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THE IDLER MAGAZINE.

AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY.

June 1893.

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Memoirs of a Female Nihilist.

BY SOPHIE WASSILIEFF.

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II.—IN PRISON.

The life of a female prisoner! It is so uniformly dull that I fear to weary you, friends, in repeating its history; while for me, even now, outside of some few days only too memorable, the twenty-seven months spent in the fortress are like a great hole, empty and badly lighted, at the bottom of which sometimes passed human shadows and some few phantasmagorical scenes.

In these scattered remembrances, the foremost is my cell and the first moments I passed there.

About ten feet square, its stone walls were covered with whitewash. For furniture, a whitewood stool showing the marks of time and hard wear, a rough deal table, a narrow iron bedstead with thin mattress, a pillow filled with horsehair, and a coarse grey blanket such as is used for covering horses. These details, lighted up for a moment by the candle held by the director of the prison who accompanied me, soon fade away, not into darkness, but into semi-obscurity, for above the door, the dark outlines of which form a contrast with the surrounding whitewashed walls, is a square of glass the width of the door, and behind this burns a small paraffin lamp. By the uncertain light of this lamp, I try to get a more exact idea of my new abode.

High up in the wall opposite the door is a deep and dark hole which I presume to be a window. On the floor, in addition to the slender furniture noticed by the light of the candle, I vaguely distinguish the outlines of my travelling trunk and of a water-jug. The cold humid air gives off a musty odour. Silence reigns, but, as I move, the sound of my footsteps echoes and re-echoes beneath the vaulted roof of the corridor.



THE FACE AT THE WICKET.

All this gives to my cell the aspect of a funeral vault, into which, a few moments ago, I entered full of feverish life and vibrating emotion, and in which I now suddenly find myself buried. From time to time, at intervals of about ten minutes, this cavern is lighted up a little more brightly. There is in the door, at about the height of a man, another window much smaller than that to which I have already referred, a sort of wicket that I have not before noticed, and which on the outside appears to be protected by a shutter. At intervals, this shutter opens with a metallic noise; a ray of bluish light penetrates into my cell, and behind the wicket appears the head and part of the shoulders of a man. He wears a moustache, and for several seconds regards me attentively. Accustomed to the stronger gaslight burning in the corridor, he can only vaguely distinguish what is going on in the cell. His eyes, fixed on me at short intervals, vex and trouble me. Taking advantage of one of these intervals, I rapidly change the clothes I am wearing for others larger and more comfortable, which Aunt Vera has put into my trunk, and then I throw myself upon my narrow bed. A few minutes later, amidst the noise of iron bars and padlocks being removed, my cell door opens, and then a woman appears, and behind her I notice several men wearing blue uniforms braided with silver. The woman, whose features, owing to her back being turned towards the light, I can only vaguely distinguish, appears to be either a servant, or a woman of the people; she alone enters my cell.

This apparition causes a shudder to go through my entire being. I have before now heard of an atrocious and odious proceeding, of a special search, for the carrying out of which the prisoners, gagged and strapped on their beds, or to the iron rings found in the walls of the cells of all political prisons, are reduced to absolute helplessness, while men and women appointed to this work examine their mouths, their hair, their ears, every fold of their garments and of their bodies, in the search for some scrap of paper hidden at the last moment, and on which, perchance, may be found a name or an address.

The sudden remembrance of these examinations [1] exasperates and freezes me with terror. I rise and stand trembling by the side of my bed, with arms outstretched to defend myself, while I follow each of my visitor's movements, and question her, "What does she require? Why has she come?" She neither replies nor turns her head, but gathers up the garments I have taken off, together with the few toilet necessaries I have placed on the table, then turning towards me she extends her right arm. I start back, and my question, "What do you require of me?" becomes almost a scream.

Ah! no—happily, no!—it is only to take the fur mantle that I have used to cover my feet, and that, silently, and with the same noiseless footsteps, my ghostly visitor takes away, together with my other effects.

Are they to be examined, or are they simply taken away in order to be replaced by the prisoner's garb? I know not, and the question is one of perfect indifference to me. But the clang of iron bars and padlocks being replaced on the door, all this noise of iron, which so painfully affected me an hour ago, I now listen to with a sigh of relief.



**"TURNING TOWARDS ME,
SHE EXTENDS HER RIGHT ARM."**

This noise, and possibly my cry, appears to have awakened some of the other prisoners. I hear blows struck on the doors; voices, unknown to me, or rendered unrecognisable by reason of the thickness of these cursed walls, appear to be crying out and questioning. The questions remain unanswered, but they tell me that I am not alone; that I need only cry for help in order, if need be, to put the entire prison in a state of revolt. This idea soothes my nerves, and I lie close against the humid wall, behind which I feel there is an unknown but blessed protection, and with my face pressed into the hard horsehair pillow, I give vent to my first prisoner's tears; tears of agony and impotent revolt, tears of farewell to life.

By daylight the appearance of my cell is not improved. The narrow door made from rough oak is crossed on the inside with iron bars, while those on the outside, together with the locks and padlocks, render it almost as solid as the walls. As to the latter, white at night, they appear in the day, thanks to the moisture with which they are covered, a bluish grey. The window, placed high in a niche of the wall, is about twenty inches square, and is protected on the inner side by a grating. It is double, composed of eight small panes, those on the inner side being of fluted ground-glass, so that it is impossible to see what is going on outside. As the window is never opened, the dust has accumulated, and the light that now filters through is dull and grey. Grey are the stone blocks of which the floor is composed; grey the oak door, the furniture, and the walls; grey the narrow bed, with coarse grey covering, and all this grey, of which afterwards I learned to distinguish the shades, constitutes a cloud which presses and weighs upon the prisoner. Later on, in the Swiss mountains, it sometimes happened that I was enveloped in a cloud which, intercepting light and sound, cut me off from the rest of the world. A sojourn in one of these clouds gives to the surprised traveller, by reason of its rarity, a series of curious impressions. But twenty-seven months in a cloud is a long time! A very long time! Three times each day, with a noise of falling iron, the door of my cell opened, and on the threshold appeared two men in blue uniforms braided with silver, and armed with swords and revolvers. A third, dressed as an orderly, entered my cell carrying a tray, on which, morning and evening, was placed a glass, a teapot, sugar, and bread—at noon, a bowl of soup, and a plate containing the daily ration of meat and vegetables, all cut in small pieces. In the morning the orderly swept out my cell, filled my water-jug, and, if so desired, opened a movable pane at the top of the window, which when closed was secured by a catch.

These three silent and regular visits were the sole events of the day. Outside of these—an absolute void, a heavy silence, broken from time to time by the clang of a sword-sabbard on the pavement or the jingle of a spur, instantly suppressed.

This silence, this void, I feel but in a slight degree during the first days after my arrest—that is to say, physically. Morally, however, although separated from the world by these thick walls, I am still too near to it. At every hour of the day I can picture to myself what is taking place at home and amongst my friends, and I live their life. The desire to know if the others have been arrested, and under what circumstances, mingles with the anxiety which preoccupies me. I await with impatience the first interrogatory examination, for the questions then asked are for the political prisoner the only indications obtainable from which he can form an idea of why he has been arrested, what are the charges against him, and what fate he may expect!

I am very weary because of sleepless nights, partly due to being obliged to lie down in my clothes, and also because of excitement, which tends to keep



TELEGRAPHIC SIGNALS.

only separated from the latter by an antechamber, the doors and windows of which are barred and grilled in the same manner as the cells. Notwithstanding this, and although the distance is so short, an escort, composed of an officer of constabulary, two subalterns, and a private, await me outside my cell, armed with revolvers in their belts and sword-bayonets in their hands. This display of force for a woman prisoner, who is little more than a child, causes me to smile.

Arrived at the Director's cabinet, a large whitewashed room, in the centre of which is a table covered by a green cloth, and on which are papers, I find myself in the presence of three gentlemen. The first of these is a short, fat man, with bald pointed head, sharp, crafty grey eyes, and he reminds me of one of the rats with which the prison abounds, but it is a rat in uniform. This is the director of the prison, Capt. W—. The second is Col. P—, who, a fortnight ago, arrested me. He is still young, tall, broad-shouldered, and his constabulary uniform seems almost too tight for him. His face, square and massive, is pitted with smallpox, his moustache small and fair, and his eyes sharp and ferret-like. The third, who is in mufti, is Mr. N—, the procurer to the Chamber of Judgments. [2] Tall, stout, with an insignificant face, brown eyes, and a brown beard shaved on the chin, he is still a young man. In the town of X—, where he is a stranger, he enjoys a reputation for ability and intelligence in conducting examinations. I know him by sight, and his presence gives me cause for inquietude, for, as a rule, in ordinary cases he is satisfied to leave their conduct to one of his substitutes. I cannot help noticing the air of wellbeing and repose which characterises these gentlemen, as compared with my nervous and fatigued state, and the comparison puts me on my guard.



COLONEL P—.

me awake. My days I spend in alternately feverishly promenading my cell and lying on my bed in a state which is neither sleeping nor waking. Gradually I learn to correspond with my neighbours by means of telegraphic signals. Ah! those signals! How carefully should they be studied by all those whose fate it may one day be to be confined in a political prison, and who in Russia is not liable to such a fate? I know the signals theoretically—that is to say, I know how the alphabet is produced. But from theory to practice is a long stride, and to what movements of impatience have I given way, how desperately in my unnerved state have I struggled in order to learn the meaning of the light blows struck against the walls, and to understand the precious words that were addressed to me.

After a fortnight of such days, each of which, taken by itself, seemed more empty and slower than the previous one, but which, taken as a whole, appeared, by reason of their absolute uniformity, to have passed like a dream, I am at last summoned to the cabinet of the director of the prison, in order to be interrogated. The cabinet is at the other end of the corridor, and

I mistrust the half-closed eyes, apparently tired and sleepy, with which Mr. N— examines me, and I also mistrust my outspoken nature and the ease with which I am carried away, characteristics which Serge and Aunt Vera have so often tried to repress. On the table is the parcel of books found at my home at the time of my arrest. Where they come from remains an enigma which I fear to touch, because its solution may compromise some of my relatives and friends. Therefore, after I have replied to sundry questions concerning my social status, I refuse to answer any other. My refusal provokes much dissatisfaction, especially on the part of Colonel P—, who resorts to heroic measures, promising, if I speak, to immediately set me at liberty, but threatening, if I refuse, a long imprisonment and, possibly, hard labour. After half-an-hour devoted to a discussion, in which Mr. N— takes only a very small part, I am escorted to my cell, and informed that I have a week in which to reflect. Tired out, nervously excited, I have learnt nothing as to my probable fate. On the other hand, the large sheet of white paper, which was intended for my confession, only bears my name, age, address, and the statement that, *as to my political opinions*, I am a revolutionary socialist, and this document I have signed.

The scene in the Director's cabinet is renewed two or three times. I take advantage of these examinations to ask for books and the removal of the "blue angel," whose almost continual presence at the wicket of my door is intended to keep me from communicating with my neighbours, to render my life more miserable, to force me to confess, and to make it a matter of impossibility for me to change my garments, or enjoy any repose. Aunt Vera, to whom, according

to prison regulations, I am allowed to write once a month, works towards the same end. At last, one fine day, Capt. W— comes to my cell and informs me that, morning or evening, when I desire it, I can dismiss the sentry for half-an-hour. Two men who follow Capt. W— bring in my large travelling trunk, in which, among other things, I find part of my boarding school trousseau, including bedding and the numbered knife, fork, and spoon. At the same time, I obtain permission to take books from the prison library. These consist principally of various editions of the Gospels, and the dull "lives" of saints who never troubled themselves about earthly affairs.

Thanks to these books, of which I soon get a selection, to be later on replaced by others sent by Aunt Vera; thanks to the whiteness of my quilt and tablecloth [3]; and, lastly, to a few toilet objects found in my trunk, and an alarm clock, which I still possess, my cell appears less repulsive than heretofore. And when at night, dressed in one of those long white flannel dressing-gowns, which Aunt Vera has made especially for me, I stretch myself in my bed, I am happy as one rarely is between those walls covered with the dew of prisoners' tears, and dream of immense steppes, the blue sea, and a vast expanse free and flooded in sunlight.

II.

This period, so poor in events, is for me most memorable, for it is the commencement of my monotonous life as a prisoner. I spend the greater portion of my time reading. Pen, ink, and paper are forbidden to political prisoners, as are also newspapers, reviews, and other works dealing with current events. Even the books allowed, although they have already been passed by the Public Censor, are again examined by Colonel P—, who rigorously eliminates every line even distantly hinting at politics or social life, or which may appear to him "subversive." Thanks to this system, I for some time read nothing but scientific and philosophic works, for which classes of reading I am too young and but ill-prepared. Gradually, however, these works take hold upon me; they appeal to my pride, and I struggle to vanquish the difficulties of understanding these vast systems which rule the world, of which I know so little. They cause me to reflect, and appeal to my imagination. Outside of these works, I write Aunt Vera to send me those of different poets and celebrated novelists, and to send them as much as possible in chronological order, so that I may improve my knowledge of literature. This simple desire is in opposition to Colonel P—'s system. Fortunately, he does not know foreign languages, and such books are sent for approval to Mr. N—, who, more intelligent than his colleague, does not need to read a book through to grasp its motive, and so he signs most of what is presented to him, and then they are sent to me. Reading, with short intervals for needlework or embroidery, constitutes my daily life, excepting for the interruptions for meals and the daily walk in the narrow prison yard. There is very little to attract in this solitary walk in a small paved court-yard, surrounded by high walls, and with a soldier or policeman at each corner. The walk is soon over, however, for only one prisoner is allowed there at one time, and there are many prisoners, and the winter days are short. The most peaceable time is the twilight hour. Then the feeble light reflected from the snow and filtered through the frost-covered panes of my window rapidly declines. Then I am forced to drop work or reading, and I abandon myself to the current of my sad thoughts. I feel tired and discouraged. The slow course of a political trial of which the preliminary examinations often extend over several years; the absolute and arbitrary character of the proceedings, the ready-made verdict sent from St. Petersburg; the prisoner's ignorance of the offence of which he is accused, and of which he seldom obtains details until the trial is ended; the disastrous influence which prison life exercises, even on the strongest, all tend to prove that, once in prison, one can never be certain of regaining liberty. This idea, which the anxiety and the fatigue of the first few days chases away, returns later on with renewed force. Then another, not less painful and more important, creeps into the brain, namely, the absolute inutility of all that one can do or learn. At such times, in the semi-obscurity of my cell, when the wind is shaking my window as though it would tear it from its stone casing, I, who am only eighteen or nineteen years of age, ask myself, with infinite agony of soul, of what use are these books, of what use is life, if it is only to be a longer or shorter suffering, without the opportunity of being useful for something or to somebody?

To escape from these thoughts, I often pass the twilight hour at my window. The prison regulations forbid it, but prisoners pay little attention to this or any other rule, and our keepers, soldiers, officers, or Captain W— passing by, and noticing a prisoner at the window, simply shrug their shoulders as who would say, "What can they see?" And after all they are right, for there is little to be seen. Above, a small patch of sky; below, under the window, a sentry pacing up and down; farther on, the wall surrounding the prison; beyond that, the outside wall surrounding the fortress; and lastly, a plain, through which a river takes its course. At times on this plain I notice moving figures. Sometimes, too, the evening breeze brings to my ears the sound of laughter, a call, or a soldier's song. These indications of life in the distance are so feeble that in reality they amount to very little. And yet, in order to catch them on the wing, I sometimes



AT NIGHT.

pass hours at the little open square in my window, in spite of the cold and the snow and rain beating upon my face.

But now it is night. Tea is served, together with cold meat, purchased with money deposited at the prison office by prisoners or their friends. The little lamp above the door is lighted, the cell is locked, and the key handed over to the prison director. This regulation is not without its dangers [4], but I am thankful to know that, although I cannot go out, nor even receive the friends I so much desire to see, still there is no fear of a sudden visit from Colonel P— or his soldiers; nor of one of those examinations that sometimes take place in the cells. I also like the lamplight at night. Too dim to read or work by, it enlarges and transforms my little cell, so sad and grey by daylight, and in filling it with a golden mist produces an illusion of warmth and life. Besides, the evening is the time for telegraphic communications with neighbours, conversations which, thanks to the impossibility of the “blue angel’s” interruption, are often prolonged far into the night. This is also the hour for memories and dreams. Tired of counting the rapid and hardly perceptible blows, and putting together the letters and words composing the sentences they convey, I stretch myself upon my bed; I gaze into the dim and golden mist, and gradually people it with life and movement. Again I see our immense plains, the towns, the country with its innumerable natural riches, and the suffering and misery which our *régime* imposes upon the inhabitants, and the view of which agonises my heart. The scene is gradually peopled with known and loved faces, amongst which those of Serge and Aunt Vera oftenest appear. Sometimes the figures appear one after the other, then in groups, bringing back details of their life and of mine. These figures appearing before me stand out in such strong relief, that I sometimes forget my past and try to read the future of those for whom it exists—and for others I build castles in Spain. Often, too, joining my desires to all that my intelligence and imagination can create that is beautiful, I indulge in Utopias, and before my eyes, enlarged by the feverish dream, pass immense crowds, free, good, beautiful and happy, crowds grand as humanity.

The noise of footsteps, or the closing of a door, a groan or a cry, sometimes disperse these memories and dreams; for in the prison no doors open at night save to commit fresh prisoners, and no cries are heard save cries for help. Uneasy, I rise, as others did the night I was brought here, and listen. If the noise or the groan is prolonged, if the cry is repeated, I and others knock on the wicket of our doors in order to call the attention of the “blue angel.” As he is not allowed to speak to the prisoners, he generally indicates by dumb motions that all is well and that one may sleep in peace. But as he opens the wicket we obtain a glimpse of part of the corridor, and that often enables us to judge of what is taking place. Besides, these signals are intended to convey to the new arrival, or the comrade taken ill, that he is not alone, and that we are watching. Generally this suffices, but if not, then one or more of the prisoners takes up some hard object, such as a bottle or stool, and commences to knock on the door. In an instant the prison is alarmed, the prisoners, suddenly awakened, call for an explanation, often difficult to furnish, and in turn seize their stools and strike. The din produced by these blows, struck simultaneously, is enormous, and I know and can imagine nothing more frightfully lugubrious than to be suddenly awakened by this awful noise, and to find oneself in a cold cell from which there is no issue.



IN THE PRISON YARD.



"GHOSTS."

This method, one of the few employed by prisoners for the purpose of imposing their collective will, is only resorted to in exceptional cases, as, for instance, when it is necessary to force the warders and the director to attend to a sick comrade, or to summon the doctor at an unusual hour.

Outside of these events, outside of memories and dreams, my prison life has also its joys. These consist in the letters I receive from Serge and Aunt Vera. The former are full of a forced gaiety, short and commonplace, for the prison regulations forbid prisoners to write on other subjects save their health, clothes, and books, and they are all read by a constabulary officer, who acts as censor.

Aunt Vera's letters are long, and she tries to encourage me by a recital of the efforts she is making in order to obtain an interview with me, and each of her dear letters ends with "until we meet." But that "until" is long, and lasts eight months. At last, one day, at the commencement of summer, I hear a male voice in the corridor cry, "No. 16 for an interview." My heart throbs as though it would burst, and as soon as my door is opened I rush into the corridor, and then into the antechamber. I push the door pointed out by the warder, who enters with me, and instead of finding myself in Aunt Vera's arms, rush against a wire screen, light but strong, and closely woven. This network is high, and stretched entirely across the room. A few steps beyond is a similar screen, and between, as in a cage, is a constabulary officer with red, bloated face, who, with hands behind his back, walks slowly up and down.

