

***A HOLIDAY IN BED***

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***Free***editorial 

## A HOLIDAY IN BED.

Now is the time for a real holiday. Take it in bed, if you are wise.

People have tried a holiday in bed before now, and found it a failure, but that was because they were ignorant of the rules. They went to bed with the open intention of staying there, say, three days, and found to their surprise that each morning they wanted to get up. This was a novel experience to them, they flung about restlessly, and probably shortened their holiday. The proper thing is to take your holiday in bed with a vague intention of getting up in another quarter of an hour. The real pleasure of lying in bed after you are awake is largely due to the feeling that you ought to get up. To take another quarter of an hour then becomes a luxury. You are, in short, in the position of the man who dined on larks. Had he seen the hundreds that were ready for him, all set out on one monster dish, they would have turned his stomach; but getting them two at a time, he[Pg 24] went on eating till all the larks were exhausted. His feeling of uncertainty as to whether these might not be his last two larks is your feeling that, perhaps, you will have to get up in a quarter of an hour. Deceive yourself in this way, and your holiday in bed will pass only too quickly.

Sympathy is what all the world is craving for, and sympathy is what the ordinary holiday-maker never gets. How can we be expected to sympathize with you when we know you are off to Perthshire to fish? No; we say we wish we were you, and forget that your holiday is sure to be a hollow mockery; that your child will jam her finger in the railway carriage, and scream to the end of the journey; that you will lose your luggage; that the guard will notice your dog beneath the seat, and insist on its being paid for; that you will be caught in a Scotch mist on the top of a mountain, and be put on gruel for a fortnight; that your wife will fret herself into a fever about the way the servant, who has been left at home, is carrying on with her cousins, the milkman and the policeman; and that you will be had up for trespassing. Yet, when you tell us you are off to-morrow, we have never the sympathy to say, "Poor fellow, I hope you'll pull[Pg 25] through somehow." If it is an exhibition you go to gape at, we never picture you dragging your weary legs from one department to another, and wondering why your back is so sore. Should it be the seaside, we talk heartlessly to you about the "briny," though we must know, if we would stop to think, that if there is one holiday more miserable than all the others, it is that spent at the seaside, when you wander the weary beach and fling pebbles at the sea, and wonder how long it will be till dinner time. Were we to come down to see you, we would probably find you, not on the beach, but moving slowly through the village, looking in at the one milliner's window, or laboriously reading what the one grocer's labels say on the subject of pale ale, compressed beef, or vinegar. There was never an object that called aloud for sympathy more than you do, but you get not a jot of it. You should take the first train home and go to bed for three days.

To enjoy your holiday in bed to the full, you should let it be vaguely understood that there is something amiss with you. Don't go into details, for they are not necessary; and, besides, you want to be dreamy more or less, and the dreamy[Pg 26] state is not consistent with a definite ailment. The moment one takes to bed he gets sympathy. He may be suffering from a tearing headache or a tooth that makes him cry out; but if he

goes about his business, or even flops in a chair, true sympathy is denied him. Let him take to bed with one of those illnesses of which he can say with accuracy that he is not quite certain what is the matter with him, and his wife, for instance, will want to bathe his brow. She must not be made too anxious. That would not only be cruel to her, but it would wake you from the dreamy state. She must simply see that you are "not yourself." Women have an idea that unless men are "not themselves" they will not take to bed, and as a consequence your wife is tenderly thoughtful of you. Every little while she will ask you if you are feeling any better now, and you can reply, with the old regard for truth, that you are "much about it." You may even (for your own pleasure) talk of getting up now, when she will earnestly urge you to stay in bed until you feel easier. You consent; indeed, you are ready to do anything to please her.

The ideal holiday in bed does not require the presence of a ministering angel in the room all[Pg 27] day. You frequently prefer to be alone, and point out to your wife that you cannot have her trifling with her health for your sake, and so she must go out for a walk. She is reluctant, but finally goes, protesting that you are the most unselfish of men, and only too good for her. This leaves a pleasant aroma behind it, for even when lying in bed, we like to feel that we are uncommonly fine fellows. After she has gone you get up cautiously, and, walking stealthily to the wardrobe, produce from the pocket of your great coat a good novel. A holiday in bed must be arranged for beforehand. With a gleam in your eye you slip back to bed, double your pillow to make it higher, and begin to read. You have only got to the fourth page, when you make a horrible discovery—namely, that the book is not cut. An experienced holiday-maker would have had it cut the night before, but this is your first real holiday, or perhaps you have been thoughtless. In any case you have now matter to think of. You are torn in two different ways. There is your coat on the floor with a knife in it, but you cannot reach the coat without getting up again. Ought you to get the knife or to give up reading? Perhaps it takes a quarter of an hour to[Pg 28] decide this question, and you decide it by discovering a third course. Being a sort of an invalid, you have certain privileges which would be denied you if you were merely sitting in a chair in the agonies of neuralgia. One of the glorious privileges of a holiday in bed is that you are entitled to cut books with your fingers. So you cut the novel in this way, and read on.

Those who have never tried it may fancy that there is a lack of incident in a holiday in bed. There could not be a more monstrous mistake. You are in the middle of a chapter, when suddenly you hear a step upon the stair. Your loving ears tell you that your wife has returned, and is hastening to you. Now, what happens? The book disappears beneath the pillow, and when she enters the room softly you are lying there with your eyes shut. This is not merely incident; it is drama.

What happens next depends on circumstances. She says in a low voice—

"Are you feeling any easier now, John?"

No answer.

"Oh, I believe he is sleeping."

Then she steals from the room, and you begin to read again.

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During a holiday in bed one never thinks, of course, of analyzing his actions. If you had done so in this instance, you would have seen that you pretended sleep because you had

got to an exciting passage. You love your wife, but, wife or no wife, you must see how the passage ends.

Possibly the little scene plays differently, as thus—

"John, are you feeling any easier now?"

No answer.

"Are you asleep?"

No answer.

"What a pity! I don't want to waken him, and yet the fowl will be spoilt."

"Is that you back, Marion?"

"Yes, dear; I thought you were asleep."

"No, only thinking."

"You think too much, dear. I have cooked a chicken for you."

"I have no appetite."

"I'm so sorry, but I can give it to the children."

"Oh, as it's cooked, you may as well bring it up."

In that case the reason of your change of action is obvious. But why do you not let your wife know that you have been reading? This is[Pg 30] another matter that you never reason about. Perhaps, it is because of your craving for sympathy, and you fear that if you were seen enjoying a novel the sympathy would go. Or, perhaps, it is that a holiday in bed is never perfect without a secret. Monotony must be guarded against, and so long as you keep the book to yourself your holiday in bed is a healthy excitement. A stolen book (as we may call it) is like stolen fruit, sweeter than what you can devour openly. The boy enjoys his stolen apple, because at any moment he may have to slip it down the leg of his trousers, and pretend that he has merely climbed the tree to enjoy the scenery. You enjoy your book doubly because you feel that it is a forbidden pleasure. Or, do you conceal the book from your wife lest she should think that you are over-exerting yourself? She must not be made anxious on your account. Ah, that is it.

People who pretend (for it must be pretence) that they enjoy their holiday in the country, explain that the hills or the sea gave them such an appetite. I could never myself feel the delight of being able to manage an extra herring for breakfast, but it should be pointed out that neither mountains nor oceans give you such an appetite as a holiday in[Pg 31] bed. What makes people eat more anywhere is that they have nothing else to do, and in bed you have lots of time for meals. As for the quality of the food supplied, there is no comparison. In the Highlands it is ham and eggs all day till you sicken. At the seaside it is fish till the bones stick in your mouth. But in bed—oh, there you get something worth eating. You don't take three big meals a day, but twelve little ones, and each time it is something different from the last. There are delicacies for breakfast, for your four luncheons and your five dinners. You explain to your wife that you have lost your appetite, and she believes you, but at the same time she has the sense

to hurry on your dinner. At the clatter of dishes (for which you have been lying listening) you raise your poor head, and say faintly:

"Really, Marion, I can't touch food."

"But this is nothing," she says, "only the wing of a partridge."

You take a side glance at it, and see that there is also the other wing and the body and two legs. Your alarm thus dispelled, you say—

"I really can't."

"But, dear, it is so beautifully cooked."

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"Yes; but I have no appetite."

"But try to take it, John, for my sake."

Then for her sake you say she can leave it on the chair, and perhaps you will just taste it. As soon as she has gone you devour that partridge, and when she comes back she has the sense to say—

"Why, you have scarcely eaten anything. What could you take for supper?"

You say you can take nothing, but if she likes she can cook a large sole, only you won't be able to touch it.

"Poor dear!" she says, "your appetite has completely gone," and then she rushes to the kitchen to cook the sole with her own hands. In half-an-hour she steals into your room with it, and then you (who have been wondering why she is such a time) start up protesting,

"I hope, Marion, this is nothing for me."

"Only the least little bit of a sole, dear."

"But I told you I could eat nothing."

"Well, this is nothing, it is so small."

You look again, and see with relief that it is a large sole.

"I would much rather that you took it away."

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"But, dear——"

"I tell you I have no appetite."

"Of course I know that; but how can you hope to preserve your strength if you eat so little? You have had nothing all day."

You glance at her face to see if she is in earnest, for you can remember three breakfasts, four luncheons, two dinners, and sandwiches between; but evidently she is not jesting. Then you yield.

"Oh, well, to keep my health up I may just put a fork into it."

"Do, dear; it will do you good, though you have no caring for it."

Take a holiday in bed, if only to discover what an angel your wife is.

There is only one thing to guard against. Never call it a holiday. Continue not to feel sure what is wrong with you, and to talk vaguely of getting up presently. Your wife will suggest calling in the doctor, but pooh-pooh him. Be firm on that point. The chances are that he won't understand your case.

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## **LIFE IN A COUNTRY MANSE.**

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Up here among the heather (or nearly so) we are, in the opinion of tourists, a mere hamlet, though to ourselves we are at least a village. Englishmen call us a "clachan"—though, truth to tell, we are not sure what that is. Just as Gulliver could not see the Liliputians without stooping, these tourists may be looking for the clachan when they are in the middle of it, and knocking at one of its doors to ask how far they have yet to go till they reach it. To be honest, we are only five houses in a row (including the smiddy), with a Free Church Manse and a few farms here and there on the hillsides.

So far as the rest of the world is concerned, we are blotted out with the first fall of snow. I suppose tourists scarcely give us a thought, save when they are here. I have heard them admiring our glen in August, and adding:

"But what a place it must be in winter!"

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To this their friends reply, shivering:

"A hard life, indeed!"

And the conversation ends with the comment:

"Don't call it life; it is merely existence."

Well, it would be dull, no doubt, for tourists up here in January, say, but I find the winter a pleasant change from summer. I am the minister, and though my heart sank when I was "called," I rather enjoy the life now. I am the man whom the tourists pity most.

"The others drawl through their lives," these tourists say, "to the manner born; but think of an educated man who has seen life spending his winters in such a place!"

"He can have no society."

"Let us hope the poor fellow is married."

"Oh, he is sure to be. But married or single, I am certain I would go mad if I were in his shoes."

Their comparison is thrown away. I am strong and hale. I enjoy the biting air, and I seldom carry an umbrella. I should perhaps go mad if I were in the Englishmen's shoes, glued to a stool all day, and feeling my road home through fog at night. And there is many an educated man who[Pg 39] envies me. Did not three times as many probationers apply for a hearing when the church was vacant as could possibly be heard?

But how did I occupy my time? the English gentlemen would say, if they had not forgotten me. What do the people do in winter?

No, I don't lie long in the mornings and doze on a sofa in the afternoon, and go to bed at 9 o'clock. When I was at college, where there is so much "life," I breakfasted frequently at ten; but here, where time must (they say) hang heavy on my hands, I am up at seven. Though I am not a married man, no one has said openly that I am insane. Janet, my housekeeper and servant, has my breakfast of porridge and tea and ham ready by half-past seven sharp. You see the mornings are keen, and so, as I have no bed-room fire nor hot water, I dress much more quickly than I dressed at college. Six minutes I give myself, then Janet and I have prayers, and then follows my breakfast. What an appetite I have! I am amazed to recall the student days, when I "could not look at porridge," and thought a half-penny roll sufficient for two of us.

