

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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## A STRANGE STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MY NOVEL," "RIENZI," &c.

### CHAPTER VII.

I HAVE given a sketch of the outward woman of Mrs. Colonel Poyntz. The inner woman was a recondite mystery, deep as that of the sphynx, whose features her own resembled. But between the outward and the inward woman there is ever a third woman—the conventional woman—such as the whole human being appears to the world—always mantled, sometimes masked.

I am told that the fine people of London do not recognise the title of "Mrs. Colonel." If that be true, the fine people of London must be clearly in the wrong, for no people in the universe could be finer than the fine people of Abbey Hill; and they considered their sovereign had as good a right to the title of Mrs. Colonel as the Queen of England has to that of "our Gracious Lady." But Mrs. Poyntz, herself, never assumed the title of Mrs. Colonel; it never appeared on her cards any more than the title of "Gracious Lady" appears on the cards, which convey the invitation that a Lord Steward or Lord Chamberlain is commanded by her Majesty to issue. To titles, indeed, Mrs. Poyntz evinced no superstitious reverence. Two peeresses, related to her, not distantly, were in the habit of paying her a yearly visit, which lasted two or three days. The Hill considered these visits an honour to its eminence. Mrs. Poyntz never seemed to esteem them an honour to herself; never boasted of them; never sought to show off her grand relations, nor put herself the least out of the way to receive them. Her mode of life was free from ostentation. She had the advantage of being a few hundreds a year richer than any other inhabitant of the Hill; but she did not devote her superior resources to the invidious exhibition of superior splendour. Like a wise sovereign the revenues of her exchequer were applied to the benefit of her subjects, and not to the vanity of egotistical parade. As no one else on the Hill kept a carriage, she declined to keep one. Her entertainments were simple, but numerous. Twice a week she received the Hill, and was genuinely at home to it. She contrived to make her parties proverbially agreeable. The refreshments were of the same kind as those which the poorest of her old maids of

honour might proffer; but they were better of their kind, the best of their kind—the best tea, the best lemonade, the best cakes. Her rooms had an air of comfort, which was peculiar to them. They looked like rooms accustomed to receive, and receive in a friendly way; well warmed, well lighted, card tables and piano in the place that made cards and music inviting. On the walls a few old family portraits, and three or four other pictures said to be valuable and certainly pleasing—two Watteaus, a Canaletti, a Weenix—plenty of easy-chairs and settees covered with a cheerful chintz. In the arrangement of the furniture generally, an indescribable careless elegance. She herself was studiously plain in dress, more conspicuously free from jewellery and trinkets than any married lady on the Hill. But I have heard from those who were authorities on such a subject, that she was never seen in a dress of the last year's fashion. She adopted the mode as it came out, just enough to show that she was aware it was out; but with a sober reserve, as much as to say, "I adopt the fashion as far as it suits myself; I do not permit the fashion to adopt me." In short, Mrs. Colonel Poyntz was sometimes rough, sometimes coarse, always masculine, and yet somehow or other masculine in a womanly way; but she was never vulgar because never affected. It was impossible not to allow that she was a thorough gentlewoman, and she could do things that lower other gentlewomen, without any loss of dignity. Thus she was an admirable mimic, certainly in itself the least ladylike condescension of humour. But when she mimicked, it was with so tranquil a gravity, or so royal a good humour, that one could only say, "What talents for society dear Mrs. Colonel has!" As she was a gentlewoman emphatically, so the other colonel, the he-colonel, was emphatically a gentleman; rather shy, but not cold; hating trouble of every kind, pleased to seem a cipher in his own house. If the sole study of Mrs. Colonel had been to make her husband comfortable, she could not have succeeded better than by bringing friends about him and then taking them off his hands. Colonel Poyntz, the he-colonel, had seen in his youth actual service; but had retired from his profession many years ago, shortly after his marriage. He was a younger brother of one of the principal squires in the county; inherited the house he lived in, with some other valuable

property in and about L——, from an uncle; was considered a good landlord; and popular in Low Town, though he never interfered in its affairs. He was punctiliously neat in his dress; a thin youthful figure, crowned with a thick youthful wig. He never seemed to read anything but the newspapers and the Meteorological Journal: was supposed to be the most weather-wise man in all L——. He had another intellectual predilection—whist. But in that he had less reputation for wisdom. Perhaps it requires a rarer combination of mental faculties to win an odd trick than to divine a fall in the glass. For the rest, the he-colonel, many years older than his wife, despite the thin youthful figure, was an admirable aide-de-camp to the general in command, Mrs. Colonel; and she could not have found one more obedient, more devoted, or more proud of a distinguished chief.

In giving to Mrs. Colonel Poyntz the appellation of Queen of the Hill, let there be no mistake. She was not a constitutional sovereign; her monarchy was absolute. All her proclamations had the force of laws.

Such ascendancy could not have been attained without considerable talents for acquiring and keeping it. Amidst all her off-hand, brisk, imperious frankness, she had the ineffable discrimination of tact. Whether civil or rude, she was never civil or rude but what she carried public opinion along with her. Her knowledge of general society must have been limited, as must be that of all female sovereigns. But she seemed gifted with an intuitive knowledge of human nature, which she applied to her special ambition of ruling it. I have not a doubt that if she had been suddenly transferred, a perfect stranger, to the world of London, she would have soon forced her way to its selectest circles, and, when once there, held her own against a duchess.

I have said that she was not affected; this might be one cause of her sway over a set in which nearly every other female was trying rather to seem, than to be, a somebody.

But if Mrs. Colonel Poyntz was not artificial, she was artful, or perhaps I might more justly say—artistic. In all she said and did there were conduct, system, plan. She could be a most serviceable friend, a most damaging enemy; yet I believe she seldom indulged in strong likings or strong hatreds. All was policy—a policy akin to that of a grand party chief, determined to raise up those whom, for any reason of state, it was prudent to favour, and to put down those whom, for any reason of state, it was expedient to humble or to crush.

Ever since the controversy with Dr. Lloyd, this lady had honoured me with her benignant countenance. And nothing could be more adroit than the manner in which, while imposing me on others as an oracular authority, she sought to subject to her will the oracle itself.

She was in the habit of addressing me in a sort of motherly way, as if she had the deepest interest in my welfare, happiness, and reputa-

tion. And thus, in every compliment, in every seeming mark of respect, she maintained the superior dignity of one who takes from responsible station the duty to encourage rising merit: so that, somehow or other, despite all that pride which made me believe that I needed no helping hand to advance or to clear my way through the world, I could not shake off from my mind the impression that I was mysteriously patronised by Mrs. Colonel Poyntz.

We might have sat together five minutes, side by side—in silence as complete as if in the cave of Trophonius—when, without looking up from her work, Mrs. Poyntz said abruptly,

“I am thinking about you, Dr. Fenwick. And you—are thinking about some other woman. Ungrateful man!”

“Unjust accusation! My very silence should prove how intently my thoughts were fixed on you, and on the weird web which springs under your hand in meshes that bewilder the gaze and snare the attention.”

Mrs. Poyntz looked up at me for a moment—one rapid glance of the bright red hazel eye—and said,

“Was I really in your thoughts? Answer truly.”

“Truly, I answer, you were.”

“That is strange! Who can it be?”

“Who can it be! What do you mean?”

“If you were thinking of me, it was in connexion with some other person—some other person of my own sex. It is certainly not poor dear Miss Brabazon. Who else can it be?”

Again the red eye shot over me, and I felt my cheek redden beneath it.

“Hush!” she said, lowering her voice; “you are in love!”

“In love!—I! Permit me to ask you why you think so?”

“The signs are unmistakable; you are altered in your manner, even in the expression of your face, since I last saw you; your manner is generally quiet and observant, it is now restless and distracted; your expression of face is generally proud and serene, it is now humbled and troubled. You have something on your mind! It is not anxiety for your reputation, that is established; nor for your fortune, that is made; it is not anxiety for a patient, or you would scarcely be here. But anxiety it is, an anxiety that is remote from your profession, that touches your heart and is new to it!”

I was startled, almost awed. But I tried to cover my confusion with a forced laugh.

“Profound observer! Subtle analyst! You have convinced me that I must be in love, though I did not suspect it before. But when I strive to conjecture the object, I am as much perplexed as yourself; and with you, I ask, who can it be?”

“Whoever it be,” said Mrs. Poyntz, who had paused, while I spoke, from her knitting, and now resumed it very slowly and very carefully, as if her mind and her knitting worked in unison together. “Whoever it be, love in you would be serious; and, with or without love, marriage is

a serious thing to us all. It is not every pretty girl that would suit Allen Fenwick."

"Alas! is there any pretty girl whom Allen Fenwick would suit?"

"Tut! You should be above the fretful vanity that lays traps for a compliment. Yes; the time has come in your life and your career when you would do well to marry. I give my consent to that," she added, with a smile as if in jest, and a slight nod as if in earnest. The knitting here went on more decidedly, more quickly. "But I do not yet see the person. No! 'Tis a pity, Allen Fenwick" (whenever Mrs. Poyntz called me by my christian name, she always assumed her majestic motherly manner),—"a pity that, with your birth, energies, perseverance, talents, and, let me add, your advantages of manner and person,—a pity that you did not choose a career that might achieve higher fortunes and louder fame than the most brilliant success can give to a provincial physician. But in that very choice you interest me. My choice has been much the same. A small circle, but the first in it. Yet, had I been a man, or had my dear colonel been a man whom it was in the power of woman's art to raise one step higher in that metaphorical ladder which is not the ladder of the angels, why, then—what then? No matter! I am contented. I transfer my ambition to Jane. Do you not think her handsome?"

"There can be no doubt of that," said I, carelessly and naturally.

"I have settled Jane's lot in my own mind," resumed Mrs. Poyntz, striking firm into another row of the knitting. "She will marry a country gentleman of large estate. He will go into parliament. She will study his advancement as I study Poyntz's comfort. If he be clever, she will help to make him a minister; if he be not clever, his wealth will make her a personage, and lift him into a personage's husband. And, now that you see I have no matrimonial designs on you, Allen Fenwick, think if it be worth while to confide in me. Possibly I may be useful——"

"I know not how to thank you. But, as yet, I have nothing to confide."

While thus saying, I turned my eyes towards the open window beside which I sat. It was a beautiful soft night. The May moon in all her splendour. The town stretched, far and wide, below with all its numberless lights; below—but somewhat distant;—an intervening space was covered, here, by the broad quadrangle (in the midst of which stood, massive and lonely, the grand old church); and, there, by the gardens and scattered cottages or mansions that clothed the sides of the hill.

"Is not that house," I said, after a short pause, "yonder, with the three gables, the one in which—which poor Dr. Lloyd lived—Abbots' House?"

I spoke abruptly, as if to intimate my desire to change the subject of conversation. My hostess stopped her knitting, half rose, looked forth.

"Yes. But what a lovely night! How is it

that the moon blends into harmony things of which the sun only marks the contrast? That stately old church tower, grey with its thousand years—those vulgar tile-roofs and chimney-pots raw in the freshness of yesterday; now, under the moonlight, all melt into one indivisible charm!"

As my hostess thus spoke, she had left her seat, taking her work with her, and passed from the window into the balcony. It was not often that Mrs. Poyntz condescended to admit what is called "sentiment" into the range of her sharp practical, worldly talk, but she did so at times; always, when she did, giving me the notion of an intellect much too comprehensive not to allow that sentiment has a place in this life, but keeping it in its proper place, by that mixture of affability and indifference with which some high-born beauty allows the genius but checks the presumption of a charming and penniless poet. For a few minutes her eyes roved over the scene in evident enjoyment; then, as they slowly settled upon the three gables of Abbots' House, her face regained that something of hardness which belonged to its decided character; her fingers again mechanically resumed their knitting, and she said, in her clear, unsoftened, metallic chime of voice, "Can you guess why I took so much trouble to oblige Mr. Vigors and locate Mrs. Ashleigh yonder?"

"You favoured us with a full explanation of your reasons."

"Some of my reasons; not the main one. People who undertake the task of governing others, as I do, be their rule a kingdom or a hamlet, must adopt a principle of government and adhere to it. The principle that suits best with the Hill is respect for the Proprieties. We have not much money; *entre nous*, we have no great rank. Our policy is, then, to set up the Proprieties as an influence which money must court and rank is afraid of. I had learned just before Mr. Vigors called on me that Lady Sarah Bellasis entertained the idea of hiring Abbots' House. London has set its face against her; a provincial town would be more charitable. An earl's daughter, with a good income and an awfully bad name, of the best manners and of the worst morals, would have made sad havoc among the Proprieties. How many of our primmest old maids would have deserted Tea and Mrs. Poyntz for champagne and her ladyship? The Hill was never in so imminent a danger. Rather than Lady Sarah Bellasis should have had that house, I would have taken it myself, and stocked it with owls.

"Mrs. Ashleigh turned up just in the critical moment. Lady Sarah is foiled, the Proprieties safe, and so that question is settled."

"And it will be pleasant to have your early friend so near you."

Mrs. Poyntz lifted her eyes full upon me.

"Do you know Mrs. Ashleigh?"

"Not the least."

"She has many virtues and few ideas. She is common-place weak, as I am common-place strong. But common-place weak can be very

lovable. Her husband, a man of genius and learning, gave her his whole heart—a heart worth having; but he was not ambitious, and he despised the world.”

“I think you said your daughter was very much attached to Miss Ashleigh? Does her character resemble her mother’s?”

I was afraid while I spoke that I should again meet Mrs. Poyntz’s searching gaze, but she did not this time look up from her work.

“No; Lilian is anything but common-place.”

“You described her as having delicate health; you implied a hope that she was not consumptive. I trust that there is no serious reason for apprehending a constitutional tendency which at her age would require the most careful watching!”

“I trust not. If she were to die—Dr. Fenwick, what is the matter?”

So terrible had been the picture which this woman’s words had brought before me, that I started as if my own life had received a shock.