This officer, these nets, this drunkard's face, blot out at intervals the gentle form of Aunt Vera, who, on the other side of the cage, is doing her utmost to smile at me through her tears. Later on I get accustomed to all this, but at this first interview, so much desired, so long waited for, I feel choking with rage and despair. I do not know how to reply to Aunt Vera's enquiries, and, when I do, my voice is so strange that it causes her to murmur in despair—"My God, how you are changed, my little one!"

Changed! It is possible! The prison so crushes its victims that it is no wonder they change, especially when they are young and stay there a long time. Of the changes in myself I am aware only much later. In waiting, my slow, dull life is passed in a cloud, which covers and presses upon the prisoner until the day when the lightning flash and the tempest rends the clouds and brings down showers of tears and blood.

(To be continued.)

FOOTNOTES:

- [1] These examinations of the person only take place in cases of exceptional gravity. On the other hand, it is not prisoners alone who have to submit to the ordeal, but all persons suspected of concealing papers, Russian travellers returning from abroad, &c., &c.
- [2] Court of Justice which, if necessary, revises the judgements of the other courts, and deals with cases of exceptional gravity. Doubting the best judges—since the acquittal of Vera Vassoulitch—the Government no longer confides political cases to civil courts, but hands them over either to martial courts, or the Chamber of Judgments. This latter court has no examining judge, that function being undertaken by the procurer.

[3] The regulations admit only articles in white, black, or grey.

[4] In 1877, or '78, an Odessa prisoner, named Solomine, in an access of melancholia, tied himself on his bed and then set fire to the bedding. The smoke issuing through the door cracks warned the keepers, but the key had been handed to the director, and he was in town. When the door was at last forced open there only remained the ashes of the bedding and a partly carbonised corpse.

The Legs of Sister Ursula.

BY RUDYARD KIPLING.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HAL HURST.

The one man of all men who could have told this tale and lived has long since gone to his place; and there is no apology for those that would follow in the footsteps of Lawrence Sterne.

In a nameless city of a land that shall be nameless, a rich man lived alone. His wealth had bought him a luxurious flat on the fifth floor of a red-brick mansion, whose grilles were of hammered iron, and whose halls were of inlaid marble. When he needed attendance, coals, his letters, a meal, a messenger or a carriage, he pressed an electric button and his wants were satisfied almost as swiftly as even petulant wealth could expect. An exceedingly swift lift bore him to and from his rooms, and in his rooms he had gathered about him all that his eye desired—books in rich cases with felted hinges, ivories from all the world, rugs, lamps, cushions, couches, engravings and rings with engravings upon them, miniatures of pretty women, scientific toys and china from Persia. He had friends and acquaintances as many as he could befriend or know; and some said that more than one woman had given him her whole love. Therefore, he could have lacked nothing whatever.

One day a hot sickness touched him with its finger, and he became no more than a sick man alone among his possessions, the sport of dreams and devils and shadows, sometimes a log and sometimes a lunatic crying in delirium. Before his friends forsook him altogether, as healthy brutes will forsake the wounded, they saw that he was efficiently doctored, and the expensive physician who called upon him at first three times a day, and later only once, caused him to be nursed by a nun. "Science is good," said the physician, "but for steady, continuous nursing, with no science in it, Religion is better—and I know Sister Ursula."

So this sick man was nursed by a nun, young and fairly pretty, but, above all, skilful. When he got better he would give the convent, and not Sister Ursula, a thankoffering which would be spent among the poor whom Sister Ursula chiefly attended. At first the man knew nothing of the nun's existence—he was in the country beyond all creeds—but later a white coifed face came and went across his visions, and at last, spent and broken, he woke to see a very quiet young woman in black moving about his room. He was too weak to speak: too weak almost to cling to life any more. In his despair he thought that it was not worth clinging to; but the woman was at least a woman and alive. The touch of her fingers in his as she gave him the medicine was warm. She testified to the existence of a world full of women also alive—the world he was beginning to disbelieve in. He watched her sitting in the sunshine by the window, and counted the light creeping down from bead to bead of the rosary at her waist. They then moved his bed to the window that he might look down upon the stately avenue that ran by the flat-house, and watch the people going to and fro about their business. But the change, instead of cheering, cast him into a deeper melancholy. It was nearly a hundred feet, sheer drop, to those healthy people walking so fast, and the mere distance depressed him unutterably. He played with the scores of visiting-cards that his friends had left for him, and he tried to play with the knobs of the desk close to the head of his bed, and he was very, very wretched.



"A HOT SICKNESS TOUCHED HIM WITH ITS FINGER."

One morning he turned his face away from the sunlight and took no interest in anything, while the hand turned back upon the dial so swiftly that it almost alarmed the doctor. He said to himself: "Bored, eh? Yes. You're just the kind of over-educated, over-refined man that would drop his hold on life through sheer boredom. You've been a most interesting case so far, and I won't lose you." He said to Sister Ursula that he would send an entirely fresh prescription by his boy, and that Sister Ursula must give it to the invalid every twenty minutes without fail. Also, if the man responded, it might be well to talk to him a little. "He needs cheering up. There is nothing the matter with him now; but he won't pick up."

There can be few points of sympathy between a man born, bred, trained, and sold for and to the world and a good nun made for the service of other things. Sister Ursula's voice was very sweet, but the matter of her speech did not interest. The invalid lay still, looking out of the window upon the street all dressed in its Sunday afternoon emptiness. Then he shut his eyes. The doctor's boy rang at the door. Sister Ursula stepped out into the hall, not to disturb the sleeper, and took the medicine from the boy's hand. Then the lift shot down again, and even as she turned the wind of its descent puffed up and blew to the spring-lock door of the rooms with a click only a little more loud than the leap of her terrified heart.



"SISTER URSULA."

Sister Ursula tried the door softly, but rich men with many hundred pounds worth of *bric-à-brac* buy themselves very well made doors that fasten with singularly cunning locks. Then the lift returned with the boy in charge, and, so soon as his Sunday and rather distracted attention was drawn to the state of affairs, he suggested that Sister Ursula should go down to the basement and speak to the caretaker, who doubtless had a duplicate key. To the basement, therefore, Sister Ursula went with the medicine-bottle clasped to her breast, and there, among mops and brooms and sinks and heating pipes, and the termini of all the electric communications of that many-storied warren, she found, not the caretaker, but his wife, reading a paper, with her feet on a box of soap. The caretaker's wife was Irish, and a Catholic, reverencing the Church in all its manifestations. She was not only sympathetic, but polite. Her husband had gone out, and, being a prudent guardian of the interests confided to him, had locked up all the duplicate keys.

"An' the saints only know whin Mike'll be back av a Sunday," she concluded cheerfully, after a history of Mike's peculiarities. "He'll be afther havin' supper wid friends."

"The medicine!" said Sister Ursula, looking at the inscription on the bottle. "It must begin at twenty minutes past five. There are only ten minutes now. There *must*—oh! there must be a way!"

"Give him a double dose next time. The docthor won't know the differ." The convent of Sister Ursula is not modelled after Irish ideals, and the



"READING A PAPER, WITH HER FEET ON A BOX OF SOAP."

present duty before its nun was to return to the locked room with the medicine. Meantime the minutes flew bridleless, and Sister Ursula's eyes were full of tears.

"I must get to the room," she insisted. "Oh, surely, there is a way, any way!"

"There's wan way," said the caretaker's wife, stung to profitable thought by the other's distress. "And that's the way the tenants would go in case av fire. To be sure now I might send the lift boy."

"It would frighten him to death. He must not see strangers. What is the way?"

"If we wint into the cellar an' out into the area, we'll find the ground ends av the fire-eshcapes that take to all the rooms. Go aisy, dear."

Sister Ursula had gone down the basement steps through the cellar into the area, and with clenched teeth was looking up the monstrous sheer of red-brick wall cut into long strips by the lessening perspective of perpendicular iron ladders. Under each window each ladder opened

out into a little, a very little, balcony. The rest was straighter than a ship's mast.

The caretaker's wife followed, panting; came out into the sunshine, and, shading her eyes, took stock of the ground.

"He'll be No. 42 on the Fifth. Thin this ladder goes up to it. Bad luck to thim, they've the eshcapes front an' back, spoilin' the look av a fine house: but it's all paid for in the rint. Glory be to God, the avenue's empty—all but. But it should ha' been the back—it should ha' been the back!"

Two children were playing in the gutter. But for these the avenue was deserted, and the hush of a Sabbath afternoon hung over it all. Sister Ursula put the medicine-bottle carefully into the pocket of her gown. Her face was as white as her coif.

"'Tis not for me," said the caretaker's wife, shaking her head sadly. "I'm so's to be round, or I'd go wid ye. Those ladders do be runnin' powerful straight up an' down. 'Tis scandalous to think—but in a fire, an' runnin' wid their night clothes, they'd not stop to think. Go away, ye two little imps, there! The bottle's in your pocket? You'll not lose good hold av the irons. What is ut?—oh!"

Sister Ursula retreated into the cellar, dropped on her knees, and was praying—praying as Lady Godiva prayed before she mounted her palfrey. The caretaker's wife had barely time to cross herself, and follow her example, when she was on her feet again, and her feet were on the lowest rungs of the ladder.

"Hould tight," said the caretaker's wife. "Oh, darlint, wait till Mike comes! Come down, now!—the good angels be wid you. There should have been a way at the back. Walk tinderly an' hould tight. Heaven above sind there'll be no wind! Oh, why wasn't his ugly rooms at the back, where 'tis only yards an' bedroom windows!"

The voice grew fainter and stopped. Sister Ursula was at the level of the first floor windows when the two children caught sight of her, raising together a shrill shout. The devil that delights in torturing good nuns inspired them next to separate and run the one up and the other down the avenue, yelling, "O—oh! There's a nun up the fire-escape! A nun on the fire-escape!" and, since one word at least was familiar, a score of heads came to windows in the avenue, and were much interested.

In spite of her prayers, Sister Ursula was not happy. The medicine-bottle banged and bumped in her pocket as she gripped the iron bars hand over hand and toiled aloft. "It is for the sake of a life," she panted to herself. "It is a good work. He might die if I did not come. Ah! it is terrible." A flake of rust from the long disused irons had fallen on her nose. The rungs were chafing her hands, and the minutes were flying. The round, red face of the caretaker's wife grew smaller and smaller below her, and there was a rumbling of wheels in the avenue. An idle coachman, drawn by the shouts of the children, had turned the corner to see what was to be seen. And Sister Ursula climbed in agony of spirit, the heelless black cloth shoes that nuns wear slipping on the rungs of the ladder, and all earth reeling a hundred thousand feet below.

She passed one set of apartments, and they were empty of people, but the fire, the books on the table, and the child's toy cast on the hearthrug showed it was deserted only for a minute. Sister Ursula drew breath on the balcony, and then hurried upwards. There was iron rust red on both her hands, the front of her gown was speckled with it, and a reflection in the stately double window showed a stainless stiff fold of her head-gear battered down over her eye. Her shoe, yes, the mended one, had burst at the side near the toe in a generous bulge of white stocking. She climbed on wearily, for the bottle was swinging again, and in her ears there came unbidden the nursery refrain that she used to sing to the little sick children in the hospital at Quebec:

"This is the cow with the crumpled horn."

Between earth and heaven, it is said, the soul on its upward journey must pass the buffeting of many evil spirits. There flashed into Sister Ursula's mind the remembrance of a picture of a man gazing from the leads down the side of a house—a wonderful piece of foreshortening that made one dizzy to see. Where had she seen that picture? Memory, that works indifferently on earth or in vacuo, told her of a book read by stealth in her novitiate, such a book as perils body and soul, and Sister Ursula blushed redder than the brickwork a foot before her nose. Everything that she had read in or thought about that book raced through her mind as all his past life does not race through the soul of a drowning man. It was horrible, most horrible. Then rose a fierce wave of rage and indignation that she, a sister of irreproachable life and demeanour (the book had been an indiscretion, long since bitterly repented of), should be singled out for these humiliating exercises. There were other nuns of her acquaintance, proud, haughty and overbearing (her foot slipped here as a reminder against the sin of hasty judgments, and she felt that it was a small and niggling Justice that counted offences at such a crisis), and—and thinking too much of their holiness, to whom this mortification, with all the rust flakes in bosom and kerchief, would have been salutary and wholesome. But that she, Sister Ursula, who only desired a quiet life, should climb fire-escapes in the face of the shameless sun and a watching population! It was too terrible. None the less she did not come down.

Praying to be delivered from evil thoughts, praying that the swinging bottle would not smash itself against the iron ladders, she toiled on. The second and third flats were empty, and she heard a murmur in the street; a hum of encouraging tumult, cheerful outcries bidding her go up higher, and crisp enquiries as to whether this were the end of the performance. Her Saint—she that had not prevailed against the Nuns—would not help Sister Ursula, and it came over her, as cold water slides down the spine, that at her journey's end she would have to—go—through—the window. There is no vestibule, portico, or robing-room at the upper end of a fire-escape. It is designed for such as move in a hurry, unstudious of the graces, being for the most part not over-dressed, and yet seeking publicity—that publicity which came to Sister Ursula unsought. She must go through that window in order to give her invalid his medicine. Her head must go first, and her feet, and the bursten shoe, must go last. It was the very breaking point in the strain, and here her saint, mistaking the needs of the case, sent her a companion. Her head was level with the window of the fourth story, and she was rejoicing to find that that also was empty when the door opened, and there entered a man something elderly, of prominent figure, and dressed according to the most rigid canons laid down for afternoon visits. He was millions of leagues removed from Sister Ursula's world—this person with the tall silk hat, the long frock-coat, the light grey trousers, the tiny yellow buttonhole rose, and the marvellous puffed cravat anchored about with black pearl-headed pins—but an imperative need for justification was upon her. Her own mission, the absolute rightness of her own mission, were so clear to herself that she never doubted anyone might misunderstand when she pointed upwards to the skies, and the flat above.



"SISTER URSULA
LOOKED DOWN."



"SANK PANTING AT THE FOOT OF THE
BED."

The man, who was in the act of laying his tall hat absently upon the table, looked up as the shadow took the light, saw the gesture, and stared. Then his jaw dropped, and his face became ashy-grey. Sister Ursula had never seen Terror in the flesh, well-dressed and fresh from a round of calls. She gathered herself up to climb on, but the man within uttered a cry that even the double windows could not altogether stifle, and ran round the room in circles as a dog runs seeking a lost glove.

"He is mad," thought Sister Ursula. "Oh, heavens, and *that* is what has driven him mad."

He was stooping fondly over something that seemed like the coffin of a little child. Then he rushed directly at the window open-mouthed. Sister Ursula went upwards and onwards, none the less swiftly because she heard a muffled oath, the crash of broken glass, and the tinkling of the broken splinters on the pavestones below. For the second time only in her career, she looked down—down between the ladder and the wall. A silk hat was bobbing wildly, as a fishing-float on a troubled stream, not a dozen rungs beneath, and a voice—the voice of fear—cried hoarsely, "Where is it? Where is it?" Then went up to the roofs the roaring and the laughter of a great crowd; yells, cat-calls, ki-yis and hootings many times multiplied. Her Saint had heard her at last, and caused

cat-calls, ki-yis and hootings many times multiplied. Her Saint had heard her at last, and caused

Sister Ursula to disregard the pains of going through the window. Her one desire now was to reach that haven, to jump, dive, leap-frog through it if necessary, and shut out the unfortunate maniac. It was a short race, but swift, and Saint Ursula took care of the bottle. A long course of afternoon calls, with refreshments at clubs in the intervals, is not such good training as the care of the sick in all weathers for sprinting over a course laid at ninety degrees. Nor again can the best of athletes go swiftly up a ladder if he carries a priceless violin in one hand and its equally priceless bow in his teeth, and handicaps himself with varnished leather buttoned boots. They climbed, the one below the other.

The window at the foot of the invalid's bed was open. At the next window was the white face of the invalid. Sister Ursula reached the sash, threw it up, went through—let no man ask how—shut it gently but with amazing quickness, and sank panting at the foot of the bed, one hand on the bottle.

"There was no other way," she panted. "The door was locked. I could not help. Oh! He is here!"

The face of Terror in the top hat rose to the window-level inch by inch. The violin-bow was between his teeth, and his hat hung over one eye in the fashion of early dawn.

"It's Cott van Cott," said the invalid, slowly and critically. "He looks quite an old man. Cott and his Strad. How very bad for the Strad!"

"Open the window. Where is it? Is there a way? Open the window!" roared Cott, without removing the violin-bow.

Sister Ursula held up one hand warningly as she stooped over the invalid.

For the second time did Cott van Cott misinterpret the gesture and heaved himself upward, the violin and the bow clicking and rattling at every stride. He was fleeing to the leads to save his life and his violin from death by fire—fire in the basement—and the crowd in the street roared below him with the roar of a full-fed conflagration.

The invalid fell back on the pillows and wiped his eyes. The hands of the clock were on the hour appointed for the medicine, lacking only the thirty seconds necessary for pouring it into a wine-glass. He took it from Sister Ursula's hand, still shaking with helpless laughter.



"TOOK ONE LITTLE BRASS THIMBLE-LIKE THING FROM ITS INSIDE."

you in the cellar, did she? And Van Cott thought it was a fire? Do you know, Sister Ursula, that all those things would have been impossible on any other planet? I'm going to get well, Sister Ursula."

In the long night, Sister Ursula, blushing all over under the eyes of the night-light, heard him laughing softly in his sleep.



"'OPEN THE WINDOW!' ROARED COTT."

"God bless you, Sister Ursula," he said. "You've saved my life."

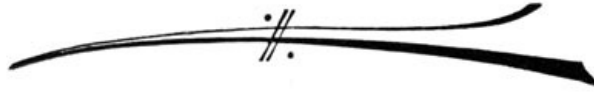
"The medicine was to be given," she answered simply. "I—I could not help coming that way."

"If you only knew," said the invalid. "If you only knew! I saw it from out of the windows. Good heavens! the dear old world is just the same as ever. I must get back to it. I must positively get well and get back. And, Sister Ursula, do you mind telling me when you're quite composed everything that happened between the time the door shut and—and you came in that way?"

After a little Sister Ursula told, and the invalid laughed himself faint once more. When Sister Ursula re-settled the pillows, her hand fell on the butt of a revolver that had come from the desk by the head of the bed. She did not understand what it was, but the sight pained her.

"Wait a minute," said the invalid, and he took one little brass thimble-like thing from its inside. "I—I wanted to use it for something before you went out, but I saw you come up, and I don't want it any more. I must certainly get back to the world again. Dear old world! Nice old world! And Mrs. Cassidy prayed with

Nice old world! And Mrs. Cassidy prayed with



EMILE ZOLA.

“Lions in Their Dens.”

VI.—EMILE ZOLA.

BY V. R. MOONEY. ILLUSTRATIONS BY E. M. JESSOP.

(With photographs at various ages.)

“M. Zola?”

“No, monsieur, this is *not* No. 21 *bis*—this is No. 21.”

By way of justification for the asperity of the tones in which this reply is given forth the concierge of No. 21 proceeds to inform me that every one makes the same mistake.

“It is a perpetual procession here,” she goes on. “It is nothing but M. Zola? M. Zola? M. Zola? without cease. I wish people would learn the right address.”

Now I at least ought to have known better, for I had visited M. Zola before, so, feeling rather small, I beat a hurried retreat, and betook myself to No. 21 *bis*.

Unlike most Parisians, Zola has a whole house to himself, and, as you perceive at a glance on entering, a very richly decorated house it is; tapestries, bronzes, bas-reliefs, sculptures in stone and marble, are studiously arranged about the hall and the handsome staircase, the general effect, in the subdued light of windows of stained glass, being most artistic.

