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As It Was to Have Been.

A CABLE FROM SYDNEY ON THURSDAY LAST STATED THAT JUST AS THE NEW ZEALAND TROOPS LEFT THE BARRACKS TO EMBARK PER THE ZEALANDIA FOR AUCKLAND THE DEFENCE DEPARTMENT CABLED STOPPING THEIR EMBARKATION.

Serial Story.

(PUBLISHED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.)

A DAUCHTER OF MIDIAN.

By JOHN K. LEYS.

Author of "A Sore Temptation," "The Thumb-print," "The Broken Fetter," "In the Toils," "A Million of Money," etc., etc.

PART III.—MR MITCHELL'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XXII.

SYBIL PLAYS THE SPY.

"What shall you do?" whispered Sybil to her sister.

Sidney made no reply, but she trembled all over. The fact was that, relying on Mr Mitchell's old offer, and sick to death of the monotony of school life, Sidney had thrown up her situation; so that the cool rejoinder of the laird that he also had changed his mind was something like a sentence of death for her.

"Let us go up to bed," whispered Sybil. "You will sleep with me to-night, wont you?"

"Please don't go upstairs yet, young leddies, said the laird, eyeing them suspiciously, though without changing the position of his head as it hung over his plate. "I've got something to say to ye."

Of course the two girls kept their places in the chimney corner, whilst the master of the Castle went on with his supper.

Before he had finished his meal a mesasge was brought to him saying that the factor was waiting to see him.

The laird grunted, and went on with his supper. Evidently he considered the factor a personage of greater consequence than either of his guests, for when he had finished supper he hastily rose from table and went to the library, forgetting, apparently, that he had asked Sybil and her sister not to go to bed till he had spoken to them.

So the two girls remained where they were, while the silent butler removed the supper tray, and then took a cellaret from the sideboard, and carried it out of the room.

"That means that the conference may last all night," said Sybil. "I'm going to bed."

"Please stop a little longer, dear," pleaded Sidney. "Remember that I have no one to look to but Mr Mitchell, and it would be a pity to offend him on the very first night."

Sybil was not so much afraid of the "dour" consequential little man who was master at Inveroran as her sister was, and she wanted to go to bed; but of course she could do nothing but carry out Sidney's wishes. They sat down together before the dying fire, and again their hands insensibly met.

Miss Dalrymple had considerately left the two sisters to themselves, and retired long since. The servants, too, had gone up to their rooms, and the great house was as still as a tomb. An hour went by, and Mr Mitchell did not return to the dining-room. He seemed to have forgotten that the two girls were sitting up at his request.

"I will go and tell Mr Mitchell that we are waiting for him," said Sybil, springing to her feet. 'I dare say, he has quite forgotten that he asked us not to go to bed till he had spoken to us; but it would be quite like him if he were to be sulky with us to-morrow, all the same, if we disobeyed him.—Wait here till I come back."

Sybil's shortest way to the room where Mr Mitchell and the factor were sitting lay through the disused closet in which she had once before tried to hide herself when she was anxious to hear what was being said in the laird's room. It was with no intention of eavesdropping that she took that way now, but as soon as she opened the door of the closet she remembered that with a little trouble she could manage to overhear the conversation between the laird and his factor. For a few minutes she stood still, considering whether she would be justified in playing the spy. And she came to the conclusion that there was not the same necessity, or the same excuse, for playing the spy on Mr Mitchell that had existed on the former occasion. She had now established her identity, and it was no business of hers, she told herself, to pry into the affairs of the laird.

She decided, therefore, that she would simply knock at the door, and putting her head into the room wish Mr Mitchell good-night, and come away.

But she forgot to tap at the door, for no sooner had she reached the inner door, which opened into the laird's room, than she heard a name shouted out in a loud and angry voice —a name that made her start and her face turn pale—the name of her father.

What had these two men to say about him? Surely, whatever it might be, she had a right to hear it? So she opened the door very softly, held it open about half an inch, and bent her ear to listen. McPail was speaking.

"Don't you owe it all to me, you dirty scrub? What could you have done without me? You never could have done the job without me? Grant could have eaten half a dozen of you!"

The reply was so low that the listening girl could not catch it.

MacPhail burst into a loud, mocking laugh.

"You hadn't the nerve!" he cried. You'd have missed——. What's that you say? Don't speak of it? Wha's wantin' to speak of it? But I'm not going without my fair share. If we had divided fair, or onything like fair, how comes it that you're the master and I'm the man? How comes it that you live i' the castle, an' I bide i' the factor's lodge?"

"Because you threw away your chance when you had it, like a fool. I warned you not to part with the shares, and you preferred ready money. And yet, ten thousand pounds and a post like yours is not to be despised, Duncan, and none kens that better than you. You're very well off, and you're not such a fool as not to know it."

The answer to this was an indistinct grumbling, like the growling of a wild beast in a cage. Would they say nothing more about her father, Sybil wondered. If only she had happened to come a minute or two sooner!

"And now, what are ye going to do wi' they twa young weemen?" demanded the factor.

"I've been thinking of that," said Mr. Mitchell, in his thin, hard tones. I'll offer the auld sister two pound or two pound ten a week to go to Italy —or some place far awa', an' bide there. I offered her three hundred a year to do the same thing the year before last, and the silly creature didna tak' it. So I can mak' my ain terms wi' her. After all, she has no claim on me."

"An' the young ane?"

"Well, she's what I ca' a credit to the establishment. I'm no' in ony great hurry to part wi' her. She's bonny, and though she's a deep ane she can do me no harm. I have thought sometimes that the Honourable Ronald Keith took a fancy to her, when he was staying here for the shooting; and it would suit me very well if he were to marry her. It would be a good thing for our family."

"But she's no kith or kin to you!" exclaimed the factor, with a note of surprise in his voice.

"No; but I'm her guardian, and it would doubtless tend to draw his lordship's family an' mine thegither. What the —— are ye sniggerin' at there?"

"Hoots, man, naethin'! Ye're juist clean awa' wi' your suspeecions. But I'm sayin' this. Ye may keep that young wumman here, but it'll be at yer ain peril. Ye said yersel' that she was a deep ane, and she's proved it——"

"Never fash yer thumb aboot that, Duncan, ma man," said the laird. He had relapsed into the broad Scotch he had spoken in his youth, by which Sybil knew he was pretty far gone in liquor. "The lass has nae suspeecions —hoo could she hae ony? And here she'll bide as long as it pleases me. And noo I'm thinkin' it'll be about time ye were steppin' doon bye, Duncan. Ye'll juist hae ae mair gless, an' than ye'll gang."

Sybil, in terror lest she should be caught playing the spy, drew gently away from the door, not even daring to close it. Dark as it was she made her way without any mishap through the adjoining room, and thence into the hall. Sidney, tired out with her long journey, had fallen fast asleep over the fire, now a heap of white ashes with a red glow in the centre.

"Come, sister," said Sybil, laying her hand on her head to wake her, but speaking under her breath. "Come, and I will take you up to your room."

"Why, Sybil, how strangely you speak! What is the matter? Has anything happened?"

"No. And yet something has happened. I have learned that Mr. Mitchell and that wretch the factor have cause to be afraid of me."

For those words of McPhail still echoed in her ears, "If you keep her here you keep her at your peril!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN VINO VERITAS.

It was not the run he had made to catch the moving train that made John Blackwood's heart beat fast when he flung himself down on the seat of the carriage he had succeeded in boarding. He had made, not in so many words, but in effect, a declaration of love to his beautiful client, and she had not repelled him.

The truth was that he had fallen in love with her from the time when he took his seat in the railway carriage in which she travelled from England, when he had interfered to protect her against the impertinence of a "smart" vulgarian. He had had no hope of seeing her again, and it was with a feeling almost of bewilderment that he recognised her when she spoke to him in Glasgow. His delight when he found that he might be of service to her, and would naturally be brought into a relation of more or less intimacy with her, may be imagined. And now that he had had the pleasure of a second and a longer meeting with her he could no longer resist the temptation of telling her of the devotion that burned in his heart.

The young lawyer was not by any means a wealthy man, but he was well connected, and fairly well off, and it did not occur to him that there was any discrepancy between him and Sybil. Young Scotchmen are not accustomed to expect a dowry with their brides, and Blackwood had full confidence in his ability to keep the pot boiling independently of his small private fortune.

It was late when Blackwood reached Glasgow, and his first care was to go to a restaurant and order supper.

The restaurant he selected was fitted up with boxes, resembling private rooms without doors; open to the inspection of those who might be passing, but quite secluded so far as conversation went. Blackwood was sitting in one of these boxes, waiting for his meal to be brought to him, when a man somewhat older than himself walked along the corridor with rather unsteady gait, and finally came to an anchor opposite the doorway of the box in which he was sitting.

"'Pon my life! Our old friend Blackbird!" cried the stranger, in a rather thick voice. The young lawyer smiled at hearing the nickname, which had not greeted his ears since his school days; and although Bertie Simpson was not the kind of man he cared to be intimate with, he felt that for old acquaintance' sake he could not do less than hold out his hand, and ask him to join him at supper.

"Thanks, aw'fly, old man, but I've just been dining. So hard to get a Johnny to speak to in this strait-laced village. All the fellows have gone home to tea, like good go-to-meeting young men. In town, now, we never think of dining till half past seven or eight, and then look in at the Empire or the Gaiety, and spend a jolly evening. Here, in the provinces ——"

"Have you been down long?" interrupted Blackwood, who did not care to hear the customs of his native city scorned by one of her renegade sons.

"Only ran down two nights ago. I say, let's drink to old times! Let's have some champagne!"

"Thank you all the same, but a glass of beer with my dinner or supper is good enough for me."

"Stuff an' nonsense! Who would drink beer when he can get champagne? Champagne's the tipple for a gentleman, I tell ye.—Waiter, bring a magnum of the best brand of champagne you've got!"

Blackwood was annoyed, for he did not wish to drink with the fellow. He saw that Simpson had had enough to drink already. But when the wine was brought, it would have seemed downright churlish to refuse to take a share of it. So Mr Simpson, his foolish face looking even more vacuous than usual, and his hat perched very much on the back of his head, sat opposite the young lawyer, leaning his arms on the table, and caressing every now and then the big bottle of champagne that stood at his elbow.

"Still grinding away at the law?" inquired Simpson, when they had gravely drunk to each other's health.

"Still grinding away," said Blackwood, cheerfully. "I've set up for myself now."

"Awful grind it must be!" said the man of fashion, sympathetically. "For myself, I never cared very much for office work. I find that lookin' in now and then at a broker's and takin' a squint at a tape is about as much of it as I can stand."

"You have made your pile, then?" asked Blackwood, with a greater show of interest than he had yet shown. Bertie Simpson had not by any means been considered a clever boy at school, and Blackwood was inclined to put him down as a brainless young braggart; but he was beginning to think that he must be more clever than people had supposed, or he would not have made enough already to enable him to live in idleness.

In answer to Blackwood's question Simpson gave an elaborate wink.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon," said Blackwood hastily, and flushing a little. "When you spoke as if you had given up business I naturally supposed that you had made your pile. But I assure you I had no wish——"

Simpson burst into a roar of laughter.

"My dear fellow, I'm not offended. I only meant to insinuate that my pile is more or less a matter of private interest——"

"Exactly so. And I am very sorry ——"

"No more apologies, my dear f'lah. I beg of you," said Mr Simpson in his

very grandest manner. "In fact, I am rather proud of the level-headedness I showed on one occasion, which has enabled me ever since to live the life of a gentleman. You know I have always maintained that in the world of finance chances happen to a man that he would not get elsewhere."

"Yes. I remember you looked down upon law as being too slow.'"

"I did. And so it is. You don't have the chances you have in the financial world, though I admit there are pickings to be had sometimes. Shall I tell you how I managed to snare the oof-bird?"

Blackwood saw that the champagne was having its effect, and he hesitated about accepting the confidences of a man in that condition.

"Thanks, old man," he said drily, "but I'm afraid your experiences would not be of much use to me."

"Dare say not. Such chances don't grow on every bush. But it's the being able to take advantage of the opportunity when it comes; that's the thing, my boy."

Blackwood saw that the fellow was simply dying to expatiate on his own cleverness, so he curtly told him to "fire away."

"It was not long after I went up to town," began Mr Simpson, "that I was connected with the floating of one of our largest mining companies. You'll excuse my mentioning names, won't you? Well, this mine was not one of those miserable wildcat things that are floated by the dozen, but a genuine first-class article, which has been paying handsome dividends for years. I was in a solicitor's office then, and the prospectus was put before us—that is to say, my principals—in the way of business. The vendors of the mine were willing to take the greater part of the payment in shares, but they needed some capital, for they hadn't a penny between them, so far as I could make out, and of course they needed capital to work the mine. And one of them, I remember, wanted ready money. The other preferred shares, because he had faith in the mine. And he was right."

"Well, after a bit the company was floated, and before long there were rumours flying about that there was something fishy about it."

"But I thought you said it was a good, honest mine," interrupted Blackwood.

"The mine was right enough, you Juggins," retorted Mr Simpson. "It was the title of the vendors that was said to be a trifle queer. I put one or two questions to one of the vendors—I think I mentioned that there were two—and he looked so scared that I felt convinced that there was something seriously wrong. So I went to the expense of engaging a man out in Australia to make inquiries for me on the spot—on behalf of persons interested, of course. And what do you think was the result? I found that the men who had sold this mine—worth nearly a million of money, mark you—had no more right to it than you or I have at this moment!"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Blackwood.

Mr Simpson, greatly pleased with the effect he had produced, leaned back in his chair and folded his arms, enjoying the look of undisguised astonishment on his friend's face.

"They were a pair of downy ones, I can tell you," said Mr Simpson, unfolding his arms, and resting them on the table in his former attitude.

"But I thought those mining titles had to be registered in the colony," observed Blackwood.

"So they have; and so far as the title was a copy of the Register out there it was all right. But the flaw went deeper than that. The vendors were not the original discoverers of the mine. The man who discovered it had registered his claim in proper form, and shortly afterwards the two men I have been speaking of—the vendors to the Company—registered an assignment of his claim in their favour."

"And some people doubted the validity of the assignment?"

"Well, very few folks knew as much as I have been telling you now. There were vague rumours that all was not square; and at one time these rumours made the shares jump up and down to any extent; so most men believed that they had been put about for that very purpose—see?"

"I see. But what was wrong with the assignment?"

"Only this—that it was actually dated the day after the death of the man who granted it!"

"That may have been a mistake—a mere clerical error."

"I thought that might be so. But the matter seemed worth looking into. And in the first place I ascertained beyond a doubt that while the assignment was dated May 18th, Grant had been killed on the 17th of May."

Blackwood had been prepared for hearing that the assignment was a forgery, and in a vague way he had thought that it must be the Lone Gully mine that Simpson was talking about. But he was not prepared for the mention of the name of Grant. The word struck him like a blow. It scarcely needed the phrase "had been killed" which Simpson had used to tell him that he had been speaking of Sybil's father.

For a moment he felt half-bewildered, but quickly recovering himself, he said—"They must have been impudent scoundrels! What made them so careless, do you suppose?"

"I'm not sure that it was carelessness. Perhaps they had knowledge of something that made it impossible that a genuine assignment could have been executed earlier—for example, if the vendor had been trying to sell the mine elsewhere, and they thought the false date necessary. But that's all guesswork on my part. Either through accident or by design the false date was there in black and white."

"And what did you do next?" asked Blackwood.

"Now, what do you think I did do?" demanded Mr Simpson, setting his head askew, and leering at the lawyer in an insinuating way. "What would you have done, old Blackbird?"

"I'd have warned my principals—or perhaps laid the matter before the Director of Prosecutions, or whatever they call him."

"And got the sack for your pains, and serve you right!" exclaimed Simpson, contemptuously. Not me! Not much! No. I set myself to discover some real, genuine, undoubted specimens of the handwriting of this man Grant—there now, the name is out, and I didn't intend to let it slip!" cried the ingenuous youth. "But I know I am safe with you, old man. You're not the one to give away an old pal. Where was I? Oh, yes—I got some letters of his, after a lot of trouble and writing backwards and forwards, getting them identified by affidavit, and all the rest of it. At last it was done. And it was as plain as the nose on your face from a comparison of the handwriting that the assignment was a rank, palpable forgery! A forgery that couldn't have deceived a child, if it had been anyone's interest to raise the question whether the assignment on which the whole thing rested was genuine or not."

"And what did you do then?"

"What did I do? I waited till the thing was in full swing, and money was coming in freely. Then I bought a share or two, so as to give me a locus standi, do you see?—and then went and interviewed the chairman— the vendor—the forger, I have no doubt.

"I didn't beat about the bush, I can tell you. I simply said, 'Look here, my fine fellow, you have been and put your foot in it. I have you on toast. And now you many take your choice between paying me one thousand pounds per annum, in equal quarterly payments, or standing your trial at the Old Bailey on a charge of forgery, fraud, and conspiracy?'"

"And how did he take it?"

"Oh, at first he mounted the high horse—would give me in charge for attempting to obtain money, et cetera, et cetera.

"'Yes, I am attempting to obtain money,' says I, 'and don't you forget it. And what's more, I rather think I shall obtain it. What do you think, my good sir?' My word, you should have seen his face when he tumbled to it that I was in earnest, and wasn't to be frightened off! He was mad, I can tell you. But in the long run he knuckled under—he had to—and he pays me the one thousand per annum as regular as clockwork. And now I am like to bite my fingers off that I didn't make it two thousand while I was about it."

"You might make it two thousand even now," said the lawyer, sarcastically.

"What do you take me for?" demanded Mr Simpson, assuming the attitude of an aggrieved and combative man. "It seems to me that you want to make me out a regular blackmailer!"

Blackwood nearly burst into a laugh at the rascal's transparent self-deception; but he restrained himself, for he reflected that Mr Simpson might have it in his power to be a valuable friend or a dangerous enemy.

Finding that it was Mr Simpson's intention to return to London on the following day, he took the precaution of obtaining from his his town address, and shortly afterwards persuaded the young man, who had taken about as much wine as he could carry, to go to his hotel.

Then John Blackwood went home, and lay awake, notwithstanding his fatigue, for the greater part of the night, thinking. And somehow his thoughts always came back to the same point—"Suppose that I follow up this and find it is not only correct but demonstrably correct; suppose that I succeed in recovering the greater part of this valuable property for Sybil. She will be a very wealthy woman—a great heiress, in fact. Is it likely that, living in luxury, and with crowds of admirers at her feet, she will care to remember the obscure Glasgow lawyer who served her? It is not likely. It would not be fair to expect that she should look at me a second time—not in that way. Friendly and grateful, and all that, she would be, I am sure. But the sober fact is that if she recovers the mine, which Mitchell has apparently stolen from her father, she will be as much above me as a princess is above a baker's boy."

And with this unpleasant conviction haunting his mind he lay and tossed from side to side till the winter dawn crept through the smoke curtain to tell him that a new day had been born.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SCHEMING OF LOUIS DURANT.

Louis Durant was a soldier of Fortune, and being liberally provided with brains, and being free from anything resembling a scruple of conscience, he had made a very good fight of it.

He was an Englishman only on the mother's side, but as his father had been nothing to boast of in any way, he had long since kept his French parentage as much in the background as possible. One thing, however, he had inherited from his father—his artistic temperament. It mattered little that the pictures he painted were very bad ones, and that he could not really play the violin—the instrument he specially affected—for he firmly believed that he was a true artist, and was happy in his belief.

He had been for many years conversant with the shady side of finance; and though he affected to dispise money grubbers and their ways, and to devote himself to art, he was dependent on his own earnings—or his own filchings—for his bread and butter.

When he was asked by the promoters of the Lone Gully Mining Company to make a report on the title of the vendors, he quite understood that his report must be a satisfactory one to his employers, and he was ready to make his report accordingly. He had his reward in a liberal grant of shares in the company, which had placed him for some years beyond the reach of want. But his money was coming to an end. Hence his courtship of Miss Dalrymple. He thought he knew enough of Alexander Mitchell's secret to make it impossible for that gentleman to refuse to give him a fair sum with his niece.

But he had fallen in love with Sybil Grant, and he had conceived that it was possible to gain a far larger sum than he could hope to obtain by marrying Miss Dalrymple by taking up Sybil's cause, and making it his own.

He knew that Sidney Grant's father had been the original owner of the Lone Gully mine. Some years before he had seen Sidney Grant, and although he scarcely remembered her, he felt tolerably certain that the charming young lady who came to the Castle in her name was not the Sidney Grant he had once been introduced to. He said nothing, however, preferring to turn his suspicion into certainty, and then see what use he could make of his knowledge before he acted.

The evident partiality of the Hon. Ronald Keith for Sybil had forced his hand; and after declaring himself to Sybil he had left the Castle, determined to discover what in reality was the nature of the claim which she had upon Mr. Mitchell. If, as he suspected, she was entitled to the mine which Mitchell and McPhail had sold to the Lone Gully Company, he would be in a magnificent position for making terms with her. Either out of gratitude, or out of a regard for her own interests, Sybil would be sure to listen to him when he let her see that her success depended upon him. And (as her husband) the immense fortune he meant to win for her would practically belong to him.

This was his scheme; and this was the reason why he was so anxious to know whether Sybil had any papers belonging to her father in her possession.

Durant had made up his mind that if necessary he would go to Australia; but he found that by the help of the telegraph cable he could direct his inquiries from London, and he did this to such advantage that one day in December he issued from a certain office in a back street in the city with his face radiant. He had penetrated the secret which he had wilfully refrained from investigating when he pretended to examine the title of the Lone Gully Company and their mine, and he told himself that now he held that old rascal Mitchell in the hollow of his hand.

In the joy of his heart Durant went to the best restaurant he could find in the city, and treated himself to the most dainty luncheon the house could supply, with an adequate allowance of champagne. He then lit a cigar, and passed half an hour in running over the columns of the evening journals. As he was about to throw down the last of them, the following advertisement caught his eye:

"Signor Zucatti, Professor of Palmistry, Astrology, and the Allied Arts, receives every morning from eleven to one, and every afternoon from four to seven. Those who consult the Professor may rely on the strictest confidence being maintained concerning their affairs."

"By Jove," said Durant to himself, tossing down the newspaper, "that was the Italian fellow I saw with Sybil the first time I saw her. I remember I recognised him as the man who was accused of being concerned in a murder in Italy. I wonder what connection there can have been between him and Sybil. Suppose I were to go to see him, and under pretence of consulting him try to find out——. Bah! is it worth while?"

He almost decided that he would let the Italian alone; but he had nothing particular to do that afternoon; and he ended by making up his mind to pay the Professor a visit. Even if he learned nothing about Sybil, he thought the man's pretensions to mystical lore might be amusing. So he asked a waiter to call a hansom, and gave the cabman the address of the Professor's house.

(To be continued.)

Copyright Story.

On the Leads: A Ghost Story.

By S. BARING-GOULD.

Author of "Mehalah," "John Herring," etc.

Having realised a competence in Australia, and having a hankering after country life for the remainder of my days in the old home, on my return to England I went to an agent with the object of renting a house with shooting attached, over at least three thousand acres, with the option of a purchase should the place suit me. I was no more intending to buy a country seat without having tried what it was like, than is a king disposed to go to war without knowing something of the force that can be brought against him. I was rather taken with photographs of a manor called Fernwood, and I was still further engaged when I saw the place itself on a beautiful October day, when St. Luke's summer was turning the country into a world of rainbow tints under a warm sun, and a soft vaporous blue haze tinted all shadows cobalt, and gave to the hills a statelieness that made them look like mountains. Fernwood was an old house, built in the shape of the letter H., and therefore, presumably, dating from the time of the early Tudor monarchs. The porch opened into the hall which was on the left of the cross stroke, and the drawing room was on the right. There was one inconvenience about the house; it had a staircase at each extremity of the cross stroke, and there was no upstair communication between the two wings of the mansion. But as a practical man, I saw how this might be remedied. The front door faced the south, and the hall was windowless on the north. Nothing easier than to run a corridor along at the back, giving communication both upstairs and downstairs, without passing through the hall. The whole thing could be done for, at the outside, two hundred pounds, and would be no disfigurement to the place. I agreed to become tenant of Fernwood for a twelvemonth, in which time I should be able to judge whether the place would suit me, the neighbours be pleasant, and the climate agree with my wife. We went down to Fernwood at once, and settled ourselves comfortably in by the first week in November.

The house was furnished, it was the property of an elderly gentleman, a bachelor named Framett, who lived in rooms in Town, and spent most of his time at the club. He was supposed to have been jilted by his intended, after which he eschewed female society, and remained unmarried.

I called on him before taking up our residence at Fernwood, and found him a somewhat blase, languid, cold-blooded creature, not at all proud of having a noble manor house that had belonged to his family for four centuries; very willing to sell it, so as to spite a cousin who calculated on coming in for the estate, and whom Mr Framett, with the malignity that is sometimes found in old people, was particularly desirous of disappointing.

"The house has been let before, I suppose," said I.

"Oh, yes," he replied indifferently, "I believe so, several times."

"For long?"

"No—o. I believe, not for long."

"Have the tenants had any particular reasons for not remaining on there—if I may be so bold as to inquire?"

"All people have reasons to offer, but what they offer you are not supposed to receive as genuine."

I could get no more from him than this. "I think, sir, if I were you I would not go down to Fernwood till after November was out."

"But," said I, "I want the shooting."

"Ah, to be sure—the shooting, ah! I should have preferred if you could have waited till December began."

"That would not suit me," I said, and so the matter ended.

When we were settled in, we occupied the right wing of the house. The left, or west wing was but scantily furnished, and looked cheerless, as though rarely tenanted. We were not a large family, my wife and myself alone; there was consequently ample accommodation in the east wing for us. The servants were placed above the kitchen, in a portion of the house I have not yet described. It was a half wing, if I may so describe it, built on the north side parallel with the upper arm of the western limb of the hall, and the H. This block had a gable to the north like the wings, and a broad lead valley was between them, that, as I learned from the agent, had to be attended to after the fall of the leaf, and in times of snow, to clear it.

Access to this valley could be had from within, by means of a little window in the roof, formed as a dormer. A short ladder allowed anyone to ascend from the passage to this window and open or shut it. The western staircase gave access to this passage, from which the servants' rooms in the new block were reached, as also the untenanted apartments in the old wing. And as there were no windows in the extremities of this passage that ran due north and south, it derived all its light from the afore-mentioned dormer window.

One night, after we had been in the house about a week, I was sitting up smoking with a little whisky and water at my elbow, reading a review of an absurd, ignorantly written book on New South Wales, when I heard a tap at the door, and the parlour maid came in, and said in a nervous tone of voice: "Beg your pardon, sir, but cook nor I, nor none of us dare go to bed."

"Why not?" I asked, looking up in surprise.

"Please, sir, we dursn't go into the passage to get to our rooms."

"Whatever is the matter with the passage?"

"Oh, nothing, sir, with the passage. Would you mind, sir, just coming to see? We don't know what to make of it."

I put down my review with a grunt of dissatisfaction, laid my pipe aside, and followed the maid.

She led me through the hall, and up the staircase at the western extremity.

On reaching the upper landing I saw all the maids there in a cluster, and all evidently much scared.

"Whatever is all this nonsense about?" I asked.

"Please, sir, will you look? We can't say."

The parlourmaid pointed to an oblong patch of moonlight on the wall of the passage. The night was cloudless, and the full moon shone slanting in through the dormer, and painted a brilliant silver strip on the wall opposite. The window being on the side of the roof to the east, we could not see that, but did see the light thrown through it against the wall. This patch of reflected light was about seven feet above the floor.

The window itself was some ten feet up, and the passage was but four feet wide. I enter into these particulars for reasons that will presently appear.

The window was divided into three parts by wooden mullions, and was composed of four panes of glass in each compartment.

Now I could distinctly see the reflection of the moon through the window with the black bars up and down, and the division of the panes. But I saw more than that; I saw the shadow of a lean arm with a hand and thin lengthy fingers across a portion of the window, apparently groping at where was the latch by which the casement could be opened.

My impression at the moment was that there was a burglar on the leads, trying to enter the house by means of this dormer.

Without a minute's hesitation I ran into the passage and looked up at the window, but could see only a portion of it, as in shape it was low, though broad, and, as already stated, was set at a great height. But at that moment something fluttered past it, like a rush of flapping draperies, obscuring the light.

I had placed the ladder, which I found hooked up to the wall, in position, and planted my foot on the lowest rung, when my wife arrived. She had been alarmed by the housemaid, and now she clung to me, and protested that I was not to ascend without my pistol.

To satisfy her I got my Colt's revolver, that I always kept loaded, and then, but only hesitatingly, did she allow me to mount. I ascended to the casement, unhasped it, and looked out. I could see nothing. The ladder was overshort, and it required an effort to heave oneself from it, through the casement on the leads. I am stout, and not as nimble as I was when younger. After one or two efforts, and after presenting from below an appearance that would have provoked laughter at any other time, I succeeded in getting through and upon the leads.

I looked up and down the valley—there was absolutely nothing to be seen except an accumulation of leaves carried there from the trees that were shedding their foliage.

The situation was vastly puzzling. As far as I could judge there was no way off the roof, no other window opening into the valley. I did not go along upon the leads, as it was night, and the moonlight is treacherous. Moreover, I was wholly unacquainted with the arrangement of the roof, and had no wish to risk a fall.

I descended from the window with my feet groping for the upper rung of the ladder in a manner even more grotesque than my ascent through the casement, but neither my wife—usually extremely alive to anything ridiculous in my appearance—nor the domestics were in a mood to make merry. I fastened the window after me, and had hardly reached the bottom of the ladder before again a shadow flickered across the patch of moonlight.

I was fairly perplexed and stood musing. Then I recalled that immediately behind the house the ground rose; that, in fact, the house lay under a considerable hill. It was just possible by ascending the slope to reach the level of the gutter and rake the leads from one extremity to the other with my eye.

I mentioned this to my wife, and at once the whole set of maids trailed down the stairs after us. They were afraid to remain in the passage, and they were curious to see if there really were some person on the leads.

We went out at the back of the house and ascended the bank till we were on a level with the broad gutter between the gables. I now saw that this gutter did not run straight, but stopped against the hall roof; consequently, unless there were some opening of which I knew nothing, the person on the leads could not leave the place, save by the dormer window when open, or by swarming down the fall pipe.

It at once occurred to me that if what I had seen were the shadow of a burglar he might have mounted by means of the main water pipe. But if so, how had he vanished the moment my head was protruded through the window? And how was it that I had seen the shadow flicker past the light immediately after I had descended the ladder? It was conceivable that the man had concealed himself in the shadow of the hall roof and had taken advantage of my withdrawal to run past the window so as to reach the fall pipe and let himself down by that.

I could, howeevr, see no one running away, as I must have done going outside so soon after his supposed descent.

But the whole affair became more perplexing when, looking towards the leads, I saw in the moonlight something with fluttering garments run-

ning up and down them.

There could be no mistake. The object was a woman, and her garments were in tatters. We could not hear a sound.

I looked round at my wife and the servants. They saw this weird object as distinctly as myself. It was more like a gigantic bat than a human being; and yet that it was a woman we could not doubt, for the arms were now and then thrown above the head in wild gesticulation, and at moments a profile was presented, and then we saw, or thought we saw, long flapping hair unbound.

"I must go back to the ladder," said I. "You remain where you are, watching."

"Oh, Edward, not alone!" pleaded my wife.

"My dear, who is to go with me?"

I went. I had left the back door unlocked, and I ascended the staircase and entered the passage. Again I saw the shadow flicker past the moonlit patch on the wall opposite the window.

I ascended the ladder and opened the casement.

Then I heard the clock in the hall strike one.

I heaved myself up to the sill with great labour and endeavoured to thrust my short body through the window when I heard feet on the stairs, and next moment my wife's voice from below, at the foot of the ladder. "Oh, Edward, Edward! please do not go out there again. It has vanished, all at once. There is nothing there now to be seen."

I returned, touched the ladder tentatively with my feet, refastened the window, and descended, perhaps inelegantly. I then went down with my wife, and with her returned up the bank to the spot where stood clustered our servants.

They had seen nothing further, and although I remained on the spot watching for half an hour I saw nothing more.

The maids were too frightened to go to bed, and so agreed to sit up in the kitchen for the rest of the night by a good fire, and I gave them a bottle of sherry to mull and make themselves comfortable upon and to help them to recover their courage.

Although I went to bed I could not sleep. I was completely baffled by what I had seen. I could in no way explain what the object was and how it had left the leads.

Next day I sent for the village mason and asked him to set a long ladder against the well head of the fall pipe, and examine the valley between the gables. At the same time I would mount to the little window and contemplate proceedings through that.

The man had to send for a ladder sufficiently long, and that occupied some time. However, at length he had it planted, and then mounted. When he approached the dormer window

"Give me a hand," said I, "and haul me up; I would like to satisfy myself with my own eyes, that there is no other means of geting upon or leaving the leads."

He took me under both shoulders, and heaved me out, and I stood with him in the broad lead gutter.

"There's no other opening whatever," said he, "and Lord love you, sir, I believe that what you saw was no more than this," and he pointed to a branch of a noble cedar that grew hard by the west side of the house.

"I warrant, sir," said he, "that what you saw was this here bough as has been carried by a storm and thrown here—and the wind last night swept it up and down the leads."

"But was there any wind?" I asked. "I do not remember that there was."

"I can't say," said he; "before twelve o'clock I was fast asleep, and it might have blown a gale and I hear nothing of it."

"I suppose there must have been some wind," said I, "and that I was too surprised, and—the women too frightened, to observe it," I laughed. "So this marvellous spectral phenomen receives a very prosaic and natural explanation. Mason, throw down the bough, and we will burn it to-night."

The branch was cast over the ledge, and fell at the back of the house. I left the leads, descended, and going out, picked up the cedar branch, brought it into the hall, summoned the servants, and said, derisively—"Here is an illustration of the way in which weak minded women get scared. Now we will burn the burglar or ghost that we saw. It turns out to be nothing but this branch, blown up and down the leads by the wind."

"But, Edward," said my wife, "there was not a breath stirring."

"There must have been. Only where we were we were sheltered, and did not observe it. Aloft, it blew across the roofs, and formed an eddy that caught the broken bough, lifted it, carried it first one way, then spun it round and carried it the reverse way. In fact the wind between the two roofs assumed a spiral movement. I hope now you are all satisfied. I am."

So the bough was burnt, and our fears—I mean those of the females, were allayed.

In the evening, after dinner, as I sat with my wife, she said to me, "Half a bottle would have been enough, Edward. Indeed, I think half a bottle was too much; you should not give the girls a liking for sherry, it may lead to bad results. If it had been elderberry wine that would have been different."

"But there is no elderberry wine in the house," I objected.

"Well, I hope no harm will come of it, but I greatly mistrust—"

"Please, sir, it's there again."

The parlour maid with a blanched face was at the door.

"Nonsense," said I, "we burnt it."

"This comes of the sherry," observed my wife. "They will be seeing ghosts every night."

"But, my dear, you saw it as well as myself!"

I rose, my wife followed, and we went to the landing as before, and sure enough, against the patch of moonlight cast through the window in the roof, was the arm again, and then a flutter of shadows, as if cast by garments.

"It was not the bough," said my wife. "If this had been seen immediately after the sherry, I should not have been surprised, but—as it is now it is most extraordinary."

"I'll have this part of the house shut up," said I. Then I bade the maids once more spend the night in the kitchen, "and make themselves lively on tea," I said—for I knew my wife would not allow of another bottle of sherry being given them. "To-morrow your beds shall be moved to the East wing."

"Beg pardon," said the cook, "I speaks in the name of all. We don't think we can remain in the house, but must leave the situation."

"That comes of the tea," said I to my wife. "Now," to the cook, "as you have had another fright—I will let you have a bottle of mulled port to-night."

"Sir," said the cook, "if you can get rid of the ghost, we don't want to leave so good a master. We withdraw the notice."

Next day I had all the servants' goods transferred to the east wing, and rooms were fitted up for them to sleep in. As their portion of the house was completely cut off from the west wing, the alarm of the domestics died away.

A heavy stormy rain came on next week, the first token of winter misery.

I then found that—whether caused by the cedar bough, or by the nailed boots of the mason, I cannot say, but the lead of the valley between the roofs was torn, and water came in, streaming down the walls, and threatening to severely damage the ceilings. I had to send for a plumber, as soon as the weather mended. At the same time I started for town to see Mr. Framett. I had made up my mind that Fernwood was not suitable, and by the terms of my agreement I might be off my bargain if I gave notice the first month, and then my tenancy would be for the six months only. I found the squire at his club.

"Ah!" said he, "I told you not to go there in November. No one likes Fernwood in November, it is all right at other times."

"What do you mean?"

"There is no bother except in November."

"Why should there be bother, as you term it, then?"

Mr. Framett shrugged his shoulders. "How the deuce can I tell you? I've never been a spirit and all that sort of thing. Mme. Blavatsky might possibly tell you. I can't. But it is a fact."

"What is a fact?"

"Why, that there is no apparition at any other time. It is only in November, when she met with a little misfortune. That is when she is seen."

"Who is seen?"

"My Aunt Eliza—I mean my great aunt."

"You speak mysteries."

"I don't know much about it, and care less," said Mr. Framett, and called for a lemon squash. "It was this. I had a great aunt who was deranged. The family kept it quiet, and did not send her to an asylum, but fastened her in a room in the west wing. You see, that part of the house is much separated from the rest. I believe she was rather shabbily treated, but she was difficult to manage, and tore her clothes to pieces. Somehow she succeeded in getting out on the roof, and would race up and down there. They allowed her to do so, as by that means she obtained fresh air. But one night in November she scrambled up there, and, I believe, tumbled over. It was hushed up. Sorry you went there in November. I should have liked you to buy the place. I am sick of it."

I did buy Fernwood. What decided me was this: The plumbers, in mending the leads, with that ingenuity to do mischief which they sometimes display, succeeded in setting fire to the roof, and the result was that the west wing was burnt down. Happily, a wall so completely separated the wing from the rest of the house—that the fire was arrested. The wing was not rebuilt, and I—thinking, with the disappearance of the leads, that I should be freed from the apparition that haunted them, purchased Fernwood. I am happy to say we have been undisturbed since.

(The end.)

Complete Story.

A BAD CHARACTER SUIT.

By FLORA ANNIE STEEL.

A flood of blistering yellow sunshine was pouring down on to the prostrate body of Private George Offord as he lay on his back, drunk, in an odd little corner between two cook-room walls in the barrack square, and a stream of tepid water from a skin bag was falling on his head as Peroo, the "bhisti," stood over him, directing the crystal curve now on his forehead, now scientifically on his ears. The only result, however, being that Private George Offord tried unavailingly to scratch them; then swore unintelligibly.

Peroo twisted the nozzle of the "mussuck" to dryness, and knelt down beside the slack strength in the dust. So, kneeling, his glistening curved brown body got mixed up with the glistening curved brown water-bag he carried, until at first sight he seemed a monstrous spider preying on a victim; for his arms and legs were skinny.

"Sahib!" he said, touching his master on the sleeve. It was a very white sleeve, and the buttons and belts and buckles all glistened white or gold in the searching sunlight; for Peroo saw to them, as he saw to most things about Private Offord, body and soul. Why, God knows, except that George Offord had once—for his own amusement—whacked a man who, for his, was whacking Peroo. The fact being that the offender happened to be one of the best bruisers in the regiment, and George Offord, who was in a sober bout, wanted to beat him, which he did.

There was no one in sight; nothing save the walls, and an offensively cheerful castor-oil bush which grew, greener than any bay-tree, in one angle, sending splay fingers of shadow close to Private Offord's head, as if it wished to aid in the cooling process. But despite the solitude, Peroo's touch on the white sleeve was decorous, his voice deference itself.

"Sah-eeb!" he repeated. "If the 'Huzoor' does not get up soon, the Captain will find the master on the ground, when he passes to rations. And that is unnecessary."

He might as well have spoken to the dead. George Offord's face, relieved of the douche treatment, settled down to placid, contented sleep. It was not a bad face; indeed, considering the habits of the man, it was singularly fine and clear-cut. In youth it had evidently been a superlatively handsome one also.

Peroo waited a minute or two, then undid the nozzle of his skin bag once more, and drenched the slack body and the dust around it.

"What a tyranny is here!" he muttered to himself, the wrinkles on his forehead giving him the perplexed look of a baby monkey; "yet the master will die of sunstroke if he be not removed. 'Hai! hai!' What is it to eat forbidden fruit, and find it a turnip!"

With which remark he limped off methodically to the quarter-guard and gave notice that Private George Offord was lying dead drunk between cook-rooms Nos. 7 and 8, after which he limped on as methodically about his regular duty, which was the filling of regimental water-pots. What else was there to be done? The special master—whom he had elected to serve between whiles—would certainly not want his services for a month or two at least, since that period would be spent in clink; for Private George Offord was an habitual offender.

Such a very habitual offender, indeed, that when the adjutant and the colonel conferred over this last offence, even Griffiths, the second Major, had not a word to say, though he had stood Offord's friend many a time to the extent even of getting him re-enlisted in India—a most unusual favour—when, after an interval of discharge, he had turned up at his ex-captain's bungalow begging to be taken on, and averring that he had served his way out to India before the mast in that hope, since enlistment at the depot might take him to the other battalion. The story, so the adjutant had said, was palpably false; but the silent little major had got the colonel to consent, and so Private George Offord—who was an ideal soldier to look at—had given the master tailor no end of trouble about the fit of his uniform; for he was a bit of a dandy when he was sober. But now, even Major Griffiths felt the limit of forbearance was past; nor could a court-martial be expected to take into consideration the trivial fact which lay at the bottom of the observant little major's mercy: namely, that though when he was sober George Offord was a dandy, when he was drunk—or rather in the stage which precedes actual drunkenness—he was a gentleman. Vulgarity of speech slipped from him then; and even when he was passing into the condition in which there is no speech he would excuse his own lapses from strict decorum with almost pathetic apologies. "It is no excuse, I know, sir," he would say, with a charming regretful dignity, "but I have had a very chequered career—a very chequered career indeed."

That was true; and one of the black squares of the chessboard of life was his now, for the court-martial which sentenced Private George Offord to but a short punishment, adding this rider, that he was to be "thereinafter dismissed from Her Majesty's service."

"He is quite incorrigible," said the colonel, "and as we are pretty certain of going up to punish those scoundrels on the frontier as soon as the weather cools, we had better get rid of him. The regiment mustn't have a speck anywhere, and his sort spoils the youngsters."

The major nodded.

So Private George Offord got his dismissal; also the bad character suit of clothes which is the Queen's last gift to such as he.

It was full six weeks after he had stood beside that prostrate figure between cook-rooms Nos. 7 and 8, that Peroo was once more engaged in the same task, though not in the same place. And this time the thin stream of water falling on George Offord's face found it grimed and dirty, and left it showing all too clearly the traces of a fortnight's debauch. For Peroo, being of a philosophic mind, had told himself, as he had limped away from giving information at the quarter-guard, that now, while his self-constituted master would have no need of his services, was the time for him to take that leave home which he had deferred so long. Therefore, two of three days after, he had turned up at the quartermaster's office with the curious Indian institution, "the changeling," and preferred his request for a holiday. It was granted, of course: there is no reason why leave should not be granted when a double, willing even to answer to the same name, stands ready to step into the original's shoes, without payment—that remaining a bargain between the doubles themselves.

"Here," said Peroo, "is my brother. He is even as myself. His character is mine. We are all water-carriers, and he has done the work for two days. I will also leave him my skin bag, so that the Presence may be sure it is clean. He is a Peroo also."

He might have been the Peroo, so far as the quartermaster's requirements went. So the original went home and the copy took his place; but not for the whole two months. The order for active service, of which the colonel had spoken, came sooner than was expected; and Peroo hearing of it started back at once for the regiment. A "changeling" could pass muster in peace, but war required the reality; besides, the master would no doubt be released, since he was surely too good fighting material to be left behind. So, at least, Peroo had told himself; yet there his hero was, lying in the dust of a by-alley in the bazaar, in a ragged bad-character suit, while the barrack square was alive with men—not half so good to look at—who could talk, as the mules were laden, of the deeds they were to do!

The wrinkles on Peroo's forehead grew more like those of a monkey in arms than ever. This was indeed a tyranny! but at least the Presence could be moved out of the burning sun this time, without of necessity getting him into more trouble. So a few friends were called, and together they carried George Offord into the windowless slip of a room which Peroo locked at four o'clock in the morning and unlocked at ten at night; but which, nevertheless, served him as a home. There was nothing in it save a string-bed and a drinking vessel—for Peroo, after his kind, ate his food at the bazaar; but that, for the present, was all the Englishman required either. So there Peroo left him in the darkness and the cool, safe for the day.

But after that what was to happen? The problem went with Peroo as he limped about filling the cook-room water-pots; for on the morrow he must be filling them on the first camping ground, fifteen miles away from that slip of a room where the master lay. What would become of his hero then?

The sandy stretches in which the barracks stood were full of mules, camels, carts, and men of all arms belonging to the small picked force which was to march with the one solid regiment at dawn on their mission of punishment.

"'Pani!' (water)," shouted a perspiring artilleryman, grappling with a peculiarly obstinate mule as Peroo went past with his skin bag. "'Pani,' and bring a real 'jildi' (quickness) along with it. Wot! you ain't the drinken-water, ain't yer? Wot's that to me?—I ain't one o' yer bloomin' Brahmins; but I'll take it outside instead o' in, because of them 'black-sillys' o' the doctor's. So turn on the hose, Johnnie—I'll show yer how."

"'E knows all about it, you bet," put in one of the regiment, cheerfully. "W'y, 'e's bin 'ydraulic engineer and waterworks combined to that pore chap as got the sack the other day—George Offord."

"Sure it was a thriflin' mistake wi'd the pripositions his godfathers made whin they named him; for it was on and not off—'e'rd he was six days out of sivin'," remarked a tall Irishman.

"You hold your jaw, Pat," interrupted another voice. "'E was a better chap nor most, when 'e wasn't on the lap; and lordy! 'e could fight when 'e 'ad the chanst—couldn't 'e, waterworks? Just turn that 'ose o' yours my way a bit—will yer?"

"'Huzoor,'" assented Peroo deferentially; he understood enough to make the thought pass through his brain that it was a pity the master had not the chance. Perhaps the curve of water conveyed this to that other brain beneath the close fair curls whence the drops flew sparkling in the sunlight. At any rate, their owner went on in a softer tone, "Yes! 'e fi't like fits. Looked, too, as if 'e was born ter die on the field o' glory, and not in a bad-character suit; but, as parson says, 'Beauty is vain. I will repay, saith the Lord.'"

The confused morality of this passed Peroo by; and yet something not altogether dissimilar lay behind his wrinkled forehead when, work over, he returned to the slip of a room and found Offord vaguely roused by his entrance.

"I—I am aware it is no possible excuse, sir," came his voice, curiously refined, curiously pathetic. "But I really have had a very checkered life—I have, indeed."

"Huzoor!" acquiesced Peroo briefly; but even that was sufficient to bring the hearer closer to realities. He sat up on the string bed, looked about him stupidly, then sank back again.

"Get away, you d——d black devil," he muttered, with a sort of restless anger. "Can't you let me die in peace, you fool? Can't you let me die in the gutter, die in a bad character suit? It's all I'm fit for—all I'm fit for." Then voice, anger—listless, useless anger—all tailed away to silence. He turned over with a sort of sob and straightway fell asleep, for he was still far from sober.

Peroo lit a cresset lamp and stood looking at him. Beauty was certainly vain here, and if the Lord was going to repay it was time He began. Time someone began, at anyrate, if the man who had fought for him, Peroo, was not to carry out his desires of dying in a gutter—dying in a bad character suit.

