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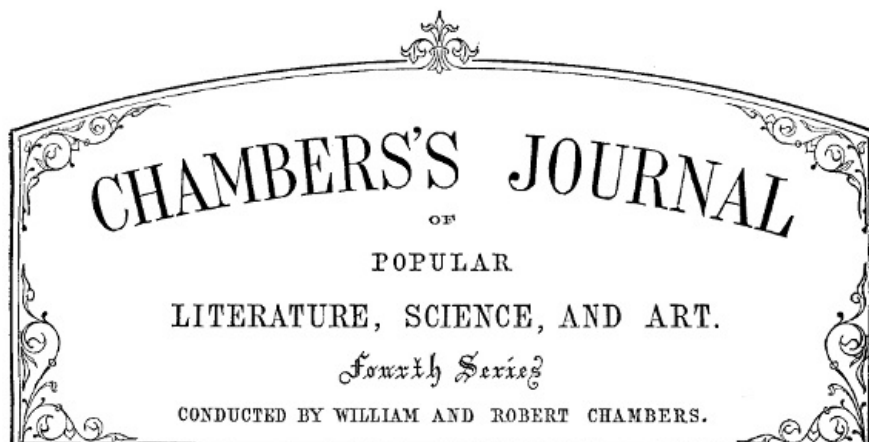
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**CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL
OF
POPULAR
LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.**

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THE HIDDEN BOX.

A TALE OF THE COVENANTERS.

SOMETHING like two centuries ago, while the persecution against the Covenanters was raging in Scotland, many were forced, for conscience' sake, to give up all and retire to out-of-the-way places, to be out of the reach of their enemies. Among others, a well-to-do farmer of the name of MacWilliam, reduced to penury by the fines imposed upon him and the confiscation of his lands, withdrew from the home of his youth; and having rented a moorland farm in a remote parish of a neighbouring county, he settled down there with his wife and family. Hillfoot—for such was the name of the farm—lay in a hollow between two hills of moderate elevation, which rose with a gentle slope on each side. A burn ran through the farm, and about two miles farther on, joined a river of some importance. Almost at the confluence of the two the glen took a sharp turn to the left, and thus rendered Hillfoot invisible from the main road, which followed the course of the larger stream.

Though the farm was of considerable extent, little more than a living for the family could be made about it, for heather was more abundant on the hills than grass; and good arable land was out of the question, for the district was so late that cereals could barely ripen, and even the meadows along the holms by the burn-side yielded but scanty crops. It was in this place, however, that James MacWilliam had elected to spend his latter days. All around the house the outlook was no doubt bleak and bare and far from encouraging; but all that he loved most dearly were with him, and if he had not the comfort and luxury of former days, he had what he prized more than all earthly things—freedom to worship God in the way it seemed best to himself. At the time of his removal to Hillfoot he was about forty years of age, and his wife two or three years his junior. They had been married some fifteen years, and two children—a son and daughter—had blessed their union. John, a lad of fourteen, assisted his father in the tending of their flocks and in the working of the farm; while their daughter Barbara, two years younger, helped her mother in the house; and although she was not strong enough yet to do the heavy work, by the sweetness of her temper and the blitheness of her nature her presence enlivened all about her and made the heavy task seem light.

Years rolled on; and though they often heard of the persecution and dreadful punishment their fellow-countrymen, nay even their fellow-parishioners were suffering, still in their remote and unsuspected retreat they were allowed to live on in peace. Ten years had passed, and with them many changes had come over Hillfoot and its inmates. Death had not left it inviolate, for the wife and mother, not strong at best, had been ill able to stand the privations and hardships which the family had endured since settling there. It was with sad hearts that her husband and family saw her pining away; and although they put forth every effort and tried every expedient that love could devise to prolong her life, she sank lower and lower; and when autumn was merging into winter, and the heather-bells were beginning to wither, she passed away. Barbara, on whose shoulders the household duties had long before this fallen, was now no longer a girl, but a comely lass of twenty-two. Her tall graceful figure, kindly manner, and sweet disposition made her beloved by all who knew her, and brought her many admirers. She had become betrothed to a young man, a shepherd on a neighbouring farm, and but for the ailing health and subsequent death of her mother, was to have been married the following summer.

John, on whom, from the decrepitude of his father, the management of the farm had now devolved, had applied himself with so much earnestness to his task, and things had so prospered in his hands, that the family were in a much better condition than they had ever been since their coming there.

Of all the neighbours they had come in contact with, James Morton of Burnfoothill was the one with whom they had the most dealings. Morton's wife had been dead for many years; but his only daughter Janet, a young woman about Barbara's age, kept house for her father. At bottom, Morton was an honourable enough man, but he was grasping and worldly, and cared little for those things which his neighbour MacWilliam regarded as most sacred. Between the old folks accordingly there had been little coming and going; but Barbara and Janet were fast friends, for the two girls had forgathered among the braes shortly after the former had come to Hillfoot, and an intimacy was then formed which grew closer as they grew older, and which now rendered the two almost inseparable.

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John MacWilliam had also found something of a kindred spirit in Janet, and from taking a deep interest in her welfare, he gradually awoke to the consciousness of regarding her with a true and honest affection. He had long worshipped at a distance; but now that his mother was dead, and his sister betrothed to a neighbouring swain, he determined to approach the object of his love and tell her the state of his feelings. An opportunity was not long in presenting itself. Janet came on a visit to Hillfoot one lovely June afternoon, and in the evening, as she was preparing to go home, John volunteered to accompany her. They sallied out and wended their way down the burn-side. The sun was sinking behind the hills; the sky was bright and clear and peaceful overhead, and as the shadows lengthened, a dead calm seemed to descend on all things around. Nothing was to be heard save the purling of the brook at their feet, or the bleat of the lambs far up the hillside. The quiet beauty touched the hearts of both as they tripped along, and caused them to linger by the way, that they might the longer gaze on the tranquil scene. Seating themselves on a grassy knowe, with the maiden's hand clasped in his, he told in simple yet passionate language how he had long regarded her with the deepest affection and that she alone could make him happy. Need more be said? They rose to go, for the shadows were deepening; and as they

sauntered down the glen hand in hand, it was agreed that he should ask her father's consent that very night.

When they entered Burnfoothill, Morton was much surprised to see John at such an unusual hour; and when he learned his errand, was not overpleased, for he had calculated that his daughter, of whom he was justly proud, would make a better match, since he was rich, and she being his only child, was the heiress-apparent to all his possessions. Accordingly, he would give his consent only on two conditions, and these were, that John should buy Hillfoot and portion it to his daughter! When John heard these conditions, his heart died within him; and he parted that night from Janet like a man in a dream; and, despairing of ever being able to fulfil the conditions, he retraced his steps up the glen with a heavier heart and less elastic step than when an hour or two before he had come down. When he reached home, he knelt by his bedside and prayed to the Father of all mercies for help to enable him to bear up with his trouble.

Throughout the long night he pondered and racked his brain for some expedient whereby he might raise the necessary funds and remove the only obstacle between himself and his happiness, and carry Janet home in triumph—his reward and joy. The day dawned; and as he prepared to go forth to his first duty in the morning, that of looking after the sheep, he felt as if there was no life in him—as if there was nothing to live for now. But the old adage says truly—the darkest hour is just before the dawn. Seizing his staff, he stalked forth and began to ascend the hill. He had hardly reached the top when he saw right in front of him a man looking carefully amongst the heather as if for something he had lost. He appeared to be a stranger to the place; and his dress shewed him to be no shepherd; and John, surprised that such a person should be there at so early an hour, went forward and accosted him. The stranger started when he heard a voice, for he had not noticed any one approaching, but answered cheerily the 'Good-morrow' addressed to him. At first he regarded his interrogator with some suspicion; but the frank open countenance of the latter soon dispelled all doubt; and when John asked whether he had lost anything, the stranger proceeded to tell him the following story.

He began: 'I am a captain in the Scottish army; and the other day while sitting in my house in Edinburgh I received a message to come to the Tolbooth jail, as an old friend desired very particularly to see me. Wondering who this friend in the Tolbooth could be, I set out, and having arrived there you can judge of my surprise when I recognised in the prisoner before me an old comrade and fellow-officer, Bertram by name. We had served together under Leslie, and had been fast friends. After some years, Captain Bertram left his regiment and went up to London. What he went for I could never learn, but I lost sight of him from that time, until he sent for me to come to the Tolbooth. His history he told me had been an eventful one; and he had passed through much since I had seen him last. Amongst other things, he had allied himself with the ringleaders in the Ryehouse Plot; and when that conspiracy had become known to the government, my friend the captain fled with all haste from London and made the best of his way to Scotland. Though he had made many narrow escapes, he got across the Border safe enough, and was congratulating himself on having at last reached a haven of safety, when he learned to his surprise that the limbs of the law were still on his track, and that even there he was not safe. He hurried north as fast as possible, thinking to find refuge in the Highland glens; but his pursuers had been gaining on him, and as he was traversing this part of the country—I take it to be on the top of this very hill—he saw his pursuers, a party of red-coats, come over the top of yonder hill on the other side of the valley. He had carried with him from England a small box of extremely valuable jewellery, by selling which he would have as much as keep him in his old age and forced retirement. But when he saw the soldiers so close on him, he hid the box in a tuft of heather, so that if he were taken it might not fall into the hands of his enemies; and if he did escape he might have an opportunity of coming back and recovering it. He was, however, captured before he reached Glasgow, which I believe is not more than twelve miles from here; thence he was taken to Edinburgh and confined in the Tolbooth, where I saw him. I interested myself in his case, and used all my influence to get him set free; but the evidence of his guilt was too decided to admit of a doubt, and the government was in no forgiving mood. He was tried, condemned, and has been executed. The night before his execution he sent for me and described the place where he had left his box of valuables, and asked me to go and search for them and take the use of them. From the description I got of the hill, I think this must be the one, and my errand here this morning is to find this lost treasure.'