On the first landing, lances and swords and armour of different

kinds shine out from behind tropical plants. On this landing is Zola's studio, which is full of indications of his love for the antique—a love that is not carried to extremes, however, for the high-backed, uncomfortable chairs of our forefathers, in which so many of his fellow-collectors find it necessary to seat themselves (or their visitors), are here replaced by spacious modern armchairs.

I am not kept long waiting.

"Well, I am glad that this is a wet day, or else you would very likely have regretted losing the opportunity of going to the Bois."

Such are the *maitre's* first words after a hearty shake of the hands.

"So you want to know *all* about me. Now let me see what I can tell you without repeating myself."

And Zola sinks down into a small but comfortable armchair, with a small Turkish inlaid coffee and cigarette stand covered with books on one side, and on the other an antique wrought iron fender placed in front of an immense fireplace, and commences placidly the following monologue, which I give as nearly as possible in his own words.

"My father's mother was a Corfiote, he himself a Venetian, and my mother was a Parisian. My father and mother met in Paris, during one of my father's numerous visits here in connection with an aqueduct which he wanted to construct at Aix in Provence. Within a very short time of their first meeting, they were married. It was a love match. I was born in Paris, in 1840, and to-day I am, therefore, 53.



EMILE ZOLA.

Paris 23 janv. 93

Monsieur et cher confrère,

Je serai chez moi dimanche prochain, 24 janvier, à une heure et demie, et je vous y attendrai. Veuillez seulement me prévenir la veille, si je puis compter sur votre visite.

Cordialement à vous

Emile Zola

21 bis rue de Bruxelles.

(FACSIMILE OF M. ZOLA'S HANDWRITING.)

"In 1847 my father died, and left very little behind him, except lawsuits, which, through inexperience more than anything else, my mother and grandmother managed to lose.

"My education only then began, but until 12, when I had finally to enter college, I had it pretty much my own way. That means I worked very little, and spent most of my time in the open air, running about in our glorious southern fields, and learning how to love and admire nature.

"At college I studied with varying success.

"What I liked best were mathematics and science. I hated Greek and Latin.

"It was during the last year of my college life that I made the acquaintance of two young fellows who may have been instrumental in making of me what I am now. As we had pretty much the same tastes it was our passion, whenever we could indulge in it, to run out in the fields, get on the banks of a stream, and for hours, under

the shade of some tree, read the books of fiction which came to our possession. After each book had been gone through, we discussed its merits, chapter by chapter, studied the characters and the plot; all this more from a metaphysical than a literary point of view.

"I left college in 1848, and came to Paris to get work, in order to help my mother. I found a situation which I soon had to give up, and, till 1861, I went through all the hardships that a destitute young man can undergo in Paris.

"Often have I spent in my attic the best part of the day, lying in bed to keep warm.

"Although, as you see, I am better off now, I often look back upon that time regretting that it cannot return.

"*Voyez vous*, privations and suffering were my lot, but I had in me the fire of youth. I had health, hope, unbounded confidence in myself, and ambition.

"*Ah oui!* It was a glorious time. I remember how I used to write for hours and hours in my bed; how everything was then fresh to me, how my inexperience made me look hopefully forward. *Enfin*, life seemed bright, beautiful, and cheerful.



THE STAIRCASE.

"After all, I really think hope is a higher satisfaction than possession.

"But I stray from the subject.

"Let me see, you left me in bed trying to get warm, and waiting for someone to provide the necessary number of coppers for a dinner.

"In 1861, I at last found a sufficiently remunerative situation at Hachette's, the publishers.

"I began at 200 francs a month. I did my work so thoroughly that I was soon raised. After a certain time I was placed in the advertising department, and there came in contact with the writers and newspaper men, who, in my first literary efforts, gave me a helping hand.

"During my stay in that office, I never ceased writing.

"You must know that I was all my life a very hard and conscientious worker.

"After my day's work at the office, I used to read and write for hours at home by candlelight. In fact, the habit of writing at night became so inveterate that, long afterwards, when I had time in the day, I pulled down the blinds in my room and lit the lamp in order to work.

"Towards this epoch I met my two college friends again. One had gained some notoriety as a painter, the other was a student at the *ecole polytechnique*. We resumed our rambles in the woods and our discussions. This, I am convinced, was of great use to me, as our different ways of looking at things enabled me to judge of characters, and to appreciate differing opinions.

"Before I left college, viz., when I was 17, I had written the '*Contes à Ninon*.' These I retouched a little, and determined to try my luck as a writer with them.

"As usual, with young and unknown writers, publishers received me and politely returned my manuscript. I tried my employer, but, although he encouraged me, and showed his sense of appreciation, by giving me a more responsible position, he refused to publish my story. Finally, I presented it to Mr. Hetzel, and to my indescribable joy he accepted it.

"The book was very favourably reviewed, but sold very poorly.

"Soon afterwards, I began contributing to the *Vie Parisienne* and the *Petit Journal*, and thus got launched in journalism.



THE BEDROOM.

"As my evenings alone did not enable me to do all the work I had in hand, I resigned my situation in 1867, and devoted myself exclusively to literature.

"This did not improve my position, and I was obliged, for a certain time, to suffer new hardships and privations.

"It is needless to follow my career step by step. You know what I am now—you see I have succeeded."

"Well, *mon cher maitre*, not many men can boast of a success equal to yours. Indeed, there is evidence enough in this very room of that success."

"That implies, of course, that you think I have an enormous account at the bank. You are mistaken. Every centime I get comes from the sale of my books, the rights of translation, etc. My royalty is 60 centimes per volume. This brings me about 300,000 francs a year, and I am not a man to economise. All this furniture, and the articles you see scattered about, I have slowly accumulated. I began to purchase with the first economies I ever made.



EMILE ZOLA.

"This passion which obliged me frequently to change residences in order to find room for the ever increasing number of objects was acquired by me through reading Victor Hugo in my childhood. It is not so ardent now, I regret to say."

As he got up to show me round, the light fell full on his face. I thought I noticed a look of melancholy, and made a remark to that effect.

With a sigh he replied, "*Mon cher monsieur*, I repeat I always think with pleasure of my garret. I had then no cares. I was, what I call, absolutely independent."

"But in what way are you dependent now?"

"More than you think. I was then my own reader and my only critic. I lived in my writings, and thought them perfect. Since then I belong to the public, upon whose judgment my success depends, upon whose appreciation my reward lies. Do not imagine that I do not frequently suffer deeply, that I am not wounded, and that I do not feel mortified and become discouraged by the misinterpretation of my motives. These are passing clouds, but they are not pleasant, I can assure you."

As he was unburdening his sorrows, we visited the apartment. It would be impossible to describe it in the short space of an article, as I must admit I seldom found such a mass, and at the same time such a variety, of objects collected.

The accompanying photos will be more eloquent than my pen.

Taste presides in everything; choice, disposal, grouping, and colouring. The southern nature of the host reveals itself in its love for bright colours, education and refinement in the subdued tones and harmonious *ensemble*.

He did not hesitate to show me everything; unfortunately, however, had I seen less, I would have remembered more.

As we walked back to the studio I returned to the previous subject, and asked him whether, as was generally supposed, he dashed through his books after a painstaking preliminary work.

He denied this.

"It is an error; I work very hard."

"What way do you proceed then, *cher maitre*?"

"Well, I never prepare a plot. I cannot do it. I have frequently meditated for hours, buried my head in my hands, closed my eyes, and got ill over it. But no use. I finally gave it up. What I do is to make three kinds of studies for each novel. The first I call a sketch, viz., I determine the dominant idea of the book, and the elements required to develop this idea. I also establish certain logical connections between one series of facts and another. The next *dossier* contains a study of the character of each actor in my work. For the principal ones I go even further. I enquire into the character of both father and mother, their life, the influence of their mutual relations on the temperament of the child. The way the latter was brought up, his schooldays, the surroundings and his associates up to the time I introduce him in my book. You see, therefore, I sail as close to nature as possible, and even take into account his personal appearance, health and heredity. My third preoccupation is to study the surroundings into which I intend to place my actors, the locality and the spot where certain parts may be acted. I enquire into the manners, habits, character, language, and even learn the jargon of the inhabitants of such localities.

"I frequently take pencil sketches and measurement of rooms, and know exactly how the furniture is placed. Finally, I know the appearance of such quarters by night and by day. After I have collected laboriously all this material, I sit down to my work regularly every morning, and do not write more than three pages of print a day."

"How long does it take you to produce that?"

"Well, not very long. The subject is so vivid that the work proceeds slowly, but without interruption. In fact, I hardly ever make any erasures or alterations, and once my sheet is written and laid aside, I do not look at it again. The next morning I resume the thread, and the story proceeds to the end by logical progression.



THE DINING ROOM.

"I work like a mathematician. Before I begin I know into how many chapters the novel shall be divided. The descriptive parts have an allotted space, and if they are too long for one chapter I terminate them in another. I try also to give some rest to the mind of the reader, or rather remove the tension caused by too long and stirring a passage, by interlarding something which diverts the attention for a time.

"Finally, I repeat, I have no preconceived plot. I do not know at

the beginning of a chapter how it will end. Situations must logically follow one another, that is all."

Of course, after this, the conversation rolled on some of his principal works, particularly "La Terre."

In reply to the objection taken to that book, one of his arguments is that progress and science have made of man a being distinct from that of last century, and insisted that nowadays we must abandon the study of the metaphysical man of years gone by for an enquiry into the physiological creature of our days. That is my opinion, and it is in defence of this conviction that I worked for years.

The next subject upon which I thought I might tackle him was the "Debacle."

"How did I prepare my 'Debacle'? Well, in the same way as all my other books. You know I went over most of the battlefields described by me. Moreover, I received innumerable letters on the subject. The most interesting ones came from the professors of Paris schools, who, being left without employment, enlisted.

These letters, coming from educated men, contain, without one exception, the same lamentations, and give similar accounts of privations and suffering. They all describe how for days they had to go without food, and ragged; and how fast their numbers were thinned. Each had in his memoirs accounts illustrating the blundering ignorance of the commanders! I was violently attacked when the 'Debacle' appeared. Everything was criticised as usual, and many details declared inaccurate. But I ask you whether it is always possible to be as absolutely accurate in small details in a novel as in a history?



EMILE ZOLA.



THE DRAWING ROOM.

"Some dates have been misplaced, and some details relating to the colour of the troopers' collars were not right; but criticism of such absurd details cannot affect the treatment and the development of the subject, and the conclusions arrived at. I am told that Marshal MacMahon is wild against me, and that he is preparing a reply to my book. It has always been my object to avoid personalities. I never once accused MacMahon, but the facts prove that he acted ignorantly. History will be severer, and when those who write it consult documents as I did, they will not treat him with the deference I used.

"General Gallifet is also my enemy. Do you know why? Because I have not mentioned him."

"How does your 'Debacle' sell now, *cher maitre*?"

"Not so well as at the beginning, and the cause of it is the Panama scandal. When the unscrupulousness of a certain class of men

was made bare, the initiators of the enquiry were accused by a section of the nation with want of patriotism. Curiously enough, the same accusation was levelled against my book, therefore, instead of being thanked for the courage I had of disclosing the evils, I am punished for it. The same influences acted against me in the last Academy elections. Before the Panama affair, I was certain to have a chair."

"Will you continue presenting yourself?"

"Certainly, until I get a seat. There is no reason why I should be excluded from that body, and if I abstain from presenting my candidature, it might be construed as an admission on my part that I considered justified the action of the academicians against me."

"When is your novel about 'Lourdes' going to appear?"

"Later than you think. I am working at present at Dr. Pascal, which closes my series of the Rougon Macquart novels."

"Would it be indiscreet to ask you what subject you intend treating this time?"

"No. It will be a philosophical and scientific defence of the principal work of my life—the twenty volumes of the Rougon Macquarts. You see I attach the greatest importance to this, and therefore give special attention to my work, which is meant to be a justification of my theories and *hardiesses*. After this I'll take 'Lourdes' in hand. 'Lourdes' will be followed by 'Rome,' and then by 'Paris.' They will form a triptych."



STUDY CORNER.

"Namely?"

"Well, in the first I shall try to prove that the great scientific development of our time has inspired hopes in the mind of all classes, hopes which it has not realised to the satisfaction of the most impressionable, therefore the most exacting and unreasonable minds. How such minds have returned with greater conviction to the belief in the existence of something more powerful than science, a something which can alleviate the evils from which they suffer, or imagine they do.

"Among these there may even be social philanthropists, who may think that divine intercession is more efficacious to cure the suffering of the people than anarchist theories. In my 'Rome' I shall treat of the Neo-Catholicism, with its ambitions, its struggle, etc., as distinct from the pure religious sentiment of the pilgrims of 'Lourdes.'

"Finally, in 'Paris' I shall endeavour to lay bare the corruption and vice which devour that city; vice and corruption to which the whole civilised world brings its share. I need not say that these will be written in the shape of novels.



EMILE ZOLA.

"For 'Lourdes' I have collected all my material. As you know, I followed a pilgrimage, and was given the kindest assistance by the clergy, who allowed me to consult every document in their possession. As usual, I receive every day letters from laymen and priests, who spontaneously supply me with information."

Zola thereupon got up, opened a drawer, and showed me piles of such letters. Among these I read one from a priest, who seemed convinced that before long Zola would be a convert. I asked him what he had seen at Lourdes.

"Nothing that I did not expect, considering that before going there I had had long conversations with eminent specialists in nervous diseases. I saw cures which would be called extraordinary by such as ignore the curative power of faith in hysteric complaints and its derivatives. But I did not see limbs straightened or replaced, nor has any monk or priest showed me or even alluded to such cures.

"But what struck me was that, contrary to what one is made to expect, I did not find among the clergy that aggressive and ostentatious proselytism. Everything is conducted in a dignified, quiet, unassuming manner."

Continuing to look among the letters, I picked one from an English lady, expressing the sincere hope that the "Debacle" would bear fruit, that the lesson it taught would be a warning to France, and save the nation from the errors it had fallen into during the Empire.

When I had done, Zola assured me that since the "Debacle" he was happy to say that he receives numerous such letters from England. This shows him that the hostile feeling against him tends to disappear.

Before withdrawing, I asked him whether he had heard any more of the thief who, assuming the title of a journalist, had stolen some of his bronzes.

With a laugh, Zola replied in the negative, and explained that he had to thank "Lourdes" for the theft.

"Since it has become known that I prepare that book, the clerical papers send me their reporters. I receive them without exception. On this occasion, I was talking to a friend when a card was presented bearing the title of a small such paper. I requested the servant to show the bearer in the drawing-room.

"Five minutes later I was with the fellow, who asked a couple of questions. Instead, however, of waiting for complete information, which I volunteered to give, he very politely withdrew, and only the next day did I discover that he had removed valuables for about 700 francs."

For how long I might have engaged the great and amiable novelist in conversation I don't know; but at this point, having listened to him for more than an hour and a half, I rose to leave.

And now that the heavy door has closed behind me, shall I attempt to compose a picture of Zola as I have seen him there in his room in his warm, many-pocketed Tyrolese jacket, braided with green, and buttoned up to the throat? Perhaps it is unnecessary, for his features must by this time be familiar to almost all.



ZOLA AT WORK.

Like all Southerners, Zola helps out his voice with frequent gestures; but he has none of the exuberant eloquence of his race. In society he is still, to a certain degree, and must always remain the victim of bashfulness; and his one attempt at public speaking was a complete failure. He has in him nothing of the boulevardier, and he is happy only when at work. Enforced idleness would mean misery to him.

People I Have Never Met.

BY SCOTT RANKIN.

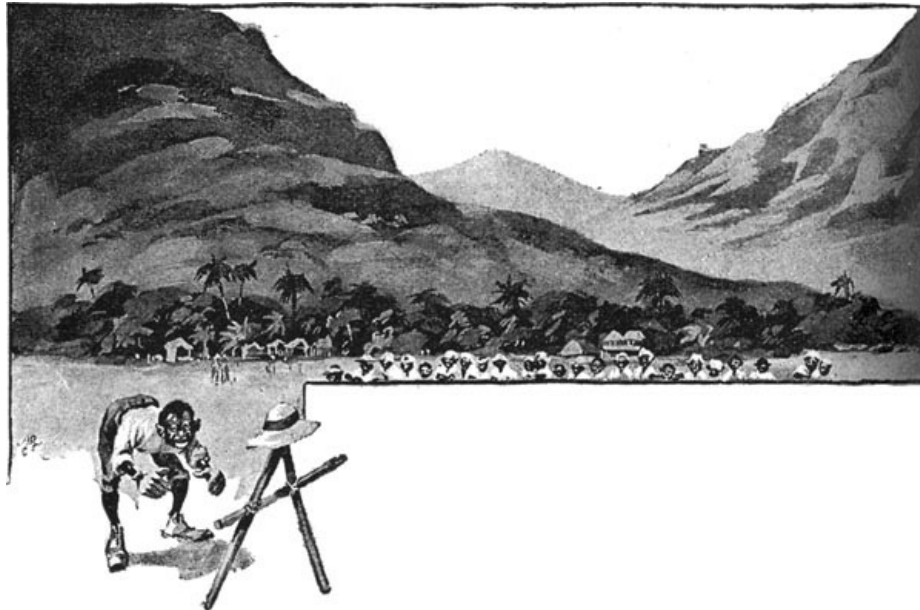


"THE LIGHT THAT FAILED."

An Ethiopian Cricket Match.

BY EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GEO. HUTCHINSON.



After the "Rhine" had been anchored in the harbour of St. Thomas, West Indies, for the space of two days, our First Officer, more generally known in these records as the Model Man, received a rather remarkable communication. It was a letter from a black sportsman, who issued a challenge to our ship on behalf of a local club. This note reminded the Model Man of a most successful cricket match in the past, when an eleven from the "Rhine" was victorious; and it suggested that, during the present visit of our vessel, a return match might be played. We talked the matter over, and I said:

"Of course you will accept."

But the Treasure answered:

"You see there is always one great difficulty with black cricketers. They have a theory you cannot play the game properly in clothes, and they get themselves up for a match much the same as we should if we were going swimming."

"Why, last time we played," continued the Model Man, "only one man had anything you could fairly call raiment. He came on to the pitch with what he regarded as a pair of cocoanut-fibre trousers, and his team made him captain upon the strength of them."

I said:

"If they prefer to play undraped, I don't see that it much matters to us."

"Not personally, but a mixed audience cannot be expected to stand it," replied the Treasure. "We play cricket in St. Thomas upon a very public and central piece of ground, and, at one time, everybody used to turn out and watch the matches; but now, owing to the barbarous reasons I have given you, cricket has fallen into disrepute. Of course, to see an eleven taking the field in a state of nature makes dead against civilisation and human progress."

Finally, the Model Man wrote to say that it would give him great pleasure to bring a team to the ground upon the following morning if the local talent promised to wear clothes. "My eleven will absolutely refuse to play against anybody in the nude," he wound up.

An hour later a negro in a boat paddled out to us with an answer. He hailed us, and we asked him if his people would accept our terms.

"Yes, massa, we all put fings on, but we much sooner play cricket widdout."

"Nonsense," shouted back the Model Man. "Cricket is a civilised game, and must be followed in a civilised way, or not at all. We will be on the ground at ten o'clock."

The messenger rowed off, and a great discussion began as to the constitution of our team. Everybody wanted to go to the match, and sit in the shade and look on and criticise, but no one much cared about playing. The Captain of the "Rhine" absolutely refused, to begin with. He said:

"I would do anything for my officers—anything in reason; but cricket is out of the question. I shall, however, be on the ground with some ladies. A good appreciative audience is everything in these cases. Moreover, I will umpire if the tide turns against us."