Dreary pleasure, you say, breakfasting alone in a[Pg 40] half-furnished house, with the snow lying some feet deep outside and still monotonously falling. Do I forget the sound of my own voice between Monday and Saturday? I should think not. Nor do I forget Janet's voice. I have read somewhere that the Scotch are a very taciturn race, but Janet is far more Scotch than the haggis that is passed around at some London dinners, and Janet is not a silent woman. The difficulty with some servants is to get them to answer your summons, but my difficulty with Janet is to get her back to the kitchen. Her favorite position is at the door, which she keeps half open. One of her feet she twists round it, and there she stands, half out of the room and half in it. She has a good deal of gossip to tell me about those five houses that lie low, two hundred yards from the manse, and it must be admitted that I listen. Why not? If one is interested in people he must gossip about them. You, in London, may not care in the least who your next door neighbor is, but you gossip about your brothers and sisters and aunts. Well, my people are as familiar to me as your brothers are to you, and, therefore, I say, "Ah, indeed," when told that the smith is busy with the wheel of a[Pg 41] certain farmer's cart, and "Dear me, is that so?" when Janet explains that William, the ploughman, has got Meggy, his wife, to cut his hair. Meggy has cut my own hair. She puts a bowl on my head and clips away everything that it does not cover. So I would miss Janet if she were gone, and her tongue is as enlivening as a strong ticking clock. No doubt there are times when, if I were not a minister, I might fling something soft at her. She shows to least advantage when I have visitors, and even in winter I have a man to dinner now and again. Then I realize that Janet does not know her place. While we are dining she hovers in the vicinity. If she is not pretending to put the room to rights, she is in her fortified position at the door; and if she is not at the door she is immediately behind it. Her passion is to help in the conversation. As she brings in the potatoes she answers the last remark my guest addressed to me, and if I am too quick for her she explains away my answer, or modifies it, or signifies her approval of it. Then I try to be dignified and to

show Janet her place. If I catch her eye I frown, but such opportunities are rare, for it is the guest on whom she concentrates herself. She even tells him, in[Pg 42] my presence, little things about myself which I would prefer to keep to myself. The impression conveyed by her is that I confide everything to her. When my guest remarks that I am becoming a hardened bachelor, and I hint that it is because the ladies do not give me a chance, Janet breaks in with—

"Oh, deed it's a wonder he wasn't married long since, but the one he wanted wouldn't have him, and the ones that want him he won't take. He's an ill man to please."

"Ah, Janet," the guest may say (for he enjoys her interference more than I do), "you make him so comfortable that you spoil him."

"Maybe," says Janet, "but it took me years to learn how to manage him."

"Does he need to be managed?"

"I never knew a man that didna."

Then they get Janet to tell them all my little "tantrums" (as she calls them), and she holds forth on my habit of mislaying my hat and then blaming her, or on how I hate rice pudding, or on the way I have worn the carpet by walking up and down the floor when I would be more comfortable in a chair. Now and again I have wound myself[Pg 43] up to the point of reproving Janet when the guest had gone, but the result is that she tells her select friends how "quick in the temper" I am. So Janet must remain as she has grown and it is gratifying to me (though don't let on) to know that she turns up her nose at every other minister who preaches in my church. Janet is always afraid when I go off for a holiday that the congregations in the big towns will "snap me up." It is pleasant to feel that she has this opinion of me, though I know that the large congregations do not share it.

Who are my winter visitors? The chief of them is the doctor. We have no doctor, of course, up here, and this one has to come twelve miles to us. He is rather melancholy when we send for him; but he wastes no time in coming, though he may not have had his clothes off for twenty-four hours, and is well aware that we cannot pay big fees. Several times he has had to remain with me all night, and once he was snowed up here for a week. At times, too, he drives so far on his way to us and then has to turn back because the gig sticks on the heavy roads. He is only a doctor in a small country town, but I am elated when I see him, for he can tell me whether the Government is still in[Pg 44] power. Then I have the school inspector once a year. The school inspector is always threatening to change the date of inspection to summer, but he takes the town from which the doctor comes in early spring, and finds it convenient to come from there to here. Early spring is often winter with us, so that the school inspector comes when there is usually snow on the ground or threatening. The school is a mile away at another "clachan," but the inspector dines with me, and so does the schoolmaster. On these occasions the schoolmaster is not such good company as at other times, for he is anxious about his passes, and explains (as I think) more than is necessary that regular attendance is out of the question in a place like this. The inspector's visit is the time of my great annual political debate, for the doctor calls politics "fudge." The inspector and I are on different sides, however, and we go at each other hammer and tongs, while the schoolmaster signs to me with his foot not to anger the inspector.



Of course, outsiders will look incredulous when I assure them that a good deal of time is passed in preparing my sermons. I have only one Sabbath service, but two sermons, the one beginning as[Pg 45] soon as the other is finished. In such a little church, you will say they must be easily pleased; but they are not. Some of them tramp long distances to church in weather that would keep you, reader, in the house, though your church is round the corner and there is pavement all the way to it. I can preach old sermons? Indeed I cannot. Many of my hearers adjourn to one of the five houses when the service is over, and there I am picked pretty clean. They would detect an old sermon at once, and resent it. I do not "talk" to them from the pulpit. I write my sermons in the manse, and though I use "paper," the less I use it the better they are pleased.

The visits of the doctor are pleasant to me in one sense, but painful in others, for I need not say that when he is called I am required too. To wade through miles of snow is no great hardship to those who are accustomed to it; but the heavy heart comes when one of my people is seriously ill. Up here we have few slight illnesses. The doctor cannot be summoned to attend them, and we usually "fight away" until the malady has a heavy hold. Then the doctor comes, and though we are so scattered, his judgment is soon known all[Pg 46] through the glens. When the tourists come back in summer they will not see all the "natives" of the year before.

It is said by those who know nothing of our lives that we have no social events worth speaking of, and no amusements. This is what ignorance brings outsiders to. I had a marriage last week that was probably more exciting than many of your grand affairs in London. And as for amusements, you should see us gathered together in the smiddy, and sometimes in the school-house. But I must break off here for the reason that I have used up all my spare sermon paper—a serious matter. I shall send the editor something about our social gatherings presently, for he says he wants it. Janet, I may add, has discovered that this is not a sermon and is very curious about it.

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## **LIFE IN A COUNTRY MANSE. A WEDDING IN A SMIDDY.**

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I promised to take the world at large into my confidence on the subject of our wedding at the smiddy. You in London, no doubt, dress more gorgeously for marriages than we do—though we can present a fine show of color—and you do not make your own wedding-cake, as Lizzie did. But what is your excitement to ours? I suppose you have many scores of marriages for our one, but you only know of those from the newspapers. "At so-and-so, by the Rev. Mr. Such-a-one, John to Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Thomas." That is all you know of the couple who were married round the corner, and therefore, I say, a hundred such weddings are less eventful in your community than one wedding in ours.

Lizzie is off to Southampton with her husband. As the carriage drove off behind two horses that could with difficulty pull it through the snow, Janet suddenly appeared at my elbow and remarked:

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"Well, well, she has him now, and may she have her joy of him."

"Ah, Janet," I said, "you see you were wrong. You said he would never come for her."

"No, no," answered Janet. "I just said Lizzie made too sure about him, seeing as he was at the other side of the world. These sailors are scarce to be trusted."

"But you see this one has turned up a trump."

"That remains to be seen. Anybody that's single can marry a woman, but it's no so easy to keep her comfortable."

I suppose Janet is really glad that the sailor did turn up and claim Lizzie, but she is annoyed in a way too. The fact is that Janet was skeptical about the sailor. I never saw Janet reading anything but the *Free Church Monthly*, yet she must have obtained her wide knowledge of sailors from books. She considers them very bad characters, but is too shrewd to give her reasons.

"We all ken what sailors are," is her dark way of denouncing those who go down to the sea in ships, and then she shakes her head and purses up her mouth as if she could tell things about sailors that would make our hair rise.

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I think it was in Glasgow that Lizzie met the sailor—three years ago. She had gone there to be a servant, but the size of the place (according to her father) frightened her, and in a few months she was back at the clachan. We were all quite excited to see her again in the church, and the general impression was that Glasgow had "made her a deal more lady-like." In Janet's opinion she was just a little too lady-like to be natural.

In a week's time there was a wild rumor through the glen that Lizzie was to be married.

"Not she," said Janet, uneasily.

Soon, however, Janet had to admit that there was truth in the story, for "the way Lizzie wandered up the road looking for the post showed she had a man on her mind."

Lizzie, I think, wanted to keep her wonderful secret to herself, but that could not be done.

"I canna sleep at nights for wondering who Lizzie is to get," Janet admitted to me. So in order to preserve her health Janet studied the affair, reflected on the kind of people Lizzie was likely to meet in Glasgow, asked Lizzie to the manse to tea (with no result), and then asked Lizzie's mother (victory). Lizzie was to be married to a sailor.

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"I'm cheated," said Janet, "if she ever sets eyes on him again. Oh, we all ken what sailors are."

You must not think Janet too spiteful. Marriages were always too much for her, but after the wedding is over she becomes good-natured again. She is a strange mixture, and, I rather think, very romantic, despite her cynical talk.

Well, I confess now, that for a time I was somewhat afraid of Lizzie's sailor myself. His letters became few in number, and often I saw Lizzie with red eyes after the post had passed. She had too much work to do to allow her to mope, but she became unhappy and showed a want of spirit that alarmed her father, who liked to shout at his relatives and have them shout back at him.

"I wish she had never set eyes on that sailor," he said to me one day when Lizzie was troubling him.

"She could have had William Simpson," her mother said to Janet.

"I question that," said Janet, in repeating the remark to me.

But though all the clachan shook its head at the sailor, and repeated Janet's aphorism about sailors[Pg 53] as a class, Lizzie refused to believe her lover untrue.

"The only way to get her to flare up at me," her father said, "is to say a word against her lad. She will not stand that."

And, after all, we were wrong and Lizzie was right. In the beginning of the winter Janet walked into my study and parlor (she never knocks) and said:

"He's come!"

"Who?" I asked.

"The sailor. Lizzie's sailor. It's a perfect disgrace."

"Hoots, Janet, it's the very reverse. I'm delighted; and so, I suppose, are you in your heart."

"I'm not grudging her the man if she wants him," said Janet, flinging up her head, "but the disgrace is in the public way he marched past me with his arm round her. It affronted me."

Janet gave me the details. She had been to a farm for the milk and passed Lizzie, who had wandered out to meet the post as usual.

"I've no letter for ye, Lizzie," the post said, and Lizzie sighed.

"No, my lass," the post continued, "but I've something better."

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Lizzie was wondering what it could be, when a man jumped out from behind a hedge, at the sight of whom Lizzie screamed with joy. It was her sailor.

"I would never have let on I was so fond of him," said Janet.

"But did he not seem fond of her?" I asked.

"That was the disgrace," said Janet. "He marched off to her father's house with his arm around her; yes, passed me and a wheen other folk, and looked as if he neither kent nor cared how public he was making himself. She did not care either."

I addressed some remarks to Janet on the subject of meddling with other people's affairs, pointing out that she was now half an hour late with my tea; but I, too, was interested to see the sailor. I shall never forget what a change had come over Lizzie when I saw her next. The life was back in her face, she bustled about the house as busy as a bee, and her walk was springy.

"This is him," she said to me, and then the sailor came forward and grinned. He was usually grinning when I saw him, but he had an honest, open face, if a very youthful one.

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The sailor stayed on at the clachan till the marriage, and continued to scandalize Janet by strutting "past the very manse gate" with his arm round the happy Lizzie.

"He has no notion of the solemnity of marriage," Janet informed me, "or he would look less jolly. I would not like a man that joked about his marriage."

The sailor undoubtedly did joke. He seemed to look on the coming event as the most comical affair in the world's history, and when he spoke of it he slapped his knees and roared. But there was daily fresh evidence that he was devoted to Lizzie.

The wedding took place in the smiddy, because it is a big place, and all the glen was invited. Lizzie would have had the company comparatively select, but the sailor asked every one to come whom he fell in with, and he had few refusals. He was wonderfully "flush" of money, too, and had not Lizzie taken control of it, would have given it all away before the marriage took place.

"It's a mercy Lizzie kens the worth of a bawbee," her mother said, "for he would scatter his siller among the very bairns as if it was corn and he was feeding hens."