The latter misfortune could be avoided, however, for things were going cheap in the bazaar that evening, as was only natural when it was to be deserted for six months at least. So it ought not to be hard to get the master an exchange for something more suitable to his beauty, if not to his death.

Five minutes afterwards George Offord—too much accustomed to such ministrations to be disturbed by the process of undressing—was still asleep, his chin resting peacefully on Peroo's best white cotton shawl, and the bad character suit was on its way to the pawnshop round the corner. It was nigh on an hour, however, before Peroo, having concluded his bargain, came back with it, and by the light of the cresset set to work appraising his success or failure. It was a success certainly. The uniform was old, no doubt, but it was a corporal's and what is more, it had three good conduct stripes on the arm. That ought to give dignity even to a death in the gutter.

Peroo brought out some pipe-clay and pumice-stone from a crevice and set to work cheerfully on the buttons and belts, thinking as he worked that he had indeed made a good bargain. With a judicious smear of cinnabar here and there, the tunic would be almost as good as the master's old one, plus the good conduct stripes, which he could never have gained for himself even if he had remained in the regiment.

But out of it? The suggestion set the hero worshipper a-thinking. If, for instance, the Lord were really to repay Private George Offord for that good deed in defending a poor lame man—a good deed which no bad one could alter for the worse? Peroo's confused instincts would on this point would have been a match for a whole college of Jesuits in casuistry, as he laid on the pipe-clay with lavish hand and burnished the buttons till they shone like gold.

It was grey dawn when George Offord woke, feeling a deferential touch on his shoulder.

"Huzoor," came a familiar voice, "the first bugle has gone. The Huzoor will find his uniform—a corporal's, with three good conduct stripes—is ready. The absence of a rifle is to be regretted, but that will be amended if the Huzoor will lend a gracious ear to the plan of his slave. In the meantime a gifting of the Huzoor's feet for the putting on of stockings might be ordered."

George Offord thrust out a foot mechanically and sat on the edge of the string bed staring stupidly at the three good conduct stripes on the tunic, which was neatly folded beside him.

"It is quite simple," went on the deferential voice. "The Huzoor is going to march with the colours, march with the regiment, but he will be twelve hours behind them, that is all. He will get the fighting, and by-and-by, when the killing comes and more men are wanted, the colonel sahib may give a place; but in any case there will always be the fighting. For the rest, I, the Huzoor's slave, will manage, and as there will of necessity be no canteen, there can be no tyranny. Besides, since there is not a cowrie in the master's jacket, what else is he to do?"

This last argument was unanswerable. George Offord thrust out his other foot to be shod for this new path and stared harder than ever at the good conduct stripes.

That night, despite the fatigue of a first day in camp, Peroo trudged back along the hard white road to meet someone whom he hoped would come trudging to meet him; hoped, yet hardly expected, for this was the first step, and he had perforce been obliged to leave his charge to his own devices for close on twelve hours amid the distractions of the bazaar. Still without a cowrie in his pocket—Peroo had carefully extracted the few annas he had found in one—a man was more or less helpless even for evil. That was one comfort.

Nevertheless, Beauty was vain, so there was a lilt in the lagging step which, just as Peroo had begun to give up hope of playing Providence, came slowly down the road. It belonged to George Offord in the gentlemanly stage of drink. He had had a checkered life, he said, almost tearfully, but there were some things a

man of honour could not do. He could not break his promise to an inferior—a superior was another matter, since in that case the offender had to pay for his choice honestly. But he had promised Peroo—his inferior—to come. So here he was, and that was an end of it!

It seemed more than once during the next few hours as if the end had indeed come. But somehow Peroo's deferential hand and voice extracted those wild uncertain feet, that weary sodden brain, from ditches and despair. Still, it was a very sorry figure which Peroo's own hasty footsteps left behind, safely quartered for the day in a shady bit of jungle, while he ran on to overtake the rear guard if he could. The start, however, had been too much for his lameness and he was a full hour late at his work; which, of course, necessitated his putting in an excuse. He chose drunkenness as being nearest the truth, was fined a day's wages, and paid it cheerfully, thinking the while with more complacency of the sleeping figure he had left in the jungle.

The afternoon sun was slanting through the trees before that figure stirred, and George Offord woke from the long sleep which fatigue, superadded to his usual sedative, had brought him. He felt strangely refreshed, and lay on his back staring at the little squirrels yawning after their midday snooze in the branches above him. And then he laughed suddenly, sat up, and looked about him half-confusedly. Not a trace of humanity was to be seen; nothing but the squirrels, a few green pigeons, and down in the mirror-like pool behind the trees—a pool edged by the percolating moisture from the water with faint spikes of sprouting grass—a couple of egrets were fishing lazily. Beyond lay a bare sandy plain, backed by faint blue hills—the hills where fighting was to be had; and close at hand were those three good-conduct stripes!

That night Peroo had not nearly so far to go back along the broad white road; yet the step which came echoing down it, if steadier, lagged more. Nor was Peroo's task much easier, for George Offord, in the abject depression which comes to the tippler from total abstinence, sat down in the dust more than once, and swore he would not go another step without a dram. Still, when an hour after dawn, he was once more dozing in a shady retreat with a pot of water and some dough cakes beside him, while Peroo, in luck, was getting a lift in a country gig, to the third camping ground.

But even at the second, where the sleeping figure remained, the country was wilder, almost touching the skirts of the hills; and so, when George Offord roused himself—as the animals rouse themselves to meet the coming cool of evening—a ravine deer was standing within easy shot, looking at him with head thrown back, and wide, startled nostrils scenting the unknown.

The sight stirred something in the man which had slept the sleep of the dead for years—that keen delight of the natural man, not so much in the kill, as in the chase, not so much in the mere chase itself as in its efforts, its freedom. He rose, stretching his long arms in what was half a yawn, half a vague inclination to shake himself free of some unseen burden.

But that night he swore at Peroo for leading him a fool's dance; he threatened to go back. He was not, he said, so hepless as all that! He was not a slave; he would have his tot of rum, like any other soldier, or go——

"'Huzoor,'" interrupted Peroo, deferentially, "this slave is aware that many things necessary to the 'Huzoor's' outfit as a soldier remain to be produced. But with patience all may be attained. Here, by God's grace, is the rifle. One of us—Smith-sahib of G Company, 'Huzoor,' found freedom to-day. He was reconnoitering with Griffiths Major-sahib, when one of those hell-doomed Sheeahs—whom heaven destroy—shot him from behind a rock.

Private George Offord seemed to find his feet suddenly.

"Smith, of G Company!" he echoed, in a different voice.

"'Huzoor!' the sahib whom the 'Huzoor' thrashed for thrashing this slave."

"Poor chap!" went on George Offord, as if he had not heard; "so they've nicked him; but we'll pay 'em out—we'll——" His fingers closed mechanically on the rifle Peroo was holding out to him.

It was a fortnight after this, and the camp lay clustered closely in the mouth of a narrow defile down which rushed a torrent swollen from the snows above; a defile which meant decisive victory or defeat to the little force which had to push their way through it to the heights beyond. Yet, though death, maybe, lay close to each man, the whole camp was in an uproar because Major Griffiths' second pair of "putties" had gone astray. The other officers had been content with one set of these woollen bandages, which in hill climbing serve as gaiters and help so much to lessen fatigue; but the major, being methodical, had provided against emergencies. And now, when with that possibility of death before him, his soul craved an extreme order in all things, his clean pair had disappeared. Now the major, though silent, always managed to say what he meant. So it ran through the camp that they had been stolen, and men compared notes over the fact in the mess tent and in the canteen.

In the former, the adjutant, with a frown, admitted that of late there had been a series of inexplicable petty thefts in camp, which had begun with the disappearance of Private Smith's rifle. That might perhaps be explained in an enemy's country, but what the dence anybody could want with a pair of bone shirt studs!

"And a shirt," put in a mournful voice.

"Item, a cake of scented soap," said another.

"And a comb," began a third.

The colonel, who had, till the present preserved a discreet silence, here broke in, with great heat, to the adjutant—"Upon my soul, sir, it's a disgrace to the staff, and I must insist on a stringent inquiry the instant we've licked these hill men. I—I didn't mean to say anything about it; but I haven't been able to find my toothbrush for a week."

Whereupon there was a general exodus into the crisp cold air outside, where the darkness would hide inconvenient smiles; for the colonel was one of those men who have a different towel for their face and hands.

The stars were shining in the cleft between the tall shadowy cliffs which rose up on either side; rose in vague masses of shadow on which—seen like stars upon a darker sky—the watch fires of the enemy sparkled here and there. An enemy powerful, vigilant; and yet beside the camp fires close at hand the men had forgotten the danger of the morrow in the trivial loss of the moment, and were discussing the major's "putties."

"It's wot I say all along," reiterated the romancer of G Company, "It begun ever since Joey Smith was took from us at No. Two camp. It's 'is ghost—that's wot it is. 'Is ghost layin' in a 'trew-so.' Jest you look 'ere! They bury 'im, didn't they? as 'e was—decent like in pants and coat—no more—Well! since then 'e's took 'is rifle off us, an' a great coat off D Company, and a knapsack off A——"

"Don't be layin' out thim blankets he tuk from the store, man," interrupted the tall Irishman. "Sure it's a testhimony to the pore bhoy's character, annyhow, that he sh'u'd be wantin' thim where he is."

"It is not laughing at all at such things I would be, whatever," put in another voice, seriously, "for it is knowing of such things we are in the Highlands——"

"Hold your second sight, Mac," broke in a third, "we don't want none o' your shivers to-night. You're as bad as they blamed niggers, and they swear they seen Joey more nor once in a red coat dodgin' about our rear."

"Well! they won't see 'im no more, then," remarked a fourth, philosophically, "for 'e change 'is tailor. Leastways 'e got a service 'khakee' off Sergeant Jones the night afore last; an' the sergeant 'e took 'is Bible oath to 'ave it off Joey Smith's ghost w'en 'e got time to tackle 'im, if 'e 'ave ter go to 'ell for it."

Major Griffiths meantime was having a similar say as he stood, eyeglass in eye, at the door of the mess tent. "Whoever the thief is," he admitted, with the justice common to him, "he appears to have the instincts of a gentleman; but by gad, sir, if I find him, he shall know what it is to take a field officer's gaiters!"

Whereupon he gave a dissatisfied look at his own legs, a more contented one at the glimmering stars of the enemy's watch fires, and then turned in to get a few hours' rest before the dawn.

But some one a few miles farther down the valley looked both at his legs and at the stars with equal satisfaction. Some one tall, square, straight, smoking a pipe—some one else's pipe, no doubt—beside the hole in the ground where on the preceding night the camp flagstaff had stood. That fortnight had done more for George Offord than give his outward man a trousseau; it had clothed him with a certain righteousness, despite the inward conviction that Peroo must be a magnificent liar in protesting that the 'Huzoor's" outfit he neither been gifted to him or bought honestly.

In fact, as he stood looking down at his legs complacently, he murmured to himself, "I believe they're the major's, poor chap—look like him somehow." Then he glanced at the sergeant's coatee he wore and walked up and down thoughtfully—up and down beside the hole in the ground where the flagstaff had stood.

So to him from the dim shadows came a limping figure.

"Well?" he called, sharply.

"The orders are for dawn, 'Huzoor,' and here are some more cartridges."

George Offord laughed—an odd, low little laugh of sheer satisfaction.

It was past dawn by an hour or two, but the heights were still unwon.

"Send some one—any one," gasped the colonel, breathlessly, as he pressed on with a forlorn hope of veterans to take a knoll of rocks whence a galling fire had been decimating every attack. "Griffiths, for God's sake go yourself, or get some one ahead of those youngsters on the right, or they'll break—and then——"

Break! What more likely? A weak company, full of recruits, a company with its officers shot down, and before them a task for veterans—for that indifference to whizzing bullets which only custom brings. Major Griffiths, as he ran forward, saw all this, saw also the ominous waver. God! would he be in time to check it, to get ahead?—that was what was wanted, some one ahead! no more than that—some one ahead of the youngsters!

There was some one. The tall figure of a man ahead of the wavering boys.

"Come on! Come on, my lads; follow me!" rang out a confident voice; and the major, as he ran, half blinded by the mists of his own haste, felt it was as a voice from heaven.

"Come on! Come on! Give it 'em straight! Hip, hip, hurray!"

An answering cheer broke from the boys behind, and with a rush the weakest company in the regiment followed some one to victory.

"I don't understand what the dickens it means," said the colonel, almost fretfully, that same evening when, safe over the pass, the little force was bivouacking in a willow-set valley on the other side of the hills. Before it lay what it had come to gain, behind it danger past. "Some one in my regiment," he went on, "does a deuced plucky thing—between ourselves, saves the position; I want, naturally, to find out who it was, and am met by a cock-and-bull story about some one's ghost. What the devil does it mean, major?"

The major shook his head. "I couldn't swear to the figure, sir, though it reminded me a little . . . but that's impossible. However, as I have by your orders to ride back to the top, sir, and see what can be done to hold it, I'll dip over a bit to where the rush was made, and see if there is any clue.

He had not to go so far. For in one of those tiny hollows in the level plateau of pass, whence the snow melts early, leaving a carpet of blue forget-me-nots and Alpine primroses behind it, Sergeant Jones and the small party going to make security still more secure, came upon Peroo, the water-carrier, trying to perform a tearful travesty of the burial service over the body of George Offord.

It was dressed in Sergeant Jones' tunic and Major Griffiths' "putties"; but the sergeant knelt down beside it, and smoothed the stripes upon the cuff with a half mechanical, half caressing touch, and the major interrupted Peroo's protestations with an odd tremor in his voice.

"What the devil does it matter," he said, sharply, "what he took besides the pass! Stand aside, man—this is my work, not yours. Sergeant! form up your men for the salute—ball cartridge."

The major's recollection of the service for the burial of the dead was not accurate, but it was comprehensive. So he committed the mortal remains of his brother soldier to the dust, confessing confusedly that there is a natural body and a spiritual body—a man that is of the earth earthy, and one that is the Lord from heaven. So, following on a petition to be saved from temptation and delivered from evil, the salute startled the echoes, and they left George Offord in the keeping of the pass, and the pass in his keeping.

Perhaps the major, as he rode campwards, wondered vaguely if some one before the Great White Throne wore a bad-character suit, or whether Wisdom understood the plea, "I've had a very checkered life—I have indeed."

But Peroo had no such thoughts, needed no such excuse. It was sufficient for him that the "Huzoor" had once been the protector of the poor.

Music and Musicians.

Old Songs That Live.

(By Lue Vernon.)

During these days of popular songs one almost forgets our dear old ballads which were so popular long years ago, but which even yet, when one recalls them to mind, bring back many memories of the past. Perhaps these memories may be ones of sorrow to many, while to others they may be the scenes of joyous days that have faded and passed away never to return again.

There is not one of the old-fashioned ballads that has not played a part in the past lives of the "lad and lassie," who took those soft moonlight strolls underneath a star-studded sky with nothing but their wedding day in view, twenty-five or thirty years ago. But we seldom hear them now. This great, busy and progressive world is up-to-date in all things nowadays, and the line of song making is no exception.

In place of "In the Evening by the Moonlight" or "Old Uncle Ned," we now have the great and successful hit of the popular songs of the day, if we believe the title page of the publishers of such musical trash.

People nowadays in the mad rush for the golden treasure do not care to hear some one sing "Old Hundred" or "Rock of Ages Cleft for Me." They want the "latest" song as badly as they want the latest Sunday issue of new journalism.

Someone has said that "memory is a tyrant which often forces itself upon us unbidden."

In nothing is this more true than in music. How often do the beautiful songs, some of them love ballads, we learned in years long past, come back to us. In memory we love to listen to them once more, if not in reality.

There are some readers of this magazine who no doubt have a personal recollection of "Adolphus Morning Glory" and "The Big Sunflower," two very popular negro songs and dances. It was the latter song that made Billy Emerson, the minstrel, famous throughout the world. I chuckle now as I write this, when I think of him.

Then there was "Joseph Orange Blossom," "Not for Joe," "I Hope I Live Forever," and "I Ain't Going to Tell." The chorus of the last-named song was this:

"She was sweeter dan the sweetest,
She was neater dan de neatest,
You may talk about your fashion,
But she really was de belle;
But where she lives or what's her name
I ain't a-going to tell."

This old song had a large sale, and every old-time minstrel had it in his budget of songs. But it did not live long, and passed away almost as rapidly as it came; still it blazed the way for other popular songs, which at this late day seem of somewhat principal character.

All of the afore-named negro songs, I hold, are responsible for the so-called "coon song" of to-day. And I must confess that I am disgustingly tired of them. You hear them on every corner, at every theatre, the organ-grinder and even the Chinaman tries to pick it on his unbearable and ear-splitting "fiddle."

Then we had the "Grecian Bend," a design thought at the time to be very graceful, having had its origin, it is said, in Brooklyn, and having been the subject of a very popular song in its day—a song explanatory as well as melodious. Here is the first verse. I would give it all—three verses—but it would take up too much space:

"The ladies wanting something new,
As women are so prone to do,
Wear lofty heels upon their shoes
To give them the Grecian bend;
With foot so short and heel so high
They can't stand plumb if they would try,
And so they think to catch the eye
By means of a Grecian bend."

It was about this period that the first gymnasts were seen in professional acts outside of the circus. They made their appearance in regular theatres following the introduction of specialties in the "Black Crook."

A song popular in that day was "The Flying Trapeze," the subject of which was such a performer. I give the first verse:

"Once I was happy, but now I'm forlorn,
Like an old coat that is tattered and torn,
Left in this wide world to fret and to mourn,
Betrayed by a girl in her teens.
The girl that I loved she was handsome;
I tried all I knew how to please,
But it was not one quarter as well as
That man on the flying trapese."

The chorus of this piece was very descriptive.

Then came "Shoo Fly" and "Dem Golden Slippers." They each made a hit, and no comedian of those days was without these two pieces in his song album.

And the old sweetheart songs. I cannot forget them. They were so pretty, with their liquid and bewitching harmonies and their sweet verses of endearment. "Mollie Darling," "Nellie Gray," "Bessie Lee," "Ella Ree" and "Kittie Wells." How I wish that the minstrel companies would revive them again. In England they are reviving the old sweetheart songs that were popular in the last century, and they are meeting with great favour.

The sweetheart song has been sung since the beginning of the world, and will be heard until the end of time. It is frequently the same thing over again; for although the words may be different the sentiment is generally the same. For instance, who can listen to the old, yet pretty, ballad of "Silver Threads Among the Gold" without thanking in one's heart the author for giving us such a beautiful sweetheart song. Of course, I repeat, the old songs are the best, and this is one of the songs of the long ago that causes me to say so. The sweetheart song is the most popular form of song in existence, and although we have heard its sentiment expressed in a thousand ways, we never tire of "Love's Old Sweet Song." It seems to be the only kind of song which appeals to all, for we hear it sung by persons of every age and class.

And when one has a song which one terms a favourite it is nearly always a little ballad about a sweetheart. "Daisy Dean" was a great favourite years ago, because it told in verse and song what many a faint-hearted lover would have whispered in the ear of his own sweetheart, if he had only possessed the courage, and had dared.

Youth is generally brightened by the companionship of a little girl or young woman who makes roses appear to bloom among the dreary stubbles of every-day life. It is the indulgence in, the yearning for, or the recollection of, the old songs and faces which gives the old-time love ballads their greatest charm.

More than two-thirds of the successful up-to-date compositions find their inspiration and subject in the prepossessing young woman. Nowadays a satirical or topical song may make a so-called hit, but its sale is never great, and it does not last long. The public soon tires of such claptrap. The old songs of the long past years will live on and on forever. But the sweetheart song—well, we find great pleasure in buying it, and we are not ashamed to leave it open on the piano.

Do you ever tire listening to that old negro song, "Old Black Joe?" Of course not. You like to hear it: you know you do. It will always be sung as long as there are people on earth.

No one will claim that "I'se Gwine Back to Dixie" or "My Dear Savannah Home," either in poetry or music, suggests a master mind, yet it is quite as absurd to call it silly drivel, or to class it as a weariness and affliction. Such songs are a fair type of our American folk-song. They are found in some very good collections of American poetry, but even if this were not the case, it would not follow that they do not possess a certain charm which is not to be denied.

It may be safely contended that in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred sentiment and association go through life with people, however their musical tastes may have been broadened and cultivated. Because a man has spent a decade in studying out the meaning harmonies of Wagner, it does not follow that he is not moved by the simple pathos of "Annie Laurie." Because a woman in a foreign conservatory has learned all there is to know in the sphere of vocalisation it is not true that she will turn with weariness from a favourite humble ballad of her childhood. And in a how much less degree may the technical failings of these simple memories show themselves to the great preponderance of people to whom music is a mere recreation and a sentimental pleasure.

The revival of the folk-songs in foreign countries, and the commentaries thereon by distinguished critics, show an awakening everywhere in the melodies of the people. The old songs of the American homes did not have the flavour of foreign antiquity, but they are worthy of honourable place in musical annals. The ballads which the middle-aged man of to-day heard in the home of his childhood may be the sweeter for tender associations; but is it not true that what was simple and pleasing then has in itself the same attributes now?

There was the "Annie" group, so to speak—"Annie Laurie," "Annie of the Vale," "Gentle Annie." They are not often heard in the cities nowadays, for perhaps the same reason that city folk rarely essay at this time the prison duet from "Il Trovatore." Take the old song, "My Old Kentucky Home." It recalls the scenes of boyhood days as nothing else can—the far-away farm house, with its commodious hallways, the dark cellar beneath, and its mirth-giving vintage; the spacious pantry, overloaded with good things; the dark garret and its barrel of old Bourbon; the big front yard with its primitive forestry; the deep, cool well with its time-worn bucket; the weather-beaten barn, sheltering the blue ribbon horses, its big lot adjoining full of cackling fat fowls and the close-by orchard, laden with ripe, juicy apples. Have you ever listened to this grand old song, as rendered by Sousa's band? If so you will understand why I claim that the old songs are the best. I give the chorus:

"Weep no more, my lady; oh, weep no more to-day;
We'll sing one song of the old Kentucky home;
For our old Kentucky home far away."

The old tunes and songs have been held for years in derision. An invitation to spend the evening singing or playing old tunes has been spurned by many of our up-to-date vocalists. They are dreadful. Who cares for them? Very good for a sleepy crowd of old people, but to think any musical person would condescend to sing one for the pleasure of the thing augurs an ignorance as deplorable as profound, so the young miss said—of the singing society—as she turned with a sniff of her pretty heavenly-tending nose, to her "Motets" and "Anthems."

"Vanitas vanitatum," said a lover of the old songs, "they know not what they say."

We will admit that there is much that is novel and striking in the up-to-date songs, but the beauty of the old songs is still there, and just a little spark would set them into popular flame.

The dignity of the so-called higher class of music is not compromised by the popularity of the old songs of the people. No musician with a real love for his art and a proper conception of the true musical feeling will fail to recognise what is good and worthy of approbation in the melodies of rural and provincial life. And every musician knows that many of the most famous compositions are borrowed largely from themes that were the simple melodies of the people.

We all know that cherished memories of home and friends are ours with such enduring vividness that the record can never be effaced. But in all reminiscences of days gone by there is nothing that so haunts our lives as the old songs that we were accustomed to in the days of our childhood. The sweet tones of a mother's voice, as she hummed "Massa's in de Cold, Cold Ground," will live and speak in the heart long after the voice has been hushed to silence. We may cross oceans, and wander in foreign climes; the erect frame may be bowed with the weight of years, and raven ringlets may be changed to locks of snowy whiteness; but the old songs heard in the distance in the still morning, or sung by ourselves in some calm hour of reflection, on a winter's evening, will bring around us the friends and the scenes of other days and far-off lands, and while the dim eye of age sparkles with unwonted brilliancy, the heart will beat with the buoyancy of early youth.

Take the "Suwanee River," a song that has been sung in every part of the inhabited globe, a simple ballad that the greatest vocal artists in the world have been proud to sing; can you mention a song that will ever take its place in the hearts of our people? I do not think you can; and had some old master written it, it would have been held no dearer by the people than it is to-day.

But as time rolls by no doubt we shall do better and learn to give the old songs of the long ago the high position they surely deserve. American national life is far better for its songs—its old songs. It is better for the association which the old-time songs awaken. The negroisms of the "Suwanee River" and "My Old Kentucky Home," with their beautiful, bewitching and soul-entrancing melodies, will lie in the hearts of the people until the end of time.

The world moves on; the masters educate us; the geniuses dazzle us, but regularly the old songs come back and the world seems really brighter and the past a little dearer that we knew them long ago and have not ceased to love them.

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Creed of the Well-taught Pupil.

1. I believe that the composer knew what he wanted in the way of tones; therefore I will play exactly what he wrote, so nearly as I can.

2. I believe that the bar is intended to show the place of the strong pulse; therefore I try to place the accent upon the tone written next after the bar.

3. I believe good rhythm is at the very foundation of music; therefore I will endeavour to keep an even time, without hurrying or slackening. And if any differences in movement are to be made between the easy and difficult parts of a composition, I believe that as a rule the more difficult parts should go more rapidly than the others, inasmuch as they indicate greater intensity, and perhaps bravoura.

4. I believe that music is essentially a message from the composer or a picture painted in tones; in short that it represents the ideal in tonal forms; and therefore I will try to play it as if I knew what the message was, or as if I had the picture in mind. In other words, will play it with expression.

5. The foundation of playing with expression is to make a piece sing, and when I play I will try to sing with fingers, and help out their singing with discreet use of the pedal.

6. I believe that the pedal may be used at any place in a composition where the effect is improved by so using it. These places will be where there is a tone of melody to be held after the fingers are taken off it (in order to do something else), or where it is desired to improve the resonance of the pianoforte.

7. When I haven't any reason for using the pedal I will leave it alone, for few things are more objectional than the absent-minded lingering upon the pedal which we often hear from badly taught students?

8. Inasmuch as music is a message, or a picture, from the imaginary world of the ideal, it follows that there must be great differences in the quality of pieces of music, according to the nobility and purity of mind in composers, and according to the especially noble mood of a great composer at the moment of writing some choicest work. And it shall be my en-

deavour to know as many as possible of these pieces of music best worth knowing; and when I know them, to play them with all possible appreciation and in such a way as to induce my hearers to love them and enjoy them.

9. And since musical playing is the object of my study, I will esteem all kinds of technical exercises and studies according to their value in making me more and more master of the resources of the instrument, to the end that I may fitly interpret music worth knowing.

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Humoresque.

When the notorious Judge Jeffreys held the office of Recorder, he once took part in an action brought by a party of musicians who sought to recover payment for certain services which they had rendered at a wedding. One of the plaintiffs was very much annoyed by the Recorder frequently addressing him with, "I say, fiddler! Here, you fiddler!" Shortly afterwards, when called upon to give evidence, he described himself as a "musicianer," upon which Jeffreys asked him what difference there was between a "musicianer" and a "fiddler." This afforded the witness an opportunity of squaring accounts; so he informed the counsel that there was as much difference between the two as between a pair of bagpipes and a recorder. For the benefit of the uninitiated, it may be well to mention that a recorder is a kind of flute, now obsolete.

Mrs. Quarterest: "What is your attitude towards Wagner's art, professor?"

Professor Balder: "Hands over my ears."

Hostess: "Oh, pray, don't leave off, Herr Rosecranz—that was a lovely song you just began."

Eminent Baritone: "Yes mateame; but it tit not harmonise viz de chenerad gonferzation; it is in B-vlat, and you and all your vrents are talking in G! I haf a zong in F, and a zong in A flat, but I haf no zong in G.

Guest: "Who kept up that terrific pounding on the piano last night?"

Host: "It was next door."

Guest: "A great annoyance, isn't it?"

Host: "I should say that it is. I'd like to play on that piano for about an hour—with a hose."

At a musical festival, two ladies temporarily vacated their places during an interval, and on their return found a gentleman occupying one of them. They explained that the seats were theirs, but the gentleman claimed them as his.

"But here are our numbered tickets," expostulated the lady.

"And here is mine," replied the man in possession," producing his.

"But we were here at the 'Creation.'" urged the elder lady.

And the gentleman felt he could not continue against such a priority of occupation, so he went away.

"As an instance of how little some people know about music, although they claim to be authorities upon the subject, the following amusing little episode is worth relating:—

A certain celebrated violinist lately gave a high-class concert in Adelaide, and among the items on the programme appeared Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata," which, however, was not played, another totally different selection being substituted. At the close a gentleman remarked to a lady:

"The music was very fine, was it not?"

"Yes," was the reply, "but I did not care for the execution of the 'Moonlight Sonata.' It was pretty fair; but I have heard it played better."

It was not played at all, but she never noticed that. Afterwards one of the leading performers was asked why he did not play that particular piece, and he said:

"I have only just found out that I have been playing the programme advertised for to-morrow night instead of the one for this evening," and the audience never noticed it apparently. This is a fact.

The following lovely story is going the rounds concerning a good old homespun lady who had attended for some time a church in which the service was intoned. Meeting the vicar in the street one day, she said to him: "Mr Pasture, I hev a little favour to ask of ye; I've bin a-sayin' my prayers in F now for nigh on five years, and I would reely like to say them in E for awhile, I'm gittin' so husky in F now that I can't jine in as I used to do."

The celebrated violinist, Paganini, had once to give a concert at the Carlo Felice in Genoa, and being late, he drove in a cab. On alighting he offered the usual fare to the cabman, who refused it, saying that a great man, who was able to play as well on one string as in four, ought to give him at least double the fare.

"Very well," answered Paganini, "I will pay you double when you are able to drive me to the theatre on one wheel."

A Philadelphian wag is reported to have played the following successful trick upon two of his fellow townsmen:—He played his fiddle into a phonograph just about the time Sarasate was in town. Then he jabbered some lingo of his own into the same machine, and fooled two well known Philadelphia violinists by telling them he had Sarasate into the phonograph. The bad Spanish first commanded their attention, but when Boothe began turning the crank of the instrument so rapidly as to make the scales and arpeggios he had previously played into it fairly fly, the two violinists were lost in admiration.

"Sarasate to a T," said one.

"Listen to that run! I would know it in a thousand. True Sarasate technic!"

LESSON IN ARITHMETIC.

Teacher: "If you take three fingers from ten, how many remain?"

Hanchen is dumb.

"How many fingers have you altogether?"

"Ten."

"And suppose three to be missing—what have you then?"

Hanchen (beaming): "No music lessons!"

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Music and Words.

This day I heard such music that I thought,
Hath human speech the power thus to be wrought
Into such melody, pure, sensuous sound—
Into such mellow, murmuring muses caught,
Can words (I said), when these keen tones are bound
(Silent, except in memory of this hour),—
Can human words alone usurp the power
Of trembling strings that thrill to the very soul,
And of this ecstasy bring back the whole?

II.

Ah, no, 'twas answered in my inmost heart,
Unto itself sufficient is each art,
And each doth utter what none other can,—
Some hidden mood of the large soul of man.
Ah, think not thou with words well interweaved
To wake the tones wherein the viol grieved
With its most heavy burden; think not thou,
Adventurous, to push the shallop's prow
Into that surge of well remembered tones,—
Striving to match each wandering wind that moans,
Each bell that tolls, and every bugle's blowing
With some most fitting word, some verse bestowing
A never-shifting form on that which passed
Swift as a bird that glimmers down the blast.

III.

So, still unworded, save in memory mute,
Rest thou sweet hour of viol and of lute!
Of thoughts that never, never can be spoken,
Too frail for the rough usage of men's words,—
Thoughts that still keep their silence all unbroken
Till music once more stirs them—then like birds
That in the night time slumber, they shall wake,
While all the leaves of all the forest shake!
Oh, hark! I hear it now, that tender strain,
Fulfilled with all of sorrow save its pain.

R. W. GILDER.

THE DRAMA.

Miss Nance O'Neil, the American tragedienne, and her strong company, start their Auckland season on Boxing Night. The initial production will be Sudermann's masterpiece, "Magda," in which Miss O'Neil takes the title role. Mr. McKee Rankin, Mr. Thomas Kingston, and Mr. Harry Plimmer are among the leading artists taking part in the play, which will run three nights. On Saturday and Monday "Peg Woffington" will be staged, and on New Year's night and the two following evenings the piece will be "Queen Elizabeth." The fame of the actress and the excellence of the company supporting her, together with the character of the pieces played, makes the season one of the most important in the dramatic annals of Auckland.

On Christmas night the "Messiah" will be given in the Auckland Choral Hall. There will be a chorus of 100 voices, and Dr. W. E. Thomas will preside at the organ. The principals on the occasion will be Madame Chambers (soprano), Miss Reeve (contralto), Mr. W. Cousins (tenor), and Rev. Arthur Mitchell (bass).

Mr. Donald Macdonald, the war correspondent, who, by the way, has won fresh fame by his book on Ladysmith, which is said to be the best yet written on the siege, had to take a rest recently, being quite done up. He is booked to appear in Adelaide at Christmas.

Worth's Circus has been doing good business in the South. It plays in Dunedin during Christmas week.

The Wellington Amateurs lost £216 on the production of "The Grand Duke." For their next production they will ask the public to choose any one of the following six: "Iolanthe," "Ruddigore," "The Yeomen of the Guard," "Pinafore," "Rip Van Winkle," and "The Grand Duchess."

Mr. "Banjo" Patterson concluded his Auckland season, and his New Zealand tour on Friday last. He has gained fresh laurels, and many of them, during his stay here.

"Australis, or the City of Zero," has been settled upon as the title of the pantomime extravaganza which Mr J. C. Williamson will produce at Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney, on Boxing Night. Mr Williamson has promised something absolutely novel in the way of scenic and mechanical sensations, and "Australis" will afford full opportunity for the art and skill of the painter and mechanist. The extravaganza opens in the Jenolan caves, then follow the centennial celebrations of inauguration of the Commonwealth, while in the second act the players are on the ice-fields on the way to the South Pole. New Zealanders will be interested to learn that some forty members of Pollard's Opera Company have been engaged by Mr Williamson to take part in the production. Miss Maud Beatty will be the principal boy, and Miss May Beatty the principal girl, and Messrs W. S. Percy, R. Queely and E. Fitts will be included in the cast. Mr Williamson has engaged, in addition, a number of specialty performers, and some of the members of his own company will play prominent parts. The whole production will be under the supervision of Mr Gerald Coventry, who recently arrived from America for the purpose.

ROYAL ACTORS.

One of the best, if not the best, royal actors of the present day is the Grand Duke of Constantin-Constantinovitch of Russia, whose recent appearance in the Hermitage Theatre at St. Petersburg in the role of Hamlet has caused the greatest admiration and has given him a place among the most talented actors of the present day. His imperial highness is not only an actor, but is also a poet and an author of considerable reputation. It was he who made the beautiful translation of "Hamlet" into the Russian tongue, and is now engaged in translating another of the works of England's greatest poet.

In the British royal family there is more than one member who is clever in the histrionic art, and most people have heard of the talented acting of the Princess Henry of Battenberg, who is also famous for her skill in arranging theatricals and in selecting who shall play the various roles. Her royal highness would have made an excellent actress or manager of a theatre had her lines laid in other places, and as it is her talents have often given the Queen herself and the other members of the royal family great pleasure.

Another talented royal actress is the Princess Friedrich-Augusta of Saxony (nee Archduchess of Austria-Tuscany), who delights in arranging little plays, to the great delight of the King and Queen of Saxony, and who is best in comic roles. Once, however, her imperial highness undertook the part of a servant maid, and in blacking the boots was a little too realistic in her acting for the taste of King Albert, who later begged his lively niece to remember that she was the future Queen of Saxony and that she would like to see her choose roles more fitted to her station in life.

In Wurttemberg, before the marriage of the Princess Pauline of Wurttemberg and the twin Duchess of Wurttemberg, little plays were often gotten up by them and were most thoroughly enjoyed by the whole court. The Princess Pauline (now the hereditary Princess Zu Wied), however, who has a passion for horses, was even fonder of taking part in equestrian fetes than of acting, and almost every year one was arranged in the royal riding school at Stuttgart, when her royal highness would appear in costume and delight every one by her clever performances. Her cousins, the Dukes Robert and Ulrich of Wurttemberg, also took part in these entertainments.

The present Empress of Russia, as Princess Alik of Hesse, was particularly fond of acting, and shared the tastes of her brother, the Grand Duke of Hesse, in regard to acting, music and dancing. She was particularly clever in arranging entertainments in which she took part, ad there is a beautiful picture of her with powdered hair, leading a minuet at the residence schloss at Darmstadt.

Here is a yarn of the happy days when Sullivan and Gilbert were good friends: Speaking of his experiences with Gilbert in America, Sir Arthur tells us: "Gilbert and I arrived at Buffalo early one winter morning. We went to a hotel, the Tifft House, and walked upstairs to our rooms. We wanted the fires lit, upon which the maid told us, with great dignity and condescension, that 'the gentleman'—alluding to the coloured servant—would do that for us. He did, but before he had finished the maid came up again, and ejaculated, 'Either of you men got any washing? the gentleman has called for it,' to which we replied, with delicate irony, 'When this gentleman has finished lighting the fires he will probably be kind enough to take the washing down to the gentleman who is waiting to take it away,' and then we subsided."

There are any amount more, but we must close with this one, which Sir Arthur was very fond of telling: "When I was at Los Angeles a curious thing had just occurred. It seems there was a little bit of land between California and Mexico which, by some accident, had been left out of the United States survey. The result was that no one quite knew who had jurisdiction, but there was one man who was Judge, Sheriff and Executioner, besides being anything else that was considered requisite for the proper carrying out of the law. One day a Mexican killed another man. There was no doubt about it. He was brought up before our friend of the multiple offices, who tried him, and sentenced him to death. Meanwhile there was no likelihood of the man running away, so he was left perfectly free, and told that his execution would take place within three days of sentence. When the day arrived the Judge, being his own Sheriff, went to look for him, and, having found him, said, 'Come along, Juan Baptisto! Time's up!' But Juan was engaged in a very exciting game of euchre, and asked the Judge for permission to finish the game. The Judge, being a bit of a sportsman, acceded, and I am not sure that he did not take a hand in it himself. As soon as the game was over Juan declared himself ready, and within a few minutes afterwards the Judge and Sheriff satisfactorily performed his duty as hangman." It should be added that "The Mikado" had been produced some time before this occurrence.

Secondary Schools' Distribution of Prizes.

PRINCE ALBERT COLLEGE.

The annual distribution of prizes in connection with Prince Albert College took place in St James' Hall last Wednesday evening. The Rev. Dewsbury presided, and amongst those on the platform were: Mrs Goldie, wife of the Mayor; the Revs. W. Gray Dixon, W. J. Williams, R. Harding (from England), S. Griffin (Onehunga), and Mr G. Fowlds, M.H.R. An apology was received from Mr D. Goldie, the Mayor, whom an important City Council meeting prevented from being present.

The chairman, in his opening remarks, said the purpose of the College was to combine with a sound commercial and classical education soundness in the principles of morality, religion, and godliness. They were to-day laying the foundations of the country, which in the course of another hundred years would become a powerful and populous State. But its prosperity depended entirely upon whether they were laying the foundation-stones rightly. He fully agreed with the principle laid down by Gladstone, that it was as much the duty of the State to be religious as it was of the individual. What was their great want in their public and private life, in their commerce, their halls of justice, their legislature? Conscience—individual and public conscience. And unless there was instruction in the principles of religion, conscience could have nothing upon which it could operate. So long as Prince Albert College was fulfilling the purpose of its existence they could wish it all prosperity. (Applause.)

The Rev. Gray Dixon also addressed the children, dwelling on the true meaning of education, and the importance of religious instruction in schools.

The headmaster (Mr T. Jackson) read the sixth annual report of the College, which stated inter alia:—"Our numbers have been steadily maintained throughout the year, which, although several boys have left somewhat suddenly to enter suddenly presented commercial openings, we close with a roll-call of nearly 200. I am able to say, taking a general view of the whole year's work, that on both sides of the College it has been satisfactory. The order, conduct, and tone of the pupils have been, in general, equal to those of any former year. We have been free from epidemics or case of serious illness. . . . This year we sent in one girl, Miss Rhoda Collins, and one boy, A. Lawry, for the junior University scholarship examination; one boy, D. Rosewarne, for the medical preliminary examination; besides seven girls and five boys for matriculation. Three girls, Ruth Utting, Jessie Thorne, and Susan Forrest, passed the junior Civil Service examination last January, taking fair positions among the Auckland candidates. We are sending in next January 2 girls for the senior and 6 boys for the junior Civil Service examinations. . . . It is pleasing to chronicle the first academic successes of old boys in foreign fields. A. C. McMaster and D. W. Sibbald have both passed part 1 of the first professional examination for the M.B. degree at the University of Edinburgh, and both give promise of a successful career. I hope it will not be imagined, however, that we work for public examinations alone. A considerable number of Prince Albert College boys and girls have entered offices, trades, and the teaching profession, and the main part of the teaching of the College is given to those who do not compete in examinations." After detailing past and prospective changes in the teaching staff, the report continued:—"The large schoolroom of each college has been adorned during the last term by the erection of Honours Boards, containing respectively, the names of the first boy and the first girl of the school for each year since its beginning in 1895. This is an addition we have long been wishful to possess, and I wish I could thank the generous donor by name, but he prefers to remain anonymous. The names on the boards at present are:—Boys: A. Gray, F. Thorne (twice), J. C. Simmonds, and A. Lawry. Girls: M. Bayly, J. Hetherington (twice), and L. Button. The names which are to be added for 1900 are in the prize list. The playground of the Boys' College has been for some time sadly in want of repair, and its surface is now undergoing, at considerable expense, a thorough reconstruction. It will probably be ready for use when school reassembles on February 12. Likewise, a large part of the lower grounds of the Girls' College is to be improved, both in appearance and in providing fresh available space for the girls' recreation. I must express my thanks to the Board of Governors for these and similar signs of interest in the welfare of the College; also to my colleagues, and particularly Miss Rainforth and Mr Stephenson, for their loyal co-operation. In conclusion, I must again, with Cato-like persistence, press our three great needs on the attention of those who have the means of honouring themselves by becoming benefactors of the College. We need, and badly need, first, foundation scholarships; second, foundation prizes: and thirdly, a field for cricket and football."

The prizes were then presented to the successful scholars by Mrs Goldie, after which Mr G. Fowlds addressed the scholars, expressing his high appreciation of the work of the College. The headmaster, on behalf of the boys, presented a cricket bat to Mr A. E. Crump, who is leaving the College, and a photograph of the girl candidature for matriculation was presented to Miss Rainsforth by Miss Rhoda Collins, dux of the girls' side, on behalf of the candidates. Selections were played by the school orchestra, under Mr Paque. At the close of the proceedings votes of thanks were accorded to Mrs Goldie, the speakers of the evening, the orchestra and Mr Paque, and "Dulce Domum" and the National Anthem were sung by the pupils before dispersing.

The following is the prize list:—

BOYS.

Lower School.—Writing: W. Elliott. Improvement: C. Virtue, 1; J. B. McFarlane, 2. Dux: S. Brakenrig.

Form II.—English: F. Wolfgramm (1st, A. Lush). Improvement: A. Knight, 1; M. Caughey, 2. Dux: A. Lush.

Form III.—English: A. Butler. Improvement: R. Brown, 1; N. Purdy, 2; J. Dadley and C. Brown, honourable mention. Dux (presented by Mr T. W. Jones): E. Woolby.

Form IV.—English: R. Bellow (1st, M. Hampson). Languages: W. Brooksmith, Mathematics and science: H. Lawry. Dux: M. Hampson.

Form V.—Languages: L. R. Brakenrig. Improvement: E. Chitty.

Special Prizes.—Scripture: A. Butler, 1; M. Hampson and A. Lush, honourable mention. Reading: R. Bellow, 1; L. Browne, 2. Writing: W. Dumper, 1; G. Whiteside, 2; S. Brakenrig and C. Burton, honourable mention. Arithmetic: A. Lawry, 1; E. Woolby, 2; F. Wolfgramm, 3. Drawing: W. Baildon, 1; L. Rowe, 2; R. Morrison, honourable mention. Shorthand (presented by Mr Colwill): W. Baildon, 1; T. Hodgson, 2. Gymnastics: W. O'Meara, 1; A. Knight, 2. Mathematical problems (presented by Mr Stephenson): A. Lawry, 1; B. Buddle, 2. Examination prizes: M. Hampson, 1; A. Lush, 2. Dux of school (presented by Mr C. E. Button): A. Lawry. Sports championship: D. Rosewarne, 1; W. McKinney, 2; R. H. Gilbert, 3.

GIRLS.

Lower School.—Writing: Vera Shaldera (1st Eleanor Withy). Arithmetic: Dot Wood (1st Eleanor Withy). Dux, Standard III.: Hazel Lindsay. Dux, Standard IV.: Eleanor Withy.

Form II.—English: Muriel Smith. Improvement: Nora Buttle. Dux: Madge Buttle.

Form III.—English: Edith Collins (1st, Winifred Melleop). Languages: Ruth Phillipps. Mathematics: Jessie Brooks. Improvement: Eveline Hale. Dux: Winifred Melleop.

Form IV.—English: Elsie Collins (1st Flossie Jones). Languages: Marion Laseron. Mathematics: Ruth Utting. Improvement: Agnes Monro. Dux: Flossie Jones.

Lower V.—Civil Service work: Margaret Gilmour.

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE.

A large number of ladies and gentlemen interested in the institution visited St. John's College, Tamaki, on Wednesday afternoon, when the annual distribution of prizes took place. The Rev. G. MacMurray presided and apologised for the absence of the Primate.

The chairman referred to the good work of the school, and expressed his belief that both the moral and physical sides of the boys' characters were being attended to. The speaker made feeling reference to the late Corporal Devereux, an old pupil of the school, and hoped that his example would animate the boys with the spirit of patriotism. Though he was no advocate for militarism, yet he saw the great importance of military training, and it was to our schools we must look for the training of the officers for our future regiments. He congratulated Mr Smallfield on the position attained by the school.