“I beg pardon,” I said, falteringly, pressing my hand to my heart; “a sudden spasm here—it is over now. You were saying that—that—”

“I was about to say——” and here Mrs. Poyntz laid her hand lightly on mine. “I was about to say, that if Lilian Ashleigh were to die, I should mourn for her less than I might for one who valued the things of the earth more. But I believe there is no cause for the alarm my words so inconsiderately excited in you. Her mother is watchful and devoted; and if the least thing ailed Lilian, she would call in medical advice. Mr. Vigors would, I know, recommend Dr. Jones.”

Closing our conference with those stinging words, Mrs. Poyntz here turned back into the drawing-room.

I remained some minutes on the balcony, disconcerted, enraged. With what consummate art had this practised diplomatist wound herself into my secret. That she had read my heart better than myself was evident from that Parthian shaft, barbed with Dr. Jones, which she had shot over her shoulder in retreat. That from the first moment in which she had decoyed me to her side, she had detected “the something” on my mind, was perhaps but the ordinary quickness of female penetration. But it was with no ordinary craft that her whole conversation afterwards had been so shaped as to learn the something, and lead me to reveal the some one to whom the something was linked. For what purpose? What was it to her? What motive could she have beyond the mere gratification of curiosity? Perhaps, at first, she thought I had been caught by her daughter’s showy beauty, and hence the half-friendly, half-cynical frankness with which she had avowed her ambitious projects for that young lady’s matrimonial advancement. Satisfied by my manner that I cherished no presumptuous hopes in that quarter, her scrutiny was doubtless continued from that pleasure in the exercise of a wily intellect which impels schemers and poli-

ticians to an activity for which, without that pleasure itself, there would seem no adequate inducement; and besides, the ruling passion of this petty sovereign was power. And if knowledge be power, there is no better instrument of power over a contumacious subject than that hold on his heart which is gained in the knowledge of its secret.

But “secret!” Had it really come to this? Was it possible that the mere sight of a human face, never beheld before, could disturb the whole tenor of my life—a stranger of whose mind and character I knew nothing, whose very voice I had never heard? It was only by the intolerable pang of anguish that had rent my heart in the words, carelessly, abruptly spoken, “if she were to die,” that I had felt how the world would be changed to me, if indeed that face were seen in it no more! Yes, secret it was no longer to myself—I loved! And like all on whom love descends, sometimes softly, slowly, with the gradual wing of the cushat settling down into its nest, sometimes with the swoop of the eagle on his unsuspecting quarry, I believed that none ever before loved as I loved; that such love was an abnormal wonder, made solely for me, and I for it. Then my mind insensibly hushed its angrier and more turbulent thoughts, as my gaze rested upon the roof-tops of Lilian’s home, and the shimmering silver of the moonlit willow, under which I had seen her gazing into the roseate heavens.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN I returned to the drawing-room, the party was evidently about to break up. Those who had grouped round the piano were now assembled round the refreshment-table. The card-players had risen, and were settling or discussing gains and losses. While I was searching for my hat, which I had somewhere mislaid, a poor old gentleman, tormented by tic-doloureux, crept timidly up to me—the proudest and the poorest of all the hidalgos settled on the Hill. He could not afford a fee for a physician’s advice, but pain had humbled his pride, and I saw at a glance that he was considering how to take a surreptitious advantage of social intercourse, and obtain the advice without paying the fee. The old man discovered the hat before I did, stooped, took it up, extended it to me with the profound bow of the old school, while the other hand, clenched and quivering, was pressed into the hollow of his cheek, and his eyes met mine with wistful mute entreaty. The instinct of my profession seized me at once. I could never behold suffering, without forgetting all else in the desire to relieve it.

“You are in pain,” said I, softly. “Sit down and describe the symptoms. Here, it is true, I am no professional doctor, but I am a friend who is fond of doctoring, and knows something about it.”

So we sat down a little apart from the other guests, and after a few questions and answers, I was pleased to find that his “tic” did not belong to the less curable kind of that agonising neu-

ralgia. I was especially successful in my treatment of similar sufferings, for which I had discovered an anodyne that was almost specific. I wrote on a leaf of my pocket-book a prescription which I felt sure would be efficacious, and as I tore it out and placed it in his hand, I chanced to look up, and saw the hazel eyes of my hostess fixed upon me with a kinder and softer expression than they often condescended to admit into their cold and penetrating lustre. At that moment, however, her attention was drawn from me to a servant, who entered with a note, and I heard him say, though in an under tone, "From Mrs. Ashleigh."

She opened the note, read it hastily, ordered the servant to wait without the door, retired to her writing-table, which stood near the place at which I still lingered, rested her face on her hand, and seemed musing. Her meditation was very soon over. She turned her head, and, to my surprise, beckoned to me. I approached.

"Sit here," she whispered; "turn your back towards those people, who are no doubt watching us. Read this."

She placed in my hand the note she had just received. It contained but a few words to this effect:

"DEAR MARGARET,—I am so distressed. Since I wrote to you, a few hours ago, Lilian is taken suddenly ill, and I fear seriously. What medical man should I send for? Let my servant have his name and address. "A. A."

I sprang from my seat.

"Stay," said Mrs. Poyntz. "Would you much care if I sent the servant to Dr. Jones?"

"Ah, madam, you are cruel! What have I done that you should become my enemy?"

"Enemy! No. You have just befriended one of my friends. In this world of fools, intellect should ally itself with intellect. No; I am not your enemy! But you have not yet asked me to be your friend."

Here she put into my hands a note she had written while thus speaking. "Receive your credentials. If there be any cause for alarm, or if I can be of use, send for me." Resuming the work she had suspended, but with lingering, uncertain fingers, she added, "So far, then, this is settled. Nay, no thanks; it is but little that is settled as yet."

## GREAT SALT LAKE.

THERE are in the world several very remarkable lakes of salt water, two of which, especially, are not more singular for their geographical peculiarities than in reference to human history; these are, the well known Dead Sea, and the Great Salt Lake of the Mormons.

The Dead Sea, gloomy and terrible in its wild and desolate majesty, object of superstitious terror to the miserable Arabs on its shore, and dreaded and shunned by animals as well as men, occupies part of a deep and large depression in Asia Minor, more than three hundred and fifty miles in length, and twenty miles wide. Its extreme depth is more than two thousand

five hundred feet below the sea. The surface of the water of this lake is about thirteen hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean, but the whole depression of which the lake is a part, can only be understood, by regarding it as a continuation towards the north, of the gorge of the Red Sea. There can be little doubt that the Dead Sea and the Lake of Tiberias originally formed part of that inlet from which they have long since been cut off by a rocky neck. Receiving little fresh water from rivers, the sea water has been partly evaporated from its former bed—the arid scorching air of Palestine having sucked away so much of the whole quantity as corresponds to the present difference of level. All the water left behind has become fully saturated with the salts originally present when the lake formed part of the sea; and large quantities of these salts have sunk down, forming a solid but partly soluble bed, which might be redissolved if at any time the supply of fresh water should increase. The cause of the want of vegetation and of animal life, must be sought in the large quantity of bitter or magnesian salts that everywhere abound, and has no reference to the supposed asphaltic from which the lake derived its classical name.

There is, however, some evidence from ancient sculptures, once embellishing the temple of Karnak in Egypt, and now in the Louvre, illustrating the ancient geography of the part of Asia in which the Dead Sea is situated. These sculptures refer to an expedition under the Egyptian king, Ramesis II., through the land of the Philistines and Canaan, to the land of Shittim, in the plains of Moab. They show us that the ford of the Jordan, and the course of the river Arnon, existed formerly pretty much as they do now; and, indeed, it seems probable that the ordinary surface of the water of the lake and its tributaries must have been somewhat lower then than it has been since, so that there has been no additional evaporation within many centuries. Travellers have often noticed a succession of terraces, or pebble beaches, apparently marking intervals of cessation in the evaporation; but it is clear that the most modern of these must date back from a period very much anterior to that of the Egyptian memorial referred to.

Important and necessary as salt is to almost all living beings, and useful as it is sometimes as a mineral manure, it is evident that a very small excess of supply over demand, converts it into a poison. Salt is by no means an inert mineral, and when common salt is mixed, as in these cases it must be, with the magnesian salts existing in the sea, the result is very injurious.

It is not necessary that the surface of a lake should be below the sea level, in order that it become saturated with salt when evaporation has removed part of the original water. In Persia there is a curious instance recorded; the lake of Oroomiah, eighty miles long and thirty broad. This intensely salt lake is nearly four thousand feet above the level of the Black

Sea. But it is also the case that almost all the sheets of water in the interior of Africa and Australia, which are all above the sea level, become brackish each season by evaporation from the surface, after the rainy season is concluded. The impress of its original formation is not easily lost to a deposit, and it is one of the most singular illustrations of the cause of what was at one time least explicable in the structure of the two great continents of Africa and Australia, that in the absence of a central mountain range and of great rivers proceeding from such range through a sloping country, or in any other case where natural drainage is interfered with, the sheets of water, or shallow lakes, are generally brackish. If any proof were wanting that all parts of the earth have been at one time at the bottom of the sea, it could not be more satisfactorily obtained than from the due consideration of this fact, and its illustration in the cases before us.

The Salt Lake of the Mormons appears to represent, on a small scale, the saline marshes of Australia and Africa. In the part of North America that extends between New Mexico and Oregon, bounded on the east by the Rocky Mountains, and on the west by the Sierra Nevada of California, there is an extent of nearly two millions of square miles, forming the territory of Utah. For the most part this country is a flat desert, though there are not wanting a number of parallel ridges of considerable elevation that rise out of it. On the north, the Columbia river, and on the south the Colorado, traverse it, and carry off part of the drainage that would otherwise form a vast freshwater lake in the interior; but towards the centre, the only drainage is into a number of pools, of which the largest and most important is that which has become famous as affording a safe resort for the Mormons.

This lake is about two hundred and fifty miles in circumference at present, but has evidently once covered a much larger area, and may do so again, should anything interfere with the drainage of the district. It is of irregular outline, and very shallow, with several islands rising to some height out of the water. The water yields from twenty to nearly forty per cent of salt, according to the season, and in this respect agrees almost exactly with the Dead Sea: showing that there is in both cases ample material for complete saturation. But there is a very great difference in the nature of the mineral contents, inasmuch as in the Salt Lake of Utah almost the whole of the salt is of the common kind used for the table, whereas in the Dead Sea barely one-half is of this nature, the rest consisting of salts of magnesia and lime. White salt in large quantities forms a kind of scum on the shingles of the shore of the Salt Lake; and its vast expanse, as blue as the ocean, is only occasionally ruffled by the wind, and appears to afford no support to either animal or vegetable life. Not a boat of any kind is to be seen upon it, not a tree flourishes on its borders,

nor on any of the adjacent plains; neither fish nor mollusk inhabits it, and if the trout of the streams of the vicinity are unfortunate enough to enter it, they instantly die. One kind of poor worm dwells solitary on the sands which enclose it, and one dull leathery seaweed redeems the blank barrenness that otherwise reigns around.

Locusts, which are occasionally the pests of the distant plains, if driven in this direction, are destroyed, and a deposit a foot deep of their dead bodies is described by a recent traveller as the only presence that recalled him to the organic world.

The Mormon city of New Jerusalem is situated only a few hours' ride from this dreary lake. Rising out of the great desert of Utah, it forms a kind of advanced post, midway between the Western or Atlantic States of the Union, and the Pacific State of California. Almost inaccessible, owing to the natural difficulties of the intervening country—but in a district fertile enough, when once reached—no better spot could have been discovered on the surface of the earth for modern Mohammedanism; and it is especially in reference to this part of the case, that we have brought the Salt Lake of Utah into comparison with the buried cities of the plain in the Eastern world.

Strange is the contrast of life in these two localities. The one in the old world, within a few leagues of the ancient Jerusalem, the scene of events the most interesting to the human race that have taken place since the foundation of the world, is now the haunt of the wild Arab—half Mohammedan, half pagan—under whose protection the Christian traveller must be placed to visit these savage and deserted spots. A few doubtful ruins mark spots whose history will never be forgotten; but the general aspect is that of dreary, but picturesque, mountains, wild passes, and gloomy volcanic gorges.

Jerusalem itself, also, has been well described in these few words: "A broken and desolate plain in front is bounded by a wavy, battlemented wall, over which towers frown, and minarets peer, and mosque domes swell, intermingled with church turret, and an indistinguishable mass of terraced roofs."\*

Of the New Jerusalem, a very recent traveller informs us that all the streets are a hundred and thirty feet wide, and run from north to south, and from east to west, forming square blocks of houses, each side measuring six hundred and fifty-seven feet. Each house is surrounded by gardens. The houses are built of adobes (mud bricks unburnt), generally in a simple style, frequently elegant, and always clean. Some of the dwellings are very large: among others, there is in course of construction for the governor, Brigham Young, a palace measuring ninety-eight feet by forty feet, built of several kinds of stone at great cost. "The long salient ogives of the windows of the upper story give to the roof which they interred the appearance of a crenelated diadem, and render this monument a model

\* Warburton's Crescent and Cross, vol. ii. p. 144.

of Mormon architecture. Thirty Sultanas are intended to occupy this harem, which has already cost 30,000 dollars, and is far from being finished.\* Public offices, a public library, and a social hall or temple, are grouped around. Activity reigns everywhere; there are no idle or unemployed persons; and it must also be added to the credit of the Mormons, that no grog-shops or gaming-houses are met with, and that disturbances are said to be unknown.

It is curious that in this vast and almost unexplored desert of Utah, there should have risen into strength and opulence, a new sect, holding opinions so offensive to all civilised nations, that there seemed at first no possibility of their being allowed room to grow. Whatever we may say and feel with regard to polygamy—the peculiar institution of Mormonism—it has commended itself to a large and varied section of the human family in the Western world, as well as in Asia; for we are told that there are now in Great Salt Lake City (named in order of numerical importance), English, Scotch, Canadians, Americans, Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Germans, Swiss, Poles, Russians, Italians, French, Negroes, Hindoos, and Australians, besides a stray Chinese. All these differ in country, language, customs, laws, nationality, and tastes, and have flocked together to live in harmony, in independence of the central authority of the States. The population of the Mormon sect is estimated at about sixty thousand.