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When he had finished his story, John immediately volunteered to help him in his search for the box; and the stranger being nothing loath, the two started to look, and continued the search until the sun had mounted high in the heavens. The stranger, unused to the rough and uneven ground of the hill, was completely knocked up, and determined to give up the search as useless, remarking that it reminded him of looking for a needle in a haystack. After being pressed to go down and partake of some refreshments—which, however, the stranger declined—and as they were on the point of parting, John asked him to leave his address, so that if he did find the box, he would be able to let him know. The stranger did so, and promised a handsome reward if the box was found and brought to Edinburgh. They parted, the stranger to make the best of his way to the village, which lay some four miles off, and thence take horse to Glasgow; John to go his rounds amongst the sheep, which had been neglected while the search was going on.

Whilst he was thus occupied, he kept turning over in his mind what had passed between the stranger and himself, and it suddenly occurred to him that here was an opportunity of raising at least a little money, for should he find the box, the stranger had promised a handsome reward. At the thought, a wild tumultuous joy filled his breast, and he eagerly hastened to finish his round and get back home, so that when he had breakfasted he might renew the search. He was,

however, so far behind his usual time of arrival that he found his kinsfolk in consternation at his protracted stay. Fearing some accident had befallen his son, the old man was on the point of going out to seek for him when he made his appearance. John told them the cause of his delay; and also declared his intention of going out to continue the search as soon as he had satisfied his hunger.

The story told by her brother made a great impression on Barbara, and she, after sitting wrapt in thought for a few minutes, exclaimed: 'It *must* have been him!' Her brother in surprise asked what she meant; and then she told how, one afternoon two or three months before, she had wandered up the burn-side with her seam in her hand, and had seen a man running along the hill as fast as the nature of the ground would permit; and as he ran she saw him halt, and as it were bend down amongst the heather, and then start off to run again. She stood and watched him till he went out of sight, thinking it was perhaps some poor Covenanter chased by 'Kirke's Lambs,' who at that time were the terror of the country; but having watched some time longer, and seeing no one in pursuit, she concluded it would simply be a shepherd on some errand of despatch, and thought no more about it. Her brother's recital, however, had brought the circumstance to her memory; and laying the two things together, she inferred that it must have been Captain Bertram she had seen, and that when she saw him stoop, he had concealed the box of valuables.

When John heard his sister's story, he eagerly questioned her whether she could trace the man's course along the hill or point out the place where she had seen him stoop. Barbara was uncertain, but volunteered to accompany her brother and indicate, so far as she could remember, the spot he was so anxious to find. Hurriedly partaking of the food his sister had prepared for him, in a very few minutes the two issued forth to begin the search. They agreed that it would be better to go to the place where she had been standing when she saw the fugitive, so that she might have a better idea of where to look. They accordingly held their way up the valley, and as they were going he told her all that had passed the night before, and explained how it was that he was so eager to fall in with the concealed treasure. She, with all the ready sympathy of a sister, entered into his spirit; and when they had reached the place where she thought she had been standing, she proposed that he should go up the hill, and in that way she might be more able to tell definitely at what distance the man had been out. The suggestion seemed good, and was immediately carried out; and at the distance of nearly half a mile from where she was standing, she signalled him to stop. She immediately ascended, and as soon as she had reached him the search began in earnest. Sticking his staff in the ground where he had been standing, he hung his plaid upon it; and then Barbara and he going out something like fifty yards, and taking different directions, each described a semicircle with the plaid as centre, meeting on the opposite side. They continued the process, narrowing the circle every round, till they had come within five yards of the plaid; but all to no purpose. The task seemed hopeless, and they were on the point of abandoning the search in the space they had inclosed with the first round, when Barbara, with a joyful cry, drew forth the box from a thick bunch of heather!

The two then hurried home to make known their good fortune to their father, and also to consult how they should let Captain Hamilton, John's friend of the morning, know that they had found the box. There were no telegraph wires in those days which could flash the news to its destination in a few minutes; nor were there even mails from so remote a place, by which letters could be carried with anything like safety or precision. The only way therefore that seemed to be advisable was that John should take the box and carry it all the way to Edinburgh and hand it over to the rightful owner. It was accordingly resolved that he should start very early next morning, which would enable him to reach Edinburgh that day, and take the box with him. To effectually conceal it, Barbara put up two pairs of blankets of her own weaving into a bundle, with the box inside; and when the east was beginning to turn gray, John set out with his bundle on his back, and some cakes and cheese in his pocket. On he trudged with a light step and lighter heart, for he felt he was on the eve of having his dearest wish fulfilled. Long before its inhabitants had begun to stir, he passed through Glasgow, then an insignificant city compared with its present grandeur and prosperity. While it was still early, halting by the wayside he quenched his thirst at a neighbouring spring, and then walked on, passing many villages by the way. By midday he reached Falkirk, and having there done justice to his cakes and cheese, he pushed on; and as the sun was sinking in the west he reached Edinburgh, and with little difficulty sought out the address given him by his friend the captain.

He found that that gentleman lived in one of the most fashionable houses in the town; and when he knocked at the door and asked to see Captain Hamilton, the page told him in a very rough manner that his master had no time to waste on such as he. John felt nettled at this impertinence, but respectfully desired him to tell his master that the shepherd with whom he had been speaking the morning before, was at the door, and wished to see him. The page very reluctantly went; and when he delivered his message, was not a little surprised to see the alacrity with which his master obeyed the summons. The captain took John into his private room, and there eagerly asked him if he had found the box. For an answer, John quietly drew the article asked for from his bundle and handed it to the captain, who took it, and having produced the key which Bertram had given him when he told him the story, opened the box and found the contents all safe. He did not tell John what was the value of the jewels it contained; but after having been made acquainted with the mode in which the treasure had been recovered, he produced a bag containing one thousand guineas, and handed it to the faithful shepherd, as the reward of his honesty and fidelity. He at the same time pressed him to accept of his hospitality for that night; to which John readily consented, being thoroughly worn out by his long and tiresome journey. Ordering meat to be set before his guest, he waited till he had had enough, and then conducted

him to a bedroom for the night.

It would hardly be possible to describe the feelings of John when he found himself alone. An overpowering sense of gratitude to his heavenly Father filled his breast, and falling on his knees, he poured forth a fervent prayer of thanksgiving for what he had received. In the munificent reward he had earned, he saw the highest aim of his ambition won, and his dearest hopes consummated. Having at length retired to rest, his thoughts kept him awake for some time; but tired Nature soon asserted herself, and he sunk into a deep and refreshing slumber, and slept until the beams of the rising sun shining into his room roused him, and warned him that it was time to be taking the road. He rose, dressed himself, and was on the point of leaving, when the butler knocked at the door and told him breakfast was laid for him in the hall. Gratefully partaking of the offered cheer, he then set forth on his journey homeward, where he arrived as the gloaming was deepening into night. His story was soon told; and when he held forth the bag of gold and declared how much it contained, and assured them that it was all his own, his sister fairly broke down and wept for very joy. John then told his father the whole story of how he had trudged to the Scottish metropolis, and what he had there found; and he in the fullness of his heart embraced his children, and thanked God who had been so bountiful to them.

There is little more to tell. The muirland farm changed owners, and the house was repaired. James Morton was no longer opposed to the marriage of his daughter Janet with John MacWilliam, for his son-in-law elect was no longer a poor tenant farmer, but an independent laird; and before another summer had come and gone, a new mistress had begun to rule at Hillfoot, and Barbara had been wedded to her shepherd-swain. It is unnecessary to follow them further in detail; suffice it to say that John and Janet lived long and happily together, and had the pleasure of seeing their sons and daughters grow up around them; and when he died, he left Hillfoot to his eldest son, charging him neither to sell it nor to leave it. Well and faithfully has that injunction been carried out, for to this day a descendant of the MacWilliams is in possession of Hillfoot.

FIRES AND THEIR CAUSES.

THE oft-repeated words, 'Cause unknown,' appended to the daily reports of the conflagrations which occur all over the country—such as that, for instance, which lately occurred at Inveraray Castle, but which is now supposed to have been caused by lightning—furnish matter for grave reflection. A glance at the report of one of the largest fire brigades will shew us that the causes (when ascertained) are of the most varied description. It appears that the candle is the most destructive weapon to be found in an ordinary household, for conflagrations lighted by its help far outnumber those credited to any other cause. Curtains come next on the black list. The next large figures are given to 'Spark from fire,' followed by 'Foul flues.' Next in order may be noticed 'Gas,' 'Children playing with fire,' 'Tobacco-smoking,' 'Spontaneous ignition,' and lastly 'Incendiarism.'

There is no doubt that many a fire owes its origin to causes quite beyond the control of the tenant of the house in which it occurs, and that the scamping manner in which builders' work is often done is the prime cause of many a fire which is put down as unaccounted for. The ends of joists are left protruding into chimneys, or a thin hearthstone is set upon a bed of timber. In both cases the wood becomes so dry and hot that it is ready to take fire from the first spark that settles near it. Overheated flues represent a source of danger which is also attributable to the careless builder; for if the flue were so placed that its heat could not affect adjacent woodwork, it would be always as safe when hot as when cold. It is true that by act of parliament builders are obliged to preserve a certain distance between flues and timber; but surveyors cannot always reckon on their instructions being carried out, and cases are unfortunately rare nowadays where workmen will do their duty in such matters without constant supervision. Lath and plaster divisions between houses are also illegal; but buildings, and more especially warehouses, are now of such vast extent, that they really represent aggregations of small houses in which the act of parliament concerning party-walls becomes a dead-letter.

Among the ascertained causes of fire are those which occur in the various workshops where hazardous trades are carried on. These naturally shew an increase since steam-power has become such a universal aid to nearly every kind of human labour; necessitating furnaces which remain kindled for weeks or months together. Apart from this source of risk, there are numerous trades where such inflammables as turpentine, naphtha, spirits of wine, and combinations of them in the form of varnishes, are in daily use to a very large extent. The familiarity which such constant use provokes breeds a contempt which often resolves itself into a negligence almost criminal in its nature. Drying-stoves afford another dangerous item in the list of fires connected with the trades; japanners, cabinet-makers, and hosts of others using such stoves as a necessity of their business. Hot-water pipes for heating purposes also represent the cause of a large number of fires, the most dangerous kind being those which are charged with water and hermetically sealed. The reason of this is easily explained. Water boils at a temperature far below that necessary to ignite woodwork; but when confined in such pipes as we have described, it will rise in temperature to an extent only measured by the strength of the material which holds it. A soft metal plug is sometimes inserted in these pipes, so that should any unusual degree of heat be approached, it will melt out, and thus relieve the pressure; but such a good precaution is by no means universal.