The Treasure only consented to play after much pressure. He said:

"You know what the wicket is like; it's simply mountainous, and black men have no control over their bowling. For you medium-sized chaps it may be comparatively safe, but bowling at me is like bowling at a haystack—you cannot miss. When I go in, the blacks never bother about the stumps, but just let fly at random on the chance of winging me. Last match here, I hit their crack fast bowler all over the island, and he got mad at last, and gave up attempting to bowl me, but just tried to kill me."

"You scored off him, though," said our Fourth Officer, who remembered the incident.



"AS IF THEY WERE GOING IN SWIMMING."



"I did," admitted the Treasure. "I slapped one straight back, as hard as ever I could lay in to it, and he funkyed it, and tried to get out of the way and failed. I nearly knocked a limb off him, and then he abandoned the ball, and went and sulked and chattered to himself in the deep field."

The Doctor said it would give him great pleasure to play, but he added that he should feel very averse to bowling against anybody with nothing on. Then the Model Man answered:

"You need not fear. The negroes are very particular about pads and such things. They don't wear shoes, for nothing could hurt their feet, but they never dream of batting without leg-guards, because a nigger's shins are his weak spot. These fellows are not much good at cricket after you have once hit them hard. Either they get cross and throw up the whole thing, and leave the ground and go home to their families, or else they become frightened and servile. I have known them almost beg for mercy before each ball."

"You'll play, of course," said the Fourth Officer to me.

"Certainly, if you will," I answered. Then he replied:

"I shall undoubtedly play. I'm not a man who does much with the bat, but my bowling is rather out of the common. I have a natural leg-break which baffles fellows frightfully. Why, there was a question raised once about playing me for my county."

I did not ask him which county, because one should never goad a willing horse. The Fourth Officer had been in a thoroughly mendacious vein ever since we left St. Kitts; the fault grew upon him, and now he began to utter transparent inaccuracies at all hours, from sheer love of them.

After much argument and conversation, our team was finally selected, the last man chosen being a black stoker of great size and strength.

"I regard him as a speculation," explained the Captain of our side; "either he will get out first ball or make a hundred. There are no half-measures with him."

As we approached the ground on the following morning, our Model Man confided to me a great source of anxiety. This was the fielding. He said:

"You see, men don't mind batting, but they get very unsportsmanlike when it comes to going out into the field. Some actually hide, or pretend they have engagements; others feign illness and retire; others, again, salve their miserable consciences by paying a negro a shilling to go and field for them. I only mention this. I know you're not the man to do such things; but, between ourselves, I fear the Doctor is just a sort of chap to escape fielding. There are others also I must keep an eye upon. Being captain of a scratch cricket team in the Tropics is no light task, I can tell you."

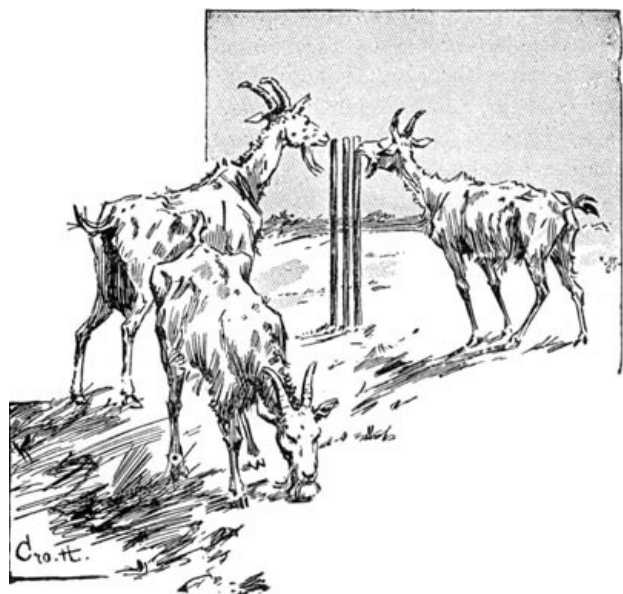
A considerable crowd had gathered to see the conflict. The negroes sat and lolled round the ground, while, behind them, buggies and horsemen were drawn up. Conspicuous in that gay throng appeared the Captain of the "Rhine," seated on a brown horse, amid female equestrians. Beyond the audience rose a belt of tamarind and flamboyant trees, the latter with gigantic green and brown seed-pods hanging from their branches; and above these woods, sloping upwards to the blue sky, extended the hills, with winding roads, visible here and there through the foliage that covered them, and with many a flagstaff and white cottage scattered upon their sides.

The ground itself suggested golf rather than cricket. Here and there a little dried-up grass occurred, but it collected in lonely tufts, between which extended great ravines and hillocks and boulders and patches of desolation. Upon a barren spot in the middle, the wickets had been pitched. When we arrived, they appeared to be an object of no little interest to sundry goats. These beasts evidently regarding the stumps as some strange new form of vegetation, sprang up in a single night from the arid soil, sauntered round them enquiringly, and a shabby he-goat, braver than his companions, nibbled the bails.

Our opponents, adequately attired, had arrived. They constituted a motley, good-humoured gathering in all shades. One, John Smith, a genial hybrid, commanded them, and presently a great shout arose, when it transpired that he had secured choice of innings. The Doctor said, in a tone of reproof:

"Hang it, John, you've only won the toss. You couldn't make a bigger row if you'd won the match."

"Great fing to go in fus, sar," explained John; "we go in fus now, when we's fresh."



"NIBBLED THE BAILS."



JOHN SMITH.

correctly speaking, the field arranged itself. Indeed, our team hardly proved as amenable as might have been wished. The Doctor insisted on taking long-leg and long-off.

"Why?" asked his Captain, looking rather distrustfully at a buggy with some red parasols in it, which would be extremely close to the Doctor at long-leg.

"It isn't that, old chap," replied our physician, cheerfully, following the Model Man's eye. "In fact, I'm not sure if I even know those girls. I only suggested a place in the long field because I'm a safe catch. That's important."

So he had his way.

Meantime, the Treasure found some other parasols—white ones—and placed himself within easy chatting distance. Investigation proved that the white parasols were protecting the Enchantress and her mother. The Model Man said that he might just as well be on the ship as there. So he ordered his man up to take the wicket. The Treasure came reluctantly, and absolutely declined to keep wicket. He declared that it was simple murder to make a person of his size attempt such a thing on such a ground.

He led me aside privately, and said:

"Look here, you know that walking-stick of mine, manufactured from a shark's backbone—the one you are always worrying me to give you? Well, I will, when we go back to the ship, if you'll take the wicket. If you fall at your post, then your heirs shall have it."

I closed on this bargain promptly, and while I dressed up in all sorts of life-saving inventions used at cricket, the Treasure took an unobtrusive, circuitous route back to the white parasols.

John Smith himself and another negro, who was said to be related to him by marriage, came in first. They were padded up to the eyes, and evidently felt the importance of their position. Then a black umpire said: "Play, gem'men," and our Fourth Officer started with his world-famed, natural leg-break. He bowled three wides in succession as a preliminary. It is not easy to bowl wides underhand, but that Fourth Officer managed it; and I began to understand why, after all, his county had determined to struggle along without him.

"What's the matter, old man?" asked our Captain, who was fielding at short-slip.

"It's all right, old chap; you wait," answered the Fourth Officer, full of confidence.

"Yes, quite so, but they count one against us every time. I didn't know whether you knew it," explained the Model Man.

Meantime the bowler made further futile attempts to drop the ball upon the mound he had discovered. At last he actually did do so, but instead of breaking in and taking a wicket, as we, who were in the secret, hoped, the batsman got hold of it, and hit it high and hard to long-leg. All eyes turned to see if the Doctor's estimate of his own powers at a catch was justified. But he had disappeared entirely. He had not even left a substitute. Everybody shouted with dismay, and then the Doctor suddenly bounded on to the field. He distinctly came out of the buggy, from between

Then the Model Man led out his warriors.

I sauntered across the pitch with the Treasure, and examined its peculiarities. We were discussing a curious geological formation, midway between the wickets, when our Fourth Officer approached in some glee at a great discovery. He had found a little hill, rather wide of the stumps, on one side, and he explained that whenever he dropped a ball on this elevation, he must bowl an Ethiop.

"You see, my natural leg-break will take the ball dead into the wicket every time," he said.

We hoped it might be so; and he begged us to keep the thing a profound secret, because, as he said, if it got about that we were going to utilise this hill to such an extent, the enemy would probably send out and have it removed, or alter the pitch.

After the goats cleared away, and the juvenile spectators driven back a trifle, our Model Man arranged his field. More



"DRIVEN BACK A TRIFLE."

the red parasols. If he had not actually known those girls, he must have introduced himself, or prevailed upon somebody else to do so. He tore into the scene of action, looking for the ball.

"It's in the air, you fool," yelled a dozen voices. Then it fell within a yard of the Doctor. A child could have caught it. We were all quite unsettled. The Model Man said:

"I'm not a bit surprised—it's just what I expected."

And the Fourth Officer said:

"I don't really see what good it is my bowling for catches at long-leg if there's no long-leg."

And the Doctor said:

"Wouldn't have done it for money. Hadn't the faintest idea you'd started. I saw you bowling balls all over the place, miles away from the wicket, and I thought you were merely practising." Which was rather an unpleasant thing for the Fourth Officer to hear.

Then the game steadied down and proceeded. Our Captain took the ball, after the underhand expert had got a few within sight of the wicket, and so finished his over. The Model Man was much more successful, for he clean-bowled a negro with his third delivery. It pitched in a sort of mountain-pass, about ten feet from the wicket; then it branched off to the right and hit a stone, and came back again, and finally took the off stump. I don't see how anybody alive could have played it. The batsman retired utterly bewildered, and the Model Man assured me he had never sent down a better ball.

A slogger came in next, and made runs rather rapidly, but nothing much happened until the Fourth Officer's third over. Then he fell foul of me, and took exception to my method of keeping the wicket. He was being hit about pretty generally, and had become very hot, so, at another time, I should not have retorted upon him; but, when he spoke, I was hot too, and being hit about also, so I answered without deliberation. He said:

"Can't you even try to stump them?"

And I replied:

"I might, if my arms were ten feet long."

Then he said:

"You've had dozens of chances. I always want a wicket-keeper for my bowling."

Whereupon I answered:

"You want twenty—in a row. One's no good."

He said:

"You don't like standing up to my fast ones, that's the truth."

And I responded:

"Oh, bless you, I'd stand up to them all right, if I knew *where* to stand. A wicket-keeper's supposed to keep the wicket, not run all over the ground after wides."

During this unseemly argument, the Model Man, the Treasure, and the Doctor were all having an unpleasantness on their own account. The Doctor was imploring our Captain to take himself off and let somebody else bowl. He said: "Can't you see they've collared you? They've scored twenty runs. Don't think that *I* want to go on. Far from it. I'm only speaking for the good of the side."

But the Model Man refused to leave off bowling for anybody. He emphatically denied that they had collared him. Then he changed the subject, and turned upon the Treasure, and asked him where he supposed he was fielding.

The Treasure answered:

"This is mid-on. I'm all right."

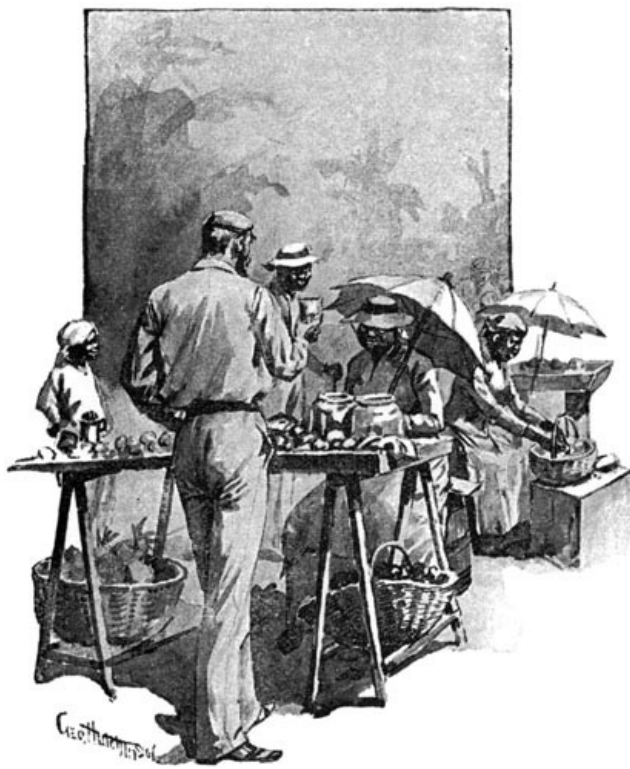
"You may think it's mid-on, but it isn't," shouted back the worried Model Man. "I've no doubt you're all right," he continued, bitterly, "but you're no sportsman."

After twenty more runs had been scored, the Fourth Officer unexpectedly and frankly admitted that he was not in form. He relinquished the ball, and said he had the makings of a sunstroke about his head, and went off to field among a few friends in a patch of shade under a tree, where all kinds of refreshments were being sold. Then our Captain held a consultation, and determined to try a complete change in the attack. He called upon the Doctor and the Treasure, and told them just to bowl quietly and carefully, and as straight as possible.



"A BLACK UMPIRE."

The Treasure started with yorkers; which



"REFRESHMENTS WERE BEING SOLD."

was about the most effective thing he could have done, for, whenever he got one on the wicket, it bowled a black man. Two negroes, including the slogger, fell to him in his first over. Then the Doctor tried his hand, and began by being absurdly particular about the field. He put five men in the slips, and then started with terrifically fast full pitches to leg. A good player would have hit one and all of these right out of the island into the sea, but the people who were now at the wickets merely got out of the way, and let the Doctor's deliveries proceed to the boundary for three byes each.

Upon this he insulted me, as the Fourth Officer had done before him. He said:

"Do stand up to them, old man."

I said:

"Why should I? I'm out to enjoy myself. I'm a human being, not a target. Besides, long-stop will lose interest in the game if he has nothing to do."

"They don't have long-stops in first-class cricket," grumbled the Doctor. "You've got no proper pride."

Then I said:

"Of course, if you are mistaking this display for first-class cricket, it's no good arguing with you."

In his second over the Doctor bowled a shade straighter, and began knocking the batsmen about, and hurting them and frightening them. If they had only kept in front of the wicket, and put their bats between their legs out of the way, they might have been safe enough, but they dashed nervously about and tried to escape; and the ball would shoot and hit their toes, or rise and threaten their heads, or break back into their stomachs. Then the bowler got a man "retired hurt," and a regular panic set in.

"I'm keeping down the run-getting, anyhow," said the elated Doctor.

"Yes, and you'll have to mend all these local celebrities for nothing after the match," replied our Treasure.

The latter had taken several more wickets, and now the score stood at sixty, with three further blacks to bat. About this time I made an appeal to the umpire upon a question of stumping a man, but he had his back turned and was buying a piece of sugarcane. He apologised profusely. He said:

"I'se too sorry, Massa, jus' too sorry, but I'se dam hungry, Sar."

Hungry! Whoever heard of an umpire being hungry? Thirsty they may be, and generally are, but hunger is a paltry plea to raise.

Soon afterwards, our black stoker made two brilliant catches, one after the other, the Treasure quickly bowled their last man, and the innings closed for seventy-three runs.

Then the rival teams scattered through St. Thomas for luncheon, the spectators dispersed, and the goats had the cricket ground all to themselves until the afternoon.

Some lively betting took place during our meal. The Model Man was gloomy, and doubted the ability of his eleven to make the necessary score on such a wicket; but the Doctor appeared extremely sanguine, and the Fourth Officer actually guaranteed half the runs himself. He said:

"Though not a finished bat, yet it often happens that I come off with the willow when I fail with the leather."

It struck me that if his success with one was proportionate to his failure with the other, there seemed just reason for hoping he would get into three figures that afternoon.

Our Captain grew very anxious about the order of going in. Finally, he determined to start with the black stoker and me. He said:

"You play steadily and cautiously and let him hit. If it chances to be his day, we may, after all, win with ten wickets in hand. Stranger things have happened at cricket."

"Not many," I replied; "but we will do our best."

Our best, unfortunately, did not amount to much. The match was resumed at half-past three, before an increased gathering of onlookers; and three distinct rounds



"BLACK STOKER MADE TWO BRILLIANT CATCHES."

of applause greeted the gigantic stoker and me as we marched to the wickets. It proved a fortunate thing that we got the applause then, because we might have missed it later. My own innings, for instance, did not afford the smallest loophole for enthusiasm at any time.

The black certainly began well. He hit the first ball he received clean out of the ground for six runs, but the second ball retaliated and smote him direfully somewhere in the small ribs. Thereupon, he fell down and rolled twenty yards to allay the agony, after which he rose up and withdrew, declaring that he had met his death, and that no power

on earth would induce him to bat again. These negroes never forget an injury of this kind. If our black stoker lives over to-morrow, he will probably collect his colleagues from the ship, and row ashore by night and seek out the local bowler, and make it very unrestful and exciting for him.



"SOMEWHERE IN THE SMALL RIBS."

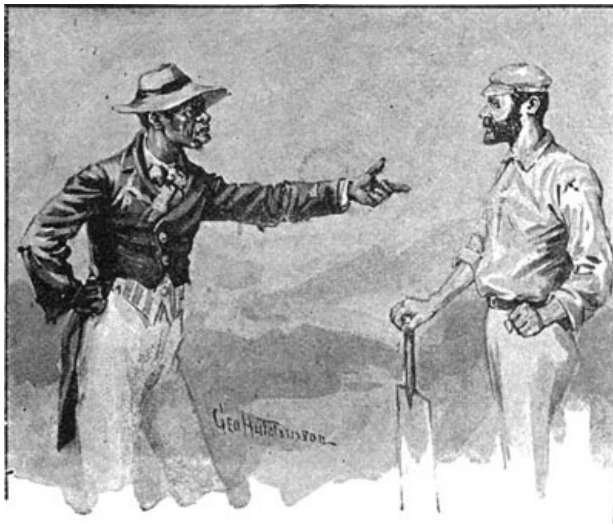
The Model Man now came in, but he had the misfortune to lose my assistance almost immediately. I was caught at short leg after a patient innings of ten, slightly marred, however, by about the same number of chances. The Fourth Officer took my place. He began by nearly running out his Captain. If point had not stopped to dance and rub his leg, the wicket must have fallen. Then the new-comer settled down and played with great care, and irritated the bowlers extremely by giving them advice and criticising their efforts. Once they sent him so slow a ball that it never reached the wicket at all. Then our Fourth Officer rushed out and hit it after it had stopped, and so, rather ingeniously, scored two. It was a revolutionary sort of stroke, and the umpire said it must not be counted, but the batsman insisted upon having the runs put down. Of course, to argue with any umpire is madness. This black one simply waited for the next over, and then gave our Fourth Officer out "leg before." There was a great argument, but the umpire's ruling had to be upheld, and the batsman retired, declaring that he would never play cricket with savages again as long as he lived. He said:

"In the first place the ball was a wide, and in the second, after breaking a yard and a half, it hit my elbow. Then that black ass gives me out 'leg before.' It's sickening. Emancipation is the biggest error of the century. I'm going back to the ship." But he did not. He found something under a yellow parasol that comforted him.

The Doctor came in next, and hit the first ball he received over the bowler's head for three. Encouraged by this success, he ran half across the ground to the next one, missed it, and would have been stumped under ordinary circumstances, but the ball, instead of going to the wicket-keeper, shunted off at a sort of junction, and proceeded to short-slip. He, desiring the honour of defeating the Doctor, would not give the ball up, and tried to put the wicket down himself. This the outraged custodian of the stumps refused to permit, and while they were wrangling about it, and the rest of the team were screaming directions, our batsman galloped safely back amidst loud applause.