Brigham Young, the successor of the celebrated Joe Smith, is the supreme president of these Latter-day Saints throughout the world—the Pope of the Mormons—a prophet and a seer—the recognised and lawful governor of the territory of Utah—the husband (in 1855) of seventeen wives, and the father of an unknown progeny. He would seem to be a remarkable man, and to have persuaded himself that he believes, more or less, in the peculiar tenets of the Mormon faith, whatever they may be. He has under him two vice-papal potentates, several apostles, a commander-in-chief of the army, a sacred historian, a head of the record office, an editor of the official journal, and a grand patriarch; there are also judges and other local authorities. It is certainly a proof of power that an uneducated man should have been able so long to keep together the strange assembly of jarring elements collected in the plain around the Great Salt Lake of Utah.

The medical profession is not encouraged in the city of the Salt Lake, nor is the practice of the law very profitable. Most of the converts work at mechanical employments, and the wages obtained by the labouring classes are large enough to secure a livelihood for all. The poor work for the rich; or, if there be not rich enough, the Church finds employment.

The exodus of the Mormons from Nauvoo,

Illinois, when they were driven, and their march to their new and almost unknown land, was a very trying and painful part of their history. Like the Israelites of old, they travelled with their flocks and herds, their wives and little ones, and their course lay through an enemy's country. Rivers and mountain-passes had to be crossed, and food and shelter were very scarce. At last, after a journey of nearly a thousand miles, the pioneers of the party reached the Great Salt Lake, and the main body of the emigrants gradually arrived and established themselves in their new country. Water was found, wood was found, stone was found, soils were cultivated, and the city now stands a singular monument of the latest variety of religious fanaticism. Not a pleasant one to reflect upon, as suggesting that, despite all the advances of education and of science, men remain more inclined to follow impulse than reason, and more willing to accept an absurdity offered to them than to think for themselves.

There was one great trial in store for the Mormons after their successful establishment. It was the discovery of gold in California. In those early days of the little settlement, the advice of Brigham Young to his followers was this: "Gold is fitted to pave streets with, to roof houses, and to make plate. The treasures of the earth are in the storehouse of the Lord; raise grain, build cities, and God will do the rest." The Mormons did so, and—so far—have flourished.

### EASY BOOTS.

SHOULD we like to part with our corns? For, if so, they are doomed. A time has come when every free man, enjoying free use of his feet, can, if he will, walk his two dozen miles a day, probably with more ease than his bootmaker has hitherto let him enjoy in walking ten. When each of us shall feel that he has ten toes to go upon and not a pair of wedges that he only wishes *were* of wood like the last to which they are fashioned, and insensible to all the twinges that afflict the temper, scorn shall arise of trains, and carriages, and cabs, except as economists of time, for with what happy independence will the holiday Londoner discover the complete use of his legs! Let it no more be a truth that nobody walks who can ride, but let our custom rather be that nobody rides who can walk. There shall be grief then in omnibus yards, and shoe reform may be as good as a new street for the relief of overcrowding from horse-traffic. It is—if the bootmakers would only understand that fact—easier in every sense to adapt boots and shoes to the feet, than to adapt the feet to the customary form of boots and shoes. The time has come for every foot to kick at the bootmaker's last, for, within the last three or four years, science has really concerned itself to such good purpose with the settlement of the principles on which a man's foot should be shod, that, as far as shape goes, the fashion of a boot or shoe may be perfected. The healthy foot

\* Journey to Great Salt Lake City, &c. By Jules Rémy. 2 vols. 8vo. London, 1861. Vol. i. p. 193.

can get a boot that shall ensure the free and full and comfortable use of it; a boot in which a long day's march over the autumn moors, or through the shingle of the coast, may be enjoyed without more than a wholesome amount of weariness.

It is only within the last four years that we may consider this matter of the right shape of a boot to have been fairly and practically settled for us by the anatomists. The doctors, centuries upon centuries ago, concerned themselves with the cure, not the prevention, of corns. Celsus recommended scraping them and anointing them with resin. Paulus Ægineta, who gave a whole chapter to them, proposed rubbing them down with pumice-stone, and then applying blister fly, or a compound very much like our black ink. Aëtius discussed the remedies known, but did not include the prescription of Marcellus, "Rub the corn with the ashes of an old shoe mingled with oil." We heartily agree in the advice to burn the shoe, but we are against any further rubbing of the toe with it; there having been more than rub enough.

Peter Camper, a famous physician and naturalist of Leyden, in the last century, who studied under Boerhaave, and whose works include a treatise on the physiognomies of men of different countries, and divers illustrations of his taste for the fine arts, suggested, as good for corns, an ointment of frogs and quadrupled mercury; but a much better suggestion of Camper's was his direct attack upon the causes of corns, bunions, flat-foot, and other griefs of the kind, in his essay, playful and philosophical, on the Correct Form of Shoes. He apologises for his subject by saying that he had told his pupils, who declared all subjects to be exhausted, that a man with full knowledge could find something to say worth saying, upon any topic, even if it were shoes. Dr. Camper, Professor of Medicine, Surgery, and Anatomy, at Amsterdam and Groningen, died seventy-two years ago; but in his day, as now, the foot was distorted by the shoemaker, and especially was treated then, as now, as if it belonged to a goose, and had the great toe in the middle of the foot. "It is surprising," he says, "that while mankind in all ages have bestowed the greatest attention upon the feet of horses, mules, oxen, and other animals of burden or draught, they have entirely neglected those of their own species, abandoning them to the ignorance of workmen, who, in general, can only make a shoe upon routine principles, and according to the absurdities of fashion, or the depraved taste of the day. Thus from our earliest infancy, shoes as at present worn serve but to deform the toes and cover the feet with corns, which not only render walking painful, but, in some cases, absolutely impossible. All this is caused by the ignorance of our shoemakers." Marshal Saxe, who considered the secret of war to consist in the power of marching, recorded in his Memoirs a special wish that soldiers "were to have shoes made of thin leather, with low heels, which will fit extremely well, and make them involuntarily

assume a good grace in marching." Sir Robert Dick used to tell that when a Highland regiment was at the battle of Maida, on being ordered to charge, all the soldiers took off their regulation boots and charged barefoot—but then they were Highlanders. West India regiments of men of colour commonly march out, with their boots hanging from the muzzles of their muskets. The English soldier is required to case his foot in one of seven sizes of a shoemaker's boot made upon the old pattern, which entirely disregards the mechanism of the foot and the natural movements for which freedom should be given. The majority of adults, having their feet gradually distorted by a long course of moulding of the toes within the boot, walk without pain in boots that ought to hurt them. What is there, then, to complain of? In the case of the soldier, much. Walking with feet of which the great toes are displaced, however painless, is not natural walking. A man's full marching power can only be had out of a pair of feet working as they were made to work.

Doctor Hermann Meyer, Professor of Anatomy in the University of Zurich, is a man of mark, well known to the medical profession out of his own country, for a text-book of Physiological Anatomy, in which he has incorporated investigations (for which he is especially distinguished) on the mechanics of the skeleton, and chiefly on the mechanism of the foot and knee. In the spring of the year 'fifty-seven, it occurred to Professor Meyer to apply his special knowledge to the writing of a treatise more practical than Camper's, On the Correct Form of Shoe, which accordingly appeared, with a sharp exposition of the hurts we suffer from shoemakers, as A Picture of Contemporary Civilisation, called after that attic thief Procrustes, who had a bed to the size of which he stretched or trimmed all travellers whom he caught. Procrustes ante portas (Procrustes at our doors). For in the line of boots at the doors of an inn-gallery the doctor would see many a bed of Procrustes for toes. Professor Meyer's scientific paper was so simple and clear, that the recasting of it into the form of a scientific tract for public use, was urged by medical men in many countries. It was published, therefore, at Zurich as a little independent treatise at the end of the year 'fifty-seven, and already in England it has found a sensible physician, Dr. John Stirling Craig, of Stratford-upon-Avon, who has thought it worth translating, under the title of Why the Shoe Pinches; a Contribution to Applied Anatomy; and has so issued it as a sixpenny tract for the good of his countrymen.

But we have not only the Zurich professor for our counsellor. The other day, Dr. Humphry, Lecturer on Anatomy and Physiology in the University of Cambridge, published a little book containing the enlarged substance of two lectures on the Foot and Hand; and, in his lecture on the foot, appended to a clear account of its anatomy, are practical comments on the right form of shoe. This teacher not only assents heartily to Professor Meyer's doctrine, but

borrowed of Dr. Craig some of the woodcuts that Dr. Craig borrowed of Dr. Meyer, showing what ought to be the true form of a boot-sole. And Dr. Humphry wishes to send all his readers, as we wish to send ours, to the sixpenny translation we have named, for by the doctrines hereof it is worth every man's while to bind his shoemaker.

Even shoemakers, however, are among the leaders of the new reform. Another little book, recently published, is one entitled *The Foot and its Covering*, in which Mr. James Dowie, who was apprenticed to shoemaking six-and-forty years ago, and who has endeavoured to introduce rational principles into his trade, sets out with a translation of Camper's treatise on the *Correct Form of Shoe*, and goes on with a treatise of his own, less clear and neat in its definitions than that of Professor Meyer, but in the main arguing to the same conclusion. We shall now endeavour to inculcate a proper understanding of Professor Meyer's principle of shoe reform.

The thigh bone, the longest bone in the body, carries the weight of the trunk to the knee. At the knee joint this is transferred to two bones that descend to the ankle. One of these, much larger than the other, bears the chief weight, and forms with its lower end the inner ankle, besides having its front edge or chine (which we corrupt into shin) close under the shin, of the right form for cleaving a way with least trouble through air, water, grass, or under-wood. The other leg-bone gives a hold to muscles that work the machinery of leg and foot, and, forming with its end the outer ankle, strengthens the ankle joints. These leg or shank bones are, in giants, disproportionately long. The weight transmitted by them falls on the uppermost of a set of seven bones forming the back part of the foot and the heel. There are no less than twenty-six bones in the foot, to ensure elasticity, variety, and precision of movement, and, by help of the elastic cartilages set between them, breaking the jar to the whole frame that would result—to say nothing of the chance of fracture to itself—if it were upon one solid bone that we came down in our running and leaping, and could account it a safe thing to “fall on our feet.” The six-and-twenty bones of the foot are thus divided. A group of seven (tarsal), which are short and thick, forming the hinder part of the instep; five long bones (metatarsal) connecting these with the five toes; fourteen bones of the toes, called phalanges, because they are arranged like soldiers in phalanxes—three deep on the four little toes, making twelve—with two for the great toe, making in all fourteen. The seven bones behind the instep through which the weight of the body passes from the shank bones to the ground, are thus arranged: A pretty large one at the top, the middle bone of the instep, is joined with the two leg bones. It rests chiefly upon the heel bone, which is the largest bone of the foot; but its front part presses on a little bone (said to be like a boat) interposed between it and the three wedge bones,

from which runs the three long bones (metatarsal) that connect the back of the foot with the great toe, and the two toes next to it. The other two bones, that connect the back of the foot with the little toe and its neighbour, run from a cuboid bone that completes the strength of the arch of the instep, and has no less than six bones, but especially the front part of the heel bone, in connexion with it.

If we cut the bones of the human foot through with a saw from tip of heel to tip of toe, we see how they not only form an arch, the arch of the sole, but how even the fibres of which the bones are made, run in each bone with distinct reference to its position in the arch it is to strengthen. At the back, this arch springs from the solid heel bone: a comparatively upright pillar with nothing but the one upper bone of the instep between it and the weight of the body. Therefore, if a man in jumping falls upon his heels, the jar is considerable. He may feel the vibration in his brains, and might even cause a distinct hurt to the hip, knee, or some other joint of the body. But the fore pillar of the arch is longer, broader, slopes more gradually to the ground, and is composed of several bones jointed together. For this reason, the jumper or the runner down stairs chooses to alight on the balls of his toes. It is true, that in walking, the heel first touches the ground; but when it does so, the weight of the body is supported partly by the fore-part of the other foot, and the weight falls aslant on the heel in such a way as bring the toes of that foot also very quickly to the ground.

Between the bones building this arch, is an elastic gristle for its mortar, and there are also ties, especially two ligaments answering the purpose of the “tie beam” of a roof to prevent the arch from being crushed flat by the pressure from above. One of these ties runs high up within the arch of the sole, joining the top of the heel bone to the first bone of the fore pillar; the key bone as it were, the upper bone to which the weight of the body descends from the leg lying between them, and in part supported by this elastic ligament. The other tie is at the base of the arch, between the bottom of the heel bone and balls of the toes. The overstraining of either of these ligaments, especially of the upper one, causes the arch to sink, and we then have weak ankle or flat foot, with some difficulty of raising the heel so as to mount well on the balls of the toes.

Flat foot can be produced in infancy when children are induced to walk before the bones and ligaments are strong enough to bear the weight of the body. Parents should never be in a hurry to set children on their legs, but let them roll and kick until they walk of their own will. Again, at the age of about fourteen, when the body is increasing rapidly in size and weight, weakness will often show itself by a yielding of the arch of the foot sole, when pressure on the foot, as in the case of errand-boys or young nurserymaids, is too great or too long continued. It is common among our farm labourers, who strangle all the movements of the feet

in their laced high-lows, and so accustom themselves to a sort of stilt walking that they hardly know how to use their feet, and want the "support" of their work-a-day clumps when they put on their Sunday shoes.

There are three joints of the foot, and of all of them movement is crippled in such high-lows as are worn by the English labourer. Men who are so shod that they walk somewhat as if they had cork legs, and do not execute the proper movements of the foot, have the muscles of the foot and leg ill developed, and the small and shapeless leg of an English agricultural labourer thus becomes a direct consequence of the make of his high-lows. "Look," says Sir Charles Bell, "at the legs of a poor Irishman travelling to the harvest with bare feet; the thickness and roundness of the calf show that the foot and toes are free to permit the exercise of the muscles of the legs. Look again at the leg of our English peasant, whose foot and ankle are tightly laced in a shoe with a wooden sole, and you will perceive from the manner in which he lifts his legs, that the play of the ankle, foot, and toes is lost as much as if he went on stilts, and therefore are his legs small and shapeless." We know that, according to old tradition, "footmen" are still judged by their calves. When they had real running to do, the development of that essential muscle of the calf was looked to as evidence of their ability for footman's service. We need hardly say that a man tumbles down when he fails to adjust the weight of his body so that its centre lies over his feet. The drunkard and the idiot have brains so far wanting in this power of adjustment, that they may be known by their gait. If we stoop to pick anything up, only our long thighs enable us to thrust so much of the body back as will enable us to bend head and arms forward, and to have our fingers on the ground.

