

III.—Prose Pieces

TAGG

TAGG was commissionaire at Clothilde's.

He wore the uniform of his sovereign lady Madame Clothilde, who retained him in her service for several purposes. One, as he stood at the main entrance, he harmonised architecturally. Two, he kept charge of pet dogs while customers shopped; further, it was Tagg's duty to offer the protection of a Chinesely huge umbrella on rainy days.

Those were his duties, and that was his life so far as anyone at the establishment knew or cared. Tagg held no interest for the hothouse beauties who displayed gowns and hats, or the shrewd, ambitious heads of departments. They knew that he answered to the name of Tagg, which was useful; but beyond that the man was unknown to the staff of the famous shop. They did not care whether the medal he wore had been awarded him for the Boer War or the Crimean, the Napoleonic Wars or the Salvation Army Wars. In point of fact, it indicated Spion Kop.

There was another automaton in the famous establishment.

This was a girl. Her right arm was missing, which made her useless for display purposes, for salesmanship, for stitching or for trimming. And she was plain and homely. But she possessed one tiny gift. She had a keen eye for colour, and her duty was to

“match” trimmings and delicate fabrics to exactitude. Madame had come across her by accident; had lifted her in a fit of generosity to a set post in the establishment; and then, characteristically, had forgotten her existence.

This girl answered to the name of Janet, and was at everyone’s beck and call.

The two, man and girl, fellow-automata, had never exchanged even a fragment of conversation.

When the Great War burnt over Europe, Tagg silently vanished. Nobody on the staff of Clothilde’s troubled to ask why—they were all too deeply concerned with individual worries.

Ten days later, a figure clad in khaki, trimly-fresh, waited in the dusk outside the staff entrance of Clothilde’s. The girls of the establishment were passing out after the day’s work, mostly in couples, dressed as smartly as mondaines, but depressed with the utter stagnation of trade. Many of them recognised the broad, heavy figure and thick-set features of Tagg; a few of them nodded to him perfunctorily; the others hurried on without sign.

He waited patiently until the one-armed girl appeared in her sober black gown, and stepping a pace forward, touched his khaki cap with military stiffness.

“Miss!”

“Oh, it’s you, Mr Tagg. Gone for a soldier?”

‘Always was a soldier,’ he replied, with some dignity. “A reservist. Called back to the colours.”

“If you’re waiting to see Madame, she’s gone off to Paris.”

“I was waiting to see you. The fact is, I wanted to ask you a favour.” There was diffidence under the boldness. “Perhaps you wouldn’t mind walking with me a bit. . . . I don’t know your name.”

She looked at him for a moment with the instinctive suspicion of the Cockney, and then relaxed.

"Waters," she told him. "Janet Waters. I get my 'bus at Baker Street."

"I'm going off to-morrow night," he said at last. "With the regiment. To France."

"To France!" she repeated, in surprise. No movement of the British forces had been allowed to be mentioned by the newspapers. While it had seemed quite natural to her that Madame Clothilde should cross the channel on business, it came to her as something unexpected that a man should be crossing to war.

"Yes," he affirmed. "Strictly speaking, I oughtn't to tell you that. It's a secret, and you mustn't let it go further. We go off to-morrow night, at midnight, from Nine Elms."

"Where's that?" she asked, with the usual Cockney ignorance of London's geography.

"It's a station over on the South side, near Vauxhall. You take a tram over the river, and then it's quite easy for you to find."

"For me?"

"Yes," he answered, and stopped under the lamp-post of a by-street to face her directly, looking down upon her with eyes that commanded and pleaded at one and the same time. "Yes, and that's the favour I wanted to ask of you. You see, everyone in the regiment will have someone to see them off... all except me."

"You're not married, then?"

"Neither wife nor child, brother nor sister, mother nor sweetheart. There's nobody in England cares whether I live or die."

Realisation of the utter loneliness of this fellow-being came to her for the first time. "It must be cruel to be all alone like that."

"Yes; and if you would be so kind as to come to the station and say to me, 'Good-bye, and God bless you!'"—a huskiness in his throat stopped him for a

moment—"that's all I wanted to ask you, Miss Waters—that you would come to Nine Elms to-morrow night, and say to me, 'Good-bye, and God bless you!'"

"Indeed I will!" she answered warmly, giving him her hand.

She did more than he asked. She brought a rose with her on the following night to give to him. She asked him not to forget to write and tell her all about his battles. As the long troop-train drew out of the gloomy goods-station of Nine Elms into the blackness of the night, amongst the fluttering handkerchiefs on the platform there was one, waved left-handedly, for Tagg.

He wrote to Janet from a French town of which the name was blacked out by the Censor. It was not a letter—it was scarcely even the kind of message one can send by postcard. A card printed with ready-made phrases had been issued to the men of the Expeditionary Force, and they were only allowed to place a tick against the sentences applicable to their own cases. Tagg's printed message ran:

"I am quite well.

"I hope to send you a letter in due course."

Tagg went into battle on the line between Mons and Charleroi. He disappeared in that terrific holocaust of Cambrai. Not even his body was found. The men of his company told that he fought with a dogged courage which was an inspiration to the youngsters around him.

Perhaps it was the rose from the one-armed girl, inside his breast-pocket, which spurred him on.

Someone at home was caring.

MAX RITTENBERG.

By kind permission of "Everyman."

HIS FIRST NIGHT'S COURTIN'

MY chief companion at this time was anither mason apprentice, yin Davie Gracie. Davie was a graun' whussler through his teeth, and kenned a' the guid mairchin' tunes, and him and me used to walk regularly up ae side o' the street and doon the ither keepin' step to the "Battle o' Stirling Brig" or "The Blue Bonnets are over the Border."

Davie fell in love wi' a nice bit lass wha was in service at the Burn; he was sairly put aboot to get through the dark loanin's and past the Auld Kirk-yaird on his wey to see her, without feelin' the hair o' his croon risin' fit to lift up his bonnet.

I wasna in the least chawed at him haein' a sweet-hert, for I bothered my heid little aboot lassies, nor had I ony sympathy wi' him in his fears and timourness, for that I coonted unmanly. Ae dark Wednesday night, hooever, he prayed on me to keep him company to the Burn on the followin' Friday night, and to back up and mak' his persuasions a' the mair attractive to me, he told me his sweet-hert had a neibor—a braw, sonsie lass he said she was, and that I wad hae something better to do than hing aboot and kick my heels till he had a word or twae wi' Marget Dalrymple—for sic was his sweet-hert's name.

Well, efter a lot o' hickin' and haawin', I consented to gang wi' him, and aboot hauf-past seven the followin' Friday we set oot frae Thornhill for the Burn.

I dinna ken hoo Davie got word ower to the lassies, but whenever we landed I saw at aince that I was expected. Marget left Dave staunin' at the outside door and took me richt ben to the kitchen, and there, sittin' on the settle, was the biggest, fattest lass I had ever seen, wi' a face like a full harvest moon and a crap o' hair like the mane o' a chestnut pownic.

Man, she was a stoot yin. Her claes seemed to be juist at the burst, and the expectant kind o' wey she was sittin' on the edge o' the settle made her stootness a' the mair pronounced. I couldna help lookin' at her, and stood sayin' nocht, but gey dumbfoondered like. Then I heard the ooter door steek, and when I lookit roon' Marget was off, and I was my leave-a-lane wi' the fat fremit lassie.

Efter a wee, when the tickin' o' the clock had got awfu' lood, I remarked that it was a nice nicht for the time o' year, and she said at aince that it was. Mind ye, we had never shaken haun's, or ocht o' that kind, and we micht easily hae dune sae, withoot pittin' oorsels to muckle trouble, for mine were in my pooch and hers were lyin' on her lap as if she never intended usin' them again in this warld. You see, I had never been to see the lassies before, I was a novice at the usual formalities, and wasna juist very sure o' what was expected o' me, so I made some ither remark about the tattie crap, and sat doon at the ither end o' the settle, and twirled my bonnet roon' my finger.

Man, the nearer I was to her, the bigger she was, and the redder her face, and hair, and haun's seemed to be. Dod, my lass, thinks I to mysel', I've seen something like you made in a brickyard. I gied a bit lauch to mysel', as the thocht struck me, and lookit at her oot o' the tail o' my e'e. In a moment she lookit sideweys at me, and lauched too, and says she, "There ye go noo. Ye've sterted."

"Sterted," says I, "what to dae?"

"H'm! what to dae—as if ye didna ken. My word, but you toon chiels are great boys," and she gaed a wee bit loll in the settle and giggled and jippled.

Dod, thinks I, she's gi'en me credit for bein' a bit o' a blade, and, to tell ye the truth, I admit it flattered my vanity, so I thocht it juist as weel to act up to the character, as yin micht say.

"Ay, you're richt," says I, "Thornhill chiels ken a thing or twae, I tell ye."

"Yes," says she, "but if you're a sample o' them, there's ae thing they dinna ken."

"What's that?" I asked, raither ta'en aback.

"Hoo to sit on a settle beside a lass," said she, and she lookit up to a side o' bacon hingin' on the ceilin' and giggled again.

Man, that took the stairch oot o' me, as it were, and I didna very weel ken what to say. I lookit at the lang length o' settle that was between us, and muttered something about meetin' her hauf-road. Govanenty! she cam' her hauf glibly, and I sidel'd ower mine, and there we sat cheek-for-jowl; but I keepit my bonnet in my haun'!

Man, d'ye ken this, when I was close beside her she seemed sae big, and me sae wee, that I felt like a wee sparra cooryin' aside a corn stook.

Just for something to say I asked her where she belanged to, and she said "Crawfordjohn." Then I spiert if she had ever been to Thornhill, and she said "Yes," that she had gaen through it aince in a cairt.

"Where were they cairtin' ye to?" I asked, withoot lauchin'.

"Oh," says she, "they werena cairtin' me onywhere. I was gaun to Scaurbrig Kirk."

"Oh, then," says I, "ye'll be a Cameronian."

"Not at all," says she, "I'm a dairywoman."

So I let it staun' at that, and put my bonnet doon on the flaer.

"That's the thing," says she, and she hotched hersel' up; "ye're the better o' baith haun's free when ye come to see the lassies."

Man, I kenned then that I was in a tichtish place, and I began to wonder hoo in the name o' guidness I was to get oot o't. I saw at aince that it was policy to keep sweet wi' her, so, to appear mair at hame and taen wi' my quarters, I put my airm on the back o'

the settle. Dod, she was quick o' the uptak', for she sune leaned back till her shooder touched my airm, and then she turned her face to mine, and, in the firelicht, man, d'ye ken it was juist like a sunset.

Hoo I did curse Davie Gracie, and hoo I wished he wad come in, or that the ceilin' wad fa', or the hoose tak' on fire, or something desperate wad tak' place to save me. Nocht happened tho', and I just sat quate, but a' the time I felt she was gettin' mair and mair cooriet into me, and my airm, wi' her great wecht on't, was beginnin' to sleep and to feel terribly jaggy weys and prickly. Mair than that, I had the uncomfortable feelin' that she was makin' things gang what yin micht ca' "swift a wee."

At last, efter a lang silence, she spiert at me if I kenned a nice piece o' poetry ca'd "The Pangs o' Love."

"No," says I, "I never heard o't; but the fact is, love's no muckle in my line."

"Hoo's that?" she asked, quite surprised.

I didna very weel ken what to say. Then a happy thocht struck me. It cam' like an inspiration—a' in a flash, as it were—and I saw my wey oot o't. Efter hurriedly thinkin' ower maiters, says I, "Weel, I daursay I needna say that love's no' in my line, for it is. Nocht wad gie me greater plesure than to hae a nice lassie like you for a sweethert, and the prospect before me o' a happy mairrit life, but that can never be," and I pou'd my hair doon aboot my een and shook my heid frae side to side. "Of course, you, bein' a stranger in this locality, will no' ken that a' my family's peculiar—not only peculiar, but dangerous."

"In what wey?" she asked.

"Oh, weel," says I, "when we turn twenty-yin we've a' to be ta'en to an asylum for a wee—in fact, I doot I'll hae to gang before I'm that age, for I feel terribly queer at times. For instance, the day noo, I've been

daein' the daftest things imaginable, and my heid's been bizzin' like a bumbee's bike."

She looked at me for a meenit, but I juist put on a kistin' face and my b'lo' jaw was doon.

"It's very hard lines on a young chap like me," I gaed on, "wi' a' the warld before me, but it's in the bluid, and the warst o't is, it's bluid we seek. If it was a hairmless kind o' daftness it wad be naething, but—weel, isn't it a peety?"

She made nae answer, but, mair to hersel' than to me, she says, "I think that fire needs a wee bit coal. I'll juist gang oot and get a bit."

For a stoot lass she raise quick, and her step was licht. She gaed oot, but she never cam' back, and I sat at the fire warmin' my taes till Marget and Davie returned. Man, it was a mercifu' deliverance. When we were aince ootside, quat o' the ferm toon and tacklin' the Burn brae, I told Davie a' aboot my ploy, and he lauched a' the road hame. He even kinket when we were passin' the Auld Kirkyaird, and forgot a' aboot water-kelpies and whitefaced kye.

Needless to say, I never gaed that gate again, and I gied Davie to unnerstaun' that the hair o' his heid nicht staun' oot like a whalebone besom before he wad get me to gang again wi' him to see the lassies.

JOSEPH LAING WAUGH.

By kind permission of the Author.