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All the chairs in the five houses were not sufficient to seat the guests, but the smith is a handy man, and he made forms by crossing planks on tubs. The smiddy was an amazing sight, lit up with two big lamps, and the bride, let me inform those who tend to scoff, was dressed in white. As for the sailor, we have perhaps never had so showily dressed a gentleman in our parts. For this occasion he discarded his seafaring "rig out" (as he called it), and appeared resplendent in a black frock coat (tight at the neck), a light blue waistcoat (richly ornamented), and gray trousers with a green stripe. His boots were new and so genteel that as the evening wore on he had to kick them off and dance in his stocking soles.

Janet tells me that Lizzie had gone through the ceremony in private with her sailor a number of times, so that he might make no mistake. The smith, asked to take my place at these rehearsals, declined on the ground that he forgot how the knot was tied: but his wife had a better memory, and I understand that she even mimicked me—for which I must take her to task one of these days.

However, despite all these precautions, the sailor was a little demonstrative during the ceremony,[Pg 57] and slipped his arm around the bride "to steady her." Janet wonders

that Lizzie did not fling his arm from her, but Lizzie was too nervous now to know what her swain was about.

Then came the supper and the songs and the speeches. The tourists who picture us shivering, silent and depressed all through the winter should have been in the smiddy that night.

I proposed the health of the young couple, and when I called Lizzie by her new name, "Mrs. Fairweather," the sailor flung back his head and roared with glee till he choked, and Lizzie's first duty as a wife was to hit him hard between the shoulder blades. When he was sufficiently composed to reply, he rose to his feet and grinned round the room.

"Mrs. Fairweather," he cried in an ecstasy of delight, and again choked.

The smith induced him to make another attempt, and this time he got as far as "Ladies and gentlemen, me and my wife——" when the speech ended prematurely in resounding chuckles. The last we saw of him, when the carriage drove away, he was still grinning; but that, as he explained,[Pg 58] was because "he had got Lizzie at last." "You'll be a good husband to her, I hope," I said.

"Will I not," he cried, and his arm went round his wife again.

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## **A POWERFUL DRUG.(NO HOUSEHOLD SHOULD BE WITHOUT IT.)**

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All respectable chemists, Montgomery assures me, keep the cio-root. That is the name of the drug, and Montgomery is the man who ought to write its testimonials. This is a testimonial to the efficacy of the cio-root, and I write it the more willingly, because, until the case of Montgomery cropped up, I had no faith in patent medicines. Seeing, however, is, they say, believing; and I have seen what the cio-root did for Montgomery. I can well believe now that it can do anything, from removing grease-spots to making your child cry out in the night.

Montgomery, who was married years ago, is subject to headaches, and formerly his only way of treating them was to lie in bed and read a light novel. By the time the novel was finished, so, as a rule, was the headache. This treatment rather interfered with his work, however, and he tried various medicines which were guaranteed to cure[Pg 62] rapidly. None of them had the least result, until one day, some two months ago, good fortune made him run against an old friend in Chambers street. Montgomery having a headache, mentioned it, and his friend asked him if he had tried the cio-root. The name even was unfamiliar to Montgomery, but his friend spoke so enthusiastically of it that the headachy man took a note of it. He was told that it had never been known to fail, and the particular merit of it was that it drove the headache away in five minutes. The

proper dose to take was half an inch of the root, which was to be sucked and eventually swallowed. Montgomery tried several chemists in vain, for they had not heard of it, but at last he got it on George IV. Bridge. He had so often carried home in triumph a "certain cure," which was subsequently flung out at the window in disgust, that his wife shook her head at the cio-root, and advised him not to be too hopeful. However, the cio-root surpassed the fondest expectations. It completely cured Montgomery in less than the five minutes. Several times he tried it, and always with the same triumphant result. Having at last got a drug to make an idol of, it is not perhaps to be wondered at that Montgomery[Pg 63] was full of gratitude. He kept a three pound tin of the cio-root on his library-table, and the moment he felt a headache coming on he said, "Excuse me for one moment," and bit off half an inch of cio-root.

The headaches never had a chance. It was, therefore, natural, though none the less annoying, that his one topic of conversation should become the properties of this remarkable drug. You would drop in on him, glowing over the prospect of a delightful two hours' wrangle over the crofter question, but he pushed the subject away with a wave of his hand, and begged to introduce to our notice the cio-root. Sitting there smoking, his somewhat dull countenance would suddenly light up as his eyes came to rest on the three-pound tin. He was always advising us to try the cio-root, and when we said we did not have a headache he got sulky. The first thing he asked us when we met was whether we had a headache, and often he clipped off an inch or two of the cio-root and gave it us in a piece of paper, so that a headache might not take us unawares. I believe he rather enjoyed waking with a headache, for he knew that it would not have a chance. If his wife had been a jealous[Pg 64] woman, she would not have liked the way he talked of the cio-root.

Some of us did try the drug, either to please him or because we were really curious about it. Whatever the reason, none of us, I think, were prejudiced. We tested it on its merits, and came unanimously to the conclusion that they were negative. The cio-root did us no harm. The taste was what one may imagine to be the taste of the root of any rotten tree dipped in tar, which was subsequently allowed to dry. As we were all of one mind on the subject, we insisted with Montgomery that the cio-root was a fraud. Frequently we had such altercations with him on the subject that we parted in sneers, and ultimately we said that it would be best not to goad him too far; so we arranged merely to chaff him about his faith in the root, and never went farther than insisting, in a pleasant way, that he was cured, not by the cio-root, but by his believing in it. Montgomery rejected this theory with indignation, but we stuck to it and never doubted it. Events, nevertheless, will show you that Montgomery was right and that we were wrong.

The triumph of cio-root came as recently as [Pg 65]yesterday. Montgomery, his wife, and myself, had arranged to go into Glasgow for the day. I called for them in the forenoon and had to wait, as Montgomery had gone along to the office to see if there were any letters. He arrived soon after me, saying that he had a headache, but saying it in a cheery way, for he knew that the root was in the next room. He disappeared into the library to nibble half an inch of the cio-root, and shortly afterwards we set off. The headache had been dispelled as usual. In the train he and I had another argument about the one great drug, and he ridiculed my notion about its being faith that drove his headache away. I may hurry over the next two hours, up to the time when we wandered into Buchanan street. There Montgomery met a friend, to whom he introduced me. The gentleman was in a hurry, so we only spoke for a moment, but after he had left us he turned back.

"Montgomery," he said, "do you remember that day I met you in Chambers street, Edinburgh?"

"I have good reason for remembering the occasion," said Montgomery, meaning to begin the story of his wonderful cure; but his friend who had to catch a 'bus, cut him short.

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"I told you at that time," he said, "about a new drug called the cio-root, which had a great reputation for curing headaches."

"Yes," said Montgomery; "I always wanted to thank you——"

His friend, however, broke in again—

"I have been troubled in my mind since then," he said, "because I was told afterwards that I had made a mistake about the proper dose. If you try the cio-root, don't take half an inch, as I recommended, but quarter of an inch. Don't forget. It is of vital importance."

Then he jumped into his 'bus, but I called after him, "What would be the effect of half an inch?"

"Certain death!" he shouted back, and was gone. I turned to look at Montgomery and his wife. She let her umbrella fall and he had turned white. "Of course, there is nothing to be alarmed about," I said, in a reassuring way. "Montgomery has taken half an inch scores of times; you say it always cured you."

"Yes, yes," Montgomery answered; but his voice sounded hollow.

Up to this point the snow had kept off, but now it began to fall in a soaking drizzle. If you are[Pg 67] superstitious you can take this as an omen. For the rest of the day, certainly, we had a miserable time of it. I had to do all the talking, and while I laughed and jested, I noticed that Mrs. Montgomery was looking anxiously from time to time at her husband. She was afraid to ask him if he felt unwell, and he kept up, not wanting to alarm her. But he walked like a man who knew that he had come to his last page. At my suggestion we went to the Enoch's Station Hotel to have dinner. I had dinner, Mrs. Montgomery pretended to have dinner, but Montgomery himself did not even make the pretense. He sat with his elbows on the table and his face buried in his hands. At last he said with a groan that he was feeling very ill. He looked so doleful that his wife began to cry.

Montgomery admitted that he blamed the cio-root for his sufferings. He had taken an overdose of it, he said, tragically, and must abide the consequences. I could have shaken him, for reasoning was quite flung away on him. Of course, I repeated what I had said previously about an overdose having done him no harm before, but he only shook his head sadly. I said that his behavior now proved my contention that he only believed in[Pg 68] the cio-root because he was told that it had wonderful properties; otherwise he would have laughed at what his friend had just told him. Undoubtedly, I said, his sufferings to-day were purely imaginary. Montgomery did not have sufficient spirits to argue with me, but he murmured in a die-away voice that he had felt strange symptoms ever since we set out from Edinburgh. Now, this was as absurd as anything in Euclid, for he had been boasting of the wonderful cure the drug had effected again most of the

way between Edinburgh and Glasgow. He insisted that he had a splitting headache, and that he was very sick. In the end, as his wife was now in a frenzy, I sent out for a doctor. The doctor came, said "yes" and "quite so" to himself, and pronounced Montgomery feverish. That he was feverish by this time, I do not question. He had worked himself into a fever. There was some talk of putting him to bed in the hotel, but he insisted on going home. Though he did not put it so plainly, he gave us to understand that he wanted to die in his own bed.

Never was there a more miserable trio than we in a railway carriage. We got a compartment to ourselves, for though several passengers opened the[Pg 69] door to come in, they shrank back as soon as they saw Montgomery's ghastly face. He lay in a corner of the carriage, with his head done up in flannel, procured at the hotel. He had the rugs and my great coat over his legs, but he shivered despite them, and when he spoke at all, except to say that he was feeling worse every minute, it was to talk of men cut off in their prime and widows left destitute. At Mrs. Montgomery's wish, I telegraphed from a station at which the train stopped to the family doctor in Edinburgh, asking him to meet us at the house. He did so; indeed, he was on the steps to help Montgomery up them. We took an arm of the invalid apiece, and dragged him into the library.

It was a fortunate thing that we went into the library, for the first thing Montgomery saw on the table was the half inch of cio-root which he thought had killed him. He had forgotten to take it.

In ten minutes he was all right. Just as we were sitting down to supper, we heard a cat squalling outside. Montgomery flung a three-pound tin of the cio-root at it.

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[Pg 73]

## **EVERY MAN HIS OWN DOCTOR.**

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Statistics showing the number of persons who yearly meet their death in our great cities by the fall of telegraph wires are published from time to time. As our cities grow, and the need of telegraphic communication is more generally felt, this danger will become even more conspicuous. Persons who value their lives are earnestly advised not to walk under telegraph wires.

Is it generally realized that every day at least one fatal accident occurs in our streets? So many of these take place at crossings that we would strongly urge the public never to venture across a busy street until all the vehicles have passed.

We find prevalent among our readers an impression that country life is comparatively safe. This mistake has cost Great Britain many lives. The country is so full of hidden dangers that one may be said to risk his health every time he ventures into it.

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We feel it our duty to remind holiday-makers that when in the country in the open air, they should never sit down. Many a man, aye, and woman too, has been done to death by neglecting this simple precaution. The recklessness of the public, indeed, in such matters is incomprehensible. The day is hot, they see an inviting grassy bank, and down they sit. Need we repeat that despite the sun (which is ever treacherous) they should continue walking at a smart pace? Yes, bitter experience has taught us that we must repeat such warnings.

When walking in the country holiday-makers should avoid over-heating themselves. Nothing is so conducive to disease. We have no hesitation in saying that nine-tenths of the colds that prove fatal are caught through neglect of this simple rule.

Beware of walking on grass. Though it may be dry to the touch, damp is ever present, and cold caught in this way is always difficult to cure.

Avoid high roads in the country. They are, for the most part, unsheltered, and on hot days the sun beats upon them unmercifully. The perspiration that ensues is the beginning of many a troublesome illness.

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Country lanes are stuffy and unhealthy, owing to the sun not getting free ingress into them. They should, therefore, be avoided by all who value their health.

In a magazine we observe an article extolling the pleasures of walking in a wood. That walking in a wood may be pleasant we do not deny, but for our own part we avoid woods. More draughty places could not well be imagined and many a person who has walked in a wood has had cause to repent it for the rest of his life.

It is every doctor's experience that there is a large public which breaks down in health simply because it does not take sufficient exercise in the open air. Once more we would remind our readers that every man, woman or child who does not spend at least two hours daily in the open air is slowly committing suicide.