We made fifty-eight for four wickets, the Model Man being the next to succumb. He had performed well, in something approaching style, for thirty runs. After him came the Treasure. He played forward very tamely at everything, until a ball suddenly got up and skinned two of his knuckles. Then he grew excited, and began hitting very hard, and making runs at a tremendous pace.

Meanwhile the Doctor, finding his wicket still intact, suddenly became enthusiastic and took extraordinary interest in his innings. Between each ball he marched about the pitch and grubbed up tufts of grass and threw away stones, and patted the different elevations and acclivities with his bat. But he might just as well have patted the Alps, or any other mountain range. He hit a fast ball straight up into the air, when only five or six runs were wanted to win the match. It was one of those awkward, lofty hits that half the field can get to, if they only look alive. In this case, four negroes were all waiting to secure him, so the Doctor escaped again. Then, evidently under the impression that he bore a charmed life, he began taking great liberties, and pulling straight balls and strolling about out of his ground, and so forth. Finally, amid some intricate manoeuvres, he jumped on to his own wicket, and retired well pleased with his performance. The Treasure went on hitting and being hit for a few minutes



"THERE WAS A GREAT ARGUMENT."

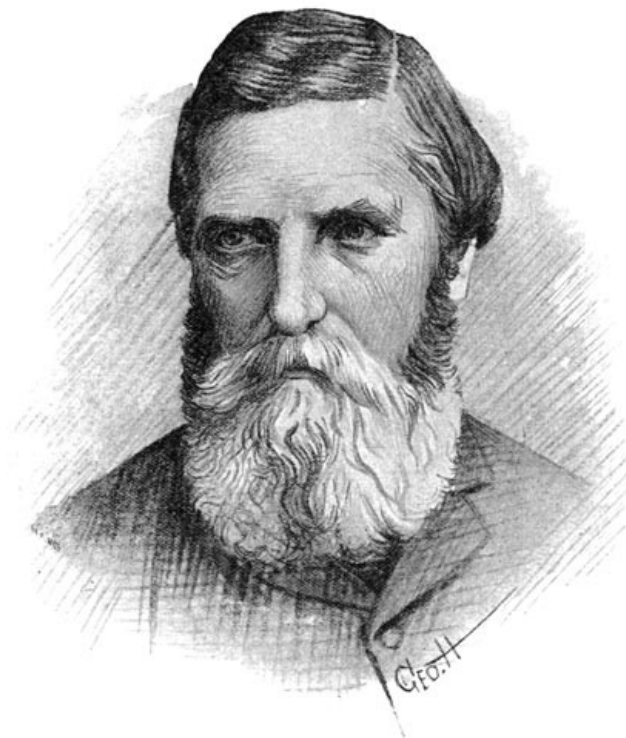
longer; then he made the winning stroke, and the contest came to a happy conclusion.

With one or two exceptions, everybody had much enjoyed the match; and that night, I recollect, we sat and smoked late on the deck of the "Rhine," fought our battle once more, explained our theories of cricket to one another, and agreed that it was a great and grand amusement.

"But," said the Fourth Officer, "it is not a pastime in which your nigger will ever excel. He cannot learn the rules, let alone play the game."

"No," I answered, "he does not excel at it, because, 'unstable as water,' the Ethiopian will never excel at anything; but he does quite as well as one might have expected, and, if he had a better ground, might play a better game."

Certainly that cricket ground requires attention. To level it, though doubtless an engineering feat, should not be impossible. If an earthquake could be arranged, it might leave a surface for steam rollers to begin working upon; but no mere patching or tinkering will answer the purpose. Something definite and drastic and colossal must be done to the cricket ground we played on at St. Thomas before it can become fairly worthy of the name.



R. M. Ballantyne

My First Book.

BY R. M. BALLANTYNE.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GEO. HUTCHINSON.

(Photographs by Messrs. Fradelle & Young.)

Having been asked to give some account of the commencement of my literary career, I begin by remarking that my first book was not a tale or "story-book," but a free-and-easy record of personal adventure and every-day life in those wild regions of North America which are known, variously, as Rupert's Land—The Hudson's Bay Territory—The Nor' West, and "The Great Lone Land."

The record was never meant to see the light in the form of a book. It was written solely for the eye of my mother, but, as it may be said that it was the means of leading me ultimately into the path of my life-work, and was penned under somewhat peculiar circumstances, it may not be out of place to refer to it particularly here.

The circumstances were as follows:—

After having spent about six years in the wild Nor' West, as a servant of the Hudson's Bay Fur Company, I found myself, one summer—at the advanced age of twenty-two—in charge of an outpost on the uninhabited northern shores of the gulf of St. Lawrence named Seven Islands. It was a dreary, desolate spot; at that time far beyond the bounds of civilisation. The gulf, just opposite the establishment, was about fifty miles broad. The ships which passed up and down it were invisible, not only on account of distance, but because of seven islands at the mouth of the bay coming between them and the outpost. My next neighbour, in command of a similar post up the gulf, was about seventy miles distant. The nearest house down the gulf was about eighty miles off, and behind us lay the virgin forests, with swamps, lakes, prairies, and mountains, stretching away without break right across the continent to the Pacific Ocean.



"WHERE I WROTE MY FIRST BOOK."
(A Sketch by the Author.)



MR. BALLANTYNE'S HOUSE AT HARROW.

The outpost—which, in virtue of a ship's carronade and a flagstaff, was occasionally styled a "fort"—consisted of four wooden buildings. One of these—the largest, with a verandah—was the Residency. There was an offshoot in rear which served as a kitchen. The other houses were a store for goods wherewith to carry on trade with the Indians, a stable, and a workshop. The whole population of the establishment—indeed of the surrounding district—consisted of myself and one man—also a horse! The horse occupied the stable, I dwelt in the Residency, the rest of the population lived in the kitchen.

There were, indeed, other five men belonging to the establishment, but these did not affect its desolation, for they were away netting salmon at a river about twenty miles distant at the time I write of.

My "Friday"—who was a French-Canadian—being cook, as well as man-of-all-works, found a little occupation in attending to the duties of his office, but the unfortunate Governor had nothing whatever to do except await the arrival of Indians, who were not due at that time. The horse was a bad one, without a saddle, and in possession of a pronounced backbone. My "Friday" was not sociable. I had no books, no newspapers, no magazines or literature of any kind, no game to shoot, no boat wherewith to prosecute fishing in the bay, and no prospect of seeing any one to speak to for weeks, if not months, to come. But I had pen and ink, and, by great good fortune, was in possession of a blank paper book fully an inch thick.

These, then, were the circumstances in which I began my first book.

When that book was finished, and, not long afterwards, submitted to the—I need hardly say favourable—criticism of my mother, I had not the most distant idea of taking to authorship as a profession. Even when a printer-cousin, seeing the MS., offered to print it, and the well-known Blackwood, of Edinburgh, seeing the book, offered to publish it—and did publish it—my ambition was still so absolutely asleep that I did not again put pen to paper in *that* way for eight years thereafter, although I might have been encouraged thereto by the fact that this first book—named “Hudson’s Bay”—besides being a commercial success, received favourable notice from the press.

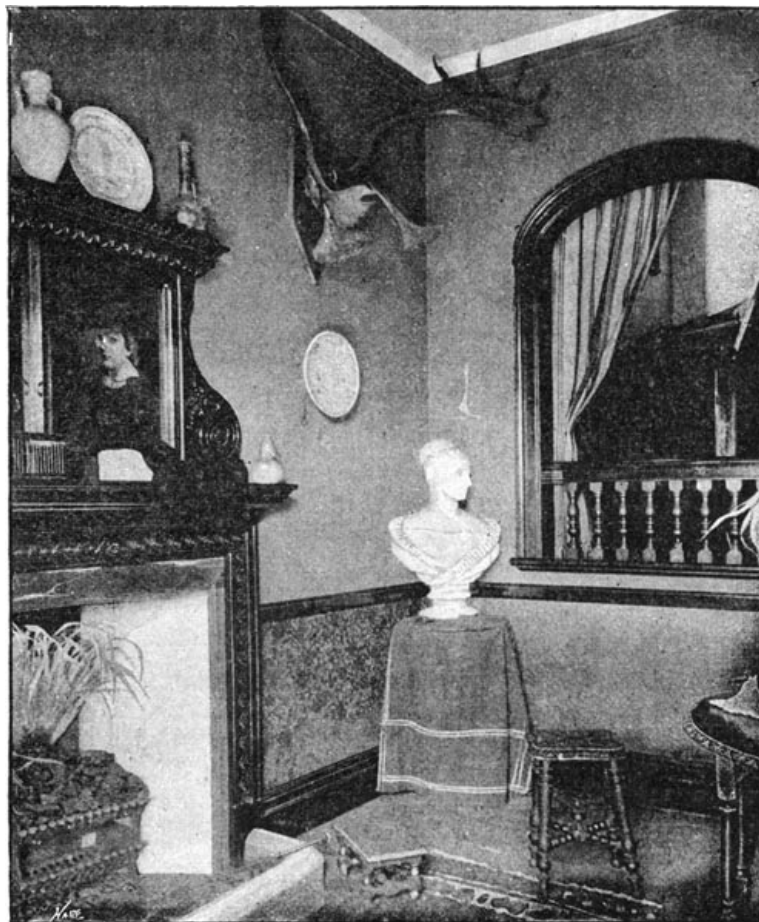
It was not until the year 1854 that my literary path was opened up. At that time I was a partner in the late publishing firm of Constable & Co. of Edinburgh. Happening one day to meet with the late William Nelson, publisher, I was asked by him how I should like the idea of taking to literature as a profession. My answer I forget. It must have been vague, for I had never thought of the subject before.

“Well,” said he, “what would you think of trying to write a story?”

Somewhat amused, I replied that I did not know what to think, but I would try if he wished me to do so.

“Do so,” said he, “and go to work at once”—or words to that effect.

I went to work at once, and wrote my first story or work of fiction. It was published in 1855 under the name of “Snowflakes and Sunbeams; or, The Young Furtraders.” Afterwards the first part of the title was dropped, and the book is now known as “The Young Furtraders.” From that day to this I have lived by making story-books for young folk.



THE HALL.

From what I have said it will be seen that I have never aimed at the achieving of this position, and I hope that it is not presumptuous in me to think—and to derive much comfort from the thought—that God led me into the particular path along which I have walked for so many years.

The scene of my first story was naturally laid in those backwoods with which I was familiar, and the story itself was founded on the adventures and experiences of myself and my companions. When a second book was required of me, I stuck to the same regions, but changed the locality. When casting about in my mind for a suitable subject, I happened to meet with an old retired “Nor’wester” who had spent an adventurous life in Rupert’s Land. Among other duties he had been sent to establish an outpost of the Hudson Bay Company at Ungava Bay, one of the most dreary parts of a desolate region. On hearing what I wanted he sat down and wrote a long narrative of his proceedings there, which he placed at my disposal, and thus furnished me with the foundation of “Ungava.”

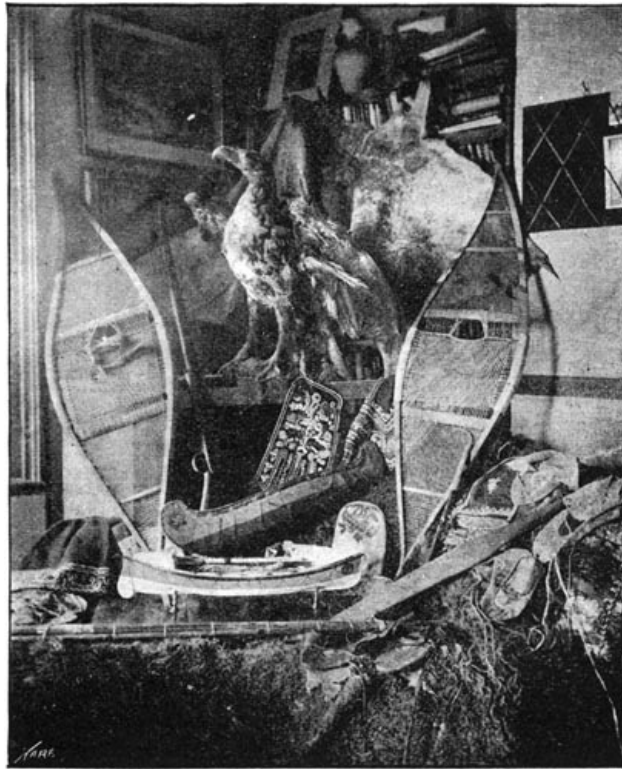
But now I had reached the end of my tether, and when a third story was wanted I was compelled to seek new fields of adventure in the books of travellers. Regarding the Southern seas as the most romantic part of the world—after the backwoods!—I mentally and spiritually plunged into those warm waters, and the dive resulted in the “Coral Island.”

It now began to be borne in upon me that there was something not quite satisfactory in describing, expatiating on, and energising in, regions which one has never seen. For one thing, it was needful to be always carefully on the watch to avoid falling into mistakes geographical, topographical, natural-historical, and otherwise.

For instance, despite the utmost care of which I was capable while studying up for the "Coral Island," I fell into a blunder through ignorance in regard to a familiar fruit. I was under the impression that cocoanuts grew on their trees in the same form as that in which they are usually presented to us in grocers' windows—namely, about the size of a large fist with three spots at one end. Learning from trustworthy books that at a certain stage of development the nut contains a delicious beverage like lemonade, I sent one of my heroes up a tree for a nut, through the shell of which he bored a hole with a penknife. It was not till long after the story was published that my own brother—who had voyaged in Southern seas—wrote to draw my attention to the fact that the cocoanut is nearly as large as a man's head, and its outer husk is over an inch thick, so that no ordinary penknife could bore to its interior! Of course I should have known this, and, perhaps, should be ashamed of my ignorance, but, somehow, I'm not!

I admit that this was a slip, but such, and other slips, hardly justify the remark that some people have not hesitated to make, namely, that I have a tendency to draw the long bow. I feel almost sensitive on this point, for I have always laboured to be true to nature and to fact even in my wildest flights of fancy.

This reminds me of the remark made to myself once by a lady in reference to this same "Coral Island." "There is one thing, Mr. Ballantyne," she said, "which I really find it hard to believe. You make one of your three boys dive into a clear pool, go to the bottom, and then, turning on his back, look up and wink and laugh at the other two."



TROPHIES FROM MR. BALLANTYNE'S TRAVELS.

"No, no, not 'laugh,'" said I, remonstratively.

"Well, then, you make him smile."

"Ah, that is true, but there is a vast difference between laughing and smiling under water. But is it not singular that you should doubt the only incident in the story which I personally verified? I happened to be in lodgings at the seaside while writing that story, and, after penning the passage you refer to, I went down to the shore, pulled off my clothes, dived to the bottom, turned on my back, and, looking up, I smiled and winked."

The lady laughed, but I have never been quite sure, from the tone of that laugh, whether it was a laugh of conviction or of unbelief. It is not improbable that my fair friend's mental constitution may have been somewhat similar to that of the old woman who declined to believe her sailor-grandson when he told her he had seen flying-fish, but at once recognised his veracity when he said he had seen the remains of Pharaoh's chariot wheels on the shores of the Red Sea.



THE DINING ROOM.

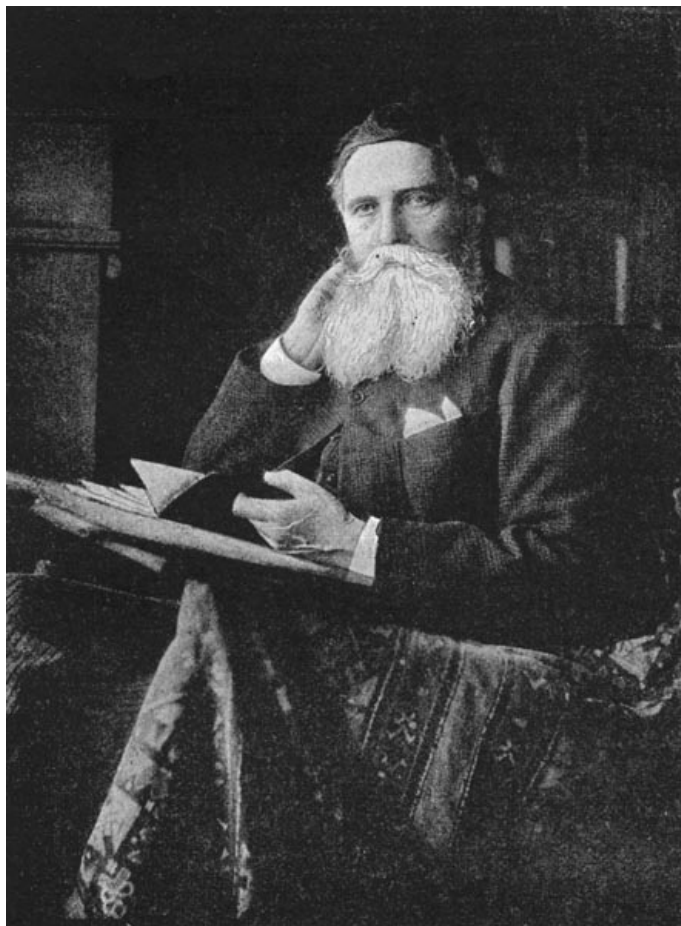
Recognising, then, the difficulties of my position, I formed the resolution to visit—when possible—the scenes in which my stories were laid; converse with the people who, under modification, were to form the *dramatis personæ* of the tales, and, generally, to obtain information in each case, as far as lay in my power, from the fountain head.

Thus, when about to begin "The Lifeboat," I went to Ramsgate, and, for some time, was hand and glove with Jarman, the heroic coxswain of the Ramsgate boat, a lion-like as well as lion-hearted man, who rescued hundreds of lives from the fatal Goodwin Sands during his career. In like manner, when getting up information for "The Lighthouse," I obtained permission from the Commissioners of Northern Lights to visit the Bell Rock Lighthouse, where I hobnobbed with the three keepers of that celebrated pillar-in-the-sea for three weeks, and read Stevenson's graphic account of the building of the structure in the library, or visitors' room, just under the lantern. I was absolutely a prisoner there during those three weeks, for no boats ever came near us, and it need scarcely be said that ships kept well out of our way. By good fortune there came on a pretty stiff gale at the time, and Stevenson's thrilling narrative was read to the tune of whistling winds and roaring seas, many of which latter sent the spray right up to the lantern and caused the building, more than once, to quiver to its foundation.



THE STUDY.

In order to do justice to "Fighting the Flames" I careered through the streets of London on fire-engines, clad in a pea-jacket and a black leather helmet of the Salvage Corps. This, to enable me to pass the cordon of police without question—though not without recognition, as was made apparent to me on one occasion at a fire by a fireman whispering confidentially, "I know what *you* are, sir, you're a hamitoor!"



MR. R. M. BALLANTYNE.

"Right you are," said I, and moved away in order to change the subject.

It was a glorious experience, by the way, this galloping on fire-engines through the crowded streets. It had in it much of the excitement of the chase—possibly that of war—with the noble end in view of saving instead of destroying life! Such tearing along at headlong speed; such wild roaring of the firemen to clear the way; such frantic dashing aside of cabs, carts, 'buses, and pedestrians; such reckless courage on the part of the men, and volcanic spoutings on the part of the fires! But I must not linger. The memory of it is too enticing. "Deep Down" took me to Cornwall, where, over two hundred fathoms beneath the green turf, and more than half-a-mile out under the bed of the sea, I saw the sturdy miners at work winning copper and tin from the solid rock, and acquired some knowledge of their life, sufferings, and toils.



THE DRAWING ROOM.