The pipes which are used for carrying off heated air, and which are placed above gas-burners, are too often allowed to pass between the ceiling and the floor above without any regard to the obvious danger incurred. The various close stoves which were introduced to public notice at the time when the price of coal was suddenly doubled, although no doubt economical, are not so safe as the old form of kitchen range, which many a careful housewife has likened to a cavern. The whole of the air which rises through the flue of a closed stove actually passes through the fire, and thus attains a very exalted temperature. In the old stoves, on the other hand, the hot air is always largely diluted with that which is attracted to the chimney from all quarters. It is evident therefore that the chances of fire in the flue of the former are much greater than in that of the latter.

Theatres may be said to combine within their walls all the risks which we have as yet alluded to, for they represent factories where work of a most diversified kind is carried on, and where both open and closed fires are in constant use. At pantomime time especially, the number of persons employed in the various workshops of a large theatre is to the uninitiated quite marvellous. Carpenters and 'property-men' (those clever workmen who can make everything from a bunch of carrots to a parish pump) represent a constant source of danger from fire, in that they deal with inflammable material, and require the aid of heat for their size and glue. It is obviously important in a little kingdom where all is make-believe—where the most solid masonry is wood and canvas, where the greenest trees are dry as tinder, where even limpid streams are flimsy muslin, nay, where the moon itself is but a piece of oiled calico—that there should be no mistake about the reality of the precautions against accidental fire. In most theatres, rules are in force of the most stringent character, extending even to such details as clearing so many times a day the accumulated shavings from the carpenters' shops. If such a sensible law were enforced in other places besides theatres, it would be a preventive measure of very great value.

Shavings are perhaps the most dangerously inflammable things to be found about a building. A block of wood is a difficult thing to set on fire; but when reduced to the form of shavings, a mere spark will turn it into a roaring fire. The same thing may be said in a minor degree of a lump of iron, which when reduced to filings can be burnt in the flame of a common candle. It is often this difference of bulk which will decide whether a material is practically inflammable or not. Paper affords another example of the same principle; tied tightly in bundles it may smoulder, while in loose sheets its inflammability is evident.

It is stated upon good authority that in one-third of the number of fires which occur the cause is not ascertained. The plan long ago adopted in New York, and which has led to a sensible diminution in the number of fires there, has not, for some reason, found favour with the authorities in this country. We allude to the custom of convening a coroner's court to inquire into the origin of every fire which takes place. There is little doubt that such inquiries would educate thoughtful householders into taking precautions which might not otherwise strike them as being at all necessary. The importance of such precautions is manifest when we learn that in London alone there are on the average three fires in every twenty-four hours. If this wholesale destruction were reported of an Eastern city, where the houses are of wood, and are sun-dried by incessant tropical heat, there would be some excuse for it. But here at home, where bricks and mortar are so common, it is certainly astonishing that fires should be so prevalent.

It would seem that it is a much easier task to set an entire house on fire, than it is with deliberate intention, and with proper combustibles, to light a stove for the purpose of boiling a kettle. This latter operation is not so simple as it appears to be, as any one may prove who has not already tried his, or her, hand at it. In fact, an efficient or bad house-servant may be almost at once detected by the ease or difficulty with which she lights her fires. The inefficient servant will place some crumpled paper in the grate, and will throw the best part of a bundle of wood on the top of it, crowning the whole with a smothering mass of coal; and will expect the fire to burn. The good servant will, on the other hand, first clear her grate, so as to insure a good draught; she will then place the wood above the paper, crossing the sticks again and again; then the coals are put in deftly one by one, affording interstices through which the flames will love to linger; a light is applied; and the kettle will soon be singing acknowledgments of the warm ardour with which it has been wooed. Contrast this with the other picture, where double the fuel is wasted, and where smoke and dirt make their appearance in lieu of tea and toast. We venture to say that a badly managed kitchen fire, with its train of unpunctual meals, leads to more general loss of temper than all the other minor domestic troubles put together. The stove is usually the scapegoat on which the offending servant lays her incompetence (the cat clearly could establish an *alibi*); but the most perfect of ranges would not remedy the fault. The only real reason for such a state of things is the prevalence of sheer stupidity. Molly's mother was taught by Molly's grandmother to light a fire in a certain way, and Molly's descendants will, from persistence of habit, continue to light fires in that manner, be it good or evil, until the end of time. It is quite clear that the same stupidity which causes an intentional fire to fail, will occasionally lead to a pyrotechnic exhibition which has been quite unlooked for. For instance, cases are not unknown where servants have used the contents of a powder-horn for coaxing an obstinate fire to burn; the loss of a finger or two generally giving them sufficient hint not to repeat the experiment.

The general use of gas has done much to reduce the number of conflagrations, for it has replaced other illuminators far more dangerous; but it has at the same time contributed a cause of accident which before its use could not exist. So long as people will insist on looking for an escape of gas with a lighted candle, so long will their rashness be rewarded with an explosion. It is not customary, where there is a doubt as to whether a cask contains gunpowder or not, to insert a red-hot poker into the bung-hole. Yet such a proceeding would be scarcely less foolhardy

than the detection of the presence of gas by means of flame. The test in both cases is most thorough, but it is too energetic in its action to be of any value but to those who wish to rise in the world too suddenly.

Drunkenness is a well-known source of burnt-out dwellings, the habitual tippler being too often left to his own devices in the matter of matches and candles. The usual faculty of double vision with which an inebriated man is gifted, leads to a divided claim upon the extinguisher, which naturally points to a disastrous sequel. Even sober people will be guilty of the most hazardous habits, such as novel-reading in bed with a candle placed near them on a chair; for novels, like some other graver compositions, are occasionally apt to induce slumber; and the first movement of the careless sleeper may imperil his life, as well as the lives of others who may be under the same roof with him.

The caprices of female dress have also often led to fatal accidents from fire, and crinoline skirts had in their day much to answer for. But at the present time petticoats seem to have shrunk in volume to the more moderate dimensions of an ordinary sack, so that we are not likely to hear of accidents from this particular cause until some fresh enormity is perpetrated in the name of fashion. We may mention in this connection that tungstate of soda (a cheap salt) will render muslins, &c. unflammable. But strange to say, it is not generally adopted, even on the stage, where the risks are so multiplied, because it is said to prevent the starch drying with due stiffness! We have all heard of what female courage is capable when little ones are in danger, but we hardly thought that it was equal to the task of risking precious life for the appearance of a muslin dress. We can only bow, and say—nothing.

Where fires have been traced to spontaneous combustion, it has generally been found that some kind of decomposing vegetable matter has been the active instrument in their production. Cotton-waste which has been used for cleaning oily machinery and then thrown aside in some forgotten corner, sawdust on which vegetable oil has been spilt, and hemp, have each in its turn been convicted of incendiarism. The simple remedy is *to avoid the accumulation of lumber and rubbish in places where valuable goods and still more valuable lives are at stake*. Occasionally fires have been accidentally caused by the concentration of the sun's rays by means of a lens or of a globe of water, and opticians have for this reason to be very careful in the arrangement of their shop-windows. A case lately occurred where a fire was occasioned, it was supposed, by a carafe of water that stood on the centre of a table. The sun's rays had turned it into a burning-glass! It is stated, with what amount of truth we cannot say, that fires in tropical forests are sometimes caused by the heavy dewdrops attached to the foliage acting the part of lenses.

The advance which has been made during the last twenty years in all appliances connected with the art of extinguishing fires, has done much to limit or rather localise the dangers of such catastrophes; for whereas in the old days the lumbering 'parish squirt' was the only means of defence, we have now in all large towns steam fire-engines capable of throwing an immense stream of water with force enough to reach the topmost floors of very high buildings. The aforesaid 'squirt' was capable of little more than wetting the outside of contiguous buildings, with a view to prevent the spread of the original fire, which generally burnt itself out. But now our engines furnish a power which will often smother a large fire in the course of half an hour or less. Moreover, our well organised fire brigades are trained to convey the hose to the nucleus of the flames, and much heroism is shewn in the carrying out of this dangerous duty. It will be especially interesting to the readers of this *Journal* to note that the first really efficient brigade was formed in Edinburgh by the late lamented Superintendent Braidwood. He was afterwards employed in a like service for London, where his devotion to duty eventually cost him his life. Like a true soldier, he died 'under fire.'

And now for a few simple precautions.

Let some member of the family visit every portion of the house before it is shut up for the night. (While he is seeing to the safety of the fires and lights, he can also give an eye to bolts and bars, and thus fulfil another most necessary precaution.) See that there is no glimmering of light beneath the bedroom doors for any unreasonable time after the inmates have retired to rest. Insist on ascertaining the cause of any smell of burning. It may be only a piece of rag safely smouldering in a grate, but satisfy yourself upon the point without delay. Do not rake out a fire at night, but allow it to burn itself out in the grate. (We have already referred to the danger of hearthstones set upon timber.) Do not allow an unused fireplace to be closed up with a screen unless it is first ascertained that there is no collection of soot in the chimney, and no communication with any other flue from which a spark may come. Caution servants not to throw *hot* ashes into the dust-bin. Let the slightest escape of gas be remedied as soon as possible, and remember that the common form of telescope gasalier requires water at certain intervals, or it will become a source of danger. Finally, forbid all kinds of petroleum and benzoline lamps to be trimmed except by daylight. (A lamp was the initial cause of the great Chicago fire.)

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Many other precautions will suggest themselves to the careful housekeeper. But after all, the best precaution is common-sense, which, however, is the least available, being the misnomer for a faculty which is far from common.

THE STORY OF A DETECTIVE OFFICER.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER II.

By ten o'clock on the following morning I had sketched out my plan, and more than that, I was down at the water-side and looking after a lodging, for I never let the grass grow under my feet. I must say, however, that I very much disliked the east end of London, and especially the river-side part of it; everything was so dirty and miserable and crowded, that to a man of really decent tastes like myself, it was almost purgatory to pass a day in it. And on this particular occasion the weather changed the very day I went there; it was getting on towards late autumn (October in point of fact), and we had been having most beautiful weather; but this very morning it came on to rain, a close thick rain, and we didn't have three hours of continuous fine weather while I stopped in the east.