How pitiful it is to hear a business man say, as business men so often say, "Really I cannot take a holiday this summer; my business ties me so to my desk, and, besides, I am feeling quite well. No, I shall send my wife and children to the seaside, and content myself with a Saturday-to-Monday now and again." We solemnly warn[Pg 76] all such foolish persons that they are digging their own graves. Change is absolutely essential to health.

Asked the other day why coughs were so prevalent in the autumn, we replied without hesitation, "Because during the past month or two so many persons have changed their beds." City people rush to the seaside in their thousands, and here is the result. A change of beds is dangerous to all, but perhaps chiefly to persons of middle age. We have so often warned the public of this that we can only add now, "If they continue to disregard our warning, their blood be on their own heads." This we say not in anger, but in sorrow.

A case has come to our knowledge of a penny causing death. It had passed through the hands of a person suffering from infectious fever into those of a child, who got it as change from a shop. The child took the fever and died in about a fortnight. We would not have mentioned this case had we not known it to be but an instance of what is happening daily. Infection is frequently spread by money, and we would strongly urge

no one to take change (especially coppers), from another without seeing it first dipped in warm water. Who[Pg 77] can tell where the penny he gets in change from the newspaper-boy has come from?

If ladies, who are ever purchasing new clothes, were aware that disease often lurks in these, they would be less anxious to enter dressmakers' shops. The saleswoman who "fits" them may come daily from a home where her sister lies sick of a fever, or the dress may have been made in some East End den, where infection is rampant. Cases of the kind frequently come to our knowledge, and we would warn the public against this danger that is ever present among us.

Must we again enter a protest against insufficient clothing? We never take a walk along any of our fashionable thoroughfares without seeing scores of persons, especially ladies, insufficiently clad. The same spectacle, alas! may be witnessed in the East End, but for a different reason. Fashionable ladies have a horror of seeming stout, and to retain a slim appearance they will suffer agonies of cold. The world would be appalled if it knew how many of these women die before their fortieth year.

We dress far too heavily. The fact is, that we would be a much healthier people if we wore less clothing. Ladies especially wrap themselves up[Pg 78] too much, with the result that their blood does not circulate freely. Coats, ulsters, and other wraps, cause far more colds than they prevent.

Why have our ladies not the smattering of scientific knowledge that would tell them to vary the thickness of their clothing with the weather? New garments, indeed, they do don for winter, but how many of them put on extra flannels?

We are far too frightened of the weather, treating it as our enemy when it is ready to be our friend. With the first appearance of frost we fly to extra flannel, and thus dangerously overheat ourselves.

Though there has been a great improvement in this matter in recent years, it would be idle to pretend that we are yet a cleanly nation. To speak bluntly, we do not change our undergarments with sufficient frequency. This may be owing to various reasons, but none of them is an excuse. Frequent change of underclothing is a necessity for the preservation of health, and woe to those who neglect this simple precaution.

Owing to the carelessness of servants and others it is not going too far to say that four times in five undergarments are put on in a state of [Pg 79]semi-dampness. What a fearful danger is here. We do not hesitate to say that every time a person changes his linen he does it at his peril.

This is such an age of bustle that comparatively few persons take time to digest their food. They swallow it, and run. Yet they complain of not being in good health. The wonder rather is that they do not fall dead in the street, as, indeed, many of them do.

How often have doctors been called in to patients whom they find crouching by the fireside and complaining of indigestion! Too many medical men pamper such patients, though it is their plain duty to tell the truth. And what is the truth? Why, simply this, that after dinner the patient is in the habit of spending his evening in an arm-chair, when he ought to be out in the open air, walking off the effects of his heavy meal.

Those who work hard ought to eat plentifully, or they will find that they are burning the candle at both ends. Surely no science is required to prove this. Work is, so to speak, a

furnace, and the brighter the fire the more coals it ought to be fed with, or it will go out. Yet we are a people who let our systems go down by disregarding this most elementary and obvious rule of health.

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If doctors could afford to be outspoken, they would twenty times a day tell patients that they are simply suffering from over-eating themselves. Every foreigner who visits this country is struck by this propensity of ours to eat too much.

Very heart-breaking are the statistics now to hand from America about the increase in smoking. That this fatal habit is also growing in favor in this country every man who uses his eyes must see. What will be the end of it we shudder to think, but we warn those in high places that if tobacco smoking is not checked, it will sap the very vitals of this country. Why is it that nearly every young man one meets in the streets is haggard and pale? No one will deny that it is due to tobacco. As for the miserable wretch himself, his troubles will soon be over.

We have felt it our duty from time to time to protest against what is known as the anti-tobacco campaign. We are, we believe, under the mark in saying that nine doctors in every ten smoke, which is sufficient disproof of the absurd theory that the medical profession, as a whole, are against smoking. As a disinfectant, we are aware that tobacco has saved many lives. In these days of wear and tear,[Pg 81] it is specially useful as a sedative; indeed, many times a day, as we pass pale young men in the streets, whose pallor is obviously due to over-excitement about their businesses, we have thought of stopping them, and ordering a pipe as the medicine they chiefly require.

Even were it not a destroyer of health, smoking could be condemned for the good and sufficient reason that it makes man selfish. It takes away from his interest in conversation, gives him a liking for solitude, and deprives the family circle of his presence.

Not only is smoking excellent for the health, but it makes the smoker a better man. It ties him down more to the domestic circle, and loosens his tongue. In short, it makes him less selfish.

No one will deny that smoking and drinking go together. The one provokes a taste for the other, and many a man who has died a drunkard had tobacco to thank for giving him the taste for drink.

Every one is aware that heavy smokers are seldom heavy drinkers. When asked, as we often are, for a cure for the drink madness, we have never any hesitation in advising the application of tobacco in larger quantities.

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Finally, smoking stupefies the intellect.

In conclusion, we would remind our readers that our deepest thinkers have almost invariably been heavy smokers. Some of them have gone so far as to say that they owe their intellects to their pipes.

The clerical profession is so poorly paid that we would not advise any parent to send his son into it. Poverty means insufficiency in many ways, and that means physical disease.

Not only is the medical profession overstocked (like all the others), but medical work is terribly trying to the constitution. Doctors are a short-lived race.

The law is such a sedentary calling, that parents who care for their sons' health should advise them against it.

Most literary people die of starvation.

Trades are very trying to the young; indeed, every one of them has its dangers. Painters die from blood poisoning, for instance, and masons from the inclemency of the weather. The commercial life on 'Change is so exciting that for a man without a specially strong heart to venture into it is to court death.

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There is, perhaps, no such enemy to health as want of occupation. We would entreat all young men, therefore, whether of private means or not, to attach themselves to some healthy calling.

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[Pg 87]

## **GREटना GREEN REVISITED.**

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The one bumpy street of Springfield, despite its sparse crop of grass, presents to this day a depressed appearance, a relic of the time when it doubled up under a weight of thundering chariots. At the well-remembered, notorious Queen's Head I stood in the gathering gloaming, watching the road run yellow, until the last draggled hen had spluttered through the pools to roost, and the mean row of whitewashed, shrunken houses across the way had sunk into the sloppy ground, as they have been doing slowly for half a century, or were carried away in a rush of rain. Soaking weeds hung in lifeless bunches over the hedges of spears that line the roads from Gretna; on sodden Canobie Lea, where Lochinvar's steed would to-day have had to wade through yielding slush, dirty piles of congealed snow were still reluctant to be gone; and gnarled tree trunks, equally with palings that would have come out of the ground with a sloppy gluck, showed a dank and cheerless green. Yesterday the rooks[Pg 88] dinned the air, and the parish of Gretna witnessed such a marrying and giving in marriage as might have flung it back fifty years. Elsewhere such a solemn cawing round the pulpit on the tree tops would denote a court of justice, but in the vicinity of Springfield, it may be presumed, the thoughts of the very rooks run on matrimony.

A little while ago Willum Lang, a postman's empty letter-bag on his back, and a glittering drop trembling from his nose, picked his way through the puddles, his lips pursed into a portentous frown, and his grey head bowed professionally in contemplation of a pair of knock-knee'd but serviceable shanks. A noteworthy man Willum, son of Simon, son of David, grandson by marriage of Joseph Paisley, all

famous "blacksmiths" of Gretna Green. For nigh a century Springfield has marked time by the Langs, and still finds "In David Lang's days" as forcible as "when Plancus was consul." Willum's predecessors in office reserved themselves for carriage runaways, and would shake the lids from their coffins if they knew that Willum had to marry the once despised "pedestrians." "Even Elliot," David Lang would say, "could join couples who came on foot," and that, of course,[Pg 89] was very hard on the poor pedestrian, for greater contempt no man ever had for rival than David for Elliot, unless, indeed, it was Elliot's for David. But those were the great clattering days, when there were four famous marrying shops: the two rival inns of Springfield, that washed their hands of each other across the street, Mr. Linton's aristocratic quarters at Gretna Hall, and the toll-bar on the right side of the Sark. A gentleman who had requisitioned the services of the toll-keeper many years ago recently made a journey across the border to shake his fist at the bar, and no one in Gretna Green can at all guess why. Far-seeing Murray, the sometime priest of Gretna Hall, informed me, succeeded Beattie at the toll-house in 1843, and mighty convenient friends in need they both proved for the couples who dashed across the border with foaming fathers at their coaches' wheels. The stone bridge flashed fire to rushing hoofs, the exulting pursuers, knowing that a half-mile brae still barred the way to Springfield, saw themselves tearing romantic maidens from adventurers' arms, when Beattie's lamp gleamed in the night, the horses stopped as if an invisible sword had cleft them in twain, the maid was whisked like a [Pg 90]bundle of stolen goods into the toll-bar, and her father flung himself in at the door in time to be introduced to his son-in-law. Oh, Beattie knew how to do his work expeditiously, and fat he waxed on the proceeds. In his later days marrying became the passion of his life, and he never saw a man and a maid together without creeping up behind them and beginning the marriage service. In Springfield there still are men and women who have fled from him for their celibacy, marriage in Scotland being such an easy matter that you never know when they may not have you. In joining couples for the mere pleasure of the thing, Simon brought high fees into disrepute, and was no favorite with the rest of the priesthood. That half-mile nearer the border, Jardine admits, gave the toll-bar a big advantage, but for runaways who could risk another ten minutes, Gretna Hall was the place to be married at.

Willum Lang's puckered face means business. He has been sent for by a millworker from Langholm, who, having an hour to spare, thinks he may as well drop in at the priest's and get spliced; or by an innocent visitor wandering through the village in search of the mythical[Pg 91] smithy; or by a lawyer who shakes his finger threateningly at Willum (and might as well have stayed at home with his mother). From the most distant shores letters reach him regarding Gretna marriages, and if Willum dislikes monotony he must be getting rather sick of the stereotyped beginning "I think your charges very extortionate." The stereotyped ending "but the sum you asked for is enclosed," is another matter. It is generally about midnight that the rustics of the county rattle Willum's door off its snib and, bending over his bed, tell him to arise and marry them. His hand is crossed with silver coin, for gone are the bridegrooms whose gold dribbled in a glittering cascade from fat purses to a horny palm; and then, with a sleepy neighbor, a cold hearth, and a rattling cynic of a window for witnesses, he does the deed. Elsewhere I have used these words to describe the scene:—"The room in which the Gretna Green marriages have been celebrated for many years is a large rude kitchen, but dimly lighted by a small 'bole' window of lumpy glass that faces an ill-fitting back door. The draught generated between the two cuts the spot where the couples stand, and must prove a godsend to flushed and flurried [Pg 92]bridegrooms. A bed—wooden and solid, ornamented with divers shaped and divers colored clothes dependent from its

woodwork like linen hung on a line to dry—fills a lordly space. The monster fireplace retreats bashfully before it into the opposite wall, and a grimy cracked ceiling looks on a bumpy stone floor, from which a cleanly man could eat his porridge. One shabby wall is happily hid by the drawers in which Lang keeps his books; and against the head of the bed an apoplectic Mrs. Langtry in a blue dress and yellow stockings, reminding the public that Simon Lang's teas are the best, shudders at her reflection in the looking-glass that dangles opposite her from a string." The signboard over a snuffy tavern that attempted to enter into rivalry with the Queen's Head depicts the priest on his knees going through the church marriage services, but the Langs have always kept their method of performing the ceremony a secret between themselves and the interested persons, and the artist in this case was doubtless drawing on his imagination. The picture is discredited by the scene of the wedding being made in a smithy, when it is notorious that the "blacksmith" has cut the tobacco plug, and caught fish in the [Pg 93]Solway, and worked at the loom, the last, and the toll-bar, but never wielded Vulcan's hammer. The popular term is thus a mystery, though a witness once explained, in a trial, to Brougham, that Gretna marriages were a welding of heat. Now the welding of heat is part of a blacksmith's functions.