The headmaster (the Rev. P. S. Smallfield) then read the annual report, of which the following are extracts:—

This is the tenth occasion, since I became headmaster of this school in 1891, on which I have had the pleasure of seeing the parents and friends of the boys assemble together in this hall to witness the distribution of the prizes. This time last year there were 64 boys on the school roll. This term there are 86, of whom 39 have been boarders. It is encouraging to notice that there has been an increase in the number, evn if that increase be only a small one. Our old boys certainly do not forget their old school, and have given us most generous help this year in the carrying out of our athletic sports, and in many other ways. For the first time during the ten years I have been in charge of this school I have to chronicle the death of an old pupil. We were all exceedingly sorry when the news came to Auckland of the death of that gallant young soldier, the late Corporal Devereux, who was lately killed in action in South Africa. He joined this school in February, 1892, at the age of 12 years, having before that time attended the Mount Hobson district school; and he left school at the end of 1894, at the age of 15. While a schoolboy he was foremost in all games and sports, and a great favourite with his companions. The deepest sympathy is felt for his bereaved parents by masters and boys alike. He fell facing the enemy and serving his country, and though we deplore his untimely end, we feel glad that New Zealand's sons are found willing to stand forth at the call of duty, endure the toils of a soldier's life, and take the risks of battle for home and Empire. A movement is on foot among the old boys of this school to place a brass tablet in some suitable place at St. John's College in memory of the late Corporal Devereux. Mr Craddock, who left New Zealand about the middle of the year to pay a visit to England, had been captain of our cadet corps for four years. He had brought the cadet corps to a state of efficiency, and the patient and thorough work he did in the school will not be forgotten by his old pupils. His place in the school has been most efficiently filled by Mr Robt. McIlroy, M.A., and the command of the cadet corps has been taken over by Mr R. M. V. Abbott. Our boys were successful in another firing match held last Saturday morning. Dr. Campbell has presented a handsome vase to be fired for annually by teams from the various cadet corps in Auckland. The match resulted in St. John's College team winning the vase with a score of 406 out of a possible 800 points. I wish to express my great indebtedness to the assistant masters for their work during the year, for their interest in the boys' sports, and in their welfare generally; for the good example they have consistently set, and for their kind and willing co-operation with myself. Mr Lancaster has undertaken the preparation of the candidates for the public examinations, and any credit that they may gain will be due to him. I wish also to thank the visiting masters, Mr R. Leslie Hunt, Professor Carollo, and Herr Dittmer, for their most efficient assistance, and for their interest in the boys. At the end of last year three pupils of this school, viz., S. Green, E. F. Luks, and W. Wallace, passed the Civil Service junior examination; and three pupils, viz., E. F. Luks, J. W. May, and W. L. H. Morrison, passed the examination for matriculation. Thus about 9.5 per cent. of the number of boys on the school roll passed public examinations at the end of last year. This month we have sent up six pupils for the matriculation examination and one for the medical preliminary examination. In January next we shall send up seven pupils for the Civil Service junior examination. Assisted by the masters I have just concluded an examination of the whole of the school. The results have satisfied me that the boys have made good progress during the year. The results of the public examinations for matriculation and the Civil Service junior examinations, which will be published early next year, will show those interested in the school whether good work has been done, as I am confident it has, in the fifth form.

The chairman then presented the school prizes, and Mrs G. P. Pierce presented the athletic prizes, after which afternoon tea was dispensed, and the visitors after inspecting the buildings and grounds left for town.

KING'S COLLEGE.

King's College, Remuera, was en fete on Wednesday when the annual distribution of prizes took place. The guests assembled in the College gymnasium, where the reports were read and the prizes distributed. The Rev. W. Beatty presided. The report of the principal (Mr Graham Bruce) stated this was the fifth year of the College's existence, and there were now 123 boys in the school, of whom 38 were boarders. Captain Major's departure for South Africa was a great loss to the school, but the place had been capably filled by Mr Wither, and much gratitude was due to that gentleman for his hearty and loyal assistance in a time of difficulty and heavy pressure. Of the other members of the staff, Messrs Strong and Worley, both old Nelson College boys, had joined at the beginning of this year. Mr Stuckey, who had proved himself an energetic and capable teacher, was about to leave, as as to devote his whole time to University work. With the assistance of Mr Wither the principal had examined the lower school, and considered the results of the examination most satisfactory. A marked improvement had been shown on last year's work, especially in arithmetic, mental arithmetic, and writing. Many of the boys showed promise of excellent ability, particularly in the second form. Speaking of the successes at last year's public examinations, the report said:—In the senior district scholarship examinations of the Auckland Board of Education, one of the boys came within a few marks of winning a scholarship, and he was offered, and accepted, free tuition at this school for three years. Two boys were sent in for the junior University scholarship examination for a first trial. One of these passed with credit, and the other matriculated on the results of the examination. Both of these boys have just sat for the same examination this year. In the matriculation examination four of the boys were successful; five boys passed the junior Civil Service, and two boys passed the senior Civil Service, one of whom gained distinction and obtained the second place in New Zealand. The report then continued:—The teaching of the Holy Scripture has been in the hands of the Rev. F. Smith, who reports very favourably on the work the boys have done during the year. Six of the elder boys were confirmed by the Primate. In shorthand most creditable work has been done. Some of the boys in Mr Colwill's senior class are able to write at the rate of 80 or 100 words a minute. As regards French and German, the former is taught as a general form subject throughout the school, while in the latter there is at present only a small class. Looking at it from a commercial point of view, it would be better to see this state of things reversed, and it would be of much more advantage to New Zealand boys if German, and not French, were the language to which most attention was given. The athletic sports gathering was a most successful function this term. Football, cricket, tennis, and swimming have all been fully up to the standard of previous years. Up to the present the boys have suffered from the lack of a good-sized playground for the proper carrying on of these games, but the new paddock in the lower part of the grounds, which has just been levelled and sown in grass at a cost of about £500, is completed, and should be ready for use for the next football season. The report concluded with an expression of thanks to Mrs Bruce, the Rev. W. Beatty, and the members of the staff.

Dr. McArthur then read his report on the examination of the school, conducted by himself. The report stated that the work of the whole school had been very good. The mathematics of VI.B and A, and the science of V.A and V.B were specially worthy of commendation.

The chairman expressed his pleasure at the two previous reports. He was satisfied that parents would have their sons educated as good and honest upright gentlemen. In addition to being taught how to earn their living boys should be taught how to use money, and how to enjoy it. They should also be taught to defend their country, and for this moral as well as physical courage was required.

Addresses were given by several other gentlemen, after which the chairman presented the various prizes. Votes of thanks were accorded by acclamation to the chairman, the staff, and Mrs Bruce.

The company then adjourned to the grounds, where a most beautiful sight was to be seen. The grounds were hung with Chinese lanterns and fairy lights, and as the guests strolled about and listened to the music, the effect was most beautiful. The German band played throughout the evening, while a most enjoyable concert programme was given, consisting of part songs, by Mr Connell's Glee Club, and songs by Miss Annie Taylor and Messrs Charles Kissling and W. Cousins. The musical arrangements were in the hands of Mr Connell. Supper was served in one of the schoolrooms, and everyone left with the conviction that they had thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

LADIES' COLLEGE, REMUERA.

A large number of friends visited the Ladies' College, Remuera, on Thursday afternoon, on the occasion of the annual distribution of prizes. Mrs Moore-Jones, principal, had made lavish arrangements for the accommodation of the guests and a most enjoyable afternoon was spent. Music was supplied by the German Band and by some of the pupils of the College, and afternoon tea was dispensed. The ceremony of "hoisting the flag" was performed by Colonel Dawson, who made a suitable speech. The prizes were presented by the Rev. W. Beatty as follow:—

PRIZE LIST.

Medals.—Form I.: Flora Scott, gold, highest exam. percentage for year.

Form II.: Marjory Towle, silver and gold.

Form III.: Lorna Towle, silver.

Flora Scott, Scholarship.

Sybil Payton, geography; W. Hume, geography; E. Tylden, Greek literature; K. Smith, French; Hilda Morrin, English history; Elsie Court, Scripture; K. Clark, languages, French, Latin, and German; Elinor Galbraith, general knowledge; Kathleen Shera, general knowledge; Mary Lowe, highest examination marks; Elsie Tylden, French; Hilda Kingswell, history; Sybil Payton, English; Elsie Court, Latin; Lena Cleave, drawing; Elinor Galbraith, Scripture (verbatim); Olive Witheford, Latin; Ruth Galbraith, Scripture; Mavis Clark, highest examination marks; Dorothy Cheeseman, English; Annie Ralph, spelling; Una Headdy, Scripture; Katie Ralph, French; Flora Scott, mathematics; Katie Ralph, arithmetic; Olive Witheford, mathematics; W. Smallfield, English and science; Gladys Wigmore, history; Hilda Morrin, botany; K. Hume, literature; Daisy Galbraith, French; Lily Browning, arithmetic; Rose Stevens, music; Lily Browning, English; Lily Headdy, conversational French; Mary Towle, highest yearly marks; Marjory Towle, highest yearly marks; M. Lovett, drawing; Dorothy Nolan, conversational French (given by Madame Albegianne); K. Hume, music (given by Miss Tilly); M. Lovett, general improvement; Lorna Towle, highest yearly marks; Dolly Peach, Scripture; Dorothy Morton, highest yearly marks; Elsie Tylden, general knowledge; Dolly Peach, algebra; Dorothy Nolan, highest examination marks, Form V.; Bessie Williams, general improvement; Nellie Richardson, highest yearly marks, Form IV.B; V. Walsh, English and literature; Hilda Tucker, steady work; Doris Warner, writing; V. Walsh, science; Bertha Cleave, Arithmetic; Lily Taanes, general improvement.

HARLE GILES' COMMERCIAL COLLEGE.

Mr T. Harle Giles' College closed a successful year on Tuesday. During the past year Mr Giles has personally supervised the commercial side of the College, while the classical and mathematical side has been under Mr Hugh McLeod, B.A., who succeeded Dr. McArthur in this department at the beginning of the year.

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Topics of the Week.

Finis.

Well, we have done with that old century—the nineteenth—that wonderful hundred years—and are fairly embarked on another. Naturally we must feel somewhat strange when we come to consider the transition. I know it will be years before I get accustomed to speak of the nineteenth century without a sense of dealing in distant futurities. A child and man of the nineteenth, I cannot regard the twentieth save as a kind of foster parent. Its thought, its discoveries, its inventions, its heroes, its sages, its poets—I know them not. Mine belong to its predecessor. Before the twentieth century has made a reputation for itself I shall most likely have done with time. I never can hope to be on such easy familiar terms with the newcomer as with the old nineteenth, who was my father's and my father's father's friend before mine. Perhaps we shall never be friends, but merely acquaintances. Nay, I may find him my enemy. Certainly I cannot expect so much of him as of the friend of my early youth, my family friend, kind old "nineteenth." Drop a tear with me over the fresh grave before we turn away. Perhaps our happiest days are buried there, and our fondest hopes. We pass over the border into another century, wherein, as Schiller says, we must find our life element, but the storehouse of our most treasured memories will be on the other side. There we shall find the quiet retreat which is not to be found in the busy, bustling days to come. To feel thoroughly in touch with the twentieth century one should enter into the world with its dawn. The babies born this week will be the most favoured children. But we, whose familiar dates are 18 this or 18 that, must always have the appearance of being old and antiquated. When you relate some occurrence of a year or two back, and couple it with the explanation, "Yes, that was last century," you will inevitably convey the notion that you are a greybeard. The last century! Dear me! Although it is only yesterday that we were there it already seems an antediluvian period. At the beginning of last year, when we dropped the eighteen hundred in our dates and wrote 1900, it was a little hard to get accustomed to the change. The inclination always was to start with 18—as folks had been doing for ninety-nine years. Now, however, we have got used to the alteration in the numerals. But you can't change your whole attitude of mind as you can a quartette of figures, and while you write quite glibly 1901 you will doubtless be thinking last century style. If you are past middle life the chance is you will never get mentally acclimatised to the new era, but will constantly be open to the sneering comment of the new generation. "What can he know about it: he belongs to last century!" But enough of melancholic regret. This is a time for hope quite as much as for regretful retrospect. The new century holds in it abundant and glorious promise, and why should not we be partakers in its bounty? The future! The future! Is it not for us, the oldest, as well as for the youngest? We have lived in a mighty era and seen great enterprises come to fruition. But also we have been privileged to see the first dim suggestions of others, which are probably destined to be more wonderful than all the wonders we have witnessed; and we can look forward in this new century to see fulfilled the prophecies of the old one.

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New Year Resolutions.

These, the dying days of December, are those in which we begin to reflect that the years are speeding past, and that we have indeed done the things we ought not to have done and left undone those things which we should have done; and we usually make all sorts of resolutions for the coming year. This time we have not merely to turn a page in the book of time, but to close one volume and to open another. Nineteen of these vast tomes of the centuries lie behind us, but that on which the covers are now closing is the most marvellous and eventful of all. No wonder then if the most thoughtless of us feel some thrill as we realise that we are personally called to open our account in the new volume, a volume in which may be written still more wonderful things than contained in any that lie on the shelves of the past. No wonder that we are all, or I hope all, determining that we will do our utmost that our record in the new volume may be better than aught that has been set down either for or against us in the past. It is usual to be jocose and mildly humorous on the subject of New Year resolutions. To me, I confess, the subject savours more of the tragic. Looking back on the dead and gone years, the reminders of broken or blasted good resolutions stand out grim and stark on the barren land (which should have been so fruitful), like the stumps of half-burned trees on some neglected clearing. Humour it seems to me is swallowed up in shame. Even where we have in some degree kept our pledges how far short they have fallen of what we intended and really ought to have performed. Yet failure in the past is no reason for altogether ridiculing the habit. Even if we only keep conscience alive by our annual resolutions, they are worth while. Even if we fail, so that we have really made some effort, the moral force expended is not altogether futile. It is after all merely the try, try again of nursery days applied to our daily life and morals. Nor does it need that the resolution should be of a weighty order. Effort is everything. So that there is effort, so that we care to exert effort and feel shame when we relax, things are not altogether hopeless. It is then for us to take our courage in both hands, as the French say, and resolve that our resolutions shall be better fought for than in the past. After all it is not everyone who is privileged to witness and assist at the dawn of a century, and we have our extra responsibilities in connection therewith.

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Cold Water.

The kill or cure method of medical treatment still continues to find favour among the Maoris in spite of the spread of science and civilization. Last week, at some place near Gisborne, a native suffering from typhoid was handed over to the tohungas for treatment, and these gentlemen took him out to sea to give him a course of sea bathing. In two days the patient succumbed, as was to have been expected by anyone with any real knowledge of medicine. In all likelihood their failure to cure their man will not in the least destroy the faith of the hydropathists in themselves or the native belief in their methods; and if they are not hindered they will be ready to prescribe and superintend a course of sea bathing to the next poor unfortunate in need of medical help. From the fact that this method of treatment enjoys the prestige of great antiquity among the Maoris it is plain that they had discovered the virtue of cold water before modern Europe dreamt of it. For the bath, deemed so indispensable among the Romans and Greeks, seems to have disappeared almost completely during the Middle Ages, and is only slowly regaining the high position it held of yore. It is only in England, and there of comparatively recent times, that the institution of the morning tub has any claim to being established. And a couple of generations ago it held a very doubtful position. Examine the old houses at Home and in nine-tenths you will find no provision for washing in the shape of a proper bathroom and bath. In Scotland it is very much the same. I remember hearing of one family who had lived two years in a house where, for a wonder, there was a bath, and during the whole time they were never quite certain for what the room and the contrivance were intended. On the Continent the absence of bathing appliances is ten times more marked, and bathing, as we here understand it, a hundred times less frequent than in England. The average Frenchman or Frenchwoman—and I am speaking of middle-class people—would seldom think of indulging in a daily dip; and the Briton's predilection for his tub is a standing joke among Continentals, who endeavour to turn the laugh against us by saying, "What a dirty people to require such frequent ablutions!" Bathing is one of the madnesses of the British in a Frenchman's eyes. And perhaps there is among some good folks a tendency to carry their devotion to cold water a little too far and to emulate our Maori tohungas in their confidence in its virtues under every and all circumstances. We do not take our typhoid patients out to sea and dip them in the briny, but it is questionable whether many people do not indulge in cold water bathing to an extent that is injurious to their health. The best medical authority is against the indiscriminate use of the tub. Here the danger to be apprehended is not so great as in a cold climate, where it is simply madness for delicate people to take a morning bath in ice cold water, as they frequently do; but even here it is a mistake to conclude that cold water bathing is equally good for everyone.

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A Sensible Reminder.

The speeches of the dignitaries who present the prizes at "breaking up" ceremonies at our schools are usually somewhat laboured, commonplace and stilted, and have a very strong family resemblance one to the other. That of the Rev. Mr Beatty at King's College, Auckland, was an exception to the rule, and there was much solid sense and wisdom in the position taken up, namely, that in a commercial people in a utilarian age are far too apt to look upon education as a means of turning a boy into an efficient money-making machine in the shortest that it is useless to instruct a lad in the art of making money if we do not also teach him how to keep itand how to spend it; how to use it, in short, for his own betterment—mental, moral and physical, and how to devote part of it the service of others. The book learning acquired during early years is perhaps the least important part of education. The formation of character, the moulding of thought, and the acquiring of habits—these are the important subjects. In choosing a school one is far too apt to look solely to examination results. It would be far better to keep a record of the stamp of young men a school turns out in after life if this were practicable. It seems to me to matter little if a man has crammed so much knowledge into his head as to be able to demonstrate the right to have certain letters after his name, but it does matter everything if he has become impregnated with high ideals in the matter of truth, honour and business rectitude.

Minor Matters.

The Latest Business Trick.

In some manner the cheeky man gained admittance to the senior partner's private office. "Don't want any books, brooms, or soap," said the senior partner, without looking up. "Sir!" exclaimed the cheeky man, "I would inform you that I am no pedler." "Then who are you?" "A sporting gentleman, sir." "What business can you have with me?" "I wish to make a bet." "Look here! I am no—" "Of course you are no gambler. This is a gentleman's bet. I bet you, sir, that I can hold up my thumb, and after I lower it you will leave the room." The senior partner threw down his pen. "Five pounds that I will not leave the room." "Done!" Up went the cheeky man's thumb. "Wait!" called the senior partner; "this is so easy that I would like to make it ten." "Make it twenty if you like." "All right, it is twenty." The cheeky man raised and lowered his thumb. "You don't see me leaving the room," said the senior partner. "No," admitted the cheeky man. The partner laboured with his pen for thirty minutes. "I'm still here." "So I see." Fifteen minutes passed. "You'd just as well pass over the twenty." "It is early yet." Ten more minutes skipped merrily. "Look here," said the senior partner suddenly, "when is the time up?" "There is no time limit, sir. If you remain in this room the money is yours. When you leave I win. This evening, to-morrow, next week; it makes no difference to me." Then the senior partner gave in. "Take the money!" he roared, "but if it wasn't for catching the Epsom tram I would stick you out and win."

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Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Lovers.

The young men of a southern town have organised a society which aims to redress the woes of lovers. I trust that your lover days are not so far past that you have forgotten what these woes might be. One is a lack of sympathy with the youth who evidently cannot realise that there are others in the world than the girl he adores, and other topics as well worth talking about. Young men who find proper understanding and encouragement among themselves have founded the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Worthy Young Lovers, in which a grievance committee will be kept quite busy. That it is limited to young lovers shows the ignorance of twenty which does not know that love is like the measles and whooping cough in that one has it harder and is more likely to find it fatal the older one gets.

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Heading Him Off.

Miss Frocks thought that she detected symptoms of growing sentimentality in young Mr Dolley, and she determined that she would discourage him. Her kindly efforts to make it apparent that his advances were unwelcome were of no avail, however. He was too dense or too egotistical to see that she regarded him only with toleration, and he rushed on to his doom.

"Miss Frocks," siad he, assuming a languishing attitude and a manner intended to be expressive of his lovelorn condition, "I am going to ask you a question which no doubt has been put to you many a time before, and ——"

"Oh, I know what you are going to say," the girl cut in. "Yes, I've been asked the question a great many times and I'm going to answer it this time before I am asked again."

Mr Dolley looked at her in a dazed sort of way, and she went on:

"Yes, I do play golf."

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A Well-Known Lawyer in Trouble.

There is a well-known legal light of Wellington who is in deep disgrace without the shadow of an excuse for himself to bolster up his sinking spirits. He went out the other night to dine informally with some friends, and his hostess, who had been married but a short time, put herself out to entertain him. The dinner was excellent and the barrister did full justice to it. They had coffee in the library, and the biggest, most padded leather chair was put at the guest's disposal. With a sigh he sank into its cavernous depths and prepared for a luxurious evening with a good cigar ahead of him. Brilliantly his hostess rambled on. She told stories that were witty, and she gently deferred to his views, but presently he left her to do all the talking. In the midst of a striking account of a theatre she stopped with a jerk. There was no response and a dead silence punctuated only by a gentle and regular breathing. The legal luminary was fast asleep in his big chair. There was no doubt of it. Nothing could conceal the fact. With one indignant and comprehensive glance at her plainly delighted husband she arose and majestically swept upstairs. And she did not go down again. It was some time later when her husband apologetically came up after her. He had not expected her wrath to last. "Did—did you think you were badly treated?" he asked. "How long did he sleep?" asked the still insulted wife. Again the grin overspread her husband's face, but he spoke in a sad tone, as befitted the occasion. Nearly an hour," he breathed. "I wouldn't mind," pacifically. Then it was the worm turned. "Mind!" she stormed. "Of course I wouldn't, only you have grounds now for the rest of your life for saying I talk so much it puts people to sleep!" And she wept.

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A Self-Denying Husband.

"George, dear," said the loving wife, "why don't you smoke the cigars I presented to you on your birthday?"

"A pipe is good enough for me, my dear. Cigars are too rich for my blood."

"But, George, dear, they didn't cost much. I paid only 3/ for the box."

"It was very thoughtful of you to buy them, Mary; but, as I said, a pipe is good enough for me. Your kindness, however, won't be thrown away. The cigars will enable me to do the handsome thing by our friends when they call. They shall have them."

"But I should like to see you smoke one of them, dear."

"Self-denial, my darling, is one of the greatest of human virtues. I deny myself for the pleasure of our friends."

"It is noble of you, George, and after all I am proud of your resolution."

"Don't make me vain," said the hypocrite, as he went out on the front step to enjoy the shilling perfecto he had purchased coming from town.

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At a Linwood Wedding.

A pretty little miss of about ten summers nearly broke up a wedding party at Linwood a short while ago. It was about the first wedding that she had ever attended, and she felt the importance of the occasion very much. After the ceremony she noticed that the people went up to the bride and groom and made remarks to them. She supposed that they were words of congratulation or condolence, or something of that sort, but her ideas of the proper thing to say under the circumstances were a little vague. Finally she whispered to an old friend of the family who was near by: "What shall I say when I go up there?" she faltered. "Oh, just anything to show them that you are glad they are married. Just something complimentary, you know." In a few minutes the little miss had made her way to where the happy couple were receiving the congratulations. There was quite a crowd around, but she didn't mind them one bit. She marched straight up to the bride, and, extending her hand, said: "I wish you both many happy returns of the day." The remark convulsed every one in hearing, but the little miss left with the consciousness that she had observed the proprieties.

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Which Said the Joke Best?

"You Colonials," said the London young man as he stopped sucking his cane, "are always insinuating that we Englishmen don't know what a real joke is. Now, just hold your sides while I go over this one which I read in a home paper a week ago: The Countess—M'lord, you were at the grand dinner last night, were you not? Just a while ago I heard one of those vulgar colonials make the remark that this morning you had a big head. The Duke—But, m'lady, there's nothing in it." The colonial looked as sober as a criminal court judge. "Well?" he asked. "Don't you see," explained the disgusted Britisher, poking the other in the ribs with his cane, "the countess says some one accused her companion (ha!) of having a big head (ha, ha!) and he declares (p-sh, ha!) there's nothing in it!" "Yes, but—" "Blarsted idiocy, but what?" "Her companion was a duke." "Yes," "And not any different from the rest of the English nobility?" "No. But the joke, the joke! It is so adroitly put. In apparent inadvertence (desperately) the duke admits there is nothing in his head! Now, do you see?" "Well, it's a little strange that the duke could make such a frank and candid admission, but—where does the joke come in?"

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Clear the Line!

"Clear the line" on active service prefixes a telegram of supreme importance only, and all official Natal was startled when a "clear the line" telegram, addressed to the heads of the hospitals in the field, announced nothing more serious than that the Prince of Wales' horse had won the Derby. The sender, an Irish surgeon-major, was promptly carpeted, and was extremely surprised that it was thought necessary to ask him any questions. "Shure," he said, "isn't it the duty of the surgeons to kape up the spirits of the sick and wounded, and is there anything that would make them more joyful than to know that the Prince's horse had won the race."

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The Trooper and the Prince's Cigars.

Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales has a wonderfully kind heart, and is constantly showing in the most practical manner her sympathy for our gallant soldiers who have been wounded in battle, says an English exchange. A few weeks ago the Princess, accompanied by the Prince, paid a visit to the military hospital at Netley, near Southampton, where there were lying many men who have been wounded during the present war. As she walked slowly through the wards the tender-hearted princess sadly exclaimed: "Oh, this awful war! What terrible suffering it brings!" In one bed the Princess saw a soldier whose cheek and mouth had been wofully lacerated by a Boer bullet. His suffering appealed to her kindly heart, and she said to him: "My poor fellow! Can you anyhow contrive to smoke?" "Yes, Your Royal Highness," was the reply. Whereupon the Princess walked over to the Prince and asked: "Have you your cigar case with you to-day?" The Prince at once handed his case of choice cigars to Her Royal Highness, who possessed herself of the fragrant contents and gave them all to the delighted soldier, saying, "Take these, my brave fellow, and enjoy them. I am sure you will like them. The Prince believes they are the best that can be had." Then, with a cheery smile, the gracious lady passed on her way.

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Parsonic Comfort.

A man lay very ill, and expressed a wish to see the parson, who was a noted tippler. On his arrival he was asked to sit by the bedside and read the parable of the Prodigal Son.

This he did, in fervent voice.

When he reached the end he was requested to repeat the dose, and—"Would yer mind sitting a little closer, sir?"

The parson did as requested, feeling glad he was apparently bringing some consolation to the poor fellow, but when on wading through for the second time, he was again asked to

"Face the starter" he didn't show great alacrity, especially as he was again requested to "sit just a little closer, please, sir."

However, he conformed once more to the sick man's request, and this time thought he saw the fellow's face light up with delight. On completing the third reading he asked the man why he liked the Parable so much.

"Oh, it ain't the —— parable, sir; but ever since I've been in orspital I 'avn't touched a drop of liquor, and yer breath is so comforting."

Now, can this possibly refer to an Auckland parson and patient?

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Not Enough to Go Round.

A young married lady has just acquired a new coach, and a new footman to match.

"John," she said one day, "we will drive out to make a few calls. But I shan't get out of the carriage; you will therefore take the cards that are on my dressing-table and leave one of them at each house we stop at."

"Very good, ma'am," answered John, and ran upstairs to fetch the cards.

After they had driven about a considerable time, and cards had been left at a large number of houses, the lady remarked—

"Now, we must call at the Dales, the Franktons and Clarkes."

"We can't do it," here broke in the footman in alarm; "I've only the ace of spades and the ten of clubs left!"

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Age of Chivalry.

Customer: I would like to buy some kind of Christmas present suitable for an old lady.

Shopgirl: Yes, sir. How would a nice little folding stool do?"

Customer: What use could she make of that?

Shopgirl: When she has to travel in a car crowded with men she can open it out and sit down in the aisle, you know.

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A Mayor's Slip.

For once the Bishop and clergy were to be found on the same platform with the Nonconformist minister of the town. The worthy Mayor was transported with joy at the sight. After remarking how gratifying it was to see Church and Chapel joining together in a common cause, he added: "And what I says, gentlemen, is this: if a man's 'art is in the right place, it don't matter what sex he belongs to."

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Ready to Oblige.

An elderly lady presented a cheque lately to a young bank clerk.

After examining it critically, he said. "This is a crossed cheque, madame; I am sorry we cannot pay it across the counter."

Elderly lady: "Never mind, I can come round!"

* * *

Her Mistake.

The conductor said there was room for a few more inside.

At the corner, when a tram turned west, the customary contingent of shoppers got in, and there was an uncomfortable jam.

But the little man kept his eyes on his paper. He also kept his seat.

"Pardon me, madam," said a polite man hanging on to a strap to a lady standing beside him with an armful of paper parcels, "you are standing on my foot."

"I'm so sorry," said she. "I thought it belonged to the man sitting down."

And then the little man's eyes were lifted from his paper, and she got the seat.

* * *

How Tommy Spoilt the Dinner.

I was invited to a friend's house to partake of the Christmas dinner. A merry company were assembled, and all enjoyed the feast of good things provided by our genial hostess. One of the guests, in a jocular manner, asked little Tommy, the son of our hostess, where turkeys came from.

"Dunno," he answered; "but I can tell you where this one came from" (pointing to the one on the table). "Ma got it from a tramp for one and sixpence, 'cause the man said he stole it. Didn't he, ma?"

In Doubtful Company.

At a party one evening a gentleman met a young lady with whom he was slightly acquainted, who was considered by her friends to be a rather strong-minded woman, and occasionally a bit of a romp.

In the course of conversation he remarked that he had not seen her for a long time, and inquired if she had been enjoying a holiday at Rotorua or the South.

"Oh, no," replied the lady. "I had a walking tour. Other two girls and I took a tramp through the Waikato for a month; and we just had a glorious time of it.

"Indeed, that was surely a very unusual way of spending a holiday. I hope the tramp behaved in a proper and becoming manner?"

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An H.M.S. Ringdove Yarn.

During the recent cruise of H.M.s. Ringdove amongst the Solomons and other South Sea islands, a visit was paid to the lately-annexed Santa Cruz group to see that the flag was flying on all of them. One failed to come up to sample; and an armed landing-party proceeded ashore to inquire into, and if necessary avenge, the insult. Investigation, however, disclosed that a chief's wife had been so hard hit by the coloured bunting that she had used it to supplement the resources of her own scanty wardrobe, and the usual island punishment of village-burning and pig-stealing was not resorted to.

We are willing to take a certain amount of stock phrases in newspaper accounts of American tornadoes, but when a New York paper tells us about a zephyr carrying a bed quilt sixty-one miles and then going back for the sheet, we're not there.

Sports and Pastimes.

TURF FIXTURES.

December 22, 27, 27—Auckland Trotting Club Summer Meeting
December 26, 28, January 1, 2—Auckland Racing Club
December 26—Bay of Plenty Jockey Club
December 26, 27—Gisborne Racing Club
December 26, 27—Taranaki Jockey Club
December 26, 27—Thames Jockey Club
January 1, 2—Hawke's Bay Jockey Club
January 28, 30, February 1 —Takapuna Jockey Club
April 6, 9, 12—Auckland Racing Club
April 20, 24—Avondale Jockey Club
May 24, 25—Takapuna Jockey Club Winter
June 8, 10, 12—A.R.C. North N.Z. Grand National Meeting

DATES OF COMING EVENTS.

December 26—Auckland Cup
January 1—Great Northern Derby
January 2—A.R.C. Royal Stakes
January 23—Wellington Cup
January 29—Takapuna Cup
February 20—Egmont Cup
February 27—Dunedin Cup

NOTES BY MONITOR.

The Woodville races took place last week on Wednesday and Thursday, when the weather was fine and the attendance on both days fully up to the average. Betting throughout proved brisk, the sum of £7862 going through the totalisator during the two days. The Hack Hurdles went to Discharge, with Rimu second and Vanquish third. Robin Gray accounted for the Grandstand Handicap, and he followed this up on the second day by securing the Scurry Handicap. The Woodville Cup was won after a good race by Murmur, who finished a length in front of Palaver, with Volley third. Jewel Gun proved too good for the opposition in the Flying Handicap, his nearest opponent being Marianthus and Mustella. Amoureux won the Borough Handicap from start to finish, and coming out again on the second day somewhat easily carried off the Railway Handicap. The Welter Hack Handicap gave rise to a fine finish between Kaiahakaroa and Passion Fruit, the former getting home by half a length. The speedy St. Dennis had matters all his own way in the Electric Handicap, leading from the start and winning by two lengths from Calceolaria and Warnote. On the second day Fireball opened proceedings by having a comfortable win in the Stewards' Handicap. Rimu, who had run second on the opening day, won the Hurdle Race in the easiest possible fashion. Brown Bill, after a good race, got home in front of Passion Fruit in the Rushine Handicap, while the Summer Handicap fell to The Hempie, who won after a desperate struggle with Cherrystone by a neck. Marianthus secured the Telegraph Handicap, while Calceolaria brought matters to a conclusion by running home ahead of Regret and Daphne in the High Weight Handicap.

The second day of the Auckland Racing Club's Summer Meeting will take place to-morrow (Friday). At the time of writing I have not the acceptances to hand, so that I am quite unable to deal with the several events.

Carbine is evidently coming into favour again with the sporting public in England. Two of his stock to earn winning brackets recently in the Old Country are Semper Viglins and Wargrave. The former started in the Lincoln Autumn Handicap at 10 to 1 against, and carried 7st 9lb to victory after a great race. Wargrave competed at the Lewes Autumn Meeting in the Nursery Handicap, in which he carried 7.2. The son of Warble went out at odds on, and never giving the field a chance won hard held.

The Royal Stakes will be decided on the concluding day of the A.R.C. meeting, and at the time of writing twelve remain in for the six furlong flutter. If he was quite himself Renown should possess a chance second to none, but as this does not appear to be the case it looks like proving a battle between Mr Stead's selected and Formula.

Advance appears to hold a mortgage on the Auckland Plate, this being the only event for which the champion black will compete. He certainly seems to hold everything safe at weight-for-age, and I anticipate that but few will be found willing to oppose him.

Next Thursday the Great Northern Derby comes on for decision, and there are but eight horses in to do battle for the Blue Ribbon of the Turf. With Renown below par the race is far more open than it otherwise would have been, and Beddington and Formosan should prove dangerous opponents for the Napier Crack to defeat.

The Auckland Steeplechase which will be run next Wednesday, looks like proving a duel between Cannongate and Nor'-west, and although the son of Cannon is a greatly improved horse I hardly fancy he is equal to putting down the Sou'-wester gelding over the big obstacles.

LAWN TENNIS.

(By "Vantage.")

The photograph of Mr. J. Paton, hon. sec. of the New Zealand Lawn Tennis Association, was unavoidably held over last week, and appears in the current issue.

Mr. J. Patterson left for the championship meeting last Tuesday by the Taiune. The rest of the team left by the Mapourika on Thursday, the complete list being Parker, Peacock, Patterson, Goldie, Vaile, Davies, Upton, Caldwell and Young.

Miss Gore left last week for Christchurch, with the view of getting some practice in the Southern city before the tournament. She will play with her brother, Mr. H. M. Gore, in the combined championships.

A Christchurch correspondent sends me the following information about the meeting, which will doubtless prove of great interest to players in all other parts: The secretary went through the handicap entries last night (December 14), and they are excellent. Seventy-one competitors for the men's single handicap would be rather unwieldy but for our provision for dividing into two grades. All the leading players of the colony except Marshall seem to have entered. Marshall, I understand, disapproves of the Victorians being allowed to compete in our championships.

The men's handicap doubles has 32 pairs, the combined handicap doubles 33, and the ladies' events have filled up to last year's numbers.

Dunedin sends a very strong contingent of players numerically, most handicap players, and have supported us most loyally. There are a number of players from Oamaru and a couple from Invercargill.

The local entries are good, and there are a good many from Wellington, mostly well-known names. The West Coast of the North Island and Hawke's Bay are unrepresented. Shearing being late has, I know, kept Dickie and some others away. Nelson has also sent nothing so far.

There are a good many fresh names among the ladies from the South. It remains to be seen how they turn out.

As there has been some speculation as to whether the Australians will visit Auckland, the following extract from a letter written by a member of their team to Mr. A. A. Davies may prove of interest: "The M.C.C. team, consisting of Dunlop and Diddams, Waters, Saxon and McKean, leave Melbourne on the 12th inst., per Monowai, for Christchurch, due to arrive there on the 21st inst. It is our intention to take part in whatever matches we may be qualified for at the New Zealand tournament, a match against our team is to be arranged, and on the 2nd or 4th of January we expect to leave for Wellington, and, provided time permits, a game will be played at this port. If this is not possible we disband, three of our party, together with myself, will continue our holiday to Auckland, while the remainder go direct to Sydney. I very much regret indeed that my partner, Dunlop (of some six years' standing), and the winner of several single championships, will not be able to accompany me farther north than Wellington. However, those who are able to proceed to Auckland, while not being in any way representative tennis players, are enthusiasts, and are sure to spend a jolly time."

The quality of the balls used in the recent match between Parker and Hooper has given rise to some little argument in the columns of the Press, but it certainly would be prudent on the part of competitors, especially after the match, to refrain from fighting the match over again on paper. Rather take special precaution beforehand to have best quality balls in readiness yourself. In any case, it should have been the duty of the secretary to the Association to see that proper balls were supplied, and not leave it to the Club on whose lawns the match was played, or to the president of that Club.

We understand that Mr S. Diddams, of the Victorian team now visiting New Zealand, will pay a visit to Auckland after the holidays, and a match is already talked about between him and Mr Hooper, which will certainly be very interesting to watch.

Auckland will be fairly well represented at the Christchurch tournament, and we hope to hear of our boys securing some of the valuable trophies. It may not be too much to expect that they will return with the championship banner, but the Victorian players probably carry too many guns for the New Zealand players.

West End, as usual, have sent their quantum of players, some five or six representatives of that Club going South. J. Patterson left some days in advance of the others via the East Coast. Evidently he intends to arrive early on the scene of action, in order to secure the necessary practice with the Southern and Australian cracks, but players here well remember that when last he visited Christchurch he improved so rapidly and exhibited such astonishing form that he caught it hot from the handicappers, and since then he has enjoyed the soubriquet of "Owe 40 Paterson."

It is unfortunate that the weather was so bad on Saturday week last, causing the postponement of the inter-club fixtures. It is probable that a Saturday in each of the months of January, February, and March will be set apart to decide the premier club. Great interest is being manifested in the results.

THE RULES OF WHIST.

If you the modern game of whist would know,
From this great principle its precepts flow:
Treat your own hand as to your partner's joined,
And play not one alone, but both combined.
Your first lead makes your partner understand
What is the chief component of your hand;
And hence there is necessity the strongest
That your first lead be from your suit that's longest.
In this with ace and king, lead king, then ace:
With king and queen, king also has first place;
With ace, queen, knave, lead ace and then the queen;
With ace, four small ones, ace should first be seen;
With queen, knave, ten, you let the queen precede;
In other cases you the lowest lead.
Ere you return your friend's your own suit play,
But trumps you must return without delay.
When you return your partner's lead take pains
To lead him back the best your hand contains.
If you receive not more than three at first;
If you have more you may return the worst.
But if you hold the master card you're bound
In most cases to play it second round.
Whene'er you want a lead 'tis seldom wrong
To lead up to the weak or through the strong.
If second hand your lowest should be played,
Unless you mean "trump signal" to be made;
Or if you've king and queen, or ace and king,
Then one of these will be the proper thing.
Mind well the rule of trumps; you'll often need them;
When you hold five 'tis always right to lead them,
Or if the lead won't come in time for you,
Then signal to your partner so to do.
Watch also for your partner's trump request,
To which, with less than four, play out your best.
To lead through honours turned up is bad play,
Unless you want the trump suit cleared away.
When, second hand, a doubtful rosk you see,
Don't trump it if you hold more trumps than three;
But having three or less trump fearlessly.
When weak in trumps yourself don't force your friend,
But always force the adverse strong trump hand.
For sequences stern custom has decreed
The lowest you must play if you don't lead.
When you discard weak suit you ought to choose,
For strong ones are too valuable to lose.

Exchange Notes.

No call from the 22nd of December until the 4th of January.

The market closed very strong on Saturday.

Waihi Company's record return this month totalled £29,673, the product of 11,308 tons.

The total output from the Waihi mine since 1890 is £1,490,489, of which £628,500 was distributed in dividends.

A parcel of 16 tons of ore from the Ironcap mine yielded bullion worth £52 17/3.

Monowai shares also sold at 3/4 this week, and Broken Hills at 4d and 4½d.

Tributers in the Great Mercury mine crushed 220 tons of ore for a return of bullion worth £313 14/6.

The Talisman Consolidated Company has acquired the Adeline Reefs S.C., formerly known as the Wealth of Nations, also a small area of ground to the west of this claim, the additional areas aggregating over 100 acres. These claims immediately adjoin the Victor-Waihou section of the company's property, and should prove a very valuable acquisition.

The Waitekauri Extended Company's output to date is £6,546, of which £1,021 was last month's contribution.

In the May Queen Extended mine stone broken from the reef this week shows strong colours of gold.

A very promising body of ore eighteen inches to two feet in thickness, was passed through in the Alpha last week. The dish prospects of free gold were not very high, but the hanging-wall of the lode carries a fair amount of sulphide.

Progress Castle Rock Company crushed 96lbs of stone for a return of 54ozs of gold worth about £150.

The Barrier Reefs Gold Mining Co. this week received a cable through the Bank of New Zealand stating that the sum of £3,144 5/4 has been placed to its credit, this being the net proceeds of the concentrates forwarded for treatment to the Sulphide Corporation, N.S.W.

A good deal of business has been done in Waihi Extended shares at prices ranging from 3/7 to 4/5.

A parcel of 50lbs of stone from the Nil Desperandum new find at Mahakirau, when treated yielded 51ozs 13dwts of gold worth about £150.

Tairua Broken Hill shares have again advanced, sales being made from 1/4 to 1/10. This is a good sign in face of the fact that a threepence call will exhause the capital.

Sales of Imperials took place at 4d and 5¼d. May Queens changed hands at 10d, Bunker's Hill 6d, and May Queen Extended at 9d.

A dividend at the rate of 6 per cent. per annum will be paid by the N.Z. and River Plate Company this year. The approximate net profit for the year is £31,360, of which £18,000 will be added to the reserve fund, and £917 parried forward.

South British Insurance shares sold at 73/, New Zealands at 70/, and Nationals at 20/.

The Thames-Hauraki Company has been notified that if it ceases pumping the Drainage Board will not take action for breach of contract. This is due to the plea being raised by the May Queen representative that the Board has no powers to recover contributions.

Several transactions have taken place this week in D.S.C. shares at 8/6.

The Waitekauri return for the month totalled £5,304 from 2,512 tons, making the total output to date £294,569 17/.

Devonport Ferry Company paid the customary dividend this week.

The new find in the Mahakirau Valley promises well. Messrs Davies and Prescott have bagged another 36lb of rich specimens from the lode. Already several areas have been pegged out in the district.

May Queen tributers crushed 130 tons of ore for a yield of bullion valued at £1,074 0/4.

The Manaia Company, Whangamata, cleared up this week for the excellent return of $1,245 $/ from 160 tons of ore.

A parcel of 36 tons of ore from the Hardsworth claim, Kuaotunu, yielded bullion worth £270 8/10.

By the Assassin's Hand.

SOME RULERS WHO HAVE PERISHED BY PISTOL, KNIFE AND BOMB.

It has always been one of the penalties of royalty, rulers and the politically powerful to fail to please everybody, and in many instances during the last century Kings, Queens, Princes, Presidents and Ministers have paid that penalty with their lives, while many another would have done so but for the intervention of Providence. There is hardly a living sovereign against whom the hand of the assassin has not been raised, our own good Queen not excepted, and with such deadly effect have bomb, dagger and pistol been wielded by Anarchists, Nihilists and others that it would not be possible to count on one's fingers the times the world has been shocked in the last hundred years by news of royal and political murders.

The latest murder of a crowned head will still be fresh in the memory of most of our readers—that of King Humbert, of Italy, at Monza, on the 29th July last.

The murder of the Empress of Austria last year came as a shock to the whole of the civilised world.

The Empress, who was staying at her favourite resort, Territet, on the Lake of Geneva, made an excursion to Geneva, and was returning to the boat when the assassination took place. She had nearly reached the landing place, when a man pushed against her, and she nearly fell, but her lady-in-waiting, thinking that he had only jostled her, walked on by her side. When she reached the boat the Empress became very faint, and the captain, after he had started, was induced to put back, when it was discovered that Her Majesty had been stabbed to the heart, and she died soon afterwards without ever knowing that she had been murdered.

The assassination of the late Shah of Persia took place under circumstances entirely different to those surrounding the murders of other rulers referred to in this article, for he was engaged in his devotions when the fatal shot which robbed him of his life was fired.

On the first of May, 1896, he went forth from his palace, at Teheran, to the shrine of Abdul Azinu. Ere he entered the building he gave a bank note to an Arab, and spoke a few kind words to a water carrier. At the hour of two he was kneeling at his prayers, when the stillness was broken by the report of a revolver. The Shah rose to his feet, and, turning, fixed his eyes on the flying assassin, took two or three steps forward, and dropped to the ground. Some of his attendants rushed to his aid, while others secured the murderer, but His Imperial Majesty was past human assistance—the shot had passed between the fifth and sixth ribs and entered his heart.

One of the most cruel and terrible assassinations which may claim to be included in this article was that of Stambuloff, the "Bismarck of Bulgaria," who, though neither of royal blood nor a ruler in the understood sense of the word as here used, was for a long time, politically, monarch of Bulgaria, much to the dissatisfaction of the reigning Prince Ferdinand and of Russia.

To recount the events which led up to the murder of the ex-Premier Stambuloff would be to tell a wonderful and fascinating story of political intrigue crowned by this most abominable crime, which was not the doing of Anarchists, but it would require a volume in itself. Therefore, it must suffice to say that Stambuloff during his tenure of office as Prime Minister had by his policy, which was not entirely in the interests of Russia, incurred her displeasure. Therefore, his removal was determined upon, and there is not the least doubt that Prince Ferdinand was well aware of the fact—Stambuloff himself knew it, and asked permission of the Government to leave Bulgaria for Carlsbad, but this was refused him.

What Stambuloff told many of his friends would occur came to pass on the evening of July 15th, 1895. He had been playing cards in the Union Club, at Sofia, and left there to return to his mansion, which was in the same street, at the hour of eight, when it was still light in the streets, and many people were abroad.

After standing for a moment outside the club he hailed a fiacre, and drove down the street. Scarcely had they proceeded a dozen yards when an attack was made on the carriage. Three men, armed with yataghans, knives and pistols, seemed to spring from out of the earth and rush upon the vehicle. The ex-Prime Minister must have recognised what was happening, for, standing up in the carriage, he whipped out his revolver and fired, jumping at the same time to the ground. He rocked to and fro as he alighted on his feet, and ere he could regain his balance, a cruel blow on the head from a yataghan felled him to the earth, where the three men, setting upon him with ferocious savagery, inflicted, in less time than it takes to read of the onslaught, the most terrible injuries.

He had twenty wounds in his head, both hands were almost severed at the wrists, an eye was cut out, and his face so shockingly slashed as to be almost unrecognisable. All this was done ere a friend with him could alight, even before the carriage had stopped, in fact, and before the body servant of the victim, who was seated on the box of the carriage beside the driver, could spring to the ground. The murderers fled, leaving M. Stambuloff weltering in his blood and his friend lying beside him with a stab in the forehead.

M. Stambuloff was yet alive when removed to his home, and lingered in agony two nights and two days perfectly conscious, but never sleeping, ere succumbing on the 18th. Both his hands had to be amputated. He had recognized two of the three assailants, Huloff and Tufektchieff, and the latter was arrested, but immediately released, having proved an alibi. A reward of 10,000 francs was offered for the murderers, and many arrests were made, but for this terrible crime no one suffered, and Bulgaria has yet to pay the penalty for it.

The fourth president of France, M. F. Sadi Carnot, who was elected in 1887, served until June 24th, 1894, when he was stabbed to death in the streets of Lyons. He had gone thither on a visit to the Exhibition. Spending the earlier part of the evening at the Palais de Commerce he set out, the central figure of a procession, for the Grand Theatre, where there was to be given a great gala performance. Everywhere his visit to the town had given the greatest satisfaction, for the President was a popular man, and well liked by the people. Crowds thronged the route to the theatre, and before the Place de la Comedie was a happy crowd awaiting to greet him on his arrival, while the theatre itself was packed with an impatient audience, who had taken their seats at the hour of nine.

Smiling faces were all around. In the boxes and fauteuils, gallery and pit there was a ripple of merry laughter. Joy was the all-pervading force. The minutes crept on. The President was late, but what were those shouts without? He was coming. The mass rose prepared to cheer. There was silence outside now. Some officials entered the "loge" reserved for the Presidential party, and M. Rivaud, Prefect of Police, stepped to the front into full view of the house. The paleness of his face seemed to cast a chilliness over every heart. Something was wrong. People tried to cheer, but the Prefect solemnly raised his hand and opened his lips. He essayed to speak, but for a moment the words refused to come. When he spoke a bomb might have been dropped from the roof, so great was the scene of consternation and confusion his one short sentence created.