I was not likely to be very particular about my lodgings in one sense, though in another I was more particular than any lodger that ever came into the neighbourhood; and after a little trouble I pitched upon a public-house again, chiefly because my going in and out would attract less attention there than at a private house; so I secured a small second-floor back room at the *Anchor and Five Mermaids*, or the *Anchor* as it was generally called, for shortness.

The great recommendation of the *Anchor and Five Mermaids* was that it was nearly opposite to Byrle & Co.'s engineering shops, a ferry existing between the two places; this ferry was reached by a narrow dirty lane, which ran by the side of the *Anchor*, and I could see that numbers of the workmen came across at dinner-time. The *Anchor* stood at the corner, one front looking on the lane, the other upon the river; and once upon a time there had been, not exactly a tea-garden, but arbours or 'boxes' in front of the house, where the customers used to sit and watch the shipping; but this was all past now, and only the miserable remains of the arbours were there; and it was as dull and cheerless a place as the tavern to which Quilp took Sampson and Sally Brass in the *Old Curiosity Shop*, of which indeed it reminded me every time I looked at it.

I always had a readiness for scraping acquaintances; in fact it is not much use of your being a detective if you can't do this. If you can't be jonnick with the biggest stranger or lowest rough, you are no use on that lay. I really must avoid slang terms; but 'jonnick' means hearty and jovial; on a 'lay' means being up to some game or business. Before the first dinner-time had passed, I had got quite friendly with two or three of Byrle's hands who came into the *Anchor* to have their beer; and I learned some particulars about the firm and then about the gatekeeper, that helped me in my ideas.

Directly after they had all gone back, I went over too, and the dinner-traffic having ceased, I was the only passenger. The ferryman did not like taking me alone, but he was bound to do it; and he looked as sulky as if he was going to be flogged at a cart's tail. He was a tall, bony-headed fellow, between fifty and sixty I should say; and I noticed him particularly because of an uncommonly ugly squint in his left eye. In accordance with my plan, I began talking cheerfully to him while he was pushing off from the shore; but he didn't answer me beyond a growl. Then I offered him some splendid chewing tobacco, which a 'friend just over from America had given me.' Really and truly I had bought it within a quarter of a mile of the *Anchor and Five Mermaids*, but he wasn't to know that. I can't chew; I hate the idea; but I put a piece of the tobacco in my mouth, knowing how fond these waterside men are of the practice, and how friendly they get with one of the same tastes. To my surprise, he would not have it, and I was glad to pitch my plug into the river when he turned his head away. But confound these cock-eyed men! there is never any knowing where to have them. He had not turned far enough, I suppose, or I didn't make proper allowances for his squint; for as I threw my plug away with a shudder—it had already turned me almost sick—I caught his plaguy cross-eye staring full at me. I knew it was, by the expression on his face; that was my only guide, for an astronomer could not have told by his eye in which direction he was looking.

The ferryman pulled well, however; and just as we got athwart the bows of a short thick-looking craft—it is of no use my trying to say what kind of a craft she was; I can't tell one from another—a voice hailed us. 'Ay, ay,' says the boatman, lifting his sculls; 'do you want to go ashore, captain?' 'Yes,' returned a voice; and I looked up and saw a man leaning over the side of the vessel; and the boatman sending his wherry close under the ship, the stranger slid down by a rope very cleverly, and got in. Though the boatman had called him 'captain,' and though he was very clever with the rope, he didn't look altogether like a regular sailor; he was a dark full-faced man, with black eyes, a dark moustache, and curly greasy-looking hair.

The stranger said a few words in a very low tone to the boatman, evidently to prevent my overhearing, and then nothing passed until we landed. The sulky ferryman took his fee without a word; and I went straight to the wicket-gate of Byrle's factory, where of course I found the gatekeeper. I stated that I was in want of employment, and had heard they were taking on labourers, and so had applied for a job.

'No; I don't know as we want any more hands,' said the man, who was sitting down in a little sentry-box; 'and we have had plenty of people here; besides, you're lame, ain't you?'

'A little,' I said, limping as I moved; 'not very bad: a kick from a horse some years ago.'

'Ah! you won't do for us then,' he said; 'but I'm sorry for you. *I'm* lame too, from a kick of a horse; I can't stand without my stick;' here he rose up to let me see him; 'but you see I was hurt in the service, and the firm have provided for me. I'm very sorry for you, for it's hard to be slighted

because you are a cripple. Here is sixpence, old fellow, to get half a pint with, and I wish I could make it more.'

I took the sixpence, and thanked him for his kindness; he deserved my thanks, because he wasn't getting more than a pound a week, and had four or five little children. I found this out afterwards.

I was satisfied at having made a friend who might prove useful; but I had one or two more questions to ask him, and was thinking how I could best bring them in, when he said hurriedly: 'If you could get hold of Mr Byrle by himself, he might do something for you, for he is a very good sort; and you seem strong enough in every other way, and would make a good watchman, I should think.'

Yes; he did not know how good a one!

'Mr Byrle senior or junior?' I asked, on the strength of my information from the hands at the *Anchor*.

'Junior! O lor! that wouldn't do at all!' exclaimed he with quite a gasp, as if the idea took his breath away. 'It's a case of "O no, we never mention it" with him. He's seldom at home, and when he is, he and the old gentleman lead the very— Here you have it! Here's Mr Forey, the only foreman in the place who would listen to you. Now, speak up!'

Mr Forey, a dark-whiskered, stoutly built man, came up, glancing keenly at me as a stranger; so touching my cap, I again preferred my request to be taken on as a labourer.

'I don't like lame men,' he said; 'but there does not seem to be a great deal the matter with you. You say you can have a first-rate character. We shall be making changes next week, and there's no harm in your looking round on Monday morning at nine sharp.—Stop! I can give you a job now. Do you know how to get to T—?'

'Yes, sir,' I said.

'Then take this letter to Mr Byrle, and bring back an answer,' said Mr Forey. 'If he is not at home, ask for Miss Doyle, who may open it. I want an answer this afternoon; so cut off! Stay! here's a shilling for your fare; it's only tenpence, you know; and I'll leave eighteenpence with Bob here at the gate for your trouble.'

I took the shilling, Bob winking triumphantly at me, as if to say it was as good as done, and I left the yard.

I was amused at having the commission, for I wondered what Mr Byrle would say when he saw me, and whether my disguise was so complete that he would not recognise me at all. That would be something like a triumph, and I almost made up my mind that it would be so. Had Mr Forey seen me hurrying to the station, he might again have said that there did not seem much the matter with me; but I walked slowly enough through the street in which the *Yarmouth Smack* was situated, and had a pretty good trial of my disguise and my nerves as I passed it. Peter Tilley, dressed in a blue slop and cord trousers, so as to look like a dock labourer or something of that kind, was leaning against the door-post, lazily watching the passers-by. I made up my mind to try him; so stopping at a lamp-post just opposite to him, I took out my pipe, struck a match on the iron, coolly lit the tobacco, and after one or two puffs, threw the match into the road and walked on. He never knew me. It was all right.

The drizzling rain came down again as I got out at T—; but luckily Mr Byrle's house was not more than a quarter of a mile from the station; and so resuming my limp, I got there without delay. The man-servant who answered the door took my letter, but told me that the old gentleman was not at home; then on finding Miss Doyle was to open the letter and send an answer, told me to wait in a little room which looked as if it was used as an office, having floor-cloth instead of carpet, wooden chairs, and so forth. He was a careful servant, and would not ask a stranger to wait in the hall, where coats and umbrellas might be had by a sharp party.

I had not waited long, when the door opened, and a young lady, whom I of course judged to be Miss Doyle, came into the room. She was a dark, keen-looking young party, and spoke rather sharply. 'You are to take an answer back, I believe?' she said.

'Yes, miss,' I answered, touching my forehead, for as you may suppose, I held my cap in my hand.

'Mr Forey only wishes me to send word; I am not to write,' she went on; 'he wants to know if Mr Byrle will be at the works to-morrow. He will not. Tell Mr Forey he will leave town to-night, and not return until the day after to-morrow. You understand?' She spoke very sharply; so I said: 'Yes, miss,' sharply too, and touched my forehead again.

'You need not wait,' she said; and opening the door, I saw the servant waiting to let me out. I knuckled my forehead again, and putting on rather a clumsier limp than before, got out of the house into the rain and mud. Rain and mud! What did I care for rain and mud now?

'Sergeant Nickham,' says I, when I got fairly out of range of her windows, for I wouldn't trust *her* with so much as a wink of mine—'Sergeant Nickham,' I said, 'you are the boy! If you can't command your face, there isn't a man in the force as can. If you haven't got a memory for faces, find me the man who has, that's all about it!'

Why, of all the extraordinary capers that I ever tumbled to in my life, I never came near such a caper as this. Miss Doyle! *That* was Miss Doyle, was it? Right enough, no doubt; but if she wasn't also the sham clerk who came and found that I was put on the watch by Mr Byrle, I didn't know a horse from a hedgehog—that's all. The quick look of her eye, her sharp quick voice, the shape of

her face, the very way she stood—lor! it was all as clear as daylight. But then I thought, and I kept on thinking till I had got back to the works, what could *she* have to do with stealing engine-fittings? 'Twasn't likely as she had anything to do with that. It was past all question in my mind as to her being the same party. I knew it for certain; and then came the point—What did she dress herself up for and come a-spying on me and her uncle?—for she was Mr Byrle's niece.

I hadn't got to the bottom of this by any means, by the time I got back to the works; however, I gave my message very respectfully to Mr Forey; and offered Bob the gatekeeper his sixpence back, with many thanks.

'No, old chap,' he says; 'keep it at present. If you get on regular, I'll take it off you and a pint into the bargain the day you draw your first week's cash; but a fellow out of work knows the vally of a sixpence.'

The same ferryman took me back; and his temper hadn't improved, I found. I fancied too that he was particular watchful of me, and so I was particular watchful of him; and from long practice I could do it better and more secretly than he could, although he *had* got a cross-eye. Lor! I could tell when we were nearing that same ship that the man climbed out of; I could tell it by the cunning way in which the boatman looked at me, to see if I would take any special notice of it. I didn't know what his little game might be, but I determined to spoil it; so I stooped down, and was tying up my shoe, making quite a long job of it, till after we had fairly passed the craft, and then I looked up with an innocent face that quite settled him.