It is not for Willum Lang to censure the Langholm millworkers, without whose patronage he would be as a priest superannuated, but if they could be got to remember whom they are married to, it would greatly relieve his mind. When standing before him they are given to wabbling unsteadily on their feet, and to taking his inquiry whether the maiden on their right is goodly in their sight for an offer of another "mutchkin:" and next morning they sometimes mistake somebody else's maiden for their own. When one of the youth of the neighborhood takes to him a helpmate at Springfield his friend often whiles away the time by courting another, and when they return to Langholm things are sometimes a littled mixed up. The priest, knowing what is expected of him, is generally able when appealed to, to "assign to each bridegroom his own;" but one shudders to think what complications may arise when Willum's[Pg 94] eyes and memory go. These weddings are, of course, as legal as though Lang were Archbishop of Canterbury, but the clergymen shake their heads, and sometimes—as indeed was the case even in the great days—a second marriage by a minister is not thought amiss.

About the year 1826, the high road to Scotland ran away from Springfield. Weeds soon afterwards sprouted in the street, and though the place's reputation died hard, its back had been broken. Runaways skurried by oblivious of its existence, and at a convenient point on the new road shrewd John Linton dropped Gretna Hall. Springfield's convenient situation had been its sole recommendation, and when it lost that it was stranded. The first entry in the Langs' books dates back to 1771, when Joseph Paisley represented the priesthood, but the impetus to Gretna marriages had been given by the passing of Lord Hardwicke's act, a score of years before. Legend speaks of a Solway fisherman who taught tobacconist Paisley the business. Prior to 1754, when the law put its foot down on all unions not celebrated by ministers of the Church of England, there had been no need to resort to Scotland, for the chaplains of the fleet[Pg 95] were anticipating the priests of Gretna Green, and doing a roaring trade. Broadly speaking, it was as easy between the Reformation and 1745 to get married in the one country as in the other. The Marriage Act changed all that. It did a real injustice to non-members of the Established Church, and only cured the disease in one place to let it break out in another. Lord Hardwicke might have been a local member of Parliament, pushing a bill through the House "for the promotion of Larceny and Rowdyism at Gretna Green." For the greater part of a century, there was a whirling of coaches and a clattering of horses

across the border, after which came marriage in England before a registrar, and an amendment of the Scotch law that required residence north of the Sark, on the part of one of the parties, for twenty-one days before the ceremony took place. After that the romance of Gretna Green was as a tale that was told. The latter half of the last century, and the first twenty years of this, were thus the palmy days of Springfield, for after Gretna Hall hung out its signboard, the Langs were oftener seen at the "big house" than in the double-windowed parlor of the Queen's Head.

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The present landlord of this hostelry, a lightsome host, troubled with corns, who passes much of his time with a knife in one hand and his big toe in the other, is nephew of that Beattie who saw his way to bed by the gleam of post-boy's lamps, and spent his days unsnibbing the Queen's Head door to let runaways in, and barring it to keep their pursuers out. Much depends on habit, and Beattie slept most soundly to the drone of the priest in his parlor, and the rub-a-dub of baffled parents on his window-sills. His nephew, also a Beattie, brings his knife with him into the immortal room, where peers of the realm have mated with country wenches, and fine ladies have promised to obey their father's stable-boys, and two lord chancellors of England with a hundred others have blossomed into husbands, and one wedding was celebrated of which neither Beattie nor the world takes any account. There are half a dozen tongues in the inn—itsself a corpse now that wearily awaits interment—to show you where Lord Erskine gambolled in a tablecloth, while David Lang united him in the bonds of matrimony with his housekeeper, Sarah Buck. There is the table at which he composed some Latin doggerel in honor of the event,[Pg 97] and the doubtful signature on a cracked pane of glass. A strange group they must have made—the gaping landlord at the door, Mrs. Buck, the superstitious, with all her children in her arms, David Lang rebuking the lord chancellor for posing in the lady's bonnet, Erskine in his tablecloth skipping around the low-roofed room in answer, and Christina Johnstone, the female witness, thinking sadly that his lordship might have known better. Here, too, Lord Eldon galloped one day with his "beloved Bessy;" and it is not uninteresting to note that though he came into the world eighteen months after Lord Erskine, he paid Gretna Green a business visit nearly fifty years before him. Lang's books are a veritable magic-lantern, and the Queen's Head the sheet on which he casts his figures. The slides change. Joseph Paisley sees his shrewd assistant, David Lang, marry his granddaughter, and dies characteristically across the way. David has his day, and Simon, his son, succeeds him; and in the meantime many a memorable figure glides shadow-like across the screen. The youth with his heart in his mouth is Lord George Lambton. It is an Earl of Westmoreland that plants his shoulders against the door, and tells[Pg 98] the priest to hurry. The foot that drums on the floor is Lady Alicia Parson's. A son of Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough makes way for his own son; a daughter follows in the very footsteps of her father, only a few hours between them. A daughter of Archdeacon Philpot arrives at four o'clock in the morning, and her companion forgets to grease the landlord's hand. The Hon. Charles Law just misses Lord Deerhurst. There are ghosts in cocked hats, and naval and military uniform, in muslin, broadcloth, tweed and velvet, gold lace and pigskin; swords flash, pistols smoke, steaming horses bear bleeding riders out of sight, and a thousand forms flit weird and shadowy through the stifling room.

The dinner of the only surviving priest of Gretna Hall frizzled under the deft knife of his spouse as he rubbed his hands recently over the reminiscences of his youth. Willum Lang never officiated at the Hall. Intelligent Jardine, full of years and honors, now

enjoys his ease, not without a priestly dignity, on a kitchen sofa, in his pocket edition of a home at Springfield, and it is perhaps out of respect to his visitor that he crowns his hoary head with a still whiter hat. His arms outstretched to the fire,[Pg 99] he looks, by the flashes of light, in his ingle-nook a Shakespearian spirit crouching over an unholy pot, but his genial laugh betrays him, and his comely wife does not scruple to recall him to himself when he threatens to go off in an eternal chuckle. A stalwart border-woman she, in short petticoats and delightful cap, such as in the killing times of the past bred the Johnny Armstrongs and the terrible moss-troopers of the border. A storehouse of old ballads, and a Scotchwoman after Scott's own heart.

The day that Gretna Hall became an inn, its landlord felt himself called to the priesthood, and as long as he and his son remained above ground, marriage was the heaviest item in their bills. But when Gretna knew them no more, Jardine's chance had come. Even at Springfield the line has always been drawn at female priests, and from the "big house" used to come frequent messages to the shoemaker with its mistress's compliments and would he step up at once. The old gentleman is a bit of a dandy in his way, and it is pleasant to know that Nature herself gave him on those occasions a hint when it was time to dress. The rush for him down dark fields and across the Headless Cross was[Pg 100] in a flurry of haste, but in the still night the rumble of a distant coach had been borne to him over the howes and meadows, and Jardine knew what that meant as well as the marriage service. Sometimes the coaches came round by Springfield, when the hall was full, and there was a tumbling out and in again by trembling runaways at the rival inns. Even the taverns have run couples, and up and down the sleety street horses pranced and panted in search of an idle priest. Jardine remembers one such nightmare time when the clatter of a pursuing vehicle came nearer and nearer, and a sweet young lady in the Queen's Head flung up her hands to heaven. Crash went her true lovers' fist through a pane of glass to awaken the street (which always slept with one eye open) with the hoarse wail, "A hundred pounds to the man that marries me!" But big as was the bribe, the speed of the pursuers was greater, and the maiden's father looking in at the inn at an inconvenient moment called her away to fulfill another engagement. The Solway lies white from Gretna Hall like a sheet of mourning paper, between edges of black trees and hills. The famous long, low room still looks out on an ageing park, but they are only ghosts[Pg 101] that join hands in it now, and it is a clinging to old days that makes the curious moon peep beneath the blind. The priest and the unbidden witness still are, but brides and bridegrooms come no more. To the days of his youth Jardine had to fling back his memory to recall the gravel springing from the wheels of Wakefield's flying chariot. The story is told in Hutchinson's *Chronicles of Gretna Green*, the first volume of which leads up to but does not broach the subject, and is common property at Springfield. The adventurer's dupe was an affectionate school-girl on whose feelings he worked by representing himself as the one friend who could save her father from ruin and disgrace. The supposed bankrupt was said to have taken flight to Scotland, and the girl of fifteen, jumping into Wakefield's coach at Liverpool, started with him in pursuit. A more graceless rascal never was, for at Carlisle the adventurer swore that he had talked with Miss Turner's father in an hotel where he was lying hidden from the sheriff's officers, and that the fugitive's wish was that she should, without delay, accept Mr. Wakefield's hand. The poor lassie, frantic with anxiety, was completely[Pg 102] gulled, and on the eighth of March, 1826, Wakefield's coach drew up at Gretna Hall. Too late came the pursuit to stop the marriage, but the runaways were traced to France, and the law soon had the husband of a week by the heels. He had trusted, like all his brotherhood, to the lady's father making the best of it; and so,



perhaps, he did; for the adventurer's address for the next three years was—Newgate, London.

Spiders of both sexes kept their nets at Gretna Green, but a tragedy was only enacted at the hall between a score of comedies; and they were generally love-sick youths and maidens who interrupted the priest to ask if that was not the "so—sound of wh—wheels on the gravel walk?" A couple whom it would almost have been a satisfaction to marry without a fee (for the mere example of the thing) was that which raced from the south of England with the lady's father. When they reached the top of a hill his arms were gesticulating at the bottom, and they never turned one corner without seeing his steaming horse take another. Poor was the fond lover (dark his prospects at Gretna Green in consequence) but brave the maid, to whom her friends would insist on leaving money, which[Pg 103] was the cause of the whole to-do. The father, looking on the swain with suspicious eye, took to dreaming of postillions, high-roads, blacksmiths and Gretna Green. He would not suffer his daughter to move from his sight, and even to dances he escorted her in his private carriage, returning for her (for he was a busy man) at night. Quick of invention were the infuriated lovers. Threading the mazes of a dance, the girl was one evening snatched from her partner's arms by the announcement that her father's carriage barred the way below. A hurried explanation of why he had come so soon, a tripping down the stairs with trembling limbs into a close coach, a maiden in white in her lover's arms, and hey-ho for Gretna Green. Jardine is mellowed with a gentle cynicism, and sometimes he breaks off in his reminiscences to wonder what people want to be married for. The Springfield priest, he chuckles, is a blacksmith at whom love cannot afford to laugh. Ay, friend Jardine, but what about the blacksmith who laughs at love?

Half a century ago Mr. McDiarmid, a Scotch journalist of repute, loosened the tongue of a Springfield priest with a bowl of toddy. The result was as if the sluice had been lifted bodily[Pg 104] from a dam, and stories (like the whisky) flowed like water. One over-curious *paterfamilias* there was who excused his visit to the village of weddings on the ground that he wished to introduce to the priest a daughter who might one day require his services. "And sure enough," old Elliot, who entered into partnership with Simon Lang, crowed to his toddy-ladle, "I had her back with a younger man in the matter of three months!" There lives, too, in Springfield's memory the tale of the father who bolted with an elderly spinster, and returning to England passed his daughter and her lover on the way. Dark and wintry was the night, the two coaches rattled by, and next morning four persons who had gone wrong opened the eyes of astonishment.

When David Lang was asked during Wakefield's trial how much he had been paid for discharging the duties of priest, he replied pleasantly, "£20 or £30, or perhaps £40; I cannot say to a few pounds." This was pretty well, but there are authenticated cases in which £100 was paid. The priests had no fixed fee, and charged according to circumstances. If business was slack and the bridegroom not pressing, they lowered their charges,[Pg 105] but where the bribed post-boys told them of high rank, hot pursuit, and heavy purses, they squeezed their dupes remorselessly. It is told of Joseph Paisley that when on his death-bed he heard the familiar rumble of coaches into the village, he shook death from him, ordered the runaways to approach his presence, married three couples from his bed, and gave up the ghost with three hundred pounds in his palsied hands. Beattie at the toll-bar, on the other hand, did not scorn silver fees, and as occasion warranted the priests have doubtless ranged in their charges from half-a-crown and a glass of whisky to a hundred pounds.