In walking, one heel a little in advance of the body first touches the ground, the toes follow, and one arch is complete while the body, for the briefest space of time wholly supported by it, passes over. For that act of passing over, it is raised entirely by the fore-part of the foot making its leverage against the ground on the great toe. The movement is not rigidly straight. The foot comes to the ground with its toes slanted a little outwards, the outer and hinder edge of the heel first touches the ground (as we find by the wearing of the boot upon a healthy foot), the ball of the little toe next comes to the ground (so that the boot sole wears rather upon its outer edge), and the balls of the other toes follow in swift succession, until that of the great toe takes its hold upon the ground, when from that toe, on the inner side of the foot, the last impulse is given that sends the body over to the other foot. A special long muscle provided for this purpose works a tendon that passes behind the outer ankle under the sole of the foot to the great toe. Its work is, when the ball of the toe is firmly pressed to the ground, to lift the outer ankle, and so help to raise the body. We find, then, that without good muscles, a well-set heel, a firm-set and

elastic bony arch, and a strong straight great toe, there can be no good walker. We understand also (as Doctor Meyer points out), that in a healthy foot a straight line drawn down the middle of the great toe, from the middle of its tip to the middle of its ball, would, if continued, pass exactly through the middle of the heel. The smaller toes do none of the lifting. They give lateral support, and give help in securing a good grip of the ground, especially to those who walk barefoot on difficult ways.

Now let us apply this knowledge to boot and shoe making:

In the first place, it is clear that an elastic as well as durable substance should be the material of the foot-case. The best possible material may, or may not be, leather. Hitherto no attempts at improvement upon the material have been fully successful.

In the next place, as to the make and fit. There must be no inelastic sole, and no tight lacing to impede the free movement of any of the foot joints, though a tight lace never can be so tight as some of the hard leather casings of the bony arch of the foot, especially in Wellingtons, which, in proportion as they compel the use of a boot-jack, take the grace and health out of the movements of the foot. The now prevalent use of a light boot fastened only by the imperceptible pressure of an elastic web let into each side over the ankles, and so slipping easily over the instep, is a change in the right direction. Indeed, so far as regards the movements of the ankle joint and of the arch of the foot, the correct form of shoe is thus attained.

All that we have left us to do, is, to restore the great toe to its place in nature. Dancing-masters and shoemakers are alike enemies to good walking. The dancing-master asks for a turning out of the whole foot, so that the rise can be made only by an ungainly waddle over the side of the toe, instead of along its length. Taglioni herself could not walk; nobody who has seen a ballet can have failed to observe the curious waddle of the dancer, man or woman, who with toes too much turned out, has now and then to walk from one part of the stage to another.

The bootmaker, ignorant of the relative use and importance of the different parts of the foot, has steadily persisted for centuries, and at this day usually persists, in so shaping the shoe that the great toe is forced upon the other toes more or less out of its right line with the heel. Nine civilised people in ten, perhaps, have their great toes thus by a course of submission to misshapen boots and shoes so far turned inwards, that a line run down in the middle of them from point to ball if continued would not fall anywhere in the heel at all, but several inches away outside the body. The necessary consequence is, that the full strength of the natural lever for raising the body is destroyed; the effort has to be made at a disadvantage, and with pressure; the act of walking loses some of its grace and much of its ease; so that although the boot may be so well adjusted to the spoilt shape of the foot, as

to cause no pain, an honest twenty or thirty mile walk is more than the hampered foot-machinery has power to sustain.

For this reason, says Dr. Meyer, it is wrong to suppose that because a shoe is easy it is right, or that a cast of the foot, unless it be a healthy one, would make the best last for the shoe it is to wear. Allowance should be made for the gradual return of the great toe to its place, by leaving its place (to some extent at least) vacant for it, and permitting gentle pressure where the joint has been forced into undue projection. When the shoemaker now tells his customer that he treads very much on one side, he in fact compliments him by the information that he has a healthy and unsubjugated foot, determined to tread straight. It is precisely because children's feet are only in the first stage of injury, and are more nearly as God made them than as they are destined to be made by the shoemakers, that children especially come into trouble with the shoemakers, or with the parents and guardians who believe rather in shoes than in feet, for "treading on one side." A strong and healthy foot tramples a foolish shoe out as far as possible into the form it ought at first to have had. Even the distorted foot, after the shoemaker has done his worst, will often tread over the leather of the inner side of the boot-heel, because of a natural effort of the foot-heel to bring itself into some approach to the right line with the great toe.

In a properly-made shoe, then, the great toe and the heel have their right relative places furnished for them. And, since they are to be in a line together, it must follow that if a well-made pair of boots be placed side by side so that their heels touch, their sides also will touch through the whole space in front of the instep from the place of the ball of the great toe to the very end of it. They will diverge only at the rounded ends, where the great toes round off into the little toes, along whose line, and nowhere else, any possible pointing of the shape of the boot sole can be got. Apart from the general necessities of a fit, the observation of the absence of undue looseness or pressure, and of the high heel that partly defeats nature's scheme in the construction of the bony arch, and throws too much of the work of support upon the toes, there is no better rough test of the degree to which a pair of boots has been adapted to a pair of feet, than to place them with their inner sides together, and observe the cut of the soles. The more they diverge from each other between the place of greatest breadth and the end of the toes, the worse they are; the more they tend to be in contact along that line, the better they are; and when they quite touch throughout that line, they are what they ought to be. To secure this, to secure also a sole of which the greatest breadth corresponds truly with the greatest breadth of the tread, and which, moreover, is contrived to allow room enough for the play of the foot in walking, including its lengthening or shortening with the ranging curve of its arch, is to secure what we ought to have, and what we

can get only by defying shoemakers' prejudices, and compelling shoemakers, whether they like it or not, to understand the true theory of their trade. The English translation of Doctor Meyer's essay (published by Edmonston and Douglas), exact in detail, and clearly illustrated by drawings, is enough to enable any man to lay the law down clearly to his bootmaker. It is sixpenny worth of knowledge that will, we hope, be the ruin of a fashion that has put thousands of people into actual torment of pain, and denies to most of us the full and free use of our legs.

## SKY PICTURES IN SICILY.

### I. THE COMET.

PALE phantom, on the blue October night,  
Like a dropped plume from fallen angel's wing  
Floating astray, a shunned, mysterious thing,  
Alike unclaimed by darkness or by light;—  
Old superstitions quicken at thy sight,  
Of storm and earthquake,—of tyrannic King  
Sudden struck mad,—of Death volcanoes fling  
Down hills alive with Autumn's vintage bright.  
To me a strange companion thou hast been  
For many a lonely hour beside the sea,  
Bringing back fire-lights when I used to lean,  
A wondering child, against my father's knee,  
Who told us tales of others like to thee,  
Ghosts of the air, with fright by simple mortals  
seen.

### II. DAY COLOURS.

The spirits of Palermo's thousand flowers  
Give thousand colours to Palermo's sky;  
Look up at sunrise—lo! pomegranate bowers,  
And banks of blue forget-me-not hard by—  
Evening doth warm 'mid orange fruitage die,  
Above her tent the rose, with crimson showers,  
Fringes the clouds: o'er yonder mountain towers  
A rain of violets falleth from on high.  
Yes, this was Enna's land; and here, I swear,  
Was the famed grove of the Hesperides.  
So bright the wreaths for Hours to choose and wear,  
So teeming ripe the bounty of the trees;—  
Colour and changing perfume fill the air,  
Which faints not 'neath the freight, but laughs  
like heart at ease.

### III. THE MOON TAKES UP THE TALE.

Yet, with her soft and rich and mystic light,  
The moon doth challenge this variety;  
"Leave to the day its gaudy shows," saith she,  
"Mine be the calmer holiness of Night.  
After the feast, the prayer—after delight,  
Thoughtful repose—after the rainbow sea  
Heaving with glittering turbulence, for me  
One changeless amethyst, as mirror bright.  
Mine are the hours when Memory softly roves  
(Hope would the mysteries of the sun explore),  
When all the best aspirings, purest loves,  
And sweetest friendships man enjoyed of yore,  
Come back—when even the mournful dirge 'No  
more!  
Like soothing distant chime, in mellowed cadence  
moves."

### IV. RAIN.

Hark! how the rain that rings upon the spears  
Of the sharp reeds, makes answer—or with tone  
Saddens the breeze, like the low streamy moan  
Of captive Naiad, sobbing out her fears.  
Saying, "Your shows are brighter for my tears;  
Mine are the gems on yonder bow bestrown,

Brighter by far than my North sisters own ;  
 Mine, yon grey pillar that the sea uprears.—  
 Climb to the lonely temple on the hill,  
 Where stood Segesté once, when I am there,  
 And ye shall see above that ruin fair  
 I can hang grief so solemn, that a thrill  
 Of ancient awe the blood of health shall chill,  
 As though departed Gods were weeping dark in  
 air."

#### AMONG THE ARABS.

THE *Souvenirs Intimes d'un Vieux Chasseur d'Afrique*, by M. ANTOINE GANDON, combine solid information with entertaining narrative. They are truthful and vivid military reminiscences of an epoch—the settlement of French rule in Algeria—which is passing fast from contemporary news into the domain of history. Nearly thirty years—a generation—have slipped away since the great Arab chief submitted to the force of his European foe. But besides their historic value, the *Souvenirs* possess a simple, serious, and sympathetic charm of their own. We have had, M. Paul d'Ivoi observes, plenty of memoirs of courts, and to spare. Here we are offered the memoirs of a nation. For, the soldier who has subdued and who still holds Algeria is more than a mere army soldier: he is the peasant son of the energetic country who has planted her foot, in the name of agriculture and civilisation, on an uncultivated and savage land. This soldier, a rustic in endurance, a cavalier at heart, a hero and a martyr when occasion requires, is painted by the *Chasseur d'Afrique* with all the affectionate accuracy we should bestow on the portrait of a bosom friend.

That which gives to old African soldiers their peculiar physiognomy, is not their complexion bronzed by the sun, but the intelligence which illumines their countenance whenever there is danger to be foreseen or annoyance to be avoided. Warfare with the Bedouins is a rude school; it requires of those who wage it, not only the courage indispensable to every good soldier, but also an individual disposition, enabling them to compete in skill and cunning with the boldest marauders and the most finished thieves in the world. Few will believe that Arabs have penetrated, during the night, into the midst of an army of ten thousand men, and have thence stolen horses that were guarded and watched by hundreds of sentinels. As these delightful tricks did not always succeed, and a culprit was occasionally caught in the fact, it afforded the means of ascertaining their modes of proceeding.

The Arab who is projecting a masterstroke, and intends selecting the handsomest out of a thousand steeds, usually comes in the course of the day to inspect the bivouac, although he is obliged to make his preliminary observations from a distance—from a very considerable distance, it may be. The natives, in fact, are allowed to penetrate easily into the middle of an encampment; but they are almost always people of the neighbourhood who form part

of the expeditionary columns, such as camel-drivers, herdsmen, and pack-horse leaders, who have been hired for the transport of provisions. In the latter case, the Arab thief will be mistaken for one of the men employed; he will take good care that no one shall see him enter.

His choice made, the rogue disappears till night. In order to return to the middle of the bivouac, he habitually divests himself of every item of clothing, and retains no other arm than a well-sharpened knife in a leather sheath slung with a strap across his body. He is also provided with a long rope of camel's hair, which is twisted round his head, like a turban. As soon as he has passed the first sentries, the thief is metamorphosed into a serpent; he crawls on continually, without hurry, without noise, without any perceptible rustling. With his eyes fixed on the living objects whom he wishes to avoid, he stops short if he perceives in the sentinels the slightest sign that their attention has been attracted. He will take three hours, if need be, to clear a distance of a hundred yards.

At last he gets near the coveted object, the horse intended to be stolen. There, his movements are more deliberate than ever, in order not to frighten the animal, who must not be allowed, for several minutes, to perform any but very natural motions, capable of deceiving the eye of the most vigilant sentinel. At first, he cuts the shackles with which the horse's forefeet are tied together, he fastens his rope to one of the horse's feet, and retires, crawling all the while, as far as the length of the rope allows him. The distance between himself and the animal then varies from twelve to fifteen feet. If, during these preparations, the horsekeepers appear to have heard any noise, the thief again remains motionless; the horse remaining quiet, and the sentinels resuming their former tranquillity, the process of stealing is continued.

The Arab slightly pulls the rope; solicited by this mute appeal, the horse rises and sets a step; but the movement is so perfectly similar to that which the animal is in the habit of making when he wants to reach a wisp of hay or a blade of grass a little way off the stake to which he is fastened, that, by night, nine sentinels out of ten would be deceived. The robber repeats the same manœuvre as long as possible. As he has carefully studied the ground, he will continue it while no alarm is given; but generally, once out of the immediate reach of the men whose duty it is to keep special watch over the stolen horse, he leaps on the animal's back and sets off at full gallop, well knowing that gun-shots by night are only dangerous for the comrades of those who fire them. Sometimes the thief covers his entire person with leaves, but he will commit no such foolish act in a country denuded of shrubs and bushes. On naked ground, he is as naked as a snake; in a bushy country, he transforms himself into a living bush: in short, he assimilates his person to the aspect of the country he is traversing.

From the general to the private soldier, every

one was so liable to these misadventures, that few could laugh at the expense of their neighbours. Nobody could boast of being safe from these audacious thefts, in spite of every imaginable precaution. If you made game of your comrade who had lost his calf, you might find, next morning, that you had been robbed of your cow.

At that date the army was not yet provided with those little tents, so convenient and so easy to carry, which are now in fashion. They slept, then, with the sky for their roof; the foot soldier, with a modest camp coverlet; the luckier horseman, sheltered by his immense cloak and the vast blanket which, in the light cavalry, was placed, folded into sixteen, between the saddle and the horse's back. The police station, placed as it is in the centre of the bivouac, guarded by the sentinels of its own regiment, and by all those of the infantry besides, ought, one would think, to have nothing to fear from thieves. Nevertheless, a station of this kind was victimised by some thieves of the province of Tlemcen one splendid summer's night of 1836.