A RAINY DAY STORY

ONE morning recently as I was about to start from my home, I noticed that it was raining very hard outside, and as I turned to the rack to get an umbrella I was surprised to find that out of five umbrellas there was not one in the lot I could use. On the impulse of the moment I decided to take the

whole five down town to the umbrella hospital and have them all repaired at once.

Just as I started from the door my wife asked me to be sure and bring her umbrella back as she wanted to use it that evening. This impressed the subject of umbrellas very vividly on my mind, so I did not fail to leave the five umbrellas to be repaired, stating I would call for them on my way home in the evening.

When I went to lunch at noon it was still raining very hard, but as I had no umbrella this simply impressed the subject on my mind. I went to a nearby restaurant, sat down at a table, and had been there only a few minutes when a young lady came in and sat down at the same table with me. I was first to finish, however, and getting up I absent-mindedly picked up her umbrella and started for the door. She called out to me and reminded me that I had her umbrella, whereupon I returned it to her with much embarrassment and many apologies.

This incident served to impress the subject more deeply on my mind, so on my way home in the evening I called for my umbrellas, bought a newspaper, and boarded a street-car. I was deeply engrossed in my newspaper, having placed the five umbrellas alongside of me in the car, but all at once I had a peculiar feeling of someone staring at me. Suddenly I looked up from my paper, and was surprised to see sitting directly opposite me the same young woman I had met in the restaurant! She had a broad smile on her face, and looking straight into my eyes she said knowingly: "You've had a successful day, to-day, haven't you?"

ANON.

THE TRIALS OF A SCHOOLMISTRESS

Teacher (in mental arithmetic).—If there were three peaches on the table, Johnny, and your little sister should eat one of them, how many would be left?

Johnny.—How many little sisters would be left?

T.—Now listen, Johnny. If there were three peaches on the table, and your little sister should eat one, how many would be left?

J.—We ain't had a peach in the house this year, let alone three.

T.—We are only supposing the peaches to be on the table, Johnny.

J.—Then they wouldn't be real peaches?

T.—No.

J.—Would they be preserved?

T.—Certainly not.

J.—Pickled peaches?

T.—No, no. There wouldn't be any peaches at all, as I told you, Johnny, we only suppose the three peaches to be there.

J.—Then there wouldn't be any peaches, of course.

T.—Now, Johnny, put that knife in your pocket or I will take it away, and pay attention to what I am saying. We imagine three peaches to be on the table.

J.—Yes.

T.—And your little sister eats one of them and then goes away.

J.—Yes, but she wouldn't go away until she had finished the three. You don't know my little sister.

T.—But suppose your mother was there and wouldn't let her eat but one?

J.—Mother's out of town and won't be back until next week.

T. (sternly)—Now, then, Johnny, I will put the question once more, and if you do not answer it correctly I shall keep you after school. If three peaches were on the table, and your little sister were to eat one of them, how many would be left?

J. (straightening up)—There wouldn't be any peaches left. I'd grab the other two.

T. (touching the bell)—The scholars are now dismissed. Johnny White will remain where he is.

American Paper.

THE WOMAN WHO TOOK ADVICE

THERE was once a Woman who had the opportunity of marrying either of two brothers she preferred. Since they had both of them good points she decided to consult their sister as to which, in her opinion, would make the best husband. "I think," she said, "that I shall take John. He is so good."

"But," said the Sister, "he gobbles his soup and sugars his lettuce. To say nothing of buttering his bread in slabs. We have never been able to teach him better."

"But he reads Browning so beautifully!" cried the Woman.

"You will hear him eat soup oftener than you will hear him read Browning," said the Sister.

"I am sure that he would never love any other woman but me so long as he lived," said the Woman.

"But he has an inveterate habit of reading aloud all the jokes in all the funny columns of all the papers, no matter what you are reading," replied the Sister. "You would find that very trying, as you are fond of reading to yourself."

"I am sure he would give his life for me!" cried the Woman.

"If you will pause and consider," replied the Sister, "you will realize that the probabilities of his being called upon to do that are very few indeed. Whereas the fact that he is very careless about brushing his clothes will be daily apparent to you."

"Dear me!" said the Woman. "And are Henry's manners so perfect?"

"They are all a woman could desire," replied the Sister. "He will take you anywhere you like, and he always admires your singing."

"But are you sure that down in the bottom of his heart he is a perfectly good man?" asked the Woman.

"Not at all," replied the Sister. "I have no means of seeing the bottom of his heart. But he always opens the door for me and hopes I slept well."

"How do you know," said the Woman, "that in some tremendous spiritual crisis he would not fail me?"

"I don't," the Sister replied. "We have never had any of those in the family. I should not marry with a view to having them, I think. But you are certain to have soup."

"Very well," said the Woman, "if that is your advice, I will take Henry."

Which she did and lived happily ever afterwards.

This teaches us to take care of the manners, and the morals will take care of themselves.

JOSEPHINE DODGE DASKAM.

From "Fables for the Fair," by special permission of the Author, and of the Publishers, Messrs Scribner & Sons.

HOW TERRY SAVED HIS BACON

EARLY one fine morning, as Terence O'Fleary was hard at work in his potato-garden, he was accosted by his gossip, Mick Casey, who he perceived had his Sunday clothes on.

"Ah! Terry, man, what would you be afther doing there wid them praties, an' Phelim O'Loughlin's berrin' goin' to take place? Come along, *ma bouchal!*¹ sure the praties will wait."

"Och! no," sis Terry: "I must dig on this ridge for the childer's breakfast; an' thin I'm goin' to confession to Father O'Higgins, who holds a stashin beyont there at his own house."

"Bother take the stashin!" sis Mick: "Sure that 'ud wait too." But Terence was not to be persuaded.

Away went Mick to the berrin'; and Terence, having finished "wid the praties," as he said, went down to Father O'Higgins, where he was shown into the kitchen to wait his turn for confession. He had not been long standing there before the kitchen-fire, when his attention was attracted by a nice piece of bacon which hung in the chimney-corner. Terry looked at it again and again, and wished the childer "had it home wid the praties."

"Murther alive!" says he, "will I take it? Sure the priest can spare it; an' it would be a rare thrate to Judy an' the *gossoons*² at home, to say nothin' iv myself, who hasn't tasted the likes this many's the day." Terry looked at it again, and then turned away, saying, "I won't take it: why would I, 'an it not mine, but the priest's? an' I'd have the sin iv it, sure! I won't take it," replied he; "an' it's nothin' but the Ould Boy himself that's timptin' me. But

¹ My boy. Pronounced *büch-öll* (ch as in German).

² Small boys. Derived from the French *garçon*.

sure it's no harm to feel it, any way," said he, taking it into his hand, and looking earnestly at it. "Och! it's a beauty; and why wouldn't I carry it home to Judy and the childer? An' sure it won't be a sin afther I confesses it."

Well, into his greatcoat pocket he thrust it; and he had scarcely done so, when the maid came in and told him that it was his turn for confession.

"Murther alive! I'm kilt and ruined, horse and foot, now, boy, Terry. What'll I do in this quandary, at all, at all? By gannies! I must thry an' make the best of it, anyhow," says he to himself; and in he went.

He knelt to the priest, told his sins, and was about to receive absolution, when all at once he seemed to recollect himself, and cried out—

"Oh! stop, stop, Father O'Higgins, dear! for goodness' sake, stop! I have one great big sin to tell yit; only, sur, I'm frightened to tell id, in the regard of niver having done the like afore, sur, niver!"

"Come!" said Father O'Higgins, "you must tell it to me."

"Why, then, your rividence, I will tell id; but, sur, I'm ashamed like."

"Oh! never mind: tell it," said the priest.

"Why, then, your riverince, I went out one day to a gintleman's house, upon a little bit of business; an' he bein' engaged, I was showed into the kitchen to wait. Well, sur, there I saw a beautiful bit iv bacon hanging in the chimbly-corner. I looked at id, your riverince, an' my teeth began to wather. I don't know how it was, sur, but I suppose the devil timpted me, for I put it into my pocket; but, if you plaze, sur, I'll give it to you;" and he put his hand into his pocket.

"Give it to me!" said Father O'Higgins. "No, certainly not: give it back to the owner of it."

"Why, then, your riverince, sur, I offered id to him, and he wouldn't take id."

“Oh! he wouldn't, wouldn't he?” said the priest: “then take it home, and eat it yourself, with your family.”

“Thank your riverince kindly!” said Terence, “an' I'll do that same immediately; but first and foremost, I'll have the absolution, if you plaze, sur.”

Terence received absolution, and went home rejoicing that he had been able to save his soul and his bacon at the same time.

ANON.

SHARP PRACTICE

“AH! Ramsey, a precious seedy looking customer. ‘Well, sir,’ says old Fogg, looking at him very fierce—you know his way—‘well, sir, have you come to settle?’ ‘Yes, I have, sir,’ said Ramsey, putting his hand in his pocket, and bringing out the money; ‘the debt's two pound ten, and the costs three pound five, and here it is, sir;’ and he sighed like bricks, as he lugged out the money, done up in a bit of blotting-paper. Old Fogg looked first at the money, and then at him, and then he coughed in his rum way, so that I knew something was coming. ‘You don't know there's a declaration filed, which increases the costs materially, I suppose?’ said Fogg. ‘You don't say that, sir,’ said Ramsey, starting back; ‘the time was only out last night, sir.’ ‘I do say it, though,’ said Fogg, ‘my clerk's just gone to file it. Hasn't Mr Jackson gone to file that declaration in Bullman and Ramsey, Mr Wicks?’ Of course I said yes, and then Fogg coughed again, and looked at Ramsey. ‘My God!’ said Ramsey; ‘and here have I nearly driven myself mad, scraping this money together, and all to no purpose.’ ‘None at all,’ said Fogg, coolly; ‘so you had better go back and scrape more together, and bring it here in time.’ ‘I can't get it, by—,’ said

Ramsey, striking the desk with his fist. 'Don't bully me, sir,' said Fogg, getting into a passion on purpose. 'I am not bullying you, sir,' said Ramsey. 'You are,' said Fogg. 'Get out, sir; get out of this office, sir, and come back, sir, when you know how to behave yourself.' Well, Ramsey tried to speak, but Fogg wouldn't let him, so he put the money in his pocket and sneaked out. The door was scarcely shut when old Fogg turned round to me, with a sweet smile on his face, and drew the declaration out of his coat pocket. 'Here, Wicks,' says Fogg, 'take a cab, and go down to the Temple as quick as you can, and file that. The costs are quite safe, for he's a steady man with a large family, at a salary of five-and-twenty-shillings a week, and if he gives us a warrant of attorney, as he must in the end, I know his employers will see it paid; so we may as well get all we can out of him, Mr Wicks; it's a Christian act to do it, Mr Wicks, for with his large family, and small income, he'll be all the better for a good lesson against getting into debt, won't he, Mr Wicks, won't he?'—and he smiled so good-naturedly as he went away that it was delightful to see him. 'He is a capital man of business,' said Wicks, in a tone of the deepest admiration; 'capital, isn't he?'

CHARLES DICKENS.

THE KING'S BELL

ONCE upon a time, after a long and honourable reign, a king lay dying. He called to him his son and heir and said:

"The rights of a king will one day come to naught; he who seems to rule is the veriest slave of all. You must look for nothing but a life of trouble, and consider yourself fortunate if you can one day die in peace."

But the prince, being young and full of hope, and having the wilfulness and inexperience of youth, protested, as young persons will, that he knew better.

"The cares of state," he said, "shall sit lightly upon me. The life of a king should be one long holiday. I will show my courtiers and all the world what true happiness means. What is the use of being a king if one cannot be happy? Why, a bird in the air or a peasant in the field is better off than that! I am in no hurry for my kingdom—indeed, most dear father, I am not; but I shall be a happy king."

While he spoke his father sighed and died. When the royal mourning was over the new king ordered that a bell of silver should be placed upon the top of the palace in a high tower. Attached to it were many ropes, so arranged to connect with the rooms below that wherever the king might be one should be always near his hand.

"Whenever I am happy I shall ring the bell," he told his courtiers and friends; "and that, you shall see, will be often, for I am sure that my father's dying words were mistaken ones. Yes, I shall be a happy king."

So the years slipped by; and, though they listened, his people never heard the bell. One thing after another prevented the king from ringing it. "When I get through this grievous affair of state," he would say, "I shall be happy." But that affair would be succeeded by another. Then he would murmur: "This war over, peace will come, and the bell can be heard after." But before his hand could clasp the bell-rope, word would be brought of other outbreaks. So the bell was silent.

At last he, like his father, lay with his life slipping away. The priests came in good time to administer the last sacraments. A noise of weeping floated through the palace.

"What sound is that?" asked the king. They

dared not tell him. "I command you to tell me," he said to the grand chamberlain, but he turned away his face. A priest stepped towards him and said:

"The people, your majesty, are weeping because you are soon to leave them."

"Am I dying?"

"You are in grievous danger of death, and should think of your departing soul."

"And my people love me so that they weep because I am to leave them?" he demanded, eagerly.

"Sire, they would gladly die for you, they love you so," answered the priest.

Then such a beautiful look as no one there had ever seen overspread the face of the dying king. He reached out his hand, rang the bell, and with its sweet and silver clangour sounding, and the consolations of Holy Church filling his soul, he passed to the rest of paradise.

ANON.

ON THE ART OF MAKING UP ONE'S MIND

"NOW, which would you advise, dear? You see, with the red I shan't be able to wear my magenta hat."

"Well, then, why not have the grey?"

"Yes—yes, I think the grey will be *more useful*."