Though the toll-bar only at rare intervals got wealthy pairs into its clutches, Murray had not been long installed in office when pockets crammed with fees made him waddle as heavily as a duck. Fifty marriages a month was no uncommon occurrence at Gretna at that time, and it was then that the mansion was built which still stands about a hundred yards on the English side of the Sark. The toll-keeper, to whom it owes its existence, erected it for a hotel that would rival Gretna Hall, and prove irresistible to the couples who, on getting married on the Scotch side, would have to pass it[Pg 106] on their return journey. But the alterations in the Marriage Laws marred the new hotel's chances, and Murray found that he had over-reached himself. Perhaps one reason why he no longer prospered was because he pursued a niggardly policy with the postillions, ostlers, and other rascallions who demanded a share of the booty. The Langs knew what they were about far too well to quarrel with the post-boys, and stories are still current in Springfield of these faithful youths tumbling their employers into the road rather than take them to a "blacksmith" with whom they did not deal.

There is no hope for Gretna. Springfield was and is the great glory of its inhabitants. Here ran the great wall of Adrian, the scene of many a tough fight in the days of stone weapons and skin-clad Picts. The Debatable Land, sung by Trouvere and Troubadour, is to-day but a sodden moss, in which no King Arthur strides fearfully away from the "grim lady" of the bogs; and moss-troopers, grim and gaunt and terrible, no longer whirl with lighted firebrands into England. With a thousand stars the placid moon lies long drawn out and drowned at the bottom of the Solway, without a lovesick maid to shed a tear; the chariots[Pg 107] that once rattled and flashed along the now silent road were turned into firewood decades ago, and the runaways, from a Prince of Capua to a beggar-maid, are rotten and forgotten.

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[Pg 111]

## MY FAVORITE AUTHORESS.

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Just out of the four-mile radius—to give the cabby his chance—is a sleepy lane, lent by the country to the town, and we have only to open a little gate off it to find ourselves in an old-fashioned garden. The house, with its many quaint windows, across which evergreens spread their open fingers as a child makes believe to shroud his eyes, has a literary look—at least, so it seems to me, but perhaps this is because I know the authoress who is at this moment advancing down the walk to meet me.

She has hastily laid aside her hoop, and crosses the grass with the dignity that becomes a woman of letters. Her hair falls over her forehead in an attractive way, and she is just the proper height for an authoress. The face, so open that one can watch the process of thinking out a new novel in it, from start to finish, is at times a little careworn, as if it found the world weighty, but at present there is a gracious smile on it, and she greets me[Pg 112] heartily with one hand, while the other strays to her neck, to make sure that

her lace collar is lying nicely. It would be idle to pretend that she is much more than eight years old, "but then Maurice is only six."

Like most literary people who put their friends into books, she is very modest, and it never seems to strike her that I would come all this way to see her.

"Mamma is out," she says simply, "but she will be back soon; and papa is at a meeting, but he will be back soon, too."

I know what meeting her papa is at. He is crazed with admiration for Stanley, and can speak of nothing but the Emin Relief Expedition. While he is away proposing that Stanley should get the freedom of Hampstead, now is my opportunity to interview the authoress.

"Won't you come into the house?"

I accompany the authoress to the house, while we chat pleasantly on literary topics.

"Oh, there is Maurice, silly boy!"

Maurice is too busy shooting arrows into the next garden to pay much attention to me; and the authoress smiles at him good-naturedly.

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"I hope you'll stay to dinner," he says to me, "because then we'll have two kinds of pudding."

The authoress and I give each other a look which means that children will be children, and then we go indoors.

"Are you not going to play any more?" cries Maurice to the authoress.

She blushes a little.

"I was playing with him," she explains, "to keep him out of mischief till mamma comes back."

In the drawing-room we talk for a time of ordinary matters—of the allowances one must make for a child like Maurice, for instance—and gradually we drift to the subject of literature. I know literary people sufficiently well to be aware that they will talk freely—almost too freely—of their work if approached in the proper spirit.

"Are you busy just now?" I ask, with assumed carelessness, and as if I had not been preparing the question since I heard papa was out.

She looks at me, suspiciously, as authors usually do when asked such a question. They are not certain whether you are really sympathetic. However, she reads honesty in my eyes.

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"Oh, well, I am doing a little thing." (They always say this.)

"A story or an article?"

"A story."

"I hope it will be good."

"I don't know. I don't like it much." (This is another thing they say, and then they wait for you to express incredulity.)

"I have no doubt it will be a fine thing. Have you given it a name?"

"Oh, yes; I always write the name. Sometimes I don't write any more."

As she was in a confidential mood this seemed an excellent chance for getting her views on some of the vexed literary questions of the day. For instance, everybody seems to be more interested in hearing during what hours of the day an author writes than in reading his book.

"Do you work best in the early part of the day or at night?"

"I write my stories just before tea."

"That surprises me. Most writers, I have been told, get through a good deal of work in the morning."

"Oh, but I go to school as soon as breakfast is over."

[Pg 115]

"And you don't write at night?"

"No; nurse always turns the gas down."

I had read somewhere that among the novelist's greatest difficulties is that of sustaining his own interest in a novel day by day until it is finished.

"Until your new work is completed do you fling your whole heart and soul into it? I mean, do you work straight on at it, so to speak, until you have finished the last chapter?"

"Oh, yes."

The novelists were lately reprov'd in a review for working too quickly, and it was said that one wrote a whole novel in two months.

"How long does it take you to write a novel?"

"Do you mean a long novel?"

"Yes."

"It takes me nearly an hour."

"For a really long novel?"

"Yes, in three volumes. I write in three exercise-books—a volume in each."

"You write very quickly."

"Of course, a volume doesn't fill a whole exercise-book. They are penny exercise-books. I have a great many three-volume stories in the three exercise-books."

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"But are they really three-volume novels?"

"Yes, for they are in chapters, and one of them has twenty chapters."

"And how many chapters are there in a page?"

"Not very many."

Some authors admit that they take their characters from real life, while others declare that they draw entirely upon their imagination.

"Do you put real people into your novels?"

"Yes, Maurice and other people, but generally Maurice."

"I have heard that some people are angry with authors for putting them into books."

"Sometimes Maurice is angry, but I can't always make him an engine-driver, can I?"

"No. I think it is quite unreasonable on his part to expect it. I suppose he likes to be made an engine-driver?"

"He is to be an engine-driver when he grows up, he says. He is a silly boy, but I love him."

"What else do you make him in your books?"

"To-day I made him like Stanley, because I think that is what papa would like him to be; and yesterday he was papa, and I was his coachman."

"He would like that?"

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"No, he wanted me to be papa and him the coachman. Sometimes I make him a pirate, and he likes that, and once I made him a girl."

"He would be proud?"

"That was the day he hit me. He is awfully angry if I make him a girl, silly boy. Of course he doesn't understand."

"Obviously not. But did you not punish him for being so cruel as to hit you?"

"Yes, I turned him into a cat, but he said he would rather be a cat than a girl. You see he's not much more than a baby—though I was writing books at his age."

"Were you ever charged with plagiarism? I mean with copying your books out of other people's books."

"Yes, often."

"I suppose that is the fate of all authors. I am told that literary people write best in an old coat——."

"Oh, I like to be nicely dressed when I am writing. Here is papa, and I do believe he has another portrait of Stanley in his hand. Mamma will be so annoyed."

## THE CAPTAIN OF THE SCHOOL.

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When Peterkin, who is twelve, wrote to us that there was a possibility ("but don't count on it," he said) of his bringing the captain of the school home with him for a holiday, we had little conception what it meant. The captain we only knew by report as the "man" who lifted leg-balls over the pavilion and was said to have made a joke to the head-master's wife. By-and-by we understood the distinction that was to be conferred on us. Peterkin instructed his mother to send the captain a formal invitation addressed "J. Rawlins, Esq." This was done, but in such a way that Peterkin feared we might lose our distinguished visitor. "You shouldn't have asked him for all the holidays," Peterkin wrote, "as he has promised a heap of fellows." Then came a condescending note from the captain, saying that if he could manage it he would give us a few days. In this letter he referred to Peterkin as his young friend. Peterkin wrote shortly afterwards asking his sister[Pg 122] Grizel to send him her photograph. "If you haven't one," he added, "what is the color of your eyes?" Grizel is eighteen, which is also, I believe, the age of J. Rawlins. We concluded that the captain had been sounding Peterkin about the attractions that our home could offer him; but Grizel neither sent her brother a photograph nor any account of her personal appearance. "It doesn't matter," Peterkin wrote back; "I told him you were dark." Grizel is rather fair, but Peterkin had not noticed that.

Up to the very last he was in an agony lest the captain should disappoint him. "Don't tell anybody he is coming," he advised us, "for, of course, there is no saying what may turn up." Nevertheless the captain came and we sent the dog-cart to the station to meet him and Peterkin. On all previous occasions one of us had gone to the station with the cart; but Peterkin wrote asking us not to do so this time. "Rawlins hates any fuss," he said.

Somewhat to our relief, we found the captain more modest than it would have been reasonable to expect. "This is Rawlins," was Peterkin's simple introduction; but it could not have been[Pg 123] done with more pride had the guest been Mr. W. G. Grace himself. One thing I liked in Rawlins from the first: his consideration for others. When Peterkin's mother and sister embraced that boy on the doorstep, Rawlins pretended not to see. Peterkin frowned, however, at this show of affection, and with a red face looked at the captain to see how he took it. With much good taste, Peterkin said nothing about this "fuss" on the doorstep, and I concluded that he would let it slide. It has so far been a characteristic of that boy that he can let anything which is disagreeable escape his memory. This time, however, as I subsequently learned he had only bottled up his wrath to pour it out upon his sister. Finding her alone in the course of the day, he opened his mind by remarking that this was a nice sort of thing she had done, making a fool of him before another fellow. Asked boldly—for Grizel can be freezing on occasion not only to her own brother, but to other people's brothers—what he meant, Peterkin inquired hotly if she was going to pretend that she had not kissed him in Rawlins' presence. Grizel

replied that if Rawlins thought anything of that he was a nasty boy; at which Peterkin echoed "boy" with a grim laugh,[Pg 124] and said he only hoped she would see the captain some day when the ground suited his style of bowling. Grizel replied contemptuously that the time would come when both Peterkin and his disagreeable friend would be glad to be kissed; upon which her brother flung out of the room, warmly protesting that she had no right to bring such charges against fellows.

Though Grizel was thus a little prejudiced against the captain, he had not been a day in the house when we began to feel the honor that his visit conferred on us. He was modest almost to the verge of shyness; but it was the modesty that is worn by a man who knows he can afford it. While Peterkin was there Rawlins had no need to boast, for Peterkin did the boasting for him. When, however, the captain exerted himself to talk, Peterkin was contented to retire into the shade and gaze at him. He would look at all of us from his seat in the background, and note how Rawlins was striking us. Peterkin's face as he gazed upon that of the captain went far beyond the rapture of a lover singing to his mistress's eyebrow. He fetched and carried for him, anticipated his wants as if Rawlins were an invalid, and bore his rebukes[Pg 125] meekly. When Rawlins thought that Peterkin was speaking too much, he had merely to tell him to shut up, when Peterkin instantly collapsed. We noticed one great change in Peterkin. Formerly, when he came home for the holidays he had strongly objected to making what he called drawing-room calls, but all that was changed. Now he went from house to house, showing the captain off. "This is Rawlins," remained his favorite form of introduction. He is a boy who can never feel comfortable in a drawing-room, and so the visits were generally of short duration. They had to go because they were due in another house in a quarter of an hour, or he had promised to let Jemmy Clinker, who is our local cobbler and a great cricketer, see Rawlins. When a lady engaged the captain in conversation, Peterkin did not scruple to sign to her not to bother him too much; and if they were asked to call again, Peterkin said he couldn't promise. There was a remarkable thing the captain could do to a walking stick, which Peterkin wanted him to do everywhere. It consisted in lying flat on the floor and then raising yourself in an extraordinary way by means of the stick. I believe it is a very difficult[Pg 126] feat, and the only time I saw our guest prevailed upon to perform it he looked rather apoplectic. Sometimes he would not do it, apparently because he was not certain whether it was a dignified proceeding. He found it very hard, nevertheless, to resist the temptation, and it was the glory of Peterkin to see him yield to it. From certain noises heard in Peterkin's bedroom it is believed that he is practicing the feat himself.

