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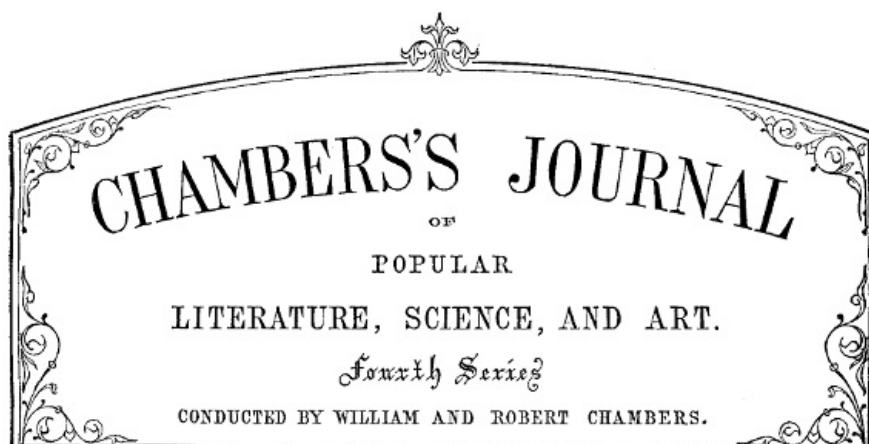
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**CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL
OF
POPULAR
LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.**

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No. 686.

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DERELICTS.

Has the idea ever occurred to any one that at all times there are ships of one kind or other floating about at sea without a living creature on board? They have been abandoned by their officers and crew in what seemed a hopeless condition. Some are dismantled and mere hulks. Some are swimming keel upwards. Some are water-logged, but being laden with timber will not sink. There they are driving hither and thither on the ocean, as wind and waves direct, a dread to the mariner, who may unawares come against them in the dark. We remember seeing an account of one of these derelicts, as they are called, being fallen in with after having been abandoned for weeks. It was water-logged up to the very deck, and sitting on a scrap of the exposed bulwarks was a poor cat, still alive, in the last degree of attenuation. We have often with commiseration thought of that accidentally deserted cat, its hunger, its misery, its hopelessness night and day in the midst of the dreary and spacious ocean. How the creature must have been delighted when rescued from its floating prison! Occasionally derelicts are taken in tow and brought into port, where they are broken up, or if of any value, are reclaimed by owners, to whom they are delivered on a payment of 'salvage.'

We are going to speak of a kind of derelicts out of ordinary experience.

On the 17th of September 1855, while sailing in the American whaler *George Henry*, in Davis's Strait, and when about forty miles from Cape Mercy, Captain Buddington descried a vessel having something peculiar in her appearance. No signals were hoisted, none answered, and no crew visible when he approached. Going on board, he found no living being in the ship; but in the best cabin were documents declaring the abandonment of the ship, and explaining the circumstances under which it had taken place. The wastrel, the treasure-trove, the lost-found, was the famous *Resolute*, whose story we shall tell presently.

Jurists and legislators have had to determine the ownership of property that seems for the time to belong to no one. *Derelict* is the lawyers' name for such property, so far at anyrate as regards abandoned ships. Where a crew merely quit their ship to obtain assistance, or for any other temporary purpose, it is not derelict: they intend to return; but when the master and crew abandon her without hope of recovery, she becomes ownerless for a time, and then falls to the lot of the finder. Not necessarily to keep, however, but, as has been said, to hold as a claim for salvage from the crown, the owners, or the under-writers. If the solitary ship is found near any coast, there is generally some claim put forth by the owner of the sea-shore, whether the owner be government or a private individual; but when out in the open sea, far distant from land, international maritime law may have to settle the matter. In practice, however, very little of this takes place; a ship really abandoned out in mid-ocean is seldom worth the expense of repair; the finders and salvors regard it chiefly in the light of saleable old materials; and the derelict, if it be taken in tow or otherwise navigated to port by its discoverers, usually finds its way into the hands of the ship-breaker.

A curious inquiry it would be, How many abandoned ships are at this moment locked up in densely packed ice? No great difficulty will be felt in understanding that derelicts have a peculiar history in the Arctic regions. When a ship is left forlorn in any sea or ocean, the probability is that fire or leakage has rendered the abandonment necessary as the only chance of escape for passengers and crew. Or it may be that the ship has been cast upon some coast or outlying rock, and so become tenantless. In the intricate channels of the frozen regions, on the contrary, a ship may be in a sound condition, but so hopelessly hemmed in on all sides with huge floes and fields of ice, that the crew would have exhausted all their food and necessaries of life before liberation comes; they quit the luckless vessel, and wend their way by sledge or by boat to regions of civilisation.

Many of the illustrative instances of this kind of derelict are exceedingly interesting. In 1821 Lieutenants Parry and Lyon, in the *Fury* and *Hecla*, encountered such terrible difficulties that the first-named ship was nipped and then wrecked; the crew fortunately were able to reach the *Hecla*, which after a time returned home with a double company of officers and men. The *Fury* was derelict, but not the stores, as we shall presently see. In 1829 Captains John and James Ross started on the expedition which was destined to last till 1833. What they suffered during four successive winters, their narrative told in moving terms. They lost their ship, and would in all probability have perished from starvation, had it not been that they were able to reach Fury Beach, and there avail themselves of the provisions which the wrecked *Fury* had on board. This ship, as well as that which had been under the Rosses, probably fell to pieces by degrees, in a grave of ice or water or both. {98}

Poor Sir John Franklin's fate will always be bound up in our recollection with that of the *Erebus* and *Terror*. It is pretty generally known to our readers that those two ships left England in 1845, under Captains Crozier and Fitzjames, with Franklin in supreme command over both; that they wintered near the south-east entrance of Wellington Channel; and that when the summer heat of 1846 had sufficiently melted the ice, they proceeded south through Regent Inlet to the west side of King William Land. They were hopelessly and helplessly iced in for the remainder of that year, all through 1847, and on into 1848. Poor Franklin succumbed to illness, anxiety, cold, and disease, and died on the 11th of June 1847. Seeing no hope of extricating the ships, and worn down by every kind of privation, Crozier and Fitzjames abandoned the *Erebus* and *Terror* on the 26th of April 1848, accompanied by the remainder of both crews—numbering in all somewhat over one hundred souls. How many of them reached King William Land and Montreal Island, in sledges or on foot, we shall probably never know; but certain it is that not one of the hapless men

was ever again seen by Europeans; whether any of the Eskimo met them or saw them, is doubtful. There were the two deserted ships, left to fate to decide whether they would ever again be liberated from their icy home, and enabled to render useful service. Rumours were communicated in later years by the Eskimo to some whaling crews that two ships had been iced up for several winters: supposed to have been the *Erebus* and *Terror*.

In 1850 Captain M'Clure commenced the famous voyage which, though it led to the abandonment of the good ship *Investigator*, enabled him to be the first commander who really effected the North-west Passage. (Whether he was the first to *discover* it, is a question on which much controversy has arisen.) Sailing down the Atlantic to Cape Horn, up the Pacific to Behring's Strait, and through the Frozen Sea to Banks Land, he there passed three frightfully severe winters, from the autumn of 1850 to the spring of 1853. There he quitted his trusty but ice-bound ship; and there, so far as human testimony goes, the *Investigator* still is, in Mercy Bay. In imminent peril of starvation, M'Clure and his gallant crew were compelled to this abandonment; they sledged over the ice to Melville Island, where fortunately they met with another expedition, and safety was insured. This other expedition, the most remarkable of all for derelict, comes next for notice.

Sir Edward Belcher, at a time when the public anxiety about the unknown fate of Franklin was most intense, was in 1852 placed in command of an expedition more complete than any that had been previously despatched to those regions. It comprised the *Resolute* under Captain Kellett, the *Intrepid* under Captain M'Clintock, the *Pioneer* under Captain Sherard Osborn, the *Assistance* under Belcher himself, and two or three auxiliary vessels. We have not here to tell how it arose that the ships made few or no discoveries, and disappointed the government in more ways than one. The sledgings, however, were splendid; and it was a joy to all that the expedition brought M'Clure and his crew safely back to their native land. Never were officers more deeply disappointed than when Belcher commanded them, one after another, to abandon their ships in 1854. He had been out two winters; some of the ships had been long ice-bound; and the sense he entertained of his responsibility impelled him to adopt a step which certainly could not have been adopted willingly. He ordered Kellett to abandon the immovable *Resolute*, M'Clintock the *Intrepid*, and Sherard Osborn the *Pioneer*; he himself abandoned the *Assistance*; and the officers and crews of all four ships obtained a passage to England in such other vessels as happened to be available in the autumn of 1854. Not only so, but they also brought with them M'Clure and the crew of the *Investigator* (as denoted in the last paragraph). Out of these five abandoned ships four have never, so far as we are aware, been since seen by Europeans. They may perchance be iced up still, or have fallen to pieces by repeated shocks from masses of ice loosened during the brief summers. One at Mercy Bay in Banks Land, two on the shores of Melville Island, two in Wellington Channel—such were the localities of the derelicts. Perhaps some future explorers will tell us something of four of these brave old weather-beaten craft, of which, for more than twenty years, we have known nothing.

Not so concerning the fifth. And here we are brought to the deeply interesting episode of derelict briefly indicated at the beginning of this paper. Judging from such facts as appear reliable, it is probable that the ice around the *Resolute* loosened somewhat during the autumn of 1854; that she was drifted slowly by the current until another winter nipped her, and held her ice-bound at some point nearer the entrance to Baffin's Bay; that she was again loosened in the summer of 1855, and drifted leisurely down Davis's Strait to the point where Captain Buddington espied the wanderer. Two facts are certainly known: that the distance drifted could not have been less than a thousand miles, from Melville Island through Barrow Strait, Lancaster Sound, and Baffin's Bay to Davis's Strait; and that four hundred and seventy-four days elapsed between the abandonment and the recovery. The tough old ship was still sound; a little water had entered the hold, and a few perishable articles had decayed, but in other respects the *Resolute* appeared not much the worse for her strange voyage.