"It's a good material."

"Yes, and it's a *pretty* grey. You know what I mean, dear; not a *common* grey. Of course grey is always an *uninteresting* colour."

"It's quiet."

"And then again, what I feel about the red is that it is so warm-looking. Red makes you *feel* warm even when you're *not* warm. You know what I mean, dear."

"Well, then, why not have the red? It suits you—red."

"No; do you really think so?"

"Well, when you've got a colour, I mean, of course."

"Yes, that *is* the drawback to red. No, I think, on the whole, the grey is *safer*."

"Then you will take the grey, madam?"

"Yes, I think I'd better; don't you, dear?"

"I like it myself very much."

"And it is good wearing stuff. I shall have it trimmed with—— Oh! you haven't cut it off, have you?"

"I was just about to, madam."

"Well, don't for a moment. Just let me have another look at the red. You see, dear, it has just occurred to me—that chinchilla would look so well on the red."

"So it would, dear."

"And, you see, I've *got* the chinchilla."

"Then have the red. Why not?"

"Well, there is the hat I'm thinking of."

"You haven't anything else you could wear with that?"

"Nothing at all, and it would go so *beautifully* with the grey.—Yes, I think I'll have the grey. It's always a safe colour—grey."

"Fourteen yards I think you said, madam?"

"Yes, fourteen yards will be enough; because I shall mix it with—— One minute. You see, dear, if I take the grey I shall have nothing to wear with my black jacket."

"Won't it go with grey?"

"Not well—not so well as with red."

"I should have the red then. You evidently fancy it yourself."

"No, personally I prefer the grey. But then one must think of *everything*, and—— Good gracious! that's surely not the right time?"

"No, madam, it's ten minutes slow. We always keep our clocks a little slow."

"And we were to have been at Madame Jannaway's at a quarter-past twelve. How long shopping does take! Why, whatever time did we start?"

"About eleven, wasn't it?"

"Half-past ten. I remember now; because, you know, we said we'd start at half-past nine. We've been two hours already!"

"And we don't seem to have done much, do we?"

"Done literally nothing, and I meant to have done *so* much. I *must* go to Madame Jannaway's. Have you got my purse, dear? Oh, it's all right, I've got it."

"Well, *now* you haven't decided whether you're going to have the grey or the red."

"I'm sure I don't know what I *do* want now. I had made up my mind a minute ago, and now it's all gone again—oh, yes, I remember, the red. Yes, I'll have the red. No, I don't mean the red, I mean the grey."

"You were talking about the red last time, if you remember, dear."

"Oh, so I was, you're quite right. That's the worst of shopping. Do you know I get quite confused sometimes."

"Then you will decide on the red, madam?"

"Yes—yes, I shan't do any better, shall I, dear? What do *you* think? You haven't got any other shades of red, have you? This is such an *ugly* red."

The shopman reminds her that she has seen all the other reds, and that this is the particular shade she selected and admired.

"Oh, very well," she replies, with the air of one from whom all earthly cares are falling, "I must take that, then, I suppose. I can't be worried about it any longer. I've wasted half the morning already."

Outside she recollects three insuperable objections to the red, and four unanswerable arguments why she should have selected the grey. She wonders

would they change it, if she went back and asked to see the shopwalker? Her friend, who wants her lunch, thinks not.

"That is what I hate about shopping," she says. "One never has time to really *think*."

She says she shan't go to that shop again.

JEROME K. JEROME.

From "Three Men in a Boat," by special permission of the Author.

IMPROVISING

"COME here!" shouted Mrs Lorne fiercely to her husband.

He slipped nimbly out of the pantry, where he had retreated under the pretence of cleaning his gardening tools.

"What did I marry you for?" demanded the lady.

"Spite," was the unhesitating response.

"It's a lot of good me a-screwin' an' scattin' to keep the home what it is, an' the first bit of overtime money you have for a fortnight you want to get your boots mended with it instead of turning it up." She thrust his shabby boots before his face. "What do you want doin' to them, I ask you?"

He knocked them away, retorting: "Soling and heeling. What do you think they want—old Irish lace tops putting round?"

"You leave my lace yokes be. They was given me by my poor Aunt Aggie, as knows what a life you lead me. Don't stand there like a fool. Speak, can't you? Say summut."

Mrs Lorne was getting into form. Her husband opened his mouth to speak. "Shut up," she screamed; "I won't 'ave no back answers off you. I won't 'ave it. You ain't a man."

"If you don't shut up I'll go." He was going to finish—"out for the night." But she towered above him: "That's it, threaten me, strike me! Strike me," she reiterated.

The door opened and their son John entered from work. He was thin and pale, but it suited him. His mother began to weep. "It's a good job you've come in," she sniffed, "else there's no knowin' how many black eyes I might 'ave by now. The brute will murder me one of these nights."

John Lorne sighed. He crossed over to the piano, which filled one side of the small sitting-room. The woman began noisily to get his tea as he ran his fingers along the keys. He played a fluting chord. "I don't know whatever I married you for," rasped his mother's voice. "My overtime money," suggested his father.

John touched the notes softly as if he were seeking some tune he had lost. After a few bars he became more certain, and wandered into spring-like music. The troubled voice of a nightingale broke through. The song of the other birds died away in tribulation, until only the nightingale remained.

Mrs Lorne must have heard the nightingale, too, for she laid down the cups and saucers without a bang, and quietly took up a shirt she had been mending. John gazed vacantly at the blue roses on the wallpaper before him as he played. The nightingale sang on.

As the piano ceased Mr Lorne sat up.

"You'd better 'ave your tea," said the lady. "What was it you was just playing?"

"That was only improvising," replied John Lorne.

"Well, it's the best thing you play. It's that good it seems new every time I hear it." She picked up the boots again, remarking: "They are shabby, aren't they? I think I'll buy you a new pair to-morrow."

“No, go on, it’s all right. I can mend them myself. I’ve got a piece of leather left,” said Lorne.

“Well, do both. It won’t hurt him to have two pairs,” proposed John. And they all sat round to tea.

OSWALD H. DAVIS.

By kind permission of “Everyman.”

THE BROTHERHOOD O’ MAN

SOME time ago I heard a grand Lecture on the Brotherhood o’ Man, and I was so much impressed with what I heard that I felt it was my duty to join right away some Society which would have that for its motto.

The “Freemasons” would be the very thing, I was tell’d, but says I to mysel’—I’m no’ just sure o’ the Masons’ creed; mind you, I wish to tramp on nae taes, for I’ve heard that one Mason will do anything he can for another, will help him in a’ his difficulties, gie him the verra. hair off his heid—if he has it to spare—and do mair for him than ony o’ his natural brothers would do. Still, someone had whispered in my ear that the first night you join the Masons, you must come before the members exactly as Adam appeared in the garden o’ Eden! Now, as I’m no’ just a Venus de Milo, I didna like this bit o’ the business at all, and I decided to take the matter to Alexandrum—as the lawyer bodies say.

The other Society I was advised to join was the Burns Club o’ the toon in which I live. Its motto was, “It’s comin’ yet for a’ that”—meanin’, of course, the Brotherhood o’ Man, no’ the Woman’s Suffrage—although, in my opinion, you ladies would get all you want and more, if you would take Mr Lloyd George round the neck (no’ to choke him, of course),

instead of throwing epitaphs and other things at him.

Well, the Burns Club and the Burns Dinner being, so to speak, one and the same thing, and my faither, gude man, having aye been a great admirer o' the poet, I thocht I wad grace the Dinner with my presence. I'm no' a great Burns scholar mysel', but I ken the names o' some o' his poems—therefore I was qualified for membership o' the Club, and, as I'm telling you, I went to the Dinner.

The first thing that impressed me was the grand printed programme, which was decked wi' thistles o' gold, and streamin' wi' tartan like a hieland chief. The bill o' fare, needless to say, was a gude one. At the top o' it was printed in big letters—

“I will be blithe and licht,
My heart is bent upon sae gude a nicht ;
Like brithers a' we'll do our part—
May friendship's torch be lit in every heart.”

For mysel'—I was starvin' wi' hunger, for, wi' an eye to the price o' my ticket, I had ta'en nae solids since breakfast ; and it wasna my *heart* that cried oot wi' joyful anticipation, but a bit o' me nearer the foot o' my waistcoat. I was fair starvin' and my puir stomach was beginning to think I had lockjaw.

Oh! there must hae been a mighty slaughter for this occasion, all the bullocks, soos, and auld roosters in the countryside had been transformed into cockie-leekie, beef, ham, roast turkey, and potted-heid. Then there was a great, big steamin' haggis, for, of course, nae haggis, nae Burns Dinner—that's the rule, and the chieftain o' the puddin' race was there a' richt, but there wasna much left o' his sonsie face when we were done wi' him, I can tell you.

Everything has an end, and a puddin' has twa—as Shakespeare says in his *Paradise Lost*—and so

we warstled through to the end o' the bill o' fare at last. At this stage, the programme announced:

“Happy we'll be a' thegither,
Happy we'll be, ane and a',
Time will see us a' the blyther
Ere we rise to gang awa'.”

The last twa lines hit it neat; but some o' the braw chieles found it not quite so easy to rise to the occasion when the time came for them to depart.

Well, the toasts were maist wonderfu'. First, we were reminded o' the King, the Queen, and the Royal Family by the chairman, who said they grand folks wad nae doot be partakin' o' haggis and cockie-leekie at that verra meenit—perhaps! After this came the Imperial Forces (washed doon wi' imperial stout), and then—the chairman rose to propose the toast o' the evenin'.

“Friends and brithers,” said he, and a hush fell on the company, while every lug was turned to catch his words—“Friends and brithers,” he repeated, and his voice trembled at the thought o' sae mony near relations, “I rise to propose the immortal memory o' *Tommy Burns!*”

There was an uncanny silence for a wee, then some o' his hearers gied a bit laugh, and a chiel at his elbow whispered, “Robbie, man; *Robbie Burns.*” And then the maist awfu' argument got up I ever heard in my life. Some were for Robbie, some for Tommy, and others for Rob, or Robbin—but a' were agreed that the hin'most bit o' the name was Burns. As for me, what wi' sae mony different opeenions, the richts o' it were fair driven oot o' my heid.

“Ah, weel!” said the chairman, when this bit blast had blawn ower, “Tommy, or Robbie, hae it as it suits ye best, lads, it's a' the same now, for he's deid and buried 500 years syne; and so we'll drink a fu' measure to his memory.”

There was nae counter-motion to that at anyrate. Then there were mighty cheers—the company sat doon again, and some o' them had verra little memory left o' their ain.

Mair toasts, as weel as sangs, followed, till I thocht it was time I was goin' home to the wife (she's a grand hand wi' the poker, ye ken), and so I didna stay to see the finish.

The next morning I had a sair heid, somehow; but when I was lookin' at the papers I found the pages were crammed fu' o' speeches and poetry. Here's one I learned off by heart:—

“Hail, Scotia's Bard! thy touch hath waked
A harmony sublime,
The thrill and passion of whose chords
Shall vibrate through all time.

“Thy poet's heart responsive beat
To Nature's varying moods;
Full rich thou wert in gifts o' mind,
Though poor in worldly goods.

“The sorrows of thy brother-man
Were thine, his hopes, his fears;
And thine the power to move to mirth,
Or dim the eyes with tears.”

Them's my sentiments, richt enough! Oh, aye; you were a grand hand wi' the pen, Robbie, my man, but for a' that—it's a gude thing that you've only one birthday in the year.

JAMES DEY.

By kind permission of the Author.

PROPITIATION

THE short cut to the river is certainly through the stableyard and past the home farm. If you run all the way you can get there in five minutes—or seven, allowing for falls. Diccon usually ran, and he usually took seven minutes, because he was such a small boy. This afternoon he took fully ten minutes: you cannot even walk fast when you are carrying a large wooden engine and a full-sized Teddy bear.

He staggered along the footpath to the bridge and threw his red engine and Teddy bear over the parapet into the water.

“There you are, God,” he said. It was not a willing sacrifice; but he simply had to give God these things, so that Babs need not die. Perhaps the red engine and Teddy would take off His attention. Diccon hung over the parapet. Teddy spun wildly, with imploring arms, in the eddy below the bridge, till he sank, water-logged and drowned; the red engine rode far down the stream, wheels uppermost. They were the things Diccon loved beyond all his other toys. He comprehended suddenly the unspeakable emptiness of his life now that they were gone. But God despised half-gifts; nothing less than the best would satisfy Him; one knew that because of Cain.

Back came the small boy through the wet meadow to the house. It had been raining for days, and the nettles smelt horribly. He wondered whether Teddy had got to Heaven yet. He pictured the golden floor of Heaven, and Teddy sitting under the Tree of Life with its fruits, while angel-children played with him. Perhaps he had a small golden sailor-hat by now, and little wings growing; he had been such a good Teddy.

He would be frightfully happy, of course. It was more difficult to imagine the translation of the engine.

The doctor's motor was still there. Diccon went in at the front door. There was no one about. The house was as still as still. Then he came suddenly on nurse. She was crying with great sobs. "Oh, Master Diccon!" she said. By this he knew that Babs had died, after all.

DORIS L. MACKINNON.

By kind permission of "Everyman."

THE WOMAN WHO HELPED HER SISTER

THERE was once a Woman who had read in a book that the best way to become dear to a Man was to cook appetising dishes for him. Therefore when a nice Man called on her it was her custom to retire and compose delicious lunches in an American chafing-dish, leaving her Sister to entertain the Man till her return. Her Sister would not learn to cook, because she did not care to.