Peterkin, you must be told, is an affectionate boy, and almost demonstrative to his relatives if no one is looking. He was consequently very anxious to know what the captain thought of us all, and brought us our testimonials as proudly as if they were medals awarded for saving life at sea. It is pleasant to me to know that I am the kind of governor Rawlins would have liked himself, had he required one. Peterkin's mother, however, is the captain's favorite. She pretended to take the young man's preference as a joke when her son informed her of it, but in reality I am sure she felt greatly relieved. If Rawlins had objected to us it would have put Peterkin in a very awkward position. As for Grizel, the captain thinks her a very nice little girl, but "for choice," he says[Pg 127] (according to Peterkin) "give him a bigger woman." Grizel was greatly annoyed when he told her this, which much surprised him, for he thought it quite as much as she had any right to expect. On the whole, we were perhaps rather glad when Rawlins left, for it was somewhat trying to live up to him. Peterkin's mother, too, has discovered that her boy has become round-shouldered. It is believed that this is the result of a habit he

acquired when in Rawlins's company of leaning forward to catch what people were saying about the captain.

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[Pg 131]

## **THOUGHTFUL BOYS MAKE THOUGHTFUL MEN.**

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Urquhart is a boy who lives in fear that his friends and relations will send him the wrong birthday presents. Before his birthday came round this year, he dropped them pretty broad hints as to the kind of gift he would prefer, supposing they meant to remember the occasion. He worked his people differently, according to the relationship that existed between him and them. Thus to his mother he simply wrote, "A fishing-rod is what I want;" but to an uncle, from whom there was only the possibility of the present, he said, "By the way, next Monday week is my birthday, and my mother is going to send me a fishing-rod. Wouldn't it be jolly rot if any other body sent me a fishing-rod?—Your affectionate and studious nephew, Thomas Urquhart." To an elderly lady, with whom he had once spent part of his summer holiday, he wrote, "By-the-bye" (he always came to the point[Pg 132] with by-the-bye), "next Monday week is my birthday. I am wondering if anybody will send me a cake like the ones you bake so beautifully."

That lady should, of course, figuratively have punched Urquhart's head, but his communication charmed her. She did not, however, send him a cake. He had a letter from her in a few days, in which, without referring to his insinuating remarks about his birthday and her cakes, she expressed a hope that he was working hard. Urquhart thought this very promising, and sent a reply that undid him. "I am sweating," he said, "no end; and I think there is no pleasure like perusing books. When the other chaps go away to play, I stay at the school and peruse books." After that Urquhart counted the old lady among his certainties, and so she was, after a manner. On his birthday he received a gift from her, and also a letter, in which she said that her original intention had been to send him a cake. "But your nice letter," she went on, "in which you say you are fond of reading, reminds me that you are getting to be a big boy, so I send you a book instead," Urquhart anxiously undid the brown paper in which the book was wrapped. It was a volume of mild[Pg 133] biographies, entitled, "Thoughtful Boys Make Thoughtful Men."

From its first appearance among us, this book caused a certain amount of ill-feeling. I learned by accident that Urquhart, on the strength of the lady's letter, had stated for a fact to his comrades that she was going to send him a cake. He had also taken Fleming Secundus to a pastry-cook's in the vicinity of the school, and asked him to turn his eyes upon a cake which had the place of honor in the centre of the window. Secundus admitted with a sigh that it was a beauty. Without comment Urquhart led him to our local confectioner's, and pointed out another cake. Secundus again passed favorable



criticism, the words he used, I have reason to believe, being "Oh, Crikey!" By this time Urquhart had exhausted the shops of an interesting kind in our neighborhood, and he and his companion returned to the school. For a time Urquhart said nothing, but at last he broke the silence. "You saw yon two cakes?" he asked Secundus, who replied, with a smack of the lips, in the affirmative. "Then let me tell you," said Urquhart, solemnly, "that the two of them rolled together don't come within five miles of the cake[Pg 134] I'm to get on my birthday." Tremendous news like this spreads through a school like smoke, and Urquhart was courted as he had never been before. One of the most pitiful cases of toadyism known to me was witnessed that very day in the foot-ball field. I was playing in a school match on the same side as Urquhart and a boy called Cocky Jones by his associates because of his sublime impertinence to his master. While Urquhart was playing his shoelace became loosened, and he stooped to tie it. "I say, Urquhart," cried Cocky, "let me do that for you!" It will thus be seen, taking one thing with another, that Urquhart's confidence in the old lady had raised high hopes. "Is this the day Urquhart gets his cake?" the "fellows" asked each other. Consider their indignation when he got, instead, "Thoughtful Boys Make Thoughtful Men." Secundus refused to speak to him; Williamson, Green, Robbins, Tosh and others scowled as if he had stolen their cake; Cocky Jones kicked him and bolted.

The boy who felt the disappointment most was, however, Urquhart himself. He has never been a shining light in his classes, but that day he stumbled over the Latin grammar at every step.[Pg 135] From nine to ten he was quiet and sullen, like one felled by the blow. It is, I believe, notorious that in a fair fight Cocky Jones could not stand up before Urquhart for a moment; yet, when Cocky kicked, Urquhart did not pursue him. Between ten and eleven, Urquhart had a cynical countenance, which implied that his faith in humanity was gone. By twelve he looked fierce, as if he meant to write his benefactress, and give her a piece of his mind. I saw him during the dinner-hour in hot controversy with Green and Tosh, who were evidently saying that he had deceived them. From this time he was pugnacious, like one determined to have it out with somebody, and as he can use his fists, this mood made his companions more respectful. Fleming Secundus is his particular chum, and after the first bitterness of disappointment, Secundus returned to his allegiance. He offered to mark Cocky Jones' face, I fancy, for I saw him in full pursuit of Cocky in the playground. Having made it up, he and Urquhart then discussed the matter calmly in a corner. They had several schemes before them. One was to send the book back, saying that Urquhart had already a copy of it.

"But, I haven't," said Urquhart.

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"Williamson has read it, though," said Secundus, as if that was much the same thing.

"But though we did send it back," Urquhart remonstrated, "the chances are that she would send me another book in its place."

His faith, you see, had quite gone.

"You could tell her you had got such a lot of books that you would prefer a cake for a change?"

Urquhart said that would be putting it too plain.

"Well, then," said Secundus, "even though she did send you another book, it would perhaps be a better one than that. Tell her to send 'The Boy Crusoes.' I haven't read it."

"I have, though," said Urquhart.

"Well, she could send 'The Prairie Hunters.'"

"She's not the kind," said Urquhart. "It's always these improving books she buys."

Ultimately the two boys agreed upon a line of action which was hardly what the reader might expect. Urquhart wrote letters of thanks to all those who had remembered his birthday, and to the old lady the letter which passed through my hands read as follows:

[Pg 137]

"DEAR MISS ——:

I sit down to thank you very faithfully for your favor, namely, the book entitled 'Thoughtful Boys Make Thoughtful Men.' It is a jolly book, and I like it no end better than a cake, which would soon be ate up, and then nothing to show for it. I am reading your beautiful present regular, and hoping it will make me a thoughtful boy so as I may be a thoughtful man, no more at present,

I am, Dear Miss ——,  
Your very sincere friend,  
THOMAS URQUHART."

Our boys generally end up their letters in some such way as that, it being a method of making their epistles cover a little more paper. As I feared, Urquhart's letter was merely diplomatic. He had not come round to the opinion that after all a book was better than the cake, but he had seen the point of Fleming's sudden suggestion, that the best plan would be to "keep in" with his benefactress. Secundus had shown that if Miss M—— was bothered about this year's present, she would be less likely to send anything next year, and this sank into Urquhart's mind. Hence the tone of his letter of thanks.

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It remains to follow the inglorious career of this copy of "Thoughtful Boys make Thoughtful Men." First, Urquhart was openly contemptuous of it, and there seemed a probability of its only being used as a missile. Soon, however, he dropped hints that it was a deeply interesting story, following these hints up with the remark that he was open to offers. He and Fleming Secundus had quite a tiff about it, though they are again good friends. Secundus, it appears, had gone the length of saying that it was worth a shilling, and had taken it to his bed to make sure of this. Urquhart considered it as good as bought, but Secundus returned it to him next day. Examination of the book roused the suspicions of Urquhart, who charged Secundus with having read it by peeping between the pages, which, to enhance its commercial value, had remained uncut. This Secundus denied, but he had left the mark of his thumb on it. Eventually the book was purchased by Cocky Jones, but not without a row. Cocky went up to Urquhart one day and held out a shilling, saying that he would give it for "Thoughtful Boys Make Thoughtful Men." The owner wanted to take the shilling at once, and give up the book later in the[Pg 139] day, but Cocky insisted on its being put into his hands immediately. That Jones should be anxious to become the possessor of an improving book surprised Urquhart, but in his haste to make sure of the shilling, he handed over "Thoughtful Boys

Make Thoughtful Men." Within an hour of the striking of this bargain a rumor reached Urquhart's ears that Cocky had resold the work for one and sixpence. Inquiries were instituted, which led to a discovery. At our school there is a youth called Dicky Jenkinson, who, though not exactly a thoughtful boy, has occasional aspirations in that direction. Being for the moment wealthy, Jenkinson had remarked, in the presence of Cocky, that one and sixpence would not be too much to give for Urquhart's copy of "Thoughtful Boys Make Thoughtful Men." Feeling his way cautiously, Cocky asked whether he meant that the book would be cheap at one and sixpence to anybody who wanted it, or whether he (Dicky) was willing and able to expend that sum on it. Thus brought to bay, Jenkinson solemnly declared that he meant to make Urquhart an offer that very day. Cocky made off to think this matter over, for he was aware that the book had been already offered to[Pg 140] Fleming Secundus for a shilling. He saw that by taking prompt action he might clear sixpence before bedtime. Unfortunately, he was not able to buy the book from Urquhart, for he was destitute of means, and he knew it would be mere folly to ask Urquhart for credit. In these painful circumstances he took Robbins into his confidence. At first he merely asked Robbins to lend him a shilling, and Robbins merely replied that he would do no such thing. To show that the money would be returned promptly, Cocky then made a clean breast of it, after which Robbins was ready to lend him an ear. Robbins, however, stipulated that he should get half of the spoils.

Cocky, as has been seen, got the book from Urquhart, but when it came to the point, Jenkinson was reluctant to part with the one and sixpence. In this extremity Cocky appealed to Robbins, who at once got hold of Dicky and threatened to slaughter him if he did not keep to his bargain. Thus frightened, Jenkinson bought the book.

On hearing of this, Urquhart considered that he had been swindled, and set off in quest of Cocky. That boy was not to be found, however, until his[Pg 141] threepence had disappeared in tarts. I got to know of this affair through Robbins' backing up of Cocky, and telling Urquhart that nobody was afraid of him. A ring was immediately formed round Urquhart and Robbins, which I had the pleasure of breaking up.

Since I sat down to write the adventures of "Thoughtful Boys Make Thoughtful Men," I have looked through the book. Jenkinson read several chapters of it, and then offered it for next to nothing to anybody who had a fancy for being thoughtful. As no bidder was forthcoming, he in the end lost heart and presented it to the school library. A gentleman who visited us lately, and looked through the library, picked it up, and said that he was delighted to observe that the boys kept their books so clean. Yet not so long ago he was a boy at our school himself.

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[Pg 145]

## IT.

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As they were my friends, I don't care to say how it came about that I had this strange and, I believe unique, experience. They considered it a practical joke, though it nearly unhinged my reason. Suffice it that last Wednesday, when I called on them at their new house, I was taken up stairs and shown into a large room with a pictorial wall paper. There was a pop-gun on the table and a horse with three legs on the floor. In a moment it flashed through my mind that I must be in a nursery. I started back, and then, with a sinking at the heart, I heard the key turn in the lock. From the corner came a strange uncanny moan. Slowly I forced my head round and looked, and a lump rose in my throat, and I realized that I was alone with It.