The police station in question, with the exception of the sentinel, snored like one man, including the quartermaster of the platoon, who, profiting by the calmness of the atmosphere and the mildness of the temperature, had taken off nearly all his clothing, in order to enjoy complete repose. Rolled up in a warm blanket, which itself was encased with a thick cloak, with his head reposing on a sack of barley, beneath which he had placed his clothes, the brave sous-officier was dreaming, perhaps, that he was carrying off one of the emir's flags—the customary dream of all Chasseurs d'Afrique in Abd-el-Kader's time—when the trumpets of the regiment sounded the ear-piercing summons to awake.

"Already!" said the happy sleeper, with a yawn. "Are we never to enjoy twenty-four hours of quiet? Sentinel!"

"Here, quartermaster. Do you want anything?"

"Yes; hand me my pantaloons and my boots, that I may dress myself behind the curtains. You will find them under the barley-sack."

The sentinel lifted the sack, and announced, "Neither pantaloons nor boots do I see there."

"What do you mean? Neither boots nor—I say, you there, you fellows of the guard, get up a little quicker than that. What have you done with my boots?"

"Your boots?" replied a chasseur, who had followed his quartermaster's example in relieving his feet of their casings during the night, "I can't find my own!"

"Fortunately I only took off my braces," muttered the brigadier, who sought in vain for the two leather straps so designated.

"In that case, we had best say no more about it," the quartermaster hastily replied. "While we were fast asleep, some Bedouin thief has paid us a visit. We must conceal the matter, if possible; only you will allow me to observe that you have all slept on guard, like so many logs of wood, be it said without offending you."

As usual, the chasseurs made oath that they had watched conscientiously; but the mischief was done, and they had now only to remedy it. Some comrades, who were fortunately supplied with a change, helped to furnish the missing articles; and the only individual on whom evil consequences fell was the chasseur, who was obliged to return unshod to his squadron, and to pass in that state before the officer of the platoon to which he belonged. That officer had not seen much service in Africa, having come there lately by exchange.

"Ah, ha!" he said to the poor chasseur. "You let your boots be stolen while you were on guard! Villanous soldier!"

It was a villanous expression which the young officer made use of; but discipline is severe; and the chasseur, really an excellent soldier, made no other reply than by biting his moustache, on which he could not prevent a hot tear from falling.

Four days after this adventure the officer's horse was stolen, and the chasseur took no further revenge on his superior than to remark, "You now see, lieutenant, that everybody is liable to these accidents—the Bedouins are such thieves!—but the parties robbed are not the more villanous soldiers for that."

Captain Cavaignac—as he then was—who was exceedingly beloved by his men, possessed a magnificent mare and foal, which were confided to the care of a Chasseur d'Afrique, who every morning took them to graze in the orchards which extend around the ramparts of Méchouar, taking good care also to keep within gunshot of the sentinels who were placed at the outposts. One day, while the brave fellow, reckoning perhaps a little too much on the neighbourhood of the sentinels, had gone to sleep beneath the shade of an olive-tree, an Arab marauder, gliding like an adder through the grass, managed to secure the colt without a single human witness of the theft. On awaking, the poor fellow in charge could not believe his eyes. In vain he searched the environs, in vain he interrogated the sentinels, who had not lost sight of the mare for a single instant. They had not heard the slightest noise; and they considered the colt's disappearance so extraordinary a fact, that they assured their comrade that he must have forgotten to bring the young one in the morning with its mother. The chasseur, convinced of the contrary, as well as of the uselessness of any further search, led back the mare to Méchouar, and, with tears in his eyes, related his misadventure to Captain Cavaignac.

"They have contrived to steal my colt, captain, but I assure you it was no fault of mine; and I mean to catch the thief, I give you my word for it."

"I forbid you to go and meet your death for the sake of a wretched colt which is lost past recovery," replied the captain. "One day or other, situated as we are, we might be obliged to kill and eat it; and I had rather, *ma foi!* that the poor little creature should be alive and well with the Arabs than dead with us."

"You tell me that, captain, in order not to vex me; but I can see very well that you are vexed about it yourself. Sacre——! It shall never be said that a thief of a Bedouin——I have a plan of my own——"

In vain did the captain endeavour to console the disconsolate chasseur; who promised, it is true, not to rush into danger, but who would not swear to give up the pursuit of the robber.

"Let me see," said our chasseur, as he returned to the stable, which was by no means the worst lodging in Méchouar, "how I must set about to catch my thief. If I go pittering and pining to my comrades, they will all of them want to come with me, although I was the only one to fall asleep, like the great big imbecile that I was. I must undertake the expedition alone. The Bedouin has the colt; he will be wanting the mother. Good; we will try and have a meeting tête-à-tête."

The day after the colt had been so cleverly conjured away, the chasseur led the mare, as usual, to graze and lay down in the shade of the olive-tree, exactly as he had done the day before. That day, nothing new occurred. Next day, a repetition of the same occurrences. On the third day things took quite a different turn.

While the sentinels, believing their comrade asleep at his usual resting-place, gave a look now and then at the mare who was fastened with a long rope to a stake fixed in the ground, an Arab, almost naked, jumped on the animal's back, after cutting the rope round its foot. But, at the same instant, another individual, just as lightly clad as the former, pounced upon the robber, dashed him to the ground, and literally strangled him, without cord or lasso, with the help of nothing but his hands. The chasseur's plan had perfectly succeeded. For three days, after pretending to fall asleep beneath his favourite olive-tree, he had crawled out of his uniform, which remained on the spot to deceive the thief, and then, creeping in another direction, had crouched in a hole dug close to the mare, who served to decoy the ravisher of the colt.

Sailors are notoriously superstitious; it appears that soldiers also are occasionally given to regard events in a supernatural light. Some at least of the Chasseurs d'Afrique (among whom M. Gandon may be reckoned) entertain a belief in presentiments and warning hallucinations: they hold that we are sometimes permitted to catch a glimpse of the future, and to have a knowledge of distant facts, by means of the momentary separation of the mind from the body. During the African campaigns, it was observed that privation of food, thirst, and fatigue, singularly predisposed the soldier to have the most extraordinary dreams—dreams which seemed to last for years, whilst the dreamer had not slept more than a couple of minutes. In some of these cases, the soul was so completely detached from the body that the latter was insensible to physical sensations, how painful soever they might be in the waking

state: while the former was gifted with a power of clairvoyance which would be incredible were it not attested by facts.

It is well known that Socrates spoke with deep conviction of the familiar demon who accompanied him everywhere. A distinguished naval officer was witness, during a considerable space of time, to a fact of a similar nature.

The vessel on board which this officer was sailing happened to meet with a violent storm in the South Sea. Monstrous waves broke over the deck without cessation, sweeping before them everything that was not very firmly fastened. The sailors, hanging on to the rigging, had the greatest difficulty in resisting the fury of the sea, when suddenly was heard the shout, "A man overboard!"

It was a sailor named Smith, who was carried away by a mighty wave. In such a frightful sea, all means of salvage were almost impossible. What, consequently, was the captain's surprise when, to his profound stupefaction, he saw, a few minutes afterwards, the same Smith, with the sea-water pouring from his clothes, quietly helping his comrades to work the vessel, as if nothing had happened!

When the storm had subsided a little, and danger was over, they inquired of Smith the particulars of his miraculous preservation.

"As soon as I was washed overboard," he said, "I saw a man sitting by my side on the crest of the wave. He took me by the hand, and brought me back on deck without my feeling the slightest pain. More than that: although I saw the ship pitching and rolling horribly, I felt no anxiety about her fate; my neighbour's calmness reassured me, for I was fully aware that he would save me. Look, there he is—there! He never leaves me now."

So saying, Smith pointed to a spot beside him where every one else saw only vacancy, but where he distinctly beheld, as he affirmed, his imaginary comrade.

From that time Smith became taciturn, and he was frequently observed, when quite alone, to express by his looks and gestures his consciousness of being in company with another person. Any interrogation by his messmates on the subject of his vision, appeared to him a mockery, so firmly was he persuaded that his phantom friend was as visible to others as to himself. When urged by his questioners to give a description of his companion, the portrait he drew was exactly his own. Before long, this fixed idea obtained such an ascendancy over his imagination, and even over his senses, that he behaved in every respect as if he had been two persons. If it were wanted to take in a reef, to furl a sail, or perform any other perilous manœuvre in boisterous weather, whenever the task required the powers of two robust and practised men, Smith would allow no other sailor to help him, but executed the work alone, with supernatural precision and vigour.

The crew at last became habituated to his mysterious ways, and the officers could not help remarking in this singular sailor an extraordinary

aptitude and intuition whenever it was his turn to take the helm. One night Smith was seen to jump out of his hammock, go down to the hold, and shortly return to the deck of the ship holding in his arms a bundle of smoking cordage which had caught fire, nobody knew how, and then quietly throw it in the sea. Another time, he called the master carpenter aside, and advised him to lose no time in repairing a damage which no one had observed. A day or two later this damage would have caused a leak, and compromised the safety of the ship.

The most remarkable incident witnessed by the naval officer was this: He was on watch one very dark night; so dark that, on looking over the ship's side, the water was hardly distinguishable. Smith was then at the helm. The officer, happening to glance at the compass, perceived that the ship had suddenly changed her course.

"Why, Smith!" he shouted, "what are you about? Helm to starboard, man; helm to starboard!"

"I can't," replied Smith. "He won't let me."

The officer repeated his order, to no purpose. He found it impossible to make himself obeyed. Smith persisted in repeating, with energy, "I can't, sir; he won't let me."

The captain, overhearing the discussion, came on deck to ascertain the cause of the dispute, and also to learn (for he had already remarked it) why the vessel changed her course.

Before the officer could finish his explanation, a large ship, with every sail set, shot past the vessel that Smith was steering, so close as almost to touch her. The presentiment in Smith's mind, which he had obeyed with so much obstinacy, saved them from a collision when both vessels were running at their utmost speed.

From human to animal intelligence and instinct, the transition is easy. Regimental dogs were as great favourites with the Chasseurs d'Afrique as with other soldiers. M. Gandon immortalises two. Saragosse, an enormous long-haired Bedouin dog, died of old age, and was buried with military honours, having been carried to his grave, in a triumphal attitude, on a funereal bier, by two stalwart chasseurs in their stable dress, with their blouses turned inside out, in token of mourning. The chief mourner was a spaniel, Coquelicot (Poppy), a respectable cortège of hounds and greyhounds followed, who howled out (by means of well applied kicks) their unanimous funeral oration. A deputation of Arab dogs attended; a military salute with pistols rendered the ceremony still more impressive; and a few days afterwards, a tuft of dog's grass, planted by unknown paws, relieved with its verdure the desolation of Saragosse's grave. This veteran, who had braved many bullets and ropes—he was twice hung, undergoing an hour's suspension each time—succumbed under the weight of rheumatism and length of days.

A more tragic fate awaited Kebir (in Arabic, Great), a pretty little poodle, who never was a warrior, but who, nevertheless, was adored by the regiment, on account of his grace and

his extraordinary intelligence. Left an orphan at a fortnight old, he was adopted and reared (by the milk-bottle) with paternal care by the sous-officiers of the first squadron; as he grew up, he learned to know every one of his protectors by name, however exaggerated such an assertion may appear. He belonged to the small breed of poodles vulgarly called "moutons." His frizzled hair, incomparably fine and silky, was as white as snow, and his bright sparkling eyes seemed to be constantly asking for something to do or to divine.

Kebir was not yet four months old when a formal order was given to clear the quarters of every dog. A certain person who, luckily for the chasseurs, did not make old bones in Africa, the Commandant Seven-Stars, displayed in the execution of this order a degree of vehemence and brutality incompatible with the dignity of a superior officer. Armed with a pair of pistols laden with ball, Commandant Seven-Stars prowled about, by day and by night, in pursuit of the proscribed unfortunates, and fired without pity on every poor animal who was indiscreet enough to fall in his way. Kebir was very soon made aware of the threatened danger. For three or four successive days, his patrons pointed out to him the commandant, with the following recommendation: "You see that great long monsieur there. Very well; whenever you see him coming in one direction, you slip away in the opposite direction, and come and hide yourself in bed." Kebir's secret bed was so cleverly concealed in the dormitory, that it was impossible to discover it.

Kebir took the hint; never could Commandant Seven-Stars get within pistol-shot of him—which, perhaps, was as fortunate for the commandant himself as it was for the pretty poodle.

Kebir adored horses in general, but he had a particular friendship for the steed belonging to the head quartermaster. Whenever the latter returned to quarters after carrying a report to the colonel, Kebir was always at his post, awaiting the arrival of his friend the horse. The quartermaster dismounted, tossed the reins to the dog, who set off as fast as he could trot and led the horse to his proper place. The stable-guard gave the horse his corn, when Kebir jumped into the manger to prevent the horses on either side from pilfering their comrade's ration. The repast concluded, the poodle leaped on the back of his friend, and thence bounding from croup to croup the whole length of the stable, at last descended to the ground, to join the sous-officiers at their mess.

So much cleverness obtained its recompense. Kebir's presence, if not authorised, was at least supported by the terrible commandant, who one day, in the middle of parade, was greatly astonished to receive, from the mouth of the animal itself, a note to this effect: "I thank Commandant Seven-Stars for leaving off firing at me with his pistols. The commandant is requested to give an acknowledgment of the receipt of this."

While the commandant was perusing this

singular missive, Kebir, seated on his hind-quarters, fixed his bright eyes on the reader, whose countenance unbent itself, perhaps for the first time in his life. The acknowledgment, signed and given into Kebir's charge, was brought to the sous-officiers' chamber, whence they were frequently accustomed to despatch their orders by the same means, the surest and the readiest of all. Often and often the adjutant on service has given a sealed letter to Kebir, saying, "Take this to your quartermaster, and bring me the answer."