One day the Man invited the Woman to go to the theatre with him. This she would have liked to do very much, but she remembered what she had read, and replied:

"I will tell you something better. Take my Sister to the theatre, and when you come home I will have a nice supper waiting for you."

"Oh, very well!" said the Man. That evening he fell in love with the Sister, and some time later he asked her to marry him.

"But I thought it was my sister you came to see," said she; "and besides that I fear I should make a poor wife. I am not practical and I cannot cook."

"As to that," replied the Man, "I came at first, it

is true, to see your sister, but I saw very little of her because she stayed in the dining-room so much. So that I grew to admire you. And as for your not cooking, that is easily arranged. Your sister can live with us and manage all that very nicely.

This teaches us that you must catch your hare before you cook for him.

JOSEPHINE DODGE DASKAM.

(From "*Fables for the Fair*," by special permission of the Author, and of the Publishers, Messrs Scribner & Sons.)

AN INCIDENT

I AM going to tell you a little incident of two racing men on a railway journey from one town to another, and held up at a junction for two hours, as one invariably is on Sunday travelling. Bill suggests to Harry that they have a walk along the country road. They go for a stroll—and come within hearing of the village church bells. Says Harry to Bill: "Hark at those bells, Bill—ain't that lovely—them's *church* bells, them is—Bill, ain't that lovely! come on!" (They stroll along the road and stop outside the village church—stand looking at one another.)

"Hark! Bill—'Abide with me' (repeat 'Abide with me, fast falls the eventide')—ain't it lovely? It's the congregation singing—makes you think, Bill, don't it, of the times when we were boys? we're not so bad as we're painted—let's go in, Bill; it'll remind us of old times: come on."

(In they go, get into a pew and sit down—they are handed a Prayer Book and Hymn Book, and they start fumbling with the pages.)

"Bill," says Harry, "I've forgotten the places! I can't find the place."

"Garn!—what Sunday is it?"

"Blimey! don't you know?—second Sunday after Ascot."

WILBERT GAMBLE.

By kind permission of the Author

WHY THEY DIE YOUNG

Scene—BOX-OFFICE OF FRIVOLITY THEATRE.

Enter—Two Ladies.

"Two seats, please."

"For to-night?"

"Why, yes, of course, to-night!"

"What price seats?"

"Five shilling seats."

(The ticket-seller looks over his ticket rack, selects two tickets and lays them before the ladies.)

"Are these good seats, now?"

"Very good, indeed—numbers 5 and 7."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, madam."

"Where are they?"

"Near the centre of the orchestra."

"How far is that from the stage?"

"Nine rows."

"Nine rows! Oh, that is too far back."

"They are excellent seats, I assure you."

"Can you hear well there?"

"Splendidly."

"And see well?"

"Certainly."

"But don't you think nearer the stage would be better?"

"No; I don't think so."

"I don't think I'd like these."

"Well, I can give you two in B."

"In B?"

"Yes."

"Where's B?"

"Second row from the orchestra rail."

"Isn't that too near the music?"

"Well, it is rather close."

"I don't like to be near the orchestra."

"The tickets I first offered you are more desirable."

"But I don't like them."

"Where would you like to have your seats, then?"

"Where would you suggest?"

"I'd take them farther back."

"I don't like back seats at all. Have you any in H?"

"Yes, madam."

"Then let me see them."

(The ticket man picks out two seats, 9 and 11 H.)

"Are these end seats?"

"No, they are near the middle."

"Can you see there?"

"Yes."

"Haven't you got any end seats?"

"No."

"That's too bad. I like end seats, or at least my husband likes them. He is very nervous, you know, and he always goes out when the curtain goes down."

"Yes, madam; there are a great many nervous gentlemen in London."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, madam; I know so."

"Dear me, how strange."

"Very."

"Are you nervous?"

"No, but I'm getting that way."

"Oh, so sorry."

"Shall you take these tickets?"

"You say you haven't any end seats?"

"Not one left in the house."

"Let me see a diagram."

"There is one before you, madam."

"Oh, yes. So there is."

(The ladies study the diagram, and have a dialogue about the seats, location, and advantage and disadvantage of sitting in particular seats, totally oblivious of the fact that there are a dozen other people waiting to get at the window.)

"What part of the house is this?"

"That's the stage."

"The stage? Dear me! Does it look like that?"

"I suppose so."

"Suppose! Don't you know?"

"No."

"Why don't you know?"

"Excuse me, madam; but will you kindly make your selection of tickets, as there are a number of other ladies and gentlemen waiting to purchase?"

"I think you are very rude."

"Pardon me, madam; but——"

"No explanation necessary."

"What tickets will you take?"

"Oh, give me two here."

"Yes, madam."

"These are good? Pardon me for asking."

"Certainly."

"What time does the curtain go up?"

"Eight o'clock."

"When does Miss Terry come on?"

"Miss Terry?" asks the ticket-seller, in wild surprise.

"Yes, Miss Terry."

"This is the Frivolity Theatre, madam."

"What? I thought it was the Lyceum, and I want to see Miss Terry play Olivia. I shan't want the

tickets if Miss Terry isn't here. Excuse me, where is the Lyceum Theatre?"

"Across the street."

(Exeunt.)

(After this, we are not surprised if theatre ticket-sellers "die young"; or—take to drink.)

GEORGE STRONACH.

By kind permission of the Author.

WHAT HE FORGOT

WHEN Mr Jenkins went to his bedroom at half-past one, it was with the determination of going to sleep, and with another determination that he would not be interviewed by Mrs Jenkins. So as soon as he had entered the door, and deposited his lamp upon the dressing-table, he commenced his speech:

"I locked the front door. I put the chain on. I pulled the key out a little bit. The dog is inside. I put the kitten out. I emptied the drip-pan of the refrigerator. The cook took the silver to bed with her. I put a cane under the knob of the back hall door. I put the fastenings over the bathroom windows. The parlour fire has coal on. I put the cake-box back in the closet. I did not drink all the milk. It is not going to rain. Nobody gave me any message for you. I mailed your letters as soon as I got down town. Your mother did not call at the office. Nobody died that we are interested in. Did not hear of a marriage or an engagement. I was very busy at the office making out bills. I have hung my clothes over chair-backs. I want a new egg for breakfast. I think that is all, and I will now put out the light."

Mr Jenkins felt that he had hedged against all

inquiry, and a triumphant smile was upon his face as he took hold of the gas check, and sighted a line for the bed, when he was earthquaked by a ringing laugh, and the query from Mrs Jenkins :

“ Why didn't you take off your hat ? ”

ANON.

GOLDEN SYRUP

As a small child I sat on the nursemaid's knee at bedtime and contemplated my supper of arrowroot. I had had my bath; I was warm and comfortable; I liked the feeling of my nightgown and the smell of damp towels drying on the guard.

The nursemaid tied on my feeder over my flannel nightgown. “ Be a good child,” it said in red cross-stitch. With assumed interest I drew the nursemaid's attention to some of the more familiar letters. She put me through my alphabetical paces, and interpreted the motto for me. The diversion was short. She became aware of the cooling arrowroot, and dipped her spoon. The spoon broke through the surface skin, and showed the liquid stuff beneath, steaming hot. Then it was at my lips.

“ Sup them up,” said the nursemaid, who was Scotch. I swallowed obediently. The thing had to be gone through with.

But soon I saw the hopelessness of the undertaking. It was not like eating cornflour or even porridge. In these firmer foods you could measure your progress; you made a clearly defined bay, which grew with each successive spoonful until you came triumphant, if replete, to the other side—exactly like the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea in my Bible-book. It was impossible to make any such impression on arrowroot. For every spoonful swallowed there

flowed in a fresh rush of thick white stuff from every side. A constant level was maintained. It became very disheartening.

"Be a good child," she said.

She had recently told me what would be my fate if I were a bad child. I sat up.

"If I don't, shall I go to hell?" I asked. She said she expected so.

Unutterable boredom and nausea had seized me. Soon the fires of hell seemed preferable to another spoonful of that pale glue. Tears rolled down my cheeks, and in a desperate moment I spat out what I could. The devil did not instantly appear, so it is to the nursemaid's undying credit that she did not appeal to Nana. Instead, she fetched from the cupboard a clear glass jar of golden syrup, and, when she had dipped a spoonful, she traced upon the surface of that loathsome arrowroot a glittering golden pattern. Soon I saw, even through the distortion of my tears, that here was no common, unmeaning wriggle, but the outline of some great four-legged thing.

"That's a dromedary," said the nursemaid. And so it was. He had a long, long neck, and a hump upon his back, and a little tail, and long, thin legs, and he was racing over the white desert of my arrowroot—a wondrous, golden beast.

"Now," said the nursemaid, "we will eat this dromedary." I had never eaten a common camel before, still less a dromedary, and the idea filled me with excitement. First I ate his long, thin legs, and then his thread-like tail, and then his golden body with its hump, and last of all I ate his long, long neck, and then his proud head with its great golden eye. Spoonful by spoonful. He tasted very good. And then I saw, to my amazement, that all the arrowroot was finished as well, and I needn't go to hell to-night.

The nursemaid wiped my mouth with the feeder, and kissed me. "To-morrow night," she said, "you shall eat an elephant. Now say grace."

I folded my hands; they stuck together by reason of the syrup on them. "Thank God for my good dromedary. Amen."

DORIS L. MACKINNON.

By kind permission of "Everyman."

LEVINSKY'S GREAT SCHEME

LEVINSKY, despairing of his life, made an appointment with a famous specialist. He was surprised to find fifteen or twenty people in the waiting-room.

After a few minutes he leaned over to a gentleman near him and whispered, "Say, mine frient, this must be a pretty goot doctor, ain't he?"

"One of the best," the gentleman told him.

Levinsky seemed to be worrying over something.

"Vell, say," he whispered again, "he must be pretty exbensive, then, ain't he? Vat does he charge?"

The stranger was annoyed by Levinsky's questions and answered rather shortly: "Fifty dollars for the first consultation and twenty-five dollars for each visit thereafter."

"Mine Gott!" gasped Levinsky, "fifty tollars the first time and twenty-five tollars each time afterwards!"

For several minutes he seemed undecided whether to go or to wait. "Und twenty-five tollars each time afterwards," he kept muttering. Finally, just as he was called into the office, he was seized with a brilliant inspiration. He rushed toward the doctor with outstretched hands.

"Hello, doctor," he said effusively. "Vell, here I am again."

ANON.

THE SINGER AND THE YOUNG MUSICIAN

IN a humble room, in one of the poorest streets of London, little Pierre, a fatherless French boy, sat humming by the bedside of his sick mother. There was no bread in the closet ; and for the whole day he had not tasted food. Yet he sat humming, to keep up his spirits. Still, at times, he thought of his loneliness and hunger, and he could scarcely keep the tears from his eyes ; for he knew nothing would be so grateful to his poor invalid mother as a good sweet orange ; and yet he had not a penny in the world.

The little song he was singing was his own—one he had composed with air and words ; for the child was a genius.

He went to the window, and looking out saw a man putting up a great bill with yellow letters, announcing that Madame Malibran would sing that night in public.

“Oh, if I could only go!” thought little Pierre ; and then, pausing a moment, he clasped his hands ; his eyes lighted with a new hope. Running to the little stand, he smoothed down his yellow curls, and taking from a little box some old stained paper, gave one eager glance at his mother, who slept, and ran speedily from the house.

“Who did you say is waiting for me?” said the lady to her servant. “I am already worn out with company.”

“It is only a very pretty little boy, with yellow curls, who says if he can just see you, he is sure you will not be sorry, and he will not keep you a moment.”

“Oh ! well, let him come,” said the beautiful singer, with a smile ; “I can never refuse children.”

Little Pierre came in, his hat under his arm, and in his hand a little roll of paper. With manliness unusual for a child, he walked straight to the lady, and bowing said, "I came to see you, because my mother is very sick, and we are too poor to get food and medicine. I thought that, perhaps, if you would only sing my little song at some of your grand concerts, maybe some publisher would buy it, for a small sum; and so I could get food and medicine for my mother."

The beautiful woman rose from her seat; very tall and stately she was; she took the little roll from his hand, and lightly hummed the air.

"Did you compose it?" she asked, "you, a child! And the words?—Would you like to come to my concert?" she asked, after a few moments of thought.

"Oh yes!" and the boy's eyes grew bright with happiness, "but I couldn't leave my mother."

"I will send somebody to take care of your mother for the evening; and here is a crown, with which you may go and get food and medicine. Here is also one of my tickets: come to-night; that will admit you to a seat near me."

Almost beside himself with joy, Pierre bought some oranges, and many a little luxury besides, and carried them home to the poor invalid, telling her, not without tears, of his good fortune.

When evening came, and Pierre was admitted to the concert-hall, he felt that never in his life had he been in so grand a place. The music, the myriad lights, the beauty, the flashing of diamonds and rustling of silks, bewildered his eyes and brain.

At last she came; and the child sat with his glance riveted upon her glorious face. Could he believe that the grand lady, all blazing with jewels, and whom everybody seemed to worship, would really sing his little song?

Breathless he waited—the band, the whole band, struck up a little plaintive melody; he knew it, and clapped his hands for joy. And oh, how she sung it! It was so simple, so mournful, so soul-subduing—many a bright eye dimmed with tears; and naught could be heard but the touching words of that little song—oh, so touching!

Pierre walked home as if he were moving on the air. What cared he for money now? The greatest singer in all Europe had sung his little song, and thousands had wept at his grief.