Just as we pushed up to the hard (that's the landing-place), he says to me: 'Do you often cross here?'

'Not often,' I said; 'at anyrate, not yet. I generally cross a little higher up.' (That was very true; about Westminster Bridge was my place; if he liked to think I meant somewhere about Tooley Street or Billingsgate, of course I couldn't help it.) 'But I have left my old quarters, and so I shall often go this way.'

'Ah,' he says, 'you live at the *Yarmouth Smack*, don't you?'

'The what?' I said. 'Where's that?'

'The *Yarmouth Smack*,' he says again, pointing to the side we had come from. I knew where the *Yarmouth Smack* was well enough; but I shook my head, and said: 'No; I live on this side of the water; but I shall live anywhere when I can get work.'

He didn't say any more; I did not suppose he would; but there was something uncommonly suspicious in his talking about the *Yarmouth Smack*, something more than I could believe came from chance.

In the lane, just as I was about to turn into the side door of the *Anchor*, I met the foreign-looking captain, who must have crossed the river before me, as I had last seen him on the other side. He knew me, I could tell well enough, and I knew him; but I was not going to let him see where I was going, so I passed the door of the *Anchor*, limping on till he was clear; then I hurried in, went upstairs at once, and was out in the old ruined harbours I have spoken of in a minute. These overhung the river at high-water (it was nearly high-tide now), and the landing-place of the ferry was close to them. The ferryman and the captain were talking, as I expected they would be, while the boat was waiting for passengers; and by standing in the corner box, I could have heard every word they said, if they had spoken out, as honest people should speak. But they were that artful and suspicious, although they could not have known there was anybody listening, that they talked almost in whispers, and I only caught the last bit from the ferryman. 'No,' he says; 'he's not the party; but I'll go up to the *Smack* to-night and make sure of the man.'

Ah! as I thought; they were both in it somehow. But what a most extraordinary fuss and Gunpowder Plot sort of business there was about stealing a few bits of metal. I actually should have felt ashamed of the East-enders, who are really some of the sharpest folks I ever came across, if I had not felt there was a something behind, and that, by a lucky accident, I seemed upon the point of finding it out.

The night—my first night in the east too—was not to pass without an adventure, and I had not seen the last of my new acquaintance the captain. I got very tired of the company in the *Anchor*—not that I mind who I mix with, and if there had been any of the factory hands about the place, I would have sat with them until the house closed; but they only came there at meal-times it seemed, or on their road home. So I walked about the neighbourhood a bit; not because it was pleasant, for it was a wet night; and what with the rain and the mud and the drunken sailors and the fried-fish shops and the quarrelling there was going on, it was anything but agreeable. The fact is I like to know every court and alley in my district, and there *were* some pretty courts and alleys here. However, nobody thought me worth robbing, and besides, I am always civil, so I never get interfered with. It's a capital rule; the best I know; and costs nothing.

When I was coming back, and had got pretty nearly to the *Anchor and Five Mermaids* again (it is very absurd to give such long signs to public-houses), I saw a very pretty girl whom I had noticed before, standing at a corner out of the rain; but it was not raining very much now. She wasn't—well, I won't say what she was not, or what she was. She was very pretty, I say, and was doing no harm there; but two or three fellows coming by at the moment, one of them took hold of her roughly, and finished by almost pushing her down. She got away from him, and drew a door or two off; but his companions laughing at him for being bested by a woman, he followed her, and on her pushing him from her, gave her a back-handed smack in the face. There were several men loitering about, smoking and so forth, and I heard one or two say it was a shame; but none of

them interfered; and I, being a little way off, and not wanting to get into a row, might have passed this over; but she called him a brute and a coward, and he went at her to strike her again. She ran across the road to where I stood, to avoid him, and he followed her. Then I saw it was my acquaintance the captain.

He swore more horribly than ever I heard any one swear, and springing forward, would certainly have hit her down; but I jumped between them and knocked up his arm. 'Brayvo!' said some women, who had been attracted by the girl's scream; and 'Brayvo!' said the men who hadn't interfered. At once the captain turned on me, and let fly desperately at my head; but I was not to be had in that way, and I stopped him and returned a hit that I know must have loosened a couple of teeth; and then he swore again, and began to pull off his coat. So did I.

'Don't fight wid him, my darlin',' said an old Irishwoman, who was selling herrings, laying her hand on my arm. 'You 're an honest English boy, and these fellows will have a knife in ye if they can't bate ye fair.'

'No, Biddy, they shan't,' said one of the men coming forward, followed by half-a-dozen more. 'If there's to be a fight, it shall be a fair one; and mates, we'll put any fellow into six feet of mud who only shews a knife.' {778}

His mates said so too, and they were a rough and likely lot for it, and the river was within a score or so of yards. So with a scowl at them (for I do believe now he meant murder; I didn't think of it then, although I was a policeman), he rolled up his sleeves and came at me.

He was a strong fellow, not so tall perhaps, but certainly heavier than I was, and I daresay, from his manner, fancied he could fight. But fight *me!* Why, a gent once offered through Alec Keene (he had seen me spar in private at Alec's), to make it worth my while to leave the police, and he would back me against any ten-stone-four man I fancied, for a hundred; and I was half inclined to take it too, only something important turned up just then. Well, in two rounds I settled the captain. He tried to catch hold of me and throw me; but I knocked him clean off his legs each round; and then his friends took him away.

'There's one comfort at any rate in having had the row,' I thought: 'he'll never suppose I'm a detective after this.'

I wished, however, it had never come off, there was such a fuss. Why, if I could have drunk shillings and sixpences, I might have had them, I do believe. In a place like that you get a crowd directly; and although the affair did not last three minutes, there was a hundred men and as many women too, anxious to treat me; and I was naturally obliged to drink with one or two; not at the *Anchor* though.

The affair made such a stir, that I read in one of the local papers the next week how Jem Mace had been down in the neighbourhood of the Docks, incog.; and that for once the brute strength of a boxer had been used in a good cause, and all that sort of nonsense. I know I have always found the best class of boxers very good fellows.

Of course I was vexed at this shindy having taken place so early, as the quieter I kept myself the better; and I would have given five pounds to have been out of it. My wishing this only shews you never know what is coming; and something came out of this street fight that I never expected.

SEA-LIONS.

THE domestication of a pair of 'sea-lions' at the Brighton Aquarium, and the subsequent addition, some few months ago, of a 'little stranger' to this interesting family circle, afford an opportunity for a brief description of some of the more prominent points in the structure and habits of these little-known animals. The name 'sea-lion,' to begin with, is by no means so inappropriate or far fetched as popular designations are usually found to be, when submitted to scientific criticism. For the 'sea-lion' is included by zoologists along with the seals and walruses in the great Carnivorous order of quadrupeds, to which, it need hardly be remarked, the lions, tigers, bears, dogs, and other flesh-eaters belong. The sea-lion is in fact a large seal, and seals and walruses are simply marine bears; and if we can imagine the body of a familiar bear to be somewhat elongated, and that the limbs were converted into swimming paddles, we should obtain a rough but essentially correct idea of the zoological position of the seals and their neighbours.

But whilst the seals and sea-lions are united with the walruses to form a special group of carnivorous quadrupeds, adapted to lead a life in the sea, there exist some very prominent points of difference between the common seals and the less familiar sea-lions. The sea-lions and their nearest allies are thus sometimes named 'Eared' seals, from the possession of an outer ear; the latter appendage being absent in the common or True seals. And whilst the common seals waddle in a most ungainly fashion on land, the sea-lions are able to 'walk,' if not elegantly, at least with a better show of comfort than their more familiar neighbours. A glance at the structure of the sea-lion's feet, or better still, a comparison of its members with those of the seal, shews the reason of its greater skill and ability in progression on the land. The fore-limbs of the seal are, so to speak buried in the skin, below the elbow; only a small part of the fore-arm and hand being thus free from the body. The hind-limbs of the seals, again, exist in a permanently extended condition, and are disposed backwards in a line with the tail and body. The hind-limbs, moreover, are frequently united with the tail by means of a connecting fold of skin, and the whole hinder extremity of the

body in a seal may thus be regarded as forming a large tail-fin. In swimming, the fore-limbs of the seal are applied closely to the sides of the body, and serve as rudders; whilst the hinder portion of the body, hinder limbs, and tail, constitute the swimming-organs—a work for which by their great flexibility they are perfectly adapted.

In the sea-lions on the other hand the fore-limbs are free from the skin and body to a much greater extent than in the seals. The 'hand' itself in the sea-lion is exceedingly flexible, although completely enclosed in a horny or leathery skin. The thumbs of this hand further exist in a well developed state; all five fingers being of nearly the same length in the seal. As regards the hind-feet of the sea-lion, these members, like the fore-limbs, are freely separated from the body, at least as far as the ankle and foot are concerned, and the foot is turned outwards, forcibly reminding one of the conformation of that organ in the bear. But we may only note by way of conclusion to these zoological characters that the teeth of the sea-lion are decidedly of a carnivorous type. Any one regarding the skull of a sea-lion could readily form the idea that the animal which possessed it was a flesh-eater. These animals usually possess thirty-six teeth; the 'eye' teeth being of very large size, and so placed in the jaws that any substance entering the mouth is firmly held by these teeth and the adjoining front teeth. The 'grinders' of the sea-lion are small, and do not appear to be of any very great use to the animal. These creatures swallow their food—consisting of fishes, molluscs, and sea-birds—whole, and when a large fish is divided in two, the portion retained in the mouth is swallowed; the portion which tumbles into the water being afterwards seized and duly swallowed in its turn.

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That the sea-lions are by no means destitute of the craft and cunning of their land-neighbours, is proved by the fact that they capture such birds as the penguins by lying motionless in the water, allowing merely the tip of the nose to appear at the surface. The unwary bird, swooping down upon the floating object, presumed to consist of something eatable, is then seized and devoured by the concealed enemy.