In the land of the Vikings I shot ptarmigan, caught salmon, and gathered material for "Erling the Bold." A winter in Algiers made me familiar with the "Pirate City." I enjoyed a fortnight with the hearty inhabitants of the Gull Lightship off the Goodwin Sands; and went to the Cape of Good Hope, and up into the interior of the Colony, to spy out the land and hold intercourse with "The Settler and the Savage"—although I am bound to confess that, with regard to the latter, I talked to him only with mine eyes. I also went afloat for a short time with the fishermen of the North Sea in order to be able to do justice to "The Young Trawler."

To arrive still closer at the truth, and to avoid errors, I have always endeavoured to submit my proof sheets, when possible, to experts and men who knew the subjects well. Thus, Capt. Shaw, late chief of the London Fire Brigade, kindly read the proofs of "Fighting the Flames," and prevented my getting off the rails in matters of detail, and Sir Arthur Blackwood, financial secretary to the General Post Office, obligingly did me the same favour in regard to "Post Haste."

One other word in conclusion. Always, while writing—whatever might be the subject of my story—I have been influenced by an undercurrent of effort and desire to direct the minds and affections of my readers towards the higher life.

Trials And Troubles of an Artist.

BY FRED MILLER.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY E. M. JESSOP.



Are any professional men so liable to public insults as painters? Only last summer a new, and I think unique, type of insult was dropped upon me. I had a picture in hand, and wanted a bit of background to complete it. I had seen just the very thing near Twickenham, so, taking my sketching-box and camp-stool, I trained out, and in due course started work. Although I was painting by the side of a public road, the traffic was small and the passers-by few. Still there *were* passers-by, mostly children, with their nurses or governesses. I am too used to being looked at to take any notice of those who try to peep as they pass, and I soon got quite absorbed in my task. Presently, I was aroused from my artistic abstraction by a little girl dropping a penny in my box, and before I had time to explain, expostulate, or thank her, she had run away. "The world is less hard-hearted than I thought," was my reflection as I resumed painting. A little while after this I noticed, during the pauses of my work, another little girl hovering about me in an undecided sort of way. After a few moments' indecision, *she* dropped a penny in my box and disappeared. "This is encouraging," I said to myself, "I shall certainly come here again."



I resumed my sketch, when presently a young girl with two children came and stood near me. These were of a different class. There was no timidity or reticence about them. After standing at my side, and finding that they could not see to advantage, the three sidled round to the back, and gradually edged themselves nearer and nearer until they commanded a satisfactory view of the sketch.

They watched in silence for awhile, and then the girl



might have divided us was bridged now, so I got what satisfaction I could out of her chatter.

"I wish I could paint. I'd like to do them tex's what they gives yer at Sunday school."

"Oh, that's the line you'd like to take up, Julia, is it?"

Another pause.

"D'yer like them paintin's what they gives yer at the tea grocers? My brother says 'e's going to paint them sort when 'e gets them colours what you squeezes out of tubes; you know, like them ladies' tormenters, same as you gets on Bank 'olidays on 'Ampstead 'Eath."

I wanted to go on with my picture, so I suggested to Julia (I had no reason to suppose that her name was not Julia) that it was getting near tea-time.



"Oh, is it," she said; "come along, Halbert." Then, turning to me, she added—"Are yer comin' to-morrer? I'd like yer to see my brother's paintin's."

"That depends upon how much I make to-day, Julia," I answered—"whether the 'pitch' is a good one or not."

"Oh," said Julia, thoughtfully; "I'd like yer to come to-morrer," and then as she passed she dropped a halfpenny into my box.

On other occasions, when out painting in poor neighbourhoods, my easel, camp-stool, and self have been used as "home" in games like "Hi-spi-Hoy" and "Hoop," and I have, during the progress of my sketch, been more than once in imminent danger of being carried away, and my kit sent flying, during a sudden rush of the excited players. But even such an indignity as this does not touch bottom. Boys have before now made me a "Harbour of Refuge," with the poetry left out, and bricks and various missiles substituted. They have dodged behind me to escape the consequences of "cheekiness" to bigger boys, and have used my canvas as a screen to shield off stones.

said—"You ain't done much yet. 'Spose you're going to finish it at 'ome?"

The tone of her voice made me inclined to humour her, so I replied—

"Well, you see, miss, I haven't taken enough yet. Can't afford to go home on twopence."

"My brother paints. He's in the sixth standard. I give 'im a box of paints on his birthday, and he's going to paint me a picture for my bedroom."

The
gulf
that



And what are you to do? Just at that moment, in all likelihood, you are putting in a crisp, telling touch that will "do the trick," and if the news were brought to you that your favourite aunt had fallen downstairs, it would not be sufficient to make you rise from off your camp-stool.



"Hi-spi-Hoy"

I was sketching once near a row of those cheap one-storied cottages, generally called Villa This and Villa That,

inhabited by a tribe the mothers of which seem always to have a baby on hand, and several others in various stages of development. These children spend most of their time, so far as I can judge, in hanging about, just outside the front garden, waiting for something to turn up to amuse them, and I had been much bothered by their creeping round behind me, or edging closer and closer to my side, and occasionally shoving each other so as to shake me or my sketch. I tried to

forget them, and maintained a chilling silence. The numbers, however, kept on increasing, and presently games were projected in my immediate vicinity, as though I were the centre of gravity, or the hub of the universe. The climax was reached when a young nurse, aged seven or thereabouts, with a child just on the brink of independence in her arms, came up and said—

"D'yer mind me leaving my baby here, while I have a game with the Tubbses? She'll be all right if I sit her on your jacket."

Nice thing when seeking material for a masterpiece for next year's Academy to be asked to look after baby!

The remarks made by street loafers and errand-boys, too, who stand at your elbow for half-an-hour at a stretch, are not encouraging, as a rule. One boy, in what he considers a tone of confidence, will say to another—

"S'elp me, Bob, aint 'e a doin' it a fair treat."

"Carry me out" (it is impossible to write "out" as *they* pronounce it), "Arree, ain't it fine" (rising intonation on the "I")—"I wish I was a bloomin' hartist."

"Don't 'e fancy 'isself, just."



"D'YER MIND ME LEAVING MY BABY HERE?"



BANK 'OLIDAYS ON 'AMPSTEAD 'EATH."

It is difficult to keep quietly on at work with every appearance of indifference under such circumstances. It is also exasperating to be called "Matey," as though you were a pal of theirs, and lived on the same landing. Yet these are only a few of the indignities with which a poor artist has to put up.

Who has not, when on a sketching tour, felt the contempt that the bucolic mind has for a man who, day after day, and week after week, sits out of doors on his camp-stool, doing his best to catch some of Nature's mystery and fleeting beauty, and give it an abiding place on his canvas.

My friend S— is a big, healthy, bearded fellow, who looks as though he could pick half-hundred weights up in each hand with the ease that I pick up my palette. The following dialogue took place on one occasion between him and an elderly rustic who had been standing watching him for some time, as he sat by the roadside, painting.

"No offence, sir," said the agriculturist, "but is anything the matter wi' yer?"

"No," answered S—— "What makes you ask?"

"Yer hain't lame, are yer?"

"Lame! Good gracious, no!"

"You hain't 'ad a misfortune in any way? The sciatics or lumbager, that's kind o' laid yer by?"

"No, I'm as well as I have always been."

"An' yer call yerself a man and can sit theer a doin' o' that. Well, I'm d—— d!"

I never go out sketching without feeling this silent contempt, for it is only rarely that it finds expression. The remarks made by villagers show how utterly unable they are to grasp the idea of anyone valuing an artist's efforts. The old story of the painter who was asked by the farmer whose cow he had been drawing, what the said picture might be worth when finished, is typical.

"Oh, I hope to get thirty pounds for it if it is well hung," explained the artist.

"Thutty pound for the mere picture!" cried the old fellow in astonishment. "Why, I'd sell you the old cow itself for ten."



AIN'T 'E A DOIN' IT A FAIR TREAT."



YER HAIN'T LAME, ARE YER?"



WHOSE COW HE HAD BEEN DRAWING.

A spirit of commiseration underlies a good many of the remarks made by the bucolic. I went down on one occasion to see a couple of painters who had taken a small cottage at one and sixpence a week in order to paint some orchard pictures. When their neighbours, who were farm hands, got to know them a bit, they were very friendly disposed, and made them presents of vegetables, and one old fellow who was reputed to have "saved a smart bit o' money," said to one of the "painter chaps," as they were called—

"There don't seem much of a living in your business, sir. I s'pose trade's a bit dull with ye, now folks is a spring cleaning. What do yer say now to paintin' my cart in yer dinner hour? I shall want it done afore long, and I'd like to gie ye the job, for a shilling or two down't come amiss to any of us. Do it now?"

Another job refused by these same artists was to clean and touch up an old picture that had been bought for a few shillings at a sale. The old chap who had purchased it went so far as to offer them a shilling to do the work, and that offer being declined, he threw in a pint of stout as an additional inducement.

A friend who had painted a 50 x 40 canvas outside during one summer, spending some five or six weeks upon it, told me that one old chap, who looked like a jobbing gardener, used to pass by every day, and invariably stayed to stare at the work, but always at a respectful distance, and it was not until the picture was nearly completed that he broke the silence.

"D'yer moind me 'aving a look at it, sir?"



WHAT DO YER SAY NOW TO PAINTIN' MY CART



STAYED TO STARE AT THE WORK.

"Oh, certainly not," and my friend got off his camp-stool to let the critic have an uninterrupted view. The subject was a careful study of wild flowers and herbage, growing in the corner of an orchard. The old fellow seemed to take the picture in very carefully, and at length said:

"Is it a view in Ireland, sir?"

"View in Ireland! What made you think of that? Don't you see it's the corner of the orchard there, with all the thistles and docks and wild flowers?"

"Well, to be sure! Fancy anyone a paintin' them weeds and trumpery!" and with that cheerless remark the old fellow sheered off.

Sculptors, unlike painters, rarely venture out of their studios, but it happened that a sculptor came down to spend a few days with us when in a Norfolk village, and so liked the place that he hired a barn, had a lot of clay and a turntable sent down, and started modelling a milkmaid. As the work progressed, it became the talk of the place, and, in due course, numbers came to see the clay image that my friend was setting up in the barn. This work *did* appeal to them. They could see at a glance what it was meant to represent, and the chorus of approval was loud and general, except on the part of the village constable. He was a taciturn man, and used to come and smoke his pipe and preserve a contemptuous silence. One day he said—

"Are you making that image for a church?"

"No. Why did you think I was?"

"Oh, nothing. Only when I was in London, and that's a smart while ago, I worked on a church as was a buildin', and we had to fix some figures; only they were made in what we calls Portland cement."



MODELLING A MILKMAID



"Oh, then, you have seen sculpture before?"

"Yes, sir, 'tain't the first time as I've seed a graven image, as the Bible calls 'em. D'yer ever make them figures they puts over doors and winders of houses?"

"No; I can't say I do."

"Did you ever see them two figures in the Lord Mayor's palace in the City? You *ought* to see them, sir. I reckon they're the best things in that line you can see anywhere?"

"I'm afraid I don't remember which figures you refer to."

"Oh, they ain't like your work, not a little bit. They're picked out in all kinds of colours, and are ever so big. I was thinking they must represent two of them heathen gods what the Children of Israel fell down and worshipped. You know the figures I mean?"

"I'm afraid I don't. Can't you remember their names?"

"Why, Gog and Magog, aren't they, sir?"



THE VILLAGE CONSTABLE.

The Brothers' Agency.

BY DO BAHIN.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE MISSES HAMMOND.



"SHE WON'T SEE YOU."

"She won't see you, my boy," said Grigsby, as I stood on the steps of the Scandalmongers' Club waiting for the next West Kensington 'bus; "she's doing a roaring trade, and don't want any more advertisements; and if she does she'll put up her own notices, and not use you for billsticker."

"Grigsby may not be right this time," I reflected, as I scaled the 'bus. "He seldom is! And haven't I triumphantly interviewed all the most unmanageable celebrities of the last ten years, from Lord Tennyson to the Royal baby? I suppose it's my bland appearance. It lulls suspicion and excites curiosity. People want to see whether it is possible for any man to *be* such a fool as I *look*. Anyhow, I must go through with it now, as I've let it out to Grigsby."

The fact is, I was about to try to interview Miss Jenny T. Buller, the inventress and manager of the "Brothers' Agency," perhaps the most important social factor of the present century. In due course I found myself opposite a smart-looking house, on whose door-plate was engraved "The Brothers' Agency."

Being taken no doubt for a postulant Brother, I was shown upstairs into a severe but elegant room, in the middle of which, at a huge desk loaded with papers, sat a fashionable young lady of the frailest type of Transatlantic beauty.

"Miss Buller, I believe."

"You will not suit," she said, after one short but decisive stare. "You are not up to our mark."

"I don't wish to be a Brother," I replied.

"Then what do you want?" she answered.

"Miss Buller," I inquired, as if my life depended on the response, "how did you ever think of this wonderful scheme?"

She laid down her pen, and turned in her chair; and I saw that I had won.

"I'm tired of writing just now," she began, "and I don't mind if I tell you."



"I DON'T MIND IF I TELL YOU."

"I found myself obliged to increase my income by some means. I first thought of starting a servants' agency; but the inconvenience I experienced from having no brothers to take me about suggested a novel idea to me. I was wondering if other girls felt as I did, when it flashed upon me that young men who, from any reasons, are in want of money, might let themselves out as brothers to well-to-do damsels possessing no fraternal relations. I immediately settled to start an agency for this object—somewhat on the principle of 'Lady Guides'—the full title being 'The agency for supplying Brothers to brotherless girls, or those with unobliging brothers.' I resolved to call it shortly 'The Brothers' Agency.' It is a good name, and gives to the undertaking a kind of monastic flavour that I find is very taking.

"Of course I only began in a small way amongst the men and girls I knew personally; but my business spread so rapidly that I soon started a regular office, and issued printed rules.

"I decided that the Brothers should go to their work during the day (as such relations do), and only be engaged for the evening to escort my clients, as their sisters, to balls, theatres, etc. I knew that young men in London society were supposed to let themselves out for dances; so why not as Brothers?"

"Why not, indeed?" I murmured sympathetically.

"We do not find," she continued vivaciously, "that it leads to matrimonial complications, as the

men who seek employment as Brothers are usually so very impecunious that they understand that marriage is out of the question for them. I was told by my friends, by which I mean all those who felt themselves privileged to say nasty things to me, that we should degenerate into a matrimonial agency, but I have not found it so. On the contrary, every man entering his name on our books, and every girl engaging a Brother, signs a paper agreeing to pay a large prohibitive fine should they get engaged to each other during the period of fraternity. Any man known to be engaged is obliged to take his name off the books *at once*, as we find *fiancées* very prejudiced, and several unpleasant visits were paid to me at the office. Any man becoming engaged while fulfilling a contract is liable to instant dismissal at the employer's pleasure, it having been found that he almost invariably becomes remiss and inattentive in his discharge of duties.



"ONE SISTER WAS SEEN AT THE THEATRE BY AN OLD MAIDEN AUNT."

"Of course, till the significance of the title of 'Brother' became generally known in London society, there arose a good deal of scandal and confusion.

"One sister was seen at the theatre by an old maiden aunt, who had never heard of the Agency. The young lady offered as an explanation that the man with her was 'only engaged for the time,' which so shocked the poor old lady that she made a codicil next day to her will reciting her niece's misbehaviour and disinheriting her."

"That kind of misunderstanding," I said, "can hardly occur any longer."

"I should think not," she retorted. "And meantime, thank goodness, the term 'Brother' has put an end to that hackneyed form of refusal, 'I love you as a brother.' The sisters are only allowed to require the attention of the Brothers for a stated number of nights a week, and the work is well paid. On the other hand, the sisters escape all the duties they generally have to perform for their real brothers, such as practising accompaniments, mending, shopping, or running messages.

"Brothers are engaged by the week; but I always recommend that the same Brother should not be retained for more than a month, as too long a service makes them—like old family servants—presume, and fancy themselves invaluable."

"And how do you manage about characters?" I here enquired.

"I never," she said, "consent to act as agent for any man I have not seen, or to procure a Brother for any girl I have not talked to; and I study their characters so as to know how any arrangement is likely to answer. We often have photographs of Brothers ready for engagement—in fact, those who keep their names permanently on the books usually supply us with cabinet pictures for reference, and I arrange for interviews as between mistresses and servants."

"And what terms are generally asked by the Brothers?" I said.

"These, of course," she replied, "depend largely on the nature of the situation, and the qualifications of the Brother. Vulgar or disagreeable girls have to pay very heavily. Families with several girls are charged more in proportion, as many men object to go where other Brothers are

kept. Some men are willing to go as joint Brother to a family of girls, but this rarely works well.

"They are paid so much a week, and their theatre money if they have to escort the lady to the play (like beer money, you know). One man required his buttonhole bouquets, but I said he was clearly above his place. We do not arrange any engagements for the summer vacation, as we have found it too dangerous. I really think," she added thoughtfully, "that the best way of explaining our methods to you would be to show some entries in our books."

"I should be deeply interested," I answered, stifling my eagerness, "and it would be very kind of you."

She drew a great ledger towards her, and showed me one or two entries. The first ran as follows:

"A Brother, six feet high; dresses well; aristocratic manners; a good dancer, and knows all the newest steps, including the Pas de Quatre; obliging, and good-tempered; a teetotaler, and only smokes the best tobacco. Has the highest credentials from his last place. Available for "Church Parade" on Sunday, but prefers not to attend church previously, as he cannot get up so early."

"What a paragon!" I exclaimed.

"Ah! but he asks a very large salary," she rejoined; "he is so much sought after. This is a less expensive one—"

"A Brother, aged 27, something in the City; bad figure, but pleasant smile, and amusing to talk to; slightly provincial, but very highly educated; *most* respectable and steady; musical, and a good tennis player. Very few private engagements, and therefore available most days of the week. Charges strictly moderate."

"We have one man on the books who owns a dogcart," resumed Miss Buller. "He is in the Guards, and preferred to earn a little money to being obliged to leave his regiment. I need hardly say that his charges are very high."

"Naturally," I murmured.

"Here is an advertisement addressed to young ladies of a religious turn of mind:

"A young curate, who has a conscientious objection to bazaars, would be glad to augment his income (the money to be devoted to charitable objects) by obtaining employment as a Brother. He does not dance himself, but would give the sanction of his presence to such entertainments any day except Friday. He is fond of tennis and a good oar. He will give assistance to any lady district-visiting, or taking a Sunday-school class in his own parish. He prefers, as the object is a charitable one, leaving the question of salary to the sister's own good feeling.'



"You wouldn't believe," said Miss Buller, "what a run there is on him; but I find I can easily supply every kind of variety now. A barrister, on this next page, suggests that, as he has influential legal connections, he can generally procure for his sister an excellent place at the sensational trials that have become so fashionable for ladies to attend! He commands a huge salary, especially being a gifted conversationalist, and taking the charge of a dinner table brilliantly; he has credentials from his last place for being 'witty without vulgarity.'"

"And now," I said, "I should like to see the sort of advertisement used by ladies needing Brothers, if you would be kind enough to show me one."

"They are not so interesting," she replied, "but here is one I received to-day:

"A Brother is required during the hunting season by two sisters. He must be a good rider, capable of giving a lead, but very obliging, as two Brothers have been parted with lately, owing to over-excitement in the field causing them to neglect their sisters. The Brother will be mounted by the ladies' parents.'"

"Don't you find that disputes arise," I asked, "between



"MENDING."



"KNOWS ALL THE NEWEST STEPS."

was unpleasant."

"Of course," she answered pensively, "an ill-tempered girl can make matters very unpleasant; but such people pay very highly, as I pointed out only yesterday to one of our most promising Brothers. 'She is rather a common girl,' I said, 'but you know you were very unlucky at Newmarket lately; and you sit up incessantly playing poker; and if you take my advice you will make your losses good by sticking to your place. I dare say the theatres are rather trying, but, on the other hand, as you don't go into at all the same society that she does, you are not likely to meet anyone you know at the parties she takes you to; and, of course, as her Brother, you need not dance incessantly with her!' He finally took my advice."