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When the English government heard of this remarkable recovery of the old weather-beaten craft, they at once waived any right or claim they may have had to it, and surrendered it to Captain Buddington and his crew as the salvors. After nearly a year had elapsed since the recovery, an Act of Congress was passed, empowering the United States government to expend forty thousand dollars (about eight thousand pounds) in the purchase of the ship and its trappings from the fortunate finders, and the presentation of it to England as a graceful act on the part of the Great Republic. The plan was excellently carried into effect. In one of the American navy yards the *Resolute* was thoroughly overhauled, the defects repaired, all the equipments and stores replaced—even the officers' books, pictures, and miscellaneous articles returned exactly to the places they had occupied in the cabins. Captain Hartstein, of the United States navy, was commissioned to bring the ship to England. He arrived near Cowes shortly before the close of the year 1856; the Queen, the Prince Consort, and other members of the royal family went on board and inspected the old *Resolute*. The royal visitors having taken their departure, the vessel was towed into Portsmouth harbour amid much gay ceremonial, and was handed over to the authorities of the dockyard. Early in 1857 Captain Hartstein and his companions returned to America. It is mortifying to have to read that, owing to some niggardliness at the Admiralty, or perhaps more correctly that want of sentiment in English officials, we gave a shabby return for a graceful act. The *Resolute* should have been maintained as a memento of a most remarkable episode, even if not actually employed in further service; instead of this, the ship was dismantled and converted into a mere hulk!

Another derelict was the *Advance*. This vessel, provided by the munificence of an American merchant, Mr Grinnell, was placed under the command of Dr Kane, and sent northward in 1853

to search for Franklin. Kane made an historically famous progress up Smith Sound to such a latitude as to bring that route into favour among Arctic explorers. The return journey was, however, a terrible one. After two winterings in the ice he abandoned his poor ship in April 1855, and made a three months' sledge-journey to the Danish settlements in Greenland. Has the *Advance* ever been seen by later explorers; has it been iced up for twenty-two years; or have shocks and nippings shattered it to fragments?

The *Polaris*, connected with an American expedition, was abandoned in October 1872, and the officers and crew returned to the United States by boats. Storms, driftings, and other calamities led to a division of the crew into two parties. One worked their way down Davis's Strait, or were drifted thither, and were picked up in April 1873 by the *Tigress*, off the coast of Labrador; the others, making boats out of some of the timbers of the *Polaris*, managed to reach the eastern side of Baffin's Bay, where they were picked up by the *Ravenscraig* whaler in the autumn of the same year. The poor *Polaris* scarcely deserved the name of a derelict; for only portions of a hull were left stranded on a coast of the icy sea.

One more example, and this also from the Arctic regions. In 1872 the Austrians did excellent work in furtherance of maritime research by fitting out a private expedition in the small ship *Tegetthoff*, under the management of Lieutenants Weyprecht and Payer. Instead of taking the Baffin's Bay and Smith Sound route, the *Tegetthoff* coasted round Norway to Nova Zembla, and wintered off that island. Instead of being free to sail in the following summer, the ship was fast locked in an ice-floe from which she could not be extricated, and drifted when the floe drifted. Luckily the drift was just in the direction which the explorers wished to go, almost due north. They came most unexpectedly to a group of islands until then totally unknown, the largest of which they named Franz Josef Land, in honour of the Emperor of Austria. They wintered in the high latitude of eighty-one degrees north, and made excellent sledge-expeditions in the spring of 1874, an account of which, together with other interesting details, was given last month in this *Journal*. Returning to the *Tegetthoff*, they found her still immovably fixed in the ice. A prospect of exhausted stores and provisions led to a resolution to abandon the ship; this was done in the summer; and a boat-voyage of three months brought the hardy adventurers to the mainland in the autumn of the same year. We cannot help fancying that the abandoned ship will one day fall into friendly hands; and if it does, the salvors will find many interesting things on board; for the crew brought away as little as possible with them, in order not to overload the boats. Meanwhile the *Tegetthoff* is 'waiting till called for.'

THE LAST OF THE HADDONS.

CHAPTER IX.—ARTHUR TRAFFORD'S CHIVALRY.

WHEN the first hurry and excitement was over, I found that the duties I had to perform were anything but arduous in a house like Mr Farrar's. I had only to see the genteel solemn undertaker, and give him a *carte blanche* to furnish the best—out of respect for what I knew would be Mr Farrar's wishes, I did not add, 'and the plainest'—as it is becoming good taste to do. It was equally easy to arrange with the milliners and dressmakers, &c. They all seemed to know precisely what the size of the house required, and assured me in a few hushed words that everything should be in the best taste, and the servants' mourning all that was proper for such an occasion; every shade of difference in position being duly considered. Moreover, the question of my own mourning, which had somewhat puzzled me, was settled upon at once, in a way which would have not a little amused me had the occasion been a different one. 'Friend staying in the house—chaperon of Miss Farrar's—everything would be found quite correct.'

During the next few days, Lilian did not allude to the revelation made by her dying father. I believe she was at the time too much absorbed in grief to be able to realise anything beyond the one fact that she had lost him. Mr Farrar had been a loving indulgent father; and though for the first fifteen years of her life she had seen very little of him, that little had shewn her all that was best in his nature, and given her faith in him.

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On coming to live at the great palace he had built, she found herself treated like a princess in a fairy tale, surrounded with luxury, the richest gifts showered upon her, a host of attendants ready to obey her slightest whim, and above all, the orthodox Prince Charming to lay his heart at her feet. It was natural enough that her grief should be strong for the loss of the father, to whom she owed all this; as well as a love which was itself stronger and deeper than is lavished upon all daughters.

I did not attempt any commonplaces in the way of condolence; just in a quiet, undemonstrative way made her feel that a friend was near, and trusted to the first terrible anguish wearing itself out. With poor Mrs Tipper it was different, though I knew her grief was in its way just as genuine as Lilian's. I saw that it did her real good to moan and cry, and talk over her brother's goodness, generosity, wonderful cleverness, and so forth; and fully indulged her when she and I were alone. I am glad to believe that I was of some service to both in the time of need.

Mr Farrar had no immediate relations to be bidden to the funeral. Mrs Tipper hesitatingly mentioned something about a cousin in the 'green-grocery line;' but presently opined that perhaps 'dear Jacob' might object; and he was dropped out of notice. Major Maitland, Lilian's uncle on her mother's side, who promised to attend 'if possible;' Arthur Trafford; Robert

Wentworth; and the doctor and lawyer, were to be the followers at the funeral.

I saw more of Arthur Trafford during that week of seclusion than I had previously done; and I was more than ever dissatisfied with him. For the first few days, Lilian kept her room, almost prostrate from the shock which had come upon her at a time when she was so entirely unprepared. I think too that it would have appeared to her almost like irreverence for the dead to listen to love-speeches just then. Nevertheless, she might have been expected to turn to him for comfort, and I thought it significant that she did not do so. I acted as messenger between them; and if I had had a very high opinion of Arthur Trafford before, I should have lost it now. The one only thing I could see in him to respect was his love for Lilian. It was not his lack of love for her, but his too evident love for something else, which offended me. It might be that I was not marked 'dangerous' in his estimation, now that circumstances were altered, and that therefore he was more unguarded with me. I can only say he appeared to very great disadvantage under the new aspect of affairs. In our first interview after Mr Farrar's death, I saw that he was thinking a great deal more of the large fortune which would revert to Lilian than anything besides.

'So I hear there is no will, Miss Haddon?'

'You have made inquiries already then!' was my mental comment. I knew that the fact was not public property yet, and that he must have taken some pains to find it out.

'I believe not, Mr Trafford,' I coldly returned.

But my coldness was not of the slightest importance. He was too much absorbed in the one thought to notice my manner of speaking.

'And Lilian inherits without restrictions of any kind. Just the kind of man to have made all sorts of unpleasant complications—meant to do it too—and now my darling is unfettered!'

And in his gratification, he so far forgot the *convenances* as to whistle softly to himself, whilst he carefully readjusted one of Nasmyth's little gems, which hung slightly aslant upon the wall.

'She says she knows how much you are sympathising with her just now, Mr Trafford.'

He coloured to his temples as he replied: 'Of course I am, Miss Haddon. It's—it's a great loss, make the best of it, to an only child; and it came upon her so suddenly, poor girl.' Adding, a little consciously (I daresay it was not pleasant to have me silently eyeing him as I was doing), 'Tell her, please, that I am longing to do what I may to comfort her—beg her, for my sake to keep up. It will never do to let her get low and desponding, you know. Hers is a nature of the tendril kind—so entirely dependent upon those she loves.'

'I do not think so, Mr Trafford; and I do not think that those she loves will find it so. At anyrate, she does not give *me* the idea of being weak.'

'I meant only the kind of delicacy which accompanies refinement, and which is so charming in a woman, Miss Haddon;' adding a little more pointedly than was necessary, I thought: 'such fragility as arouses the chivalry of men.'

'As the chivalry is dying out, I must hope that the exciting cause is getting scarcer, Mr Trafford.'

We eyed each other a moment, and then tacitly agreed for an armed truce. I left him, and went to Lilian's room with lagging steps and a heavy heart.

'Arthur feels it terribly,' she said, lifting her eyes to mine as I entered the room; fortunately for me, taking it as a matter of course that he did. 'Dear papa was so good to him.'

'He hopes you will bear up for his sake, dear Lilian.'

'I will, indeed I will. Tell him he shall not find me selfish by-and-by.'

Still no allusion to the one subject which was engrossing all my thoughts. It was not until the evening after the funeral that she approached it, and then she waited until she and I were alone, before doing so. Flushing painfully, and with downcast eyes, she hesitatingly begun: 'Have you been thinking of—of what dear papa told us—that night, Mary?'

'Yes, dear, I have; a great deal.'

'I am so thankful that you and you only were present.' She paused a few moments, and I tried to help her.

'I think that there is no doubt—you have a sister, and that the packet, which I have taken care of, is intended for her, Lilian.' Taking it from my desk, I shewed her the words on it in her father's handwriting: 'Quarter's allowance due 24th for Marian;' with an address, 'Mrs Pratt, Green Street, Islington.'

'Marian! Yes; that was the name,' she murmured.

'I have since found out that she was born three or four years before Mr Farrar was married to your mother, Lilian.'

A bright hope sprang to her eyes. 'Perhaps he was married before, Mary?'

'I do not think that is likely, or it would be known. But I know you will none the less do what is just and right.'