If the party in question were not in his room, one of his comrades had only to say, "He is gone to the canteen, or to the stable; you will find him there," and Kebir always found the person addressed, and always brought back the answer.

Whenever a chasseur belonging to the squadron had occasion to go into the military hospital, the billet-master used to call Kebir, and, putting the hospital ticket into his mouth, would say, "You will go with the patient, and show him the way to the hospital." Kebir, limping on three legs, and pretending that he also had need of the doctor, proceeded straight to the establishment, jumped on a post beneath the bell-pull, and rang the bell. As soon as the infirmary porter opened the door, he knew at once that he had to receive a patient belonging to the first squadron. As soon as his receipt was signed, Kebir took it back, without limping at all—his cure was supposed to be effected—gave it to the billet-master, and the business was ended.

On Saturdays—the day for cleaning up and mending clothes—Kebir kept a little shop supplied with trifling articles, such as thread, needles, pipes, tobacco, and so on: the whole arranged in packets of one and two sous each. A chasseur came, took a two-sou article, and purposely laid only one sou on the counter. The shopkeeper would then jump up on his shop, and sometimes inflict a sharp bite on the dishonest purchaser, who was fairly forced to come down with his cash. If any one gave a two-sou piece in payment for a two-sou packet of tobacco, so much the worse luck for him. Kebir insisted on having two pieces of money for every two-sou article, and there was no means of avoiding it. It is clear that, with such intelligence, the ordinary feats of poodles were mere child's play for Kebir, who could play at dominoes so admirably as to make other canine gamblers die of envy.

Poor Kebir came to an untimely end. He was murdered by a rascally chasseur discharged from the service, who had sworn to have his revenge for a punishment inflicted on him by an adjutant of whom Kebir was particularly fond. When the unfortunate animal's body, pierced with sword-strokes, was found in an out-of-the-way corner of the quarters, all the chasseurs of the first squadron held a tumultuous inquest over it. Luckily for the culprit, he was out of their reach, on board ship.

"You see, quartermaster," said an old chas-

seur who related the particulars of Kebir's death, "if the brigand who killed our poor poodle had not taken himself off immediately afterwards, we should have fought him, every one of us, one after the other, until one of the parties had gained the victory. Never was the squadron so sad since the death of your poor sparrow, Cyrus, you remember, who whistled like a nightingale. It was not a man who killed *him*, but only a rat; and a rat is nothing but a brute. But for a Chasseur d'Afrique to assassinate an unfortunate little dog! O the wretch! If ever I lay hold of him!"

#### RIFLE PRACTICE WITH ST. IVES.

I WENT down in the country the other week for four or five days' rifle practice, with an enthusiasm not unbecoming a zealous volunteer.

I wrote to my usual comrade in such sports, my neighbour, Captain St. Ives, of the Cambridge Rifles, and asked him to fix a day and place for our first meeting. The same night I got the following answer, which I subjoin, because its pleasant rural tone gave me an agreeable foretaste of the pretty scene where our "wappenshaw" was to be held, and of the country beauty that lent a charm to our five days' amusement:

"Walk up Summer Lees to the Abbey, turn up across the down at old Hibberd's, and go straight ahead; it cuts off a large corner. There is a post-office at Knoyle, so you can put any letters in there. When you get to the sign-post, shortly after the end of the limekiln hill on your right, you will see some pasture land and an orchard across the other side; make for the left-hand corner—a path is trodden through the grass the other side of the rails, avoid the gate—and then turn sharp to your right through the cut grass, which will bring you direct to Teffont."

But an hour after I received the note furnishing such an attractive topographical map of the country, I heard the sound of hoofs outside my cottage-gate, and who should it be but St. Ives himself, smart and soldierly, in grey uniform cuffed with scarlet, mounted, and on his way to drill one of his new companies at Crocker-ton Furze. He had his rifle slung behind him, and wore over his right shoulder a large canvas haversack, containing, as he told me in a business-like way, "a three hundred-yard cord, and pegs for judging-distance drill." He agreed to call for me (having changed his plan) as he returned, send his horse home by my servant, and walk up with me to Teffont Magna Downs, where he had lately devised a new butt with fifteen hundred yards' range.

I shot a blackbird or two, that were sitting in permanent committee on my best strawberries; and by the time I had cleaned my gun, wiped my long Enfield, measured out thirty ball-cartridges, counted out five-and-thirty caps, put on my belt and cartouch-box, got some paper for patching, and a pot of paste to plaster up the wounds I intended to inflict on the canvas target, St. Ives arrived again. He was in good humour, for the smart innkeeper who is sergeant of the Arrowbury Company had been useful in drilling the recruits, and left his

(St. Ives's) hands clear for judging-distance, which, by-the-by, is a most necessary but horribly difficult study. We had a pleasant walk to Telfont Magna Downs, through the village, where the grey stone cottages with mullioned windows were cockaded with roses, and past some new-formed mountains of fresh-mown hay. The road, now in sun, now in shadow—it wanted an hour of sunset—was a sight to rejoice the eye, for, even the sunshine-paved spaces had wafts of moving shadows upon them; as for the shadow-portions, they had always half a dozen threads of sunshine drawn across the dark, like the gold strings of some fairy loom. And what the more made me think "the good people" were about, was, that every now and then, just as a blackbird perched in some elder bush (quite a cauliflower with its great white flowers) began to sing, there would blow up a sudden drifting cloud of dust, that ran before us in the way that the Irish say dust-clouds do when they envelop a troop of fairies; those mournfully happy beings that (unlike your dismal ghost) love daylight and summer, and all happy hours and places. Now and then, we stopped, St. Ives and I, in the country lane, to watch the distance gradually turning the fir woods behind us, a heavenly blue; to hear the meditative cows breathing over the grass they pulled up in mouthfuls; to see the haymakers scatter themselves at skirmishing distance over the tawny meadows, which have since acquired the dry rusty look of an old labourer's beard; or to lean over a five-barred gate and take a tranquil pleasure in watching the green multitude of wheat stalks suddenly sway and murmur as if some question were being put to the five-acre parliament, and the agricultural interest were troubled in their sleep.

But by this time we have worked out St. Ives's topographical map, and are on the white dusty road, across which lies the bridle-path that will lead us to the right over Telfont Downs to the butt. St. Ives has the eye of an Indian scout for dark lines of feet in grass, and he soon makes it out. I really do believe he knows every one of those ten thousand molehills individually.

A close prickly thorn-bush, a now dry basin cut in the chalk to water the sheep, and we are at the thousand yard post. Strong pegs in the grass, and numbers cut through the turf till the earth shows. I see the target looks from here smaller than a pocket-handkerchief, the black bull's-eye no bigger than a pill-box. I tremble to think of having my life dependent on the success of such a shot; yet the ground even here is strewn with the empty whity-brown tubes of discharged cartridges.

"I made very pretty practice here last week, when we opened our butt," says St. Ives to me. . . .

Nine hundred—eight hundred—seven hundred—six hundred—five hundred—four hundred—three hundred feet.

"Every two minutes the target gets larger. It grows—it grows. Now it is a foot bigger,

now it is bigger still. I think I could nail it now. But who is this with swift feet, emerging as from the ground?"

"Why, Lacy, our old keeper, to be sure," says St. Ives, "come to put on the patches. Give him the paste-pot. Have you got the flags, Lacy?" Here St. Ives makes a speaking-trumpet of his hands, and roars out the question.

"Yes, sur," roars back the kippur. "Were you cart, sur, in that thur starm?" (Lacy is playing Boreas to his master's Aquilo.)

St. Ives, disdaining to reply to questions about the weather at such an unreasonable distance, does not answer till he gets close to the keeper. Now, I see the rifle-pit—a sort of chalky grave, four feet deep, from which Master Kippur had emerged. It is sheltered from the flying lead by a bulwark of chalk and turf, walled up with hurdles, and some three feet thick. On the turf behind Master Kippur, lie the three flags—red, blue, and white—which express outside, centre, and bull's-eye.

But now we go up and look at the butt itself, which is a huge horse-shoe rampart of earth and sods, that will stop any but the wildest bullets, and hoard them up for St. Ives's melting-pot again. We want to shoot nothing but invaders. The target, a stout canvas strained on two poles, is hung between two strong saplings, and blows tight with the wind—which, by-the-by, is a little too strong for rifle-shooting, but will not deflect the bullets much at the shorter ranges.

The canvas is a square, St. Ives says, with true volunteer unction, that represents the height and width of a column of men three deep. Lacy all this time is tightening the target and patching with white paper circles the rough-edged perforations torn by the bullets of his master's last night's practice. The keeper now takes to his burrow, as we shoulder our rifles and pace back to the two-hundred-yard post.

St. Ives opens his large leather pouch (remarkable for holding thirty rounds), and takes out a government cartridge. He twists off one end, pours into the rifle-barrel the small dose of large flaky-grained powder, slips in the greased bullet, levers off the sloughing paper, drives home the pointed lead with a strong gentle pressure of the cup-like end of his steel ramrod, puts the little copper hat of a cap on the nipple, and full-cocks. I, on the other hand, load on a different recipe. I pour in the powder from a horn, through a small measuring tin filter, to ensure the exact quantity of a charge. Then, I take out my thimble-shaped conical bullet, place the bottom of it on a greased circle of thin linen, and drive it into the gun.

We are both loaded. Yonder, beyond the rude hills and furze-bushes, right against the dark redoubt of clay and turf, is the target, looking about as big as an archery target; the black wafer in the centre, about as large as the crown of a large hat. While St. Ives makes ready I throw myself on the parched grizzly turf (slightly thistly, by-the-by), and look up to

freshen my eye at the great snow mountains of cloud,

Those mighty fragments rent away  
From some white Alp of yesterday.

The larks are singing overhead. The blackbirds answer them from the plantation on the hill.

St. Ives is now in a superb position: his left arm on his chest and quite under the gun, so that the barrel is embedded firm and steady in the palm of his left hand; his right arm is rectangular, and kept well out. The back and foresight are in splendid line. The barrel does not waver nor tremble a hair's breadth: it might be a bar of steel riveted into a stone wall. The keeper went under cover when I threw up my felt just now. There is a dead silence. St. Ives holds his breath and presses the trigger gently, but firmly—a jerk or bend forward from anxiety would ruin the aim.

Bang! A thin angry jet of fire, a puff of backward-blown smoke, a ping! a whiz! then a curious echo as of an axe coming down on a wood-block; a slight ripping sound as of torn canvas, and a spirt of dust in the butt immediately behind the target.

"A centre, I'll bet a fiver, though I say it that shouldn't say it!" says St. Ives, keeping his gun for a moment in position.

The keeper emerges from his troglodyte cave and lumbers to the target. He looks a moment, then returns to his burrow.

"A miss!" said I.

"Not it," replied St. Ives, quietly ringing down his ramrod. "I know all his moves. He's only gone back to get his rule to measure if it is a centre or a bull's-eye."

The keeper waves the blue flag—St. Ives's *was* a centre.

Now, as this was one of my first days' rifle practice, I may as well confess that the art is not an easy one—cool head, iron nerves, strong wrist, keen true eye, much thought and observation, and all these things aided by constant practice, are needed to make a good rifle shot. The quick instinct and partnership of eye and hand is all very well for a partridge or rabbit shot, but here other qualities are required. The distances are so long, that an error of the smallest fraction of an inch in the aim, throws the bullet up or down, many yards. At first it seems almost impossible to keep a rifle weighing eight pounds, steady, in a difficult position; anxiety, moreover, is as detrimental to good aim, as carelessness or even incompetence. Then, the wind and any fault of one's gun have both studiously to be provided for. It is often necessary, too, purposely to aim a little too low or too high, to allow for the involuntary jerk up of the rifle-barrel in firing.

I have slipped the bar of the backsight to the little figures 200. I make ready, I present. I feel the little nib of the foresight coming up over the horizon of the notch or gap in the backsight, and both telling against the black wafer. I try to get an aim dead in the centre, but I feel the barrel waver. I wish I had pulled on my first instinct. Slowly I readjust it.

I remember my breath—I press the trigger in dead silence. Again the crack, rush, and billet-chopping echo.

"High to the right," said St. Ives. "I saw it hit. Half the bullets fired fell away to the right. You can correct that, partly by making a rest of the sling, and twisting your elbow in it."

The keeper, without going to the target, waved a white flag.

We fire six more bullets, all either whites or blues, except one bull's-eye of St. Ives's, at two hundred, and we then move backward to the three hundred yards: a distance generally found peculiarly difficult by volunteers.

We move the bars of our rest up to the required distance.

"Patch," roars St. Ives to the keeper. Out he tumbles, paste-box in hand, and is soon busy at work. Our gun-barrels now begin to get besmirched about the breech, the nipples are black, and moist at the tips; while at the muzzles there are little spits and frothings of red, the result of the fired grease from the cartridges.

The target now looks scarcely bigger than the door of a hackney-coach; the black wafer, too, contracts. St. Ives lies on his stomach, like a deer-stalker, and fires; or he kneels on his left heel and makes a firm rest of his left elbow on his left knee. We look at each bullet as it emerges, clean and bright, from its paper chrysalis, with tender solicitude. St. Ives is four above me, and the distance is increasing; but I get steadier, and begin to feel an instinct when I shall hit and how my aim is. We now no longer hear the rip of the cloth, and have to trust entirely to the keeper and his three flags.

As I lie on the grass, while the patching goes on, among a litter of scraps of cartridges, powder-horns, boxes of caps, turnscrews, rag, bullets, and patches, I can hear, as the stun of the shot leaves my ears, and almost before each drifting puff of smoke has died away, the cheery carols, clear, pure, and merry, of the blackbirds chorusing from their golden bills within the dark covert of the fir-trees on the hill. Every now and then I see three or four rabbits come peering out between the furze, and then amble back to their holes.

At this moment St. Ives, who has been looking about the grass in an observant way, suddenly directs my attention to a large grassy molehill some four feet in diameter, which one of yesterday's Minié bullets has pierced with as clean and exact a perforation as a punch makes in a card. The bullet has pierced some two feet of solid earth, and has left at going in and going out, only a little spit of dust to mark its terrible passage.