"Do not cheer," he said, with a tremor in his voice. "Your President has been assassinated."

A momentary silence was followed by an outburst of rage; women cried out in terror, tears ran down many a face, men howled in rage for "Vengeance! Vengeance!"

Meanwhile, the President was slowly dying.

The carriage in which he had set out to go to the theatre was passing the Credit Lyonnais when a young man sprang suddenly from the crowd on to the step of the vehicle and down again. He had thrust something at the President, and M. Carnot had fallen back in his seat. He had been stabbed.

An officer felled the assassin to the ground as he jumped from the step of the carriage. The police seized him and soldiers closed around, and it was well they did, for the mob would surely have torn him limb from limb.

Caserio Santo, the assassin, was lodged in prison and safe from the enraged crowd, but he was an Italian, and they took vengeance on the Italians in Lyons. Their shops were sacked and burned, and themselves hunted from the place, and the disorder spread to other places, for at such a moment people do not stop to reason, and the lawless portion of society seize an opportunity to pursue their calling in comparative security.

The assassin, who was twenty-two years of age, was executed at Lyons on August 16th.

Russia has lost two Czars in the century under the hand of the assassin, but it was not the Nihilists who strangled the Emperor Paul Petrovitch, though they accounted for the Emperor Alexander II., grandfather of the present Czar, than whom, perhaps, no Sovereign had more attempts made upon his life.

He had begun his reign wisely and well, desirous to do his duty as Emperor, and lighten the sorrows and burdens of his people. But either the people did not appreciate his well-meant endeavours, or he thought they did not, and when he found there were still elements in the nation dangerous alike to his life and to the prosperity of Russia, he recalled many of his humane laws, with the result that there recommenced a system of tyranny which made things worse than they were ere he came to the throne.

Then was his life aimed at, not once, nor twice, but often, but he seemed to be specially guarded by Providence, for he escaped the most cunningly-designed plots, and always when it seemed impossible for them to fail. But success rewarded the Nihilistic persistence at last, and the Czar was murdered on March 13, 1881.

The Emperor was returning in his carriage from a review, along the canal road, when the murder was accomplished. The first bomb that was thrown destroyed the back of the carriage and killed the Cossack standing behind the vehicle, as well as several other persons, but the Czar remained uninjured, and his people besought him to stay in his carriage and be driven home as quickly as possible. The humane nature of His Majesty made this wise course impossible for him, and he insisted on himself seeing the extent of the injuries received by his attendants.

As the Czar stood speaking to those who were wounded and those who had escaped, a second bomb was thrown, which exploded close at his feet, causing him the most fearful injuries, and killing the man who threw it. The Czar, as well as all those standing round him, fell to the ground as if mowed down.

Into the story of the hatching of the plot, which came out at the trial of the Nihilists, who were hunted down after the murder, it is impossible to go here. Five persons were arrested, including two women, and one gave himself up voluntarily, and on April 22nd five of them were hanged, one of the women being reprieved.

Just a Platonic Affair.

A LITTLE HOLIDAY ROMANCE.

Scene: A Seat by the Sea.
Characters: He and She.
Time: Afternoon.

She: Funny that we should meet here! I came in quite by chance. I was going down the Cliff Walk.

He: Yes, I saw you.

She: I thought of you as I passed, but of course I couldn't look.

He: Odd how things happen.

She: We seem to meet so often in the afternoon—quite by chance.

He: It's one of those coincidences—you go by at a certain hour every day.

She: And you are always there.

He: And it seems as though we always have something to say.

She: That's why our friendship is so delightful! I get so tired of sentiment!

He: It's such rot—anyhow—but you know there are very few girls like you. Most of them expect a man to throw bouquets at them all the time. Now, you——

She: Oh, I hate that sort of thing! When I first met you—and realised that you weren't that kind of man—I was so believed!

He: Yes, I find myself wishing to consult you about even the most ordinary things. I find your point of view is more direct than my own. You look straight at things. I blink.

She: And yet I have blinked at the irregularity of our friendship.

He: Why irregular?

She: Oh, they do say that friendship between the sexes is not good form. In the 20th century people will have outgrown such foolishness. Then friendships like ours will be more frequent. It will be a case of mutual—respect and—er—people won't remark it. Why, you have no idea what silly ideas people get sometimes. For instance, I know some of them think—oh, well, it's too ridiculous!

He: What?

She: That we are engaged! Just fancy! Ha! ha!

He: Ha! ha! But—by Jove—that doesn't seem fair to you?

She: Oh, I don't mind it in the least. They will soon see we are only friends. We shall go on—and on—for ever, just being good friends. Commonplace people might call it love, but we shall know better.

He: But suppose you marry some day—that would spoil everything. I don't suppose your husband would understand ——

She: I am quite sure your wife would object! Women are funny that way. Very few girls understand platonic friendships.

He: Oh, I shall never marry. There's only one girl that I like well enough, and she ——

She (quickly): It isn't Alice—is it?

He: Alice! Now, you know better than that. She's not at all my style!

She: Alice is a well meaning girl. How do you like her brother Jack?

He: Good enough sort of fellow——

She: He used to call last winter. I thought him rather amusing. He tells such funny stories.

He: But frivolous—don't you think?

She: Oh, I prefer a serious man!

He: If you should ever marry, what kind of a fellow would you pick out?

She: What an idea!

He: But really! You will have to think about it some day.

She: I shall never marry. The man that I might like—well, he doesn't care for me in that way.

He: Doesn't care for you? He must be an idiot. Do I know him?

She: He has charming qualities—more so than any man I know!

He (moodily): Oh, I see—I'm not even in the race.

She (softly): Well, there's that girl you care for!

He: The men accuse you of being something of a flirt—like to play shuttlecock with hearts, and all that. Is that true?

She: Not a man I could respect.

He: Oh, hang respect! Could you care for me?

She: In that way?

He: Oh, there's only one way when you get to it——

She: How can people tell when they're really in love?

He: Oh, you know well enough—when it really happens!

She: But people confuse—all sorts of things with love nowadays. Mental attraction and sympathy.

He: Oh, look here—I didn't ask you for a cold-blooded analysis. I want—

She: What?

He: You.

She: Perhaps you only think you do. Wait a few years, and then we will be sure.

Then we may each meet other affinities. Some people have two or three, you know.

He: Oh, well—if it's a joke to you—

She: It's so ordinary to just be in love! A platonic affair is more up to date.

He: I want an answer. You can't play with me.

She: Ha, ha, ha! I've heard that somewhere before!

He: I dare say. So I suppose it must be good-bye.

She: No, wait—a minute. It's all new to me!

He: Well, try to absorb the idea and tell me——

She: It seems so funny——

He: Yes, it's much jollier to be engaged.

She: But I never thought it would happen like this.

He: Neither did I. But have you ever thought what fun it would be to stop all the talk?

She: This is certainly not like anything I have ever read.

He: No, this is the real thing.

She: Then we must have been in love from the first?

He: Certainly.

She: Why didn't you tell me before?

He: I was afraid you didn't care. You do, don't you?

She: Of course.

He: Then it's settled?

She: Yes, but I'm not sure that I wouldn't have liked the book way better.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN "ALL NERVES."

A NOTE OF ALARM.

There are ominous signs that the conditions of present day life induce a state of extreme nervous tension in women, especially married women. The danger threatens not only the happiness of many homes but the welfare of the next generation also. One instance is that of a lady at Kaiwarra, Wellington, who has been the victim of distressing nerve troubles. The following details were furnished by Mrs Mary Maher to our reporter. She stated:—"For many years my nervous system was completely shattered, and life was almost unendurable. At times I was quite unable to control myself and would start and tremble at the slightest sound. Previous to that I suffered from a serious internal complaint and was discharged from the Hospital in the belief that I could not live long. I was extremely weak and languid, and my food did not give me strength to do domestic duties. Having read how a lady, who had suffered similarly, had been cured by Dr. Williams' pink pills, my husband purchased several boxes for me. After taking two boxes a wonderful improvement was noticeable. My nerves became retoned, and I felt brighter and stronger; a continuance with Dr. Williams' pink pills cured me. The weakness, lassitude, and trembling sensations have all disappeared, and I take pleasure in performing my household duties. As a nerve tonic Dr. Williams' pink pills are unrivalled."

By retoning the nerves and enriching and increasing the blood supply Dr. Williams' pink pills cure such cases as Mrs Maher's. Various nerve diseases such as epilepsy, paralysis, neuralgia, St. Vitus' dance, hysteria, and early decay of the faculties have yielded to the great tonic effect of Dr. Williams' pink pills, which are sold by chemists and storekeepers, and by the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Wellington, price three shillings per box, six boxes sixteen and six post free. Look for the full name as substitutes are often passed off on unsuspecting persons.

The following amusing parody on the National Anthem was sung by a dissatisfied student at a supper given by the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn on the evening of the Coronation Day of Queen Victoria;

Happy and glorious—
Three half-pints 'mong four of us,
Heaven send no more of us,
God save the Queen!

LATE SPORTING.

AUCKLAND TROTTING CLUB'S SUMMER MEETING.

The opening day of the Auckland Trotting Club's Summer Meeting on Saturday last was a success in every way, as the attendance was a large one, and the sport provided of the most exciting character. Betting during the afternoon was distinctly brisk, the sum of £3089 being invested on the totalizator, which is a good advance on the amount put through on the corresponding day last year. Proceedings opened with the Maiden Trot Handicap, for which Lady R. had most supporters. The winner turned up, however, in the little thought of Hero, who won somewhat comfortably from Comet V., paying a dividend of £9 2/. The Maiden Pony Handicap followed, and for this Nancy was most in request, but she finished out of a place, Wee Tottie showing the way home to The Spray and Taffy. The Auckland Trotting Cup Handicap was the big event of the meeting, and for this a field of twelve turned out. Little Doctor was elected a red-hot favourite, with Albert Victor and Huon Leigh next in request. The race was somewhat of a surprise, as Cob, who trotted very consistently throughout, made nearly all the running, and won by over a length from Viscount, returning the good dividend of £11 7/. In the Pony Cup Handicap most support was awarded to Lady Howitzer and Bavaria, the latter winning a good race by half a length from Dolly. There was little to choose between Yum Yum and Larry in the Electric Trot Handicap as far as the betting went, but in the race itself the gelding had matters all his own way, winning easily from Comet V.

The Handicap Steeplechase was one more instance of the old adage that there is many a slip twixt the cup and the lip, for when the race appeared a certainty for Venus, who was far ahead of the field, he came to grief when nearing home, leaving Banshee and Tickle-me-gently to fight it out between themselves, the former winning by a length. In the December Handicap Trot Harold Abdullah just managed to put down a well-backed candidate in Hollywood. The son of Berlin Abdullah just reaching the post with three yards to spare. The Telephone Handicap concluded proceedings, and for this Athel was made a very warm favourite, and she justified the confidence reposed in her by winning by half a length from Wee Tottie.

AUCKLAND RACING CLUB SUMMER MEETING.

The Auckland Racing Club will make a commencement with their Summer Meeting on Wednesday next. As far as can be seen at present the fixture looks like proving one of the most successful ever held ot head-quarters. Cup Day is always a very popular one with the Auckland public, and there is bound to be a large gathering present to witness the racing:—

The following are my selection for the various events:

Trial Handicap: Solo, 1; Rosella, 2; Cavaliero, 3.

Great Northern Foal Stakes: Mr Stead's Selected.

Handicap Hurdles: Bellman, 1; Canongate, 2.

Auckland Cup: Bluejacket, 1; La Gloria, 2; Ideal, 3.

Railway Handicap: Formula, 1; Hohore, 2; The Needle, 3.

Nursery Handicap: Calibre or Cressy.

Pony Handicap: Lady Avon or Blue Paul.

Christmas Handicop: St. Ursula, 1; Honesty, 2; Peerage, 3.

Examination Humours.

"The Mirth of School Inspection" is the title Mr G. Stanley Ellis gives to his cluster of examination stories. Here are a few of the answers he has culled:—

"A professor" is "a gentleman that generally plays at balls." How true it is that an M.P. is "a gentleman who tries to make laws." "A negro is a man who eats missionaries." A school board is—and this remark seems to merit "How true!" on the margin as much as any phrase in a lady's novel from the circulating library—"a place where people talk about education to make you vote for them."

An inspector in orders was trying to make a class form words. "Now," he said, "I am a man. What kind of a man am I?" He wanted to extract the compound noun "clergyman."

"A short man, sir."

"Yes, yes," said he, a little huffed. No one likes to be called a short man, especially when he is short. "That is, I am not a particularly tall man. But that is not quite the kind of word I want. Can anyone else try?"

"Little man, sir."

"Well, that's about equal to short, isn't it? Try again."

"Ugly little man, sir."

Bores!

There are various kinds of bores. For instance, there is wild boar, and the tame bore who drives you wild. The hide of the wild boar is covered with short strong bristles which can turn the point of a spear, and affords him a certain amount of protection. The hide of the tame bore is absolutely impenetrable.

Wild boars have long ceased to roam about in this country, but a number of them are preserved in an enclosure in Windsor Forest; tame bores are still to be found in great numbers in England, and most of them are only too well preserved. Hunters are warned to avoid the tusks of the wild boar, which are sharp and inflict a nasty wound; you should also endeavour to avoid the tongue of the bore, for although not as a rule sharp it has the power of making you mad. Unless disturbed in his haunts the wild boar does not generally attack human beings: it differs in this respect from the tame bore, who sallies forth in search of his victims and runs them down even when they are most anxious to avoid him.

Years ago in the mansions of the mighty one of the principal dishes was boar's head, which was set upon the table at Christmas time with much pomp and ceremony, and even now at a fashionable dinner party a bore's head is frequently seen at the table.

In concluding this article upon bores I should like to point out with pardonable pride that I have resisted all temptation to allude to the feather and fur boas worn by ladies, and have not even so much as mentioned the boa-constrictor.

THE GREY CAVALIER

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By GUY BOOTHBY.

Author of "Dr. Nikola," "A Bid for Fortune," etc.

Christmas at Penterton Hall was like the rite of matrimony, a thing not to be taken in hand "wantonly or unadvisedly." It was a festive season which few who had participated in it are ever likely to forget. In the first place the old squire was not the sort of man to stand any nonsense. He invited you meaning that you should have a good time while you were with him. He welcomed you with the same intention. He looked after your comfort and amusements from the day that you entered his hospitable doors until you left them again. And if when that sad moment arrived you departed with the opinion that Christmas at Penterton was not what it had been described, well then you did what no other man had been known to do before you, and deserved to suffer as such. Why, the mere sight of the squire's jolly red face was sufficient to make a man enjoy himself, to say nothing of his cheery voice and inexhaustible fund of anecdotes, which everyone had heard before, but which all longed to hear again. As a host he was one man in a thousand, and when you come to his housekeeper and niece, pretty Winifred Dycie, well all you can say is that she is just one in a million, and I don't mind who knows my opinion. How it came about that the squire had never married has never been properly explained. Between ourselves, however, I fancy there is some mystery in the matter. There are not wanting people indeed who assert that the squire and his brother both loved and wooed Winifred's mother, that the younger was successful, and that the squire, like the trump he always was, and always will be, acted up to his principles, held out his hand to his rival and wished him joy. When, five years later, Winifred's father met his death on the field of battle, and his wife died of a broken heart on receiving the news, he took the little orphan girl to live with him, and gave her every scrap of his great heart. No one will ever realise how much that couple loved each other, but many who have stayed at Penterton can hazard a very good guess. If you were to listen to the old squire you would hear the most absurd stories about his darling. He would tell you how, when she was only a tiny dot of five, she would accompany him on his visits to the kennels, and pick out old Rover and Roysterer from fifteen couple or more, and never cry or even whimper when the great beasts fawned about her and endeavoured to put their paws upon her shoulders and try to lick her face. He would tell you the most extraordinary stories about her prowess in the saddle, how, "By Gad, sir, she had ridden his own pet hunter Nimrod on a certain ever to be remembered day, when the hounds met at Pinkley Gorse, and fairly floored the field, sir." And if the telling happened to be at night it is a thousand to a sixpence that he would order up another bottle of port, one of the very particular, by the way, and drink to the health of the sweetest maid who ever wore a habit. I don't think I should be very far wrong in saying that before she was twenty she had ever given the squire a moment's unhappiness. That unfortunately was to come, and it was the coming of it that constitutes this story. Needless to say, old Squire Dycie's niece was not likely to lack admirers. As a matter of fact they flocked in from all directions until the squire began to think that it would be wiser were he to issue orders that no male should be admitted within his gates without a written permit from himself. They came from north, south, east and west, and to the squire's great joy invariably went away disconsolate. How were they to know that her heart was already given and, as is often the case, to the very man of all others whom the squire was least likely to approve? Handsome, devil-may-care Dick Beverley, the Ruined Squire of Blicksford, was a charming companion of irreproachable birth and manners. As a set off, however, against these advantages, it was well known that he had squandered his patrimony, had been rusticated from Cambridge, and was in consequence the horror of virtuous mothers with marriageable daughters for many miles around. That he should have fallen in love with pretty Winifred Dycie seemed only natural, for they all did, but that she should have reciprocated his affection and have promised to be his wife seemed to be out of the proper order of things. However, it was a fact, and one that was likely to cause a considerable amount of trouble for all parties concerned in the near future. One day the young man screwed up his courage and rode over to the hall for an interview with the squire. The latter listened to him patiently and then spoke his mind.

"Impossible," he said, "quite impossible. What you ask is out of the question."

"You mean, I suppose, that you have heard all sorts of things about me. That I am hard up and have been a bit wild. I don't deny it, but if I gave you my word that I will reform and that I will not marry your niece until I have set the old place on its feet again, will you accept that as sufficient proof of my love, and sanction our engagement?"

"I can sanction nothing," the Squire answered. "I can only repeat that what you ask is impossible."

"Entreaty will not move you?"

"Nothing will move me," the other replied. "My mind is made up."

Seeing that it was useless to say anything further, Dick bade him good-bye, and that night, at a stolen meeting, in a wood behind the Hall, informed Winifred of what had occurred at the interview. Some meddlesome person told the Squire of the meeting, and he spoke to his niece upon the subject. She confessed her love, and vowed that without young Beverley life for her would be a blank. Then the Squire lost his temper, and said things for which I can assure you he was sorry afterwards. The result was a misunderstanding and a tiff, which on the Squire's part took the form of a letter to the young man in question, warning him to have no intercourse with his niece, Winifred, under the pain of his, the Squire's, severe displeasure. In less than a month he had come to hate the young man as he had never hated anyone in his life before. His very name was an abomination to him. What was more, he shepherded his niece more closely than ever, and seldom allowed her out of his sight. In consequence the lovers were not permitted to meet, and Winifred began to look pale and heavy-eyed, and life at the Hall was the reverse of cheerful. There could be no doubt that the affair was causing the dear old Squire a great amount of misery. He was not the same man at all. He had no desire to be unjust, nor, had he considered young Beverley a suitable match, would he have stood in the way for a moment. As a matter of fact he did not know much about him personally, and what little he did know was told him by busy-bodies who doubtless had their own reasons for desiring to prove the young fellow a villain of the deepest dye. On one pitiable occasion, he was driven into saying something which at any other time he would rather have cut his tongue out than have uttered. When he left the drawing-room, where the interview had taken place, and returned to his own room, Gregory, his ancient butler, informed him that Mrs Gibbs, the housekeeper, desired to speak to him.

"Send her in, send her in," said the Squire a little sharply, for he was not in the humour for domestic worries. Then to himself, he added: "What on earth can the woman have to say to me?"

It turned out that Mrs Gibbs' errand was of a peculiar nature. A domestic crisis was imminent and chaos reigned in the servants' hall. Put into plain words it amounted to this: the Grey Cavalier, the famous Penterton ghost, who was known to pace the quadrangle at the back of the house when any great trouble was about to happen to the family, had made his appearance on three occasions of late, and had been plainly seen by a footman, a lady's maid, and a housemaid. The footman had been reduced to a state of collapse, the females to a condition of idiocy. According to their statements he was standing in the moonlit quadrangle at the time, gazing sadly at the house. Then, with a wave of his hand, he had disappeared in the direction of the chapel, back to his tomb behind the altar. They indignantly denied any possibility of their having been mistaken. They had seen his great grey boots, his love locks, his lace ruffles, and his grey beaver hat, and as a result nothing could induce them to stay after their month was up, or to cross the Quadrangle after dark.

"Your maids are a pack of fools, and the footman is something worse," cried the irritable Squire, not, however, without a thrill of satisfaction as he thought of the story he would now be able to tell concerning the famous Spectre. However, he sent Mrs. Gibbs about her business, and then sat down at his writing table to pen a letter to his best friend in the world. He told him of his difficulty regarding young Beverley, of his niece's state of health, and asked his advice. Two days later an answer arrived, and in it the old Colonel promised to do his best to exorcise the fatal passion that had taken possession of the pretty Winifred, and for this reason he would spend Christmas at the Hall, and bring as many of his young friends as he could collect with him. Now, if the Colonel knew one eligible young man he knew a dozen, the respectability, wealth and culture of whom he was prepared to guarantee with his life. What was more, he knew half a dozen girls of transcendent beauty and accomplishments, who would act as excellent foils and would put Winifred upon her mettle. With such a force at his back it would be strange indeed, he argued, if they were unable to rout Beverley, and drive him from the field, never to return. Although Winifred protested against such an invasion, the necessary invitations were despatched, and in due course accepted by the parties concerned. In the meantime Beverley was supposed to be in London, and Winifred's heart was about as sad as it was possible for the heart of a maiden to be. Indeed, the only person who seemed to be enjoying the festive season at all, was the grey ghost of Sir Michael, who, within the previous month, had been twice seen on his accustomed promenade. The result was so upsetting from a domestic point of view that, instead of venerating him as he had been brought up to do, the Squire began to look upon his supernatural relative as a nuisance second only to Beverley himself. Though he protested that it was all fancy, and those who declared that they had seen the apparition must have dreamt it, I have an idea that he was no more disposed to pay a visit to the Quadrangle at night than were the maid servants themselves. What was more, he confined his visits to the chapel to daylight, and anxiously looked forward to the time when his visitors should arrive, and by so doing create a diversion.

At last the great day came, and the stables found their time fully taken up meeting trains and conveying guests to the Hall. Holly and mistletoe decorated the corridors, great logs spluttered on the fires, and all was gaiety and merrymaking. The Squire, to all appearances, was jollity itself. He had a warm welcome for each new arrival, a joke for the men, and, well, if the truth must be told, a kiss for the girls. The seeds of some promising flirtations were sown at afternoon tea, and by the time the dressing gong sounded for dinner, all was as merry as a marriage bell. Indeed, it was not until late in the evening, just as the bedroom candlesticks made their appearance, that a damper was cast upon the spirits of the party. Then, one young lady, more courageous than the rest, turned to the Squire and asked if it were true, as her maid had told her, that the Grey Cavalier had been making his appearance rather too frequently of late.

The Squire gazed at her in amazement. The temerity of the young lady staggered him. As a rule the Grey Cavalier was never mentioned, save with bated breath, and never by any chance within an hour of bedtime. He noticed also that Winifred's hand trembled, and that she turned deathly pale. He remembered the fact that she had always entertained a great fear of the Spectre, and his warm old heart went out to the girl for that reason, and, perhaps, if the truth must be told, for still another. He was well aware that she loved young Beverley, and he was filled with sorrow that it should have fallen to his lot to have been compelled to differ from her as to the merits of the man of her choice. However, as the matter stood, it was impossible for him to draw back, and accordingly he was forced not only to let her suffer, but to suffer himself at the same time. He thought of this when his guests had departed to their various bedrooms, and he and Winifred stood at the bottom of the great staircase, bidding each other good-night. His old heart was troubled, and it was made none the easier when Winifred clasped her arms about his neck and said: "Dear old uncle, you must try to think better of me. You have been so good to me, and I have repaid your kindness so poorly. You will never know how grateful I am to you for it all."

"Pooh, pooh," said the squire, "you mustn't talk nonsense, little girl. Run away to bed and come down to breakfast in the morning with the roses on your cheeks."

He noticed that the girl heaved a heavy sigh as she turned to go upstairs, and though he could not understand the reason he was even more upset than before. He began to wonder whether young Beverley might not, with encouragement, turn out better than he expected, and if he should give him the chance. This led him to think of his dear dead brother, and of Winifred's mother, both of whom at that very moment were perhaps watching him and sighing at his treatment of their orphan child. He accordingly heaved another heavy sigh, more doleful than the first, and accompanied old Gregory on his locking up operations with an even sadder heart than ever. He had not retired to his couch more than a couple of hours, however, a sleepless couple, by the way, when the unmistakable click of an iron latch in the quadrangle below reached his ears. What could it mean? He sprang out of bed and hastened to the window. He was only just in time, for there, crossing the open space, was a tall, grey figure, habited in the costume of a Cavalier. It was a frosty night, and the moon shone so cold and clear that every detail of his costume was plainly observable, even to the love locks and the long grey boots. For the first time in his life the squire was looking upon the apparition whose appearance was supposed to foretell death or disaster to his family. Suddenly, however, something struck him as being somewhat singular, and when he had seen the figure disappear by the small door into the chapel on the other side, he left the window and began to dress. Then, taking a candle, he departed from his chamber and set off on a tour of inspection. The house was in total darkness and as silent as a grave. He did not hesitate, however, but pushed on, passed the billiard room, passed his own study, until he reached the door in the long corridor, which opened into the chapel itself. Once there he blew out the light and softly opened the door. Creeping in he found the worshipping place of his ancestors in total darkness, save where it was lighted by the moonbeams which entered through the lancet windows on the further side. The marble effigies of his long departed relatives showed stiff and dark above their tombs, but in the centre of the aisle stood two figures whom he clearly recognised, one was the grey Cavalier; the other

Winifred, his niece. From his place of vantage he could plainly overhear all that they were saying. Their conversation ran somewhat as follows:—

"Are you sure, Dick, dear, that you mean what you say?" whispered the girl, who, by the way, had her arms round the Cavalier's neck.

"Quite sure," the ghost of the grey Cavalier replied. "The old man loves you, and though he doesn't trust me I'll be dashed if I'll be such a mean cad as to carry you off and break his heart while there's a chance of winning him round to our way of thinking. He'll like me all the better when he sees how hard I'm trying to be worthy of you, and, on the other hand, just think what life here would be to him without you, little woman."

"I wish, Dick, dear, he knew you as you are. He has only heard the things evil disposed people have said about you. He doesn't know how good you really are."

"Not very good, I'm afraid," the other replied. "If I've improved a bit of late I owe it all to you and your gentle influence. But I am trying to pull up, and that at least is something. And now I must be off. You say there is a ball on Boxing Night, so I suppose I must wait until another night to see you."

"Cannot you come then?"

What! The grey Cavalier make his appearance on such a festive occasion? If you think you could manage to slip away for a quarter of an hour I might try."

"I'm sure I could. At anyrate I'll do my best. But isn't it a great risk to run?"

"Risk? Not a bit of it. In that case the Spectre will be seen at midnight precisely."

The Squire waited to hear no more, but, softly opening the door, picked up his candle and fled to his own room to think over all he had heard. So far as that particular night was concerned his rest was likely to be disturbed. In the morning, however, he was a different being; he had come to an understanding with himself, and was brighter in consequence. His face at breakfast said as much. Never had such a Christmas Day been known at Penterton Hall. The Squire was like a new man: he proposed everyone's health at lunch, and conducted himself like an amiable lunatic during the remainder of the day. Boxing Day arrived in due course, and discovered no change in his condition. Winifred scarcely knew what to make of his behaviour. Poor child, the dance of that evening presented no chance of enjoyment for her. Before dusk the Squire summoned the Colonel and two or three of the young men to his study and kept them there for upwards of an hour. It was to be observed that when they emerged they seemed to be staggering under the weight of a great responsibility.

Of all the balls that have taken place at Penterton that of which I am about to attempt a description will always be considered the most remarkable. One of the most noticeable features was the fact that shortly before midnight the Colonel and the young men aforesaid disappeared from the ball room. Winifred followed their example a little later. The Squire also was not to be seen.

The clock in the belfry had scarcely struck twelve before the door of the ball room opened and the Squire entered, escorting his niece. She was very pale, and seemed much put out about something. Almost at the same moment the door at the further end of the room opened, and a singular figure, attired after the manner of the reign of the first Charles, entered, escorted by the Colonel and his stalwart aides. Winifred, on seeing him uttered a cry, and would have run towards him but that the Squire held her back.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the dear old fellow began, looking round at those present as he spoke, "all of you have heard of the famous Grey Cavalier of Penterton Hall. You will in the future be able to say that you have seen him face to face, and that he is not as terrible as you have been led to suppose. At last the Spectre has been laid by the heels, and in saying that I have to make a confession to you. My dear friends, I feel that I am very much to blame. For a long time past I have listened to the voice of public opinion, and refused to hear that of love. The first I am about to put on one side; upon the other for the future I will pin my faith. Mr Beverley, you have played me a trick in the matter of the Grey Cavalier, but I am sure if I give you my darling's hand you will show me that my confidence has not been misplaced. From this moment we will let bygones be bygones, and now," (here he turned to the musicians) "play up; let us have some music."

Of course, we all knew the story of the unhappy love affair, and we were all, or at any rate those of us who were married, delighted at the denouement. Winifred's face was a picture to see, and as for the Ghost, well, if ever the Grey Cavalier was half as happy as he appeared to be as he whirled his lady love over the ball room floor, he must have been as jolly a spectre as could have been found throughout the length and breadth of the land.

They are to be married in three months time, and the Squire has commanded our presence at the ceremony. Everyone agrees that Beverley is a reformed character, and if he is at all grateful for his happiness, he must surely reflect that he owes it to the lucky thought which induced him to take upon himself the rôle of the Grey Cavalier of Penterton Hall.

A Mistletoe Faury:

A Story of Christmas Eve.

By FERGUS HUME.

Author of "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab," Etc.

Squire Amyot was not a miser, though there were many who said he was. He was something of a hermit, it is true, and his mode of life was nothing if not economic. But he was indifferent utterly to the world, and what it said of him; so that it is not difficult to understand how the spiteful tongues were set a-wagging. There was no ostensible crime with which to brand the man, so they perforce fell back upon the charge of avarice. They knew not that the misanthrope is not of necessity penurious; because he is a misanthrope. And they seemed oblivious to the fact that an unsuspecting credulous nature can be so crushed, so deceived, so grievously wounded, as to recoil within itself to excess and shrink from any contact with the world. And this indeed was what had happened to Gilbert Amyot.

He was a recluse in every sense of the word—and as ascetic too as any monk of the Thebaid. So far as his experience went this world was full of scoundrels, traitors, seekers after self. And he had done with it. He had never married for the good reason that the one woman he had chosen for his own had jilted him. She had preferred a wealthier suitor. And he had not felt inclined to try again. For thirty years he had sought for one honest man, for one truthful heart. But his search had been in vain. And so he had retired to his own domain, far away from the hollow, noisy, strenuous world. And here at least he was able to avoid association with the seekers after self whom he abhorred. And here he was still this snowy December.

The Hall was three miles distant from any human habitation. For that alone he loved it. It was a quaint Tudor building of grey stone, richly ornate, and ivy clothed. There it lay in the heart of the great woods, for all the world like the palace of some Sleeping Beauty. When you emerged from the woods you came on the wide moors, so desolate. But the trees were all round the house, and the wintry wind whistled through them now. For many days the snow had fallen fast and thick, and the ground was masked as with a white coverlet. This was the seventieth Christmas of Gilbert Amyot, and it found him the true misanthrope and introspective egotist.

One servant only did he keep—they urged it as further proof that he was a miser—and she an old dame of sixty years. They called her Granny Jee. She came from the three mile distant hamlet of Saxton. Her history was a simple one of hardship and unceasing toil. Her husband was long since dead. But she had one son. He was a clerk in London. She had always dreaded lest she should come at last to the workhouse. And so when she had heard that Squire Amyot's housekeeper had died she had lost no time but had tramped out to the Hall in quest of her post. Perhaps because she was an excellent cook, or because she was alone in the world, or because she was as fond of her own fireside as any cat—or perhaps for all these reasons, Amyot had taken her in, and the countryside had not been a little surprised thereat. All this had happened fifteen years ago, and Granny Jee was still at the Hall. She occupied a small bedchamber in the rear of the house, and was but little seen. And the Squire came more nearly to trusting her completely than he had thought possible. On her part the old dame worried him not at all; and he took but small account of her.

Now none of the county neighbours ever called on Squire Amyot. The most frequent visitors to the Hall were of the genus vagrant; and with them did Granny Jee deal after her own way. Assuredly they came, as well she knew, for no good purpose. For there were rumours of immeasurable wealth stored therein. Yet in truth it was that although Amyot spent but small portion of his income his surplus funds were straightway well invested, and of actual money he had but little in the house. It is true there were both gold and silver plate, but these were seldom, if ever, taken from the strong room. He used to spread them out there sometimes, and examine them piece by piece in the light of a powerful lamp, and think how beautiful they were. And it may be that Granny Jee had seen the treasure thus exposed, and babbled not wisely but too well of all its splendours on those rare occasions when she visited her home. But be that as it may, Amyot Hall was commonly reported to contain the treasures of Peru. And so it was that a strange episode befell on this particular Christmas Eve.

On the morning of that day Granny Jee, in a great state of perturbation, made her appearance in the room which her master reserved wholly to himself. It was a large apartment this, with three windows looking out on to the terrace, and facing the tangled coppice which encroached nigh up to the house. The walls were lined with oak and draped with hangings of red velvet faded now beyond recognition of their pristine shade. Where there were no hangings there were books—many of them. The Squire ate and slept here; indeed, the Squire lived here. His bedstead—a quite unpretentious one of iron—was concealed from view by a screen. It stood in one corner of the room. The table whereon he took his meals stood in another: and a large desk occupied the centre. It was littered with papers in disorder. He toiled far into the night at this desk; for he was in the throes of a work on the Empire of Islam, Religious and Political; perhaps by way of reducing the rigours of his seclusion. But he was fascinated by and engrossed in his subject, and often he would find the days evaporate "like ice in the sunlight." That was his way of putting it, because he remembered the phrase of Balzac.

And so it was with fear and trembling that Granny Jee intruded on this day before Christmas upon the seclusion of her master, for she knew so well how impatient he was of interruption. She saw no reason to hope that he would be less so now than usually.

She stepped timidly round to the corner of his desk. He looked up fiercely, keeping one finger to mark the page of the book he was reading. For the moment he held the woman in the fascination of his gaze. How strangely contrasted these two aged people! Granny Jee was so young looking for her age. She had no wrinkles to speak of, and her complexion was almost an anachronism, so pink it was and so smooth. It compared oddly with the whiteness of her hair. But Granny Jee had never taxed her brain, and it had reciprocated her kind use of it by inflicting nothing approaching physical ravage upon her. To do honour to this visit she had assumed her very ancient gown of hard black silk and her muslin fichu, too—not forgetting the mittens for her hands. She looked so dignified and comely. You could quite believe it true what they said—that Granny Jee had good blood in her veins. Amyot even thought as much.

Now the Squire looked for all the world like a magician of mediaeval times. His skin was like parchment,

Many, many wrinkles were there, but oh, so fine as to be almost imperceptible. His forehead was high and bald. His nose was as the beak of a hawk. His hair was as of silver where it fringed his temples, and at the back of his head. His beard was white and long. He was hoary with age—dignified and stately of mien. He wore a skull cap of black velvet, and a black velvet dressing-gown, too, girdled at the waist. You would have said he was some astrologer—a doer of dark deers in the dark ages. What a fitting occupant for the lugubrious room!

He spoke to the woman.

"What do you want, Mrs Jee?"

Granny Jee dropped a courtesy. "Oh, if you please, sir, to-morrow's Christmas Day."

"Well, well, then to-night's Christmas Eve—the almanac has clearly told me that—what of it?"

"If you please, sir, I wish to go to Saxton to-day and return to-morrow."

"Oh, indeed—to put it shortly, you wish to spend the night away. Why, pray?"

Granny Jee grew more ill at ease. Her master had such a peculiar way of putting things.

"I am growing old, sir—old, indeed. And I have not spent a Christmas at home for these many years, and I should like to see the mummers and hear the carols. Many a merry time had I there in my young days—dead and gone now, deary me—dead and gone!"

"Indeed, indeed—so you want to go a-junketing at your age, do you?"

"Oh, sir; why not, sir? Does it not do good to the old to watch the sports of the young? I feel I do want to spend one more Christmas at Saxton before I die, sir."

"H'm." And Squire Amyot raked his beard with his lean, long finger. He always did that in moments of hesitancy or deliberation.

"And what about my food, pray?" he asked.

"Well, there's cold victuals for to-day, sir, and I'll be back in time to get your breakfast, sir."

"So far as that goes, I am content. But I am not quite certain in my own mind, I may tell you, Mrs Jee, that this desire for participation in the revels of youth is your real reason for going."

Now Granny Jee trembled and turned pale.

"Oh, sir, why should you th'nk so?"

"Because I am suspicious, Mrs Jee. Because the world has made me doubt everyone—trust no one. And I have observed for the last week or so that you have not been quite yourself—no, not quite yourself."

"I hope I have done my best, sir."

"Oh, you have earned your money as usual, if that's what you mean. But you evade my suggestion, Mrs Jee. That of itself does not reassure me. About a week ago I observed you in conversation with a tramp at the back of the house—yes, a tramp. Now, don't weep, Mrs Jee, but listen to what I have to say to you. He was a black-bearded skeleton of a man, this. I saw you in tears then, as I see you in tears now. I noticed also that he went away with a goodly supply of food."

"Sir, I will be plain with you." She smoothed her apron, and seemed as though making an effort to overcome herself. "The man, sir, was a clerk from London. He was in the same office as my son, sir; and knowing from him that I was here, he came to tell me, sir"—she burst out weeping anew—"to tell me, sir, that both he and my son had been turned away."

"Indeed, and for what rascality were they turned away?"

"Oh, for none, sir, believe me, sir, for none. Business was bad and some of them were dismissed; they amongst the number. The man was starving, sir, and for all I know, my son may be in the same plight. God help him. If you remember, sir, I have been over to Saxton once or twice lately. It was to send money to my poor child."

"H'm. Very creditable of you, I am sure. Well, Mrs Jee, your explanation for the time being is satisfactory. But understand, please, he must not come here again. Any tramps loitering about the premises I shall have locked up. As you know, there are articles of great value here—they might be stolen, Mrs Jee."

"Sir, if you suspect me——"

"Now that is quite enough. I do not suspect you. If I did you would not remain here. You can go to Saxton and return in the morning."

"Thank you, sir, thank you. And, sir, if you please, the carol singers were wanting to come around to-night."

"Very good of them, I'm sure. But I detest music of that order."

"I merely mentioned it, sir; just to show that you would not be quite alone—for it is lonely here, God knows."

"Yes, quite right, God knows, and Knowing, God protects me. You may spare me the usual platitudes. I have an excellent revolver, and if your singers or anyone else comes here under the plea of roaring their carols, they shall taste of its quality, I promise you. You can go, Mrs Jee."

Mrs Jee went, dropping a courtesy as she had done when she entered.

"A hard man, a hard man," she murmured, "never an offer of help for my poor son in his need. Ah, God, this is like to be a bitter, bitter Christmas for me."

As she was leaving the room Gilbert Amyot divined what was passing through her mind; was he a hard man? He thought he might safely answer "no." To the world at large, yes, he was hard, and rightly so, he held. But he believed in God, and he knew how to do good in secret. How distressed the old woman had been about her son. He felt sorry for her. He would do something to help her. No doubt her story of the tramp was quite true. He was a clerk, and he was a tramp, and he had been telling her how they had been dismissed in his office. Only he went just a little further, since he had levelled something more than a glance at the two of them. He was sure from what he had seen that this man was the son of Granny. "Poor old thing; she goes to Saxton not to send him money, but to give it to him. Well, I should not grudge her that pleasure even though he—as he surely will—prove ungrateful. What base ingratitude there is in the world—worst of all ingrat'tude from son to parent! Perhaps the fellow was dishonest—more likely than not! Oh, but I must help him—for old Granny's sake I must he'p h'm. I suppose I could not have a more fitting time than this. In one respect at least I must be seasonable. I will be seasonable."

And so he thought on.

All that day the old woman kept away from her master. His meals were served and removed as by invisible hands. Only at the fall of dusk did he see her again. Then she told him she was ready to go.

He assented. He did not even raise his eyes from the page which held them. "I'll expect you in the morning to serve my breakfast," that was all he said.

Away on the frozen snow trudged the old woman, her skirt kilted up. How cold it was—but not so cold as he. How hard his heart! How cruel! That was what so many said of Gilbert Amyot.

With the darkness came more snow. The Squire looked out and saw the white flakes falling, in the blackness of the night. He must make himself comfortable, he thought. Such a night it was. So he closed the shutter, and poked the fire into a right royal blaze. Then he partook of the frugal meal laid for him by Mrs. Jee. Perhaps an extra glass of port would not be amiss, as it was Christmas eve. A pipe, too, was comforting, so he chose the one he liked the best and filled it. How good a friend tobacco to solitary man! Let the snow fall, let the wind howl, let the thermometer run down into its very bulb. How snug it was in here. Christmas Eve, yes another Christmas Eve had come. Of course it had come—that was quite natural. And he was here in the old hall alone—more alone than ever on this night. But then he was always least alone when by himself. Why did retrospection force itself upon him? He found no pleasure in it—Childe Roland had not found less. Yet his thoughts would go back and back and back. The old times when he had mingled with his fellows were not pleasant to recall. By a woman scorned, by his so-called friends betrayed. How bitter it was to think of all that. Positively he could not recall one human being who had not been given over to self. Self, self, self—that was what everyone of them lived for. Peace on earth and good-will to man forsooth! What a farce! As he thought of these things the very wine lost its taste—even the tobacco. His memories were all unpleasant—all, all quite cheerless.

The fire roared up the chimney, and the logs splintered and burst into sparks, and outside the snow still fell in a never ending blinding veil. Ten o'clock already! In a couple of hours they would set the bells a ringing, in token of the birth of Christ. And there would be Judas kisses, and taunted friendship, and expressions of sincere goodwill, and well-wishing, and underneath all would be hollow, rotten, faithless. Oh, for one righteous man uncorroded by the acid of self. May Christ, who was born this night, have mercy on mankind of His creation!

He grew weary. There were yet two hours before he would seek rest. It occurred to him to visit the strong room. Why, he did not know. He could have assigned no reason for the impulse. But he obeyed it. He took up a hand lamp, and he walked through the long passage chilled by the icy breath of the night. The house was large and still and dark. There was no sign of life, all the rooms were closed up—given over to dust and silence. There were the portraits of his ancestors looking down upon him from the walls. He wondered, had they felt as bitterly as he? The echo of his foot tread on the floor rang oh, so hollow. The place was as full of strange noises as a seashell. He unlocked the door of the strong room, and left it open while he lighted the lamps. They were fixed to the walls many of them. The place blazed now like a shrine. He was glad he had had them put there. The walls and floor were of stone; so was the roof, which was arched. There was a screen before the door to keep away the strong draught from the passage. The iron boxes were all there safe enough. He opened them. What beautiful things were in them: plates and cups and vases and trays all of gold and silver. How exquisite they looked with the strong light playing on them, especially that chased chalice in gold, the plunder of some Spanish galleon. It had come down to him from an Elizabethan ancestor. And that ornate silver tray, too, so wonderfully wrought in mythological design by the master hand of Cellini. He set up the loving cups, he set up the vases of silver, the gorgeous centre pieces, the table ornaments. Oh, what a number there were! Then came forks and spoons, and knives and dishes, all in silver and richly gilt. They were very beautiful. He could imagine what a miser would have felt at the sight of such a hoard. Thank God, he was no harpagon.

"Dross, dross—mere dross," he said aloud. "And the whole of it not worth one honest heart. Yet how many souls would it not buy. What a bait for Satan to angle with!"

He stopped. He held his breath. Surely that was a footstep: and no stealthy one either. Not that of a thief. On, on, pattering along towards the strong room it came. It was quite light hearted. What on earth was it? He would not confess to fear, but instinctively his hand went to the revolver in his pocket. He felt a chill run through him, and he seemed to realise more than ever his age. He was old: old and alone, no match for any able-bodied man. No soul would hear him call. Yet he smiled grimly and held his weapon the tighter. He would shoot down the foremose of them if there were more than one. He had removed the screen so that the light shot out into the darkness of the passage. He waited. Still the same sound: such a light, little step it was. Again he waited. Then quite a small white figure came into the radiance.

"A child—a child," he gasped.

And so it was a child—a tiny little girl of not more than 5 years. There she stood, blinking her blue eyes in the light before him. Such big eyes they were and so blue—he could see that even by this light—and curly hair of golden glint and a sweet little button of a mout pursed up ever so gravely. A little Christmas angel truly in the whitest of white frocks, and daintiest of shoes, and round her waist were wreaths of mistletoe, and in her hand a branch of it, all berries.

He stared, he could not speak. Whence came she? From the skies? He sat down, and lo, she pattered up to his knee and placed her tiny hand in his, and looked up at him oh, so wistfully.

"I'se Dolly; who's you?"

"Dear little girl, who are you; where do you come from, who is with you, child?"

"Old 'ooman don away. Dolly's a fairy. Take Dolly up."

He lifted her on his knee. She seemed quite warm. She must have had a cloak around her outside. Someone must have brought her into the passage. How strange it all was! And why was she decked out so with mistletoe? He could learn nothing from her. But she seemed fascinated with the glitter of the things around. In her delight she clapped her hands. Again and again she clapped them.

"How pitty—oh, how pitty. Do div Dolly someting—some tickle ting to pay wif."

He handed her a silver cup, quite a small one. Could it be Mrs Jee the child meant? If so it must be she who had brought her into the house. What if she were lurking round now in watch for the success of her trick. But why, why—where was the reason of it all? He determined to search.

"Will Dolly stay here and play with the pretty things," he said. What a sweetly, pretty child she was.

"Ess, ess." She was not the least bit afraid. "Dolly pay all by sef-sef. Dolly dood. 'As oo dot sweety-one for Dolly?"

"I'll bring you one, dear child."

He took a lamp and went off. What could it mean? He still held the revolver tight in one hand. It was best, he thought, to be prepared for any emergency. Right into the back of the house he went and searched and searched. But not a trace of Mrs Jee or anybody. All was safe. The windows were barred. The door was locked. Nothing could be seen, nothing heard—nothing save the wuthering of the wind round the house and the gentle fall of the flakes as they were drifted on to the panes. He went back to the child. As he passed by the door of his own room the clock there struck eleven.

He found Dolly still entranced, and so merry. Evidently the child had had some sleep before she came. For she seemed very wide awake. He felt helpless and perplexed. What was he to do with her? Then his eye caught a piece of paper pinned to her dress. It had fluttered loose. There was writing on it. He picked it up and read:

"Sir, you will be robbed this night. Your only chance of safety lies with the child. Keep her in the strong room. Watch there at half-past eleven."

He did not recognise the writing. Could it be a plot—a plot to murder him! No, it was from a friend. He felt sure of it, suspicious as he was. Then an idea came to him; it grew. He began to understand. Yes, the presence of this dear child would be his best protection—his only safeguard. His mind was made up. He replaced the screen, and took her on his knee."

"Dear child," he said, slowly. "I want you to listen to me. "Say this after me—say, 'God sees you.'"

"Dod sees oo." She looked shyly now from under her mistletoe crown.

"Say it again, dear, 'God sees you.'"

"Dod sees 'oo."