'I shall *all the more* do what is right—I owe her so much more. If wrong has been done, it is for

me to make what reparation I can. And—Mary, try to always remember how anxious he was to'— She broke down; an expression in her face which shewed how deep was the wound which her loving, sensitive nature had received. Her grief was so much the harder to bear, for the knowledge that her dead was less perfect than she had believed him to be. She was already obliged to plead for him.

I knew that fragile as she looked, and tender and yielding as she had hitherto seemed, it arose more from humility at finding herself blessed as ordinary mortals rarely are, than from any lack of strength. We had not seen the best of Lilian Farrar yet. Least of all, did her lover know her. Already I could have given a better reason for loving her than he could have done.

She was musing over the address: 'Mrs Pratt, Green Street, Islington.' 'Is that where—my sister is staying, do you think, Mary? Would it not be better to go there?'

'Would you like me to go for you, Lilian?'

For a moment she looked not a little relieved by the suggestion; but after a little reflection, appeared to put the temptation to avail herself of it, aside.

'Not if I ought to go myself. Do you think that I ought to do so, Mary?'

I replied with a question: 'What do you intend to do when you have found Marian' (sister did not come readily to my lips, and I used the name instead), 'my darling?'

'Ask her to come to live here, and do all I can to make up for the wrong done to her mother'—in a low, but clear and decided tone.

Even at that moment, with her grief so fresh upon her, though it cost her a sharp agony to use the word, she called it a 'wrong.' But although my sympathies were entirely with her, I thought it right to remind her of one thing.

'There is the possibility that she may not be the kind of companion you would desire to have always with you, Lilian.'

'I want to do right, Mary,' she replied, putting my little attempt at sophistry aside.

I nevertheless made one more little feeble protest on the side of expediency. 'There are your aunt and Mr Trafford also to be considered, you know.'

'I want to do what is right,' she repeated. In her faith and inexperience, she had no misgivings as to their concurrence in all that was right; or if she had doubts with regard to one, she would not allow so much to herself.

'Therefore I think you ought not to make up your mind too decidedly as to what it will be right to do, until you have seen her—then perhaps you might trust to your instincts.'

'And, Mary,' she said, a little consciously, 'I think I would rather not name it to any one but you, until everything is settled. We can explain to auntie and Arthur afterwards, you know.'

I believed that auntie was included to make it appear less personal. She would not have hesitated a moment about taking the dear little lady into her confidence; but she *did* hesitate about telling her lover, until it would be too late to undo what was done, though she would not acknowledge so much.

'Very well, dear; we will go together as soon as you feel quite equal to it. We might go up to town by the twelve o'clock train some morning, and take a cab from the terminus to Islington.'

'I am equal to it now, Mary; and I shall not rest until we have been.'

I saw that nothing would be gained by delay—her anxiety would only increase, and therefore promptly acceded.

'Shall we say to-morrow, Lilian?'

'Yes, please.'

I quietly made the necessary arrangements; and just before we were setting forth, told Mrs Tipper that Lilian and I were going to town upon business, and that we would tell her all about it on our return. She was very easily satisfied; falling in with my opinion that it could do Lilian no harm, and might do her good, to be obliged to take some interest in the outside world; too single-minded to suspect more than the words told her. Single-minded! The rarest and best quality I have known during my checkered life—the one quality above all others which I have learned to respect, is single-mindedness. It may not always accompany large intellect, though I believe the very largest is never without it, and it is rather looked down upon by the world in general. Single-minded people are proverbially the butts of the Talleyrands of society; though the latter are more frequently baffled by them than they are willing to allow.

I saw what the effort cost Lilian—how painfully she shrank from doing what she nevertheless would not allow herself to depute another to do—as she sat with me white and still in the railway carriage. It did me real good to see her rise to the occasion in this way; and it bore out my previously formed opinion of her capability. I was also glad to feel that I was of some little use to her. Respecting the result of our errand I was not so much at ease. What was this sister? Would she be found worthy the devotion and self-sacrifice of such as Lilian? and if not, would it be given the latter to see that it would be unwise to bring her to Fairview? Until I saw the sister, I would make no attempt to bias Lilian's judgment, trusting more to her instinct than my own wisdom, in the matter. Moreover, although I knew that Mrs Tipper would easily enough be brought to see that right was right, I was by no means so sure that Arthur Trafford would be found equally

amenable. Even should he approve of Lilian's recognition of a strange sister, he was not at all likely to approve of her being brought to reside at Fairview. I knew that he meant to press for an early marriage; and I knew that he was not the man to take kindly to the idea of a stranger living with them, whatever her claims might be. But I kept my doubts and fears to myself; preserving a calm face for Lilian's eyes. More than once the thought crossed my mind that the daughter he had only designated as 'Marian' might be married, and was in fact the Mrs Pratt to whom the address on the packet referred. In such case, it would be easy enough to do right without bringing about any unpleasant complications. The address seemed, I fancied, to indicate a poor neighbourhood; and if 'Marian' should prove to be the wife of a struggling man, a portion of Mr Farrar's wealth could not be better employed than in giving him some assistance.

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MAN ON MAN.

THE sayings of men of thought may be termed the work of their lives, and form an imperishable monument of their wisdom. It would be imagined that nothing then would be easier than to string them together like beads upon a string to produce a book of great value and beauty. Without some wisdom, however, on the part of the collector, or at all events, an intelligent sympathy, this cannot be done, though it has been often tried, with much effect. Indeed, some of the stupidest works that have ever been published have appeared under the title of 'Beauties,' 'Selections,' 'Sayings,' &c., and have injured as far as possible the memories of those great men whom it was their object to embalm. To 'form a collection' from natural history, it is requisite that a man should not only possess the articles in question, but know how to arrange them both in order and by contrast; and knowledge of this kind is almost as necessary to one who would collect the wisest thoughts of the wisest thinkers. In *Human Nature*,^[1] by Mr Mitchell, we have a little volume, which if not perfect, is at least the best book of the kind which has come under our notice. It deals, as the title would imply, with only one subject, but that one of great extent, and of the most paramount importance to us—namely, Ourselves. It makes no pretence of stating any dogmatic truth, but simply gives the utterances of those who have devoted their lives to finding the truth. Often at variance and sometimes in direct opposition to one another, they are nevertheless almost all worthy of regard; and since they concern themselves with our own 'virtues, vices, manners, follies, sufferings, interests, and duties,' can scarcely fail to command our attention.

In the definitions of Mankind, in general, the variety strikes one at least as much as the ingenuity. 'Man is a microcosm;' 'the cooking animal;' 'the animal that makes exchanges;' 'the animal that makes tools, &c.' They all appear, notwithstanding their general acceptance, as more or less affected, strained, and incomprehensive. What, asks Pascal, 'is the utility of even Plato's definition of man: "An animal with two legs without feathers?" Does a man lose his humanity by losing his legs? or does a capon acquire it by being stripped of its feathers?' Thus does one philosopher fall foul of another. But when we pass from the definition to the moral description of the human race, the agreement is remarkable, and that among wholly different types of mind.

How poor! how rich! how abject! how august!
How complicate! how wonderful! is man,

says Young. And commenting on the same inconsistency, Pope sings:

Created half to rise and half to fall,
Great lord of all things; yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled,
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world.

A modern poet, Swinburne, follows still on the same side, in prose: 'After all, man is man; he is not wicked, and he is not good; by no means white as snow; but by means black as a coal; black *and* white, piebald, striped, dubious.' These ideas, so curiously similar in three such different minds, may seem to set at nought the dreams of the perfectibility of our species; but at the same time there is nothing in them to corroborate the gloomy verdict of Buckle, that 'we cannot assume in the present state of our knowledge that there has been any permanent improvement in the moral or intellectual faculties of man.'

The above is one of the most depressing statements a philosopher has ever made; but it seems to us to be directly contradicted by an even still greater name. 'I have long felt,' says Mill, 'that the prevailing tendency to regard all the marked distinctions of human character as innate and in the main indelible, is one of the chief hindrances to the rational treatment of great social questions, and one of the great stumbling-blocks to human improvement.' On the other hand, a thinker of quite another sort, Francis Galton, exclaims: 'I have no patience with the hypothesis, occasionally expressed and often implied, especially in tales written to teach children to be good, that babies are born pretty much alike, and that the sole agencies in creating differences between boy and boy, and man and man, are steady application and moral effort.' Where philosophers thus differ, we do not pretend to say which is true; but there is no doubt as to which opinion would suggest industry and which sloth. Indeed, Mr Galton's views if carried to their full length would approach to fatalism, and might almost be placed beside the famous song of Messrs Moody and Sankey:

Oliver Wendell Holmes has described the various intellects of man (but without going into the hereditary question) with as much wit as truth: 'One-story intellects, two-story intellects, three-story intellects with skylights. All fact collectors who have no aim beyond their facts are one-story men. Two-story men compare, reason, generalise, using the labours of the fact collectors as well as their own. Three-story men idealise, imagine, predict; their best illumination comes from above through the skylight.... Poets are often narrow below, incapable of clear statement, and with small power of consecutive reasoning, but full of light, if sometimes rather bare of furniture, in the attics.'

The desire to lay field to field and house to house has been the ruin of some great minds; but it is generally an attribute of the small. A few have almost no other vice save that of acquisitiveness. A whole nation indeed is said to be characterised by it. 'The Dutch,' writes John Foster, 'seem very happy and comfortable, certainly; but it is the happiness of animals. In vain do you look among them for the sweet breath of hope and advancement.... There is gravity enough, but it is the gravity of a man who despises gaiety, without being able to rise by contemplation. The love of money always creates a certain coarseness in the moral texture, either of a nation or an individual.' This last remark has certainly an application on the other side of the Atlantic. It is true that Goethe says that 'English pride is invulnerable, because it is based on the majesty of money;' but he does not refer to the mean desire of gain. He has elsewhere indeed expressed himself with some favour on the national character: 'Is it then derivation, or their soil, or their free constitution, or national education—who can tell?—but it is a fact that the English appear to have the advantage of many other nations. There is in them nothing turned and twisted, and no half-measures and after-thoughts. Whatever they are, they are always *complete* men. Sometimes they are complete fools, I grant you; but even their folly is a folly of some substance and weight.'