Back crawls the keeper, up flies my wide-awake. In a moment Lacy's head peers over the rampart, and as my gun-barrel becomes horizontal it disappears with extreme rapidity. This time I aim too low, and the ball spurns the dust three feet from the left target-post.

"Too low, but a good bee-line," says St. Ives, encouragingly. In beginning long dis-

tances some rifle instructors teach you to commence by firing a little short till you get the true principle of the line.

Soon, the score stood thus :

At two hundred yards—

BLANK : Blue—white—blue—blue — miss  
—white.

ST. IVES : Blue—blue—white—white—blue  
—blue.

At three hundred yards—

BLANK : Miss—white—white—blue.

ST. IVES : Blue—white—blue—blue.

Now for a specially good one ! Powder, every grain in, gun wiped and ragged out first, bullet true and well sent home, cap pressed firmly on nipple, sight looked to for certainty. I am tolerably sure of the target somewhere ; the only question is about a white, blue, or red. I will fire quick, just a trifle low, take care to pull the trigger slowly and without jerk, and not to cast up the barrel in pulling.

I take a good middle sight, and aim low. Crack ! I am more than sure my aim was true and careful.

“ Hurrah ! a red flag : it is a bull’s-eye. The first I ever gained at three hundred yards, and only my second day’s shooting at that distance.

“ A fluke,” sneers my evil genius of distrust. “ A splendid shot,” whispers my evil genius of self-conceit.

“ Decidedly improving,” says St. Ives ; “ surer and more intelligent shooting, more understanding of the necessary allowances.”

I get fonder of my weapon now, because I begin to understand better its tremendous powers, its foibles, its necessities, and to appreciate its fidelity to all who compel it to be their slave.

“ But now,” says St. Ives, “ let us walk up and see how the target looks, and what the tendency of to-day’s bullets is.”

So up we went, passing, thirty yards off, a still smoking wad. The great white butterflies left the pink germander flowers to hover round us, like fussy parasites, as we walked.

“ Very pretty practice, sir,” says the keeper, looking round from where he is kneeling before the target, busy with his patches.

We examined the target as if it had been a chart, and we were trying to discover a new north-west passage. We extracted some curious facts from that research. One of my bullets had entered the same hole as that of one of St. Ives’s, and had merely torn it larger. We had also a similar tie in the lower pole of the target, out of which the unanimous pair had gouged pieces of deal as thick as a man’s thumb.

We then went to the other side of the target to see what the bullets had done there. We found the turf cut in grooved lines some two feet long ; in the loose earthen part of the turf the bullets had torn and twisted the soil into small superficial rat-holes, but in the chalk and solid clay they had penetrated deeper and more longitudinally, and to the depth sometimes of twelve inches ; for we probed the wounds with our steel ramrods, and then cut down to the

bullets with our knives. The bullets thus extracted were in various conditions ; some, were smooth, and fit to fire again at once without even a greased patch ; others, were blunted at the point. Some were mere flat pellets ; others, jammed into flints, were bruised into quite a square shape. Considering that nearly all our stray bullets would, even if they had missed the head of an enemy’s column, certainly have plumped on the rear ranks, what destruction we alone (I, too, a mere beginner) might have done that day from a rifle-pit had that target been but living invaders of Old England !

We went on shooting, at four hundred yards, and after a preliminary miss or two, till we got the range, did well at that distance. At five hundred I got one centre and several misses, but then it was getting dusk, and the target, too, really looked no bigger than a pocket-handkerchief ; besides, it now became very doubtful where the keeper was.

It was time to go, for the stars were blossoming out, and the fern owl had begun its strange cry round the thorn-bushes, at the thousand yards’ distance-post ; the sheep were folded, and the bats were on the wing ; the curlew’s cry came mournfully and wild over the downs : yet still, through the warm odorous dusk of summer twilight, the indefatigable blackbirds poured forth their songs, and the rabbits, ever curious yet timid, could safely trot out now, and sniff at the torn cartridges.

We shouldered our rifles, packed up our traps, girded on our pouches, shouted “ Good night !” to Lacy the keeper, and were soon on our way home to the village.

The turf was cool and dewy beneath our feet, the sky diamonded and pure above our heads, the fern-owl glimmered through the dusk, the curlew, in the distance, complained of its transmigration. To rouse the echo in the fir woods, St. Ives gave a long, far-reaching, quavering Australian “ Kooooe !” such a cry as the Bushmen use for a signal.

“ Koooooooi !” answered the wandering mocking voice, once a nymph, whose love (the story says) brought it to this strange pass.

How sweet the new hayricks of June smelt as we passed down the lane where the white owl flitted ! How pleasant looked the lobster in its crimson shell, hiding in a green ambush of salad, when I peeped in at my cottage window, and saw the dear smiling one hurry to meet us as she heard the garden-gate slam !

## A FAIR ON THE GANGES.

At Hurdwar, in the north-west of India, about eighty miles from Meerut, there is held, once a year, a fair at which devout Hindoos, when the planets are propitious, wash away their sins in sacred Mother Ganges.

To this fair I set off with some friends one April morning from my cool retreat in the hills, seven thousand feet above the sea level. Descending below the line of oaks, blossoming pear-trees, and huge rhododendrons, passing strings of

mules and hill-men with their heavy creels, upward bound with the produce of the plains that sweltered in the sun below, we reached the little village of Rajpore, through which the road runs to the town of Deyrah. At Deyrah, tents and servants having been sent on some days before, we rested before making our grand start for the fair, which we were to see in one of its grand seventh years, when the power of the Ganges is greater, and the throng of Hindoos with sins to wash away is greater, than in the intervening lesser years.

Deyrah capital of its valley, Deyrah Doon, charms the old Indian with rose-clustered cottage porches, and not less with a bather's turreted fountain, that administers on its four sides the blessing of a shower-bath. We left Deyrah for a cool night journey in doolies—those long meat-safes slung on poles—each of us with sixteen bearers and a couple of torchmen to light our path and scare away the wild beasts; for, thirty miles of our way lay through the dense forest at the foot of the Himalayas. We were not left to depend on our torches only. At every mile of the forest road, bonfires, each attended by two stokers, were lighted. Yet in the dark our bearers yelled and waved their lights while we heard elephants crashing in the jungle. Over a road slippery with night dews, where the owls hooted around us, we passed, until the cries of the jackals warned us that a tiger might be near. But no tiger attacked us, so I went to sleep, and was aroused at sunrise by the screaming of the peacocks; but there were the brave little jungle cocks too—and the jungle cock is great-great-grandfather to our domestic bird. We heard the woodcutter's axe under the cool shades of the banyan; the woodcutter working merrily, in dread of no attack from elephant or tiger, for did he not wear the charm bought of the fakeer? With hop, skip, and jump, a troop of monkeys crossed our path, and up-stairs they went, hand over hand, one after another, to the top of an old tree. I lay with my head out of the dooly, seeing all that was to be seen, when the crack of guns and the pi-i-i-ing of bullets a few feet over our heads startled us all. One of our men was shot through the hand, another through the arm. There were four gentlemen on two elephants tiger-shooting, and this was an inconvenience consequent on the sport. We were not precisely in the line of firing, but the elephants, new to their work, were restless, and scattered the shot by their unexpected movements. The fight was in a corn-field; round about it natives, up in the trees, were looking on. The man-killer in particular request had been a terror to the neighbourhood. He carried off a grasscutter only last night, and was supposed to be a beast that came down every year at fair time to lay in wait for stragglers. The Englishmen killed him, and carried him off in triumph to the fair.

Walking on from the scene of battle with the doolies following, we came to the temples on the banks of the Ganges where the river rushes through a narrow gorge of the Sevallick range of

the Himalayas. The gorge is called the Gate of Hurree, Hurreedwar. The hill on the right is pierced with caves, and at the cave mouths we saw many nearly naked men, with matted locks, and with necklaces of beads and charms: all holy fakeers who live on alms. Among them were some of the dreadful sect of the Aghors, with ashes and yellow-ochre on their skins, carrying in their hand human skulls; they are said to have been known to eat man's flesh, and whose touch is pollution.

As we advanced into the fair, we had to leave the main street, which was choked up with human beings, some going and some coming from the river—the clothes of the latter were dripping, and the crowd of wet worshippers turned the road into a quagmire of mud, through which, to say nothing of the dense throng, walking was easy for none but the young and nimble. We afterwards heard that this condition of road led to fearful results, for on the propitious moment being announced by the gongs and shell trumpets from the temples, a rush was made for the river, in which many of the old and infirm were trodden to death. The entrances to this, as to most of the ghauts or bathing-places, being flanked by masonry, the crush was the more intense, and the screams of women, the shouts of men roaring out "Hurru, Hurru" (the name of the tutelar deity of the place), the blowing of the mysterious-sounding shell trumpets, and the beating of gongs, made up a scene of horrible confusion not to be described. A regiment of Sepoys is always stationed at the fair to control in some measure the movements of the bathers, but they could not do much with a crowd of hundreds of thousands. Ropes also are stretched by order of government across the river from bank to bank, to give a hold to those who may be swept away by the fierce current, but notwithstanding all precautions many lives are annually lost. Most of the temples are on the river-banks; some lesser ones, however, are scattered here and there without any apparent system. Like all Hindoo shrines, they are heavy gloomy masses, pyramidal, and elaborately carved. They do not equal in size or grandeur the famous temple of the Vishnu Pud at Gya, and they are all much smaller than the Juggernaut temple in Orissa.

The interiors of Hindoo temples do not in any way realise the European idea of a place of public worship. The priests alone officiate at the shrine, muttering their muntras or incantations, and at intervals placing a few flowers or pouring a few drops of milk on the sacred stone, the lingam, or at the foot of an image. The public is allowed to file through the vault or chamber, and on arriving opposite the object of adoration each worshipper touches the ground with his forehead, then stands up and joins his palms in front of his face. He then pours out his libation of milk or melted butter on the altar, and the rites are over.

The devotees being all in wet clothes just as they came from the river, the temple floor was at last knee-deep in a compost of milk,

mud, and crushed flowers. During the whole performance the air rang with shouts, the gongs boomed out funereal chimes, the people were in a religious frenzy, capable of any wild act of enthusiasm.

It was in moments such as these, in the old time, that human victims were found ready to immolate themselves before the demon's throne. I once knew of a party of Hindoos, who, after a debauch, while they were labouring under the maddening effects of bhang (hibiscus Indicus), proposed to act such a scene as I have described; the victim for a sacrifice being wanted by the mock high priest, one of them stepped forward to be the goat or buffalo (the usual sacrifice), and in an instant his comrades cut off his head. The murderers fell asleep, and woke next morning, prisoners in the hands of the police. Some, I believe and hope, were hanged, and the rest transported. I have seen extraordinary tortures undergone by Hindoos during the Churruk Poojab, or swinging festival. These deluded wretches, who undergo a fortnight's training—to render their blood less inflammatory, I suppose—have paraded before me, some with a long iron rod a quarter of an inch thick, stuck through the centre of their tongues; others with the hooks by which they had been hung up, still quivering in the bleeding muscles of their backs; but the most eccentric torture I ever witnessed was a sort of seton dance. A man, dressed in fighting costume, sword and shield in hand, with a plume of feathers in his hair, and variegated cloth round his loins, had passed two pieces of twine through the skin of his sides just below the ribs; and, while two men kept the strings tight, and nicely oiled, to allow them to slide easily through the wounds, he performed a maniac dance to a band of music which accompanied him.

Accidents often happen in this festival. I have known a poor wretch to fall from the swinging-tree and break both his legs, because the muscles of his back, through which the hooks are passed, were torn through by his weight. It is a common thing for a man to vow that he will measure, with his body laid at full length on the ground, the distance from his place of abode to Juggernaut, though it may be a thousand miles. Of course this preposterous feat takes years to accomplish, and many die by the way: their bodies being left to the care of the jackals and vultures. I have seen a man whose nails had grown through the back of his hand, which, of course, was clenched, and had probably been bound in that position; another, who, with an upright withered arm, supported a pot of the sacred foolsee plant, his nails curling round the sides of the snare. Another form of this fanaticism I once saw in the person of a stout well-to-do looking man (clothed with only a strip of leopard's skin round his loins), who had been a rich banker, but was then toiling along the hot and dusty road on foot, subsisting on alms bestowed on him at each village he passed. He had made over all his worldly possessions to his relatives, and had devoted the remainder of his

days to a pilgrimage to the sacred city of Odjein.

It is not beside our mark to talk of Hindoo superstition as we traverse the fair. Street upon street of tents, of all the colours of the rainbow, stretch, in irregular lines, as far as the eye can reach. In some, we see the gold embroidered cloths of Delhi, and the silks of Mooltan; in others, the familiar labels of Manchester, attached to some gaudy chintz or snow-white long-cloth, demonstrate the power of machinery—for these very goods have cost double their original price in transit charges, and yet beat out of the field the handloom work of the district in which cotton itself is grown.

Here is a grand affair! A gaudy tent with many-coloured shamianah, or awning, in front, under which sit a party of Cashmere nautchnees or dancing-girls, rehearsing portions of their songs for the evening's entertainment. They sing to the accompaniment of a violin and two tubluks, or small hand drums. Beautiful peris they doubtless are in the eyes of those who gaze and listen their fill *now*, their purses not being long enough to command an entrance to the regular nautch, which will take place after dark, when the fair shall be bright with coloured lamps, and the sounds of revelry take place of the discordant noises of the morning. Here, is a huge elephant, chained by all four legs; he has been brought up from the forests of Assam within the last six months, and is not nearly tame. Two female elephants stand on either side of him, who keep him in good humour: he gallantly tearing tender shoots from the branches before him, and gently placing them in the mouth of his favourite sultana. "How much for his lordship?" we ask the keeper. "Seven hundred pounds, besides backshish to the grooms who attend him." And that money will be paid, too, by some of the native princes who come to the fair, and to whom a large elephant is the true representative of state. "Bom Bom Mahudes!" is the shout of a string of men from Juggernaut, or some equally distant shrine, carrying, balanced on their shoulders, wicker baskets, containing jars of sacred water. The water is for sale, at so much a drop, and will be offered in oblations at the temples.

