Jena. On learning that I had just come from college at Fontainebleau, he remarked, with a wry face, 'My lieutenant died last night.'

I understood what he implied.—'It is for you to take his place, and you are good for nothing.'

A sharp retort was on my tongue, but I restrained it. The moon was rising behind the redoubt of Cheverino, which stood two cannon-shots from our encampment. The moon was large and red, as is common at her rising; but that night she seemed to me of extraordinary size. For an instant the redoubt stood out coal-black against the glittering disk. It resembled the cone of a volcano at the moment of eruption.

An old soldier, at whose side I found myself, observed the colour of the moon.

'She is very red,' he said. 'It is a sign that it will cost us dear to win this wonderful redoubt.'

I was always superstitious, and this piece of augury, coming at that moment, troubled me. I sought my couch, but could not sleep. I rose, and walked about a while, watching the long line of fires upon the heights beyond the village of Cheverino.

When the sharp night air had thoroughly refreshed my blood I went back to the fire. I rolled my mantle round me, and I shut my eyes, trusting not to open them till daylight. But I sleep refused to visit me. Inensibly my thoughts grew doleful. I told myself that I had not a friend among the hundred thousand men who filled that plain. If I were wounded, I should be placed in hospital, in the hands of ignorant and careless surgeons. I called to mind what I had heard of operations. My heart beat violently, and I mechanically arranged, as a kind of rude cuirass, my handkerchief and pocket-book upon my breast. Then, overpowered with weariness, my eyes closed drowsily, only to open the next instant with a start at some new thought of horror.

Fatigue however, at last gained the day. When the drums beat at daybreak I was fast asleep. We were drawn up in rank. The roll was called, then we stacked our arms, and everything announced that we should pass another uneventful day.

But about three o'clock an aide-de-camp arrived with orders. We were commanded to take arms.

Our sharpshooters marched into the plain. We followed slowly, and in twenty minutes we saw the outposts of the Russians falling back and entering the redoubt. We had a battery of artillery on our right, another on our left, but both some distance in advance of us. They opened a sharp fire upon the enemy, who returned it briskly, and the redoubt of Cheverino was soon concealed by volumes of thick smoke. Our regiment was almost covered from the Russians' fire by a piece of rising ground. Their bullets (which were rarely aimed at us, for they preferred to fire upon our cannonners) whistled over us, or at worst knocked up a shower of earth and stones.

Just as the order to advance was given, the captain looked at me intently. I stroked my sprouting moustache with an air of unconcern; in truth, I was not frightened, and only dreaded lest I might be thought so. These passing bullets aided my heroic coolness, while my self-repeated assurance me that the danger was a real one, since I was veritably under fire. I was delighted at my self-possession, and already looked forward to the pleasure of describing in Parisian drawing-rooms the capture of the redoubt of Cheverino.

The colonel passed before our company. 'Well,' he said to me, 'you are going to see warm work in your first action.'

I gave a martial smile, and brushed my cuff, on which a bullet, which had struck the earth at thirty paces distant, had cast a little dust.

It appeared that the Russians had discovered that their bullets did no harm, for they replaced them by a fire of shells, which began to reach us in the hollows where we lay. One of these, in its explosion, knocked off my shako and killed a man beside me.

'I congratulate you,' said the captain, as I picked up my shako. 'You are safe now for the day.'

I knew the military superstition which believes that the axiom *non bis in idem* is as applicable to the battle-field as to the courts of justice. I replaced my shako with a swager.

'That's a rude way to make one raise one's hat,' I said, as lightly as I could. And this wretched piece of wit was, in the circumstances, received as excellent.

'I compliment you,' said the captain. 'You will command a company to-night; for I shall not survive the day.'

Every time I have been wounded the officer below me has been touched by some spent ball; and, he added, in a lower tone, 'all their names began with P.'

I laughed sceptically; most people would have done the same; but most would also have been struck, as I was, by these prophetic words. But, conscript though I was, I felt that I could trust my thoughts to no one, and that it was my duty to seem always calm and bold.

At the end of half-an-hour the Russian fire had sensibly diminished. We left our cover to advance on the redoubt.

Our regiment was composed of three battalions. The second had to take the enemy in flank; the two others formed the storming party. I was in the third.

On issuing from behind the cover, we were received by several volleys, which did but little harm. The whistling of the balls amazed me. 'But, after all,' I thought, 'a battle is less terrible than I expected.'