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The opinions of man on women are, as might be expected, even more various than those pronounced upon their own sex. But even these are not without a certain congruity. It is rare to find a complete 'irreconcilable,' such as John Knox, who thus delivers himself: 'To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire, above any realm, nation, or city, is repugnant to nature, contumely to God, a thing most contrary to His revealed will and approved ordinance; and finally, it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice.' This would be now thought little short of treason; but there is no doubt that Knox had a certain particular queen in his mind when he made those very strong observations. Among the French philosophers, there is a wonderful unanimity concerning the fair sex, and not altogether in accordance with the proverbial gallantry of their nation.

La Bruyère says: 'Women for the most part have no principles, as men understand the word. They are guided by their feelings, and have full faith in their guide. Their notions of propriety and impropriety, right and wrong, they get from the little world embraced by their affections.' Alphonse Karr says: 'Never attempt to prove anything to a woman: she believes only according to her feelings. Endeavour, then, to please and persuade: she may yield to the person who reasons with her, not to his arguments. She will listen to the strongest, the most unanswerable proofs, enough to silence an assembly of learned theologians; and when you have done she will reply, with the utmost unconcern, and in perfect good faith: "Well, and what has all that to do with the matter?"'

It is probable that both these last philosophers were 'very much married.' No one, however, that is capable of anything beyond a superficial judgment has ever imagined that the French have a genuine respect for women. Their sayings about them are very severe. 'Whenever two women form a friendship, it is merely a coalition against a third,' writes Karr; and even Rochefoucauld confesses, 'Most women care little about friendship; they find it insipid as soon as they have known what it is to love.' 'No woman is pleased,' asserts Octave Feuillet, 'at being told by a man that he loves her like a sister.' At the same time, our Parisian philosophers give every credit to female attractions. 'Do not flatter yourself,' says one, 'because you have studied, and possibly understand all that is to be understood of womankind, you are safe against their wiles. A word, a look, from one of them may make you forget in a twinkling of an eye all your boasted knowledge.' It is like escaping into the fresh air from some brilliant but unhealthy scene to read, after these cynical assertions, what an American essayist (who ought to have been an Englishman) has to say upon this same subject: 'A woman who does not carry about with her a halo of good feeling wherever she goes, an atmosphere of grace, mercy, and peace, of at least six feet radius, which wraps every human being upon whom she is pleased to bestow her presence, and gives him the comfortable belief that she is rather glad than otherwise that he is alive, may do well enough to hold discussions with, but is not worth talking to—as a woman.' This is almost as great a general compliment as Steele's well-known eulogy on Lady Elizabeth Hastings was a particular one: 'To behold her is an immediate check on loose behaviour, and to love her is a liberal education.'

It is curious that no sages in the least agree in their definitions of genius, nor can even express what they mean by it with distinctness, which is perhaps a proof of its transcendent and mysterious power. Of originality, however, it is well remarked by Opie that 'it is most seen in the young. It is a mistake to suppose that artists [and he might have added authors] go on improving to the last, or nearly so; on the contrary, they put their best ideas into their first works, which all their lives they have been qualifying themselves to undertake, and which are the natural fruit of their combined genius, training, circumstances, and opportunities. What they gain afterwards in correctness and refinement, they lose in originality and vigour.'

A very fine addendum or paraphrase of the line, 'The proper study of mankind is man,' has been

given by Professor Huxley: 'Whence our race has come; what are the limits of our power over Nature, and of Nature's powers over us; to what goal we are tending—are the problems which present themselves anew, and with undiminished interest, to every man born into the world.' It seems to us a somewhat too lenient conclusion that Hazlitt has come to when he says, 'A single bad action does not condemn a man, nor a single bad habit.' For a single action, not to mention a habit, may be easily so bad—such as torturing a living creature for the pleasure of it—as to condemn him altogether. Our philosophers, however, do not generally err on the side of charity, except, perhaps, when admitting the force of circumstances. 'Tell me your age and your income,' says Balzac, 'and I will tell you your opinions;' and is it not our own Becky Sharp who has observed, 'Anybody could be good with three thousand a year.'

Hobbes (of all people!) makes this significant remark concerning our Saviour: 'The evangelists tell us that Christ knew anger, joy, sorrow, pity, hunger, thirst, fear, and weariness; but neither prophet, historian, apostle, nor evangelist speaks of his laughing.' {104}

We find under the head of 'the Senses' a curious modern fallacy of the Faculty in the mouth of Charles Lamb. 'Take away the candle,' he says, 'from the smoking man; by the glimmering light of the ashes he knows that he is still smoking, but he knows it only by an inference, till the restored light, coming in aid of the olfactories, reveals to both senses the full aroma.' This idea of smoking not being enjoyable in the dark is shared by even men of science; whereas it is certain that blind men (for example, Professor Fawcett) are not only fond of smoking, but delicate in their perceptions as to the quality of the tobacco. Another fallacy of a different kind—namely, that it is well to tell your friends of their faults—is thus extinguished by Sydney Smith: 'Very few friends will bear this; if done at all, it must be done with infinite management and delicacy. If the evil is not very alarming, it is better to let it alone.'

A general favourite in society is usually thought to be an exceptionally clever and cultivated person; but this is not in fact the case. 'A delicacy of taste,' says David Hume, 'is favourable to love and friendship, by confining our choice to few people, and making us indifferent to the company and conversation of the greater part of men.... One that has well digested his knowledge, both of books and men, has little enjoyment but in the company of a few select companions.'

Of the superiority of Nature over Art, Byron has a fine saying: 'I never yet saw the picture or the statue which came within a league of my conception or expectation; but I have seen many mountains, and seas, and rivers, and views, and one or two women, who went as far beyond it.' Burns has stated that we have not the gift of seeing ourselves as others see us; but Canning tells us that we at least desire it: 'Prevalent as every species of curiosity is, there is none which has so powerful an influence over every man as the desire of knowing what the world thinks of him; and there is none of which the gratification is in general so heartily repented of.' This is severe; but not so harsh as Mirabeau, who said of Lafayette, who loved popular applause, 'He deserves a certain renown; he has done a great deal with the humble means with which Nature furnished him.'

One statement in Mr Mitchell's book will be hailed with universal satisfaction, if, as Thackeray tells us, nine-tenths of our population are 'snobs;' it is a sort of apology for toadyism, and rests upon no less an authority than that of Adam Smith: 'Our obsequiousness to our superiors more frequently arises from our admiration of the advantages of their situation than from any private expectations of benefit from their good-will.' It is certainly some kind of comfort to consider that this general suppleness of the back, however mean may be its motive, does not arise from mere sordid self-interest.

Just as it is understood that all self-made men begin the world with half-a-crown in their pocket, so it is reported that all great men leave the world with some admirable sentiment in their mouths. 'William Pitt said something in his last moments. His physician (a gentleman, we suppose, of Tory proclivities) made it out to be, "Save my country, Heaven." His nurse said that he asked for barley-water.'

Curiously enough, the famous saying of the Swedish chancellor concerning the ease with which the world is governed, is not in the present collection; but there is a comparatively unknown remark by Vauvenargues that merits quotation: 'It is the easiest thing in the world for men in good positions to appropriate to their own use and credit the knowledge and ability of inferiors.' Of the truth of this there are very many modern instances. Whenever a person of rank without abilities is placed in power, and to the surprise of everybody, does not make a complete failure, his friends say: 'Ah, but he has good *administrative capacity*;' and Vauvenargues has told us what it means.

To shew the comprehensiveness of the plan which our author has adopted in this excellent selection, we may mention that between a reflection of Carlyle's and a quotation from the Persian poet Sadi, appears this maxim: 'Some people have money and no brains; others have brains and no money;' which is widely known as the motto of a certain 'unfortunate British nobleman now languishing in Dartmoor prison.'

There is a good deal of the truest wisdom, as well as amusement and instruction, to be gleaned from this little volume; and we will conclude our remarks upon it with one of its best pieces of advice: 'Take short views, hope for the best, and trust in God.'

FOOTNOTES:

- [1] *Human Nature: a Mosaic of Sayings, Maxims, Opinions, and Reflections on Life and Character.* By David Mitchell. Smith, Elder, & Co.

MRS PETRE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

'Is that the house?' asked a young woman of a decent-looking old man who was standing, rake in hand, by the entrance-gates leading to a small villa-like residence, with nothing out of the common in itself to attract special attention.

'Yes, that's the very house,' he replied, taking off his hat, and wiping away with a red cotton pocket-handkerchief the dew from his forehead—'that's it.'

I happened to be passing by just when the question was asked and answered, and involuntarily turned to glance at the edifice, which was evidently connected with some story or other; but being a stranger in that part of England, and only on a short visit to some old friends of mine—Mr and Mrs Langley by name—I had no idea what could have made so modest a mansion famous. My sex being some excuse for my curiosity, I asked Mr Langley that evening if by the place in question there hung a tale; and the result of my inquiry was the following strange story.

'It had been vacant for some years,' began Mr Langley, 'when one day a very fallow-complexioned woman of over sixty years of age called at the office of Mr Daly the house-agent in Lynton—the nearest town—and asked him if he had any detached houses of moderate rent and dimensions that could be immediately obtained. The only stipulations she made were, that it was to be taken by the year only, and must be furnished. The rent, if necessary, would be paid in advance, and a banker's reference given. Hilton Lodge, which had hitherto hung somewhat heavily on Mr Daly's hands, was immediately mentioned. The woman, who gave her name as Mrs Danton, accompanied the agent to view it, and being satisfied, at once agreed to take it.

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"It is not for myself exactly," she explained, "though I shall live here. It is for an invalid cousin of mine—an old lady—Mrs Petre. I reside with her—manage her affairs in fact—and—take care of her."

"There is no mental derangement?" queried Mr Daly, alarmed by the measured way in which Mrs Danton enunciated her sentence.

"O dear, no," she replied; "but she is depressed—very much depressed—in spirits. She has met with some severe money losses lately, owing to a scoundrel of a nephew of hers who had behaved badly. Happily, however, she has an annuity of a thousand a year, of which he could not deprive her; but it has been a severe shock to her, and at times she almost needs supervision."

'Mr Daly expressed due sympathy and commiseration, hoping, however, that the change to Hilton Lodge might be of great benefit to the poor old lady, whose age, Mrs Danton stated, was considerably over seventy.