"That's right, Dolly. Do you think you can remember that? Now you are going to be a good little girl, and sit in this chair. And by-and-by a big man will come in at that door, and then you will say to him, 'God sees you.' You understand, dear?"

"Ess. Dod sees 'oo." She was quite serious. Then it seemed to strike her it was a new game, and she laughed: "Dod sees 'oo, Dod sees 'oo. Dat's funny," she said, merrily. "Dolly knows what to say to the big man. Dod sees 'oo."

The old man looked at his watch. It was already the half hour. His mysterious visitor might be expected at any moment. He placed the child in the chair directly opposite the door. Oh, how strange it all was! She sitting there like a little white angel, wreathed in her mistletoe 'mid the glitter of silver and gold, and he with his revolver, and the bright light on them both.

He slipped behind the screen and beckoned to the child to hush, and she was so quiet, still playing with the silver cup. "Dod sees 'oo," she piped

out merrily again, but his finger held in warning silenced her. He waited and listened. No sound. Again he listened, then he heard. What a different tread was this, so stealthy, so wary. Vice on tiptoe, of a truth. It came nearer. There was a whole world of meaning in each step. For this was a maiden crime, and it seemed as if the man's heart failed him, as if at the eleventh hour some good in him were fighting for supremacy and he were undecided whether to heed or no. Still he came on. Approach, pause, recoil! Then a despairing rush forward, and a mental oath to do or die, and the final step which brought him into the light of the doorway.

Still Amyot stayed behind the screen. There was a hole in it through which he could see. It was as he had surmised—the black bearded tramp, whom the week before he had seen in converse with Mrs Jee. But the tramp was white faced now, and shaking and silent. He stood transfixed at the sight of the child enshrined there, a very virginal image amid the radiance and the glitter of it all.

"Dod sees 'oo, dadda," she said.

"Dolly!" he gasped. "Dolly, Dolly, how did you come here?"

"Old 'ooman," she said, slipping from off the chair. "See, dadda, these pitty tings. Be kind old man div dis to Dolly."

The thief threw a terrified glance around. He looked at the gold and silver lying there in all profusion. Then he looked at the child, and again at the gold and silver. And then the child stepped up to him and placed the cup within his hand. He caught her up in his arms and pressed her to him with all the love he bore her. The silver cup fell to the ground. The child's eyes followed it. Her lip was pouting.

"Come, Dolly dear, come with dadda."

"Dolly want de pitty ting."

He hesitated. She begged him.

"No, dear child; the pretty thing belongs here. Dolly must not have it. Dadda must not take it."

"I am glad you have to come to that conclusion, Mr Jee."

With an exclamation the man turned. He hugged the child more closely to him. He saw the squire before him. He made as if to rush from the room, but he seemed powerless to move. And Dolly buried her little face in his shoulder, and cried, oh, so bitterly!"

"Had you not better finish what you came to do? Is that all you would take from here?" The squire was pointing to the child.

"Yes, all. I want nothing more."

"Yet I think you came for more, Mr Jee."

"Yes, I came for—for those things; but they are as nothing to me now. I have not touched them. How do you know my name? How came my dear child here?"

"Ask your mother. She will tell, unless I am much mistaken. This is your first crime—"

"I have committed no crime," said the man fiercely.

"Ah, a casuist, I see. But come, consider; I am alone in this house, and I am old; you had better complete your work."

"No." He hung his head.

"Dolly's so tiredy tiredy, Dadda." She nestled close in to the shoulder of her father. "Dod sees 'oo," she murmured, and murmuring it she went off to sleep.

The tears were rolling slowly down the lean face of the man. Still he held tight to the child. She was breathing so softly, sleeping so sweetly. He feared almost to move lest he should wake her. Yet he must go. How had she come there—whoever could it be? But thank God she was still his. And the awful thought came upon him—oh, the horror of it—that he was to lose her. They would take her from him, imprison him, punish him for crime, for crime; he, her father, a criminal! Oh, what had he done?

"My God," he said, as he realised it, "you will not send me to prison? Say, sir, speak, say you will not send me to prison? You will not take her from me. I have been starving, I am starving. God help me."

"God has helped you, man—helped you through that sweet child. Thank Him, thank her. I would not punish her- you can go."

"God bless you, sir."

"You had better follow me."

He extinguished the lamps in the strong room, and closed the door to, and led the way to his own room. At the end of the passage he paused. Dolly was still sleeping soundly.

"Now you can call your mother."

"My mother, sir!—my mother is at home."

"I think not. Call her, I say—or I will. Mrs. Jee, Mrs. Jee. . . ."

There was no answer. Yet he felt certain that she was there. He called again. Then slowly from out of a corner of the dark passage, the old woman emerged, her handkerchief was to her face, and she was crying bitterly. She laid one hand on the arm of her son.

"It was to save you from yourself, dearie—to save you from yourself. The dear, sweet child. I knew you could not do it wth her there."

"Come in, Mrs. Jee. You—" (turning to the man) "you had better eat."

"Sir, I—I—"

"Eat, man, I say, and drink."

He sat down to the table. But he did not let go the child. The woman took her from him, and laid her gently down. Tehn he ate and drank, oh, so gratefully. For he had starved—starved that the little one should feed when it had been that there was not for both.

For some minutes, silence. Once or twice little Dolly sighed. The Squire was in his chair, a very tumult in his heart—that heart they said was of stone. Oh, but he knew it was not, now more than ever he knew. Even though he should prove the direst ingrate he must look after this man henceforth. And his good mother, too, she must never want. What a good soul she was. And dear little Dolly, perhaps she had saved his life. Who knows? Dear little Dolly. If she had not been there. He did not like the thought, and banished it.

The clock on the mantel shelf struck twelve. How different it had all been two hours ago. It was still snowing and howling outside. They must not go into the bitter night. Hark: those were the bells. It was Christmas morn. The wind was that way: they sounded out so clear. He went to the window and looked out, the snow was ceasing, there was a rift in the sky. Was this night to mark a change in his life? He almost thought it was. There were dark figures there on the lawn standing all in line.

The carols, of course. So they had come in spite of what he had said, in spite of his revolver. Well, let them stay, let them sing. They were singing, he could hear them. They saw him at the window, and were coming nearer. What was it they sang?

> Mother Mary meek and lowly,
> Nurses now the sleeping Child;
> He is come, so pure and holy,
> To save us from temptation wild.

He looked at his dear little child—she should be his now to care for. How peacefully she slept. "Dod sees 'oo." Would he ever forget those words? The man, her father, was on his knees beside her. His arms were round her.

"For this and all His mercies to me a sinner, thank God," he cried.

And Gilbert Amyot said "Amen" to that.

A Christmas Hymn

No tramp of marching armies,
No banners flaming far;
A lamp within a stable,
And in the sky a Star.

Their hymns of peace and gladness
To earth the angels brought,
Their Gloria in Excelsis
To earth the angels taught;

When in the lowly manger
The Holy Mother Maid
In tender adoration
Her Babe of Heaven laid.

Born lowly in the darkness,
And none so poor as He,
The little children of the poor
His very own shall be.

No rush of hostile armies then,
But just the huddling sheep;
The angels singing of the Christ,
And all the world asleep.

No flame of conquering banners,
No legions sent afar;
A lamp within a stable,
And in the sky a Star.

Margaret E. Sangster.

In Cornwall Christmas eve is a special holiday with children, who are allowed to sit up till midnight and drink to the "Mock"—as the Yule log is called there.

Queer Rites of Yuletide.

PECULIAR MINGLING OF CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN CUSTOMS IN THE EAST.

PAST LIVES TO-DAY.

When a search is to be made for something new in the way of Christmas legends and observances, the best plan, though it may appear paradoxical, is to look for something old.

There are many Yuletide practices which in nearly all parts of Christendom fell into disuse centuries ago, but which are still in vogue yearly in certain remote places. The majority of the ancient observances have lived in story if not in fact, and to readers of Christmas lore they have become much more than a thrice-told tale. Others of the rites have been forgotten in western Europe and America; yet if the steps be turned at this season to the region of the Black Mountain, just beyond the Adriatic, there will be found a primitive condition of Christmas ceremonial that will delight the antiquarian.

The vicinity of Petrovatz in Bosnia is an ideal place for a debtor's residence. There, once a year at Christmastime, all debtors and creditors must come together and kiss one another. The debtors are supposed to pay their creditors if they can, but if they can't they make excuses to the creditors and the matter is declared off for another year. This seems to be a sort of pleasing "stand-him-off" arrangement that could be possible nowhere save among the guileless Easterners. This custom has prevailed in the countries to the east of Austria from a time to which man's memory runneth not.

A BLACK MOUNTAIN CHRISTMAS.

Lest any should suppose that the peasants of Bosnia and Montenegro, and especially those of the "Black Mountains" proper, do not earn their Christmas feast, it should be known that for six weeks before the anniversary of the Nativity the people do not put meat of any kind into their mouths. Perhaps nowhere else in the world can be found so curious an interningling of Christian and pagan rites at Yuletide. The peasants even mingle relics of ancestor worship with their observance of Christ's birthday. One of their practices at this season dates from a time when iron was unknown by their forbears.

The night before this Eastern people begin their six weeks' fast prior to Christmas day all the meat dishes in every house in the land are put upon the tables. When supper is ready each member of the family takes a bit of each kind of food and proceeds with it to the roof of the house, where it is placed as a potent charm against witches and uncanny spirits. This custom is traceable directly to a practice of extremely ancient times, when food was placed on the housetops as an offering to certain household spirits.

At the supper all the meat in the house is eaten, and if this prove to be a physical impossibility at one sitting the members of the household must needs rise in the middle of the night and finish the repast. After the meat has disappeared each partaker must rinse thoroughly his mouth, lest a bit of meat adhere to the teeth. The next day no one eats anything. If the fast be broken the culprit certain'y will be shot with arrows by the spirits. It is the duty on this day to pick out a pig, a sheep, or a goat to be fattened for the Christmas feast. The animal is killed the third day before Christmas, and no more terrible misfortune can happen to a peasant than not to have a "bloody knife" in his house on that day.

THE YULE LOG CUSTOM.

About the only Christmas practice which these Easterners seem to have in common with the peasants of western Europe and England is the cutting and burning of the Yule log. They carry the thing much further, however, even to-day, than the Saxons, the famous lovers of good Christmas cheer, ever did. In the Black Mountain there is a "great log for Christmas," and smaller logs for each member of the family.

The Yule log idea is traced to the fire worshippers. The wood must be cut before sunrise Christmas morning. The head of the house, followed by his family, goes to some standing stump and cuts it down. He then takes off his cap to the log, turns toward the east, crosses himself, and offers up a prayer: "Give to me and to Christmas abundantly, O God."

If a log falls the wrong way another must be cut, unless the family wishes to be unlucky for a year. Smaller logs are then cut for the members of the family. The wood is drawn to the house and leaned against the wall, with the cut ends uppermost. If one by mistake is reversed the whole thing must be done over again or else misfortune will come.

When the fire is lighted there is great joy in the household, but no one on any account must speak of witches after the great log is put on the fireplace, for they are supposed to be flying around on Christmas night as "plentiful as sparks."

THE FIREPLACE CHAIN.

There is a legend, and in fact a belief, in the Black Mountain, of which research shows no trace elsewhere. Every fireplace has hanging in it, directly over the blaze, a great kettle chain. When a fire is started it takes but a few moments for this chain to become highly heated. On Christmas night, however, no matter how briskly burn the great logs, the iron chain remains cool and pleasant to the touch. There is no Montenegro peasant but will tell you that this is a fact, and he knows it to be so for he has made a test of it on many succeeding Christmas nights. The coolness of the chain is accounted for by the statement that a similar chain hung over the fire built on the floor of the stable in Bethlehem, and that at the birth of Christ the Virgin Mother grasped it for support. It became cool at her touch lest it burn the saintly hand, and from that day to this there is no fire hot enough to heat the fireplace chain on Christmas.

The fire is lighted by means of kindling, bits of which are placed under the log by each member of the family.

KISSING OF EWES AND COWS.

After this the head of the house and the son who acts as the shepherd of the sheep flock to the stables with candles and light up each corner of the interior alternately. Then they return to the door, and, as each holds his candle high, the animals are driven in one by one. The household wife then sprinkles a little wine over the oldest female of each of the different species of live stock, and, having done this, kisses the animal on the head. This is a unique Christmas practice, and antiquarians have been able to find no reason for it, nor have they been able to set the time when it began.

This kissing ceremony over, the family "clucks" like a hen and "cheeps" like a chicken. This is said certainly to insure a plentiful increase of the fowls during the coming year.

It should have been said that before the fire is lighted the iron shovel and the poker are hidden away. The Christmas fire must be stirred only with a piece of wood. As soon as a piece falls from the end of the burning Yule log one of the sons of the family picks the bit up in his teeth and at the imminent danger of being burned carries it thus into the yard and there drops it. Now of a certainty no witches can get in during the Christmas festivities.

The carcass of the Christmas feast—sheep, pig, or gont—is roasted whole. In carving it no rib of the creature must be broken. Otherwise a dire calamity is in store for the family. A cake is baked on the hearth, and as soon as the spot where it was cooked is cool each member of the family puts his bare foot on the place, and is thus insured against blistered feet for a year.

When writing of Saxon Christmas legends and old Christmas ceremonials one writes in the past almost wholly. In the Black Mountain region the oldtime customs are the customs of to-day, and time seems to have been unable to change their infinite variety.

Three thousand marriages are performed every day all over the world.

SAD END OF A SUMMER HOLIDAY.

1. This is John the Immaculate, who is about to spend a short holiday in the country. 2. At the station he is seen off by his own dear Angelina, and who, as she waves her lily hand in adieu, promises to meet him on his return. 3. He arrives, and finds that country living while generous, is scarcely formal. 4. Next morning inquiries for hot water are met with. "Hot water! What for? Shave! Oh nobody ever shaves here." He, however, mans gos to shave himself with cold water. 5. Consequently he is late for breakfast, but still enough remains. 6. After a days' experience he does not dress for dinner, and lets informal costume vie with abnormal appetite. 7. Better drop into country ways thinks John next morning when confronted with more cold water shaving and does so. 8. A week later; time to go home; think I'll go back smelling a little of the country, nice and fresh; surprise 'em a little in town. 9. But the dust of a long train journey does not usually improve one's beauty, and John did surprise 'em a little in town, with the result that Angelina doesn't see in the variegated tramp, who tries to impose himself on her as her best boy, the expected and immaculate John. The latter insisting on recognition is forthwith given in charge; and so farewell.

A Bush Christmas.—Hoisting the Old Flag.

MISTLETOE SUPERFLUOUS.

The Origin of Christmas Customs.

FORGOTTEN MEANINGS OF YULETIDE.

(By Edgar S. Nash.)

There are few things in existence today which have not been changed or moulded in the hands of Progress. One by one legends and customs have been disproved and overthrown, yet none has dared attack the legends and the customs sacred to Christmas-tide. Here and there a savant has tried to prove that December 25th does not mark the birthday of Christ. Men and women read, smile, pass on.

The time of year corresponding to our Christmas-tide has always been a period of rejoicing in the Northern Hemisphere. It marks the winter solstice. The days begin to lengthen, and the sun no longer journeys away from earth, but enters upon his return. It is a promise of renewed light and warmth, of the approach of the summer days, and men hailed these signs with every expression of gladness.

In Rome the Saturnalia, or feast of Saturn, fell at about the same time as our Christmas, and it marked the greatest festival of the Roman year. The city abandoned itself to gaiety. Unbounded license held sway; universal mirth was the order of the day; friends feasted friends, and foes were reconciled. There were no slaves, no masters; all social distinctions were laid aside. Work was stopped throughout the city, and no war was ever entered upon at this time.

THE DRUIDS HAD A FESTIVAL AT THIS TIME OF YEAR.

The tree as the emblem of life also figured conspicuously in the earlier religions. In Egypt the palm tree put forth a new shoot each month, and at the time of the winter solstice it was the custom among the Egyptians to decorate the houses with a branch of palm bearing twelve shoots. In Rome the fir tree was regarded with veneration, and during the Saturnalian festivities the halls and houses were hung with evergreen boughs.

In England, in the days of the Druids, the houses were decked with evergreens in order that the sylvan spirits might repair to their grateful shelter and remain protected from the nipping frost and the icy winter winds.

Further to the north the wild Teuton tribes worshipped their god in wooded places, and looked upon the fir tree as his sacred emblem. The period corresponding to the Roman Saturnalia was the festival of Thor. This festival, like the Roman feast, was given over to the most barbaric pleasures and the wildest forms of enjoyment. Among these peoples the festivity was known as Yule-tide.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

When Christianity spread abroad, men knew that in the story of Christ's nativity was realised what they in their blindness had striven to typify. So they adapted the old customs of their ancestors to the new order of things.

Among Northern European tribes a great fir tree was set up in each household at Christmas-tide. At its base were placed representations of Adam and Eve; in the branches coiled the Serpent, and on the topmost bough gleamed a candle, symbolising that Light of the World through Whom alone was victory over the Serpent possible. Later in history the tree was more profusely decorated with gaudy knick-knacks, all of which were at first symbolical. But the children were not allowed to see the tree till Christmas morning.

To account for its appearance there the parents used to tell the children a Chaldean legend. Years ago it was the custom for every Saxon household to burn the Yule log on Christmas Eve. This was a great, gnarled root or tree-trunk, cut the day before Christmas and brought into the hall on Christmas Eve with great ceremony, and accompanied with music. Each member of the household would sing a Yule song, standing on the centre of the log.

Then an attempt was made to drive the Yule log into the great hall, as if it were a stubborn horse. The cry was given that the "dun" refused to move, and the whole company was summoned. All took a hand, and, with loud shouting, dragged it to the great fireplace. It was lighted with the charred remnant of the former year's log, which had been carefully preserved for the occasion, and which was supposed to insure the house against ill luck.

The children were told that during the night the Yule log gave birth to the Christmas tree which they found in the hall on Christmas morning loaded with gifts.

The Christmas tree was introduced into England by Prince Albert, Consort of our Queen. From the Palace the custom spread, until now the Christmas tree is a necessary feature of an English Christmas.

THE STORY OF KINDLY SANTA CLAUS.

In Germany and other European countries it was believed by the children that the tree glittering with candles and bright baubles and the gifts found beneath the tree were the work of jolly old Saint

Valle, photo.

A CHILD OF LAST CENTURY.

Wrigglesworth & Binns, photo.

MR. J. PATON, Hon. Secretary, New Zealand Lawn Tennis Association.

Nicholas, Saint Nicholaus, or Santa Claus, as we know him. This kindly saint was no legendary character. He lived about 300 A.D., and was a noted Bishop of Asia Minor. He was looked upon as the patron saint of generosity because of his liberality.

Three daughters of a poor nobleman could not marry as advantageously as they should because their father could give them no dowry. But one night one of the daughters found in her room a purse, shaped like a stocking, filled with gold, evidently thrown in the window by someone from without. The next night the second daughter found a purse in her room, and on the third night the father caught Saint Nicholas in the act of throwing the third purse in the window.

From that story originated the custom of hanging up the stockings on Christmas Eve. Thereafter the young girls at the convent school would hang their stockings on the door of the Mother Superior's room on Saint Nicholas' night. On the following morning they would be found filled with gifts and dainties, and a little hint from Saint Nicholas as to the appearance and character of their future husbands.

Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of Russia, and his festival used to be celebrated earlier in December than the 25th, but now his name is synonymous with Christmas festivities. In parts of Europe he is known as "Pelsnichol," or Nicholas with the fur, because he is supposed to be clad in furs from head to foot.

The idea of St. Nicholas travelling in a sleigh drawn by reindeer originated in the cold Northern countries. The reindeer were the swiftest animals known, and they must needs fly like the wind to carry Saint Nick the rounds of the world in one night.

VENERATION OF THE HOLLY.

Christmas is never Christmas without the holly wreath and the mistletoe. Christians venerated the holly or holy tree, because to them the little thorny leaves and red berries made in a wreath typified the crown of thorns and the bloody drops. Doubtless they introduced this solemn reminder at the joyous festival in order not to forget the sacredness of the occasion in the general festivities.

The mistle bush, mistletoe—or mistletoe, as we know it—owes its use as a festal decoration to pagan times. According to the Scandinavian legend, Baldur, the most beloved of all the gods, had a premonition that death impended. Thereupon, his mother, Frigga, besought everything that was begotten of earth, air, fire, or water to swear not to harm her son.

But in her request she overlooked the insignificant little mistletoe. Loki, the god of destruction, disguised as an old woman, visited Frigga, and, learning of her oversight, hurried back to where the gods were assembled. There they were amusing themselves by hurling all manner of missiles at Baldur, and all were turned aside. But Loki with an arrow made of mistletoe, pierced Baldur's heart.

In reparation, the mistletoe was given to Frigga to do as she saw fit, provided it touched not earth. And she, to show that she bore no ill will, hung it up, and everyone who passed under it received a kiss as a token that, instead of hatred and jealousy, the mistletoe now stood for love and forgiveness.

THE SPELL OF THE MISTLETOE.

Among the Celtic nations the mistletoe was an object of veneration, and at the festival of the winter solstice the Prince of the Druids himself cut a bough of it. The people were assembled, and then were led to the woods by the priests, who drove in advance of the company two snow-white bullocks. When the oak tree was found which bore the mistletoe, the plant was cut with a golden sickle, and the bullocks sacrificed.

At present it is the custom for the young men to carry out the doctrine taught by the Scandinavian myth and print a smacking kiss on the lips of any maiden thoughtless enough to stand beneath the suspended mistletoe bough. But for every such kiss one of the white berries of the mistletoe must be removed, and when all the berries have been kissed away the spell is broken.

THE MEANING OF THE SPICED PUDDING AND PIES.

Almost as important as the gift giving and gift receiving on Christmas Day is the feast of dainties spread on that festal occasion. But even the Christmas dinner has its origin in the dim, distant past. Feasts were always the accompaniment of any festival. In Egypt, at the winter solstice, every family killed and ate a goose as a religious observance.

In the hieroglyphic language of the Egyptian, the figure of a goose was the word "child." The people had noticed that the goose was remarkable for the way in which it protected its young, hence it was looked upon as the symbol of great love—that love which is willing to sacrifice itself for the object of its affection. This trait was also believed to belong to the god they worshipped, so the Egyptians celebrated this festival by killing and eating a goose.

The plum pudding as a dish in the Christmas feast has its meaning. The number and richness of its ingredients represented the rich gifts which the kings laid at the feet of the child Jesus.

In earlier days the mince pie, then a great pastry dish, filled with forced meat and fruits, was made box-shaped, to typify the manger in which the Child had lain.—"Golden Penny."

I Will Abide.

Among so many, can He care?
Can special love be everywhere?
A myriad homes—a myriad ways—
And God's eye over every place?

Over; but in? The world is full;
A grand omnipotence must rule;
But is there life that doth abide
With mine own, living side by side?

So many, and so wide abroad,
Can any heart have all of God?
From the great spaces, vague and dim,
May one small household gather Him?

I asked, my soul bethought of this,
In just that every place of His
Where He hath put and keepeth you,
God hath no other thing to do.

—Adeline Whitney.

Views on the Waitakerei Coast.

(By E.A.)

To the average Aucklander, whose knowledge of seascapes is limited by the perspective of our own lovely harbour, a visit to the West Coast comes as somewhat of a revelation. The sight of the rolling, tumbling waves that break along the coast fills one with contempt for the petty ripples we are used to see, to say nothing of the awe of beholding the great expanse of ocean that stretches as far as eye can see, without land or vessels in sight. I spent a few days there this summer, camping on the bank of the Waitakerei River, a swift-flowing stream, from which it is proposed to augment our water supply, and returned quite impressed with the beauty of the coast and the delights of camping. The two seascapes given herewith were taken close to the camp, and are representative of the place, but no picture could do justice to the breakers as they change from deepest blue to yeasty foam, nor yet to the spray which rises from them and dashes its force against the lofty cliffs. That has to be seen to be appreciated. The other views are pictures of a lake which lay about two miles from our camping ground, buried in a dip of the bush-clad hills, and reflecting all the beautiful surroundings on its calm surface. It is known as Shag Lake, and covers about half the area of Lake Takapuna; further inland lies another lake, quite as large and beautiful, and this goes by the name of the Serpentine, for it fills the snake-like windings of a valley between two spurs of the range. Neither of these lakes has any visible outlet, though both are above sea level, and it is thought that they drain underground to the bed of the river, and are thus responsible for the quicksands that extend for yards along and from its banks. It is a horrible sensation to put your foot in one of these. One can hardly describe it, for no sooner does the sand slide under you in a perfectly incomprehensible way than it is followed so quickly by the natural impulse to spring up and away that you haven't time to analyse your feelings.

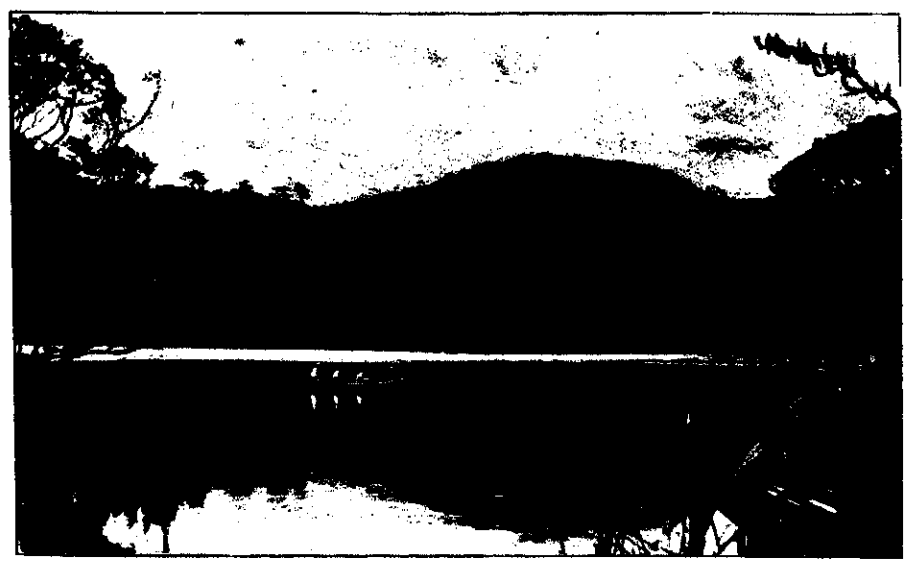
The cliffs that line the coast are very fine specimens of conglomerate formation. They are all tunnelled by great caves, the height and breadth of which in some cases would fit them to do duty for churches should ever population become numerous in that district. Occasionally these caves go right through a jutting promontory, and then you get what is known as a blowhole, for the waves rush through these apertures with tremendous force, making a noise like heavy artillery, and, as the vent is generally smaller than the entrance, a grand effect is produced when the water bursts out, sending spray all round.

The seaweed is among the strangest met with on our coasts. It grows like strips of leather belting, and is apparently as strong; some pieces I came across were quite 15 feet long, and when seen in the water looked quite uncanny as they were tossed about. Other natural wonders of the coast are jelly-fish, that filled themselves full of air and exploded with a pop when dissected; crabs of monster size and all hues; and the sea anemones, some of which were six inches across, and of all possible colours.

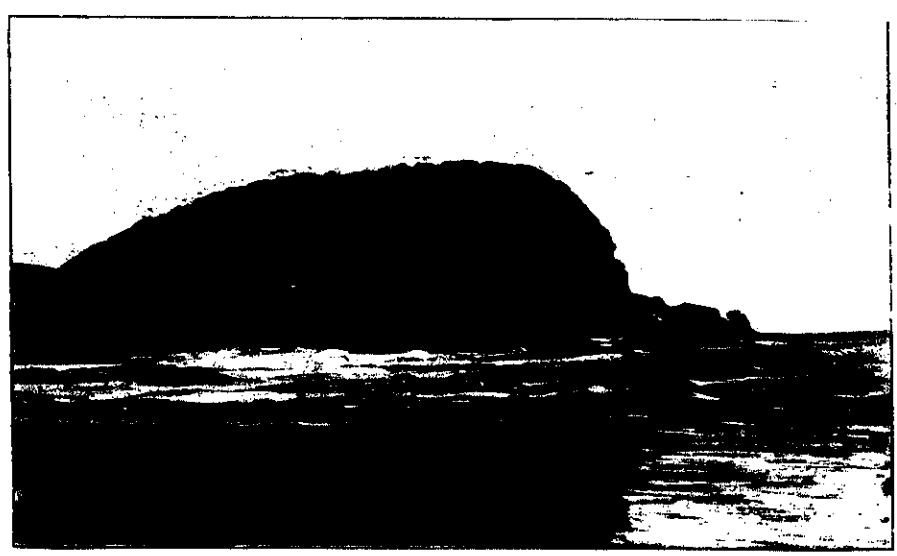
So much for the beach and its attendant interests. The coast land itself has nothing to commend it, till you reach the bush, for the sand, swept hither and thither by the strong sea winds, kills all vegetation except a tough species of manuka and flax. A few sheep pick up a living in sheltered spots, and that is all. The West Coast will always make its main reputation on the beauty of its seascapes, the delights of surf bathing, and the grotesque grandeur of its cliffs, caves and blowholes.

Holiday and holy day are essentially one and the same word, yet they have come to mean almost exactly opposite things. Those who celebrate a holiday shun the solemnity of a holy day, while those who worship on a holy day, to wit, the Sabbath, strenuously object to having it turned into a holiday. So great is the contrast between words and the things to which they are applied.

WEST COAST BREAKERS—A BLOWHOLE SHOWING IN THE CORNER.

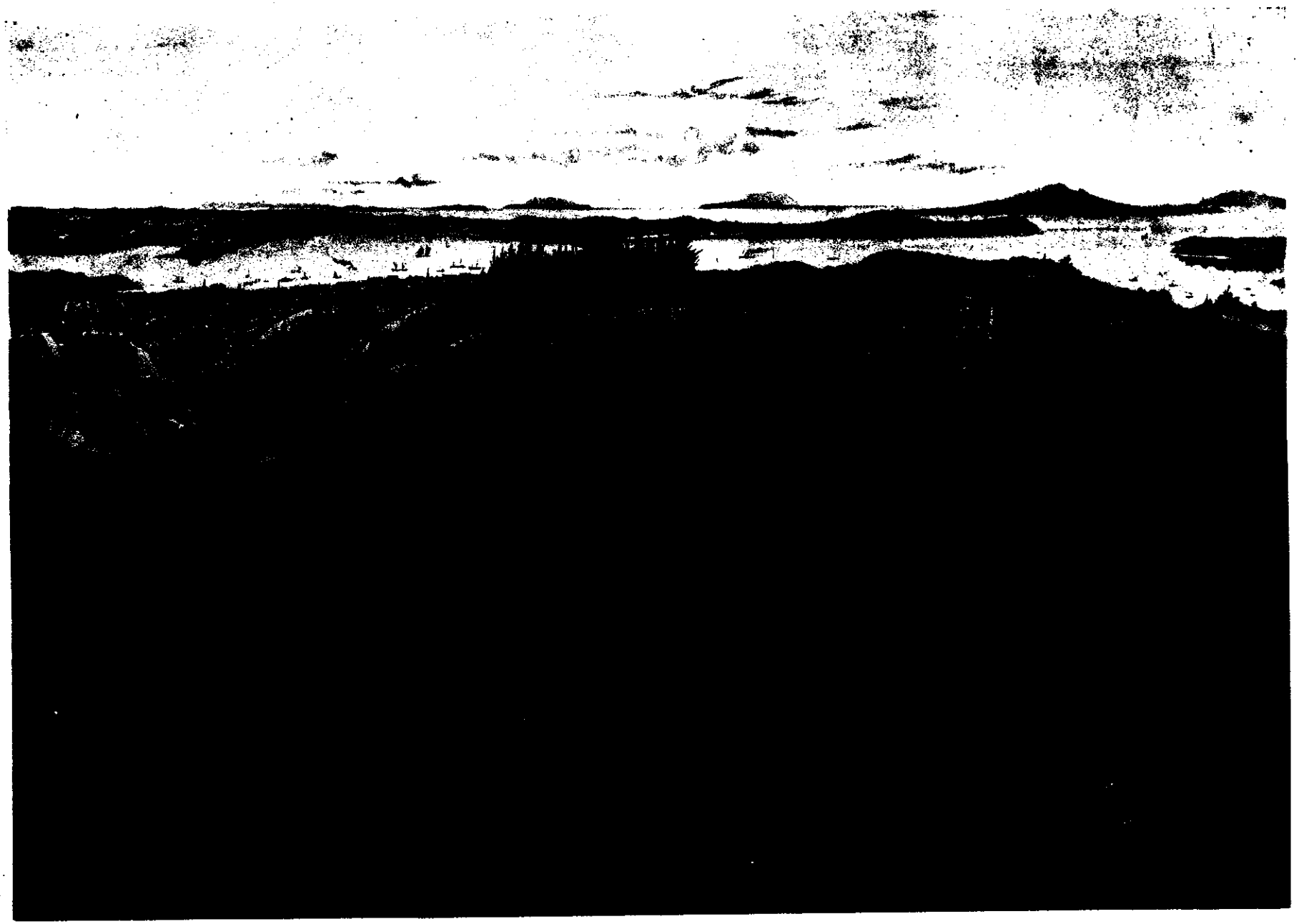


SHAG LAKE, WAITAKEREI.



Photos by Aldridge. SHADOW AND SPRAY, DIXIE ISLAND.

VIEWS ON THE WAITAKEREI COAST.



Auckland City and Harbour from the Summit of Mount Eden.

OUR PICTURE SHOWS PART OF THE CRATER IN THE FOREGROUND.

J. J. Potter, photo.

Hoisting the Flag at the Pakuranga School.

W. H. Bartlett, Photo.

Auckland Trades' Rugby Union Representative Team, 1900.

Would She Care?

By Will Wendover.

If I were dead,
From from this life by constant sorrow cursed,
I wonder would she care to come
And touch with hers the lips grown dumb,
Since death had kissed them first.

If I were dead,
And care's hot hand were taken from my brow,
I wonder, would she choose to say
Some loving words to the cold clay,
Though she may grudge them now.

If I were dead,
And resting quietly where earth's tired ones dwell,
I wonder if the tears would rise
And swamp the hard look in her eyes,
Eyes that I love so well.

If I were dead,
Perchance from out the silence there would steal
Some kindly thought of days gone by,
When love's rare sunlight filled the sky,
And her strange heart could feel.

China.

Type of the changeless, thou; yet not of good,
Whose high immutable is but the chime
Of waves that ceaseless throng the shores of Time,
Conquerors of fate and all vicissitude,
For thee, thy calm is of the enchanted wood
And wizard spell: a trance that — countless years—
Has sealed thy heart to love, thine eyes to tears,
And blasted so thy flower of maidenhood.

Is there no charm to rouse thee save the word
Of impotent hate, whereby thy sleep is stirred
To fevered dreams, not life? Across that sea
Whose waters, circling all, encircle thee—
The eternal Good—shall not a voice be heard—
"Ephphatha, break thy bonds, be strong and free."

Mary A. Woods,
In "The Academy."

Young and Old.

By Charles Kingsley.

When all the world is young, lad,
And all the trees are green;
And every goose a swan, lad,
And every lass a queen;
Then hey for boot and horse, lad,
And round the world away;
Young blood must have its course, lad,
And every dog its day.

When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown;
And all the sport is stale, lad,
And all the wheels run down;
Creep home and take thy place there,
The spent and maimed among;
God grant you find one face there,
You loved when all was young.

THE BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM.

THE BRIDAL PARTY.

Photos. by Valle.

THE BRITTAIN—VEITCH WEDDING, AUCKLAND.

A Colonial Christmas—The Dance in the Wool Shed.

Copyright Story.

Unto You a Son is Born.

By ADELINE SERGEANT.

Author of "The Idol Maker," Etc.

The snow had fallen heavily. It lay in one smooth unbroken sheet over the roofs, the untrodden fields, the deserted gardens outside the town. Within the town itself the snow was speedily fouled and begrimed by the tramp of passing feet, but one had only to go for a short distance before meeting it in all its pristine beauty and purity. Overhead the sky was brilliantly blue, but the frost held in spite of the sunshine, and although there was plenty of life and animation in the streets there was little to be done within the confines of the farms or country homesteads which lay outside the limits of the town.

Bankside was the name attached to one small farmhouse, with its few surrounding acres, tenanted by John Thorn, as it had been tenanted by his forefathers for many generations. They had held it on easy terms from one of the local magnates, and had been considered fairly flourishing people in a small way, but the landlord of the present tenant was a hard man, and had lately raised rents all round: a proceeding which fell heavily upon small holders like John Thorn. Matters indeed had with him been going from bad to worse, and it was with a heavy, overcast countenance and a strangely unelastic gait that he trod the snowy yard, and passed along the nearly empty sheds and stalls, which presented to his eye a depressingly desolate appearance. A mild-eyed cow turned her head towards him as he approached her, with a look of almost human recognition. He stopped for a moment before he passed to the house.

"Ah, Daisy," he said with a sigh, "you are the last to go, and I suppose I shall lose you before another Christmas. Well, when one loses so much it is folly to waste a word or a sigh over one poor dumb beast, but the last of anything's always hard to part with. There will be nothing but the 'House' for me and Maggie in our old age, now that the boy has disappeared. Perhaps it was all for the best that he should go: God knows: but there is one that will never think so, whatever I do: no, more than one, but he—he—neither knows nor cares." And with one last caressing stroke of his hand upon the animal's velvet sides he turned his back upon the outbuildings, and returned to the back door of the house, where he made a great parade of wiping his feet and scraping the snow from his heavy boots before he entered the house.

His wife was bustling about the kitchen. She was a small pale woman, who had once been delicately pretty, but there was a strained look of care in her eyes which destroyed the beauty of her face. Her fair hair was drawn tightly from her forehead, and fastened behind in a knot, her arms were bare to the elbow, and her hands were red. John Thorn stood and looked at her for a moment in heavy stupefaction.

"Where are the girls?" he said, as his eye roamed round the room.

"I have sent them away, John," said his wife apologetically. "It is Christmas Eve, and they were both pining to see their mothers, and I think, John—it will be better surely that they did not come back again. There is nothing more than I can do myself, and I don't want any help in the house."

John Thorn sank down in the nearest chair, putting his hands to his face with something like a groan. "You are not strong enough, Maggie; it is not right for you to be doing about in the house all day long. You will be laid up with your throat if you do."

"Oh, no, I don't think so, John," said his wife cheerily. "I keep this shawl tight round me, and I am warm with hustling about. Besides Cissy Croft promised to look in this afternoon, and help me in anything I wanted, so that I shall be all right."

"Cissy's a good girl," said John, with his brows bent, and his eyes fixed on the floor, "but it is a poor life for her, teaching infants every day and lodging with that old Miss Nargle, whose very face is enough to turn the milk sour. Why she doesn't go away and better herself is more than I can make out."

"Oh," said his wife suddenly, with a curious thrill in her voice, "don't you know, John—don't you know why she stays?"

"Me—how should I know?" said John, standing up. "She has got no ties in the place that I know, and the Vicar told me only last week that he could get her a much better situation in one of the big towns if she would go."

"I think the only ties she has are here," said Mrs Thorn, turning her back on her husband so that he should not see the tears in her eyes, though perhaps the quiver in the voice betrayed her. "She can't bear to leave us, John. That's why it is. She is hoping for news from Bernard still."

"Then she's a fool," said John Thorn, rising to his feet and striking his hand sharply on the deal table, "and she is wasting her life on one who is a shame and disgrace to everybody connected with him, and who will never cross my threshold again as long as I am here to keep him out. If she is waiting for Bernard, tell her it is lost labour, that he has left us for ever, and that if I could I would not bring him back."

His wife came up and laid both her thin hands upon his arm. "It goes to my heart to hear you talk so hard, John," she said, "and on Christmas Eve of all days in the year."

"There is no reason why one should be more soft on Christmas Eve than on any other day in the year, that I can see," said Thorn. "Right's right all the world over, and at any time and season. And even at Christmas Eve I cannot forget that the boy was a disgrace to us while he lived here, and took away what didn't belong to him when he went away."

"But if he came back," said Mrs Thorn, "if he came back——"

"He will never come back," said her husband, "and if he does he will find the old place shut up, or let to another man, for I don't see that I can go on any longer, and there is nothing before us but the House."

"Oh, no, no, John, it won't come to that," said Mrs Thorn piteously, and the tears flowed over the sunken cheeks, while a sob choked her throat, but John Thorn, usually an affectionate husband, did not stay to console her. He turned away from the kitchen, remarking that he had business in the town, and didn't know when he would be back.

Mrs Thorn was left to weep in silence, and for a minute or two she sat down in the old wooden armchair near the fire, and wiped her tears with her apron.

Thus engaged she did not notice that someone had entered the house. A girl in a hat and jacket of the plainest kind put her head in at the kitchen door, and looked anxiously at the mistress of the house. In another minute she was kneeling at Mrs Thorn's side with her arms around the good woman's neck.

"What is it, dear?" she said. "Have you had bad news?"

"Oh, Cissy, my dear, I am glad you have come. I don't know that I ought to be, for father's in a dark mood this morning, and he says that you are wasting your life in coming here."

"Oh, he doesn't mean it, never mind what he says, he would miss me very much if I didn't come," said Cissy, giving the elder woman a kiss, and looking at her with fond smiling eyes.

She was five and twenty, and had never perhaps been distinguished for her beauty, but there was a sweetness in her face which made it attractive, and her large brown eyes were somewhat pathetic in expression. There was a certain prettiness, moreover, about her silky fair hair which was allowed to cluster a little around her forehead with a natural grace that was infinitely becoming; indeed, there was a delicacy and gentleness in her appearance which made it more pleasant to many people's eyes than a rougher and more pronounced style of actual beauty.

John Thorn and many of his neighbours were apt to call her "a poor puny thing," but in the town people often looked at her twice when she passed, as though aware of a certain distinctness in her air which set her apart from the rest of the world.

Perhaps this distinction proceeded chiefly from the elevating and refining influences of Cissy's faithful love for Bernard Thorn, the only son of his parents, who, after a wild and disappointing career, had suddenly disappeared from the neighbourhood, and had been heard of no more for a period of years.

Cissy shared his mother's longings for the boy's return, and it was for his sake that she persevered in uncongenial work, and consecrated her spare hours to the work that always required doing at Bankside Farm.

"Father's so hard," Mrs Thorn repeated, "he says he won't never let Bernard cross the door again."

"Have you heard anything of him?" said Cissy quickly.

"Not a word, my dear, and I did think that this being Christmas—"

Cissy's young arms clasped her closer. "He will come home, some day, mother," she said, whispering the name that she used only in moments like these. "He will come home and put everything right. It was Christmas Eve when we saw him last, remember. I am sure that some Christmas Eve will see him home again."

"Oh, but, my dear, what will be the use of it if the house is shut up and we're ruined, and me and my good man in the House?" said Mrs Thorn, with an irrepressible burst of tears. "Better not at all than too late, Cissy."

"No, no, mother, better late than never," corrected Cissy, and then she kissed the tear-wet cheek again. "Don't fret any more," she said, "and I will help you with what there is to be done, so that the house may be quite clean and tidy when Mr Thorn comes home again."

"Bless you, my dear, I wish you were always here," said Mrs Thorn, fervently, and then she went about her daily work, consoled by Cissy's presence quite as much as by the manual help rendered by Cissy's willing hands.

John Thorn did not come home to dinner; and, after an early cup of tea, Cissy announced her intention of returing to the schoolhouse, where she lived with Miss Nargle, because she had promised to assist in the contrivance of a Christmas tree, which the vicar's wife was giving to the school children. She was coming to spend Christmas Day with the old couple, and would be in time to go to church with them. So, after an affectionate farewell, she made her way back to the town, and Mrs Thorn set to work on the few duties that still remained for her to do.

There were still some fowls in the poultry yard, and she went out to feed them with a shawl folded tightly round her head and shoulders. Her husband had swept the ground near the fowlhouse free from snow, and hens and cocks gathered round her with a great flutter and clatter and hullabaloo as she scattered the grain before them. Then for a moment she turned her face to the west, looking at the setting sun, and thinking of the boy who had followed his fortune in the track of that golden light. Where was he now, she wondered, and what had been his fate in the lands of the west?

"Oh, my boy, oh, my Bernard," she half sobbed to herself, "would that God would send you back to me again."

She had spoken aloud without knowing it, and was startled beyond measure when an answer fell upon her ear.

"Would it be a good thing if he came home again?" the voice asked her.

"Who spoke?"

She turned round hurriedly, her eyes a little blinded by the wintry glow of the golden west, and she was so flurried and upset that the sight of a tall dark figure standing between her and the house did not tend to restore her confidence.

She started and trembled a little, so that one or two eggs which she had found fell from the basket and were broken upon the ground.

"Who—who is it that asks?" she said, trembling all over, yet scarcely knowing why. But she knew the next moment, for two strong arms were around her, and a bearded face was pressed close to her own.

"Mother, don't you know me?" said the voice, and although it was so much deeper and more manly than when she had heard it last, she could no longer mistake it for any but her son's voice. It was Bernard himself who had come back to her from the wilds, or rather, as it seemed to her, almost from the dead.

"My son, my son," she cried, clinging to him and nearly fainting on his breast in the excess of her joy, "my son that was lost——"

"You may well say that, mother," said the young man, "for lost I have been, it is true; but found again now I trust, and home again with you and father—and Cissy. She is here still, is she not? though perhaps I ought not to hope it. And yet I always trusted Cissy."

"Cissy was here to-day," said his mother between laughing and crying, "and it is not half an hour since she left the house. She has never forgotten you, no fear of that. It is your father that I am afraid of, for he is a hard man sometimes, and he has never forgiven you, my dear, for going away as you did."

The young man's face grew grave. He put his arm round his mother's waist and drew her gently towards the house. It was easier to explain matters inside than outside on a cold Christmas Eve.

. . . . . .

Meanwhile John Thorn was returning from the town where he had transacted business to the best of his ability, but with no satisfaction to himself. Everything was going wrong with him. He owed money, and he could not meet his obligations, and this was the worst, because he was a strictly upright and honourable man. A long series of misfortunes only had brought him to this pass, and as he came along his homeward road he looked back to the years that were gone, and thought harshly of the son who had deserted him in his old age, and had not only deserted him but carried away with him some of the hard won savings of John Thorn's early life. It had not been a large sum with which Bernard Thorn had decamped, but the memory of it lingered in his father's mind as a worse loss than any he had experienced.

"It's a hard thing," he said to himself, "to see children grow up around you, and then, when they come to an age when they could be a help and a comfort, find that they have no mind to do anything but start off on their own account, leaving you to sink or swim as the case may be. But I should not have minded it so much if he had not taken that which was not his own to take. It is a thing I cannot forget or forgive. There's no man been a better father than I was to him when he was young, and it's a shame and disgrace that he should have treated his mother and me in this way."

He seldom thought about it so long, or put his thoughts into such concise words, and the effort made him hot, so that he stayed for a moment with his hat raised as if to cool his brow, in spite of the bitter cold of the winter night. The sun had almost set, but a yellow light lingered in the west. The sound of bells floated to his ear through the calm still atmosphere. The ringers were practising the peal for Christmas morning. He had heard those bells on Christmas Eve for more than sixty winters, and knew well what they signified. "The coming of a Saviour to the world—the coming of a Son sent by the Father, who loved the world well enough to redeem it in this way." The thought was familiar enough to his mind, and the words in which it had been announced by the angels to the listening shepherds on the plain were so well known to him that their meaning had become dulled by repetition. Yet the sound of the

bells brought them with sudden keenness to his mind, "For to you is born this day in Bethlehem a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."