We advanced at a smart run, our musketeers in front. All at once the Russians uttered three hurrahs—three distinct hurrahs—and then stood silent, without firing.

'I don't like that silence,' said the captain. 'It bodes no good.'

I began to think our people were too eager. I could not help comparing mentally their shouts and clamour with the striking silence of the enemy.

We quickly reached the foot of the redoubt. The palisades were broken and the earthworks shattered by our balls. With a roar of 'Vive l'Empereur!' our soldiers rushed across the ruins.

I raised my eyes. Never shall I forget the sight which met my view. The smoke had mostly lifted, and remained suspended, like a canopy, at twenty feet above the redoubt. Through a bluish mist could be perceived, behind their shattered parapet, the Russian Grenadiers, with rifles lifted, as motionless as statues. I can see them still—the left eye of every soldier glaring at us, the right hidden by his lifted gun. In an embrasure at a few feet distant, a man with a fuse stood by a cannon.

I shuddered. I believed that my last hour had come. 'Now for the dance to open!' cried the captain. These were the last words I heard him speak.

There came from the redoubt a roll of drums. I saw the muzzles lowered. I shut my eyes; I heard a most appalling crash of sound, to which succeeded groans and cries. Then I looked up, amazed to find myself still living. The redoubt was once more wrapped in smoke. I was surrounded by the dead and wounded. The captain was extended at my feet; a ball had carried off his head, and I was covered with his blood. Of all the company, only six men, except myself, remained erect.

This carnage was succeeded by a kind of stupor. The next instant the colonel, with his hat on his sword's point, had scaled the parapet with a cry of 'Vive l'Empereur!' The survivors followed him. All that succeeded is to me a kind of dream. We rushed into the redoubt, I know not how; we fought hand to hand in the midst of smoke so thick that no man could perceive his enemy. I found my sabre dripping blood; I heard a shout of 'Victory'; and, in the clearing smoke, I saw the earthworks piled with dead and dying. The cannons were covered with a heap of corpses. About two hundred men in the French uniform were standing, without order, loading their muskets or wiping their bayonets. Eleven Russian prisoners were with them.

The colonel was lying, bathed in blood, upon a broken cannon. A group of soldiers crowded round him. I approached them.

'Who is the oldest captain?' he was asking of a sergeant.

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders most expressively.

'Who is the oldest lieutenant?'

'This gentleman, who came last night,' replied the sergeant, calmly.

The colonel smiled bitterly.

'Come, sir,' he said to me, 'you are now in chief command. Fortify the gorge of the redoubt at once with waggons, for the enemy is out in force. But General C— is coming to support you.'

'Colonel,' I asked him, 'are you badly wounded?'

'Pish, my dear fellow! The redoubt is taken!'—Strand.

CONTAGIOUSNESS OF DISEASES.

AMONG the practical questions connected with the subject of contagious diseases is one which relates to the length of the period of special exposure. The Medical and Surgical Journal says that the contagiousness of measles, mumps, and whooping-cough disappears with the patient's recovery; that there is probably no danger of his conveying the disease to others for about a week after he himself was exposed to it—that is to say, during the so-called period of incubation; and that the contagiousness of measles does not extend beyond a fortnight.

Some authorities affirm that the contagiousness of whooping-cough ceases after six weeks, however long the coughing may continue; others think it prudent to isolate the patient until the paroxysms are over.

In scarlet fever and diphtheria the period of incubation is brief, a few days only; and during this period there is no contagion. It is very important to know that in scarlet fever the period of greatest danger is after the disappearance of the fever, the period of desquamation or peeling. From ignorance of this fact many lives have been lost. Persons have gone into society before the peeling was completed, and almost of course have communicated the disease. The fact is that every particle of the scales contains thousands of microbes.

A lady who was recovering from scarlet fever wrote a letter to a distant friend. As she wrote she blew from the paper the 'dust' which peeled from her hand. The letter conveyed the disease to the friend and her little daughter, and the daughter died.

A servant nursed a scarlet fever patient, and on leaving the place put her clothing into a trunk. A year afterwards she unpacked the trunk, and a little girl who stood by took the disease.

In diphtheria the virus resides in the false membrane, and for that reason is less likely to be carried to a distance; but the particles long retain their power of infection. The contagiousness of consumption lies in the patient's expectorations and discharges. If these are carefully received in a disinfecting fluid, there is almost no danger to attendants and friends.