Sea-lions may be regarded as the unknown, or at anyrate unrecognised benefactors of the fair sex, inasmuch as, from the rich *under-fur* which they possess, the favourite material known as 'seal-skin' is obtained. This latter name is entirely misleading in its nature; the much prized material being the produce of the sea-lion and not of a true seal. The possession of this valuable under-fur has contributed very largely to the causes of the indiscriminate attack which has for years past been made upon the sea-lions. The spirit of commercial enterprise has resulted in a war of extermination against these animals in certain regions, from the effects of which it is doubtful if the species can ultimately recover.

The sea-lions differ materially from the seals in their geographical distribution. The latter animals, as every casual reader of a natural history text-book knows, inhabit temperate and northern seas. The sea-lions, on the other hand, are found to be absent from all parts of the Atlantic Ocean save its most southern portions. They are common on the South American coasts, and are found inhabiting island-groups which may be regarded as belonging to the same zoological province as the latter continent. The mouth of the River Plate is stated as the most northern boundary of these animals on the eastern side of South America, whilst on the western or Pacific side of the New World they are found on the Californian coasts, and are even met with on the coasts of the Aleutian Isles and of Japan. The Pribylov Islands, included in the Alaska group, are regarded as forming the most northerly point of the sea-lions' distribution; and these islands—now in the possession of the United States—together with the Falkland Islands and the Cape of Good Hope, still form the three chief sources from which the seal-fur or seal-skin of commerce is obtained. It is also well ascertained that sea-lions occur at Kerguelen's Land, on the New Zealand coasts, on the Tasmanian shores, and the east and south coasts of Australia.

The average length of a large male sea-lion ranges from six to seven or eight feet, his weight averaging six hundred pounds. The females are of much smaller size than the males, and measure from four and a half to five feet in length; their weight being from one hundred to one hundred and fifty pounds. These animals, as might be expected, grow slowly, and attain their full dimensions the males in six, and the females in four years. The habits of these animals are not only of curious and interesting nature, but evince a decidedly high order of intelligence. The haunts of the sea-lions are, in whalers' *parlance*, named 'rookeries;' and in the disposition of what may be termed their domestic arrangements, as well as in the regulation of their family and personal matters, these creatures appear to be guided by instincts which, like the social order of the ants and bees, are duly perpetuated, and have become of hereditary character. The sea-lions are migratory in habits, and disappear from the majority of the haunts and breeding-places in winter. The males are few in number as compared with the females or 'cows,' as they are termed; and each male receives under his protection a larger or smaller number of females; the oldest males possessing the largest number of dependants. In the early spring, some old males appear to return first to the haunts and do duty as reconnoitring parties; the advance-guard swimming about for several days, then landing and cautiously investigating the state of the land; their shore-visits being spent in a state of perpetual sniffing, and in the careful examination of their old haunt. About a month or six weeks after the arrival of the advance-guard, and after the inspection of the land has been duly carried out, sure signs of the coming race begin to appear in the form of hundreds of males, who select advantageous positions on the beach, and await the arrival of their partners. Nor is the period of waiting an uneventful one. The best situations on the beach are fought for with eagerness, not to say ferocity. The descriptions given of the combats of the males indicate that they are of the most sanguinary description; frequent mutilations being the results of this fight for a place on the reception-ground.

On the arrival of the females, the younger males appear to do duty as ushers, in marshalling the

'cows' to their places on the rocks and cliffs above the beach; and the work of the selection of mates by the males proceeds apace, until each happy family, consisting of a male with a dozen or fifteen cows, has been duly constituted. The progress of selection and sea-lion courtship is frequently, we regret to say, attended with disastrous consequences to the lady-members of the community. When a male, envious of the choice of his neighbour, sees an opportunity, he does not hesitate to avail himself of the chance, and not only to covet but literally to steal his neighbour's mate. The desired 'cow' is unceremoniously lifted in the mouth of the captor, and transferred with all possible expedition to his own family group. Great is the sorrow of the bereaved male; but woe to both intruder and female should the thief be discovered in the act! A fierce and sanguinary fight ensues, and the hapless, passive, and altogether innocent cause of the combat, may get dreadfully injured while the combat lasts.

The young sea-lions usually appear to be born almost immediately after the parents have landed and been allocated to their respective establishments. One young is produced at a birth; the infant sea-lion being of black colour and attaining the length of a foot. When they are four weeks old, they enter the water, and speedily become expert in swimming and diving; but it is alleged, and on good authority, that occasionally the females encounter refractory offspring, and have to exercise great patience in coaxing unwilling youngsters to enter the sea. The families have settled down to their wonted existence by the beginning of August; and we are informed that during the whole of the period which intervenes between the arrival of the females and the period last mentioned, the males have not only been most assiduous in their attendance upon their families, but that they have also been existing independently of any nutriment. The males exemplify a case of living upon self, and appear to subsist by the reabsorption of their fatty matters; in the same fashion as the bears, which retire fat and well nourished to their winter-quarters, and appear in the succeeding spring in a lean and emaciated condition.

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Regarding the sea-lions and their young at present in captivity in the Brighton Aquarium, it is interesting to note the incidents connected with the first 'bath' of baby *Otaria*. This prodigy in the way of an aquarium specimen, tumbled accidentally into the water of his tank, and apparently caused his mamma much anxiety. It is stated that he plunged voluntarily into the water on a subsequent occasion, and appeared to be perfectly at home in his native element; swimming and diving with all the dexterity of an accomplished professor of the art of natation. Being startled by some sound, the young otaria dived beneath the surface of the water, the mother seizing her progeny by the neck, and swimming ashore with it in her mouth. On the occasion of the writer's visit to the Brighton Aquarium, the mother and young were disporting themselves in the water; the male sitting up in the tank, and giving vent to repeated sounds, resembling exactly the hoarse bark of a dog. We may heartily re-echo the wish, that the happiness and amenity of this interesting family may be disturbed by no untoward accident, if for no other reason that they exist among us as the representatives of a most interesting and now comparatively scarce group of quadrupeds.

It has often been disputed by naturalists whether or not the sea-lions possess a mane. There can be no doubt that the old males of one species at anyrate, the *Otaria jubata* or Cook's sea-lion, the most common form on the South American coasts, possess a mane on the neck and shoulders. Nine or ten different species of sea-lions are known to zoologists, these species being distinguished from each other by very distinct variations in the form and structure of the skull, in the fur, &c. It must, however, be borne in mind, that the recognition of the exact species to which a sea-lion belongs is frequently a very difficult matter, owing to the differences perceptible in the fur of the two sexes and in the fur of either sex, at different ages.

The complaints of zoologists regarding the ill-regulated and indiscriminate slaughter of the sea-lions are, it is to be feared, as well founded as have been our own repeated remonstrances against the wholesale slaughter of seals. The United States government, however, it is satisfactory to learn, still regulate their sea-lion fisheries at the Pribylov Islands in a methodical manner. Thus the young males alone are killed, and the period during which they are taken extends from June to October; whilst the total number of sea-lions killed annually is limited. In the South Sea Islands, these animals were killed in such numbers that they are now exceedingly scarce; British and Americans alike, slaying the sea-lions without in the slightest degree discriminating between the sexes, or between young and old seals. It is to be hoped, for the sake of science as well as of commerce, that time has taught us wisdom in this respect. We have seen how necessary legislation has become to insure the prosperity of our home-fisheries; and now that the Royal Commissioners have finished their labours in behalf of crabs and lobsters, salmon and herring, it would be well for the public interests if Mr Frank Buckland and his coadjutors were empowered to look after the sea-lion and the seal.

ANCIENT STREETS AND HOMESTEADS OF ENGLAND.

WITH kindly regard for the names, the places, and the landmarks of our forefathers, which may be called the sentimental side of our national stability, are usually, but unfortunately not invariably combined the good sense which improves but does not destroy, and the good taste which recognises the intrinsic beauty of antiquity, its harmony with our history, and the dignity which it lends to the present. Foreigners are always deeply impressed by the 'ancientness' of England, by the maintenance of the old names, and the blending together in our cities of the convenience and luxury of modern life, with the memorials of a past as grand as any country has to boast of, and

marked by far less vicissitude.

Among the evidences of the stability of England to which the attention of her own students of her history and that of foreign visitors may most worthily be directed, is the minor monumental history which Mr Alfred Rimmer illustrates, and whose value and interest the Dean of Chester points out in an interesting volume entitled *Ancient Streets and Homesteads of England* (London: Macmillan & Co.); the history of the old buildings which still remain in the old streets of our old cities, in our villages and in our hamlets.

It is pleasant to ramble with Mr Rimmer from county to county of the old land, gathering as we go a great company from the past; and assuredly all will agree that no better starting-point can be found than Chester, the pride of archæologists, the boast of historians, the city whose renown has been touched into equal brilliance and tenderness by the genius of Sir Walter Scott. An American traveller has well described the charm of the city. 'It is full,' he says, 'of that delightful element of the crooked, the accidental, the unforeseen, which, to eyes accustomed to eternal right angles and straight lines, is the striking feature of European street scenery. The Chester streets give us a perfect feast of crookedness—of those random corners, projections, and recesses, those innumerable architectural surprises and caprices and fantasies which offer such a delicious holiday to a vision nourished upon brown stone fronts.' Shrewsbury perhaps gives at first sight a more vivid picture of a fine old English town, but it has not so many treasures hidden away under modern exteriors. It is likely, Mr Rimmer tells us, that even the oldest inhabitant of Chester is ignorant of the ancient relics which the city contains. Though the origin of the famous 'Rows' is disputed—some antiquaries holding them to belong to the Roman era of the city, and to have been simply an extension of the vestibule of Roman architecture; while others consider that they were built as a refuge for the citizens during any sudden attack of the Welsh—there is but one estimate of their quaint old-world beauty; and perhaps there is no relic of the past in all England which has more stirring memories to arouse than Chester Castle, with its Julius Cæsar's tower still standing firm against the influence of time, and its tradition of Hugh Lupus Hall.