John Thorn was not in the habit of analysing his sensations, yet half unconsciously, a tide of softer feeling and sweeter emotion gradually swept over him. Thoughts of Bernard's delinquencies were lost in the remembrance of the days when he was a little lad going home on Sundays from Sunday-school, walking with his father and mother to church on the greater occasions, scarcely able to sleep in happy anticipation of Christmas Day. Such Christmas days as never would come again. Thorn groaned to himself in the very bitterness of his heart; almost he would surrender his just anger and the resentment of years if he could look into his son's bright eyes once more and shake the frank-hearted laugher-loving youngster by the hand.

The farmhouse stood before him, the gate was open he noticed as if a visitor had lately passed that way; he saw the firelight reflected on the window panes, and it seemed to him that he caught the shadow of a figure—the shadow of two figures—upon the window blind. Had his wife got company, he wondered. Had Cissy stayed to tea? But surely that was the shadow of a man?

He hastened his steps, pushed the door open, entered the kitchen ablaze with ruddy light from the glowing coals, and stood aghast. His wife was clasped in the arms of a tall, broad-shouldered man who stood with his back to the door. John could not see his face—it was a figure he did not know. Suddenly his wife saw him, and uttered a little scream.

"John," she cried, "Oh, John, thank God he has come home again."

For the moment she forgot that the father had said that very day that he would never receive his son into the house again, but she remembered the words when she saw his brow grow dark, and his lips form themselves into a set stern line. Then Bernard detached himself from her clinging clasp and faced his father.

"I have come to ask your forgiveness, father," he said, in a faltering voice, "and here," holding out a little packet, "here is the money that I took from you. I have brought it back with interest to this very day. It has been the shame of my life that I could have ever taken it, and I couldn't bear to write to you, or come back until I could return what I had stolen. Father, mother has forgiven me, will you not forgive me, too?"

John Thorn cleared his throat. He had always thought when he met his son once more, that the only words upon his lips would be those of reproach and anger, but somehow they died away, and it seemed to him as if the Christmas bells were still resounding in his ears:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth goodwill towards men. . . . Unto you a Son is born."

The father held out his hand. "It is Christmas time," he said hoarsely, and no one will ever know how many old associations, old hopes, old prayers, rose up in the man's heart and went towards the utterance of those simple words.

"I have come home to stay, father," the young man said a minute later, when the two had wrung each other's hands, "and I shall be able to put the farm on its legs again, and help you in the work. You shall not turn out, as mother said you meant to do."

"And Cissy is coming to spend Christmas with us to-morrow," said Mrs Thorn, with a glad smile shining through her tears. "It will be like the old times, John, and we shall have a happy Christmas after all."

And it was a curious coincidence, John Thorn said to himself, remembering his thoughts upon his walk from town, that the Christmas sermon which he heard next day, sitting in the pew between his wife and boy, was based upon the words—

"Unto you a Son is born."

One thousand pounds is the sum allotted to the young King of Spain as pocket money every year. The youthful monarch, however, has to pay various subscriptions to charities out of this amount, as well as to defray the maintenance of several orphans for which he is personally responsible, so that he has but little left for his private use.—Pearson's.

A SENSIBLE WOMAN.

By MRS. HARRIS, AUCKLAND.

This story was awarded Fourth Prize in our Christmas Competition.

CHAPTER I.

A trackless waste of tussock ground spreading far away in the sunset glow till lost in the purple haze beyond.

Further the towering peaks of snow-crowned mountains were outlined against a grey sky, just streaked with crimson and a gleam of gold. This was what Jessie Komisky saw as she stood still a moment on the bridle track that led across the hills to the Canterbury Plains; and her heart beat so strangely that she wondered whether there was any truth in the term "broken heart," or if anyone could die of grief, as she had read in books. She had come out alone from the Old Country to seek her fortune in this new, strange land.

No friends, no parents. All had died or left her, and she stood alone in the world, with a very scant pittance between her and poverty—such poverty as the soul of a gentlewoman born naturally shrinks from.

Genteel poverty, that skimps and plans to make a shilling go as far as half-a-crown; that tries to hide its pain beneath a smile, and bears up bravely even with a nameless vacuum stead of a breakfast; she had become acquainted with personally during her mother's lifetime, when the two lived in furnished apartments in Bayswater, and wrought fancy work for bazaars and fancy repositories.

But grim poverty, that could no longer reside in a select neighbourhood, or allow of even the most carefully mended gloves or well turned clothing; poverty that pinched the life out of one by small degrees till one literally froze and starved, and could not apply for work for lack of clothes to appear in; this thing, with its nameless terrors, Jessie was afraid of. Her young blood froze at the thought of possibilities, when pride and love should both be stamped under foot by the iron heel of want. So after the funeral, after waiting some few days in hope that Charlie Forester, her lover of better days, would at least call or express his sympathy for her bereavement; waiting for the postman with feverish impatience, only to be crushed by the sight of his familiar uniform passing by, Jessie determined to face the world for and by herself. She gave up the rooms which had so long been "home," settled all the accounts, studied the small margin shown by her bank book, sold everything the small rooms contained to a dealer, then packed her trunk and went out into the park for half an hour to think. A firm decision made, she wrote a letter to Charlie, then tore it up as quickly.

After bidding the kind hearted landlady good-bye, she hailed a cab, went to the shipping office, took out her second-class ticket as a passenger by the good ship Clematis, and with a parting sigh for Charlie's faithlessness prepared to leave England for ever.

That was just how it happened that Jessie Komisky came to Lyttelton alone, and stood now looking at the strange prospect from the hillside. Among the passengers she had made few friends; everyone seemed so intent upon their own affairs. She was reserved, and would not intrude her troubles upon a stranger's ears.

Some supposed she was coming out to be married; some suggested a possible brother, who had sent for her; others thought she might be a governess going out to some stationholder's family, as such were rare luxuries in those days.

This latter proved after all the nearest guess, for Jessie, following the example of her fellow passengers, made the pilgrimage across the hills to the little square of shanties and modest houses, small hotels, etc., which formed the nucleus of future greatness, and made her way to a registry office, where she found what she wanted, namely, work, the best and safest panacea for sorrow.

An English lady living on a distant station needed a governess for her little daughter. Thus ran the advertisement, and Jessie, applying, was immediately accepted as a new arrival, much preferred by the ofttimes homesick lady, as bringing with her almost a breath of the dear English air, socially at least, which would link on the prosaic station life with the heart throbs of the Home Land.

It was long before the time of railways, so the journey was performed for the most part by coach, the remaining miles in a carrier's waggon bearing a supply of stores to the station.

Scattered homesteads, miles apart, for at present settlers were few, the life of isolation and struggle not proving so remunerative as often represented on paper.

Floods had devastated the district through which they passed, and consequent loss of sheep had reduced the already vicarious income of the struggling farmer.

At length they came to a swollen river, which must be crossed somehow, a fresh experience for Jessie, but she got through bravely with nothing worse than a wetting, and had her reward in seeing a curl of smoke ascending from a huge wodden chimney connected with a low-lying shanty, around which a group of men were assembled to hear the latest news and receive goods from the carrier.

"Is this Havenside?" asked that worthy of a youth who came up to hold the horses.

"Yes; up yonder is the house. It's a rough bit of road, and not very safe after dark. If you've to go there you'd best be smart," was the reply.

"Well, I've a passenger to-day for there, a lady, too, and I reckon I'll just get on, and talk to you boys as I come back," said the carrier.

On, therefore, they rumbled over the rough road, the deep ruts of which threatened to overturn waggon and occupants; but in less than an hour they came up to the little homestead, and found themselves eagerly expected.

A thin, pale lady, a little girl of seven; these were the dwellers at Havenside, together with a faithful henchman, and two serving women, who had accompanied their young lady when she left her father's home, a young bride, to make a home in this distant land.

How wearily long those years had seemed! For Edward Rothsay had not proved all her fond heart hoped he would, consequently long days and weeks of neglect and loneliness had aged the brave little lady of Havenside, and her face presented a very wistful look as she welcomed the newcomer just "from home."

"You are tired, dear," said Mrs. Rothsay. "Maggie, you will bring in a cup of tea, and I will take Miss Komisky to her room." So the kind little woman bustled about, and Jessie's heart grew tender toward her, the first friend in a strange land. Little Mamie seemed so lovable, too, as she came nestling up to her new governess, with a half-shy smile of welcome.

The carrier had departed, Jessie's luggage had been taken to her room, and Mrs. Rothsay sat sipping her tea contemplatively, watching the quiet figure and serious face beside her.

She felt the girl had a sorrow, her black dress showed bereavement; but her face told a further story, one with which Mrs. Rothsay's own heart was well acquainted—the sorrow of love unrequited.

So these two came to understand each other, and again the promise was fulfilled, "He shall set the solitary in families." As the days passed, Mrs. Rothsay grew brighter, Jessie was content, while little Mamie gave her new governess all the love she could possibly spare from her dear mama, and papa that was in England.

Yes, that was the trouble of Havenside; papa was in England, and troubled himself very little about the dear ones who fondly watched for every mail.

The station was managed well by Rufus Lilworth, and as long as the returns were satisfactory, and financial need did not trouble Havenside, the owner was content to amuse himself amid English society, and enjoy the life of an "absentee." His letters told of races, hunts dinners, banquets, with here and there a word of homeliness, which the hungering reader strove to make the most of. "You must let me know if you want anything, Elsie," he wrote; "do not run short. Send McDougal to town to meet the next vessel; I have sent you a box of 'fine linen,' and trinkets for yourself and Mamie; kiss the little one for me. Love from your loving husband, Edward."

This was all, no word of his wanting her, no word of his return; and no thought of her fears during those lonely days on the station; these were the things which hurt Mrs. Rothsay, and caused her to step softly, while the song would be hushed half-sung that Edward used to love in the days when she would have followed him to the furthest point in the universe, for he was the hero of her dreams, the love of her youth.

CHAPTER II.

Rufus Lilworth pulled up his horse, threw the reins to McDougal, and ran up the steps to the little office where he was wont to consult Mrs. Rothsay whenever there was occasion. As he bowed himself in, he came face to face with Mamie and her governess, who were prepared for riding, just bidding that lady good-bye.

He had never met Miss Komisky before, though he had heard of the new importation, having himself carried the advertisement to town.

In her new hat and habit, Jessie presented a graceful enough figure for human eyes to rest on, her bronze hair curled in wilful little wavelets over her brow and neck; her pure complexion had grown healthier since her arrival, her step was elastic; her figure straight and not too tall; a goodly specimen of a young English gentlewoman, Rufus thought, as he accepted the introduction given very graciously by Mrs. Rothsay.

It took less time than that in which I write it, but in that brief space Jessie had formed her opinion of the manager; and it was not a favourable one. He was tall, dark, handsome enough, his address not unpleasing; yet, to Jessie, there seemed something too assertive in his manner, something too dominant in his tone as he spoke to Mrs. Rothsay; and certainly too free for a first acquaintance with herself.

"Perhaps it is the way in the colonies," she thought; "men appear different here." Yet chivalry could surely be as much appreciated here as in Bond-street or the Row.

His searching glance was little less than a stare, and Jessie's quick colour rose, as she hastened her little charge, and eagerly left the room.

Nothing daunted, however, by her evident confusion, Rufus Lilworth, having dispatched his business, which consisted in the delivery of some receipts to Mrs. Rothsay, was soon remounted, and, following the road taken by Jessie, quickly overtook the young equestrians.

"You will find it rather dull on the station, Miss Komisky!" he exclaimed, as he came up with them. "If you will allow me, I will accompany you for a canter across this bit of plain; there's a pretty spot about three miles on further, where one could dismount and rest."

"I must not be away from home long, thank you!" was the reply, "as I have promised Mamie her music lesson, and have also to learn some accompaniments for Mrs. Rothsay."

By her manner he could see his services were unwelcome; yet with utter nonchalence he kept beside her and refused to notice her confusion.

A very silent half-hour was the result, when Jessie declared her intention to return, and took little Mamie's rein to turn the pony's head homewards.

"Mamie, would you not like to see the springs yonder?" asked the manager, placing his horse in front of the path, entirely ignoring the evident desire of Jessie.

"No, Mr Lilworth," replied the little lady, naively. "If Miss Komisky says we go home, so we do"; and Rufus was nonplussed, though not defeated, as a thin gleam of white teeth showing between his lips betrayed his vexation, and a flush on his face told of a resolve

to be even with her another day.

However, for now he let them turn, bowing obsequiously to Jessie with a cold sneer on his handsome face.

So from that day there was a feud between them, and Jessie felt the first forebodings of coming ill disturb her newly found peace.

Strange to say Mrs Rothsay possessed the greatest possible faith in Rufus Lilworth. He had been her husband's college chum; his people were well connected; she had known his sister in her girlhood, and when Edward Rothsay had told her of the application for the post of manager she had thrown her atom of weight into the scale of acceptance. He seemed a link of the old life, almost a brother at times, and she could not understand Jessie's evident disinclination for his further acquaintance.

"Poor girl! She must be engaged to someone else," thought the kind hearted lady, "and perhaps he is a scamp."

She sincerely liked Jessie, whose presence had brightened the home life of Havenside not a little, who was ever ready to sing, play, sew, ride, read aloud, or talk of English scenes and people, as her hostess—as Mrs Rothsay liked to be called—might wish, and whom Mamie simply idolised. A most efficient nurse too proved Jessie, for when Mamie took a feverish cold, and cruel croup threatened her her little life, it was Jessie's prompt measures and clear perception that came to the rescue; and no hand could soothe the little sufferer like hers, no voice lull her to sleep like the sweet, low tones of her young governess. So passed the weeks and months quickly away. No mail brought any welcomed Home letter to Jessie. She was quite alone in the world, and these new surroundings absorbed all her love and care.

If sometimes a wistful thought would wing its way across the broad Pacific it never seemed to take form or attract to itself an answering chord of love. All was silent, and the past seemed buried, save in memory.

Rufus Lilworth was wont to bring home the mail bag from the little bush post office he passed on his daily rounds. On one particular occasion there was given to him a paper addressed to Miss Komisky, and simply out of curiosity he drew it from its wrapper to read the news.

An advertisement caught his eye:—"If this should find Jessie Komisky, who left London on June 18 —, will she please communicate with Charles Forester, G.P.O., Melbourne. Still true."

Here, he thought, was the solution of the mystery. She loved another. If she could be made to believe that other false or dead he might at last prevail. Should he deliver this paper? Again and again the thought of evil was suggested until in a lonely spot of road, where no one saw him save God's watchful angels, Rufus lit a match and watched the last scrap of that paper as it curled and blackened at his feet. There! It was done. Now she might never know that Charlie was faithful, or at least not until she was the wife of another, and that other should be himself. So he rode on, and that very night he sought Jessie, declared his love, only to be refused, repulsed, with quiet dignity, and told that love for him was impossible.

Chagrined, baffled, he retired, determined, however, to bide his time, and in some way obtain power to gain his end.

CHAPTER III.

"I hear we are to have some near neighbours," said Rufus one day, as he presented himself at early lunch. "Some new arrivals have taken up the next block, and we shall soon see a flourishing station. A house is to be built without delay."

"Oh, I am indeed glad," cried Mrs Rothsay. "Have you heard the name of the newcomer?"

"Mr and Miss Hepworth, late of Hepworth Manor, Berks, having met with reverses, after the manner of many, desire to retrench and mend their fortunes by becoming sheep farmers and wool growers in this lonely land," said Rufus; "and very good neighbours they should prove."

"Squire Hepworth has always kept his pack and followed the hunt. I believe his horses were far-famed too, and have been the means of bringing him to grief. However, he will soon find plenty of sport here, and if he can retrieve his fallen fortunes will soon keep his hounds again, I trust. Miss Komisky, have you ever ridden to a hunt?"

"No," replied Jessie. "I have passed most of my time in the town, with exceptional visits to health resorts with mamma. I have never even seen a hunt."

"Then the sooner you learn to follow the hounds the better," was the reply, "and I will teach you."

"I had much rather be excused, Mr Lilworth, thank you," said Jessie, as she rose from the table. "It is but cruel sport at best, and I prefer to remain at home."

"You two are always sparring," said Mrs Rothsay. "It would be simply lovely, Miss Komisky, to see a hunt once more. I often rode with my father when I was at Home."

Jessie only shook her head and left the room, with Mamie clinging to her hand.

Then Rufus spoke out. "I do wonder why that girl dislikes me? I am hopelessly in love with her, and she knows it. I would do all in my power to make her happy, but she shuns me at every point, cannot you help me, Mrs Rothsay?"

"Win her I must, there is not another girl in the colony whom I could love as I love her, she must and shall love me, or ——".

"Or what, Mr Lilworth? You cannot force affection; you must have patience. Jessie is a good girl, worthy of any man's choice; she will see in time how devotedly you love her, and appreciate your patient steadfastness."

But Rufus thought of that paper. And meanwhile Jessie was thinking to herself, "If he does not desist from his detestable attentions, I shall have to leave this home, and seek a livelihood elsewhere."

So in due time the Hepworth house was finished, the surrounding outbuildings completed; numbers of men employed upon the estate, fencing, ploughing, draining, planting, etc., and at last the family themselves arrived upon the scene.

There was the Squire, his three sons, two daughters, and last, but not least, the maiden aunt who had taken upon her portly shoulders the responsibility of conducting the household management, and chaperoning the daughters of her widowed brother; for all of which kind and arduous responsibilities she declared she obtained but poor thanks. "Indeed, my dear," the good lady exclaimed on the occasion of Mrs Rothsay's first call, "it is no light matter I have undertaken, I assure you; and my brother Samuel only smiles at my difficulties, and says, "girls will be girls, you cannot put old heads on young shoulders." It's all very fine, but suppose a mesalliance should occur in the house of Hepworth, I wonder what brother Samuel would say?

"He would be the first to complain bitterly of the want of training, of the loss of a good mother, etc. Indeed, Mrs Rothsay," continued Miss Hepworth, "I should get all the blame."

"My dear Miss Hepworth," replied the amused little lady, "indeed you need have no manner of fear of such a catastrophe occurring here; there are simply no men, except the labourers, shearers, and a manager here and there. You see the town, such as it is, is a safe distance away, and I am sure you will not be troubled with many visitors here; if you wish to keep your nieces single, you have done quite the right thing to bring them here."

"Mrs Rothsay, I am not so sure. I actually saw a man critically eyeing us the other day; a gentlemanly looking fellow enough, but I've no doubt a nobody."

"Oh, I suppose it was our manager, Rufus Lilworth, you need not fear him; his heart is lost to a really nice girl, who does not know when she has a good chance; and he is well connected at Home. My husband visits his people."

Somewhat consoled, poor Miss Hepworth looked with less suspicious eyes upon Rufus after this; indeed, riding parties were formed, and Mr Lilworth was always one of the number. Picnics were arranged, and then he could not be overlooked, for he made himself so necessary to them all, so obliging, and attentive, indeed Aunt Hester became quite charmed by the way in which he managed and arranged everything for their comfort.

Jessie became a great favourite with them all, especially with Ellen and Alice; for they were wont to declare that Aunt Hester was "horrid," and life was not worth living; and a thousand other things which Jessie's bright face and charm of manner helped them to forget.

Time passed very pleasantly that summer; and then a letter came which filled Mrs Rothsay's heart with dismay.

It was from her husband's sister, telling of Edward Rothsay's sudden illness and death at his father's home in Berkshire.

Overcome with grief, the widow at last decided to leave Havenside Station in the hands of Rufus Lilworth, and return to England with her little girl, and a faithful nurse.

Rufus and Jessie accompanied her to Lyttelton, and saw the poor lady off on her homeward journey.

Then it was that Rufus renewed his appeal, sure, that now he was virtually master living at the house, she would accept him. But he had reckoned without his host. Jessie declared that "she would never return to Havenside, and she would never be his wife."

A wild idea entered the mind of Rufus. "Jessie," he said, "you must hear me; I know why you always refuse me; you love another—a Charlie Forester in England. Believe me, I heard of his death from Harold Hepworth, but to save you sorrow, I kept it from you. I destroyed the paper that had the notice. But now, dear, is it any use waiting for him any longer? Come to me, and I swear I will make you the happiest woman in Canterbury. Jessie, don't you see how I love you. I cannot live without you."

"Hush, Mr Lilworth," cried the girl, whose face had grown suddenly white and set. "However you obtained the knowledge of Mr Forester's death, and whatever you may know about him. I hold it a cowardly thing of you to trade upon such knowledge; and again I tell you, that I will never be your wife. Leave me, I wish to see you no more."

So Rufus returned alone to Havenside; and Jessie obtained a situation as assistant to a lady who kept a dry goods store in the township.

Here was change of scene and occupation, which was decidedly a benefit.

Mrs Lucas speedily found out the value of her assistant, and after a year or so, offered her a partnership, which Jessie accepted, placing all her small capital in the business, and thus became quite a small capitalist.

Time passed, Mrs Lucas became so attached to Jessie, that she placed the fullest confidence in her, and presently retiring through uncertain health, enabled Jessie to purchase by degrees the whole of the business.

By this time Christchurch had grown a considerable town; prosperity was apparent all around, and some really fine buildings were in course of erection. Sometimes the Hepworths came to town, and poor Aunt Hester would confide her grief to that "very sensible young person, Jessie Konisky." Ellen was married to Rufus Lilworth; Alice engaged to a young surveyor, and actually the old Squire, instead of buying a pack of hounds, as had been anticipated, had taken to himself a young wife, the only daughter of an officer who had retired upon his pension, in a pleasant little home on the Avon.

"Well, Aunt Hester," replied Jessie, at the end of the recital, "there is only one remedy. You should follow their example."

Now, whether the good lady really took Jessie's words to heart, or whether it was purely an accidental occurrence, has never really transpired, but this is certain, according to the "Press" of the day, that Miss Hepworth, of Hepworth Manor, Berks, England, was married to Captain Charles Jackson of the ship "Goodwin," on a certain day therein recorded.

And thus ended the most important episode of Aunt Hester's life.

Just at this time Mrs Lucas died, and as she had neither kith nor kin, she left all her worldly goods to Jessie Konisky, in recognition of her kind services during her illness, etc.

Jessie thus became comparatively a rich woman, and of course offers of marriage were not wanting, all of which she most steadily refused, and why?

Because one night shortly after Mrs Rothsay's departure, she had had a dream, in which she saw her young lover, Charlie Forester, standing on a sandy plain, beneath a scorching sun.

A long line of camels passed slowly by, tired, patient beasts, looking exhausted evidently for lack of food. Then all were lost to sight and only Charlie remained, standing alone, stretching out his hands to her, saying in his own familiar voice, "Jess, wait. If I live I will come. Wait!" and he faded from her sight.

So she waited still, so firm was her conviction that he lived.

The years passed. Streaks of grey appeared among the strands of gold, and Jessie realised in many ways that she was not growing younger. No word had ever come, yet still she felt he lived, and she yet would meet him.

One day a ship came in to Lyttelton, and among her passengers was a tall, dark man, whose bronzed face told of much travel and toil. Eagerly he looked around, and seeing a newsboy, called for a paper. Scanning the pages hastily, he seemed to find what he wanted, for without further comment, with only a stern, set look on his face, a suddenfired hope in his eye, he set out for Christchurch. He reached it ere long, the pretty little town, so neatly laid out around the central square, and again referring to his paper, turned towards the street he sought, that led to Miss Konisky's drapery establishment.

He looked around a little, then entered, and addressed a smart young lady at the counter, asking "If Miss Konisky could be seen?"

Presently there came to him a woman, calm browed, steadfast eyed, with that look of waiting in her eyes which only he could read.

He stretched out his hand to her, and said: "Jess, my Jess, is it really you?"

And she? She never cried, or fainted, or did anything of the kind. She only laid her hand upon his arm, and took him aside into the office beyond. Then she looked him in the eyes, and said: "So you have come home to me, Charlie?"

"Yes, my love. I have sought the colonies through for you. I went to Australia, thinking you were there; advertised for you, got no reply; thought you were lost to me.

I went on an expedition with Burke and Wills, and just escaped with my life. They all died, even the camels, in the desert, some by hunger, others by the blacks.

Then I came to Sydney again, then to New Zealand, and in Auckland I saw the "Press," and your name.

I would not write, it might not have been you, you know; but Jess, it is. Am I too late?"

"No, Charlie, I saw you in the desert. I knew you would come."

And then, only then, he folded her in his arms, and let the hot tears fall that only a strong man sometimes sheds, upon her face as she rested on his heart.

They were very quietly married, and people wondered why Miss Konisky should marry such a nobody as he; but as she herself appeared perfectly satisfied, it really mattered little what other folks thought. Handsome presents came from Squire Hepworth, whose regard for her was very great; also from Mrs Captain Jackson, and the rest of the family. Also in due time a package from England from Mrs Rothsay, who had never forgotten those old days.

Charlie Forester told his wife all the story of his seeming faithlessness, how his people had kept him from any knowledge of her mother's death, or her whereabouts, sending him on a Continental agency in desperate haste. How, on his return, he had sought in vain for her, till at last he learned she had gone to the colonies. With this vague direction he had started in pursuit, the result being weary years of search, which ended at last in happy reunion.

"Never mind, Charlie, better late than never," was her reply.

The sunset flow is on the close of life; we leave them there, true man and happy wife.

The Queen has an album in which are written the dates of the birthdays of all Her Majesty's children, grandchildren and other relatives. It is the duty of her private secretary to keep her informed of the approach of any of these festive occasions, but her memory is so good that his services in this respect are seldom necessary.—Pearson's.

ORANGE BLOSSOMS

BRITTAIN—VEITCH.

One of the prettiest weddings of the season was celebrated at Kent Terrace Presbyterian Church, Wellington, on Wednesday, December 12th, last, when Mr Harry Brittain, the eldest son of Mr H. Brittain, chemist, of Manners-street, was married to Miss Flora Veitch, the eldest daughter of Mr A. Veitch (of Messrs Veitch and Allan, Cuba-street). With its handsome floral decorations and the crowds of gaily dressed and appreciative spectators, numbers of whom were unable to gain admittance, the church presented a very interesting and animated appearance.

The ceremony was solemnised by the Rev. J. K. Elliot, assisted by the Rev. James Paterson. The bride looked very charming in a dress of rich ivory satin de Lyons, made with court train, and prettily trimmed with silk chiffon and lace. She carried a bouquet. The handsome bridal veil, with sprays of orange blossoms, helped to complete a very delightful picture. The bridesmaids were Miss Winnie Brittain, sister of the bridegroom, Misses Daisy and Violet Veitch, sisters of the bride, and Miss Annie Allan. All four wore white dresses of Swiss muslin with transparent lace sleeves and yokes. The elder two had charming white chiffon hats, while the younger pair wore pretty picture hats, all carrying shower bouquets tastefully arranged with sweet peas, heath, and yellow poppies. They also wore gold hoop rings presented by the bridegroom.

The bridegroom was attended by Mr A. G. Bennett, solicitor, of Manaia, Mr Fred. Rowden, and Mr Frank Brittain.

Mendelssohn's Wedding March was played by the organist, Mr F. H. Bennet, as the bridal party were leaving the church.

The bridegroom's present to the bride was a handsome gold ring set with pearls.

After the ceremony the guests, numbering over eighty, drove to Waringa, the residence of the bride's parents, where the wedding breakfast was laid. After the usual toasts were proposed and heartily honoured, the bridal party were photographed on the lawn. The happy couple left to spend their honeymoon amid showers of rice and rose leaves.

Remember.

Remember, three things come not back:
The arrow sent upon its track—
It will not swerve; will not delay
Its speed; it flies to wound or slay.

The spoken word, so soon forgot
By thee: but it has perished not;
In other hearts 'tis living still,
And doing work for good or ill.

And the lost opportunity
That cometh back no more to thee;
In vain thou weepest, vainly yearn—
Those three will never more return.

One of the prettiest of all Christmas customs prevails in Norway. Every year thousands of birds die of starvation and cold, and at Christmas the rate of bird mortality is at its highest. Christmas, however, is a time of good-will, and rich and poor in Norway extend their good cheer to the birds. Outside every Norwegian home a sheaf of corn is placed. This, of course, not only provides sufficient grain during the most bitter weather, but also a warm resting-place. The sight of these sheaves outside the homes of Norway is very beautiful, and the spirit which prompts this Christmas charity is that of the Master, who cared even for the sparrows.

Personal Paragraphs.

Mrs J. J. Ker, who has been visiting Te Puke, is now back in Auckland.

Mrs Scott West is expected in Auckland early in the New Year from Sydney. She will be a guest of Mrs Burns, Epsom.

Miss Elliot, sister of Mr George Elliot, of Grafton Road, who has recently returned from Scotland, is once more comfortably settled in her Tauranga home.

Mr and Mrs Lionel Benjamin, of Symonds-street, Auckland, intend occupying the furnished house they have taken at the North Shore after Christmas.

Mr and Mrs Leo Myers have rented Mr Harold Heather's house at Mount Eden, Auckland, for six months.

Mrs Somerville has let her Symonds-street house, Auckland, to the Hon. S. E. Shrimski, M.L.C.

Mrs W. R. Erson, Onehungs, has taken a cottage at Waiwera, and intends to stay there in January.

Mrs F. W. E. Dawson will stay for a week or two at Orewa, prior to her departure with her two daughters for England.

Miss Greenfield, who has been staying with friends in Wellington for several weeks, returned to Blenheim a few days ago.

Mr Sturtevant, who has been Registrar of Deeds, etc., in Blenheim for several years, has been notified that he is to proceed to Dunedin, and will shortly leave with Mrs Sturtevant and family. His place at Blenheim will be taken by Mr Nalders.

Miss Moore has recently come to Blenheim from the North Island, and is staying with her uncle and aunt, Mr and Mrs J. Moore, at the old Parsonage.

Miss Payne (England), who has been staying in Nelson with Miss Browning for several weeks, has arrived home in Sydney.

Mrs and Miss Robinson, of Nelson, have been on a trip to Christchurch.

Miss Tendall, of the Girls' College, Nelson, is in Christchurch for her holidays. Miss Pearce and Miss Gallately also left for South by the same boat; and Miss Gribben has gone to her home at the West Coast.

Mrs Grace, of Blenheim, arrived in Nelson with her children to spend Christmas with her mother, Mrs Colt, of Brightwater.

Miss Nina Moore, of Nelson, who has lately passed several musical examinations with great credit, has been appointed a teacher of the Nelson School of Music.

Last week, the pupils of the Boys' College, Nelson, were taken for a trip to the Croixelles by steamer, which they greatly enjoyed, especially as the day was fine. Another day in the same week the boarders of the Girls' College drove to Cable Bay.

The Bishop and Mrs Mules (Nelson) entertained a number of guests at "Bishopdale" the other day, the object being to meet the Rev. Dr. Hooper (a missionary from India) and Mrs Hooper, who gave some interesting addresses.

Miss F. Webb-Bowen, who has been spending several weeks in Wellington, has returned to her home in Nelson.

Mrs Cooke (Nelson) held an exhibition of work done during the year by her pupils in the Girls' College studio on Thursday afternoon, when a number of guests were present. The display was very good, and included paintings, crayons, pastels, panels, etc., together with some of Mrs Cooke's own productions, which are always much admired.

Mrs Ireland, Hulme Court, Parnell, with her daughters, is staying at Waiwera for three months.

Mrs and Mrs Seager, of the Telegraph Department, have taken Hulme Court, Parnell, for a time.

Mrs W. H. Levin is shortly expected in Wellington from England, and Mr and Mrs Embling, who are now living in Mrs Levin's house, have taken Mr W. R. E. Brown's residence for a short time.

Mr and Mrs E. J. Fulton have left Wellington on a visit to Dunedin.

Mr and Mrs William Ferguson are soon to return from their trip to England.

Mr and Mrs Walter, and Mr and Mrs Matthews, of Waikato, have gone to Christchurch from Wellington.

The Misses Henry (Wellington) have gone up country for a month.

Mr and Mrs Duncan have gone to Lowry Bay for Christmas.

Mrs Biss and Mrs Tweed (Wellington) have gone to Christchurch for Christmas.

Mrs and Mrs B. Brown and their children (Wellington) have gone to Picton for a change.

Mrs Watson (Wellington) has gone to their summer residence at Seatown for Christmas.

Mr and Mrs W. Reid have left for the South from Wellington.

Mr and Mrs G. Rhodes are in Christchurch for Jubilee week.

The Hon. R. J. Seddon and Mrs Seddon returned to Wellington on Tuesday.

Mr G. Kettlewell arrived from Melbourne last week.

Mr and Mrs Bealey (Hororata), Mr and Mrs Wilkins (Akaroa), Mr and Mrs Leonard Malet (Clearwell) are in Christchurch for the festivities.

Mr John Connal "Te Koraha," has been laid up for the last fortnight, but is now recovering.

Miss Hicks is still at the Rhodes' Convalescent Home, and seems now to be improving in health, though slowly.

Mrs Pat. Compbell gave a "Hay Party" for children last week, which was greatly enjoyed by the little people.

Mrs (Dr.) Grace gave two "At Homes," one last week and one this, and was favoured with lovely weather for both.

Mrs (Professor) Clarke, her third daughter, is staying with Mrs Grace from Christchurch.

Mr and Mrs Chatfield gave a very pleasant afternoon tea on Saturday at their pretty residence at Island Bay, a number of guests driving or bicycling out from town. It was given as a farewell to Miss Chatfield, who is shortly to be married. Mrs Tuckey was assisting her daughter, and also the Misses Chatfield.

Mrs J. Curtis also gave an afternoon tea as a farewell to her daughter prior to her marriage. Mrs Curtis received in a handsome black gown. Miss Maud Curtis, for whom it was given, wore a pretty pink dress, and her sister was in white with frills of lace.

Miss Swainson's pupils gave a delightful entertainment by invitation to a large number of guests in the Sydney-street schoolroom. They chose "Alice in Wonderland," and gave great pleasure by their spirited and clever interpretation of the time-honoured old book.

The children are not being forgotten in the way of entertainment, for I heard of a delightful party being given one afternoon by Mrs H. D. Bell's children, and another by Mrs Harold Beauchamp on Saturday, both being highly entertaining to the little folks.

Mr Ronayne, general manager of railways, returned to Wellington from his visit to Auckland on Thursday last.

The Premier returned from Lyttelton, having an exceedingly rough trip back to Wellington in the Rotomahana, but in spite of this attended the dinner at the Trocadero to the Highland Pipers from Southland in the evening, and made a long speech in reply to the toast of his health and that of the Parliament of the country.

Mr and Mrs W. Ferguson (Wellington) and their little son, returned to Wellington by the Waikare, from Sydney, from their trip to England and the Continent, and are staying at Mrs Malcolm's until they take possession of their own home again.

Mr H. D. Bell (Wellington) has been appointed Consul for the North Island of New Zealand by the King of Denmark.

Mrs Harding and her daughters returned to Wellington by the Waikare from Sydney from their trip to England.

Mr and Mrs H. Tilley (Wellington) returned to New Zealand this week, via Sydney, from their six months' visit to England, and are staying with Mrs Higginson, in Hobson-street.

Mr Harcus Plimmer (Wellington) was entertained by his many friends in the Empire City at a social evening before his departure for Australia, and was presented with parting souvenirs in the shape of a crocodile leather case of silver mounted pipes, suitably inscribed, and a pair of hair brushes in a leather case (one presentation), being accompanied by many good wishes for success in his new career.

His Excellency the Governor will spend Christmas in Wellington, and afterwards proceeds in the Hinemoa to the islands south of New Zealand, which are annually visited, this, however, being the first visit of Lord Ranfurly to the islands. Captain Alexander, A.D.C., accompanies His Excellency on the cruise. Upon his return from the island cruise the Governor intends making a driving tour in Southland and Otago, starting from the Bluff, and driving in his own trap as far as Oamaru, where he joins the train to Christchurch.

Very successful garden parties were given in Wellington by Mrs Grace and Mrs Embling this week.

Dr. and Mrs Adams, and their family, are visiting Mr and Mrs W. Barton at "Fareham," Featherston, for some weeks.

Mrs Macintosh gave a pleasant afternoon "At Home" on Thursday, when a large number of guests assembled, and were received by the hostess and the Misses Macintosh.

Society Gossip

AUCKLAND.

LARGE "AT HOME."

Ponsonby was en fete on Wednesday afternoon when, in response to the invitation of Mrs (Dr.) Knight, some 200 guests assembled at "Severn House," at an "At Home." "Severn House" is well adapted to a function of this kind, the reception rooms being so large and conveniently situated. Mrs Knight received her guests in the drawing-room. At intervals the visitors were conducted into the spacious breakfast-room, where there was a prettily decorated table temptingly laden with such seasonable refreshments as fruit, salads, jellies, strawberries and cream, etc. The Italian string band was stationed on the staircase landing and played exquisite music during the afternoon. The guests who were present, and whose smart and pretty summer costumes made a very gay picture, found plenty of entertainment in chatting together.

Our hostess's two young daughters, Misses Muriel and Dorothy, who arrived that morning from the Wanganui College for their holidays, looked pretty in white silk blouses and white lace insertioned skirts.

Mrs Knight looked extremely well in a roseate pink shaded striped silk bodice with a cream satin yoke under ecru guipure lace threaded with black velvet bebe ribbon, and a black brocade trained skirt; Mrs Knight, senr., wore a handsome black brocade; Miss Knight looked well in a coquelicot silk blouse, and a black silk skirt; Mrs Hughes Jones was charming in a pale blue silk blouse trimmed with cream lace, and a black skirt, white lace straw toque with red roses; Mrs B. Baker wore a yellow silk, with tucked and lace insertioned bodice, golden brown straw hat with cream feathers and red roses; Mrs Maddox was in cream lace, with a smart little hydrangea blue floral toque; Mrs Goldie wore black satin, and a black bonnet with white chiffon rosettes; Miss Goldie was dainty in a wedgwood blue and white foulard, with white satin yoke under ecru guipure lace, white hat; Mrs Bond wore a royal blue and white foulard; Mrs Suggate's royal blue and white foulard with transparent yoke of ecru guipure lace was extremely effective; Mrs (Dr.) Parkes was graceful in a green and French grey bayadere striped silk repp, with black chiffon revers and front, black chip hat with salmon pink plumes; Mrs Runciman wore black matalasse, and a black bonnet; Mrs (Dr.) Lindsay looked well in white French lawn with tucked blouse, black crinoline picture hat with touches of turquoise blue; Mrs T. W. Leys wore an English costume of slate grey voile, with tucked silk bolero, mauve drooping hat with lovely mauve ostrich feathers, grey ostrich feather boa; Miss Winnie Leys looked stylish in a handsome English costume of Parma violet and white figured satin, with white ruched ribbon in vandykes to form overskirt, white tucked satin guimpe, grey hat with clusters of pink and yellow roses; Mrs Stevenson was in black satin, with white silk vest, black bonnet with Cyrano coloured flowers; Miss Ada Stevenson looked pretty in white Marcella, the Eton jacket opening over a white and blue blouse, Panama hat with white silk bow and folds; Miss Dunnett was distingue in a French grey voile, black Directoire hat with black plumes; Mrs E. Benjamin wore light grey with mitred revers of azure blue silk under cream lace, black tulle toque with blue aigrette; Mrs (Dr.) Grant was in a pretty deep cream figured and striped silk, with touches of pink, toque en suite; Mrs R. M. Watt was in a blue French muslin with lace bolero, white chiffon toque caught up at the side with pink and blue roses; Mrs H. W. Wilson wore black floral grenadine, and a white crinoline picture hat trimmed with black and white chiffon; Miss Kenevig was in tussore silk, with white hat; very handsome was Mrs Baume's Oriental figured satin gown, in which white and sapphire blue predominated, the bodice revealing a white satin guimpe under cream lace, her hat was a black crinoline with white wings; Mrs Kirker wore a black silk figured grenadine over emerald green silk, bonnet to match; Mrs Carrick was in a rich black merveilleux, with black chiffon boa, black bonnet; Mrs (Dr.) Moir wore royal blue and white spotted foulard, black bonnet with blue flowers; Mrs Coleman was in black brocade with navy jacket, black hat with red roses tucked beneath brim resting on the hair; Miss Oxley wore a pretty silver grey silk, white hat with plumes and touches of heliotrope, white and black ostrich feather boa; Mrs Fenwick wore black checked grenadine, with white vest, black and white bonnet; Mrs J. Owen was in a rich black satin, stylish little bonnet; Miss Owen wore a black silk skirt, with a contrasting bodice of cream Madras muslin over yellow silk, pink straw hat with clusters of pink roses; Miss Hooper looked very well in Nil green lustre, and a white picture hat; Mrs Hewitt wore a pigeon-wing grey skirt and coat, with white silk blouse with ruched lace, white hat caught up the side with green grapes; Mrs Reynolds was in black brocade, with smart little jacket of cream lace over yellow silk, cream toque; Mrs (Dr.) Bedford wore a pretty white lace insertion dress over cream, cream satin bolero, black chip hat with primroses; Miss Lena Butters looked charming in white and heliotrope floral muslin over yellow, lace bolero, and insertion on corsage threaded with heliotrope bebe velvet; Miss Fenwick was in a white and ecru lace insertion blouse over pink, black skirt, pink silk toque covered with ecru guipure lace; Mrs Whitelaw wore a grey and white muslin, with black Spanish lace fichu, black and heliotrope bonnet with white and silver-spangled aigrette; Mrs Devore was in black moire, with jet on the corsage, mauve floral bonnet; Mrs A. C. H. Collins wore white silk, black picture hat with black plumes; Mrs Henton was in royal blue and white foulard, brown bonnet with yellow nasturtiums; Miss Henton looked dainty in white lawn; Mrs Fred Sharland wore a green coat and skirt embroidered with white, black hat; Mrs A. M. Carter looked exceedingly well in a pink muslin blouse, trimmed with pea-green velvet bebe ribbon, grey skirt, white hat; Mrs Tonks wore a hydrangea blue and white foulard, white hat; Mrs Hanna was in a rich black brocade with white chiffon vest, black toque with pink unmounted roses; Miss Effie Hanna wore electric blue cashmere trimmed with cream lace insertion, white hat with mauve wings; Mrs Ziman was in black grenadine over peacock-blue shot silk, black toque; Mrs W. S. Douglas wore a white tucked lawn blouse, black satin skirt, black hat with pink and red roses; Miss Douglas was in a pretty dove-grey dress with Honiton lace revers, pink hat with soft pink plumes; Mrs Thomas Jackson wore a rich orchid mauve brocade tunic over a cyrano silk skirt, white hat; Mrs D. Tole was in white pique with touches of heliotrope, violet velvet toque with mauve wings; Mrs Mueller wore black silk under a black and white striped satin bodice, black bonnet with pink roses; Mrs Edmiston was in a handsome black silk; Miss Edmiston looked well in a white tucked silk blouse, and a black skirt, white hat; Mrs (Judge) Edger wore a black and white checked silk with blue ruched chiffon on corsage, black toque; Miss Langsford was in white, and dark blue plaid silk blouse, black skirt, black crinoline hat with black plumes; Mrs Oliphant wore a brown and white check cloth skirt and coat, with white facings, gold and black hat with black and white feathers; Mrs Oldham wore black silk and cape; Mrs E. Owen was in a heliotrope muslin trimmed with silk, hat to match; Miss Oldham, white pique skirt, daffodil yellow silk blouse, yellow chiffon toque caught up with cherries; Mrs T. Mahoney, white French muslin with pink and blue flowers, white toque with pink roses; Miss Wallnutt, pink muslin, white hat with cream chiffon and pink flowers; Mrs T. Macky, fawn costume trimmed with cream lace; Mrs E. Butler, grey and white floral muslin trimmed with black velvet bebe ribbon, black velvet hat caught up in the front with white chiffon rosette; Miss Frances George, China blue floral muslin blouse, black and blue spotted skirt; Mrs Adams, black silk, emerald green velvet bonnet; Mrs Oxley, white silk, white toque with violets; Miss Hughes, green striped satin, black hat; Miss D. Hughes, white and violet plaid silk blouse, white skirt, white hat with chiffon; Miss Carter, Baltic green and white muslin, black hat with pink roses; Mrs T. Peacock, prune cashmere embroidered with white, grey bonnet with prune hops; Miss Peacock, white and blue striped muslin, white hat; Mrs Munro Wilson, pink and green French muslin with black chiffon ruching on frills, black picture hat; Mrs Crawshaw, China blue and white foulard, lace bolero, black toque; Mrs N. Bagnall, navy costume with cream lace yoke, black hat; Mrs W. Bagnall, black and white cheek, with silk square yoke, hat to match; Mrs (Dr.) Coom, white silk, transparent lace sleeves, heliotrope and mauve toque; Mrs Hough, fawn striped voile; Mrs Hutchison, vieux rose cashmere with embroidered chiffon yoke, black toque; Mrs Littler, rich black brocade, white and gold toque; Miss Littler, black satin with white silk vest; Mrs Sim, black grenadine over yellow; Mrs J. J. Craig, white silk, black hat; Miss Campbell, white silk; Miss Dodson, pink costume, grey hat; Miss Devore, white silk and muslin inserted with lace, white crinoline hat; Mrs T. Wells, electric blue coat and skirt, white hat; Mrs Vivian, pink and white silk blouse, black brocade skirt, white hat, etc., etc.

Miss Alexander gave a large afternoon tea last Friday at her residence, "San Remo," Symonds-street, as a farewell to her girl friends before her marriage, which takes place shortly. Miss Alexander, ably assisted by her mother, received her guests in the reception room, which was gaily decorated with white flowers and greenery. The fortune-telling by Mrs J. H. Peart was quite a feature of the afternoon. It took place in a curtained part of the verandah, and much fun was evoked by the charming way the girls' past and future was told. Musical items were rendered—piano solos by Misses R. Nathan, Kempthorne, E. Myers, M. Heywood, and songs and duets by Misses Alexander, Julia Nathan, and Davis (2). Afternoon tea was served in the dining room, being an exceptionally dainty affair of trifles, ices, strawberries and cream, etc. The table was uniquely decorated with vases of white snap-dragon, white carnation, white sweet pea, and candy-tuft, intermingled with maidenhair ferns.

Mrs Isidor Alexander, navy and white striped foulard with twine-coloured lace applique on bodice and skirt; Miss Alexander, pretty white muslin with lace insertion running in triangles on skirt, which was also finished with small flounces, the bodice was of silk profusely tucked and trimmed with insertion, pink velvet band at neck fastened with diamond brooches; Misses Moss-Davis (2), were studies in white, silk blouses with blue ribbons swathing the waist, large blue bows on corsage; one wore a black hat with feathers, and the other a white one similar in shape: Miss Mitchelson, black skirt, pink blouse with black velvet, white hat with dash of pink; Miss Kent, white silk with lace, white hat en suite; Misses Kempthorne (2), white pique skirts, white shower muslin blouses, white Leghorn hats trimmed with flowers and black tulle; Miss Caro, pretty blue and black striped mousseline de soie, white hat swathed with blue; and her sister wore a similar costume of pink and black striped silk, with black lace let in at the neck, black hat with dash of pink; Miss Douglas, grey tucked costume, white vest, pink hat swathed with pink tulle; Miss Langsford, white skirt, green plaid muslin blouse, white Leghorn hat with plumes; Miss Savage, grey costume with black lace trimming and feathers; Miss Donald, oyster-grey costume, with narrow bands of black velvet, white hat with plumes and silk; Miss MacDonald, flowered muslin, white vest, white hat trimmed with black; Miss Cooper, green check costume, white vest, white hat; Misses Gorrie (2), mourning costumes; Misses Kerr-Taylor (2), pink gowns; Miss Cruickshank, white muslin skirt, silk blouse, pink silk round waist, black hat trimmed with pink; Miss Hanna, white costume, hat trimmed with periwinkle-blue ribbons; Miss Brigham, cream China silk, black hat with plumes; Miss Nelson, navy-blue foulard; Miss Cotter, white silk with plaid sash; and her sister wore a pale grey with blue sash, sailor hat trimmed with white; Miss Julia Nathan looked distinguee in a white silk, very much ruched, the latest cut of sleeves, net bolero, burnt-straw hat with black net and plumes; Miss Posseneskie, grey skirt, blue blouse veiled in white lace; Miss Waller, white costume, white hat with plumes; Miss Coates looked well in a white costume, with soft white tulle hat with dash of pink; Miss Grace Hesketh, black skirt, blue blouse, hat trimmed with blue; Miss Millie Heywood, royal blue foulard, white vest, white hat; Miss Pearl Little, flowered French muslin, white hat; Miss Morrin, green canvas muslin with white bands of trimming, white hat; Misses Myers (2), white costumes, black hats; Miss Daisy Worsp, white muslin with snow spots, white hat trimmed with tulle; Mrs Alfred Nathan's two little daughters, cream silk accordion pleated Empire costumes, one wore a hat trimmed with blue, and the other wore a white hat; Miss — Coleman, white frock; Miss (Sidney) Nathan, white frock.