The next day he was frightened at a visit from Madame Malibran. She laid her hand on his yellow curls, and turning to the sick woman said, “Your little boy, madam, has brought you a fortune. I was offered, this morning, by the best publisher in London, three hundred pounds for his little song; and after he has realised a certain amount from the sale, little Pierre, here, is to share the profits. Madam, thank God that your son has a gift from heaven.”

ANON.

FATHER'S GOAT

WE live near the Zoo, and when it was rumoured that a wolf had escaped, I noticed that father looked rather worried. So I said, “Don't you worry, leave that to the wolf.” I knew he wasn't really afraid, for the grass in our garden is not always long enough for a wolf to hide in, but he was considering the matter from an economic point of view.

“It's the war prices,” he replied. “It has been bad enough keeping one wolf from the door; however shall we manage to keep away two?”

Some days later, when we were all at breakfast, father made an important announcement on the

subject of food economy. He had looked at it from all sides, he said, and had come to the conclusion that it was both a necessity and a duty.

Beheading his third egg, he remarked:

"Eggs are eggs, now-a-days."

"Well," I interjected, "they're no different from what they used to be. Personally, I never mistook them for potatoes, or mixed them up with oranges or onions."

"You don't understand," he admonished, with some dignity. "I was referring to the price of eggs. Yet, what we can't cure we must just endure."

"It's the cured ones that are the worst to endure," I said. But he took no notice, and continued:

"So we must just pay, or do without. I have thought of a hen-run. From what one hears, however, it doesn't pay to keep hens. The food is scandalously dear, and you can't convince hens that it is their duty to lay—they're as unreasonable as all feminine gender. No, hens are out of the question. There's the milk though"—he pointed to the morning's supply. "How much does that cost?"

"That's tenpence worth, or what's left of it."

"There you are; why, I've seen as much for twopence! No, it won't do. I've got an idea."

Father has had a lot of ideas in his time, but somehow the flowering process has never been a complete success.

"I have really two ideas," he informed us. "First, I intend to take an allotment."

I wondered at that, for the ground attached to the house has generally been a season or so behind in the matter of working. But, like Brer Rabbit, I "lay low and said nothing."

"We must not touch the lawn; it cost too much, and I have a better use for it.

"This year," he intimated, "I do not intend to use the back-garden for vegetables—that's where the

allotment will come in. No, I have a better idea than that." He paused; then, with proud deliberation, he announced:—

"I have decided to keep a goat."

"A what?" we exclaimed, with one hysterical voice.

"No, a goat," he repeated, "not a what. I have never heard of any such animal."

Then an awed silence fell on the family.

"Think for a moment what it means from an economic point of view. A good goat will give from three to six pints of milk per day. The Nubian goat is said to yield as much as from three to four quarts per day of milk of superior quality. Therefore, if possible, we must get a Nubian goat."

I never had any idea that father possessed so much general knowledge. If fate ever wrecked us all on an island, I thought, what a fine Swiss Family Robinson sort of life we would enjoy with such a father.

"And who is to milk it?" asked someone, meekly.

"I, myself, shall do the milking," he heroically responded.

One day, when my younger sister and I had just come in from a walk, I heard her exclaim as she glanced from the window:

"Oh, whatever is that in the garden? Run for father, quick! It's some terrible animal escaped from the Zoo—it's the wolf!"

I ran to the window. "Why," said I, "it's not a wolf—unless it's a wolf in goat's clothing. It's the goat."

We hurried down, and found father equipped with a large pail, and ready to sally forth.

I asked him if the animal was to remain outside all night, or how it was to be accommodated. But father had thought of everything. He said he intended to build a shed for it: meantime its night

quarters would be in the coalhouse, where there was plenty of room, owing to the coal famine.

Ere he issued forth, we rushed upstairs to our bedroom, which, we thought, would make a grand-stand worthy of the occasion, the whole family, mother included, following.

When the goat arrived we had all been out except mother. She was busy at the time and instructed the man who brought it to put it in the garden and tie it to something. It was tethered to an apple tree and, for the time being, seemed occupied with the question of whether there was going to be a fine growth of new shoots. It looked a docile animal, meet for a daisy chain, and likely to prove an asset as a family pet.

By-and-bye father came out, pail in hand, and approached the goat. If he had faced it all the time, things might have been different. Either he did not gauge the length of the tether, or was deceived by the creature's mask of innocence. Anyhow, he turned his back on it for a few seconds, and stooped to tie his shoe-lace, or something—and, well, of course, he never milked that goat.

New proverb: "Never tie your shoe-lace near a goat."

When the excitement had subsided, a man was sent for to perform the milking operation, and we trusted that a nice supper of goat's milk would have a soothing effect on father after his one-reel drama.

But there was no milk that evening. And no wonder! For, what do you think? It was a *billy*-goat.

JAMES DEY.

By kind permission of the Author.

JOHNNIE SINGS IN A STRANGE PLACE

JOHNNIE was fond of playing in front of the foundry gates, for he knew that his father was somewhere on the other side. Saturday was his great day. He spent the forenoon in scampering along the smooth pavement that ran round three sides of the foundry. Now and again he would cross the street and ask at the milk shop: "Will it be lang till the horn blaws." There was no sound in the world so grand to Johnnie as that.

One summer when his mother was alive he had been to the seaside, and at night in the little house where he lodged he could hear the sea dashing up on the shore; but even that did not thrill him like the roar of the horn, that woke him in the dark winter mornings and summoned his father to his work.

The machinery inside the foundry begins to slacken off a bit; the gates fly open. On and on the men come, and Johnnie's eyes gleam with pride when his father steps forward to the clerk at the window of the pay-box and claims his wages.

The afternoon is far on and wee Johnnie's father has not come home yet. When the last man came out of the foundry and the gates closed behind him, Johnnie ran on, in the hope of overtaking his father on the stair. He liked to take hold of his father's hand and mount the steps two at a time. The world was not so lonely then, and he did not miss his mother quite so much. For some Saturdays his father had kept true to the promise he had made to his dying wife, who said: "Ye'll no' let the drink get the better of ye. Ye'll no' let the drink mak' ye forget our wee Johnnie." "I ken my failin'," he said, "and if only ye had been spared to me, I wad hae been a better man; but I promise to take care o' wee Johnnie. God help me." And for weeks after the

neighbours spoke of his tenderness to the motherless bairn. These Saturdays were wonderful days in the life of wee Johnnie ; but they passed out of his life like a dream. He returned from the foundry gates one Saturday ; but no father waited to take him up the stair.

It was late at night when his father staggered home and Johnnie was ordered to bed with a curse. He crawled in and lay at the back with a heart like to break. He put the blankets over his head to say his prayers, and at last there came a smothered little cry : " Mother, Mother." Then he fell asleep.

But he got hardened. Something told him he must be brave, that he must watch his father. He found out where his father was going on Saturdays. The public-house was just on the other side of the street, and through the long afternoons till the darkness fell Johnnie sat and waited.

This afternoon he could not stay in. The singing of the men in the public-house was more attractive than usual, and he wanted to get nearer it. Some one had been giving " Annie Laurie," and Johnnie knew the air. When the singer sat down there was rapping of glasses on the table and great applause. This made Johnnie leave home, cross the street and stand outside the public-house door to hear as much of the singing as he could, and he wondered if his father would sing.

Darkness was beginning to fall and Johnnie was tired. A man came out to turn on the lights in the doorway, and when Johnnie asked him, " Wull you let me in to see my father ? " the man said, " All right, Johnnie, come after me."

The handle of the door was turned and the waiter appeared. " Wee Johnnie, gents," he said. With that he closed the door again, and Johnnie was inside. The chairman was taken aback, and the men looked up. They were angry at him, and he turned to his father. " Dinna be angry, father ; I was wearyin' at

hame, and when I heard the singing I wanted to come in. Ye'll no pit me oot, father? I'll just sit quiet and listen. The chairman said, "Not at all, Johnnie, we're no angry! We're glad to see you, my man; come up beside me. Why, you'll sing something to us." At this Johnnie's father put his arm round his boy and would have detained him; but the notion of singing to the company was so charming to Johnnie that he was at the chairman's side at once. "Gentlemen," the chairman cried, tapping on the table with his tumbler, "attention to Wee Johnnie's song."

Johnnie stood up on a seat, the faces of all the men were before him, but he did not feel put about. He began—and it was as if the angels had come down to drown the sad mirth of the public-house with one of their songs.

"There is a Happy Land, far, far away"—clear and sweet Johnnie's voice filled the back room, then it swelled out into the other compartments, and men who were drinking laid down their glasses. The bells ceased to ring. Waiters and customers at the counter looked round to listen.

"Come to that Happy Land, come, come away; Why will ye doubting stand, why still delay." It was a strange place for such a silence as prevailed, and many a one had better thoughts for Johnnie's pleading.

When he came to the last lines—"Bright in that Happy Land beams every eye"—his voice was so thrilling that all held their breath, and a woman bursting into tears slipped away from the counter into the street.

Johnnie never looked down as he went on singing. He seemed to be seeing his mother, and his eyes danced with real pleasure. When he finished he looked towards his father for a word of encouragement. His father's head was bent down; but Johnnie went forward and put his hand on his knee. "Ye're no angry, father?" Johnnie grew frightened, and looked

round upon the others—there was a strange look in their faces. The chairman felt he must say something, and rose to his feet: “Gentlemen,” he said, “we have reached the end of the programme, and this is likely to be the last concert of the season.” And he was right.

The men gave up their drinking concerts.

ANON (*adapted*).

A NIPPY TONGUE

IT was Sabbath morning I made for Betty Reid's abode, where I was sure to find the old invalided woman cushioned high in an arm-chair and drawn near the little window, from which coign of vantage she could watch and comment upon the different passers-by, as they wended their way along the street to the forenoon service. “Ay, imphin; whae're thae gaun up the far side, Meg?—That's, let me see—that's Leezie Wulson and her man.—Humph, Leezie Wulson is it—weel, aith, an' ye wud think to see them gaun cancin' along the street cheek by jowl that they were aye the best o' freens, an' Nancy Murray, wha leeves but-an'-ben wi' them tells me—an' mind ye, that juist yince removed—that they sometimes kick up the very deevil. Ay, it's no' easy judgin' fowk by their Sunday behavior.—Is that a beuk Leezie hes i' her haun'?—Ay, says Meg, it's a new yin too.—Ise warrant it's new an' faceable noo, or she wudna haud it up sae heigh. An' Tam'll hae an umberellie i' his haun'. They tell me he never thinks he's richt snod without an umberellie. Haimless body, Tam. I'm aye wae for him, wi' a tinkler o' a wife like Leezie.—Is that Jess Wabster crossing the syre.—No, that's Heughsie Williamson, an' she's had her Paisley shawl weshen. It's braw an' clean.—Ay,

weel, if her shawl's clean, I'll wager her kitchen flae's no'. Awfu' hudder, Heughsie, an' aye was—so was her mither. It rins i' the blid—like wudden legs.—An' there's Geordie Muncey—Greetin' Geordie we aye caa'd him. There's never onything gangs richt wi' him. He's aye lookin' oot for troubles and worries, an' he's no' aftin disappointed. His soo dee't wi' some queer complaint that baffled Fletcher a month come Monday; and his wife, they tell me, had twins last Tuesday. Nae wunner he's forfouchten lookin'.—Guidsake, whae's that i' the middle o' the road—I do declare it's Nancy Rae frae Carronbrig. Thae Carronbrig fowk are deevils—an—a' to gang to the kirk. Nocht keeps them back—wund nor water. But Nancy's no' wise to come oot sae sune. Sic a trauchle she maun hae—a feckless, no-weel man, eleven weans, an' the youngest o' them no' a month auld. Faith, an' they'll be a' tummlin' ower yin anither like collie puppies. Nancy's mither was an awfu' tairger—Bet Black was her name. She cam' frae the wast country, was three times mairret, an' dee'd o' drink—I mind when she—preserve us a', wha's the smirkin' pair that gaed by the noo? Michty me, lookit straucht in—to see that her bonnet was sittin' richt, nae doot.—Whae were they, Meg?”

Meg had caught a glisk of them as they passed, and was in a position to satisfy her aunt's curiosity. “It's Davie Tamson and his wife. They're to be kirked the day.”

“Imphin, lovan ay, noo—of course, imphin. He mairret Bell Grier's dochter, didn't he?—Ay, Leib, the second auldest. She was a dressmaker in Dumfries.—Aye; just so, imphin. Puir Davie, simple soul, worrit a whalp. As for her—I dinna ken what kinna worker she'll be, but they tell me she's a capital guid dancer.”

“There's Tam Hotson's dochter gaun across the syre,” says Meg. “That's her last year's bonnet

tished up a bit. There's a feather at the back noo, whaur there was a flo'er afore."

"Rax me ma lang-sichted specks, Meg."

"Faigs, Aunt, I dinna think ye need ony better specks; ye're seein' brawly."

"Nae havers noo, Meg, gie's ma specks.—Weel, weel, there goes Aggie Crosbie wi' her heid i' the air like a cat wi' a herrin'—a leebral supporter o' the kirk, they tell me, an' she hungers her bit servant lassie. Sic on-gauns, Prood naebody!—What was she afore she mairret Robbie Crosbie? I min' o' her when she had neither buits or shoon to her feet. She never wud learn at the schule. She's nae notion o' ony warld ootside the hills roon' about, and thinks Ameriky's awa somewhere ayont the quarry.—Ay, just so, Wattie Semple, there ye go. Aith, an' ye're no' a beauty. I really think ye're the warst faur'd man in a' Thornhill."