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Next to the completeness of the ancient walls of Chester, its carved woodwork strikes the visitor as an instance of conservation. The carved front of the house which belonged to Randal Holme, who left valuable records of the city, is much more ancient than the date it bears (1664); and though the house called Bishop Lloyd's is now divided into tenements, the splendid remains of its ceilings and fireplaces are preserved. A little beyond it stand the beautiful cottages, with their carving intact, into which Stanley House has been divided. Here the Earl of Derby, who was executed at Bolton in 1657, passed his last day. Some of the famous carved oak furniture of this historic mansion found its way a few years ago into the possession of Mr Sly, the landlord of the celebrated *King's Arms Inn* at Lancaster, and was sold in the spring of the present year at the dispersion of his collection. One magnificent black oak bedstead splendidly carved is now in the possession of the Duke of Norfolk. Looking at the beautiful carved fronts of the cottages, and thinking of the terrible time in which the chief of the great House of Stanley left his ancestral home for ever, we are reminded of the quaint story which the earl's gentleman, Mr Bagaley, related concerning that departure. 'One Lieutenant Smith, a rude fellow,' he says, 'came in with his hat on, and told my lord he came from Colonel Duckenfield the governor, to tell his lordship he must be ready for his journey to Bolton. My lord replied: "When would have me to go?" "Tomorrow, about six in the morning," said Smith. "Well," said my lord, "commend me to the governor, and tell him I shall be ready by that time." Then said Smith: "Doth your lordship know any friend or servant that would do the thing your lordship knows of? It would do well if you had a friend." My lord replied: "What do you mean—to cut off my head?" Smith said: "Yes, my lord; if you could have a friend." My lord said: "Nay, sir; if those men that would have my head will not find one to cut it off, let it stand where it is."

The Blue Posts, 'God's Providence' House, with its inscription of thanksgiving that its inmates had been spared from the plague; the beautiful gabled house in Whitefriars, with its fine mouldings and traceries, are but a few of the memorials of the past over which one lingers in Chester, before passing on to the eastern part of the county, where one finds a special treat in the old town of Congleton, which presents features of successive periods of antiquity in its still and picturesque streets, and is surrounded on all sides by venerable family seats. Mr Rimmer's drawing of the old *Lion Inn* gives a charming idea of a black-and-white gabled hostelry, with a vast porch resting on stone pillars, and supporting a room above it. The interior preserves all its old characteristics, and has a quiet ponderousness about it, as of an inn to which wayfarers came in coaches with armed outriders on horseback, with led-horses charged with baggage, or in heavy wagons. The idea of railways or smart dog-carts, or the pertness of all modern vehicles in fact, in connection with the *Lion Inn*, has a kind of impertinence about it.

Over the Cheshire border in Shropshire there is a great deal of interest for the student of the street architecture of the past; and in that county picturesque old inns abound. We find one at Ellesmere, with the grass growing in the vast courtyard, built round by the now empty stables, which were so full of life and bustle in the old coaching days. Mr Rimmer's very brief mention of Ellesmere implies that it is a much less important place than in reality it is; and all he says about Shropshire conveys an impression that he has not studied the antiquarian aspect of his subject at all so deeply as its artistic.

Two miles from Oswestry lies Whittington village, a perfect example of the solid and beautiful in village architecture, with the gateway of Peveril's Castle opening into it, and the birthplace of Sir Richard Whittington left to the choice of the visitor. Oswestry itself is an exceedingly interesting town; portions of the old wall still remain, with several stone and half-timbered houses of great antiquity; but it is seldom thoroughly explored, because the tourist is generally anxious to reach

the county town of Shropshire, that famous city of Shrewsbury, which we know better perhaps through Shakspeare than through the historical chronicles of its life. The author might, however, have accorded more lengthened notice to Oswestry, which, if tradition may be relied upon, dates from the fourth century of the Christian era, and which undoubtedly derives its name from the overthrow and martyrdom of Oswald, the Christian king of Northumberland, who was vanquished there by Penda, the pagan king of Mercia.

Oswestry is stated to have been the site of a castle built in 1149 by Magod, one of the princes of Powys. It then passed, by marriage, into the hands of a Norman lord of Cher; and it was here that in 1164 Henry II. assembled the army with which he marched to Chirk, in his vain attempt to subjugate the principality. In 1277 Edward I. surrounded the town by a wall which was a mile in circumference, had four gates, and was further defended by a moat. In the thirteenth century both castle and town were destroyed by fire. Many scenes of our martial history pass before the mind's eye of the visitor to Oswestry. In 1403, Owen Glyndyr (or Glendower) marched from thence towards Shrewsbury at the head of twelve thousand men, intending there to unite his forces to those of the Earl of Northumberland and his son. Tradition, however, alleges that by the time he reached Shelton, two miles from Shrewsbury, he found the royal forces were engaged in battle with their enemy. The story of that eventful day is one out of which to make a mental picture as one contemplates the approach to Shrewsbury. Hotspur and his father had encamped on the previous night at a place called Berwick, nearly opposite Shelton, and they calculated on being joined there by Glendyr. They sorely needed his aid; the rebel army numbered only fourteen thousand men, while that of the king numbered twenty-six thousand. In vain they waited; in vain a few unsuccessful attempts were made at a compromise, and then at a place still known as Battlefield, and in a field yet called 'the King's Croft,' the battle was joined. Before, however, the first blow was struck, Harry Hotspur called for his sword, and was informed by his attendant that he had left it at Berwick. The iron warrior, who was about cheerfully to encounter a force greatly outnumbering his own, turned pale. 'I perceive,' he said, 'that my plough is drawing its last furrow, for a wizard told me that I should perish at Berwick, which I vainly interpreted of that town in the north.'

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The Welsh chieftain climbed into the tree and beheld the conflict; at what period of the engagement is not told; but as he concluded the king would be victorious, he quietly came down again, and leaving Percy to defeat and death, marched back to his mountains. The old oak yet remains; but for the forty years during which we have known it, it has been in a failing condition. One by one its great boughs have yielded to the storm, or broken beneath their own weight; and it is now propped up with crutches and bound together with iron hoops. Probably in another half-century the place which has known it for at least six centuries will know it no more.

One of Mr Rimmer's illustrations shews us a street in Shrewsbury which may justly claim to be one of the most perfect examples of English streets yet remaining, if not the most perfect. The beautiful old gabled houses with their projecting richly carved fronts are in excellent preservation, and for a considerable distance a person walking down the middle of the street can touch them on each side; such was the economy of room in walled cities, which renders their physiognomy just the opposite to that of villages, in which the wide spaces constitute an especial beauty. Behind the city rise the Haughmond hills, clear and sharp, and wooded to their summits. Mr Rimmer tells us, that when the sun rises red over these hills, and especially if this red rising be accompanied by noise of wind, it is a certain sign of a stormy day; thus proving the truth of Shakspeare's description of how 'bloodily the sun began to peer above yon bosky hill,' upon the fatal day of the battle of Shrewsbury. Says Prince Henry to his father:

The southern wind
Doth play the trumpet to his purposes;
And by the hollow whistling in the leaves
Foretells a tempest and a blustering day.

We wish we could find in the facts a sanction for the author's statement, that in no town in England are the interesting remains, dear to the antiquary and the student, more scrupulously taken care of than in Shrewsbury; but we have before us the eloquent and pleading testimony to the contrary of Mr Ansell Day, the enthusiastic and indefatigable champion of the rights and the dignity of the old city; and on comparing his description of Shrewsbury a hundred years ago with Shrewsbury as it now is, we learn how much has been lost within a century. A hundred years ago, Shrewsbury boasted five churches of renowned beauty. The Abbey and the collegiate church of St Mary still remain, deeply interesting to the antiquary and to the visitor. But what has been the fate of the three others—of St Chad's, of St Alkmond's (so spacious, so beautiful, famous for its exquisite tower, and built by a sister of King Alfred), and of St Julian's? St Chad's requiring reparation, a country builder was employed, whose well-intentioned performance caused the tower to fall in and destroy a portion of the church. Instead of the damage being repaired, the old church was pulled down, and an expensive, hideous, and inconvenient structure was erected in its place. The other two churches were destroyed, without even the excuse of preliminary damage; indeed so strong and in such perfect repair were they, that their demolition was an exceedingly costly process; and the buildings which replace them are curiosities of ugliness. A hundred years ago, the ancient town was surrounded by walls with square towers at intervals, alike interesting and characteristic; only a few hundred yards of the wall now remain, and one tower alone stands, the solitary memento of the past. The ancient Abbey buildings too have been swept away; the Guesten House, formerly the scene of splendid and historical hospitality; the Refectory, where a parliament once assembled to meet its king; and of all the grandeur of the past, only the ancient pulpit remains, a beautiful object indeed, but an unmeaning one in its

isolation.

Wenlock, Bridgenorth, Ross, and Monmouth with its ancient massive gate, bridge, and market-place, are full of beautiful remains; and Worcester brings many a remembrance of the historic past before our minds while we gaze on Mr Rimmer's drawings of the Corn-market, Friar Street, and the Close of the beautiful cathedral, where Henry II. and his queen were crowned, and King John is buried. In old Worcester, the days of the Great Rebellion seem quite modern, and Charles II. and his unlucky brother, men of only the recent past. A beautiful and impressive drawing is that of the *New Inn*, Gloucester, that hostelry of a strange history, for it was designed to accommodate the pilgrims who used to go in crowds to the shrine raised in the Abbey Church of Gloucester over the remains of the murdered King Edward II. The vast old hostelry is enormously strong and massive, and covers an immense area. It is fully half of timber, principally chestnut-wood. Tewkesbury, Exeter, and Glastonbury are full of beautiful remains, finely rendered in this book. The Abbot's Kitchen at Glastonbury is one of the relics of the past best known in all England; here St Patrick passed the last years of his life, and here King Arthur is said to have been buried.

At Winchester are found grand examples of the domestic architecture of the fifteenth century, in addition to the superb ecclesiastical edifices of the city; Cardinal Beaufort's Tower, and St Cross, whose noble gateway, approached from the Southampton Road, is seen through great elms and walnut-trees, where the long lines of quaint high chimneys form with the church and the foliage an exquisitely picturesque combination. We pass on in the artist's company to Guildford, where the gateway of Esher Palace still remains to remind us of Wolsey's residence there after his downfall; to Salisbury, which differs from other old cities in having nothing Roman, Saxon, or Norman about it, but being purely English and unique; to Canterbury, with its wonderful wealth of antiquities, ecclesiastical, domestic, and military, all preserved with jealous care; to Rochester, with its grand and gloomy castle, and the noble cathedral, around which there hangs an atmosphere of romance; to Rye, with its ancient grass-grown streets, gabled houses, and church clock, said to be the oldest in England; to St Albans, which has just been raised by the Queen to the dignity of a city; and from whose abbey the first books printed in England were issued; to Banbury, with its Old Parliament House, where Cromwell's fateful parliament sat, and the *Roebuck Inn*, which contains a room accounted the most beautiful Elizabethan apartment of the early style in existence. This was Oliver's council-chamber, after the taking of Banbury Castle.