'Soon afterwards, the new tenants, whose references had proved unexceptionable, arrived, and in a short time they were fairly settled in their new abode. The establishment consisted of a cook, a very old woman; a housemaid, equally elderly, who was supposed, as it afterwards turned out, to wait at table, and also to attend personally on Mrs Petre; and a rather more juvenile coachman, whose duty it was to drive out Mrs Petre daily in a small brougham with one horse, the lady being invariably accompanied by the other member of her household—last, but certainly not least in her own opinion, Mrs Danton, her cousin, confidante, companion, or custodian—whatever she was, no one seemed quite to know which. Some clever person at last discovered *who* Mrs Petre was. She was the widow of a General Petre of the Indian army; and after this had been found out, a few of her nearer neighbours left cards upon her. But for a long time nothing was seen of her beyond occasional glimpses of a pale aged face in a close black bonnet, seated side by side in the brougham with the yellow cadaverous countenance of Mrs Danton.

'She certainly had a terrible countenance,' observed Mr Langley; 'it was what you could have imagined belonging to the evil-eye. Yet it seemed she was very attentive to the old lady; they were sometimes seen walking about arm in arm, and Mrs Danton gave up her whole time—so it seemed—to the care and amusement of her melancholy charge. Yet the strange part of it was, that although the relationship between them was said to be that of cousins, Mrs Petre, old, invalid, shabbily dressed, and wretched-looking as she was, looked a thorough lady; whilst Mrs Danton bore upon her the unmistakable stamp of vulgarity and want of breeding. She tried hard to be a lady, and no doubt was fully persuaded that she succeeded in her attempts. By degrees, however, she made her way into the good graces of one or two of the families round about; and into their ears—often in Mrs Petre's presence, who would sit silently drinking in the oft repeated story of her wrongs—she would pour out the history of the nephew's delinquencies. Such a villain as Aubrey Stanmore, Mrs Danton alleged, did not exist; nothing was too bad to be said of him; he had endeavoured to ruin his aunt, had deprived her of every shilling that he could lay hold of, and instead of deploring his conduct, rather gloried in it.

'This Aubrey Stanmore, to make my story clear,' said Mr Langley, 'was a nephew of Mrs Petre's, for whom she had always had a great affection; and by the joint advice of his father and his aunt, he had been induced to exchange his military for a mercantile career, for which he had neither the necessary capacity nor capital. This latter disadvantage was in the first instance smoothed

over by an arrangement between Mrs Petre and the elder Mr Stanmore to become security for a certain sum, which, thanks to Aubrey's ignorance of business matters, was quickly swallowed up, necessitating either further securitiships or immediate failure—a crisis not to be contemplated when a little prompt aid might insure future wealth to the family through Aubrey's successes. So again, and yet again, did Mrs Petre extend a helping hand, until the crash could no longer be averted, and the failure was announced. Dearly as she loved her money, and violent as her wrath in the first instance was, she was too fond of her favourite Aubrey to withhold a free forgiveness, which would never have been cancelled but for the appearance on the scene of this Mrs Danton, a needy widow, who fanned the flame against Mr Stanmore so successfully that not only was he sternly forbidden his aunt's house, but volumes of abuse, in her once kindly, familiar handwriting, were circulated against him, damaging to both his character and future prospects.

'He was a young man, barely thirty; and surely he might hope to retrieve the past. One would have imagined so; but when he set about trying to interest some of his aunt's old friends on his behalf, they turned very coldly away. Mrs Petre's letters and denunciations bore terrible weight against Aubrey; and when he appealed again and again to her, the rebuffs he met with were studied in their insolence and severity.

'Of course, Mr Stanmore attributed her violent behaviour to its real cause—Mrs Danton, who had succeeded in persuading Mrs Petre to discharge all her old servants, upon the plea that her poverty was so great she could not afford to keep them. One in particular Mrs Danton knew it would be necessary to dismiss, and that was Janet Heath, a very superior sort of maid-housekeeper, who had been in her service for over ten years. Janet was filled with indignation when Mrs Danton first took up her residence with Mrs Petre, as she well knew the inferiority of her position, which had hitherto only been acknowledged by the latter so far as the gift of an occasional sovereign or a bundle of cast-off garments went; and to have her suddenly set at the head of affairs, and to have to listen silently to her scurrilous abuse of Mr Aubrey, was more than Janet could calmly submit to. However, when Mrs Petre herself told her that she did not wish her to remain, she had no choice but to depart; and shortly afterwards she married a man to whom she had been engaged for some years.

'But though she had left her service, Janet was too fond and faithful quite to desert Mrs Petre. She resolved to go to see her as often as she possibly could, and above everything to put in a good word as frequently as occasion permitted for Mr Stanmore, whom Janet knew to be, with all his other faults, a good-hearted and well-meaning young man.

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'This plan of visiting Mrs Petre in no way suited Mrs Danton's views. She endeavoured, by covert insinuations against Janet, to poison Mrs Petre's mind; but failing in that, she resolved to remove her from Janet's vicinity, and to take a house of her own choosing, with an establishment also selected by herself. She had been in power for about two years when they came to Hilton Lodge, and in that time Mrs Danton had wormed her way pretty successfully into the confidence of Mrs Petre's old friends, and poisoned their minds most thoroughly against her nephew, who after, to his great joy, having been sent for and fully forgiven by Mrs Petre, had suddenly been told his visits to her house were not desired, and that, although she had forgiven, she had no intention of holding any further intercourse with him!

'This was a sad blow to Mr Stanmore; but from what he had seen of Mrs Danton, he conceived it to be his duty to write out to his cousin in India, Major Arthur Dumaresque, and tell him, as the only other relative of Mrs Petre, that he did not consider she was in safe or proper hands; and urged upon him the necessity for some action in the matter.

'But in this too he had been forestalled, for Major Dumaresque had already been communicated with by Mrs Danton, who, under cover of Mrs Petre's name, wrote out such slanderous accounts of Mr Stanmore that he was quite under the impression that Mrs Danton was only acting as Mrs Petre's guardian angel, and was benevolently protecting her from the spider, namely, Aubrey Stanmore. Mrs Danton represented in glowing, though somewhat illiterate and misspelt, terms her entire devotion to her dear cousin, her desire to act altogether so as to insure the interests of Major Dumaresque, to whom Mrs Petre had resolved to leave whatever fortune she might die possessed of. As for herself, she wanted—nothing—but the heart and confidence of her charge.

'As may be imagined, Aubrey's representations, and those of his wife as well, were utterly thrown away upon Major Dumaresque. Being already prejudiced, he refused to believe in them; joined in the abuse of Mr Stanmore, and was well pleased to countenance and correspond with the person who apparently had his interests so thoroughly at heart.

'Her triumph knew no bounds when she saw how her plans had succeeded, for now the Stanmores stood alone as it were in the world. They had no friends. This was Mrs Danton's perpetual solace and comfort, as well as the knowledge that Aubrey's affairs could never be wound up and settled without his aunt's co-operation, she being the largest creditor he had. All seemed very hopeless to the Stanmores, still more so when they heard that Mrs Danton had elected to carry poor old Mrs Petre off to the country.

'However, Janet Heath was equal to the emergency. She went to Mr Stanmore and told him that she was certain Mrs Petre was not only perfectly sick of her companion, but that she had actually one day, during a visit, asked her if she could possibly return to her service. Just at this juncture Mrs Danton was called away to visit a daughter it seemed she possessed; and Janet came to Mr Stanmore and urged him to lose no time in going to see his aunt, and taking advantage of the companion's absence to beg of her to make up her mind to prevent her return. "For," said Janet, "my poor old mistress is in fear of her, Mr Aubrey; she hasn't a shilling she can call her own; her very cheques are now made out in Mrs Danton's name; and she told me she was sick of her—but

that till Major Dumaresque came home, she could make no change."

'Mr Stanmore's blood boiled at Janet's revelations, which were far more numerous than I can relate; but his position was a difficult one. He had no one to turn to; no one to advise him properly. Mrs Petre's injurious statements as regarded him had placed him in the most painful predicament; but he was resolved on one thing—to lose no time in attempting, at all events, to rescue his aunt from her present thralldom.

'But to whom could they turn? Something must be done. Mrs Stanmore would not hear of her husband subjecting himself to fresh insults from Mrs Petre's friends. She would write *once* more to Major Dumaresque, and see if she could not rouse him to a sense of the real character of Mrs Danton. This she resolved in the presence of Janet Heath and Aubrey.

"Very well, Helen; write by all means," said Aubrey solemnly; "but I have a strong conviction that that woman will never let my aunt live until Arthur Dumaresque comes home."

'Long and anxiously did the Stanmores consult with the faithful Janet as to the best means of watching over the old lady, who seemed bent on allowing herself to be ruled by Mrs Danton, who had her now as completely under her thumb as if she had been an infant. At last it was settled, when they heard Hilton Lodge had been really engaged, that Janet should take a little house as near it as possible, partly on the plea of her child—she had one little girl, Emily by name—requiring change, partly because of her anxiety to be near her old mistress. So when the Dantonian establishment was fairly settled, Janet made her appearance, greatly to the rage and disgust of the major-domo there, but to the evident joy and relief of Mrs Petre, who took to writing perpetual little plaintive notes to Janet, desiring her to come up to see her.

'Janet had to encounter more than one covert insult at Mrs Danton's hands, but she simply ignored them, and persevered most courageously in presenting herself at Hilton Lodge whenever she was sent for. During those visits she noticed the penniless condition of Mrs Petre, who bitterly complained that "she had not a shilling in the world;" and at last, thanks probably to Janet's vigorous promptings, the poor old lady at length whispered to her that she would fain get rid of Danton, as she called her, but she could not. "I shall do so when Major Dumaresque comes home," she said, "and get *you* to live with me, Janet."

'Gradually, however, Janet was doing good service to the Stanmores, for Mrs Petre now, whenever occasion came, would talk of Aubrey with much of her old kindness, and with pride told Janet one day that he and his wife had taken to magazine-writing, and were doing pretty well.