"He canna help that," ventured Meg mildly.

"No, deed no, we mauna ca' the Almighty's wark in question. A' the same, Wattie micht aye stay about hame." The passing throng of worshippers became denser, and for a time it was difficult to particularise. Betty meanwhile lay back in the chair, and at times crooned snatches of an old Psalm tune.

"There's young Tammas Hairstanes hame frae Lunnon, an' a wise-like chiel he is," says Meg, after a pause.

"Whae say ye, Meg?" Betty asked excitedly.

"Tammas Hairstanes—auld Tammas Hairstanes' grandson. That's him fornent Suffie Boyes' door."

Betty had staggered to her feet—"Ay, that's a Hairstanes, every inch o' him—a grandson' o' Tammas Hairstanes—my Tammas—My Tammas that was." Then she looked vacantly round her little kitchen, and after a pause asked Meg to sit down beside her. Quietly she sat with Meg's hand in hers. "It's sixty years sin' my auld hert has been touched

as it has been the noo. I thocht a' thae years that I had leev'd it doon, but there's a corner there yet. Ay, it's a lang time tae look back on, an' it's been a dreary life for me. But it was a' my ain daein' an' the Lord's will. Nae man o' ony spunk can staun to be slichted, an' I slichted Tammas Hairstanes. It was the nicht o' a Langmire Kirn, an' Tammas had danced twice rinnin' wi' Marget Brydon. When he cam' to tak' me hame I tel't him to gang away wi' Marget. Dear me, I mind his words to this day—'Hoots, Betty, lass—Marget Brydon's no' worth a thocht, and you are a' the world to me.' Pride an' jealousy stept in atween us, an' my dream was at an end. I could hae lippeden my life i' his keepin'. Ay, it a' comes back frae the past, an' the memory as time gangs by comes a' the clearer."

JOSEPH LAING WAUGH.

*From "Thornhill and its Worthies,"
by kind permission of the Author.*

A GOOD DINNER

I NEVER but once found anything here in excess of my expectations of even approaching them, and that was the New York oysters. I had just come on from California, where oysters are very small and unimportant, not to say insignificant, and I had often eaten a hundred there at a time, always feeling that I could eat more if I had them. So when I arrived at the Metropolitan Hotel I ordered my dinner to be served in my room, and told the waiter to bring with my dinner a cup of strong coffee and a hundred raw oysters. He looked at me and then said:

"Did I understand you to say a hundred oysters?"

"Yes," I answered; "raw, on the half-shell, with

vinegar—no lemons—and as soon as you can, for I am very hungry.”

“Ahem! Miss, did you want a hundred?”

“Yes, I do. What are you waiting for? Must I pay for them in advance? I want nice large ones.”

“No, no, miss. All right, you shall have dem,” and he went out.

I continued my writing and forgot all about my dinner till he knocked and came in with my dinner on a tray, but no oysters.

“How is this?” said I. “There are no oysters.”

“Dey’s comin’, miss, dey’s comin’,” and the door opened and in filed three more sons of Africa’s burning sands, each with a big tray of oysters on the half-shell.

I was staggered, but only for a moment, for I saw the waiters were grinning, so I calmly directed them to place one tray on a chair, one on the washstand and one on the bed, and I said:

“They are very small, aren’t they?”

“Oh, no, miss, de bery largest we’s got.”

“Very well,” said I; “you can go. If I want any more I’ll ring.”

When they got out into the hall one said to the other:

“’Fore God, Jo, if she eats all dem oysters, she’s a dead woman.”

I did not feel hungry any longer. I drank my coffee and looked at the oysters, every one of them as big as my hand. They all seemed looking at me with their horrible white faces and out of their one diabolical eye, until I could not have eaten one any more than I could have carved up a live baby. They leered at me and seemed to dare me to attack them. California oysters are small and with no more individual character about them than grains of rice, but these detestable creatures were instinct with evil intentions, and I dared not swallow one for fear of

the disturbance he might raise in my interior; so I set about getting rid of them, for I was never going to give up as beaten before those waiters. I hung a dress over the key-hole, after I had locked the door. Just outside my window I found a tin water-spout that had a small hole in it. I carefully enlarged it, and then slid every one of those beastly creatures down, one by one—one hundred and two of them—they all the time eyeing me with that cold, pasty look of malignity. When the last one was out of sight, I stopped trembling and finished my dinner in peace, and then rang for the waiters. You should have seen their faces! One of the waiters asked if I would have some more. May he never know the internal pang he inflicted upon me; but I answered calmly:

“Not now. I think too many at once might be hurtful.”

ANON.

A LOST SOUL

IT is an exquisite June night. The moon, which out in the country is pouring its flood of silver light on broad dewy fields, shines down just as placidly on Drury Lane, with its knots of quarrelling women and brawling men. At the corner of one of the courts a man and woman are standing. His rough, coarse face is quivering, his grimy hands clutch the girl's thin shoulder almost fiercely in its emotion.

The lamp over the public-house throws its glare on her face with its gleaming eyes and quivering mouth.

“Sal! Sal!” cries the man. “You can't go and throw me over now, after all this time. . . . Say that 'twas only a joke . . . that you'll stick by me still, Sal.”

“Jim, I must! I ain't been a good lot, Jim, and I promised the Sergeant.”

“Promised the Sergeant,” growls the man, with an oath. “What business has he to come between you and me?—curse him. We was ’appy till a month ago, till them (——) ’owlers got ’old of yer, and stuffed yer with rubbish about yer soul, and going to ’ell, and ——”

“No, no, Jim! Don’t say that . . . it ain’t true . . . I see what a wicked girl I’ve been, but now, Jim, it’s all gone—the sin. Jim, it’s such peace, and I so ’appy; but oh, Jim!” . . . wistfully stretching out her hands to him, “if only you ’ad it too. . . .”

“Sal, yer can’t love me, no . . . not as I love you. . . . D’ye think I could be ’appy if I know’d yer wasn’t with me? . . . I’d rather go to ’ell along o’ you, my gal, than to ’eaven with the finest lady in the land! Don’t leave me, Sal; I can’t do without yer; I must go to the bad. Think what yer givin’ up, my girl. We was always ’appy in our little ’ome, though ’twas only a garret; but we had each other, ’adn’t we? . . . Now, you’ll ’ave no one of your own to care for yer . . . ye’ll ’ave to live in a barricks and go about marchin’ ’ere, there, and heverywhere till yer drop . . . and wot for? . . . yer knows the lane, and yer knows me and the pals, but yer can’t say certain anythink arter. . . . Sal, d’yer think if the God them chaps jaw about lived up there, ’e could look down at the lane, and see them poor little kids, and be ’appy? No, Sal, no; ’tain’t worth it. Come back to me, I’ll keep straight and true. . . .”

“Jim, dear, I can’t; don’t talk so; I do luv yer, but I see how wicked I’ve been, and I ain’t my own to do wot I like with no longer. The Sergeant says I must give myself up altogether.”

He looked hard into her face. . . . “Then yer gives me up, Sal?—well, lass I’d have stuck to yer thro’ thick and thin. . . . But yer know yer own way best. . . . Save yer soul if yer like, but ye’ll damn me.”

He catches the girl roughly to him for one second—then throws her from him, and crossing the road disappears into the gin palace opposite.

For one moment she hesitates, and seems about to rush after him, but then murmuring, "No; the Lord will save 'im too"—and then she wandered down the street.

Adapted.

TWO OF A KIND

PATRICK O'MARS, a private in the Ninth Regulars, went to the colonel of his regiment, and asked for a two weeks' leave of absence. The colonel was a severe disciplinarian, who did not believe in extending too many privileges to his men, and did not hesitate to use a subterfuge in evading the granting of one.

"Well," said the colonel, "what do you want a two weeks' furlough for?"

Patrick answered: "Me wife is sick and the children are not well, and if ye didn't moind she would like to have me home for a few weeks to give her a bit of assistance."

The colonel eyed him for a few minutes, and said:

"Patrick, I might grant your request, but I got a letter from your wife this morning saying that she didn't want you home; that you were a nuisance and raised a rumpus whenever you were there. She hopes I won't let you have any more furloughs."

"That settles it. I suppose I can't get the furlough, then?" said Pat.

"No, I'm afraid not, Patrick. It wouldn't be well for me to do so under the circumstances."

It was Pat's turn now to eye the colonel, as he started for the door. Stopping suddenly he said:

"Colonel, can I say something to ye?"

"Certainly, Patrick; what is it?"

"You won't get mad, colonel, if I say it?"

"Certainly not, Patrick; what is it?"

"I want to say there are two splendid liars in this room, and I'm one of them. I was niver married in me loife."

ANON.

THE PIE IN THE OVEN

AS his spouse entered the kitchen, Mr John M'Nab, seated in his arm-chair, turned a lowering countenance from the bright fire—

"Where the mischief hae ye been?" he demanded crossly; "are we tae hae nae supper the nicht?"

"I was jist at the gate lookin' tae see if I couldna hear Flora comin' up the road wi' the constable."

"Tits, Susie, can ye no ca' him polisman an' be done wi' it?"

"Flora likes us tae ca' him constable."

He proceeded to relight his pipe. "Weel," he said, "did ye hear the polisman comin' up the road?"

"Na, John."

"But in that case he'll no' be within a mile o' the hoose, so we'd best tak' oor supper, you an' me. I haena had a proper meal the day. A body wud think ye was tryin' tae starve me."

"Havers, man, we canna tak' oor supper afore Flora an' the constable comes."

"What wey that?"

"Come, John, ye ken fine what's bringin' the constable, decent lad, here the nicht. Ye needna pretend. I wish ye wud gie him a chance this time. He's bashfu' and backward in comin' forward, it's jist

his modesty ; but ye'll gie him a wee bit encouragement tae say his say, eh, John?"

"D'ye think I'm gaun tae let the man imagine I'm wantin' tae get quit o' Flora, the only bairn we've got left? No' likely."

"Flora's willin' and so am I, and so are you, John, if ye wad but confess it yoursel'."

"If Peter Duff wants Flora, he can ask for her like a man. What hae ye got in the oven, wife?"

"Oh, jist a pie."

"A pie!"—sniff—sniff—"that's guid. Is't ready, Susie?"

"Ay, it's ready, but it'll keep till they come."

"But I want my supper noo," he declared ; "I'm terrible hungry."

"I'm sure they'll no' be lang," she replied. "Maybe the constable'll no' be sae bashfu' the nicht."

"Bah! the man hasna the pluck o' a hen."

"Well, promise ye'll gie him a chance. Three times has he come here tae ask ye for Flora."

"An' sat like a stuffed owl till it was time tae gang tae oor beds."

"I dinna wonder at him no' sayin' muckle, for ye put the fear o' death into the man. If ye wad gie him a bit hint that ye ken what brings him. It's got tae be settled the nicht."

"They're footerin' awa at the gate. I suppose he's feer't tae come in. I micht as weel get oot the pie an' we'll be ready tae mak' a start."

"Ye'll leave the pie whaur it is, ma man. I'm no gaun tae be affronted in ma ain hoose."

"D'ye think I'm gaun tae be starved in ma ain hoose? What's wrang wi' haein' oor supper first an' then I'll hear what Duff has got to say?"

"Wheesht, man, wheesht! I hear them coming."

"Gang ben, Peter."

"But I doot it's ower late. I'll bid ye guid nicht, Flora."

Mrs M'Nab flew to the door. "Come awa ben, Maister Duff. We're rale glad to see ye. Kin' o' cauld the nicht, is it no'?"

"Ay, it's kin' o' cauld, as ye say. It is that. Ay, it's kin' o' cauld. Ay, I hope ye're weel, Maister M'Nab?"

"Sit doon, sit doon," he said shortly, and turned to his daughter. "Ye're late, lassie."

"It's time I was gettin' doon the road."

"Hoots, Maister Duff, ye maun bide an' tak' a bit o' supper wi' us."

"Aw thank ye, but I'd best be gettin' doon the road."

"If he wants tae gang," said Flora, "let him gang."

"Sit doon, man," thundered Mr M'Nab. "Ye'll be fair famishin', Maister Duff?"

"Me! Aw, as sure's death, Maister M'Nab, I couldna eat a bite."

"Come awa, Flora," said Mr M'Nab, "ye'll fin' the pie in the oven. See here, Susie, I'm famishin'."

"Patience, patience;" she said mildly, "John, you an' Maister Duff can hae a smoke an' a crack till I come back."

She went quickly from the room. A groan came from the constable.

"Eh, did you speak?"

"Na, oh, no-no."

"I thocht ye was maybe tryin' for tae say something. It's been a fine day. I'm saying it's been a fine day."

"Ay, so it has."

"If ye're cauld, draw in tae the fire," said the host.

"Aw thank ye," said Peter, wiping his brow.

"Dod, ye're sweetin, man."

"Ay, am sweetin'."

Now its comin', thought Mr M'Nab.

"I was gaun tae ask ye."

"I am listenin', Maister Duff."

"I was gaun tae ask ye."

"Weel, what is it?"

"It was aboot that coo o' yours that was badly. The coo's deid, man, an' the pigs——"

"Ach, man, haud yer tongue and gie yer brain a rest."

Mrs M'Nab came briskly into the kitchen and had a look into the oven. "If the pie's ruined I suppose it canna be helped."

"Aw," said the constable, "is that a pie?"