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After visiting Ely, Ipswich, Norwich, Lady Jane Grey's house at Leicester, and the crumbling ruins which only remain of the Abbey, we are bidden to the Fen counties, whose picturesqueness few are aware of, though their architectural beauties, especially those of Lincolnshire, are well known; and we are shewn among many other curious things the market-place at Oakham, all roofed and shingled with solid old oak. There is a singular custom at Oakham: every peer of the realm on first passing through the town has either to pay a fine or to present the town with a shoe from his horse; the shoe is then nailed up on the castle gate, or in some conspicuous part of the building. Queen Elizabeth has left a memento of this nature at Oakham, as also have George IV. and Queen Victoria. These shoes are often gilt, and stamped with the name and arms of the donor.

The county of Nottingham is also amply illustrated; and we find a drawing of the famous *Saracen's Head Inn* at Southwell, which dates from the time of Henry IV., and where Charles I. gave himself up to the Scotch commissioners. The beautiful Minster, and the splendid ruins of the palace, once the residence of the archbishops of York, and many an old house and quiet glimpse of the home-life of the long past, are to be seen at Southwell, the place which monarchs and nobles vied with each other to endow and adorn. Warwickshire is but little noticed in this book beyond the inevitable Warwick Castle and Kenilworth; and yet how rich the land of the elm is in village, street, and homestead antiquity.

We would have welcomed further details of Coventry, that most interesting ancient city, the scene of the first days of the triumph of Henry VII., and of one term of the dreary imprisonment of Mary, Queen of Scots; the city of the wonderful church of St Michael, which may truly be called a dream—a poem in stone. York, Beverley, Durham, Lancaster, and Carlisle, all these the artist-author sets before us with their treasures of architecture and illustration of the social life of the past. Perhaps we linger longest over the noble views of Durham Castle, and the majestic cathedral with its three grand towers, which occupies one of the finest sites in England, and with the wooded bluff beneath it, is reflected in the broad bosom of the Wear. The author leads us so far north as Carlisle, but has not much to point to there of great antiquity. The Border city had to fight too hard for ages for her mere existence, to have means or leisure for the beautifying or refining arts. Her name is otherwise writ in history.

We are grateful to Mr Rimmer for this work, which will, we hope, give the impulse to much more literature of a similar order. There is a great need of closely studied and well-written histories of the old cities and towns of the United Kingdom, which, if not conceived merely in the dry antiquarian, nor yet in the simply picturesque artistic spirit, would induce readers to recognise, and lead them to explore the archæological treasures of their own countries, which may be reached with ease, and might, with the assistance of books of this kind, be studied with equal pleasure and profit.

DURING the past few years, Japanese fans have become so popular in this country, that a few brief remarks respecting them and the manner in which they are manufactured—culled from the published Report by Her Majesty's Consul on the trade of Hiogo and Osaka—may perhaps prove acceptable to our readers.

Osaka, we learn, is the principal city for the manufacture of the *ogi* or folding fans, which are those almost exclusively exported, all descriptions of the bamboo kind being made there; the figures, writing, &c. required for their adornment are executed at Kioto. The prices vary from a few pence up to six pounds sterling per hundred, and occasionally even higher prices are given, though the bulk consists of the cheaper sorts. The superior kinds of fans, it may be mentioned parenthetically, which are termed *uchiwa* by the Japanese, are manufactured at Kioto, and are extensively used by the better classes of the natives.

The following are the principal features in the account which Mr Consul Annesley gives of the details connected with *ogi* or folding fans. As in many other branches of industry, the principle of division of labour is carried out in the fan-making trade. The bamboo ribs are made in Osaka and Kioto by private individuals in their own houses, and combinations of the various notches cut in the lower part are left to one of the finishing workmen, who forms the various patterns of the handle according to plans prepared by the designer. In like manner the designer gives out to the engravers the patterns which his experience teaches him will be most likely to be saleable during the ensuing season; and when the different blocks have been cut, it still rests with him to say what colours are to be used for the two sides of each fan. In fact, this official holds, if not the best paid, at anyrate the most important position on the staff in ordinary. When the printed sheets which are to form the two sides of the fans have been handed over to the workman, together with the sets of bamboo slips which are to form the ribs, his first business is to fold the two sheets of which the fan is to be composed, so that they will retain the crease, and this is done by putting them between two pieces of paper, well saturated with oil, and properly creased. The four are then folded together and placed under a heavy weight.

When sufficient time has elapsed, the sheets are taken out, and the moulds used again, the released sheets being packed up for at least twenty-four hours in their folds. The next process is to take the ribs, which are temporarily arranged in order on a wire, and 'set' them into their places on one of the sheets, after it has been spread out on a block and pasted. A dash of paste then gives the woodwork adhesive powers, and that part of the process is finished by affixing the remaining sheet of paper. The fan has to be folded up and opened three or four times before the folds take the proper shape; and by the time the fan is put by to dry, it has received far more handling than any foreign paper could stand; indeed foreign paper has been tried, and had to be given up, as unsuitable for the work; but with great care the Osaka fan-makers had been able to make some fans with printed pictures which had been sent over from America, though they were invariably obliged to use one face of Japanese paper. {784}

The qualities of native paper now used are not nearly so good as those of which the old fans were made, and in consequence, the style of manufacture has had to be changed. Instead of first pasting the two faces of the fan together and then running in pointed ribs, the ribs are square and are pasted in their places in the manner described above. The outside lacquered pieces and the fancy-work are all done in Osaka and Kioto, and some of the designs in gold lacquer on bone are really artistic; but the demand for the highly ornamented description of fans is not sufficient to encourage the production of large quantities of first-class work. When the insides are dry, the riveting of the pieces together, including the outer covering, is rapidly done, and a dash of varnish quickly finishes the fan.

The highest price that was ever given for a fan in the days of seclusion from the outer world rarely exceeded a sovereign; but since the arrival of foreigners in the country, some few have been made to order at prices varying from two to three pounds sterling. The general prices of ordinary fans range from two or three shillings to three pounds per hundred, though an extraordinarily expensive fan is turned out at ten pounds per hundred. The sale of fans in olden times seldom exceeded ten thousand a year for the whole country; but in recent years no less than three millions per annum have been exported from the ports of Osaka and Yokohama alone. In concluding these brief notes, it may be interesting to mention that the number of fans ordered in Japan for the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia reached the large figure of eight hundred thousand, the estimated cost of which was ten thousand pounds, and that these were over and above the ordinary annual export alluded to before.

THE PIXIES.

AMONG the superstitions still far from being extirpated in Wales and some parts of Devonshire, is a belief in exceedingly small beings known as pixies. From anything we can learn, the pixies resemble the fairies of old English superstition, but with this difference, that pixies possess that love of fun and mischief which reminds us of the Puck of Shakspeare. When a pixy has been successful in any trick upon travellers, it is said to send forth a peal of laughter and to tumble head over heels to shew its delight; this has become proverbial in Devonshire; so that if any one laughs immoderately, he is said to laugh 'like a pixy.' The following pixy story is still current.

In a little country-place in the prettiest part of Devonshire there lived a miller's daughter, who was betrothed to a young farmer of the neighbourhood. For some time their course ran as

smoothly as could be desired. But the young man began to cast looks of suspicion on another admirer of his betrothed, and to let a jealous demon rankle within him, whispering to him that he no longer held the first place in the damsel's affections.

The miller's daughter, besides possessing considerable personal attractions, had the reputation of being the neatest and most industrious housewife in the place; and so the pixies, who invariably tried to aid the industrious, took her under their especial protection. They removed everything harmful from her path, and were always at hand to do her a service; she herself meanwhile being quite unconscious of the presence of the small people. One pixy used to place flowers on her window-sill every morning, and the maiden innocently dreamt that they were offerings from her lover, and prized them accordingly. One morning early about this time the young man passed before her house, and noticed the flowers upon the window-sill. Jealousy immediately took possession of him, and he saw in the simple flowers the offerings of a more favoured admirer. Just then the window was opened gently, and the miller's daughter appeared; and unconscious of the watcher lurking behind the hedge, she took up the rosebuds which formed her morning's gift and pressed them to her lips. Then she withdrew, taking the flowers with her, and leaving him to rage inwardly at what he considered her perfidy.

From that morning his behaviour towards her was changed, and he became gloomy and morose, throwing out hints of his suspicions from time to time, which troubled the gentle maiden, without her being able to comprehend any reason for it all. But the pixies, seeing how matters stood, determined to convince the moody fellow of her truth, and at the same time to punish him for his unreasonable jealousy. So one evening, when he was coming home from a market-town (perhaps top-heavy), he was pixy-led in a meadow just below the miller's house, through which he had to pass. Hosts of pixies gathered for the occasion, armed with nettles, thistles, and small bushes of thorn-trees. With these formidable weapons they pricked, stung, and mercilessly belaboured the unfortunate young man, dancing around him with mocking gestures, and chasing him from one end of the field to another.

Thus harassed, they kept him until the morning dawned, when one pixy came forward with a beautiful bunch of flowers, which he delivered to another pixy, who carried it off, and climbing up the vine that covered the side of the miller's house, laid the bouquet on the maiden's window-sill. Then he disappeared, followed quickly by the rest of the pixies, leaving the young man (who now saw from what quarter the flowers had come) to meditate on the matter. The result of his meditations was, that before another day was gone, he went to his betrothed and told her the doubts he had gone through, and the manner in which the pixies had freed him from those doubts; and the whole affair was then settled to the satisfaction of everybody concerned, including the pixies.

Stories of this sort are wonderfully poetical, and may amuse young folks, but they are two centuries out of date, and we may hope that matters are educationally in train to supersede them by materials quite as droll and a little more rational.

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[Transcriber's Note—the following changes have been made to this text:

Page 770: daughter changed to daughter.]

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL OF POPULAR LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART, NO. 728, DECEMBER 8, 1877 ***

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