

A practical joke was played on a bridal party in Sydney recently. After the wedding bride and bridegroom, with their relatives and friends, were driven to a restaurant in town, where the wedding breakfast had been ordered. All was found in confusion; on the tables were piled chairs, mostly upside down. The proprietor, profuse in apologies, explained that he had received a telegram cancelling the order, but he put all hands to work, and in a very short time breakfast was served. The guests, who took the joke good-humouredly, beguiled the time with an impromptu musical programme, and the toast of "The Joker" was included with the rest.

The authorities of the high school at Scituate, Massachusetts, a little town not far from Boston, have tabooed one of Kipling's well-known poems, "Gunga Din." The scholars were getting ready for the annual speaking day, and one of them wished to recite this poem, but the school board peremptorily forbade it. The lines that are objected to are as follows:—

"It was crawling and it stunk,
But of all the drinks I've drunk
I'm gratefullest to one from 'Gunga
Din.'"

These lines are adjudged vulgar, and are too strong meat for Massachusetts purists.

The late Mr. Charles William Mitchell, of Jemond Towers, Newcastle-on-Tyne, a director of Armstrong, Whitworth & Co., of the Elswick Ordnance Works, left an estate which has been valued at £922,542 4/10 gross. Mr. Mitchell, who died on February 28 last at the age of 48, was an artist of considerable skill in figure-painting and portraits, and was president of the Pen and Palette Club. Among the large fortunes which have been acquired in the Elswick works, it is interesting to note, are those of:

Lord Armstrong, died December, 1900, aged 90.....	£1,360,946
Mr. Charles William Mitchell, died 1903, aged 48.....	£922,542
Mr. George Wightwich Rendel, died 1902.....	£370,238
Mr. Hamilton Owen Rendel, died 1902.....	£195,203

Nature and man work together with uncommon accord in forming the celebrated "floating gardens" of the Lakes Chalco and Xochimilco, near the City of Mexico. An English naturalist, who recently visited them and found them a paradise, tells how they grow. Floating clumps of entangled peat, moss, rushes and grass are caught, combined and anchored by stakes, or long saplings of willows and poplars, which are driven into the muddy bottom, where they soon take root. Fertile mud is then laddled up and heaped on the float until a real island is formed, which is quickly transformed into a garden where are grown flowers, melons, gourds and other kinds of produce which are daily carried to market, through a canal leading into the city. There are hundreds of such gardens on the lakes.

Holland House, the home of Lord Ilchester, is a famous residence, and its glories are well known, but Abbotsbury Castle, Lord Ilchester's country seat near Dorchester, is comparatively a terra incognita, but still a wonderfully picturesque and attractive place. Abbotsbury stands close to the sea, but beautiful sub-tropical gardens have been attached to the Castle. There flourish no less than forty-three different kinds of bamboo, dark cypresses, a illy-of-the-valley tree, from Florida, which blossoms in September, caeli, palms, and a great variety of other tropical shrubs and trees. These horticultural triumphs have been produced at a vast expense, and are the result of prolonged study on the part of an experienced Scotch gardener. Lady Ilchester delights in Abbotsbury, and generally musters a large house party, who are particularly appreciative of its artistic beauties every summer. The duck decoy and swannery are hobbies of Lord Ilchester's, and are interesting and uncommon features of the estate. The duck decoy is one of the only four now extant for the capture of wild duck in England, and is an ingenious device that has sometimes resulted in the capture of as many as five hundred in two days.

A Sydney girl asked a Japanese officer at the Government House reception to go with her through the apartments saying that she would show him round. The officer pointed to someone near by. "I would rather go with that girl," he said. Another officer was asked what he thought of Sydney girls. He replied, "Sydney girls are very nice, and Melbourne girls are nicer." One Sydney hostess asked six Japanese men to dinner. Fourteen arrived, and apologised for the absence of the rest of their colleagues. It is well known that foreign naval officers always go about in numbers, especially the Germans. If one German officer is asked to an entertainment, his shipmates take it for granted that they are included. Some Japanese officers, visiting a doctor's house in Sydney, spent the evening playing with the doctor's babies on the floor, taking no notice of the other guests. They are very fond of children. The doctor said he would often ask foreign officers to his house if they were all so easily entertained.

The author of a paper on the question, "Are Women Witty?" recently read before a women's club, answered the question in the affirmative; but the examples of feminine wit which she quoted hardly justified her conclusion.

The relation of women to wit has been appreciative rather than creative, and is likely to continue so. Appreciation is as necessary as creation, for no wit flourishes without an audience.

Modern women are marvellously quick in seeing the point of even the subtlest wit. In an audience a shrewd observer may note that the laugh of the women at a clever joke precedes that of the men by an appreciable number of moments.

Occasionally a woman makes a brilliant not, as when a Boston woman recently said in a discussion of the qualities of the sexes, "Oh, men get and forget, and women give and forgive!" This power of epigram is rare, a fact that is scarcely subject for regret.