"Man, can ye no' smell it. Does it smell burnin' or singein', Susie?"

"The pie's burnin'. Aweel, I canna help that."

Flora came to the kitchen and had a look in the oven. "Na, its no' burnin' yet."

"Guidsake, are we tae wait till it's burnt?"

She fled from the kitchen.

Mr M'Nab shouted, "Tell yer mither if she disna gie me my supper I—I'll kill somebody." He went to the door and shouted, "Susie, Susie."

Flora flew to Peter and whispered, "For ony favour be a man."

The door was slammed and the two were left alone.

"Aff wi' yer buits, Maister Duff, or leave this hoose for ever; ask nae questions noo. Gosh, but I've an appetite. Piff, but it's het. Hurry up, Duff."

"Ye're no' for eatin' the pie, are ye?"

"Jist what I'm gaun tae dae. Ye'll eat yer share, my lad. Gang ower tae the dresser and get twa plates."

Peter took down a couple of plates, at the same time disturbed something on the dresser—a large rolling-pin.

"Oh, ye great goat!"

Mrs M'Nab appeared. "Oh, is that what yer after, ma man."

"I think I'd best be gettin' awa'."

"No' likely."

"Let him gang," said M'Nab, "it's a' his faut."

She raised the pie above her head. "If ye let him gang, I'll drop it."

She carried the pie to the oven. "John, will ye gie the man a chance noo?"

"Never; I'll starve first."

"Maister M'Nab," said Peter.

"What the mischief dae ye want?"

"Oh, naething; I jist want—I jist want Flora."

"Guidsake, man, what wey did ye no' say that at first? Here, Flora, Susie. Something has happened."

Ere they arrived he was conveying the pie to the table. "Flora, tak' him, he's yours; and the pie, praise heaven, is mine. Never heed, auld wife, ye got the best o' me, but what's the odds as lang's we're happy. Wha' says pie?"

His wife held up her hand. "Wheesht, John; ask a blessin'."

J. J. BELL.

By arrangement with the Author.

ON THE TRAM CAR

THE sun shone bright from a clear, blue sky. Everybody hurried busily by. The street cars glided along. I was just in time to swing on. Once on the platform, without thinking, I gave the conductor my fare, went forward and was soon wrapped in thought. In a few minutes the conductor came.

"Fare, please," he said in an authoritative tone.

"I paid you," said I, feeling hesitatingly in my pocket at the same time.

"I know you did," was the conductor's sarcastic reply.

Not being quite sure I paid him again. In a few

minutes he came back and returned it to me. He saw by the register that he had taken it before.

"I got your fare twice," he said, apologetically.

"I thought you did. But it's all right," said I.

He stood by me, telling me how such mistakes will sometimes occur.

"Yes, that is so. No matter. It's all right," said I.

A stranger came forward from the back of the car and dropped into a seat next to me. His face wore a sure-to-carry-conviction, want-to-right-a-wrong kind of an air.

"Such mistakes will sometimes happen," he said.

"That's all right. No harm done," said I.

"You see, I didn't notice where you got on," the conductor then said. "After I collected from you, I began to think possibly I had got it before. The other day a lady got on the car and handed me her fare; it was in the afternoon, I don't remember just what day; now, let me see——"

"That's all right," said I, "mistakes are bound to occur."

"Even the best business houses sometimes make mistakes," said a stout man, turning around from the seat in front. "Now, I know a case——"

"This really didn't make any difference," interrupted I. "I couldn't remember at first whether or not I had paid my fare. I didn't want to quarrel about it, so I paid him again."

"Yes," said the stout stranger, "mistakes are bound to occur."

"What is the matter?" said a sympathetic gentleman behind me; "I saw you pay your fare."

"Oh, nothing at all," said I; "I paid him my fare."

"It's a natural mistake," said the sympathetic gentleman; "they are bound to occur."

"Yes, it's all right," said I; "they are bound to occur."

Then a slim, gaunt-looking man, seated at my left

side, turned toward me with an earnest, clear-it-all-away, hear-me-talk, student-like air :

"I guess the conductor did not mean anything. Mistakes will sometimes occur. Last week, for instance, I——"

"That's all right, gentlemen," I said with a sigh. "I must get off here. Good-day. Mistakes are bound to occur."

I walked up and boarded another car.

ANON.

PAT AND THE MAYOR

AN Irishman named Patrick Maloney, recently landed, called upon the mayor to see if he could give him a position on the police force. The mayor, thinking he would have some fun with him, said :

"Before I can do anything for you, you will have to pass a Civil Service examination."

"Ah, dthin," said Pat, "and p'fhat is the Civil Sarvice?"

"It means that you must answer three questions I put to you, and if you answer them correctly I may be able to place you."

"Well," said Pat, "I think I can answer d'thim if they're not too hard."

"The first question is, 'What is the weight of the moon?'"

"Ah, now, how can I tell you that? Shure and I don't know."

"Well, try the second one, 'How many stars are in the sky?'"

"Now you're pokin' fun at me. How do I know how many stars there are in the shky?"

"Then try the third question, and if you answer it correctly I'll forgive you the others, 'What am I thinking of?'"

"Pfhath are you thinkin' of? Shure, how can any man tell what you politicians are thinkin' about. Bedad, I don't belave you know pfhath you're thinkin' about yourself. I guess I'll be lookin' for work ilsewhere, so good-day to you!"

The mayor called Pat back and told him not to be discouraged, but to go home and think about it, and if on the morrow he thought he could answer the questions to come down again and he would give him another chance.

So Pat went home and told his brother Mike about it, whereupon Mike said:

"Now you give me dthim clothes of yours and I'll go down and answer his questions for him."

So next morning Mike went down bright and early, and the mayor recognising Patrick as he thought, said:

"Ah, good morning, Patrick. Have you really come back to answer those three questions I put to you yesterday?"

"Yis, I have."

"Well, the first question is, 'What is the weight of the moon?'"

"The weight of the moon is one hundred pounds, twenty-five pounds to each quarther, four quarthers make one hundred."

"Capital, Patrick, capital! Now the second question is, 'How many stars are in the sky?'"

"How many shtars are in the shky? There are four billion, sivin million, noine hundred and thirty-two tousand and one."

"Splendid, Patrick, splendid. Now look out for the last question, which is, 'What am I thinking of?'"

"Pfhath are you thinkin' of? Well, I know pfhath you're thinkin' of. You're thinkin' I'm Pat, but you're tirribly mistakin'; *I'm his brother Mike?*"

MILITARY DISTINCTION

“THE old-time southerner may be a good democrat, both with the big ‘d’ and the small one,” remarked a New York business man, who had just returned from a trip to North Carolina, “but he dearly loves a military title.

“I have a lively recollection of meeting a nice old gentleman in the Pine Tree state, who was introduced to me as ‘Major’ So and So.

“‘A Confederate veteran, I suppose, sir,’ I observed wanting to be polite.

“‘No, sah,’ was the answer. ‘Do not have the honah, sah.’

“‘Er—perhaps you fought somewhere else then?’ I ventured.

“‘Suttenly not. Nevah was in no war, sah.’

“‘I understand, major,’ I cried, brightening. ‘Of course, you’re an officer of the national guard. Possibly you have served on the governor’s staff.’

“‘You’re wrong, sah. Know nothin’ about soldierin’, sah.’

“‘In that case would you mind telling me how you got that title?’ I asked, bewildered.

“‘Ah married a majah’s widow, sah,’ pompously replied the southerner.”

Adapted.

THE BEST ARTIST

A STORY is told of two artist lovers, both of whom sought the hand of a noted painter’s daughter. The question, which of the two should possess himself of the prize so earnestly coveted by both, having come, finally, to the father, he promised to give his child

to the one that could paint the best. So each strove for the maiden with the highest skill his genius could command.

One painted a picture of fruit, and displayed it to the father's inspection in a beautiful grove, where gay birds sang sweetly among the foliage, and all nature rejoiced in the luxuriance of bountiful life. Presently the birds came down to the canvas of the young painter, and attempted to eat the fruit he had pictured there. In his surprise and joy at the young artist's skill, the father declared that no one could triumph over that.

Soon, however, the second lover came with his picture, and it was veiled. "Take the veil from your painting," said the old man. "I leave that to you," said the young artist, with simple modesty. The father of the young and lovely maiden then approached the veiled picture and attempted to uncover it. But imagine his astonishment, when, as he attempted to take off the veil, he found the veil itself to be a picture! We need not say who was the lucky lover; for if the artist who deceived the birds by skill in fruit manifested great powers of art, he who could so veil his canvas with the pencil as to deceive a skilful master, was surely the greater artist.

R. M.

INFORMATION WANTED

EARLY one morning in the City of London a man was vainly trying to find his home, but being unable to locate it he called upon the services of a passer-by. "Hey, m-m-mister (hic), will you take me to twenty-two?"

"Number twenty—Why you are standing right in front of it!"

"Oh, no, you d-d-don't—that's two-two, two-two!"

"Why, no, it's twenty-two."

"Say, you can't fool me. 'Nuther fellow tried to d-d-do that. He-he-he told me the other side of the street was (hic) on this side—an' 't isn't—s-sit's over there. Please t-t-take me (hic) to twenty-two, will you?"

The man walked him around the block and back again.

"Now, then, get out your key. I must be going."

"Say, it was m-m-mighty (hic) jolly of you to bring me all this l-l-long way ho-ho-home, old chap!"

"That's all right. Now get your key—hurry up."

"I'm ever so much obliged to you for bringing me all this long way ho-ho-home."

"That's all right. I must go now. Good-night."

The man had walked but a little distance when he heard his friend trying to whistle to him.

"Hey! (*Tries to whistle*). C-co-come here, I want ter speak to you. Now d-d-don't get mad (hic), old chap, it's important."

"Well, what do you want?"

"I just want to (hic) tell you how much obliged I'm to you for bringing me all this long way home."

"You had better go to bed now, so good-night."

"Hold up, old chap, you're a-a-a—would you mind telling me what your name is?"

Here the clock in St Paul's struck two.

"My name—is St Paul."

"Good enough, Miss Saint 'All. Much obliged to you for bring—me——"

"Never mind, good-night."

"Hey! Hi! (*Tries to whistle*). Mister Saint 'All—Miss Saint P-all, co-co-come here, I want to ask (hic) you something."

"What!"

"Old f-f-friend, I d-d-d-d-didn't mean that, Misser

Saint Faull,—I just want to ask you a persh-pershonal question, Mis-Mis——”

“Well, what is it?”

“Misser Saint Paul, would you mind telling me whether you ever got answers to those letters you wrote to the Ephesians?”

A. BAIRD (*adapted*).

A GOOD DEED

MAYN'T I stay, ma'am? I'll work, cut wood, go for water, and do all your errands.”

The eyes of the speaker were filled with tears. It was a lad that stood, one winter's day, at the door of a cottage on a bleak moor in Scotland. The snow had been falling fast, and the poor boy looked cold and hungry.

“You may come in, at any rate, till my husband comes home. There, sit down by the fire; you look perishing with the cold;” and she drew a chair up to the warmest corner; then, suspiciously glancing at the boy, she continued setting the table for supper.

Presently came the tramp of heavy boots, and the door was swung open and the husband entered. He looked at the boy, but did not seem very well pleased; nevertheless, he made him come to the table, and was glad to see how heartily he ate his supper.

Day after day passed, and yet the boy begged to be kept until “to-morrow”; so the couple, after due thought, said that as long as he was a good boy and worked so willingly, they would keep him.

One day in the middle of winter a pedlar, who often traded at the cottage, called, and after selling his goods said to the woman—

"You have a boy out there splitting wood, I see."

"Yes; do you know him?"

"He's a gaol-bird!" and the pedlar swung his pack over his shoulder. "That boy I saw in court myself, and heard him sentenced—'Ten months.' You'd do well to look carefully after him."

There was something so dreadful in the word "gaol!" The poor woman trembled as she laid away the things she had bought of the pedlar; nor could she be easy till she had called the boy in, and assured him that she knew the dark part of his history. The boy hung down his head. His cheeks seemed bursting with the hot blood, and his lips quivered.

"Well," he muttered, his whole frame shaking, "there is no use in my trying to do better; everybody hates and despises me: nobody cares about me."

"Tell me," said the woman, "how came you to go, so young, to prison? Where is your mother?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the boy, with a burst of grief; "Oh, I hadn't no mother! I hadn't no mother ever since I was a baby! If I had had a mother I wouldn't have been kicked, and cuffed, and horse-whipped. I wouldn't have been saucy, and got knocked down, and run away, and then stole because I was hungry. Oh, if I had only had a mother!"

The woman was a mother; and, though her children slept in the cold churchyard, she was a mother still. She put her hand kindly on the head of the boy, and said from that time he should find in her a mother.

Yes, she even put her arms around the neck of that forsaken, deserted child. She poured from her mother's heart sweet, kind words—words of counsel and tenderness. Oh, how sweet was her sleep that night! how soft her pillow! she had plucked some thorns from the path of a sinning but starving child.

That poor boy is now a promising man. His

foster-father is dead, his foster-mother is aged and sickly, but she knows no want. The "poor outcast," the "gaol-bird," is her support. Nobly does he repay the trust reposed in him!