"Now that," I said, in my very stupidest manner, "is one of the difficulties which has occurred to me. A man who has been engaged as a Brother finds himself saddled with an undesirable acquaintance after the engagement is over."

"I should have thought," she replied, indignantly, "that you would have understood that neither the lady nor the Brother are expected to recognise each other when they meet after the termination of the engagement."

"It must be anxious work sometimes," I remarked, "settling the disputes that arise."

"It is, indeed," said Miss Buller. "One contract on the part of a rising young artist was actually broken off in the middle because the sister who had engaged him, an inordinately vain girl, insisted on being introduced as a central figure into his Academy picture for the year. He refused, and appealed to me; I supported him; on which the young lady came to the office and abused us both. My fear now is," she continued, "that Mr. Whiteley will step in and 'provide' Brothers, but I feel sure that this business could only be managed successfully by a lady. A dispute arose last week over the question of a Brother being required to introduce any friends he might meet at a party to his sister. I vetoed this at once, as real brothers often decline to do this, unless they consider their sister does them credit. On another occasion a Brother insisted on smoking a strong cigar in a cab, coming back from the theatre, saying that he was not accustomed to treat his sisters with ceremony."



"AN ILL-TEMPERED GIRL CAN MAKE MATTERS VERY UNPLEASANT."

"That was rude," I remarked; "but still I pity the men if they are engaged by very exacting sisters, because, after all, they are not real brothers."



"ABUSED US BOTH."

"Oh," said Miss Buller, "I admit that sometimes sisters do get troublesome. One situation I find very hard to fill: the Brothers complain of its being such a hard place, as the young lady is so unpopular that no men ever come to speak to her, and her idea of a Brother is a person who never quits your side in the Row, or elsewhere. The consequence is, that the wretched Brother never has a moment's relaxation. She pays very highly, however. You know, many men stipulate that, even if fulfilling engagements, they shall be free to attend race meetings. We are obliged to consider the Brothers, as I assure you the competition for our best ones is tremendous. They are engaged—like seats at the theatre—for weeks beforehand. I forgot to mention that they are paid less highly in the winter than in the Season."

"You are certainly doing an excellent work," I exclaimed, growing bolder as I felt my copy was made; "and, if I could hire myself out as *your* Brother,"—I paused expressively.

"I guess I don't need to hire," she replied gaily, "I find all the Brothers are willing to take me out for nothing."

"For love, and not for money,"—I interrupted, bowing.

"When they are disengaged," she continued, laughingly. "Besides, being American, I don't need to call them Brothers."

"The Brothers have taste!" was my remark; and then I added, "I suppose the work nearly all falls on your shoulders?"

"Yes; that is inevitable. Arranging for engagements is nothing, but I find it necessary to make the Brothers refer all disputes to me, and delicate points arise. One arose last week, when a lady called upon her Brother to chastise an erring suitor, who had jilted her. However, I said at once that this was not included in his duties, as the offence was prior to his entering on his present Brotherhood."

"Well, I think you were quite right," I said; "but I'm afraid your position is not so enviable as I fancied at first. I shouldn't care myself to settle such delicate points."

"Nonsense!" she replied, "these are crumpled rose leaves. The agency is paying splendidly. I am making my fortune, and at the same time conferring a boon on society. Why there is no longer a dearth of partners at dances, as most girls bring a Brother. In fact, the agency is doing so well that I shall soon have to take larger premises."

"Well, Miss Buller," I said, taking up my hat, "I hardly know how to thank you for your courtesy and patience in answering all my questions. I now thoroughly understand the working of your excellent agency, and I am sure that it is a scheme that will continue to flourish."

"Till the Brothers form a Union, and go out on strike," replied Miss Buller gaily. "The demand already exceeds the supply!"

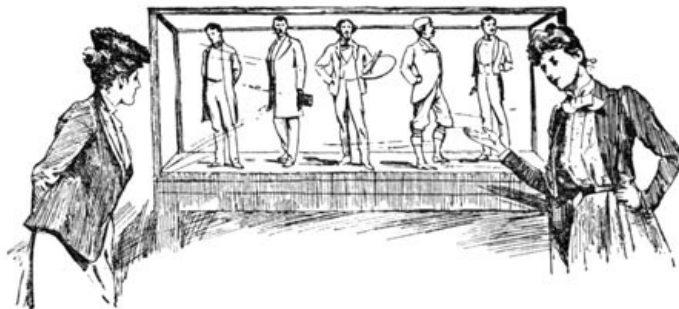
She rang the bell, and a neat parlourmaid showed me out.

As I walked away, I marvelled that this inspired scheme, which bids fair to revolutionise modern society, should be the fruit of one mind.

I also thought with pleasure of my next meeting with Grigsby.



"FOR LOVE, AND NOT FOR MONEY,'
—I INTERRUPTED."



My Own Murderer.

BY E. J. GOODMAN.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. GREIG.

When I say that my name is Samuel Chillip, of course you will know who I am. Yes, I am the author—it has been said the famous author—of "The Poisoned Waterbottle," "Steeped in Gore," "The Demon Detective," and other highly sensational and blood-curdling stories. But though these tales of mine have brought me some fame and a fair amount of profit, I am not particularly proud of them. I really don't know how I, so to speak, drifted into crime. I never liked it, and, of course, never practised it myself. I would much rather have written sentimental or moral stories,

but I seemed somehow fated to turn my attention to fraud and violence, and I could not get away from such subjects.

I am a family man with a wife and children, and live the most domesticated and harmless of lives. I rent a small villa at St. John's Wood, and have got a pretty garden, which I cultivate myself. I take my children out for walks in the Park, and have even been known to nurse the baby. Never was there a man whose mode of life was so different from his mode of getting a living. I burn the midnight oil, that is to say, I do my best work at night. The cares of a large family distract me so much that I can never concentrate my attention on my plots and situations in the daytime. It is only when the wife has retired, and the children, the darlings! are put to bed, that I can sit down quietly and develop my deeds of darkness.

Nothing out of the usual course had happened on the memorable evening of which I am about to tell, and which was destined to have so marked an influence on my literary career. I had had tea with my beloved Seraphina and our six children at seven o'clock, and afterwards we all sat round the fire, and I told stories—stories not of crime and cruelty, but of good fairies and enchanted princesses, of boys and girls at school, and innocent loves and faithful lovers, which always started with "once upon a time," and ended with "happy ever after."

During the evening my little flock gradually melted away till nothing was left of it but my dear wife and our eldest girl, aged fourteen. At ten o'clock we supped off cold roast pork and rice pudding, with a little mild ale as a beverage, and then my beloved ones kissed me, wished me good night, and left me to my labours.

By half-past ten I was hard at work in my study, deep in the most critical chapter of my new story, "The Chemist's Revenge." I rather prided myself on the originality of the crime committed in this thrilling tale. The wicked hero had invented a hideous pill, compounded of ingredients which would explode within a human body and blow it to atoms. And now I was approaching the terrible scene in which the fatal dose was about to be administered to the hapless victim.

It was a quiet night; there was not a breath of wind even to stir the trees out of doors, and all was still within, save when a coal fell from the fireplace into the grate and the clock on my mantelpiece chimed the hour. Midnight had just struck, when my ears were suddenly startled and my heart set beating by a sound out of doors. It was that of a slow, heavy step, crunching the gravel of the garden path and coming nearer and nearer to my door. And then the footsteps ceased, and there was a knock—a single knock.

If I had made the flesh of my readers to creep in my time, now it was the turn of my own. No one had ever visited me before by night in this way. I could not imagine who it could be or what he—for it was the tread of a man that I had heard—could want.

I turned cold and shivered. But a moment's thought told me that after all it might be only a policeman, suspecting burglars, come to inquire why my light was burning, or it might be a "mistake."

So I went to the door and opened it without removing the chain.

"Who is there?" I asked.

Then a voice inquired, "Is this Mr. Samuel Chillip's?" It was a somewhat hoarse, gruff voice, but its tone was subdued and quiet. It threatened nothing unpleasant.

"Yes, I am Mr. Chillip," I said.

"Can I speak with you a moment?"

"About what? Who are you?"

"I am a stranger, and I cannot well explain my business here, but it is important and urgent."

This was said in so tranquil and respectful a manner as to allay any apprehension I might have felt, while exciting my curiosity. Still I hesitated. The stranger might be a beggar. But he anticipated my thought.

"I have not come to beg," he said, "or to trouble you in any way. I have an important communication to make to you, likely to be useful to you in your occupation, and it must be made at once or it will be too late."

Here was a mystery equal to many that I myself had invented. What could it mean? I was eager to know, and alas! let the stranger in.



"I BURN THE MIDNIGHT OIL."

He asked me to allow him to accompany me to my study, and I did so. There was but a dim light in the passage, and it was not till he had entered my room, and the rays of my lamp had fallen upon him, that I discovered what manner of man it was that I had rashly admitted.

He was a tall, big man, with a hard, square face, and deep-set, glittering eyes, and his chin fringed with a round, shaggy beard, while he was attired in a rough pilot coat, and on his head he wore a broad-brimmed felt hat. He looked like a seafaring man, and was not a prepossessing person.



“HE WAS A TALL, BIG MAN.”

I asked him to take a seat, and seated myself in my round-backed writing chair beside my desk.

He had taken off his hat, and held it on his knee with his left hand, while the other he buried in his capacious side pocket. I thought he was going to produce something, but he did not.

He merely opened a conversation, and I may say that the tone of his voice throughout was always as quiet, as calm, as subdued, as when he addressed me at the door.

“You are Mr. Samuel Chillip?” he asked, or remarked, again.

I bowed in reply.

“The author of ‘The Poisoned Waterbottle’ and other stories?”

“Yes.”

“Tales of crime?”

“You may call them so.”

“What do you know of crime?”

The question startled me. In the first place, it was an extraordinary one to ask under the circumstances, and in the next, it was not an easy one to answer.

“May I inquire,” I said, “why you put this question?”

“Because I wish to know.”

“For what purpose?”

“That you will discover presently.”

The man had evidently an object in view, so I thought I would humour him.

“I have taken great interest in the subject,” I said, “and have studied it in books and newspapers and in the courts of justice, and have also derived a good deal of information from persons who have come in contact with criminals.”

“Ah! you know nothing of it from personal experience?”

“How do you mean?”

“You never, for instance, saw a murderer?”

“Only in the dock.”

“Would you *like* to see a murderer?”

“Well,” I replied, with a nervous laugh, “‘like’ is hardly the word. If I happened to come across such an individual, I should feel interested, no doubt.”

“No doubt,” this strangest of strangers echoed, adding, after a pause, “and you never saw a murder done?”



“WHO IS THERE?”

"Never."

"Would you *like* to see a murder done?"

This gruesome question almost startled me out of my chair.

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "certainly not."

"And yet you write about such things."

"That is quite a different matter. But you must excuse me for saying that I do not understand the object of these questions. May I ask who you are?"

"I am a murderer."

My visitor said this in the calmest way, as though he were only calling himself a clerk or a carpenter.

"A murderer?" I gasped rather than asked.

"A murderer in intention only at present. I am going to do a murder, and I want you to witness it."

Good heavens! I looked at the stranger; I met his terrible wild eyes, and in a moment it flashed upon me that I was in the presence of a madman.

I started from my chair, and was about to rush to the bell and call for help, but the stranger put his left hand on my shoulder and kept me in my seat, while he drew his right hand from his coat pocket, and something glittered in the lamplight. Oh, horror! a bright, new, large, six-chambered revolver!

"Be still, be silent," he said, almost in a whisper, "or you are a dead man."



"SOMETHING GLITTERED IN THE LAMPLIGHT."

I need hardly say that I was quiet enough after this, and sat grasping my chair arms with both hands, and staring at the stranger, perhaps with my hair standing on end.

"I don't want to hurt you," the dreadful man went on, "unless I can get nobody better to kill. But I mean to kill someone to-night, and I want you to see me do it. You must come with me out into the streets, and go about with me until we find somebody worth killing. You must keep very quiet, utter no cry, give no alarm, excite no suspicion. Otherwise I shall shoot you dead on the spot. I would not mind killing you, the author of so many stories of crime, but I would rather slay someone of higher social position, and leave you to live and record the deed."

I reflected that I should prefer this arrangement myself, but, still better, I would rather get out of the whole horrible business altogether. But the madman, as I regarded him, was imperative.

"Put on your hat and coat and come with me quietly," he said. "Make no noise or I fire."

It was a frightful situation, such as I had never conceived even in my wildest dreams, but what was I to do? In silence I attired myself for this terrible expedition. My companion made me precede him to the street door, opened it himself, and closed it quietly behind us.

Side by side in silence we walked, the maniac keeping half a step in my rear, and I knew all the while that he had his right hand in his side pocket. Now and then he indicated the way we should go, and then he led me across the Regent's Park, and so through street after street till we reached Hyde Park Corner. We passed several policemen by the way, but, unfortunately, none of them suspected or even particularly noticed us. I dared not give an alarm or attract attention, for did I not know that that dreadful hand was still in that dreadful side pocket?

Presently my companion paused, and said, as though speaking to himself:

"A member of the Royal Family would be best."

I was rather glad to hear this, because if he intended that an illustrious personage should be his victim he was likely to be disappointed. Royal Highnesses are not usually found walking about in



"I AM A MURDERER."

the neighbourhood of their palaces at two o'clock in the morning.

Thus we rambled to and fro near Buckingham and St. James's Palaces and Marlborough House, need I say with no result? Not a single Prince was to be seen anywhere, and my companion seemed slightly disgusted.

"Hum!" he muttered. "They are hiding. Let us go now to Downing Street."

He evidently thought that, failing Royalty, his next best course would be to slay a Cabinet Minister. But neither the Premier nor any of the Secretaries of State happened to be abroad at that hour.

Our walk down Whitehall proving uneventful, the madman next suggested that we should "try the Houses of Parliament." Here the position seemed more dangerous. The House of Commons could not have long adjourned—it was in the days of late sittings—and it was quite possible that some belated M.P. might be on his way home.

Presently, indeed, my companion made a remark that filled me with horror.

"That looks like one," he said. "Now steady."

An elderly, respectable-looking gentleman was approaching us, walking alone from the direction of the House, and my terrible associate was standing under a lamp-post still with his hand in his pocket.

My presence of mind together with my faculty of invention, here happily came to my aid.

"Stay," I whispered; "mind what you are about, or you will make a mistake. That is not a member of Parliament. I know him by sight but not to speak to. He is a retail grocer who keeps a shop in Oxford Street."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Quite."

And so the elderly stranger passed us, little guessing what a narrow escape he had had.

The position was truly appalling. Now we neared the Royal Academy, at that time still situated in Trafalgar Square, and my would-be murderer muttered something about "picking off" an R.A. or an Associate. The wretched creature seemed well up in honorary titles. Next we wandered along the Strand, and he thought of destroying a distinguished actor, but the theatrical profession had doubtless long since gone to bed. Thank goodness he had not gone far into the heart of Clubland, or he might have found there a victim worthy of his murderous weapon.

On, on he led me, past Temple Bar, not without an eye for wandering Judges and Queen's Counsel. Fortunately, at that hour, it was now about four a.m., the newspapers had all gone to press, and there were no eminent journalists about. Then he came to St. Paul's, and talked about archbishops, bishops and canons, and I almost laughed at the idea of our meeting a Church dignitary abroad at such a time.

Finally, we got into the heart of the City, and here I felt safe if he had any designs on the Directors of the Bank of England or members of the Stock Exchange.

It was in the middle of the deserted road opposite the Mansion House that he stopped at last, and cast a fond look at the residence of the Lord Mayor.

"He won't come out," he murmured; "none of them will, the cowards. Not even an alderman."

Then, after looking about him for a time—why, oh! why, were not the suspicions of some policeman excited by our strange proceedings?—he suddenly exclaimed, to my great joy:

"I am afraid it is no good. We shall have to give it up for to-night; they are all in hiding, every one of them. To be sure, I might pick off some stranger, and take my chance, but it is hardly good enough. I should waste myself."



"THAT LOOKS LIKE ONE."



"THEN HE CAME TO ST. PAUL'S."

This was the pleasantest speech he had yet made, but his next was not so agreeable.

"After all," he said, turning to me, "I don't think I could get anybody better than you. You are a rather distinguished novelist, and the fact that you write stories of crime would make it sound remarkable. What do you say?"

I was almost too frightened to say anything. I was trembling all over, for in a moment that dreadful hand might leap out of that dreadful pocket, and my fate would be sealed. But, happily, my imagination once more came to my aid.

"It is not a bad idea," I replied; "but I think you could do better. Don't be in a hurry—there are plenty of distinguished people about, but not at so late an hour as when you called on me last night. Come a little earlier to-night, say at ten o'clock, and we'll see if we can't find a Prince. I know them all by sight, and will point one out to you, a good one. Of course, if you can't get anybody better, you can shoot me."



"'THANK YOU,' HE SAID."

"Thank you," he said, and for the first time he drew his hand out of that horrible pocket of his, and grasped my own. "It is a good idea. To-night then it shall be, at ten o'clock. Good morning."

I could hardly believe my senses when I saw the dreadful creature slowly making his way towards Cheapside. But, indeed, my senses were failing me. I turned giddy, and staggered against a lamp-post, where presently I was found by a wandering policeman.

I put my hand to my throat, for I felt choking.

"Stop him, stop him!" I cried. "He has got a revolver—he is a murderer—he——"

But the miserable constable took no notice of my warning. He only took me by the arm, and, turning his bull's eye and a suspicious glance upon my countenance, said:

"Here, you had better go home quietly, sir. I suppose you have been dining out rather late. Hi, hansom!"

And he bundled me into a cab, and took my name and address, and the next moment I was bowling along on my road to St. John's Wood.

It was nearly six in the morning when I arrived, and, fortunately, no one heard me when I let myself in with my latch-key.

My wife thought I had only been sitting up extra late at



"YOU HAD BETTER GO HOME QUIETLY, SIR."

said the man.

Good! And now I retired into my study while the other detective brought the stranger forward.

"What the devil are you fools about?" I heard him cry, as he entered, handcuffed, at the door.

The sound of his voice startled me. It was *not* that of my visitor the night before. A single glance showed me that it was quite a different sort of person.

"Halloa!" I cried, "there is some mistake here. That's not the lunatic."

"Lunatic!" exclaimed the captured man, "I should think not indeed. It is you who are the lunatics. I am a policeman!"

And a policeman he was—in plain clothes. He had come to tell me that the maniac was dead. He had shot himself almost immediately after leaving me, and the constable who had put me into a hansom remembered my words and my name and address. Hence I was now summoned to give evidence at the inquest.

Of course the policeman was easily pacified, and, indeed, regarded his rough treatment by two of his own colleagues as a joke rather than otherwise.

I duly gave evidence at the inquest, but I am sorry to say that when I told my story it was not listened to quite so gravely as I thought it ought to have been.

So altogether this adventure rather disgusted me with the occupation I had hitherto been following, and now, for some time past, instead of composing tales of crime, I have gone in for writing moral stories for boys.

my work, and I told her nothing of my night's adventure. But I summoned two able-bodied detectives to my aid, and they agreed to await with me the lunatic's second visit. My family supposed that the detectives had come to assist me in getting up a tale of crime, and I did not undeceive them. So I despatched them to bed at an earlier hour than usual, on the plea that I did not wish to be disturbed, and sat with my companions in the study watching for the madman.

Precisely at ten o'clock there was heard a heavy footstep on the gravel path without, and once more a knock—a single knock.

"He has come," we whispered.