GARDEN FETE.

At the garden fete given by Mr. Bruce on the occasion of the breaking up of King's College for the holidays, Mrs Ashton Bruce received her numerous guests in her usual charming manner. She wore a black lace gown with transparent sleeves and neck, white hat with flowers and feathers; Mrs (Prof.) Segar wore a black silk skirt, azure blue striped silk blouse finished with lace, black hat with plumes, and wreath of pink flowers beneath brim. Among those present were:—Rev. W. Beatty, Dr. and Mrs McArthur, Prof. and Mrs Segar, Dr. and Mrs Close-Erson, Dr. and Mrs Swale, Dr. Maitland, Officers of U.S.S. Abarenda, Mr Fred. Earl, Mrs Major, Mr and Mrs E. W. G. Rathbone, Mrs Wilson, Mr and Mrs A. Clark, Mr M. Clark, Mr McCosh Clark, Mr H. McCosh Clark, Miss McCosh Clark, Miss Kitty Clark, Mrs Abbott, Mrs Bamford, Mrs Withers, Mr and Mrs Barstow, Mrs Callender, Mr and Mrs Carpenter, Mrs Carrick, Mrs Richmond, Mr and Mrs Heather, Mr Vincent Heather, Mr Claude Heather, Miss Heather, Mrs Marriner, Miss Rice, Mrs E. D. Boult, Mrs Cheeseman, Miss Lucas, Mr and Mrs Duncan Clerk, Mrs R. Dargaville, Miss Dargaville, Mrs and Misses Cotter, Mr and Mrs Finlayson, Misses Gorrie, Mr H. Gorrie, Mrs James Hume, Mr and Mrs Hutton, Mr and Mrs Kemp, Mrs and Misses Schwartz Kissling, Mr and Mrs John Abbott, Mr and Mrs F. Bodle, Mr and Mrs J. Burns, Mr and Mrs Ferguson, Mr and Mrs Chatfield, Mr and Mrs Cleave, Mr and Mrs Theo. Cooper, Mr Dalton, Mr and Mrs Dothie, Mr and Mrs H. Gorrie, Mr and Mrs Hill, Mr and Mrs Kensington, Mr and Mrs Lawson, Mr and Mrs Lyons, Major and Mrs Morrow, Mr and Mrs H. B. Morton, Mr and Mrs J. Mowbray, Mr and Mrs Foster, Mr and Mrs D. Nolan, Miss E. Nolan, Mr and Mrs H. C. Nolan, Mrs Petrie, Mr and Mrs Ranson, Mr and Mrs Colwill, Mr and Mrs Spencer, Mr and Mrs Tewsley, Mr and Mrs Thornes, Mr and Mrs Towle, Mr and Mrs P. Valle, Mr and Mrs Walsh, Mr and Mrs Whitney, Mrs Wigmore, Mr and Mrs S. Morrin, Mr and Mrs Woodward, Mr and Mrs Richardson, Mr and Mrs Ching, Miss Hamlin, Mr S. Hamlin, Mr and Mrs Charles Russell, Mr and Mrs A. Dyer, Capt. and Mrs Coyle, Mrs P. Dufaur, Mrs G. Hardey, Mr and Mrs Johnston, Mr and Mrs John Reid, Mr and Mrs J. Reid, Mr, Mrs, Miss, and Mr Ruddock, Mr and Mrs Nelson Pierce, Mr and Mrs H. Connell, Misses Pierce, Mr H. Pierce, Miss Kidd, Mr Wallace Kidd, Mr and Mrs Tibbs, Mr and Mrs Cook, Dr. and Mrs Marshall, Mr and Mrs Robertson, Mr and Mrs V. Coney, Mrs and Misses Kerr-Taylor, Mr and Mrs C. Baker, Mr Hutchinson, Mrs and Miss Lennox, Mrs Archer, Rev and Mrs Monro, Mr R.B. Heriot, Miss Buddle, Miss Heywood, Miss M. Heywood, Mrs Ware, Mr and Mrs Paton, Miss Stevenson, Miss D. Stevenson, Mrs and Miss Moore-Jones, Mrs MacFarlane, Mr and Mrs Sanderson, Mr and Mrs Frater, Mrs and Miss Gray, Mr and Mrs Marquande, Mr and Mrs Skeet, Mr and Mrs Luckie, Mrs Goldsborough, Mrs Baber, Mr and Mrs A. F. Wilson, Mr and Mrs Carr, Miss Carr, Mr and Mrs Musson, Miss Marshall, Mr C. Marshall, Mr Dean Bamford, Mrs Main, Miss Bews, Messrs W. J. and S. Cousins, Mr Charter, Mr R. Bles, Messrs C. and D. Hay, Mr C. Kissling, Mrs and Miss Buller, Mrs and Miss M. Aickin, Mr McCormick, Miss Annie Taylor, Mr Cole, Mr Battley, Professor Carrollo, Rev. F. Smith, Mr Short, Mr and Mrs E. Morton, and others.

PRESENTATIONS.

On Friday evening, the 21st, a very pleasant gathering was held in St. Benedict's Parish Schoolroom, when the Misses Coffey, who have resigned their positions as teachers of St. Benedict's Parish Schoolroom, when

of service, were presented by the people of the parish with a farewell address and a purse of sovereigns. All the Roman Catholic clergy of the diocese were present or represented, and His Lordship Bishop Lenihan personally made the presentation, and spoke in very high terms of praise of the great services rendered to the parish by the Misses Coffey. These young ladies have conducted St. Benedict's School with very signal success, and their abilities as teachers and disciplinarians have won the approval of all who have had an opportunity of inspecting the school. At the recent Government examination of St. Benedict's Day School, conducted by Mr J. Goodwin, of the Board of Education staff of inspectors, the splendid result of 100 per cent. of passes were obtained; every child presented passed the examination. This fact was referred to by His Lordship, who paid a high compliment to the retiring teachers for the work done by them, and for the excellent state of the school, and the proficiency of the scholars. The Very Rev. Dr. Egan, Monsignor O'Reilly, and Father Gillan also spoke in terms of praise of the teachers, and expressed deep regret at the loss of their services. The farewell address was read by Mr J. J. Daley, hon. sec. to the Testimonial Committee of the Church. At an afternoon gathering of the school children, held earlier in the week, a very warm farewell was taken of the Misses Coffey by the scholars, who presented Miss Annie Coffey with a pair of gold sleeve links, with engraved initials, and Miss Teresa Coffey with an afternoon tea-set and a beautifully illustrated address. Both ladies were also the recipients of numerous handsome farewell presents from the parents of the children. Miss Teresa Coffey is to be married next week to Mr Banks, of Coromandel.

A large number of ladies gathered last week at Mrs. Ernest H. Queree's residence, Devonport, the occasion of a "pupils' afternoon." Mrs. Queree's pianoforte pupils gave a most creditable and interesting afternoon's performance, kindly assisted by Mrs. Hamilton Hodges, who sang two songs beautifully, "Not Quite Alone" and "All Thro' the Night." The pupils who played selections were Misses M. and I. Duder, Miss F. Hamill, Miss Peacocke, Miss Wilson, Miss Cooper, Miss Irene Queree, Miss Ivy Philcox and Miss Chapman. All the young ladies acquitted themselves remarkably well, and their excellent playing of difficult compositions did their talented and painstaking teacher the highest credit. Mrs. M. Cooper played a pianoforte number, and also took part with Mrs. Queree in a charming duet, "Air de Beethoven" (Saint Saens). One of the young pianistes deserves special mention. This is Irene Queree, who, though only nine years of age, played Lardelli's "Air de Ballet" from memory (all the pupils played without their music) with an accuracy which stamped her a real little genius. On the following Wednesday afternoon a private pianoforte recital was given by Miss Minnie Duder, an advanced pupil of Mrs. Queree, in the presence of a number of friends and guests. Miss Duder played a number of Schubert's, Chopin's and other composers' selections in a most finished, accurate and highly artistic manner, and also played the accompaniments for Madame Chambers, who sang "Two Songs," "Swallows," Bemberg's "Serenade," and "At My Window." Mrs. Queree and her talented pupils were both warmly complimented at the close of the recital, which was a musical treat of a high order. Tea and cakes and strawberries and cream were handed round on each occasion.

PHYLLIS BROUN.

WELLINGTON.

Dear Bee, December 20.

Miss Richmond gave a most delightful entertainment at her Kindergarten school in Bowen-street on Saturday morning. A large number of guests, chiefly consisting of the parents of the pupils, assembling and thoroughly enjoying the pretty action songs, dancing, marching, etc., of the pupils, who were all dressed alike in white with scarlet sashes, the teachers, Miss Richmond, Miss Rolleston, Miss Hilda Williams, and Miss Lucy Atkinson also wearing white gowns with scarlet ties and belts. The hall was prettily decorated, and the whole scene a charming one, reflecting the greatest credit upon Miss Richmond, whose method of teaching and interesting and encouraging the young in their work seems an admirable one. Among the guests were:—Mrs Richmond, Mrs Maurice Richmond, Lady Atkinson, Mrs Tudor Atkinson, Mr and Mrs A. Atkinson, Mrs Rhind, Mrs Field, Miss Hamilton, Mrs Firth, Mrs and Miss Tolhurst, Mrs and Miss Williams, Mrs McPherson, Dr. and Mrs Fell, Mr and Mrs Gee, Mr and Mrs Walter (Waikato), Mrs T. Wilford, Lady Stout, Mr and Mrs Lee, Mrs Fleming, Mr and Mrs Mantell, Mrs Stafford, Miss Carter, Mrs Milward, Mr and Mrs Cyril Tanner, Mrs Hoby, Mrs Morison, Mrs L. Reid, Mrs Easterfield, Mrs Kendall, Mrs Collins, Mrs Anson, Mrs Symons, Mrs Anderson, Mrs and Miss Hislop, Miss Holmes, Mrs Grace, Mrs Barber, Miss Page, Mrs Stocker, and many others.

Mr and Mrs Embling gave one of the largest and most successful garden parties ever given in Wellington on Thursday, from 4 till 7 o'clock. It turned out a most perfect day, quite hot and yet with a gentle breeze, and the sight of so many gaily dressed folk walking about in the lovely grounds was a charming one. The garden was looking lovely, it being formerly that of Mrs Levin, who is now on her way out from Home, and a splendid band played at intervals during the afternoon under the trees. At the lower end of the garden a huge tent had been erected, and it was filled with dozens and dozens of small tables, each beautifully decorated and daintily laid out for four people, and with everything one could possibly wish for. Strawberries and cream and ices seemed perhaps more sought after than anything else, and it was hardly to be wondered at, it being our first really summer day. Mr and Mrs Embling must have stood for hours receiving on the lawn in front of the house, and fully 200 guests must have been present. Mrs Embling wore a handsome turquoise blue silk gown, veiled with black checked grenadine, and trained and with bows of black satin and a black pleated chiffon boa and a black straw toque with black tips and turquoise blue velvet and paste buckles. Among the guests were Mrs W. R. E. Brown, in violet and black; Mrs Balcombe Brown wore an exquisitely embroidered white muslin gown over mauve, and with broad epaulettes, the skirt flounced and ruched, and a white and mauve hat; Mrs Richmond, a handsome black brocaded mantle and black and white bonnet; Miss Hamilton, black satin and black and white bonnet; Mrs (Professor) Brown, a pretty pale green foulard silk figured with mauve, and with mauve velvet lapels over a white satin and lace vest; Mrs McTavish, pale green and white figured muslin and green and white tulle toque; Miss Halse, a cream and mauve figured gown; Miss E. Halse, white and blue; Mrs Parfitt, rich brown corded with salmon pink revers and toque with pink roses; Mrs Hacon, a black braided costume; Mrs Leckie, a handsome black gown and black and white bonnet with blue velvet; Mrs Adams, black coat and skirt; Mrs W. Fitzgerald, a very pretty black satin trained gown with transparent sleeves and yoke of chiffon and edged with jet; Mrs Somerville, black; Mrs O'Connor, a handsome black spotted brocade gown and violet bonnet; Mrs Tweed, navy blue spotted foulard with revers of white satin and lace and mushroom hat with flowers; Mrs McPherson, a handsome white silk gown, trained and entirely covered with black lace, and black and white toque; Mrs Kendall, a grey coat and skirt; Mrs Blackett, black; Miss Blackett, fawn and mauve shot silk with velvet cuffs and collar and pretty hat to match; Mrs Edwin, black satin, trained with white chiffon fichu, spotted with black; Miss Edwin, silver grey broche; Mrs Gee, a blue and white foulard gown and pretty chiffon toque and chiffon boa; Mrs Cyril Tanner, green figured muslin; Mrs Rhind, black; Mrs Quick, black; Miss Quick, white with insertion and black toque with pink roses; Miss M. Quick, a cream figured gown and mushroom hat with flowers; Mrs Gillon, black and white check, trained, and black toque; Mrs Watson, a black broche trained skirt and grey silk blouse and and pink chiffon toque; Miss Barron, green corded silk, and pretty white and pink chiffon toque; Miss Barron, white; Mrs Bins, sage green canvas with white satin vest, white hat; Mrs Macintosh, black; Miss Macintosh, orange veiled with ecru muslin and insertion, burnt straw hat with orange flowers under the brim, and her sister in white muslin much trimmed with lace insertion; Mrs Simpson, a cream figured gown; Mrs Duncan, black, with white lapels, black and white bonnet; Mrs Travers, a very pretty white embroidered gown, with burnt straw hat with pink silk and roses; Mrs Williams, silver grey brocade, and cape trimmed with sequins, and black and white bonnet; Miss Hilda Williams, electric blue silk, with white bodice insertioned with ecru, and electric blue piped sleeves, black toque; Miss Coleridge, white; Mrs Tolhurst, a very handsome black gown; Miss Tolhurst, oyster grey, with cream insertion, and pretty white hat; Mrs T. Young, blue coat and white front, and hat; Mrs Gerald Tolhurst, grey coat and skirt; Miss Sprott, white muslin, with lace and insertion; Mrs W. Pharazyn, black trained gown; Miss Pharazyn, pale green silk, burnt straw hat with black velvet and pink roses; Mrs Walter (Waikato), bluish grey gown with wide revers of white silk, white chiffon hat with knots of turquoise velvet and white aigrettes; Mrs Matthews (Waikato), fawn coat and skirt, white chiffon vest, and fawn and blue tulle toque with high white ospreys; Mrs Wallis, white and blue figured muslin, black hat turned up with pink roses; Mrs Tuckey, black satin, black and mauve bonnet; Mrs Collins, cream, with rows and rows of ecru insertion, and large black hat with big rosettes of pale blue, pink, and mauve chiffon; Miss Harcourt, white silk, much tucked and trimmed with lace; Mrs Pynsent, lovely mauve silk, trained and veiled with black, white bonnet with flowers; Mrs Gore, black brocade, black and white bonnet; Mrs Hislop, grey, with black and white lapels; Miss Hislop, pretty figured muslin; Mrs Grace, a very handsome black trained gown edged with cream lace in tiny flounces, gold and black and white bonnet; Miss Grace, pretty white muslin; Mrs W. Turnbull, a handsome white foulard figured with brown and blue, and black toque with flowers; Mrs Loughnan, grey; Mrs H. Burns, black, and black toque; Mrs Bristow, a very pretty pale grey gown with ecru insertion, grey feather boa, and grey mushroom hat; Mrs. Fulton, a pretty pink flowered muslin, edged with narrow black velvet ribbon, and toque to match; Mrs Milward, a cream and mauve figured muslin, and cream hat with mauve trimming; Mrs Ross, handsome black satin, and black toque; Mrs Malcolm Ross, a pretty pale grey silk canvas gown, with yoke of grey chiffon and steel embroidery, hat to match; Mrs Hales, a grey gown with white front crossed with black velvet, black and white bonnet; Miss Brandon, a pretty cornflower blue gown, piped, and with cream lace under sleeves; Miss A. Brandon, pink figured muslin; Mrs Miles, deep blue broche, with white front, black toque; Miss Miles, white; Mrs Beauchamp, blue and white foulard, and cream hat with black velvet and flowers; Mrs Waters, grey Eton costume, with white front crossed with black velvet; Miss Ashcroft, white; Mrs Firth, a striking gown of pale grey, with white vest and belt, and trimmings of steel embroidery and silver fringe, toque to match; Mrs Martin, grey bengaline silk, black hat; Mrs Stuart, pink; Mrs Dyer, black; Mrs Prouse, fawn and pink shot silk, with an overdress of black embroidered net, black toque; Miss Prouse, white; Mrs Luckie, a black and white striped gown; Mrs Strang, a very pretty smoke grey canvas, with much ecru insertion and black toque; Miss Reid, pretty pink muslin, with lace flounces; Miss Simpson, yellow figured delaine, burnt straw hat with black velvet and roses; Mrs De Renzi, cornflower blue, with toque to match; Mrs Friend, black; Miss Friend, cornflower blue; Mrs C. Pearce, electric blue gown, tucked; Mrs Seed, a mauve and black gown; Miss Seed, pale grey and pretty grey tucked chiffon toque with grey tips; Miss Seed, a pretty cream figured gown, trimmed with velvet, and bonnet to match; Miss Tripe, a white muslin gown with lace and insertion, and pretty white straw toque with tips and chiffon: Mrs Bucholtz, black and white check with white revers, and black hat with tips and paste buckles; Mrs McCarthy, a pretty cream soft trained gown with zouave of transparent black embroidered net, pink folded chiffon toque; Miss Heywood, grey gown and white hat; Miss Skerrett, black, and large black hat with feathers; Mrs Watkins, blue and white foulard, with white satin yoke, large hat to match; also Mrs and the Misses Logan, Dr. Cahill, Mrs Ward, Mrs A. Brandon, Rev. Mr Sprott, Rev. Butterfield, Professor Clarke (Christchurch), Professor Easterfield, Mrs and the Misses Fancourt, Mrs Rotheram, Mrs and Miss Ecclesfield, Mrs and the Misses Kennedy, Mrs Ward, Mrs Hogben, Mr and Mrs G. Campbell, Miss Watkins, Dr. and Mrs Fitchett, Mr and Mrs L. Wilson, Mrs K. Macdonald, Mrs and Miss McKellar, Mrs McGregor, Miss Graham, Mrs Didsbury, Dr. and Mrs Young, Mr J. Coates, Mr Joynt, Mrs Ewen, Dr. Adams, Messrs Tolhurst, Brown, Kennedy, Reid, Beauchamp, Harcourt, Luckie, Quick, Ashcroft, Walter, Matthews, Young, Milward, Duncan, Nathan, Martin, Miles, Gee, and Dr. de Renzi, Dr. Hislop, and many others.

OPHELIA.

CHRISTCHURCH.

Dear Bee, December 19.

As I sit pen in hand I feel no words of mine can describe the great pageant has taken place to com-

memorate our Jubilee in Christchurch. Never have we had such a gathering either in numbers or of interest. Old colonists from far and near met together some for the first time since leaving the ship they travelled out in. Other members of their families they had not seen for many years. Imagine the hearty hand grip and the "don't you remember" on all sides, and you will think of the difficulty it was to marshal these old colonists into anything like order for the procession. They met at the Exhibition Hall and were driven to the South Belt, where the procession started from, headed by a fine team of eight bullocks provided by Mr T. O. Hay, of Pigeon Bay, and driven by Luke Scott. In the dray were about twenty old Peninsula identities, who arrived between 1843 and 1856. Then came the volunteers numbering over thirteen hundred. Some of the mounted ones in their khaki uniforms with plumed hats, on some splendid horses put in a very fine appearance. There were drags, carriages, and other vehicles brimming over with old colonists. The carriages with the Hon. W. and Mrs Rolleston, the Mayor and Mrs Reece, the Hon. R. J. and Mrs Seddon and His Excellency the Governor were the signal for much clapping of hands all along the route. The Maoris were an interesting part of the procession. A canoe on wheels, with a crew of energetic paddlers and one to direct their movements was quite a feature. Another old warrior with a spear was much more efficient at clearing the road than any two mounted troopers. The returned troopers received quite an ovation, and a mounted Kaffir was the observed of all observers. The trades were well and some most tastefully represented, but to describe it fully would take far too long when I tell you the procession took fifty minutes to pass a given point. The line of route was beautifully decorated. The scheme had been carefully thought out by Mr Hurst Seager, and days before poles had been planted in the streets and twined with coloured muslin. Then soon after 12 p.m. on Sunday began the work of festooning from pole to pole and corner to corner, the most delicate shades of blue, yellow, pink, used with white, made the most charming effects, while some streets were red, white, and blue, and some red and white, these contrasts throwing up the paler shades. The bottom of lamp-posts, telegraph poles, etc., appeared to grow out of flax bushes and toitoi. The weather was perfect; just sufficient breeze to toy with the graceful festoons of Liberty muslin, and flags, the latter floating in every direction. Some 20,000 yards of muslin were used, but I doubt if anyone can form any idea of the prettiness of it by hearing of it. At night several places were illuminated, the "Times" Office being the best. The procession after reaching Hagley Park broke up, and there were many greetings amongst friends after the lapse of a great number of years. The Governor reviewed a march past of the volunteers and then drove off; the park soon after gradually emptied. In the evening at the Exhibition Hall an immense audience assembled, including hundreds of the old colonists, when the Doxology and a Te Deum, under Mr Wells, were sung, followed by speeches by the Mayor, His Excellency the Governor, the Premier, Sir John Hall, the Hons. W. Rolleston, and C. C. Bowen, when God Save the Queen was heartily sung by all, thus ending a memorable day in Canterbury, and if it could be possible that the same strides forward could be made in the next fifty years as in the past it sets one wondering what the result might be. Among the audience were Bishop and Mrs Julius, Bishop and Mrs Wallis (Wellington), the Bishop of Melanesia, Mrs Reece, Mrs Rolleston, Mr and Mrs John Anderson, Mr and Mrs R. Allan, Mr and Mrs Appleby, Mr and Mrs Louisson, Mr Embling and Mr Maughan Barnett (Wellington), Mr and Mrs F. M. Wallace, Mr and Mrs Burns, Mr and Mrs A. E. G. Rhodes, Canon and Mrs Knowles, Mr and Mrs Allison, etc. On Tuesday the Exhibition Hall was again the rendezvous, where the old colonists' luncheon took place. A number of willing hands decorated the tables and stage. An excellent luncheon was provided by Mr Burke, but the numbers attending seemed greatly in excess of those expected as many had to be accommodated with seats on the stage and wait a second relay. It is thought nearly 900 partook of luncheon. His Worship the Mayor was in the chair, and on his right were His Excellency the Governor, Mrs Reece, Sir John Hall, Hon. C. C. Bowen, Mr Guise Brittan, Mr Mollett, Mr W. D. Wood, Mrs Stewart, and Mr and Mrs Farr. On the Mayor's left were the Hon. C. Butler, Captain Williams, A.D.C.'s, Mr J. Deans, the Hon. J. T. Peacock, Archdeacon Dudley, Mr A. F. N. Blakiston, Canon Knowles, Archdeacon Cholmondeley, Mr R. J. S. Haiman, Mr E. W. Seager, and Mr George Hart. The tables were arranged as far as possible as the first four ships, namely, The Charlotte Jane, The Randolph, The Sir George Seymour, and The Cressy, the various toasts being given and replied to by speakers from these vessels. It was a unique and interesting gathering, the gallery being filled with spectators, and one word expresses all the old colonists and their friends seemed to feel that day, "happiness," for their faces were wreathed in smiles. Luncheon over, conveyances took the old colonists to a garden party given by Mrs Deans, senr., and Mr and Mrs John Deans, Riccarton, whose hospitality and kindness has extended for over half a century to all and sundry in and around Christchurch. Mrs Deans, seated in a chair on the lawn, received the guests, and exchanged reminiscences with many old friends. About 700 people altogether were present. Numerous marquees were dotted about for serving refreshments, and a band played at intervals. The Governor arrived about 5 p.m., having called on his way to distribute the prizes at Christ's College, that day being also the jubilee of the College. In the evening the Exhibition Hall was again filled, many old colonists being present. The choir, under Mr Wells, gave the "Canterbury Pilgrim" anthem, which was sung by the Canterbury pilgrims themselves in St. Paul's, London, just before leaving for New Zealand. Then Mr Maughan Barnett, of Wellington, stepped on to the platform to conduct the ode which he composed for the opening of the Exhibition. It went brightly and well, Mr Hugh Reeves taking the solo very effectively. At the close the applause was very enthusiastic, and Mr G. T. J. Alpers, as librettist, was compelled to acknowledge his share with Mr Barnett. Mrs Burns then sang "Rejoice Greatly" in her usual pleasing manner, the Hallelujah Chorus being a grand finale. Mr E. W. Seager then gave his lecture on "Old Canterbury," with limelight views, many of the early colonists long since passed away being shown on the canvas, with Christchurch and Lyttelton in the desert and V hut stage.

The Jubilee celebrations being uppermost, I have put them down first, but there were one or two small festivities last week. Mrs Wigram gave a delightful "At Home." The day was beautifully fine, and everything looked its prettiest. A band was stationed on the lawn; there was also some music in the house, and everyone seemed to enjoy the afternoon. Mrs Wigram wore a dainty cream gown, hat to match; Mrs J. Gould, blue glace silk, with cream lace bolero, blue chiffon and cream toque; Mrs Stead, pale blue voile finished with heliotrope silk bands, toque to match; Mrs H. H. Cook, black lace over white silk, black hat and feathers; the Misses Cook, pretty floral muslin gowns, black hats; Mrs H. H. Loughnan soft grey dress trimmed with black velvet, large black hat; Mrs Deans, black silk grenadine over green, bonnet to match; Miss Deans, white glace silk and deep cream lace, black hat; Mrs Pyne, white corded cloth, Eton coat and skirt, Tuscan and floral toque; Mrs Ogle, pale grey gown, pink vest and belt, pretty toque; Mrs Wardrop, pale pink gown, toque to match; Mrs A. E. G. Rhodes, handsome black gown, black hat with touches of blue; Mrs and Miss Fenwick; Mr and Mrs Louisson, the latter in palest grey silk with Maltese lace and narrow crimson velvet, and steel buckles on the bodice, black chiffon toque; Miss Louisson, pretty pink floral muslin, hat to correspond; Mrs and Miss Harper, Mr J. C. Palmer, Mrs Vernon, Mr and Mrs Wilding, Mrs and Miss Julius, Mrs A. Rolleston, Mrs J. Turnbull, and many others.

On Wednesday evening Miss Taylor gave a picnic at New Brighton. Quite a number of the party cycled down, Mrs Louisson, Mrs Marks, Miss M. Allan, and a few others going by tram. Among those present were the Misses Prosser, Louisson (2), Messrs Webb, Hardy-Johnston, Ziele, and Louisson.

On Saturday Mrs Louisson gave a drag picnic to Sumner for Miss M. Louisson's birthday, over thirty guests going, amongst whom were Mrs Louisson, Mrs Marks, Mrs Green, Misses Louisson (3), Taylor, Wood, M. Allan, Prosser, Messrs W. Peacock, Louisson, Ziele, Hardy-Johnston, and others.

Mrs Mathias, "Fendalton," gave a delightful afternoon tea at her residence last week, and some charming music was listened to. Among those present were Mrs Arthur Rhodes, Mrs and Miss Helmore, Mrs Secretan, Mrs and Miss Deans, Mrs and Miss Palmer, Mrs and Miss Hennah, Mrs Moorhouse, Miss Bowron, etc.

On Thursday evening the combined societies (musical and motett) gave the "Messiah" in the Exhibition Hall, which was filled. Mrs Burns, Miss Graham, Messrs Allan and Millar sang the solos, and I am told all did well with the exception of the tenor, but unfortunately at the last moment I was unable to go and hear it.

DOLLY VALE.

NELSON.

Dear Bee, December 17.

On Wednesday afternoon Mrs Fell gave a most enjoyable

AT HOME

at her residence, "St. John's," for Miss Kathleen Fell, whom everyone is glad to welcome back after her visit to England, and also for her niece, who is on a visit here from England. The chief feature of the afternoon was Miss K. Fell's singing, which was very charming. She sang quite a number of short, dainty little songs, most being quite new to her hearers, and all were greatly appreciated. Miss Webb-Bowen played all her accompaniments, and Miss Edith Kempthorne played a solo.

Mrs Fell received her guests in a very handsome gown of sage green brocbe satin; Miss Kathleen Fell looked very sweet in a soft white silk trained gown daintily trimmed with torchon lace and insertion; Miss Fell (England) was admired in a pretty blue flowered muslin with silk stripe effectively trimmed with lace; the Misses P. and S. Fell, and Doris Lightfoot, who assisted with the tea, all wore pretty white muslin frocks. Amongst the guests were Mrs Atkinson, black; Miss Ruth Atkinson, blue grey costume, black hat; Mrs Adams, wedgewood blue canvas over white silk, small black hat with pink roses at the side; Mrs Andrew, black and white silk, pink flowered muslin vest, black hat with pink trimmings; Baroness Von Rintzingslowen, black costume trimmed with black satin ribbon, black and white toque; Miss Browning, white pique skirt, muslin blouse over pink, large black hat with ostrich feathers; Mrs Bunny, mauve costume, hat en suite; Miss Bunny, heliotrope muslin, white and heliotrope hat; Mrs Chatterton, light grey silk, black chiffon hat with black feathers; Mrs Coote (Feilding), stylish gown of grey voile, large Leghorn hat with black and white feathers; Miss Cock, dark grey costume, black and pink toque; Miss M. Cock, pink muslin, hat en suite; Miss Cuthbertson, white; Miss Burnett, blue; Mrs de Castro, black canvas over rose pink, pink toque; Miss Duff, white, large white hat; Miss Edwards, blue silk blouse, black skirt, white chiffon hat; Miss Fillecul, light costume, sailor hat; Mrs Glasgow, black; Miss Glasgow, grey costume, smart hat with red and pink roses; Mrs A. Grace, stylish costume of grey, small white hat relieved with black velvet; Miss Gribben, bright pink muslin, black hat with pink and green ribbons; Misses Gibbs (2) wore white; Mrs Hudson, dark blue foulard trimmed with cream lace, bonnet to match; Miss Huddleston, powder blue costume, black hat; Miss Heaps, becoming grey cashmere, white lace yoke, grey hat to match; Mrs Harris, black; Miss Hunter Brown, smart navy costume, becoming hat to match; Mrs Houlker, dark blue foulard, black and pink toque; Miss Houlker, white; Mrs F. Hamilton, black skirt, ecru lace bodice, large hat with pink trimmings; Miss Harris, black, bonnet en suite; Miss G. Jones, light costume, Leghorn hat with cream roses; Miss Nina Jones, fawn; Miss Edith Kempthorne, white muslin, white hat with pink roses; Miss King, Miss Lubecki, fawn costume relieved with red; Mrs Lightfoot, black; Mrs Lemmer, cigar brown costume, hat en suite; Mrs A. Mackay; Miss Marsden, black silk with yoke and sleeves of white satin veiled with black lace, hat to match; Mrs Maginnity, black silk, smart bonnet relieved with green; Miss Oldham, smoke grey silk, large black hat; Miss Poole, light muslin; Mrs Patterson, black, deep lace fichu, large black hat; Miss Pitt, soft white silk and lace, large white hat with violets beneath brim; Misses Preshaw (2), grey costumes, becoming white hats; Miss Payne (England), grey costume relieved with deep yellow, small black hat; Miss Pearce, smart grey muslin, hat en suite; Miss Rochfort, light muslin, sailor hat; Mrs Robertson, black; Mrs Roberts, black costume, large hat en suite; Mrs Stephens (Port), smart grey costume, chic hat; Miss Stevens, white embroidered muslin over green, white hat with green bows; Miss Smith (Wellington), white; Miss Sealy, light muslin, large black hat; Miss F. Sealy, pink muslin, chiffon hat to match; Miss Tendall, black, cream lace fichu, hat en suite; Miss Tomlinson, pretty flowered muslin, white hat with pink flowers; Mrs Vining, black and white costume; Mrs Watts, black silk, bonnet en suite; Mrs Charles Watts, black relieved with white, toque to match; Mrs Wratt, smart grey costume, chic hat to match; Miss Webb-Bowen, green muslin, hat trimmed with pink; Miss Watkins, white muslin and lace, large black hat.

The same evening Mrs Kingdon gave a small but enjoyable

AT HOME

at her charming residence, when music and dancing were the chief amusements, and a very merry evening was spent. Mrs Kingdon wore a handsome and becoming gown of black satin with transparent sleeves; Miss Turner (Wanganui), her guest, looked well in blue satin. Others present were Mr and Mrs Adams, Dr. and Mrs Roberts, Misses Harris (2), Blackatt, Jones, Webb-Bowen (2), Smith, Tomlinson, Heaps, Trolove, Sealy, Mr and Mrs Booth, Messrs Tomlinson (2), L. Levien, A. Adams, Blackett, Oldham, Muir, Kadell, and others.

That grand oratorio

"THE MESSIAH"

was performed by the Harmonic Society in St. John's Wesleyan Church on Thursday evening. The large building was well filled in every part, and the beautiful music was listened to with great enjoyment. The effective organ passages were well played by Miss Nina Moore, and helped considerably in the successful rendering of the work. Herr Lemmer, the conductor, is to be congratulated on the general improvement of the chorus singing, which was quite a feature of the performance. The soloists were Mr John Rose, of Blenheim, tenor; Mr A. C. Maginnity, bass; Miss Kathleen Fell, soprano; and Miss Clarice Hunt, alto. All were in good voice and sang well, especially Miss Hunt, whose beautiful voice seems especially suited to oratorio music.

PHYLLIS.

BLENHEIM.

Dear Bee, December 14.

For the second time since Judge Edwards has taken his circuit, he was presented with a pair of white gloves, to denote the absence of crime from the calendar. It is a strange custom, and one wonders what is done with these emblems.

Before the dispersal of the pupils attending the High School for the Christmas vacation, there was a meeting of the relatives and friends of the pupils, several members of the Board of Governors, as well as the Mayor, Mr. McArtney, who presided in the absence of Mr. A. P. Seymour, and Dr. Innes, to witness the distribution of prizes. A special prize was given by Mrs. Innes for the best cake, which was won by K. Buckhurst, the prize for scones being won by a boy named Litchfield. Mrs. Rogers acted as judge of cakes and scones.

A prize is each year offered for the best essay, written by a Borough school child, on the "Agricultural Show," and this year the first was awarded to Miss E. Hilliard, the second to C. White, Inspector Smith acting as judge.

On Wednesday evening a large number of friends met in Wesley Hall, to welcome Mr. and Mrs. J. Crump, who have come from their missionary labours in New Britain, to spend a year's furlough in New Zealand. The hall was decorated with flowers and foliage, and draped with flags. In a large monogram of flowers, placed at the head of the hall, the initials of the guests of the evening were intertwined, and the pretty, quaint native names of their three children were placed at intervals on the walls. The Rev. Mr. Keall was chairman. Mr. A. J. Litchfield wrote regretting his inability to be present, owing to illness, but expressing his sympathy with the feeling which prompted this evidence of good feeling towards Mr. and Mrs. Crump. A handsome illuminated address of welcome was presented by Mr. E. H. Penney, to Mr. Crump, who thanked him briefly, but promised on some future occasion to give a description of the manners and customs of the people among whom he had been working. During the evening songs were sung by Mrs. T. Davies, Mrs. A. J. Litchfield, the Misses Curnow and Paine, and Messrs. Birch and Paine. Before dispersing a bountiful repast was partaken of, the viands being arranged on the tables in a most tempting manner.

FRIDA.

Quaint Christmas Customs.

WIDE-SPREAD SUPERSTITION ABOUT ANIMALS.

ODD WAYS OF CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAY.

Throughout the world there is a superstition which gives to domestic animals an instinctive knowledge of, and reverence for, Christmas.

From time immemorial unwonted sagacity has been attributed to the cock at that season. In the rural districts of England, if a cock should crow during the stillness of a December night one might hear a peasant say, "He is scaring away the evil spirits from the Christmas holy day."

Bees in southern countries are believed to sing in honour of Christ's coming. Reverence for the manger is shown by the cattle, which kneel on Christmas Eve, while sheep in pastoral regions, according to the shepherds' tales, march in procession to commemorate the visit of the angel to the shepherds.

Howison says that on one moonlight Christmas Eve, in Upper Canada, he saw an Indian creeping with care through the woods. "What are you doing?" said Howison. "We watch to see deer kneel. Christmas night all deer kneel and look up to Great Spirit," was the brave's reply.

WHEN HORSES SPEAK.

Horses and cattle in the German Alps are believed to possess the gift of speech upon Christmas Eve, but to play eavesdropper upon them means death before the New Year. According to an Alpine legend a doubting servant once hid in his master's loft upon a Christmas Eve to prove to his neighbours that they were fools to believe such trash. Upon the stroke of twelve he heard a farm horse say, "We shall have hard work to do this day week." "Yes," replied his mate, "the farmer's servant is heavy and the way to the churchyard is long and steep." Upon New Year's Day the servant was buried.

Rural Russia has set apart the eve before Christmas for a public pageant. At sunset, young and old, forming in procession, march to the homes of local dignitaries and serenade them. In return for this honour they expect money. Then follows a masquerade, in which the men imitate cows, pigs, and goats. Upon the appearance of the evening star a supper is spread. It is a sacred feast. The blessed wafer is divided, and a small portion is given to each person present, beginning with the patriarchs and ending with the children. None dares refuse this rite. At the conclusion of the supper the nobleman of the neighbourhood invites his peasants to behold a gigantic tree, prepared in their honour, and decked with trivial gifts, which at the end of the evening's galeties are distributed among those present.

CHRISTMAS IN PERU.

Christmas celebrations in Peru possess peculiar features. Lima is the centre of the merrymaking. Gala day costumes are donned, and during the day before Christmas the streets present the appearance of one gigantic fair. Donkeys laden with fruits, evergreen boughs and liquors swarm the streets. Ice stalls are prepared, where the perspiring merrymakers sit, after too lively exercises, for it is often very warm in Peru on December 25. Jests and practical jokes reign supreme. Masked parties, with guitars and mandolins, parade the streets. For the time being all restraint and order are thrown aside.

The scene changes at midnight. Chimes from the Cathedral bell summon all citizens to mass. Houses are deserted, while the churches are crowded with kneeling worshippers. Priests and monks appear, and holy mass is observed. A second mass is celebrated at nine o'clock on Christmas morning. This over, feasts and sport become the order of the day. Bull fighting holds a prominent place in this part of the day's entertainment. Night witnesses a fantastic procession, headed by the clergy. Soldiers and citizens masked and gayly dressed follow. Midway in the line is borne aloft the image of the Madonna, carrying in her arms the infant Christ.

In Norway and Sweden every member of a household must bathe on the day before Christmas. Upon the eve the Bible is read in every Christian home and prayers are said. There is little public celebration. In many villages a candle is placed in the window of each house to guide Kristine, the Northern Santa Claus, upon his way. A pan of meal and a sheaf of wheat upon a pole are placed before each door as offerings to the birds.

There are games and dances in many of the Scandinavian homesteads upon Christmas night. These parties are often interrupted by masqueraders, who sing or act a pantomime. They are generally rewarded, with food or money. Small boys clad in white pass from house to house, one of them carrying a star shaped lantern representing the Star of Bethlehem, and another a box containing two images to represent the Virgin and the Child.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE.

In Suabia a maiden who wishes to know the appearance of her prospective husband draws a stick at haphazard from a heap of wood on Christmas Eve. As the stick proves to be long or short, straight or crooked, so shall the husband be. His occupation can be foretold by dropping hot lead into cold water. As the lead forms an imaginary plane, or fast, or pair of scissors, so shall the husband be a carpenter, a cobbler or a tailor.

In Pfullingen brides are foretold upon Christmas Eve by placing a blindfolded gander within a circle. The girl toward whom the gander first runs is destined to be the first to wed.

Countrymen in Poland assert that upon Christmas night the heavens open and the scene of Jacob's ladder is re-enacted. To the saints alone, however, is it visible.

In Austria and parts of Northern Germany food is prepared with greatest delicacy on Christmas Eve and placed upon tables, in order that the Virgin Mary and the Angel in passing during the night may not be compelled to fast. A light is placed in a window in order that the Christ Child, in traversing the streets, may not fall.

Austrian peasants also think that wicked men, transformed into wolves, are permitted to prowl the streets and commit depredations on Christmas night without molestation.

A Jolly Xmas.

Decorate the home
With mistletoe and holly,
Santa Claus will come
If ev'ry thing looks jolly.
But if all is dull and drear,
Santa Claus will not appear.

She is My Love.

(In the measure of the original Irish Gaelic love song.)

She is my love beyond all thought,
Though she hath wrought my deepest dole;
Yet dearer for the cruel pain
Than one who fain would make me whole.

She is my glittering gem of gems,
Who yet condemns my fortune bright:
Whose cheek but glows with redder scorn
Since mine has worn a stricken white.

She is my sun and moon and star,
Who yet so far and cold doth keep,
She would not even o'er my bier
One tender tear of pity weep.

Into my heart unsought she came.
A wasting flame, a haunting care;
Into my heart of hearts, ah, why?
And left a sigh forever there.

Alfred Perceval Graves.

In "The Spectator."

AS SEEN THROUGH WOMAN'S EYES.

Children Honour the Holy Babe.

One of the most delightful festivals in feast-loving Rome is celebrated at Christmas in honour of "Le Santissimo Bambino de l'Ara-Coeli,"—that is to say, the Holy Babe of the Heavenly Field.

Now, the Heavenly Field has been famous ever since the time of Augustus as the Ara-Coeli, and long before his time it was noted as the site of the temple to Jupiter Capitolin, which dominated almost the entire city.

In October of the fifty-sixth year of his reign Augustus made an effort to consult the gods as to his successor. Mounting the steps of the temple, step by step, and looking upwards, he called on the gods, waiting for a reply.

"Suddenly there appeared "a venerable lady with a gracious child in her arms," as the old story has it, and she said:

"Respect this place, for soon my son, the King of Heaven, shall rule here."

Then Augustus questioned his gods and the spirit declared that a child of Judea, descended from heaven and conceived without blemish, should soon reign in the temple on the hill. The emperor, in honour of the prodigious event, had a magnificent altar erected, bearing the words "Haec est ara filii Dei," and placed it on the spot where the apparition appeared. Then the pagan idols fell, a grand basilica was built in this place, and it still bears the name of the Ara-Coeli, and there truly today reigns the Santo Bambino, the sanctuary of the Infant Jesus, beside the altar consecrated by Augustus.

FOUNDED BY A FRANCISCAN.

Then the story takes us to Jerusalem, where dwelt a pious monk of the order of the gentle St. Francis of Assisi. All the Franciscans are devoted to the infancy of our Lord, and this gentle monk, whose name is forgotten, loved Him especially. One night, while he prayed, he saw a vision on Mount Olivet, and heard a voice saying, "Go dig there, and you will find a piece of olive wood which has received some of the blood of our Lord." He did so, and finding the olive wood took it to his room and considered what to do with it. Called to Rome to see a superior of his order, he thought he would like to carve a fitting image on his precious relic and offer it to his superior. Once in Rome he told his superior of his possession, offering it to him and asking what he would prefer for him to make of it His own preference was an image of our dying Lord, as he had found it on Mount Olivet, but his superior inclined to the infant, and so it was determined it should be. On the way home he was shipwrecked and cast upon the coast of Egypt, and though his life was spared he was blind.

MIRACULOUS CARVING.

Finally he reached Jerusalem, and his first thought was his precious olive wood. He refused aid to reach his cell, and when he arrived he hastened to ascertain if his relic was safe, and the moment he touched he saw, and —oh, miracle!—the wood was carved in an image of the Divine Infant. There are many stories of this marvellous image before it reached its final resting place in the Church of Ara-Coeli, where it is to this day an object of devotion and the centre of the charming festival of the children of Rome. Thousands of children gather every year to honour Santissimo Bambino, and are informed this pretty image is the Bambino who brings them Christmas toys and joys, for whom they look as our American little folks look for Santa Claus or St. Nicholas. A stand is built especially for a child to preach, and the best little boy or the best little girl of the school or parish is selected to tell the history, child fashion, to the other children assembled of the Christ Child —the true Santissimo Bambino—that came to a stable in Bethlehem and lay in a sheep trough speechless that others might speak for Him and learn of Him who was meek and lowly of heart. How tenderly the little child preacher tells the story many visitors to Rome can testify, for the children are instructed and coached and most anxiously watched over by their teachers, who hover near them.

The little Bambino has been tabernacled, and there is a story of how it was stolen and a substitute sent in its place, and no miracles taking place a triduum was begun with profound grief and prayer, when the true miraculous image came of itself and knocked at the window and took its place on the altar, to the joy of the faithful and the confusion of the wicked woman who had tried to practise the deception.

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Humourous Yuletide Gifts.

A nice present for a small boy to purchase for his grandfather is a bicycle suitable in size for the small boy himself. The thought will please the grandfather, and the boy will probably get the wheel, so that two birds will be tickled by one feather.

Children with small feet will do well on Christmas eve to borrow their big brother's caddy-bag and hang this up over the chimney place instead of their own small stockings, says a writer in "Harper's Bazar." A caddy-bag of ordinary size recently tested was found to have a capacity of thirty pounds of sweets, two dozen oranges, and toys enough to set up a small shop.

Wives whose husbands smoke are again reminded, in view of the approach of Christmas, that the man who smokes intelligently would rather receive one cigar costing 1/ than a hundred costing 2/. We sound this note of warning merely in the interests of peace and good will.

Glass eyes on worsted slippers for your pastor are no longer considered good form. It often happens that these are placed over the most sensitive of the clerical toes, and lead the wearer of the slippers into the use of strong language if by some inadvertence they are stepped on by an outside party.

Persons of moderate means who wish to present their wives with ropes of pearls or diamond necklaces or gold chatelaines are referred to that charming little volume, "Fifty Ways of Cracking Safes; or, Burglary Made Easy," by Red Mike, the champion jewel-lifter of the United States, soon to be published by the Sing Sing Tract Society.

Always avoid anything bordering upon sarcasm in the selection of your gifts. Don't send a chafing dish, with full instructions as to how mushrooms and Welsh rarebits may be cooked upon it, to a dyspeptic friend; do not send an opera cloak to your cousin who lives all her days in the woods; and, above all, never be satirical in your gifts to servants. A set of Burns for your cook, a work on "Rest" for your hired man, or "How to Dress Well on £1 a Year" for your housemaid would be in execrable taste. Better far stick to the time-honoured gift of an orange and an imitation emerald pin for the woman and a plush polo cap for the man.