A. B. (*adapted*).

ELIZA'S ESCAPE

THE frosty ground creaked beneath her feet, and she trembled at the sound; every quaking leaf and fluttering shadow sent the blood backward to her heart, and quickened her footsteps. The child slept. At first the novelty and alarm kept him waking; but his mother so assured him that if he were only still she would certainly save him, that he clung quietly round her neck, only asking, as he found himself sinking to sleep—"Mother, I don't need to keep awake, do I?" "No, my darling; sleep if you want to." "But, mother, if I do get asleep, you won't let him get me?" "No! so may Heaven help me!" said his mother, with a paler cheek, and a brighter light in her large dark eyes. "You're sure, ain't you, mother?" "Yes, sure!" said the mother, in a voice that startled herself; for it seemed to her to come from a spirit within that was no part of her. An hour before sunset, she entered a village by the Ohio river, which lay, like Jordan, between her and the Canaan of liberty on the other side. It was now early spring, and the river was swollen and turbulent; great cakes of floating ice were swinging heavily to and fro and formed a great undulating raft, filling up the whole river, and extending almost to the Kentucky shore. Eliza saw at once this must prevent the usual ferry boat from running, and turned into a small public-house on the bank to make a few inquiries. "Take him into this room," said the

hostess, opening into a small bedroom where stood a comfortable bed. Eliza laid the weary boy upon it, and held his hand in hers till he was fast asleep. For her there was no rest. As a fire in her bones, the thoughts of the pursuer urged her on; and she gazed with longing eyes on the sullen, surging waters that lay between her and liberty. In consequence of all the various delays, it was about three-quarters of an hour after Eliza had laid her child to sleep in the village tavern that the pursuing party came riding into the same place. Eliza was standing by the window, looking out in another direction, when Sam's quick eye caught a glimpse of her. Haley and Andy were two yards behind. At this crisis Sam contrived to have his hat blown off, and uttered a loud and characteristic ejaculation, which startled her at once; she drew suddenly back—the whole train swept by the window, round to the front door. A thousand lives seemed to be concentrated in that one moment to Eliza. Her room opened by a side door to the river. She caught her child, and sprang down the steps towards it. The trader caught a glimpse of her, just as she was disappearing down the bank; and throwing himself from his horse, and calling loudly to Sam and Andy, he was after her like a hound after a deer. In that dizzy moment her feet scarcely seemed to touch the ground, and an instant brought her to the water's edge. Right on behind they came; and, nerved with strength such as God gives only to the desperate, with one wild cry and flying leap, she vaulted sheer over the turbid current by the shore, on to the raft of ice beyond! The huge green fragment of ice on which she alighted pitched and creaked as her weight came on it, but she stayed there not a moment. With wild cries and desperate energy she leaped to another and still another cake — stumbling — leaping — slipping — springing upwards again! Her shoes are gone—

her stockings cut from her feet—while blood marked every step; but she saw nothing, felt nothing, till dimly, as in a dream, she saw the Ohio side, and a man helping her up the bank.

Mrs H. BEECHER STOWE.

THE FOUR MISS WILLISES

The *Sketches by Boz* were written (says Dickens) “when I was a very young man, and were put by me on a dark night into a dark letter-box in a dark court in Fleet Street.” Boz was the pet name of the author’s younger brother Moses, which, being pronounced through the nose, became Boses, and so finally settled into Boz.

WHEN the four Miss Willises settled in our parish thirteen years ago they were far from juvenile; and we are bound to state that, thirteen years since, the authorities in matrimonial cases considered the youngest Miss Willis in a very precarious state, while the eldest sister was positively given over, as being far beyond all human hope. Well, the Miss Willises took a lease of the house; it was fresh painted and papered from top to bottom; four trees were planted in the back garden, several small baskets of gravel sprinkled over the front one; vans of elegant furniture arrived; the maid-servants told their “Missises,” the Missises told their friends, and vague rumours were circulated throughout the parish that No. 25 in Gordon Place had been taken by four maiden ladies of immense property.

At last the Miss Willises moved in; and then the “calling” began. The house was the perfection of neatness—so were the four Miss Willises. Everything was formal, stiff, and cold—so were the four Miss Willises. Not a single chair of the whole set was ever seen out of its place—not a single Miss

Willis of the whole four was ever seen out of hers. There they always sat, in the same places, doing precisely the same things at the same hour. The eldest Miss Willis used to knit, the second to draw, the two others to play duets on the piano. They seemed to have no separate existence—the Siamese twins multiplied by two. The eldest Miss Willis grew bilious—the four Miss Willises grew bilious immediately. The eldest Miss Willis grew ill-tempered and theological—the four Miss Willises were ill-tempered and theological directly. Whatever the eldest did the others did, and whatever anybody else did they all disapproved of. Three years passed over in this way when an unlooked for and extraordinary phenomenon occurred. Was it possible? one of the four Miss Willises was going to be married!

Now, where on earth the husband came from, by what feelings the poor man could have been actuated, or by what process of reasoning the four Miss Willises succeeded in persuading themselves that it was possible for a man to marry one of them without marrying them all, are questions too profound for us to resolve: certain it is, however, that the visits of Mr Robinson were received—that the four Miss Willises were courted in due form by the said Mr Robinson—that the neighbours were perfectly frantic in their anxiety to discover which of the four Miss Willises was the fortunate fair one, and that the difficulty they experienced in solving the problem was not at all lessened by the announcement of the eldest Miss Willis—“*We* are going to marry Mr Robinson.”

They were so completely identified the one with the other that the curiosity of the whole row was roused almost beyond endurance. The subject was discussed at every little card-table and tea-drinking. One old gentleman expressed his decided opinion

that Mr Robinson was of eastern descent, and contemplated marrying the whole family at once; and the row generally declared the business to be very mysterious. They hoped it might all end well; it certainly had a very singular appearance, but certainly the Miss Willises were *quite* old enough to judge for themselves, and to be sure people ought to know their own business best.

At last, one fine morning, at a quarter before eight o'clock A.M., two coaches drove up to the Miss Willises' door, at which Mr Robinson had arrived in a cab ten minutes before, his manner denoting a considerable degree of nervous excitement. It was also hastily reported that the cook who opened the door wore a large white bow of unusual dimensions, in a much smarter head-dress than the regulation-cap to which the Miss Willises invariably restricted the somewhat excursive tastes of female servants in general.

It was quite clear that the eventful morning had at length arrived; the whole row stationed themselves behind their first- and second-floor blinds, and waited the result in breathless expectation.

At last the Miss Willises' door opened; the door of the first coach did the same. Two gentlemen, and a pair of ladies to correspond—friends of the family, no doubt; up went the steps, bang went the door, off went the first coach, and up came the second.

The street door opened again; the excitement of the whole row increased—Mr Robinson and the eldest Miss Willis. "I thought so," said the lady at No. 19; "I always said it was *Miss Willis!*" "Well, I never!" ejaculated the young lady at No. 18 to the young lady at No. 17—"Did you ever, dear!" responded the young lady at No. 17 to the young lady at No. 18. "It's too ridiculous!" exclaimed a spinster of an *uncertain* age at No. 16, joining in the conversation. But who shall portray

the astonishment of Gordon Place when Mr Robinson handed in *all* the Miss Willises, one after the other, and then squeezed himself into an acute angle of the coach, which forthwith proceeded at a brisk pace after the other coach, which other coach had itself proceeded at a brisk pace in the direction of the parish church. Who shall depict the perplexity of the clergyman when *all* the Miss Willises knelt down, and repeated the responses incidental to the marriage service in an audible voice—or who shall describe the confusion which prevailed when—even after the difficulties thus occasioned had been adjusted—*all* the Miss Willises went into hysterics at the conclusion of the ceremony!

As the four sisters and Mr Robinson continued to occupy the same house after this memorable occasion, and as the married sister, whoever she is, never appeared in public without the other three, we are not quite clear that the neighbours ever have discovered the real Mrs Robinson.

CHARLES DICKENS.

JEAN VAL JEAN AND THE BISHOP

From *Les Miserables* (abridged)

THE characters introduced here are Jean Val Jean, a liberated convict, who for the petty theft of a loaf of bread, stolen to save his sister from starvation, had endured nineteen years' servitude at the galleys, and the bishop, whose marvellous sympathy and generosity are the means of salvation to Jean Val Jean's warped and fire-hardened soul.

The scene is laid in a little mountain town. The Bishop has just listened to his housekeeper's account of a suspicious-looking stranger in town, and her oft-

repeated plea for more secure locks, when there came a loud knock at the door.

"My name is Jean Val Jean. I am a galley slave. I was liberated four days ago. I have been walking for four days, and to-day I have marched twelve leagues. This evening on coming into the town I went to the inn, but was sent away in consequence of my yellow passport, which I had shown at the police office.

"It was the same everywhere, and no one would have any dealings with me. I went to the prison and the jailer would not take me in. I got into the dog kennel, but the dog bit me and drove me off: it seemed to know who I was. I went into the fields to sleep in the starlight, but there were no stars. I was lying down on a stone in the square when a good woman pointed to your house and said, 'Go and knock there!' What sort of a house is this? Do you keep an inn? I have money—one hundred and nine francs, which I earned in my nineteen years' toil. I will pay, for I have money. I am hungry. Will you let me stay here?"

The Bishop turned to his housekeeper and said, "Madame Magloire, you will lay another knife and fork."

"Wait a minute. Did you not hear me say that I was a galley slave?"

"Madame Magloire," said the Bishop, "you will put clean sheets on the bed in the alcove. We shall sup directly, sir, and your bed will be ready when you are through supping."

"You really mean that I am to stay? You keep an inn?"

"I am a priest living in this house."

"A priest! Oh, what a worthy priest! I suppose you will not ask me for money."

"No, keep your money. How long did it take you in earning those one hundred and nine francs?"

"Nineteen years."

"Nineteen years? Madame Magloire, lay his place as near the fire as you can; the night breeze is sharp on the Alps, and you must be cold, sir. This lamp gives a very bad light."

The housekeeper, Madame Magloire, understood, and fetched from the chimney of the Bishop's bedroom two silver candlesticks, which she placed on the table ready lighted.

"Monsieur, you are good, and do not despise me. You receive me as a friend and light your wax candles for me, and yet I have not hidden from you whence I come."

"You need not have told me who you were; this is not my house, but the house of Christ. This door does not ask a man who enters whether he has a name, but if he has a sorrow."

"Is that true? You know my name?"

"Yes, you are my brother. You have suffered greatly? Yes, you have come from a place of sorrow. Listen to me! There will be more joy in heaven over the tearful face of a repentant sinner than a hundred just men."

After supper the Bishop took up one of the silver candlesticks and handed the other to his guest.

"I will lead you to your room, sir."

At the moment they went through the adjoining room to the alcove, where a clean bed was prepared for him, Madame Magloire was putting away the plate in the cupboard over the bedhead; it was the last thing she did every night before retiring.

"I trust you will pass a good night."

The man did not even take advantage of the clean white sheets. He blew out the candle and threw himself in his clothes upon the bed, where he at once fell into a deep sleep.

As two o'clock pealed from the cathedral bell Jean Val Jean awoke. He had noticed the six

silver forks and spoons and the great ladle which Madame Magloire put on the table.

His mind wavered for a good hour. When three o'clock struck he suddenly sat up, then walked boldly to the alcove. With a crowbar in his right hand and deadening his footsteps, he walked towards the door of the Bishop's room.

Jean Val Jean listened, but there was not a sound. He pushed the door with the tip of his finger lightly.

He waited for a moment and then pushed the door again more boldly. Jean Val Jean advanced cautiously and carefully. He heard from the end of the room the calm and regular breathing of the sleeping Bishop.

Jean Val Jean was standing in the shadow with his crowbar in his hand, motionless and terrified by this luminous old man. No one could have said what was going on within him, not even himself.

It seemed as if he were hesitating between two abysses, and was ready to dash out the Bishop's brains or kiss his hand. The Bishop continued to sleep peacefully beneath this terrific glance.

All at once Jean Val Jean put on his cap again, walked rapidly along the bedside without looking at the Bishop, and hurried across the room, not caring for the noise he made, opened the window, put the silver in his pocket, threw away the basket, leaped into the garden, bounded over the wall like a tiger and fled.

The next morning at sunrise the Bishop was walking around the garden, when the housekeeper came running toward him in a state of great alarm.

"Monseigneur! Monseigneur! Does your grandeur know where the plate basket is?"

"Yes."

"The Lord be praised; I did not know what had become of it."

The Bishop had just picked up the basket in

a flower bed and now handed it to Madame Magloire.

"Here it is."

"Well, there is nothing in it. Where is the plate?"

"Ah, it is the plate that troubles your mind. Well, I do not know where it is."

"It is stolen, and that man who came here last night is the robber. Ah! what an abomination; he has stolen our plate."

"By the way, was that plate ours? Madame Magloire, I had wrongfully held back the silver, which belonged to the poor. Who was this person? Evidently a poor man."

A few minutes later he was breakfasting at the same table at which Jean Val Jean sat on the previous evening.

There was a loud knock at the door.

"Come in."

The door opened and a strange and violent group appeared on the threshold. Three men were holding a fourth by the collar. The three men were gendarmes. The fourth was Jean Val Jean.

The Bishop advanced as rapidly as his great age permitted.

"Ah, there you are! I am glad to see you. Why, I gave you the candlesticks, too, which are silver and will fetch two hundred francs. Why did you not take them away with the rest of the plate?"

Jean Val Jean opened his eyes and looked at the Bishop with an expression which no human language could render.

"Monseigneur, what this man told us is true, then? We met him, and as he looked as if he was running away we arrested him. He had this plate. In that case we can let him go."

"Of course."

The gendarmes loosened their hold on Jean Val Jean, who tottered backward.