Here is a wild group of Ishmaelites, horse-dealers for the nonce, and not the less robbers for that, though they do not plunder now as they used to do at home in the wild passes of Cabool. They are enormous men, with limbs like those of English navvies. And whom do we meet now, striding defiant? Whom but our gallant little Major Toddles, in a huge pith helmet and long jack-boots. The major has come to buy a horse, and saunters off in the direction of the horse-fair. My friends and I had come with the same desire, and it was in the centre of the horse-fair that we found our tent. So we engaged a dulal, or broker, who spread the news of our being purchasers, and were soon besieged by a motley crowd of Affghan, Mogul, Arab, and Hindustanee horse-dealers,

who galloped their steeds about, for our approval. Being a heavy weight, my first selection was a very handsome bay Persian, which seemed suited to me in every way, and was so quiet that I put a saddle on him, and rode him in the evening through the different streets of the fair. As we rode quietly along, we came upon Sheik Abdool, the Arab dealer, with his string of sons of the desert, picketed in line, all too slight for me, and moreover too heavily priced, a hundred and fifty pounds being a common limit for a little animal standing only fourteen hands one inch. These horses are, however, wonderful for their pluck and hardiness, and will carry a great deal more weight than they seem equal to. Here, are two gigantic Persian horses, iron grey, and a perfect pair, with silver bracelets or bangles on their legs, which jingle musically at every movement; they are covered over with trappings of velvet and silver, and will make glorious chargers for some pageant-loving native prince. Way there, for the Rajah of Doulutpore! He comes seated on his tusker elephant, with silver howdah (or castle), preceded by footmen and outriders dressed in their holiday best. We have to get under the lee of some tents, to allow his highness to pass, and he looks down with supreme contempt on Europeans. In different parts of the fair we made fresh purchases, and great was our satisfaction for the time present; but, on my return to the hills, I found that horse-jockeying was not confined to Yorkshire. My beautiful Persian dwindled down to half his size, and fell lame on all four legs, and I was glad to sell for about two pounds, he having cost me thirty.

The fair generally lasts about ten days, but on the occasion of my visit the cholera broke out, and suddenly scattered the pilgrims to the four winds. It was reported by the government officials that about a million of people had assembled on this anniversary, and, seeing that not the slightest attempt at any sanitary precautions had been made, the outbreak of a pestilence was not much to be wondered at.

#### THE BIRDS' PETITION.

SIR ROBIN REDBREAST, K.G. (Knight of the Garden), having taken, by acclamation of wings, the chair, Mr. Secretary Screech-Owl opened the meeting by putting on a pair of blue spectacles to soften the garish light of day. He then shook from his pinion a quill, which furnished the pen wherewith to report the proceedings; which proceedings proved unanimous, although some of the votes were given by proxy, as several members were unavoidably absent.

Mr. Tawny Owl (cousin-germain to the secretary) happened to be in deep affliction at the tragical fate of his missing wife, whose remains he had only that morning recognised nailed against a stable door. Indignant at the cruelty, he was quite unfitted for calm deliberation; he did nothing but frantically exclaim, "What fools men are! What ignorant asses! They might just as well gibbet every one of their cats, as

gibbet myself or my innocent partner!" His friends, therefore, advised him to remain at home and attend to the wants of his four half-fledged motherless owlets. Their cupboard now will be scantily furnished; "but," as he wisely remarked, "half a mouse is better than no meat."

Cock Sparrow, Esq., could not leave The Eaves (his ancestral residence, commanding a fine view from an airy situation), because the interesting situation of the Hon. Mrs. Sparrow would not admit of an hour's delay in the construction of their second nest; but he forwarded for inspection, as his testimonial, the wing-cases of seven hundred cockchafers, which, besides numberless larvæ and caterpillars, had been consumed in the rearing of his first spring brood.

The manifestation agreed to was this:

"We, certain small and middle-sized birds, some of us permanent residents, others of us alternately domiciled in Europe and Africa, and now in open-air public meeting assembled, without the permission of the Right Worshipful the Mayor, do hereby present our humble petition to the High and Mighty Senate of the Empire of France:

"We beg to inform you, Messieurs les Sénateurs, that their exist in France several thousand species of insects, all endowed with frightful fecundity, and almost all living exclusively at the expense of valuable vegetable productions. The sturdy oak, the ornamental elm, the fir, the pine, the precious olive, and the still more precious vine, languish—when they do not die outright—from the attacks of hosts whose legions are marshalled under standards inscribed LUCANUS, CERAMBYX, SCOTYLUS, SCARABÆUS, PHILÆOTRIBUS, DACUS, PYRALUS, PHALÆNA, and other barbaric mottoes, which the most voluble starling amongst us cannot pronounce.

"Wheat and other corn plants are ravaged at the root by the grub of the cockchafer; in the bud, by the cecidomyx; in the grain, by the weevil. Cruciferous plants, such as colza and turnips, are destroyed as soon as they are out of the ground, by one set of parasites, while other insect foes await the formation of the pod to take up their lodging in it, and feed on its contents. Peas, beans, and lentils, are like the candle which an unthrifty housekeeper burns at both ends; at top their fruit is cleaned out by grubs; at bottom the vital sap is intercepted by underground and burrowing insects. Your petitioners do not go so far as to say that, in every field, the insects eat everything; but, after the insects have taken *their* tithe, the farmer has still a further tithe to pay to mice, rats, and the innumerable small extortioners who, after a joyous summer in the field, take up their winter quarters in the barn.

"The loss occasioned to the wheat, in one single year, in one department of the east of France, by one sole species of larvæ, is estimated at one hundred and sixty thousand pounds, at the very least. To this insect are attributed the scanty harvests of the three years which preceded 1856. In certain fields, the loss amounted to nearly half the crop. Out of twenty pods of colza, taken at hazard, and con-

taining five hundred and four seeds, only two hundred and ninety-six seeds were good; the rest were consumed or damaged by insects. A crop of colza which produced only one hundred and eighty pounds' worth of oil, ought to have given two hundred and eighty-eight pounds' worth, and would have done so, if your petitioners had been allowed fair play. In Germany, the nun moth (*phalæna monacha*) has caused whole forests to perish. Three years ago, in Eastern Prussia, more than twenty-four millions of cubic metres of fir-wood were obliged to be felled, solely because the trees were dying from the attacks of insects.

"Considerable as are these losses, you will be surprised, Messieurs les Sénateurs, that they are not greater, when you consider the portentous fecundity with which these adversaries are endowed; and if Divine Providence had not raised up, in us your petitioners, a preventive check worthy of His wisdom, long ago would all vegetation have disappeared from the surface of the earth. Man, in fact, is powerless to combat with enemies like these. His genius is able to measure the course of the stars, to perforate mountains, to make a ship pursue her way in the teeth of the tempest; the beasts of the forest retreat before his advancing steps; but, in the presence of the myriads of insects who fall upon his cultivated fields and render all his labours vain, his strength is only weakness. His eye is too feeble to catch sight of more than a few of them; his hand is too sluggish to strike them; and besides, could he crush them by millions, they would be reproduced by billions. From above, from below, from the east, from the west, their countless legions succeed each other, in relays which know neither repose nor armistice. In this indestructible army, which marches to the conquest of human labour, each regiment has its allotted month, its day, its season, its plant, its tree. Each knows its own post in the fray, and never errs in taking it. Man must have succumbed in this unequal struggle, had not Providence given him in us—the birds—powerful auxiliaries, faithful allies, who marvellously well perform the task that man is incompetent to accomplish. Yes, Messieurs les Sénateurs, we, your petitioners, are in reality your patrons and protectors.

"For the sake of retrieving our characters, we have submitted to post-mortem examination; our stomachs have been searched; and medical men will certify, not only in what proportion we feed on insects, but what particular species we search out and destroy, and, consequently, what plants we preserve from their enemies.

"The three hundred and thirty species of birds who breed in France may be divided into three principal classes. In the first, your petitioners will place all birds who are injurious, at least indirectly so, inasmuch as they destroy many of us, the insectivorous birds. It includes the diurnal birds of prey, the eagles and hawks, and also the omnivorous birds, the crows, magpies, and jays. But here justice compels us to make an honourable exception in favour of the common

and the rough-legged buzzards, each individual of whom consumes about six thousand mice per annum. Complete absolution must be granted to the rook, for his assistance in the destruction of cockchafer grubs.

"In the second class, your petitioners range what are called granivorous birds, but who, in reality, are birds of double alimentation; for, with the exception of the pigeon, there is no bird which is purely granivorous; they all feed, either at the same time, or according to the season, both on seeds and insects. Noxious in the first case, useful in the second, there is a balance to be struck between the service they render, and the evil they do. Such are sparrows and other hard-billed birds. Frederick the Great declared war against sparrows, because they were just as fond as his majesty of cherries. Of course they beat a retreat and disappeared. But in two years, not only no cherries were to be had, but scarcely any other fruit; the caterpillars took the lion's share. The mighty king was glad to sign a treaty of peace with the birds, in which they stipulated for a moderate share of the blackhearts and the whitehearts in the royal gardens.

"But if sparrows, rooks, and others of their kind, exact payment for their services, the third class, much more numerous, give their aid gratuitously. Such are the nocturnal birds of prey, whom ignorance pursues as 'of evil omen.' Better than cats, they neither steal the milk nor lick the cream; they are the terror of all sorts of rats and field-mice, not to mention the multitude of night-flying insects they destroy.

"The hedge-sparrow devours per day some five hundred and fifty insects, amongst which figure the kinds the most redoubtable to man. Now, of the harm done by one of these insects you may form, Messieurs les Sénateurs, some idea, if you recollect that the chockchafer lays from seventy to a hundred eggs, soon to be transformed into so many worms, which for three or four years live exclusively on the roots of your most precious plants. The weevil lays about the same number of eggs, each of which destroys a kernel of wheat; one weevil may, therefore, be assumed to cause the destruction of an ear of wheat alone. The pyralus deposits about a hundred and twenty eggs in about as many blossom buds of the vine. From each egg so deposited, ensues the loss of a bunch of grapes.

"And now, Messieurs, be pleased to deign to put these two sets of figures together. Admitting that, out of the five hundred insects destroyed in a day by one bird, the tenth only are noxious creatures—say forty weevils and ten pyraluses (which is below the truth), you have an average of more than three thousand kernels of wheat and eleven hundred bunches of grapes saved in one day by one little bird. Suppose as many natural causes as you please; to arrest the ravages of insects; reduce the effects of the birds' effort as much as you like; there will still remain sufficient grounds to justify the say-

ing of a contemporary writer: 'The bird can live without man, but man cannot live without the bird.' A titmouse in one year consumes more than two hundred thousand microscopic eggs and larvæ.

"One would believe, Messieurs les Sénateurs, that grateful man would take under his special protection such indispensable friends as these; that he would destroy the winged foes that prey upon them, as well as the snake which glides up to the nest to devour the mother with her young. Alas! no. More cruel than the falcon, who kills to live, man kills for the pleasure of killing. The gun is not sufficiently murderous; it is reserved for more noble game. We, your melodious useful petitioners, are assailed with a variety of horrid engines—with nets, nooses, traps, and birdlime, which crush and torment us for hours, without killing us outright. We spare you the details of our sufferings.

"But whilst we thus spare you, we strongly protest against the sportsmen—magnanimous heroes!—who, along the coast from Marseilles to Toulon, slay their two hundred soft-billed birds per day, in order to display upon a spit a row of tiny roasted carcasses, which, when they were alive and useful, were little more than bunches of fluffy feathers. We protest against the hideous race of bird-catchers, who capture scores of songsters on the chance that one out of the number may survive his captivity. We protest against idle and unfeeling children who play truant from school, for the sake of plundering our eggs and stringing them into a useless and fragile ornament. We protest against cruel and stupid parents, who look on with indifference while their boys—and worse, their girls—are tormenting our progeny and reducing our race to the verge of extinction. Senators of France, we beseech you, for your own sakes, have pity on us! Take us under the protection of the law.

"Your petitioners are well aware that, supposing penalties to exist for the destruction of birds' nests containing eggs or young, police-officers would shut their eyes or look another way, if those penalties were heavy; if they amounted, as has been proposed, to six hundred and even to two thousand francs. The offence being commonly committed by children whose parents are the parties civilly responsible, there would be an unwillingness to inflict ruin on fathers and mothers whose only fault is, after all, the toleration of practices which seem to be authorised by ancient custom. But, by reducing the fine to one franc, this light penalty, saddled with the costs, would act as a paternal warning, which could not shock the conscience either of the magistrate, or of the person who took the culprit in charge.

"Your petitioners are not blind to the probability that the reforms they propose, will shock many prejudices, many inveterate habits, considered rights in certain rural districts. Might

not a little persuasion, therefore, accompany or even precede coercive measures? Your petitioners venture to propose that the Ministers of Agriculture and Public Instruction should cause to be prepared, for the use of village schoolmasters, a set of simple clear and familiar lessons which may usefully employ a few class hours in every week. Already have several bishops, with the Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux at their head, taken the initiative in this economical as well as moral and humane branch of tuition. It is to be hoped they will be seconded in this good work by our worthy friends, the country curés.

"Your petitioners further suggest that, while good is taught, the teaching of evil should be refrained from. They protest against pictures of Paul offering to Virginia a nest of young birds, also against statuettes of Damon climbing a porcelain-tree in order to present a Sèvres Phyllis with a brood of callow thrushes which the mother bird is feeding. The pictured and the sculptured nests may be exceedingly pretty objects to look at, but we, your petitioners, ask what Virginia and Phyllis are going to do with the nestlings when they have got them? Will they try to rear them? Ten to one they will fail. But the chances are, that instead of trying, they will worry the young birds to death, and then toss them to the cat: which is not pretty at all, in your petitioners' opinion.

"Finally, if France holds to the English alliance, she will refrain from the murder of English favourites who are travelling direct to England. That insular people are very prejudiced and almost superstitious respecting any harm done to our red-bosomed Chairman's family especially. We, your petitioners, it may be said, have a selfish interest in the matter; and we confess we prefer reaching the north of Europe by any route, in preference to France. The grand nation which takes the lead in civilisation, and also in revolution, will surely put a stop to such crying injustice and self-injury; when your petitioners will ever pray."

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