A suitable gift for a millionaire to make to his daughter—and I make this suggestion in response to an appeal for information—is a certified check for £200. To present her with a railroad might involve her in a bonded indebtedness that she could not well meet, and which, to that extent, would later prove to be an embarrassment. A certified check for £200, however, would appeal to the taste of any woman.

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New Year Customs in the Old World.

In England, America and Germany, where the Christmas feast is the event of the season, the advent of the New Year is an occasion of little moment. But in Scotland, France, Italy and other countries where Christmas is of little account New Year's Day is the holiday of the year. Both the New Year and Christmas feasts are the survivals of the old heathen festival of Yule. In some countries it is celebrated on December 25, and in others a week later, at the beginning of the New Year. In Scotland Christmas was celebrated with all the old pomp and jollity until the Reformation, when the fierce denunciations of John Knox against all the ceremonies and rites of the Roman Church effectually damped the celebration of the "Papistical and superstitious" feast of Christmas. But the Scotch merely postponed their winter festival for a week, and on the celebration of New Year concentrated all their energies. New Year's Eve and Day are the great national holidays of Scotland, and so riotously was the birth of the New Year celebrated that these days were claled "The Daft Days".

The last day of the old year in Scotland is called Hogmanay, on the derivation of which word volumes might be written. Probably it is derived from the Scandinavian hogger-not, from the Norse custom of killing (hog —to kill) beasts for sacrifice to the gods on that night. With their faces encased with paper masks and wrapped in large sheets forming a big pocket in front of their little persons the children go a-begging for their hogmanay. Halting before the door of a house they sing one of various verses, one of which runs:—

Get up, good wife, and dinna sweir,
And deal your bread to them that's here,
For the time will come when you'll be dead,
And then you'll want neither ale nor bread.

They were then promptly admitted to the house and supplied with oat cake, cheese and a dram. Mr Barrie has pathetically described how Sentimental Tommy and little Elspeth observed this custom in their mother's squalid London lodgings, playing the part of mummers and visiting her for their hogmanay. While waiting for the right time to act their little play Tommy lured his mother into telling them "how they would be holding hogmanay in Thrums that night, how cartloads of kebbock cheeses had been rolling into the town all the livelong day, and in the dark closes the children were already gathering with smeared faces and eccentric dress to sally forth as guisers at the clap of eight, when the ringing of a bell lets hogmanay loose. Inside the houses men and women were preparing (though not by fusting, which would have been such a good way that it is surprising no one ever thought of it) for a series of visits, at every one of which they would be offered a dram and kebbock and bannock, and in the grandest houses 'bridies,' which are a sublime kind of pie."

The custom of young people disguising themselves on New Year's Eve, singing before houses, and, on admittance being provided with food and drink, is common to all parts of Great Britain. In Scotland the custom is still observed, and in Yorkshire bands of mummers may be met on New Year's Eve going from house to house and singing for money and refreshment.

The wassail bowl has been regarded as the property of Christmas, but it is really a New Year custom. It was the custom of our ancestors to drink the old year out and the New Year in in a bowl of liquor, which came to be called the wassail bowl from the exclamation "wass hael" (be in health) of every loper as he lifted it to his lips. The bowl was passed round from guest to guest, all drinking from it, in token of the goodwill and happiness with which the New Year opened. From the wassail bowl came the "loving cup," which still figures at the banquets of London guilds. The "gossips' bowl," which Shakspere mentions in "Midsummer Night's Dream," was the same as the wassail bowl. It was composed of warm ale, nutmeg, sugar and roasted apples. It was also a more pretentious composition. A recipe of the seventeenth century directs cardamoms, cloves, nutmeg, mace, ginger, cinnamon, and coriander seed to be boiled in a cupful of water. This was to be added to four bottles of port, sherry, or Madeira, and with it were to be mixed a pound and a half of fine loaf sugar, the yolks of twelve and the whites of six eggs. The whole was to be boiled till frothing, a dozen fine, cold, roasted apples to be thrown in, and the liquor served hot.

With deep drafts of the wassail bowl our forefathers drank out the old and drank in the new year. As the church clock tolled the death of the old year and the birth of the new each member of the party drank "good health, a happy New Year and many of them," to the rest of the company. The men then sallied forth, with a kettle filled with wassail, to wish their neighbours and friends the same sentiment. If they met other parties on the way they stopped and drank to "A Happy New Year" out of each other's kettles. Even now in Scotland it is the custom to carry in one's pocket a bottle of whisky (the modern substitute for the hot-spiced ale) on New Year's eve. The streets of all Scotch towns are crowded, and as the clocks chime 12 o'clock everybody exchanges wishes for prosperity and a drink from their flasks. From this old custom there arose a superstition as to the appearance of the person who let the New Year into a house. There is and always has been a strong prejudice against allowing a woman or a light-haired man to be the "first foot" to enter a house in the New Year. If this happens bad luck will pursue all the members of that household during the year just begun. In consequence of this belief dark-complexioned men were accustomed to make a business of "first-footing" in the New Year, the presents and hospitality they received compensating them for their trouble. Even now dark-haired men are in demand to let in the New Year. It was also believed that to take a light out of the house on New Year's Day foretold a certain death in the family during the year. It was also forbidden to take anything out of the house on New Year's Day. "Take out, then take in, bad luck will begin; take in, then take out, good luck comes about."

In the Isle of Man—probably the most superstition ridden part of the kingdom—there are many curious beliefs as to New Year's Day. The last night of the old year was called Quaaltagh, and it was the custom for parties of young men to visit from house to house, and, singing a song, wishing the inmates long life and happiness, and plenty of potatoes and herrings, butter and cheese, that they might sleep well during the year, and not be disturbed by even "the tooth of a flea." On finishing the song the party was invited into the house, the darkest member being always the first to enter, and they were regaled with good cheer. For a light-haired man or any female to enter a house on New Year's Day is dreaded by all. If such a catastrophe takes place on him or her will be cast the blame for every accident that befalls the home during the year. Great care is taken to brush the carpet of a room from the door to the hearth, and not from the hearth to the door; this makes all the difference between good and bad luck, health and death, to the family during the year. On New Year's eve it was also the custom to rake the ashes of the fire over the kitchen floor. The next morning the ashes were eagerly examined for the trace of a footprint. If one was discovered with the toes pointing to the door it signified that death would certainly carry off one of the household during the year; if the foot, however, pointed from the door to the hearth, then an addition would be made to the family before twelve months had gone.

It is little wonder that the New Year should be the occasion of so many quaint customs and superstitious attempts to see what it had in store. For the death of the old and the birth of the new year is an event of universal interest; it is the birthday of the world, and marks another milestone passed in its great journey. As Charles Lamb said: "No one ever regarded January 1st with indifference. It is that from which all date their time and count upon what is left. It is the nativity of our common Adam." And as the clock tolls forth the death of the old year one cannot but secretly grieve over its departure, and as the birth of the new year is heralded the events it has in store for one and all cannot but awaken a feeling of expectation, mixed with awe.

Blouses for Ever.

The newest corsages form fancy jackets, and many are made with basques so that they look like coatees. It will be long enough before women will wear these tightly-fitting bodices in the house, so accustomed have they become to the more easy-going shirt. But since it became fashionable to keep an outdoor dress for the purpose of walking, and never to wear it in the house except for half an hour or so, blouses have become so much a delight that the fact of having to change her dress often does not worry the average woman.

One pretty bodice seen the other day was opened down the front to show a silk vest beneath, and straps fastened the fronts across. It was overlaid with motifs of lace embroidered in coloured silks, and the little basque was irregularly cut and edged with lace. Stiffness of contour and of design will not be tolerated now, and therefore irregular trimmings will have a further vogue and exercise the ingenuity of the dressmakers when tight bodices are called for.

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Young Men of To-day.

The young men of to-day are too finicky—too much given to self-analysis, too self-pampering. Their shoes and neckties cost more each year than did the entire wardrobe of their grandfathers. They feel a sense of degradation in small beginnings and plodding, and they wait for success ready made to come to them. There is not a young man in the country who would imitate Ben Franklin and march through the streets munching a loaf of bread while looking for employment. He dare not, indeed, because society has become also finicky, and he would be arrested as a tramp. The young man of to-day wants capital. Trusts and combines and corporations distress him. He cannot be president of a bank or judge of a court the first week he is from school, and he feels, like the famous Eli Pussley, that he has "no chance."—"Memphis Commercial Appeal."

Some Useful Hints on Jam Making.

The jam season will soon be upon us again. Indeed with strawberries it is already here.

Miss Mary Harrison, in her practical and useful "Modern Cookery," gives full directions, which I cannot do better than quote for the benefit of my readers.

Fruit for preserving should be sound and fresh; it should be gathered in dry weather, on the morning of a sunny day, but not so early that it has the dew on it. Of course, for us who live in cities, we must only see that the fruit is fresh and sound when we are buying it, and we should make the fruit into jam as soon as possible after picking or buying.

The best sugar is the cheapest in the end, as it throws up less scum. It must be broken small, not crushed, or the syrup will not be clear. In making jam, be careful to stir it all the time, and to skim it carefully; if left it may burn. Stir always with a long wooden spoon. To test if the jam is made, pour a little on a plate; if it sets it is done. Jam should not be over-cooked.

If too little sugar is used, the jam will not keep; if too much, it will candy.

It is impossible to lay down a rule as to the exact length of time it takes to cook the fruit.

It depends on the methods employed, the kind of fruit, and whether it is quickly or slowly boiled.

In the following directions the time mentioned is intended as a guide only, as not only will the time vary according as the preserve is slowly or quickly boiled, but the same kinds of fruit will be found to differ, some being more watery than others, the more watery the fruit the longer boiling it will take.

Put the jam when cooked into pots and cover it to exclude the air. This may be done with the specially prepared covers, which are sold at a low price, or paper may be brushed over with white of egg and put on while damp. Jams must be kept in a cool, dry place. Damp will make them get mouldy and heat will make them ferment. Glass jars are the best; the condition of the jam can more easily be seen.

The method of jam-making pursued by an experienced housekeeper is as follows: Allow three-quarters of a pound of sugar to each pound of fruit; to stone fruits allow a pound of sugar. Put the preserving-pan with the fruit on the hot plate, but not directly over the fire. Sprinkle a little sugar over it, and as the fruit becomes more liquid add the sugar. When the sugar has all dissolved put the pan over the fire, and bring it to the boil. Let it boil for twenty minutes, keeping it stirred and skimmed. Try a little on a plate and see if it will set; if not, continue to cook for a little while longer.

Stir strawberries very carefully, so as not to break the fruit more than can be avoided. Pour the jam when cool enough into jars, and place a piece of oiled paper over the jam. To exclude the air cover the pots with paper dipped in white of egg and stretched over the top. If properly made jam will keep for three or four years.

When stone fruit is used break the stones, blanch the kernels, and add them five minutes before the jam is ready.

While on the subject of jam, I must mention vegetable marrow jam, made with pineapple; it is one of the most delicious preserves, and is certainly not expensive.

Peel four or five large marrows, removing the seeds completely, and cut the marrows into pieces about two inches square. Put the vegetable in a large earthenware pan with the preserving sugar, using about three-quarters of a pound of sugar to a pound of marrow. Cut two pine apples into pieces a third of the size of the pieces of marrow, and add them together with the juice of the fruit to the other ingredients in the pan. Cover lightly with a clean cloth and leave to stand till the next day. The pieces of marrow will by then have shrunk to half their original size and they will be covered in their own juice. Now, put the whole quantity in a preserving-pan, and boil very slowly for nearly three hours, removing the scum as it rises. Pour, when cool, into jars, and finish off like any other jam. Tinned pines may be substituted for fresh ones, and are almost, but not quite, as good.

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Christmas Song.

No winter's blight our Christmas knows,
No bitter blasts nor sparkling snows;
The old year wanes, the old year goes
While halcyon hours
Drift on enchanted pinions fleet
In sunny gardens, where with sweet
And haunting perfume violets greet
Late summer's flowers.

Scarce dream we Christmas is now here,
So blue December skies appear;
So green the beckoning fields, so clear
Rise hills remote.
The golden present thralls; no past
Nor morrow's dark shadows cast,
But on Time's dial, flying fast,
Bright hours we note.

Ring out, glad Christmas bells, nor cease
From snows to palms by tropic seas;
The tidings of goodwill and peace
Exultant sound.
Ring out, blest tale of love divine,
Where'er the Christmas wreaths of pine,
Or island leis or holly twine
The world around.

Some Curious Engagement Rings.

In choosing engagement rings for their fiancees lovers at times discard the conventional jewelled circlet in favour of the bizarre, fantastic and even gruesome.

Not long since, says Tit-Bits, out of a portion of a horseshoe that he had found a young man had a ring made, which he gave to the lady of his choice on the day of their betrothal. The remainder of the horseshoe was utilised in the manufacture of a brooch and earrings.

Another iron ring, which a short while since was accepted by a young girl as a token of her lover's constancy, was a section cut from the barrel of a pistol, which many years back had played an unenviable part in a family tragedy.

The scion of a wealthy family, whose fortunes owed their existence to extensive tobacco plantations, had a ring made out of the fragrant weed, hardened by some process to the consistency almost of metal, with which to encircle the finger of his inamorata. A single diamond gave relief to the amulet's sombre hue.

Opals, formerly considered so ill-omened, are now not infrequently employed in the setting of engagement rings. One gentleman, a native of Manchester, went, indeed, to an almost extreme length in his reprobation of superstition, the ring which he gave to the lady he has now married being a hoop of thirteen opals, the former possessor of each of which had met with some serious misfortune.

The engagement ring chosen by a well-known actress had once decked the finger of an Egyptian mummy. Disdaining the everyday gewgaw with its vulgar glint of gems, she set her fancy upon this strangely discoloured stone, which had nothing to recommend it but its unconventionality and age.

A wealthy bachelor, whom we will call Taylor, has lately compounded his third threatened breach of promise action by the payment of a sum running well into four figures. To each of the three ladies who have in turn promised to be his wife this gentleman has presented an engagement ring made of a peculiar glass, in the sibylline character of which the eccentric giver places such faith that its fracture presages, in his judgment, some matrimonial disaster.

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Recipes.

CAKES, BUNS, AND BISCUITS FOR THE CHILDREN.

All utensils used in making pastry of any description should be carefully kept and appropriated to that purpose only.

The flour should be dried before the fire previous to use. The butter should be sweet and thoroughly washed in a clean cloth in cold water to remove salt, etc.

In making all cakes remember to have the ingredients ready and properly weighed out. The eggs should be well beaten and used at once. If butter is used it should first be beaten to a cream.

The oven must be properly and equally heated.

SPONGE CAKES.

Break six eggs, put the yolks into one pan and the whites into another. Beat up the yolks with six ounces of best white sugar and a tablespoonful of orange flower water.

Beat the whites well with a knife until a snowy froth appears and add them to the yolks quickly. Then sift in carefully five ounces of dry flour and pour the mixture into well buttered moulds and sift over them fine castor sugar.

SHORT CAKES (PLAIN).

Rub into one pound of flour four ounces of butter with the same quantity of sugar, one egg, a teacupful of cream and a pinch of carraway seeds, with enough milk and water to make it into a paste. Roll it out thin and cut into oval shapes. Bake a quarter of an hour on tin sheets lightly dusted with flour.

RICE CAKES.

Mix ten ounces of ground rice, three ounces of best flour and eight of pounded sugar; sift all gradually into four yolks and three whites of eggs well beaten. Add the grated rind of a lemon.

SPANISH CAKES.

Take a pound of sugar, a pound of flour, a pound of eggs, leaving out one-third of the whites; mix together, put into buttered moulds and bake in a slow oven.

Turn out when baked carefully.

QUEEN CAKES.

Take a pound each of flour, sifted sugar and fresh butter. Wash the butter in rosewater. Pour the water from the butter and squeeze dry in a clean cloth. Work it, a small piece at a time, into half the flour. Beat well six yolks and four whites of eggs. Then work them in with the rest of the flour and the sugar, to which add three tablespoonfuls of orange flower water, a little beaten mace, and one pound of currants and raisins mixed. The latter must be stoned and chopped small. Butter the hoop, which should be only half filled. Sift over each cake some fine castor sugar. Set in a good oven. When cooked turn out upon straw matting to cool.

A NICE ORDINARY CAKE.

Rub eight ounces of butter into two pounds of dry flour. Mix into a paste with three tablespoonfuls of yeast and a little water. Leave it to rise in a warm place for an hour and a half. Then mix into it the yolks and the whites of four eggs which have been separately beaten, a pint of water, or enough to make it of a proper thickness, a glass of ginger wine, the grated rind of a lemon, and a saltspoonful of ginger. Then add a pound of sultanas, washed, picked and dried. Beat the whole well together. Put into greased moulds and bake in a steady oven. Turn out of the moulds to cool.

CINNAMON BISCUITS.

Take half a pound of dry flour, one pound of crushed lump sugar, one pound of butter, two ounces of powdered cinnamon.

Beat the butter and sugar to a cream. Then stir in the cinnamon and pour into the mixture one glass of brandy. Roll out very thin upon a slab and cut into rounds with a cutter. Bake upon floured tins in a quick oven.

CREAM WAFERS.

Put into a basin three tablespoonfuls of sugar, three of flour, and two eggs, also a little orange flower water and a little grated lemon peel. Melt two ounces of fresh butter in half a pint of water and make the paste with it. Knead the whole lightly, but well. See that it is not too thin or too stiff. Heat the pan and butter it. Put in a spoonful of the mixture and fry both sides to a fine gold colour. Take it out and roll it upon a roll, and hold it while it takes the form. Then fry another and form in the same manner. Set upon kitchen paper to drain, screen lightly with castor sugar.

SCONES.

Take two ounces of butter to nearly a pound of flour. Mix with skimmed milk until you have a nice smooth dough. Knead lightly and form into round cakes. Prick holes with a fork and bake upon floured tins in a good, steady oven.

THE WORLD OF FASHION.

By MARGUERITE

I think almost everyone contrives somehow or other to shake off the toils and cares of business or the burden of housekeeping, and leaving home goes forth on pleasure bent to seek during this most pleasant season of the year for that benefit to mind and body which, with hardly an exception, is sure to be derived from a change of air and scene. Nowadays there are a hundred and one ways in which the desired benefit is attained, from the continuous change and healthy exercise of a cycling tour to the delicious idleness of sunny days passed away in some shady rose-embowered garden, or by the "sad sea waves." So, to return to our starting point, everyone's thoughts are turning longingly towards a move for fresh surroundings, and change of scene and society, sea breezes to put fresh nerve and tone into us, and peaceful pastures new, where we may for a space forget the lack of peace in the world around. In any departure of the kind, the feminine mind becomes active as to frocks and furbelows, and a few practical suggestions built on many modes and models we have recently seen may prove useful to our readers, discarding the extravagant elements and dealing with matter for moderate means.

It is likely enough that the smart-est travelling hat when people wing their way upon their holidays will be one of Amazon-shape in rather a bright-coloured tan felt or straw, such as was seen in the spring. A drapery of taffetas is wound round the crown, and a millinery bird, out of politeness called a seagull, with outspread wings, is placed at the side, but not precisely where the taffetas edged with the finest possible silk fringe is buckled with gun metal.

In the newest tailor-made gowns the newest trifle that but faintly suggests masculinity is frowned upon. No more does the stiff collar appear in company with the man-made costume, nor is the shirt, with its well-starched front correct, though, by the way, I may whisper that for sports such as lawn tennis and croquet the stiffened shirt is in vogue in Paris, possibly because it is supposed to be truly English.

The next newest thing is the shape of string-coloured crepe or chiffon, "drawn" as to the crown, and the brim formed by a couple of pleats or frills of the same, one about an inch above the other. The trimming of these smart models consists of a scarf of white chiffon, or mousseline, terminating in an immense bow at the left side.

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THE HOLIDAY OUTFIT.

HINTS CONCERNING THE LATEST NOVELTIES.

An enterprising dressmaker, seeing how smart, if somewhat exclusively so, handkerchief blouses have been for some time past, has been doing a good turn to her customers by giving them handkerchief revers and cravats. They are made of bandana, in the various pretty colours now associated with that once exclusively snuff brown and green combination, hemstitched in some cases, and in others with drawn thread edges. Bandana toques she has also constructed, to match the ties, of course. Many girls are aware of the becoming qualities of a toque and tie that match by this time, and have discovered that they draw attention to the pretty face that goes between them.

The newest sleeve is not a cool one. I do not refer to the three-quarter model at present. There is a still later edition. The sleeve is put in at the armhole with graceful looseness, wherein lurks many an element of coolness, but from the elbow to the wrist it is as tight as tight can be, and if you try to compress your wrists in hot weather you will find that the whole of your anatomy will suffer in consequence. So take the loose upper sleeve and the bell sleeve under it, or cut off your sleeve at the elbow and wear comfortably long gloves, should you suffer from the heat.

At the seaside we have usually a

Bathing Suits.

chance of using parasols, but they must not be the beruffled flimsy ones of last season. The new plain or moire silk sunshades which are so beautiful when painted by hand are the ones to choose. The linen parasol is certain to be seen at the watering places, and not only is it the bright red that we have known in seasons gone by, that will be desirable, but to accompany each toilette with which it is destined to play a part, sunshades are built of the material of which each is composed.

What with ruffles, excessively pretty boleros, and the fanciful sleeves now worn, any extra wrap like a cape is a total impossibility, and, indeed, is not required at all at present. Gloves seem to be going the way of these things, and will depart with much rapidity if a certain under-sleeve, called the mitten, comes into fashion. We have long known and loved it on our evening frocks, and have learnt to dispense with our gloves for theatre entertainments, and to show our best finger rings instead of covering them. The mitten sleeve is made of lace, and ends about the knuckles of the hands in a long point or a bell-shaped effect. It is a portion of the sleeve that should command immediate attention, especially now that the weather is hot. The upper sleeve is either slashed up or arranged with a cuff just below the elbow, the lace mitten appearing beneath it.

Any amount of ingenuity can be expended on the sleeves of to-day. Perhaps to many girls the soft muslin inner bishop sleeve will appeal eloquently, twice belted with ribbon velvet, and finished with a cameo button, or something pretty and artistic in steel, enamel or gold.

In clear contrast to the much-beruffled throat is the one deprived of any collar whatsoever. The newest vests have no neckband, but they are worn as often as not with a boa just allowed to fall over the shoulders, so that the throat beneath the chin is left uncovered.

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Crepe-de-chine constitutes one of the most ideal fabrics for the evolution of a summer blouse. A dainty sample is here illustrated, carried out in lily-of-the-valley green stitched with white, and showing a chemisette of drawn net finishing in a broad band of the same semi-transparent material tied in a coquettish bow at the side. These bows give such a finish to one's appearance that it is impossible to ignore their charms. The most delightful effects are obtained for summer gowns by tuckings of muslin or fine beadings and ribbon threadings, while applications of cloth flowers on lace or chiffon foundations are not considered too outre for the taste of Madame La Mode. There are also India muslin gowns of exquisite fineness, interningled with trimmings and insertions of Maltese or Irish lace, while nothing looks so truly elegant as French pique of the finest and softest texture, with insertions

A PRETTY BLOUSE.

of coarse thread herring-boning. I hope all reasonably-minded women are devoting a due and proper attention to their corsets, and if they take my advice they will select those of fine silken batiste, striped or watered or adorned with floral embroidery

A most serviceable costume will be found in my illustration, made of that most useful of materials, striped flannel. In this instance the stripe is a narrow pin line of black, a wide sailor collar of black satin bordered with white lace gracing the bodice and finishing in a loosely knotted cerise silk tie, the same note of colour being repeated in the folded neckband. Almost any hat could be worn with such a costume, but a capeline of black accordion-pleated muslin or a large white stitched linen hat would accord best. The newest skirts still show an increase of fulness at the back, either arranged in box

A USEFUL COSTUME.

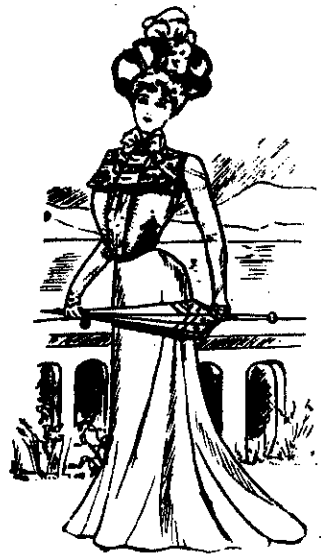
pleats or drawings, though recently I saw a very smart white serge toilette in which the skirt showed little or no fulness at the waist, but half-way spread out in graduated folds till a desired fulness was attained.

❂ ❂ ❂

A charming frock is displayed in the sketch, the material employed being soft green cashmere with a front of tucked white silk finished at the throat by a band of jewelled trimming, while broad strappings of black velvet finish the front. Round the waist is loosely knotted a sash of painted black chiffon, but as this latter is a very perishable item and soon becomes limp, soft black chine silk sprinkled with little bunches of roses and leaves in their natural colours might be substituted. Cashmere is still a much worn and highly appreciated fabric, and will remain in favour all the season. It is so exceedingly accommodating in the way of falling into elegant folds, and while fashion demands that our gowns be [illegible] and tuckings need[illegible]rable increase in [illegible]uired, a skirt [illegible]ward gar-

A CHARMING FROCK.

A very smart costume will be found depicted here, the neat little coat having a square collar covered with Cluny lace. A novelty will be observed in the way the side darts are left open to give a glimpse of the blouse beneath, tiny stitched strappings decorated with fancy buttons keeping the coat in its place. There is nothing very remarkable about the skirt except the excellence of fit, as pleated or elaborately tucked cloth skirts do not prove a source of comfort to their owner when holiday-making. With this gown any sort of blouse or hat could be worn, from a straw sailor hat and cot-



A SMART COSTUME.

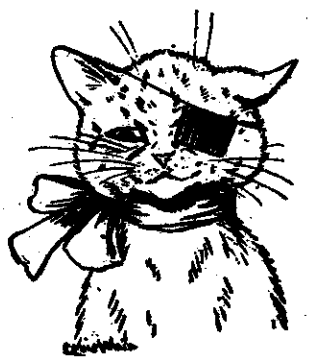
ton shirt to the elaborate specimen of fine spotted muslin lace and silk, of which a glimpse can be obtained in the illustration. It is accompanied by a fashionable Leghorn hat, the brim bound with black velvet, and a large knot of blue chiffon arranged in front, while the high crown has trails of variegated ivy embracing it. With a smart tailor-made costume such as this, and an old one as a stand-by, much is accomplished towards the foundation of a properly stocked wardrobe, as the skirt can be worn without the coat, smart blouses being substituted.

HOP-TRIMMED HAT.

This hat is of string coloured drawn chiffon trimmed with hops. This particular hat is suitable for the promenade, and, besides being very light in weight, is shady, and the effect of the dark string-colour and white is most effective and smart. Another hat just shown us was much the same shape, but in Tuscan straw, which is also wonderfully light, and trimmed with a folded band of emerald green velvet, and huge posy of the hops and leaves.

CHILDREN'S PAGE.

Dear Cousins.—This is a holiday number, and I am giving you such a lot of pictures and Xmas stories that I have decided to keep my letters over till next week. I have a whole heap of them and do not like only to print one or two, and yet if I put all of them in I should not have room for some of these pretty pictures. I hope you will all understand how it is, and not be disappointed at not seeing your letters. Cousin Winnie, Cousin Roie, Cousin Gertrude, Cousin Ethel Ada, and Cousin Irene must especially be asked for pardon as their letters arrived early. Cousin Winnie sent me a lovely doll and scrap book. Cousin Ethel Ada a scrap book, and Cousin Roie a box of fancy Santa Claus stockings full of lollies. The tree will be over before you see this, and I do hope some of you will be there.—Cousin Kate.



A CONSIDERATE CAT.

"No, thank you, there's nothing the matter. But I don't want my eyes to get tired, so I keep one tied up all the time. It's unkind to keep them both hard at work all day, don't you think?"

THE VERY LAST N.Z. CONTINGENT.

"We're all off to pacify the Boers."

"And I'm going to carry home all our medals and money."

"Hard Lines."

"It really is preposterous,"
In anguish squeaked the Slate,
"To write upon my open face
That three and three makes eight."

"It isn't me," the Pencil cried
(Its grammar was not strong),
"The fingers make me write it down
Although I know it's wrong."

"Oh, fiddlestick," the Slate replied,
Its anger rising still,
"In a free country, surely you
Can exercise your will."

The Pencil could not answer that,
So changed the theme in haste.
"Don't speak so loud," it sharply said,
"It's not at all good taste."

"Don't scratch so then," the Slate replied;
The Pencil said no more,
But calmly wrote another fib,
Viz., six from six leaves four.

—E. M. W., in December Little Folks."

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE THERE?

"This is a real old fashioned Christmas in England. I think we in New Zealand have the best of it, don't you?

"De fowls ... E DAY BEFORE THE HOLIDAYS.

Schooled home. ... "You are very lazy and very stupid little geese. You really appears to me ... next year or you will never pass when the ... aids. come ... d better not ... any more.

However Did Santa Claus Guess?

Our Twins Mollie and Bobby were singing away on 'Xmas Eve, and Billy was riding an old fencing post by way of a horse. "Oh," said the twins, "if we only had a trumpet and some proper songs."

"Yes," shouted Billy, "and if I only just had a real horse, just wouldn't I show you how a fellow should ride."

And on Christmas morning sure enough Billy found a most lovely horse and a hat Lord Roberts might have envied. "My goodness," he said, "did you ever see such a horse?"

"No! no!" shrieked the twins with delight, "but do help us with our concert, our trumpet, and songs are simply [illegible]

An then they all three said: "But however in the [illegible] Claus guess?"

Little Willie Found Santa Claus.

Little Willie, five years old, remembered what his two sisters had told him when they started down town. They were going to see Santa Claus, they said, and if Willie would be a good boy they would see to it that his stocking would be filled with lots of nice toys and sweetmeats.

Visions of soldier men and jumping ponies floated before Willie's gaze, as he sat, with his nose dented against the window pane, and wondered how old Santa Claus could drive over trees and housetops with his reindeer and his sleigh loaded with toys.

Somehow, like most boys of the present generation. Willie had just a little doubt of the existence of the white bearded old fellow who "slides down the chimneys" and "shakes like jelly when he laughs." So when he espied Helen and Mabel coming up the street, each carrying a lot of bundles, an idea suddenly struck him. Quietly he slipped down from the window ledge, and, unnoticed by any one, made his way to the girls' room and crawled far under the bed.

Helen and Mabel entered the house tired out from their Christmas shopping, and, glad to escape Willie's prying eyes, they quickly carried their numerous purchases to their room and deposited them on the bed.

"Oh, I'm so glad we got in here before that little rascal discovered us," said Mabel.

"Yes, indeed," Helen responded. "He knows too much for one of his age, and he'd be bound to find out just what's in these packages, and that would spoil everything."

"Well, we've fooled the dear little tyrant this time," said Mabel. "I suppose mamma saw us coming," she added, "and very considerately trundled him off to the nursery."

Never a sound from under the bed.

Then the two girls commenced to sort out and mark each present for whom it was intended. Time and again Willie's curiosity nearly got the better of him, as his sisters unwrapped dollies, pianos, kitchens, books, and other pretty things and placed them along the floor, remarking, "This is for Bob," and "This is for Mattie," and so on, but with the patience of an old campaigner the sly youngster bided his time. Only by a very strong effort did he control his patience, however, when Helen placed a huge box on the floor, saying, "And this is for Willie. Won't he be delighted with that?"

"I can see his eyes fairly dancing with joy now," answered Mabel.

This task completed, the two girls gathered up the paper and twine and went down stairs to tell mamma of their day's work.

This was Willie's chance, and with feelings of mixed wonder and astonishment he crawled from his hiding place. He did not care for the other toys stretched along the floor. He wanted to see what was in the box which Helen said was for him. But the cover was fastened, and, try as he would, it would not budge. His eyes were fairly bulging out with rage at this defeat and his chubby cheeks were crimson from his exertions. On the front of the box Willie saw a lot of letters, but he could not read them, and was about to give up in despair when his busy brain again came to the rescue. Willie thought of his slate and pencil which he was just learning to use, and quietly he tiptoed to where he had left them. Then returning to the treasure room once more, the little fellow threw himself, slate and pencil on the floor before the box which was to be his. Slowly but carefully the wee schemer copied letter for letter the reading on the box label, and, picking up his slate, made his way hurriedly to the nursery.

Dinner had been announced and the maid was hunting for her charge, so, after being washed up, Willie stepped into the dining room, still clinging to his slate. The family were all seated at the table and Master William marched over to his mother. Then, shoving the slate into her lap, he asked, pointing at his work, "Mamma, what does that say?"

Wondering where he could have seen the words, the mother answered proudly, "Why, that says 'Locomotive and cars.'"

A look of dismay overspread the faces of Helen and Mabel and turned to amazement when Willie blurted out, "That's what Santa Claus is going to give me for Christmas."

Of course everybody wanted to know how he found it out, and where he copied the words from, but Willie, having outwitted his sisters and satisfied his belief concerning Mr Santa Claus, was obdurate, and refused to explain until he was promised numerous other presents, besides the locomotive.

Willie's papa now thinks of training him for the detective force.

Christmas in Germany.

I am not quite sure which country is the children's paradise. When I am reading about the Feast of Dolls for the girls, and the Feast of Flags for the boys, I feel inclined to say that Japan must be that happy place; but when I read about the Christmas festivities in Germany I come to the conclusion that the children are more studied there than anywhere else. By the end of November the shops are crowded with pretty things, the streets are almost blocked with booths, and every square, street-corner, and market-place is covered with forests of Christmas trees of various sizes, from six inches to twelve feet.

I suppose you want to know why they have such a number of different sizes. Let me tell you. Every family in Germany has its Christmas tree. It may be only a few inches high and bear but a few sweets and flags on its tiny branches; but however poor the home may be, there is a tree.

German trees are fixed on a thick board or block of wood weighted with lead. This board is decorated to represent a garden. There are wooden palings all around, the ground is covered with moss or pieces of fir, and little figures of stags, sheep, dogs, and shepherds made of clay, are put here and there, while an angel is hung from the tree above them.

You won't require me to tell you what all this means, but I expect you may be a little puzzled by the stags. There is a very pretty legend in Germany that the stag was the first earthly creature who noticed the angels coming to the shepherds on the first Christmas Day. It is said that he knelt down at once, therefore he must on no account be left out of the Christmas festival.

About a fortnight before Christmas all the youngsters look forward to the visit of St. Nicholas, whom they call Pelznickel. At six o'clock in the evening he generally arrives with a tremendous ring at the door-bell. What a hubbub there is when the door is opened, and the good gentleman walks in! He is dressed in a big cloak, with a fur hat pulled well over his face; otherwise, you see, the youngsters would recognise him, for Pelznickel is really the father or uncle or big brother of the household. The elder children know this, of course, well enough; but the little ones do not. They have heard over and over again that St. Nicholas will be coming soon to punish them or to praise them, and they are anxiously watching to see whether he will give them a taste of the birch he carries in one hand, or some of the good things out of the bag he holds in the other.

They listen, too, in awe-struck wonder as he speaks to Johnnie about a careless lesson, or to Mary about a naughty fit of temper. And when Pelznickel comes to them, they put their little hands together and whisper, as they have been told to do, "Christ-child, come; make me good that I may come to Thee in heaven."

Then Pelznickel speaks tenderly to those who have been good, and sternly to those who have been naughty, warning them to improve and to persevere before Christmas comes. And after that he throws a lot of nuts, apples, sweets and cakes to the children, and whilst they are scrambling after them on the floor, he slips out of the house and is seen no more.

On Christmas Eve a big bell is rung when everything is ready, the door of a room which has been locked up for days is thrown open, and the Christ-

mas tree is shown. What a monster it is! Although it is planted on the floor, it has to bend its head when it reaches the ceiling, and it is quite ablaze with hundreds of candles, and its boughs are bending under the weight of presents of all kinds. And the people who open the parcels, whether they are old or young, must feel glad that everyone has a share in their Christmas joy.—"The Beacon."

Christmas in Royal Homes.

It would surprise the average child to see the Christmas presents of the Kaiser's children. Their mother had the principles of economy and frugality early instilled in her mind, and she has never departed from her simple domestic routine.

The Empress has a wide number of relatives, friends, and proteges to remember at Christmas-time, and her children receive the most inexpensive and simple of gifts, says the New York Mail and Express. They are not allowed to receive presents from any one save their parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. A box of sugar plums, a few fruits, invariably a selection of wholesome books, one toy, and a useful thing make up the list. Last Christmas the youngest Prince received a ball of string, a paper of tacks, and a hammer from his father.

Christmas does not bring any especial festivity to the Royal Palace in Spain. The day is chiefly given up to religious ceremonies. The young King receives congratulations and the Queen and her daughters personally dispense a good deal of money in alms. In the early days of her life in Spain the Queen Regent tried to introduce the German custom of the Christmas tree, but her Spanish courtiers rather turned up their noses, and she wisely forbore to insist upon an alien custom.

The greatest jollity reigns in the home of the little Queen of Holland at Christmas time. Wilhelmina celebrates the festival vigorously and delightedly. She has always had a tree on Christmas eve, always hung up her stocking, and she loves to give presents.

There is scarcely a poor child in The Hague who is not remembered by the Queen. One of her chief joys on Christmas morning is to follow the ancient Dutch custom of appearing suddenly at a door, and after flinging a gift rolled in a big ball of straw into the room running away as fast as she can. Another Christmas habit is that of driving about the snowy streets and tossing bonbons to groups of children.

Didn't Mean To!

Dannie is a very little boy, not yet three years old, and he has some dear funny little ways. When he does anything he ought not, or gets at anything he must not have, or even if he falls down and hurts himself, he nearly always says, "I dinna mean to!"

The other day when no one was looking, he climbed up and got the biscuit box. When discovered, he was seated in bliss upon the hearth-rug, with a "takie" (as he calls them) in each hand, and some more in his lap. "I dinna mean to!" he sobbed, when they were taken away. "I tounna help it, tould I?"

Of course we all laugh now at the little rogue's very transparent attempt at excuse, but when he grows older he will learn that "Couldn't help it" and "Didn't mean to" are not manly words with which to answer well merited reproof.

At least we hope so.

Tom, however, has not learnt it yet. The number of things he does, but doesn't mean to, is astonishing. He doesn't mean to be late at school, of course, but he plays at marbles on the way there, and loses his mark for punctuality four mornings in the week. He doesn't mean to get his feet wet coming home, but he walks in the puddles just as if a racking cough were the one object of his desire. He doesn't mean to slam doors, and tread lumps of mud into the carpet, and leave dirty finger-marks on everything he touches, but he does these things continually all the same. And I'm sure, quite sure, that he didn't mean to be cruel to his rabbits, but the poor creatures died of starvation through his careless neglect.

And there is Tom's next door neighbour, rosy cheeked Kitty. Whenever she is spoken to for leaving undone what she ought to do, or doing what she ought not, one invariably hears that she "couldn't help it." She "can't help" coming down late to breakfast, and thus disarranging everybody's plans; she "can't help" having her lessons "turned," even though she spent all the previous evening over a new story book; she "can't help" having her gloves full of holes through forgetting to mend them, or her tuckers dirty because too idle to replace them; worst of all, she "can't help" grieving her dear mother a dozen times a day by the impatient temper she shows when reminded of these things.

If only Tom would make up his mind always to mean well and stick to it, and never to weakly allow himself to do what he doesn't mean; if only Kitty would earnestly resolve that she will help giving way to those vexatious little faults of hers, what a noble boy and what a winsome maid they would be! Every hour that the bad habits are indulged they grow stronger. It will indeed be sad if some day our young folks look back upon precious opportunities lost forever, upon wrongs done to dear ones, for which they can never atone, "Couldn't help it" and "Didn't mean to" will be poor comforters then. They will dry no self reproachful tears.

The lad who turned out a ne'er-do-well "couldn't help it," and the girl who broke her mother's heart "didn't mean to." But we will not dispond. We expect better things than these from Kitty and Tom.

A Lullaby.

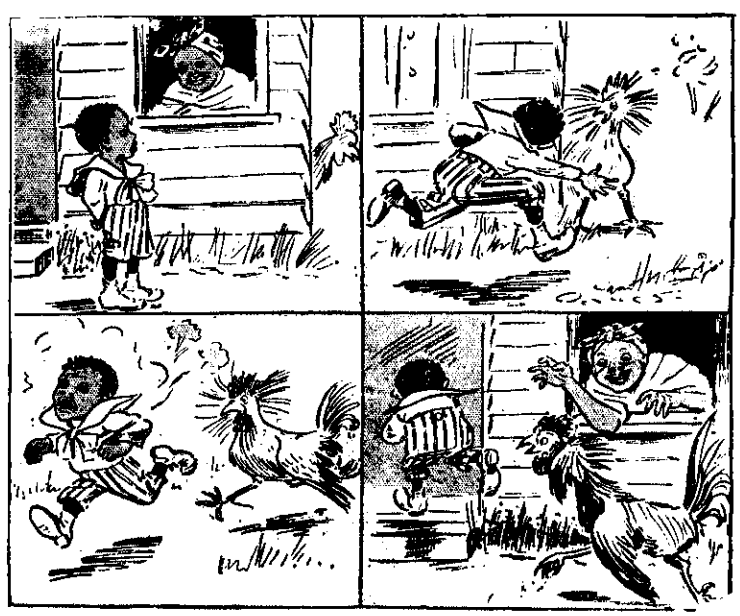
Sleep, my babe, thine eyes are weary,
Shut them close, my bonny dearie,
While thy mother sings!
Are the birds asleep, I wonder,
With their little heads tucked under
Pretty folded wings?

Sleep! the angels 'round thee hover;
Their bright wings thy head shall cover
While thou art asleep.
All the night long, close beside thee,
That no evil may betide thee,
They their watch will keep.

Bye-o-baby, warm and rosy,
In thy little cot so cosy,
Sleep till morning light!
Sleep, O sleep, thine eyes are weary,
Shut them close, my bonny dearie—
Baby-bye, good-night.

FORWARD. Hear the drum!
Now the Christmas soldiers come
Mary Ann, she is the band,
Frank the cannon draws by hand.
Tom's the private. Rose is proud
'Cause to carry the flag he's 'lowed.
Forward, march! Hear the drum!

How Sambo Went to Fetch the Dinner.



1. "Here, Sambo, my boy, run round de corner and bring me dat ole fowl we is going to hab for dinner."

2. Sambo scampered off round the corner, and nearly fell over Mr Cockadoodledoo in his hurry. "What is that you mean to do with me? Have me on toast for dinner, will you? I'll see about that," cried the angry bird, who was much bigger than Sambo expected.

3. "Now, then, Blackamoor, you had better get out of this yard sharp, or I'll try my beak on those fat little legs of yours!" "Mother! help!" cried Sambo. "De fowls am going to hab me for dinner!"

4. And he never stopped running till he reached home. "Here you are, mother; I've brought de fowl!" he cried, as he rushed through the door-way. "It appears to me dat de fowl hab brought you," said his mother. "And he looks so kind o' ruffled that I think we'd better not have him for dinner to-day, after all. P'raps he mightn't like it, and we don't want to ruffle him any more."

NOT AS BAD AS THAT.

Aunt Hannah: We shall all know each other in that better land.

Edith: Yes, so I have been told; but then, auntie, we sha'n't be obliged to speak to everybody.

BROKE THE RULE.

Mr Cannibal: Excuse me, my dear, for breaking your rule about letting you know, but I've brought a gentleman home for dinner.

DIDN'T LOOK PROSPEROUS.

He: Well, Mrs Smith is economical, anyway. She makes all her own dresses.

She: Yes, and she looks so dowdy that her husband can't get a single one of his friends to lend him any money.

NO DOUBT.

Boss: I don't know whether to discharge that new boy or raise his salary.

Manager: What has he been doing?

Boss: He rushed into my private office this morning and told me there was a man down stairs who would like to see me.

Manager: Who was it?

Boss: A blind man.

APPROPRIATE.

"Didn't Mrs Jones' husband die only last week?"

"Yes."

"I saw her yesterday, and she was wearing second mourning."

"I know—he was her second husband."

OBSERVANT.

Gray: They are beginning to have typewriters on the stage.

Black: I know; but it's a piece of affectation. No typewriter that ever was invented can begin to write as rapidly as the average actor with the common everyday pen.

TURNED DOWN.

Borrowit: Say, old man, lend me a fiver, will you?

Markley: Sorry, but I'm not making any permanent investments just now.

FALLS SHORT AS A COMPANION.

"How does your new bookkeeper suit you?"

"As a bookkeeper, he's great, but as a human being I don't take to him."

MEET FOR REPENTANCE.

Jones: What business are you in now?

Smith: I am in the meat business.

Jones incredulously): Where is your shop?

Smith: I haven't any shop. I am the ham in an advertising sandwich.

A CERTIFICATE INDEED.

Lady: "This is the second time you have received food from me, isn't it?"

"Tramp: "It is, madam, and you are at liberty to mention the fact to your friends if you wish."

WHAT SHE WANTED TO KNOW.

"My dear child, you really should not eat your pudding so quickly."

"Why not, mamma?"

"Because it is dangerous. I once knew a little boy about your age who was eating pudding so quickly that he died before he had finished it."

"And what did they do with the rest of his pudding, mamma?"

FROM THE DIARY OF A WIFE.

I am completely disheartened.

To-night I entered the parlour suddenly, and I found my husband lying on one of my lovely new sofa cushions.

How impossible it is for a woman to make a home in the true sense when she is married to such an insensate man!

Sometimes I feel that I should be glad to die.

AFTER HIS STORY.

Judge—The charge against you is disorderly conduct. What have you to say?

Prisoner—I was fishing, and——

Judge (eagerly)—What luck?

The prisoner talks volubly for five minutes, while the face of the Judge gradually hardens.

Judge—Discharged on first charge, and held for perjury.

WHAT HE WAS PAID FOR.

"If you'll give me a finer quality of goods," said the professional window trimmer, "I can make a splendid display."

"If I had the fine goods I could make the display myself," remarked the proprietor of the store. "What I'm paying you for is to make a splendid display with cheap goods."

TWO OF A KIND.

"A woman doesn't always have the last word, does she?"

"Oh, no! Sometimes she is talking to another woman."

SLIGHTLY ABSENT MINDED.

"Does your husband ever help you about taking care of the baby" was asked the wife of a young professor.

"Not often, though sometimes he does. Last evening he said he'd take Willie for an airing as he was going to walk down to the post office. Half an hour later I saw my husband sitting in the parlour reading a scientific magazine, but I could see nothing of the baby.

"Where's Willie? What have you done with him?" I asked.

"Why," said the professor, "I forgot all about him. I think he is sitting in the post office."

PRETTY BIG.

"Blowhard has a big opinion of himself." "How big?" "Well, he's beginning to imagine he's annoyed by camera fiends."

A MODE OF SPEECH.

Clergyman: "Well, Johnny, how's father and mother keeping?"

Johnny: "Mither's nae weel, sir."

Clergyman: "What's the matter? Is she laid up?"

Johnny: "No, sir, she's laid down."

The Holiday Tramcar—Did You Ever?

An Xmas Eve.

11.51: "I'll just wait up for him—

1.30: "And teach him to come home early—

2.00: "To his loving wife—

2.30: "And keep out of bad company—

3.00: "Now for a good hard knock!

3.01: "Great wasps! It's the lodger!"

Talma, photo., Melbourne.

A TWENTIETH CENTURY GIRL.