We had duly arranged our "plan of campaign," and now proceeded to carry it out. The most stalwart of the detectives was to open the front door, and the other to hide behind it. My post was on the threshold of my study, where I was to stand as a "reserve."

The men were wonderfully prompt in executing their operations. The street door had hardly been opened when there was a scuffle and a heavy fall, accompanied by much growling and cursing, and then the unmistakable sound of the snapping of a pair of handcuffs.

"It's all right," said the detective who had been behind the door, "we have got him and his six-shooter too."

Whereupon he produced the very weapon with which the maniac had threatened me—the large, bright, new revolver. I identified it at once.

"I got it out of his side pocket quick as thought,"



"THERE WAS A SCUFFLE."



Miss Fanny Brough thinks that it is indispensable

Of course, there will be the usual outcry that we don't want an Academy of British Dramatic Art because we have not had one hitherto; but there are many things wanted now-a-days which our forefathers had to do without. I don't say for a moment that the heads of the profession in England are not equal to those of France or other countries; it is the rank and file of whom I complain. They never get a chance of learning how to walk or talk properly on the stage, and, consequently, minor parts are frequently very badly played in English theatres. For instance, I went on the stage—in the provinces—just when the old system of stock companies was dying out. A few years before then it would have been possible to receive an admirable training in the provinces. But when I went on the stage, touring companies took possession of the land, and I had only two parts in eighteen months. What possible chance was there of learning to act under such a system? None at all. The result was that when I came to London, and had a comparatively good part offered me, I did not feel satisfied with the way I played it, and returned to the provinces. The difficulty, of course, is how to exist whilst qualifying for the stage. I maintain that a Dramatic Academy would do away with this difficulty, and tend to the improvement of British Dramatic Art in numberless ways. There are hundreds of inefficient teachers who profess to train people for the stage, although they themselves know nothing of the art of acting. As long as there are wealthy tyros mad to go on the stage at any cost, so long will inefficient teachers continue to flourish.

The Dramatic Academy must be subsidised.

Of course, the Dramatic Academy would have to be subsidised, either by the Government or private individuals. The experiment is not a new one. It has been tried at the Paris Conservatoire, the National Dramatic Academy at Buda-Pesth, the theatrical school at Berlin, and the Dramatic Conservatoires in Vienna and Amsterdam. Surely it would be possible to collate the experiences of these various institutions and arrive at a basis on which to work. A committee of our leading actors and managers might be appointed to report on the matter. There is a great deal of nonsense talked about the heaven-born genius plunging into the first ranks of the profession at a bound, but, as a rule, the heaven-born genius requires a great deal of preparatory work to fit him for his profession. Mr. Grein, of the Independent Theatre, puts forward a very comprehensive plan for the working of such an academy. He proposes—(1.) The school should be open to children at thirteen. (2.) That they should pass a competitive examination. (3.) That the school should be divided into five classes, the three lower ones to be entirely preparatory. (4.) That the tuition for acting should not begin until these three classes are passed, or, in other words, that the pupil should spend four years in merely preparatory work. (5.) That if the pupil then shows no special aptitude, he should be recommended to give up all idea of the stage. (6.) That six hours a week should be bestowed on diction and acting. (7.) That at the end of the course the pupils should submit to a semi-public examination, and receive a diploma if proficient. (8.) That the co-operation of managers should be invited, and that the conduct of the school should be entrusted to one man (not an actor) under the supervision of three eminent actors or actor-managers. (9.) That the school must be endowed amply enough to tide it over the first five years of its

existence, and that the fees to pupils should be made as low as possible. If a certain amount of energy and determination are brought to bear on the subject, I see no reason why it should not speedily be brought within the range of practical politics.

Mr. John Hare thinks not.

I am loath to say anything to discourage any scheme framed for the purpose of benefiting our art, but I cannot honestly say that, in my opinion, the establishment of a Dramatic Academy would, in any way, serve that purpose. The question was fully gone into by a most influential committee called together to consider the subject some ten years ago. It consisted of Mr. Irving, Mr. Boucicault, Mr. Bancroft, Mr. Vezin, Mr. Kendal, Mr. Neville, Mr. H. J. Byrne, myself, and many others. After a full discussion we found, amongst many other difficulties, it was quite impossible to find enough competent teachers who would undertake the work of instruction, so the matter fell through, and, as I do not believe in the "blind leading the blind," I am convinced that any attempt to establish an English Dramatic Academy will prove abortive.

Mr. J. L. Toole is not quite prepared to express a decided opinion.

I am not quite prepared to express a decided opinion on the matter. I am, however, more inclined to the view that a sound provincial training will always be found the more beneficial course.

Mr. Edward Terry's experience.

I think it desirable, but scarcely practicable. Some years ago I was concerned in a scheme to promote the same object, my desire being that we should start by renting a small theatre, and playing a *répertoire* of pieces—that established actors should give their services for a minimum fee as professors, and when out of engagements should undertake to appear and act, taking less than their regular salaries. If the theatre or academy succeeded, and held its own for a year, I would then have asked for a Government subsidy. A great deal of good work was done some few years ago by the "Dramatic Students," and I regret exceedingly the society has ceased to exist.

Sir Augustus Harris looks upon the idea as a myth.

What can I say? Of course, a Dramatic Academy would be a splendid institution, with all the best actors as masters teaching the young idea how to shoot—shoot straight, of course; and what a saving it would be to poor managers, who then could refer the thousands of aspirants for dramatic glory to it to become pupils and get prizes before asking for engagements. But alas! and alas!! where are the actors who will give their time and trouble to such a noble cause? I think our rough and ready way the only one suited to our peculiarities, and, therefore, look upon the idea as a myth.

Miss Rose Norreys thinks it would be a difficult project.

An Academy of Dramatic Art, where each student must first win a diploma before being eligible for the stage, would be an inestimable advantage; but, unless this academy were founded and endowed by the "State," it would again prove to be impracticable. Moreover, as there is an universally accepted theory that the British public does *not want Art*, but merely demands to be amused, or to have its attention attracted (by some means or other), I fear it would be a somewhat difficult affair to induce the "State" to regard the proposition as anything but a trivial one.

Mr. William Terriss thinks there is no

I do not think the profession to which I have the honour to belong has any necessity for a Dramatic Academy. Actors and actresses have come, and are constantly coming, to the front who have learnt their business at the best of schools—the stage, which is always self-instructing. It is not so much a lack of ability (which is the cause of a seeming lack of artists) as opportunity.

necessity.

**Cyril
Maude
thinks it
necessary.**

It seems to me that under the existing state of affairs, actors and actresses have to spend the best and most useful years of their life in a struggle to acquire a bare knowledge of the principles of their art. Could not the acquisition of this knowledge be aided and accelerated by a school in which, for reasonable terms, the beginner could learn the adjuncts of the art he has chosen, such as ease of carriage, how to speak properly (let us drop that misused word *elocution*, which only suggests the schoolgirl's recitation), fencing, production of voice, dancing, etc., not forgetting how to make up? *Then* let the tyro go into the provinces, where he must gain a certain amount of experience with constant change of theatres and of audience week by week. Who will say that this preliminary training would not be of enormous advantage to the beginner? *But* surely this school should not profess to teach *acting*, but the different arts and accomplishments which go to help to make the actor.

**Mr. Murray
Carson is
of opinion
that the
actor's own
discretion
should be
his tutor.**

I do not think a Dramatic College is either practicable or necessary. You could not expect the public, or the critics, to attend a series of performances given by novices; and as constant appearances in public must outweigh all other forms of teaching, it would be more profitable to the beginner to join a provincial *répertoire* company, and thus come into nightly encounter with his final judges, the public, thereby learning the most essential quality of the art—how to make his personality and his particular form or method the master of their feelings. Now, as the personality of every actor differs, so, I contend, must his method vary, not only in what is termed the "reading" of a part, but also in the technique of his execution. If to become a mere walking, talking machine, be the object of a beginner, by all means let him be instructed in calisthenics and elocution, and the art of first-night speech-making; but to call such a combination of classes a School of Dramatic Art is degrading; it robs the calling of its highest attribute—imagination. Innate ability must undoubtedly be developed, "which nobody can deny," but such an institution as is suggested would develop everything in the same form; and as there is no accepted standard to aim at, the result would be, so many impressions of the mind of the teacher, who might possibly be wrong. It is impossible to talk about learning to "walk the stage," dancing, fencing, etc., etc., as being of sufficient importance to demand a national institution. I have known very fine actors who neither walked well nor spoke distinctly. A school *supported by the profession*, at which it would be possible for an actor to take lessons in any of these *accessories* from accredited masters, for a small fee, would be invaluable, but it could not by any possibility lay claim to the title "School of Dramatic Art." After a few general hints, which are not in the nature of an academical lecture, Shakespeare himself says, in that memorable address to the players, "But let your own discretion be your tutor." You cannot learn discretion, it must be the result of experience—an experience made up of hard work, many disappointments, self-analysis, and, above all, much patience.

**Cecil
Rayleigh
does not
believe in
it.**

I do not believe in an Academy of Acting, because I do not believe that the art of acting can be taught. The art of the actor is merely the faculty or instinct for simulation that everybody possesses in a greater or less degree. Every savage can simulate or imitate the cries of birds and beasts. Every savage can cover himself with a skin and stalk a herd of deer so disguised. But some savages do these things better than others. Every child, when it wants to thoroughly enjoy itself, plays at being something other than it really is. The girl takes a doll and plays at being a mother. The boy puts on a paper cocked hat and plays at being a soldier. We can all act more or less. Between Mr. Irving as *King Lear*, and the beggar who shivers on your doorstep and swears that his wife and six children have not tasted food for a fortnight, the difference is one of degree, not of kind. The Pharisees of Scripture pretended to be what they were not, and got roundly denounced as hypocrites for their pains. As a fact, they were only incipient actors. The talk about teaching is, to my thinking, undiluted twaddle. The inherent desire to simulate grows, or it does not grow. You cannot make it grow. If a naturally awkward man can simulate the graces of a dancing master, if a naturally graceful man can simulate the limp of a cripple or the clumsiness of a hobbledehoy, if a comparative dwarf—like Kean—can assume the majesty of a monarch, then he is an actor. You may teach him to fence, and to dance, and to elocute till he is black in the face; you will never teach him to play "Othello" unless he is an actor. That fencing, dancing, and elocution are useful to the actor I do not deny. But if he is an actor he will pick these things up for himself easily enough under existing circumstances. A high development of the faculty for simulation

necessarily implies a corresponding development in the faculty of observation. The actor sees, notes, and reproduces. That is to say, he simulates. Moreover, being an artist, he only reproduces just so much as is necessary. He need not study anatomy, and walk a hospital, in order to indicate with a few graphic gestures the cripple's limp. Equally he need not be a superb swordsman in order to get through an effective stage combat. It is not absolutely essential that he should be elevated to the peerage before being permitted to play a duke. People talk about fencing, dancing, and elocution, as if actors had nothing to do but fence, dance, and spout. An actor has to simulate everything, from "shouts off" to a crowned king in the centre of the stage. As in all probability neither the unseen but angry shouters, nor the king, knew anything whatever of the acquirements alluded to, why should the actor bother about them? They do not help in the least. If he is an actor he can act. If he is not he can't. In the old days when an actor had to go before the curtain between the weary acts of an interminable tragedy and engage in a broadsword combat or dance a hornpipe, I can understand the necessity for his having to be a swordsman and a dancer. But I do not see the use of those accomplishments now. In these days a man need not, like Mr. Gilbert's "Jester," always climb an oak to say "I'm up a tree." In these days we prefer the actor who thinks to the actor who dances. The institution of an Academy of Acting would do one thing, and one thing only. It would deluge an already overcrowded profession with a flood of mediocre automatons.

**Addison
Bright says
it depends
upon the
style of
acting
which is
required.**

Whether or no a Dramatic Academy be needed appears to me to depend on the kind of acting required. Do you affect the French school? Is your acting void filled by the exquisite elaboration, the delicacy, the half-tones, the subdued light and grey shadow, in which the French delight?—then, obviously, it were best to adopt the Conservatoire system, which hitherto has ensured these things being done better in France. "The proof of the pudding," and what better proof of the value of a Dramatic Academy could be forthcoming than the brilliant work of Coquelin, Febvre, Maubant, Delaunay, Got, Worms, Laroche, Blanche Barretta, Emilie Broisat, Madeleine Brohan? Here is a group of clever men and women. There is not a genius among them. The Bernhardtts, Croizettes, Jane Hadings, and Mounet-Sullys, I purposely omit, as possibly unaffected by the argument. But of this band of "merely talented," there is not one but has by some means or other—and, in the first place, presumably, the method by which they were grounded in their art—become an artist, matured, solid, unapproachable. If, therefore, this be what you want, surely the Conservatoire system is the shortest cut to it. It is likely, however, that you, being English, want nothing of the kind. Kickshaws and daintiness are your aversion. The histrionic Roast Beef of Old England is your craving. You do not ask an actor to merge or transform himself into the character he assumes, but simply to employ the author as a medium for the display of his own more or less striking individuality. In this case, schooling of any kind would, of course, be fatal. Teaching would only interfere with the development of that most precious possession, his personality. There is, indeed, only one way to help the actor of this class—a class numerous and highly popular in England and America—and that is by pointing out his faults. This, at first sight, seems a simple matter. His faults are generally multitudinous and glaring. But woe to the man who points the finger at them. He is merely qualifying for a species of martyrdom. The libel laws, reinforcing the instinct of self-preservation, forbid the critics doing it, and anybody else who tries is instantly regarded as a malignant private enemy of the criticised. Yet something in this direction ought to be done, for even actors recruited from the 'Varsities will murder the language, debase the currency of manners, mumble unchecked of "liberty," and "Febuery," and "seckertery," and in many other barbarous ways betray the vulgarising influence of culture. Only one or two courses seem open to mitigate this evil—to end the harmful conspiracy of silence which fosters it. The establishment of such an academy as Miss Brough, Mr. Tree, and Mr. Alexander favour, if practicable (but where are the sufficiently eminent teachers to inspire confidence?) might do much; but better still would be an institution where not teaching, but criticism, real never-nowadays-practised criticism, was the object in view. And I think the best kind of institution for the simultaneous correction of faults and encouragement of promising talent would be a stock company, run at some big provincial theatre by a syndicate of London managers, who might there produce their London successes, turn and turn about, all the year round, and thus be brought into personal contact with the younger actors (who should be bound to them for a term of apprenticeship) impelled in their own interests to impart advice and admonition, and kept on the alert to discover genuine talent, and to snap it up when they saw it for their London houses.

J. T. Grein I have expressed my opinion on a Dramatic Academy in the *Daily Chronicle* some time ago, and have been promptly abused for it.

goes into figures.

Consequently, I am most firmly convinced that the reasons which I brought forward are sound. Nowadays, abuse is the highest form of approbation. There are just two little points on which I wish to touch just now, not in defence, but to explain. I mean that famous £50,000. It has been repeated that I want £50,000. I want them very much indeed, privately, but for the academy—*c'est autre chose*. All that I really want is that someone (the inevitable "someone," who plays such a star-part in our theatrical world) should lend a sum of £50,000 for five years, which should be placed in a bank under trustees, and the usufruct of which should serve to maintain the establishment during its period of dentition, if I may call it so. After five years the capital would return to its owner, who would be none the poorer, while art would have been a great deal the richer for it. It is also insinuated that, because I opined that *one* man—not an actor—should stand at the head of affairs, I had clearly indicated who should be that man. I—of course! Such accusations of self-nepotism are a sign of the times. No one can speak disinterestedly about a subject now; we all must have a motive. We are all mercenary, we are automatic advertising machines of our own selves, we are always insincere. Charming! But for my own part, I wish to state it very plainly that I never have thought, or could think, of putting my own candidature forward if ever the academy should become a fact. I have no desire to fill such a post, an Englishman born should do it: it is a national affair. One thing should not deter us from advocating the academy. I refer to the failure of the former school. All I know about it is from hearsay, but it must have been a most miserable business, and if half the tales which are in circulation about the management are true, it was fit for anything except education. The radical and principal fault of the old school was that it had too many heads and not one competent ruler. Big names alone will not accomplish the work, and large committees are the most troublesome spoke in the wheel-work of any machinery. The former draw the money and the latter spend it. When the funds had dried up the whole thing collapsed. And what had it done? Nothing, absolutely nothing of any importance, nothing which could not have been done better and cheaper. Let this precedent be a warning. Let us have patrons by all means, a legion of titles and lions, for they may prompt munificence. But let the reins be in competent hands: one director and three guardians (selected from the patrons), who should keep a watchful eye on the management of the school. As for the *raison d'être*, the working, the subject of a national Dramatic Academy, I have no more to say at this juncture. My plan will be found summed up by Miss Brough. I hold that it is practical.

Jerome wishes to educate the Playgoer.

I think the establishment of a Dramatic Academy would be of immense benefit to the stage. Whether such an institution would be of practicable service in teaching actors and actresses the rudiments of their art—whether it is advisable that they should be taught—whether it is possible to teach them—are debatable questions that I will not here enter upon. But such an institution would achieve a much more important and lasting result. It would educate the British Playgoer. At present this individual is most lamentably ignorant concerning all things connected with the theatre. He understands neither drama nor acting. To him the play is not an art, but an entertainment. He does not yet know enough about the matter to dissociate the player from the part. He speaks not of *Hamlet* as portrayed by Mr. H. Irving, but of Mr. Irving as *Hamlet*, which sounds the same thing, but isn't. The following conversation is not invented, but recollected. I heard it in an omnibus. Said the lady next to me to the lady opposite: "How did you like Hare?" "Oh, not at all," replied the other, "I thought him a horrid man—so nasty to his mother." "Oh, yes," said the first speaker, "you saw him in *Robin Goodfellow*, didn't you? Oh, it isn't fair to judge him by that. You go and see him in *The Spectacles*. He's a *dear* old gentleman." No doubt the second lady will take the next opportunity of seeing Mr. Hare in *The Spectacles*, and will be delighted to notice how greatly he has improved. That this is the general attitude taken up by the public towards its stage servants is proved by the fact that no favourite actor can play an unsympathetic part with impunity. To "name" would be dangerous, but reflect for a moment upon the many plays—good plays—that have failed in recent years simply because the beloved actor-manager has been cast for the part of an objectionable person.

Thinks it can be done.

In the interests of playwrights and play-actors, I wish to see the playgoer—our dramatic lawgiver—be educated; and I think this might be done by means of a "Royal Dramatic Academy." Our Royal Academy of Art has been the means of bringing into existence an artistic public, which, if small, is at all events growing and enthusiastic; and a man can paint a picture with the certainty that some, at all events, of the people who come to look at it will be capable of comprehending his meaning. Without our Royal Academy of Music it is probable that *Ta-ra-boom-de-ay* would represent the high-water mark of our national taste. With the advent of a "Royal Dramatic Academy" (the "Royal"

printed fairly large) people would begin to grasp the idea that acting was an art. A public would grow up able to appreciate a play as a play, and not merely as a digester or a pick-me-up; playwriting would not be the lottery it is; and the actor, no longer a mere public pet, would receive more dignified recognition as an artist. In France, in Germany, in Austria, in Holland, there are dramatic schools, and acting is regarded as an art. In England, keeping a theatre is supposed to be on all fours with keeping a shop. I should be sorry to add to the dustheap of rubbishy talk about Art, but thought and emotion, though it is legitimate to live by them, are not on all fours with other merchandise. An artist has a right to sell what he may possess of them, but he has no right to adulterate them to suit the taste of his customers. Something is needed to come between the drama and the entertainment-seeking public—something that shall, on the one hand, foster a purer taste, and, on the other, support and encourage a higher aim. I think a Dramatic Academy might accomplish this. If not, I know of nothing that would.

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