'One day, Janet came up to Hilton Lodge at an earlier hour than usual, without having been asked to do so by Mrs Petre; but the reason was soon told—it was the sixty-eighth birthday of the old lady, and Janet had come to congratulate her upon the day. Mrs Danton shewed some annoyance at Janet's remembrance of the anniversary; but Mrs Petre welcomed her with more animation and kindness than she had hitherto exhibited before Mrs Danton. "You must have some luncheon with me," she said; "I am going to have it in the drawing-room, and I should like you to stay for it."

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'Janet had never been so honoured; hitherto an occasional glass of wine was the most she had been accorded; but on this particular and momentous day, she and her little girl Emily were both invited to seat themselves at Mrs Petre's dinner-table, where they partook of an excellent lunch.

"You must drink my health, Janet," said Mrs Petre; "this is some of my old sherry, my treasure-wine. Danton sent up to town for it; you remember it, don't you?"

"O yes, ma'am," said Janet; "I do indeed remember it; but you used not to like it yourself."

"I don't care for it now," answered Mrs Petre, as with a very firm hand she poured out a glass of wonderfully dark-coloured sherry.

"Thank you," said Janet, taking the glass; but before raising it to her lips, added: "At your age we must not expect you to have many more birthdays; but I do hope you may have a good number yet, and happier than this, with peace in the family, and all the old times over again."

"Yes, yes," responded Mrs Petre; "when Major Dumaresque comes home. And poor Aubrey! He was a nice boy; wasn't he, Janet?"

"That he was," said Janet heartily; "and is nice still."

"I'm glad I forgave him," observed Mrs Petre, helping the little Emily to some pudding as she spoke. She had seldom taken so much notice of Janet's child before; but on this particular day she fed her from her own plate, and talked several times of Major Dumaresque's little girl; for I have not before mentioned that he was a married man with one child.

"You will like to see Miss Florence, won't you?" observed Janet. "She will be such an amusement to you."

"O yes," responded Mrs Petre; "I am looking forward very much to seeing her."

'After lunch was over, Mrs Petre and Janet sat talking for a short time, when the door suddenly opened, and a stranger to Janet, a tall dark man, walked into the room. From his immediately asking Mrs Petre how she felt, Janet guessed he was a doctor, and her conclusion was confirmed by his inquiring of her how she thought Mrs Petre was looking.

"Very well indeed," responded Janet; but from a feeling of delicacy, she thought she would withdraw until the conference with the doctor was over. Accordingly she descended to the

dining-room, where Mrs Danton was sitting; and in a few minutes was followed by the doctor, who addressed himself to the latter.

"Did Mrs Petre have her draught this morning?"

"No," replied Mrs Danton; "I gave her a glass of wine instead."

"Did she get the laudanum?" asked the doctor in a low tone; and to this question Mrs Danton's reply was made in a whisper, so inaudible that Janet feeling herself *de trop*, again got up and rejoined the old lady up-stairs.

"You have got a new doctor," remarked Janet.

"Yes," replied Mrs Petre; "I have had a cold lately; and Mrs Danton did not like Mr Heywood, who is the leading man here. But this young man seems civil enough."

"Well, I must be going now," said Janet presently.

"You can be driven home," answered Mrs Petre; "the carriage is at the door now, I think, and it can come back for me."

"No," said Janet; "it drove away a minute ago."

"Drove away!" exclaimed Mrs Petre with a flash of her old temper, which as I have before said, was a very violent one; Janet's presence no doubt emboldening her to find fault with Mrs Danton's arrangements. "Go and see where it has been sent to."

"Mrs Danton has sent the coachman to Lynton, to get a fowl for your dinner," said Janet, coming back after her inquiry.

"I didn't want a fowl; I won't have a fowl! What does she mean by sending for a fowl for me?"

'When Janet departed, she left Mrs Petre irritated against Mrs Danton—a hopeful sign that self-assertion might yet enable her to shake off the trammels into which she has got herself. And Janet thereupon sat down and wrote a joyous little note to Mrs Aubrey Stanmore, which she posted.

POST-LETTER ITEMS.

As lately as 1839, each inhabitant of these islands only wrote on an average three letters per annum. In 1840, the year associated with the introduction of the penny post, the total number of letters rose to one hundred and sixty-nine millions, giving an average of seven letters to each person, or something more than double the average of the preceding year. Since then, the history of the British Post-office, the greatest emporium of letters in the world, has simply been the history of the growth of commerce and civilisation in our midst. Each year the number of letters has surely and steadily increased, until, in 1875, it reached the enormous total of a thousand and eight millions, or an average of thirty-one letters to each person in the United Kingdom. Besides these, there were more than eighty-seven millions of post-cards, and very nearly two hundred and eighty millions of newspapers and book packets; so that a grand total of nearly fourteen hundred millions of all descriptions of postal matter is reached. How few of us can realise at the first blush what a thousand millions represents!

While the average number of letters to each person in the United Kingdom in 1875 was thirty-one, it was as high as thirty-five in England and Wales, and as low as thirteen in Ireland. Scotland occupies the happy medium between the two, shewing an average exactly double that of Ireland, and about twenty-five per cent. below that of England and Wales. It may be doubted, however, whether purely social and domestic correspondence by letter is less frequently indulged in by the Scotch people than by the English; and probably if London, where there is quite an abnormal amount of correspondence, were excluded from the calculation, Scotland would be found to be very nearly on a level with England.

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It is a striking and gratifying fact that only a mere fraction of the total number of letters posted fail to reach their destination. People often grumble at the bore of letter-writing, but seldom think of the boon they enjoy in the penny post. To write, address, and post a letter—and this is all the sender is required to do—is a mere trifle, compared with the labour of the Post-office in earning the 'nimble penny,' which is affixed to the letter in the shape of the 'Queen's Head.' Think of what has to be done for a letter posted, say, in the suburbs of London, and addressed to some remote village in the north of England or in Scotland. Perhaps it has been posted over-night, in which case the letter-carrier will be busy collecting and conveying it to the sub-district office some hours before moderately early people are thinking of getting up. From the Sub, it will be conveyed to the Head District Office, there to be stamped, sorted, and despatched to St Martin's-le-Grand. Here, in company with many thousands of others which have arrived in the same way, it will probably be manipulated as many as half-a-dozen times, in the different processes of facing, dividing, sorting, and so on, before it reaches the stage of being tied up in a bundle with a hundred or more of its fellows addressed to the same town or district, and despatched on what may probably be only the initial stage of its journey. If a night letter, Fate may decree that it should pass under the scrutinising glance of that sleepless official, the travelling sorter; in which case the bag, with its seal hardly 'set' as yet, will be ruthlessly torn open, and the bundles dispersed to the four corners of the railway sorting tender. Here is a miniature post-office, with

pigeon-holes, bags, and bundles innumerable; whose officials, in a desperate effort to keep ahead of the train, wait not for the shrill whistle of the guard or the first puff of the engine to commence their hard night's work. There are letters, letters everywhere, and not a moment to lose. There may be a bag to sort and drop before the train has accomplished the first dozen miles of its journey. Our letter is amongst the heap lying ready to be operated upon; it will be got ready by-and-by, and towards the gray of the morning it will be dropped at some little roadside station, whither the mail-cart driver has driven half-a-dozen miles or more to receive it. Thence to the post-office, another half-dozen miles; and here again the familiar process of unpacking, resorting, and re-stamping. Our letter is not for the town at which the bag is opened, but for one of its outlying villages; and the rural postman must be called in before the transaction, commenced in London some ten or twelve hours previously, can be completed. Away he goes, ere yet it is daylight, bag on shoulder, stick in hand, thinking less, probably, of the precious secrets of which he is the bearer, than of his return with a similar, although probably a lighter load in the evening. His life is not exactly one round of pleasure, but an out-and-home sort of journey, in which there is very little real progress, and the 'lettered ease' of which consists in the occasional Sundays on which he is relieved of his burden. He is the final link in the chain which, in the shape of men, horses, steam-engines, has had to be put in motion in order to deliver our penny letter!

Letters may be posted at no fewer than twenty-three thousand five hundred receptacles throughout the United Kingdom. How various is the character of these so-called receptacles! Here is the stately post-office of many of our great towns, situated in the very centre of life and activity. There the wayside letter-box, far removed from human habitation and, to all appearance, from human necessity. Lonely roads are no bar to the progress of the rural postman; although the Postmaster-general relates how an attempt to provide postal facilities in a certain district in the west of Ireland was frustrated by a superstitious objection to collect the letters from a wall-box, because 'a ghost went out nightly on parade' in the neighbourhood. Between the stately post-office and the wayside letter-box there are several different kinds of receptacles for letters: there is the branch post-office, an offshoot of the parent establishment; the receiving-house, at which a kind of uncovenanted postal service is carried on; and the pillar letter-box, which is dotted about our great towns almost as plentifully as lamp-posts are. In London there are no fewer than eighteen hundred receptacles for letters, and of these more than eleven hundred are pillar and wall letter-boxes. The public have a peculiar affection for the pillar-box, thinking probably that it can tell no tales. The writer remembers perfectly well seeing a pillar-box thrown down by a passing wagon in one of the streets of London, and afterwards turned with the 'slit' or aperture downward, so that it might not be used until re-erected. But despite this, it was rolled over and several letters inserted in it while it lay prostrate in the gutter! Similarly, letters intended to be 'posted' have often been dropped into the letter-boxes of private firms, and even into the 'street orderly bins' which stand at no great distance from the pillar letter-boxes in the city of London.

St Martin's-le-Grand is, of course, the great central depot for the letters of London, although it is doubtful whether more letters are not actually posted at the well-known branch-office in Lombard Street. Around this spot the bankers and merchants of the metropolis 'most do congregate,' and of necessity the quantity of matter 'mailed' nightly is very large. So is it at Charing Cross, another of the great posting centres of the metropolis.