Women need not bewail their failure to be witty so long as they have a keen feeling for the wit that is in others. For their own part, they may well be content to cultivate that gentler grace called humour, which "begets the smiles that have no cruelty."

While in Sydney the Japanese officers of the visiting fleet which was to have come on to New Zealand, but did not do so owing to lack of time, were on friendly terms with the midshipmen on the British "men-of-war," calling them "Brother Ritchie," "Brother Wilmot," and putting their arms round the midshipmen's necks and waists, or swinging their hands in gratitude for kindness shown. They gave the midshipmen photos, of their ships, with cap-ribbons stamped with Japanese letters, threaded artistically through them. The Japanese had a "tea-fight" on board each ship for the Royal Arthur midshipmen, giving them sake to drink, with little neck-nack biscuits made into all sorts of shapes and letters. These the Japanese expected them to eat in handfuls. Tea was brought in, pale, yellow, and clear, with purple spongy cake, which the president of the mess cut into squares, putting into each a wooden toothpick to lift it up with. Great round wafers, the size of a dinner-plate, were next served out the whole structure crumbling at the first bite. After that yellow thin "Japanese cake," crisp, and cut into oblongs, were to be eaten. On Saturday night Admiral Fanshawe signalled for the seven Royal Arthur midships to come over to the house, and entertain the Japanese cadets. British officers are envious of the Japanese routine of wearing undress uniform when off duty—blue clothes, bound with black braid; no brass buttons and no gold lace, the gold stripes all being represented by black braid, a very saving fashion when gold lace is such an expensive item in the British uniforms.

There had been half a dozen stories of thick fogs, but Captain Mansfield had waited his turn with patience. It came at last, and the other captains turned their weather-beaten faces toward him, with an expression of cheerful credulity.

"'Twas told me of a house setting pretty nigh the shore along half-way down the coast o' Maine," said Captain Mansfield. "I could show you the house if it came right. It has a curious lopsided portico on it, and one day I asked the man that lives there why it happened to be built that queer shape."

"Well," says he, "the talk is that the man who lived here first had a cousin that was an architect up Boston way, and one time the feller was down here in a terrible foggy spell, and he was figuring out to his cousin how he could build a little portico of such and such dimensions, measuring out into the fog with his rule, and so on."

"'Twas in the late afternoon; he went off next day by train. The fog still held, and along in the morning the man that lived here happened to notice that the marks of the rule went into the fog were still plain, so as he couldn't go a-fishing he took some lumber and built the foundations of this portico. That queer jog that makes it lopsided is where the wind bore in on the fog, they say, and bent the rule marks in."

There was a pause when the captain finished. Then one of the other captains spoke.

"The next subject for discussion will be lobsters," he said, slowly, "and I reckon we'd better tackle it while we've got strength."

and a new Peerage was conferred six years later on Sir Paul Kelly Lawley, who was a Yorkshire M.P. in many successive Parliaments. Escriek is really the same word (in its northern or hardened form) as Ashbridge. Lord Brownlow's seat in the South of England. The house contains a particularly choice library and a very valuable collection of pictures. Lord Wenlock, who was Their Royal Highnesses' host in Yorkshire, is a very capable man of four-and-fifty who has seen a good deal of life. An Eton and Trinity man, he represented Chester in Parliament more than twenty years ago, and was afterwards a successful and popular Governor of Madras. He was out in New Zealand and Australia with the Prince of Wales, to whom he has been a Lord-in-Waiting since 1901. The Lawleys are a clever family (a younger brother of Lord Wenlock is at present Governor of the Transvaal), and inherit the brains of their mother, who was a sister of the late Duke of Westminster, and one of the most charming and gifted women in England. The present Lady Wenlock is sister to Lord Harewood and the Countess of Desart.

That Yankee farmer had a soul for art who declared, after long contemplation of Millet's "Shepherdess" and her flock of sheep, "It is all there but the bleat."

Not all critics are equally appreciative. Millet, peasant and painter of peasants, induced by the obtuseness of the most famous critics of his day toward natural and unromanticized art, once held the theory that trained criticism was valueless—that it was spoiled by the very fact of training.

The general public, he thought, knew better than the critics; and his own art in particular could be best judged by those whose life and labours it portrayed.

He was expounding this idea one day to a friend while his latest picture, entitled "Ruth and Boaz," representing a modern parallel to the Biblical story, stood conspicuously on the easel in his cottage studio at Barbizon.

Just then a peasant called upon some errand, and upon entering the room burst out laughing. Millet wished to know why he laughed.

"Good gracious, Monsieur Millet," was the reply, "I'm laughing at your picture!"

"My picture!" exclaimed Millet. "What is the matter with it?"

"It is so funny!" exclaimed the man, gazing delightedly at the pictured peasant bearing her barley sheaves. "You have hit it off so well!"

"Hit off what?" inquired the bewildered artist.

"Why, you have painted so capitably that constable arresting the girl for stealing a bunch of garlic!"

Millet's theories of art remained unaffected, but his ideas concerning criticism underwent a sudden change.

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