Visitors to London are perhaps most familiar with the scene which is to be witnessed any evening between half-past five and six o'clock at St Martin's. Here the post-office gapes more widely at its customers, the public, than anywhere else we know of; and here it is prepared to swallow any kind of matter, from the tiniest, flimsiest document, written on 'India post,' to the stock-in-trade of a bookseller from 'the Row' adjoining, or the latest edition of an evening newspaper from neighbouring Fleet Street. Look at the numerous apertures as they gape and yawn in front of you. There is one labelled 'Newspapers,' about as big as a street-door, into which a whole edition of an evening paper might be thrown, without disturbing the calm serenity of the official inside whose duty it is to clear the throat of the monster. 'Letters,' inland, foreign, and colonial, town and country, large and small, thick and thin, may be posted with ease at as many different openings; while the 'stout card' and the thin card, the circular, the book packet, and the sample parcel, each has its appointed mode of descent into the cavernous depths below. What a struggle is there as the hour of six approaches! Burly office-porters jostle delicate shop-girls in their efforts to reach the letter-box; tiny office-boys strain and struggle beneath a load which might more appropriately have been conveyed to the post in a cart or wagon; and hapless youths who have started late, and who have been leap-frogging by the way, are fain to shy their bags or baskets of letters at the nearest opening, and take their chance. Bang goes the clock overhead, and in an instant the box closes with a crash, which must, one would think, have guillotined many a hapless letter thrown in on the stroke of the hour. Eagerness gives way to disappointment in the faces of those who are in the act of ascending the steps 'as the clock was striking the hour,' for the man in the red coat, whose heart is steeled against all importunities, has pronounced the words 'Too late,' and already the officials at the 'window' are busy exacting the fee of procrastination.^[2] No sooner has one description of posting finished than another begins. Half an hour prior to the closing of the box at St Martin's-le-Grand, the boxes all over London have closed, and the mail-carts—designed rather for speed than for elegance—are rattling into the yard behind, from the various district and branch post-offices. East, west, north, and south, all contribute their quota to the load which, a couple of hours hence, is to leave the post-office yard for the various railway stations in the shape of the 'Night-mail down.'

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The penny post has destroyed all distinctions in the great republic of letters. In the eyes of the post-office all letters are equal, whatever their character, caligraphy, or country; and no rival interests are studied within the walls of St Martin's. The big letters are not permitted to oppress

the little ones, each being tied up in their own particular bundle; and books and samples are so disposed that they are transported with a minimum of inconvenience to their less robust neighbours passing through the post. The work of facing—that is, putting all the letters with their addresses one way—stamping, dividing, sorting, and despatching, is performed in regular succession, as the letters are cleared from the box; for it is needless to say that all the operations of the post-office are carried on with clock-like regularity. In the old coaching days, when letters were despatched they were said to be sent 'down the road;' and the term 'road' is still retained in the Circulation Office, as indicating the particular desk or division at which the bags are made up for particular lines of railway or districts of country.

Eight o'clock is the hour at which the great night-mail is despatched from London; and the scene, although perhaps less stirring than that of the old mail-coach days, is sufficiently curious to attract a large crowd at St Martin's-le-Grand. Gorged with the accumulated correspondence of four millions of people, the huge building, now used exclusively for the sorting and despatch of letters, begins to exhibit palpable signs of discomfort as the hour of eight approaches; and ever and anon from the floors above come shooting down on to the platforms by which the building is surrounded on three sides, sackfuls of letters and newspapers, which are quickly transferred to the gaping mail-carts and wagons ranged underneath. Gradually the descent becomes fast and furious, until at five minutes to eight every aperture in the building is seen to belch forth its bag, box, or bundle of letters; and cart-drivers are shouting lustily to make way for 'Her Majesty's mails.' Away go the carts, vans, and omnibuses—a whole string making for Euston with the load of the 'Limited,' which seems to be limited in all else save letters; and others making for the different railway *termini* scattered all over London. A few minutes later, and there emerge from the building hundreds, we had almost said thousands, of busy toilers whose work has just preceded them; and in less than half-an-hour silence reigns supreme in and around St Martin's.

Letters are not always so plainly or so correctly addressed as they might be. This is a truism which most people will be inclined to reject as beneath their notice; and yet it is a truth which is painfully thrust upon the officials of the post-office every hour of the day. Think how the circulation of a badly addressed letter must be impeded at every stage of its progress! Let us suppose that a righteous fate overtakes it at the very outset, and that it 'sticks', in the aperture of the letter-box and loses a collection. Let us suppose, further, that it is addressed to 'George Street, London,' simply. There are *only* twenty-three streets of the name in the metropolis; and it so happens that there is one or more in each, of the eight postal districts! Thus, then, a letter so addressed might have to be sent all over London before reaching its destination; and who shall say that the fate was not richly merited? Much the same kind of thing would happen to a letter addressed to 'Queen Street, London;' there being no fewer than twenty streets bearing the title of our most illustrious sovereign, besides squares, crescents, gardens, terraces, rows, and roads innumerable. Quitting London, however, we will suppose a letter addressed to 'Newport' simply. Is it intended for Newport, Monmouth; Newport, Isle of Wight; Newport, Salop; or for any of the remaining four towns in England, two in Ireland, and one in Scotland, which flourish under that name? So too with Ashford, of which there are four places of the name in England; Bradford, of which there are three; Broughton, seven; Burnham, five; Burton, fifteen; Bury, four; and a host of others which we need not stay to enumerate. The post-office regulation on the subject of addresses runs thus: 'Every address should be legible and complete. When a letter is sent to a post-town, the last word in the address should be the name of that town, except when the town is but little known, or when there are two post-towns of the same name, or when the name of the town (such as Boston) is identical with or very like the name of some foreign town or country. In such cases the name of the county should be added.' Very good regulations these, but unfortunately they are not always attended to by the sorting clerks. We are constantly getting letters which have been delayed in their journey by the perverse stupidity of sorters mistaking the address, however plainly written, and in fact not attending to the name of the post-town. There are some other grounds for dissatisfaction. In numberless instances, towns near each other hold no direct postal communication, and letters between them make a long round before reaching their destination. These are blots on an otherwise wonderfully perfect system.

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FOOTNOTES:

- [2] By extra payment to the official at 'the window,' a letter though some minutes late will be received and despatched.

ERRORS CONCERNING ANIMALS AND PLANTS.

NOTWITHSTANDING the vast strides that science has made of late years, it is curious to note the errors and misconceptions in various points of natural history that still linger in many parts of this and other countries. We may run over a few of these popular misconceptions. Not a few even among generally well-informed people still imagine that all *Fungi* are poisonous—including even the mushroom. Many more take it for granted that all serpents sting, and that the forked tongue is the weapon by which the 'sting' is given; the fact that it is forked seeming to afford them convincing proof of its deadly character. While there are many among the educated classes who would probably be puzzled if told, that there were other mammals besides four-footed animals and man.

There are still numbers of persons who believe that a horse-hair immersed for a time in water

becomes vivified and is transformed into the curious animal known as the hair-eel; and who further imagine that this, acquiring greater thickness, becomes in process of time the common eel. This belief is universal among the uneducated, at least of the rural population, in many parts of the country. Nor is it confined to them. We have heard it stoutly maintained by a very intelligent man, of good education according to the ideas of education which were generally entertained fifty or sixty years ago; his only argument was one with which, if he had not been profoundly ignorant of natural history, he could not for a moment have deceived himself. He had often seen, in ditches or in stagnant pools, a moving hair-like thing, exactly resembling a black or dark-brown hair from a horse's mane, and no doubt it was a living thing, *and an eel!* And the other day we read among the answers to correspondents in a weekly paper, a very good advice to one who had directed attention to this same marvel—to try the experiment for himself with a horse-hair. But for any one who seeks information in the proper quarter, there is no need of such experiment; and the needful information is easily obtained. A few hours spent in the perusal of a book or two of natural history would make any man of common-sense ashamed that he had ever for a moment credited such an absurdity. The natural history of the eel is well known; and at no stage of its existence is it in form and appearance like the hair-eel. The natural history of the creature called by this name—the *Gordius* of naturalists—is also known. It is not a fish like the eel; it belongs to a class of parasitic worms very far below fishes in the scale of creation. It has no relation either to the eel or to a horse-hair. Yet the ploughman looks upon it with wonder, as he thinks of what he believes to be its origin; and the boys of the village school, when they find it in the gutter by the roadside or millpond, gather around it to gaze, and assure themselves by ocular observation of the truth of what they have heard. Ought they not to hear in the school itself what would disabuse their minds of so gross an error?

The erroneous opinion that all serpents are venomous is one that most probably originated with those who live in districts frequented only by the adder or viper; but it ought not to be entertained even by the most ignorant of the peasantry where the common snake is abundant, as it is in most parts of England. There every one ought to know that the latter is harmless, and that it is easily distinguished from the viper, which is poisonous. Curiously, too, the blind-worm or slow-worm, which, although not now ranked by naturalists among true serpents, but among the lizards, agrees with serpents in general appearance, and is in many places regarded with the utmost dread, being popularly believed to be as venomous as the viper itself. This is the case equally where it is common, as it is in many parts of England, and in Scotland where it is rare and found in comparatively few localities. 'During the summer of 1876,' says the Rev. J. G. Wood in his *Illustrated Natural History*, 'I passed some little time in the New Forest, and having gone round to the farms in the neighbourhood, begged to have all reptiles brought to me that were discovered during hay-making. In consequence, the supply of vipers and snakes was very large; and on one occasion a labourer came to my house bare-headed, his red face beaming with delight, and his manner evincing a consciousness of deserving valour. Between his hands he held his felt hat tightly crimped together, and within the hat was discovered, after much careful manœuvring, the head of a blind-worm emerging from one of its folds. As I put out my hand to remove the creature, the man fairly screamed with horror; and even when I took it in my hand, and allowed it to play its tongue over the fingers, he could not believe that it was not poisonous. No argument could persuade that worthy man that the reptile was harmless, and nothing could induce him to lay a finger upon it; the prominent idea in his mind being evidently, not that the blind-worm had no poison, but that I was poison-proof.'

Similar to the popular opinion as to the blind-worm is that concerning the little active slender lizard common in moors, and that concerning the eft or newt, both of which are deemed extremely venomous, dangerous animals, whilst in reality both are quite harmless. We do not know how far the error as to the lizard prevails in England, but it is certainly very generally prevalent in Scotland, almost every rustic dreading what he calls an *ask*, that is a lizard, nearly as much as an adder. And a similar belief, equally erroneous, prevails in France as to another species of lizard. As to the newt, the prejudice against it exists everywhere, both in England and in Scotland, but it appears in its most exaggerated form where the state of education is lowest. 'During a residence of some years in a small village in Wiltshire,' says Mr Wood, in the work from which we have already quoted, 'I was told some very odd stories about the newt, and my own power of handling these terrible creatures without injury was evidently thought rather supernatural. Poison was the least of its crimes; for it was a general opinion among the rustics in charge of the farmyard, that my poor newts killed a calf at one end of a farmyard, through the mediumship of its mother, who saw them in a water-trough at the other end; and that one of these creatures bit a man on his thumb as he was cutting grass in the churchyard, and inflicted great damage on that member. The worst charge, however, was one which I heard from the same person. A woman, he told me, had gone to the brook to draw water, when an *effert*, as he called it, jumped out of the water, fastened on her arm, bit out a piece of flesh and spat fire into the wound, so that she afterwards lost her arm!'

Some birds are regarded as of evil omen. One does not wonder that this should be the case as to the raven and the owl. The colour, the habits, and the hoarse croak of the raven may be supposed naturally suggestive of unpleasant thoughts; and it is easy to understand how the imagination may be affected by the loud hooting of the owl when it breaks the stillness of the night amidst the loneliness of the forest. But in other cases where no such explanation offers itself, superstition seems wholly unaccountable. Thus, in the north of England, where the wheatear is not very common, the sight of it is supposed to presage death to the spectator, and the country-people kill the bird and destroy its eggs on every opportunity. In the north of England also, the hoopoe has the reputation of being an *unlucky* bird. In many parts of England it is accounted unlucky to see a

solitary magpie, but lucky to see two together. One is supposed to presage sorrow; two, mirth; three, a wedding; and four, death!

In most parts of the United Kingdom, it is deemed unlucky to kill a robin, the red breast of the bird being attributed to its having been sprinkled with the blood of our Lord as He hung upon the cross; even as the cross on the back of the ass is connected in the rustic mind with our Lord's entry into Jerusalem riding upon an ass. According to the paper in the *Book of Days*, a common saying in Suffolk is, 'You must not take robin's eggs; if you do, you will get your legs broken.' The writer of it also relates the following anecdote. "How badly you write!" I said one day to a boy in our parish school; "your hand shakes so that you can't hold the pen steady. Have you been running hard, or anything of that sort?" "No," replied the lad; "it always shakes: I once had a robin die in my hand; and they say that if a robin dies in your hand, it will always shake." In some parts of England it is considered very unlucky to have no money in your pocket when you hear the cuckoo for the first time in the season. So perhaps it is, when it indicates the usual condition of the pocket.

Some insects, as well as birds, are deemed ominous of evil. There are many, even among educated people, who cannot hear the ticking of the little beetle called the death-watch without a feeling of fear; and among the vulgar, the belief is universal that it presages death in the house. And yet it is only the male insect knocking his head against the woodwork as a signal to his mate. In some parts of England the elephant hawk-moth is regarded not only as presaging, but as producing murrain. The death's-head moth is regarded with even greater aversion. This large moth, nowhere very common, has markings on the back and thorax somewhat resembling a skull and cross-bones; hence it inspires a superstitious terror, and its appearance is believed to be the harbinger of pestilence and woe. The ghost-moth inspires similar alarm. The female is of a dull brown colour; the upper surface of the male is of a silvery whiteness. In the evening the male makes his appearance, hovering over the grass in which the female lurks, often in churchyards where the grass is green and luxuriant. If alarmed, the insect disappears in an instant, settling on the ground; but by-and-by appears again hovering over the same spot. The ignorant rustic imagines it to be a ghost; and even if it were caught and shewn to him, he would be hard to be persuaded that it has no occult relation to the dead, or that its appearance is not ominous of evil to the living. Perhaps the most curious of all the popular superstitions concerning insects (and we could narrate many) is one which prevails, in Suffolk at least, as to bees. It is deemed unlucky that a stray swarm of bees should settle on your premises, unclaimed by the owner; it presages a death in the family within a year. A popular belief in Suffolk is that it is unlucky to kill a *harvestman*—a long-legged spider, very common in the fields in autumn—because if you do kill one there will be a bad harvest.

Some other errors in the natural history of animals have been long and widely prevalent, but have no superstitions connected with them. It will be enough merely to mention them. It is a common but a purely erroneous belief that the goatsucker and the hedgehog suck the teats of cows lying in the field—the latter being persecuted on that account. The woodpecker is ruthlessly killed because of the injury which it is supposed to do to trees by pecking holes in the wood and causing them to rot. The woodpecker pecks only where the wood is already decayed, which it does in quest of insects and their larvæ, and by pecking out the decayed wood, prevents the gangrene from extending, thus doing good to the tree and not harm.

The popular errors regarding plants are not so numerous, so wide-spread, or so remarkable as those regarding animals; nor do they seem anywhere to have taken so firm a hold of the minds of any class of the people, if we except perhaps the popular ideas regarding mushrooms and toadstools. Many people imagine that all fungi, except 'the mushroom,' are poisonous. It is not uncommon to hear the question asked even by educated people concerning some *agaric*: 'Is it a mushroom or a fungus?'—a question which shews that neither the meaning of the one term nor of the other is known. Every mushroom is a fungus; and although the term *mushroom* can never be applied to the minute fungi, such as blight, smut, mildew, and mould, it is very commonly applied to many of the larger kinds. Many fungi are not only not poisonous, but are wholesome and pleasant articles of food. Truffles and morels are edible fungi, and though they are found in England, they are not so common anywhere in Britain as in some parts of the continent of Europe. Some other species are also occasionally gathered and used in England; but in Scotland it may almost be said that none is ever gathered for use except the common mushroom (*Agaricus campestris*). Both in England and Scotland, however, far less use is made of the edible fungi than in France, Italy, Germany, and other continental countries, where they form a not inconsiderable part of the food of the people during summer and autumn; whilst with us, through ignorance and prejudice, they are allowed to rot and go to waste. It is proper to add, that of the larger kinds of fungi, many of the poisonous species are of the very group to which the common mushroom belongs; a group which possesses the same general form and structure with the common mushroom—a stalk surmounted by a cap, with gills on the under-side of the cap. Some excuse is therefore to be made for the general aversion prevalent in Great Britain to all kinds of fungi; and as long as we remain ignorant of the difference between the edible and the poisonous species, this aversion will naturally survive. But a wider diffusion of knowledge concerning the edible fungi is very desirable, and would enable many often to enjoy a cheap and agreeable repast.

The superstitions connected with plants seem also to have possessed less vitality than those connected with animals. In fact, they have mostly quite died out. Perhaps the most tenacious of life was that concerning the rowan-tree or mountain-ash. Our forefathers universally regarded this tree as possessing a wondrous power of affording protection from witches and from evil spirits, and for this reason it was planted close by every dwelling. Nowhere was this belief more

firmly entertained than in Scotland. Within our recollection, an aged man who acted as postman in a country town in the south of Scotland, habitually carried a piece of rowan-tree or mountain-ash in his pocket, as a fancied protection against malevolent influences. Traces of this superstition have now, we believe, disappeared. The rowan-tree is now cultivated for the sake of its beautiful clustering berries, from which a pleasantly bitter jelly may be produced, as a condiment to be eaten with roast-mutton, preferable to the jelly from red currants. This is what we call putting the mountain-ash to a better purpose than superstitiously carrying morsels of it in the pocket to avert some imaginary personal injury.

Let us hope that, by the progress of education, the minds even of the humblest classes of the people will ere long be freed from the fear of dangers merely imaginary, and elevated above the pitiful superstitions by which they are still too frequently enslaved and degraded. Yet it is probable that a considerable time must elapse before this desirable result can be fully attained. To many the errors with which their superstitions are connected, and the superstitions themselves, appear supported by a great weight of authority, such as they have been accustomed most to respect—the authority of their seniors, and of those who are looked upon as the oracles of their little circle. And if they have not instances of their own observation to adduce in justification of their beliefs, they have been assured of instances enough that have come under the observation of others.

THE QUICHENOT LAMP-FORGE.

A BRIEF account of this new lamp-forge, included in 'Useful Items From France,' which appeared in our columns (No. 668, October 14, 1876), having occasioned numerous inquiries as to this novel source of heat, a more detailed description of its principle and mode of action may probably prove acceptable. The apparatus, of which M. Quichenot, a French civil engineer, is the inventor, is designed to supply a want that has been long felt, that of a blow-pipe and furnace combined, easy of transport, applicable to the arts, or for experimental purposes, and which does its work cheaply. Requiring no special fittings, it can be used where gas cannot, and yields, it may be added, a heat considerably greater.

The so-called carburator, or actual lamp-forge, is composed of a shell or chamber of cast-iron, with a false bottom or double compartment, into which air is to be forced by the aid of a smith's or circular bellows. On this shell stands an annular vessel of cast-iron, containing petroleum, supplied from a reservoir of equal level, by the help of a pipe. The heat of the lamp-forge keeps the petroleum in ebullition, and its vapour pours into the iron carburator, mixes with the compressed air, and rushes burning through a large copper funnel, capped by a thick tube in refractory fire-clay, and which contains the hottest portion of the flame; which is then suffered to play on the crucible or cupel containing the object to be heated, and which is surrounded by a cover or screen, to prevent the cooling effects of the atmosphere.

The blow-pipe attached to the apparatus is a flexible one, the interior being fitted with a copper spiral reaching to within one-third of an inch of the nozzle, and which renders the flame shorter and more compact than is the case with blow-pipes of the usual construction. The flame can be rendered oxidising or deoxidising at pleasure. For solders of every kind this blow-pipe is believed to be well adapted. The miniature lamp-forge is capable of melting, in ten minutes, fourteen ounces of copper, nickel, or cast-iron, or about twelve ounces of wrought-iron. The heat, therefore, is only equalled by that of the larger-sized table-furnaces fed with coke and urged by a continuous blast of air. But the action of these last-mentioned furnaces is brief, and when their supply of fuel is consumed, time is wasted in cooling and recharging them. The great merit of M. Quichenot's invention is, that the lamp-forge can be kept, without difficulty, at work for a considerable time, care being taken to guard against any heating of the petroleum in the reservoir of supply.

We have not been able to ascertain if these forges are to be seen in England; but we believe that information may be had, and the apparatus seen, by applying to M. le Directeur, Fabrique des Forges de Vulcain, 5 Rue Saint-Denis, Place du Châtelet, Paris.

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