I cannot say how long I stood there motionless. As soon as I came to myself I realized that my only chance was to keep quiet. I tried to think. The probability was that they were not far away,[Pg 146] and if they heard nothing for a quarter of an hour or so they might open the door and let me out. So I stood still, with my eyes riveted on the thing where It lay. It did not cry out again, and I hoped against hope that It had not seen me. As I became accustomed to the room I heard It breathing quite like a human being. This reassured me to some extent, for I saw that It must be asleep. The question was—Might not the sleep be disturbed at any moment, and in that case, what should I do? I remembered the story of the man who met a wild beast in the jungle and subjugated it by the power of the human eye. I thought I would try that. All the time I kept glaring at It's lair (for I could not distinguish itself), and the two things mixed themselves up in my mind till I thought I was trying the experiment at that moment. Next it struck me that the whole thing was perhaps a mistake. The servant had merely shown me into the wrong room. Yes; but why had the door been locked? After all, was I sure that it was locked? I crept closer to the door, and with my eyes still fixed on the corner, put my hand gently—oh, so gently!—on the handle. Softly I turned it round. I felt like a burglar. The door would not open. Losing[Pg 147] all self-control, I shook it; and then again came that unnatural cry. I stood as if turned to stone, still clutching the door handle, lest It should squeak if I let It go. Then I listened for the breathing. In a few moments I heard It. Before It had horrified me; now It was like sweet music, and I resumed breathing myself. I kept close to the wall, ready for anything; and then I had a strange notion. As It was asleep, why should I not creep forward and have a look at It? I yielded to this impulse.

Of course I had often seen Them before, but always with some responsible person present, and never such a young one. I thought It would be done up in clothes, but no, It lay loose, and without much on. I saw Its hands and arms, and It had hair. It was sound asleep to all appearances, but there was a queer smile upon Its face that I did not like. It crossed my mind that It might be only shamming, so I looked away and then turned sharply around to catch It. The smile was still there, but It moved one of Its hands in a suspicious way. The more I looked the more uncomfortable did that smile make me. There was something saturnine about It, and It kept it up too long. I[Pg 148] felt in my pocket hurriedly for my watch, in case It should wake; but, with my usual ill-luck, I had left it at the watchmaker's. If It had been older I should not have minded so much, for I would have kept on asking what Its name was. But this was such a very young one that It could not even have a name yet. Presently I began to feel that It was lying too quietly. It is not Their nature to be quiet for any length of time, and, for aught I knew, this one might be ill. I believe I should have felt relieved if It had cried out again. After thinking it over for some time I touched It to see if It would move. It drew up one leg and pushed out a hand. Then I bit my lips at my folly, for there was no saying what It might do next. I got behind the curtain, and watched It anxiously through a chink. Except that the smile

became wickeder than ever, nothing happened. I was wondering whether I should not risk pinching It, so as to make It scream and bring somebody, when I heard an awful sound. Though I am only twenty, I have had considerable experience of life, and I can safely say that I never heard such a chuckle. It had wakened up and was laughing.

I gazed at It from behind the curtain; Its eyes[Pg 149] were wide open, and you could see quite well that It was reflecting what It ought to do next. As long as It did not come out I felt safe, for It could not see me. Something funny seemed to strike It, and It laughed heartily. After a time It tried to sit up. Fortunately Its head was so heavy that It always lost its balance just as It seemed on the point of succeeding. When It saw that It could not rise, It reflected again, and then all of a sudden It put Its fist into Its mouth. I gazed in horror; soon only the wrist was to be seen, and I saw that It would choke in another minute. Just for a second I thought that I would let It do as It liked. Then I cried out, "Don't do that!" and came out from behind the curtain. Slowly It moved Its fist and there we were, looking at each other.

I retreated to the door, but It followed me with Its eyes. It had not had time to scream yet, and I glared at It to imply that I would stand no nonsense. But, difficult though this may be to believe, It didn't scream when It had the chance. It chuckled instead and made signs for me to come nearer. This was even more alarming than my worst fears. I shook my head and then my fist at It, but It only laughed the more. In the end I got[Pg 150] so fearful that I went down on my hands and knees, to get out of Its sight. Then It began to scream. However, I did not get up. When they opened the door they say I was beneath the table, and no wonder. But I certainly was astonished to discover that I had only been alone with It for seven minutes.

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[Pg 153]

## **TO THE INFLUENZA.**

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The time has come for you to leave this house. Seventeen days ago you foisted yourself upon me, and since then we have been together night and day. You were unwelcome and uninvited, and you made yourself intensely disagreeable. We wrestled, you and I, but you attacked me unawares in the back, and you threw me. Then, like the ungenerous foe that you are, you struck me while I was down. However, your designs have failed. I struggle to my feet and order you to withdraw. Nay, withdraw is too polite a word. Your cab is at the door; get out. But, stop, a word with you before you go.

Most of your hosts, I fancy, run you out of their houses without first saying what they think of you. Their one desire is to be rid of you. Perhaps they are afraid to denounce you to your face. I want, however, to tell you that I have been looking forward to this moment ever since you put me to bed. I said little while I was there, but I thought[Pg 154] a good deal, and most of my thoughts were of you. You fancied yourself invisible, but I saw you glaring at me, and I clenched my fists beneath the blankets. I could paint

your portrait. You are very tall and stout, with a black beard, and a cruel, unsteady eye, and you have a way of crackling your fingers while you exult in your power. I used to lie watching you as you lolled in my cane-chair. At first it was empty, but I felt that you were in it, and gradually you took shape. I could hear your fingers crackling, and the chair creak as you moved in it. If I sat up in fear, you disappeared, but as soon as I lay back, there you were again. I know now that in a sense you were a creature of my imagination. I have discovered something more. I know why you seemed tall and stout and bearded, and why I heard your fingers crackling.

Fever—one of your dastard weapons—was no doubt what set me drawing portraits, but why did I see you a big man with a black beard? Because long ago, when the world was young, I had a schoolmaster of that appearance. He crackled his fingers too. I had forgotten him utterly. He had gone from me with the love of climbing for crows' nests—which I once thought would never die—but[Pg 155] during some of these seventeen days of thirty-six hours each I suppose I have been a boy again. Yet I had many schoolmasters, all sure at first that they could make something of me, all doleful when they found that I had conscientious scruples against learning. Why do I merge you into him of the crackling fingers? I know. It is because in mediæval times I hated him as I hate you. No others have I loathed with any intensity, but he alone of my masters refused to be reconciled to my favorite method of study, which consisted, I remember (without shame) in glancing at my tasks, as I hopped and skipped to school. Sometimes I hopped and skipped, but did not arrive at school in time to take solid part in lessons, and this grieved the soul of him who wanted to be my instructor. So we differed, as Gladstonian and Conservative on the result of the Parnell Commission, and my teacher, being in office, troubled me not a little. I confess I hated him, and while I sat glumly in his room, whence the better boys had retired, much solace I found in wondering how I would slay him, supposing I had a loaded pistol, a sword, and a hatchet, and he had only one life. I schemed to be a dark, morose pirate of fourteen, so that I[Pg 156] might capture him, even at his black-board, and make him walk the plank. I was Judge Lynch, and he was the man at the end of the rope. I charged upon him on horseback, and cut him down. I challenged him to single combat, and then I was Ivanhoe. I even found pleasure in conceiving myself shouting "Crackle-fingers" after him, and then bolting round a corner. You must see now why I pictured you heavy, and dark, and bearded. You are the schoolmaster of my later years. I lay in bed and gloried in the thought that presently I would be up, and fall upon you like a body of cavalry.

What did you think of my doctor? You need not answer, for I know that you disliked him. You and I were foes, and I was getting the worst of it when he walked in and separated the combatants. His entrance was pleasant to me. He showed a contempt for you that perhaps he did not feel, and he used to take your chair. There were days when I wondered at his audacity in doing that, but I liked it, too, and by and by I may tell him why I often asked him to sit there. He was your doctor as well as mine, and every time he said that I was a little better, I knew he meant that you[Pg 157] were a little weaker. You knew it, too, for I saw you scowling after he had gone. My doctor is also my friend, and so, when I am well, I say things against him behind his back. Then I see his weaknesses and smile comfortably at them with his other friends—whom I also discuss with him. But while you had me down he was another man. He became, as it were, a foot taller, and I felt that he alone of men had anything to say that was worth listening to. Other friends came to look curiously at me and talk of politics, or Stanley, or on other frivolous topics, but he spoke of my case, which was the great affair. I was not, in my own mind, a patient for whom he was merely doing his best; I was entirely in his

hands. I was a business, and it rested with him whether I was to be wound up or carried on as usual. I daresay I tried to be pleasant to him—which is not my way—took his prescriptions as if I rather enjoyed them, and held his thermometer in my mouth as though it were a new kind of pipe. This was diplomacy. I have no real pleasure in being fed with a spoon, nor do I intend in the future to smoke thermometers. But I knew that I must pander to my doctor's weakness if he was to take my side against you.[Pg 158] Now that I am able to snap my fingers at you I am looking forward to sneering once more at him. Just at this moment, however, I would prefer to lay a sword flat upon his shoulders, and say gratefully, "Arise, Sir James." He has altered the faces of the various visitors who whispered to each other in my presence, and nodded at me and said aloud that I would soon be right again, and then said something else on the other side of the door. He has opened my windows and set the sparrows a-chirping again, and he has turned on the sunshine. Lastly, he has enabled me to call your cab. I am done. Get out.

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[Pg 161]

## FOUR-IN-HAND NOVELISTS.

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The following is a word-puzzle. It narrates the adventures of a four-in-hand novelist while trying to lose his reputation. Competitors do not require to be told that a four-in-hand novelist is a writer of fiction who keeps four serial tales running abreast in the magazines. The names of specimen four-in-hand novelists will recur readily to every one. The puzzle is to discover who this particular novelist is; the description, as will be observed, answering to quite a number of them.

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A few years ago, if any one in Fleet street had said that the day would come when I would devote my time to trying to lose my reputation, I would have smiled incredulously. That was before I had a reputation. To be as statistical as time will allow—for before I go to bed I have seven and a half yards of fiction to write—it took me fifteen years' hard work to acquire a reputation. For two[Pg 162] years after that I worked as diligently to retain it, not being quite certain whether it was really there, and for the last five years I have done my best to get rid of it. Mr. R. L. Stevenson has a story of a dynamiter who tried in vain to leave an infernal machine anywhere. It was always returned to him as soon as he dropped it, or just as he was making off. My reputation is as difficult to lose. I have not given up the attempt yet, but I am already of opinion that it is even harder to lose a reputation in letters than to make one. My colleagues will bear me out in this.

If I recollect aright—for I have published so much that my works are now rather mixed up in my mind, and I have no time to verify anything—the first place I thought to leave my reputation in was a volume of pot-boilers, which I wrote many years ago for an obscure publication. At that time I was working hard for a reputation elsewhere, and

these short stories were only scribbled off for a livelihood. My publisher heard of them recently, and offered me a hundred pounds for liberty to republish them in book form. I pointed out to him that they were very poor stuff, but he said that that had nothing to do with it; I had a reputation now,[Pg 163] and they would sell. With certain misgivings—for I was not hardened yet—I accepted my publisher's terms, and the book was soon out. The first book I published, which was much the best thing I ever wrote, was only reviewed by three journals, of which two were provincial weeklies. They said it showed signs of haste, though every sentence in it was a labor. I sent copies of it to six or seven distinguished literary men—some of whom are four-in-hand now—and two of them acknowledged receipt of it, though neither said he had read it. My pot-boilers, however, had not been out many weeks before the first edition was exhausted. The book was reviewed everywhere, and, in nine cases out of ten, enthusiastically lauded. It showed a distinct advance on all my previous efforts. They were model stories of their kind. They showed a mature hand. The wit was sparkling. There were pages in the book that no one could read without emotion. In the old days I was paid for these stories at the rate of five shillings the thousand words; but they would make a reputation in themselves now. It has been thus all along. I drop my reputation into every book I write now, but there is no getting rid of it. The[Pg 164] critics and the public return it to me, remarking that it grows bigger.

I tried to lose my reputation in several other books of the same kind, and always with the same result. Barnacles are nothing to a literary reputation. Then I tried driving four-in-hand. There are now only five or six of us who are four-in-hand novelists, but there are also four-in-hand essayists, four-in-hand critics, etc., and we all work on the same principle. Every one of us is trying to shake himself free of his reputation. We novelists have, perhaps, the best chance, for there are so few writers of fiction who have a reputation to lose that all the magazine editors come to us for a serial tale. Next year I expect to be six-in-hand, for the provincial weeklies want me as well as the magazines. Any mere outsider would say I was safe to get rid of my reputation this year, for I am almost beating the record in the effort. A novelist of repute, who did not want to lose his reputation, would not think of writing more than one story at a time, and he would take twelve months, at least, to do it. That is not my way. Hitherto, though I have been a member of the literary four-in-hand club, I have always been some way ahead with at least[Pg 165] two of my tales before they begin to appear in serial form. You may give up the attempt to lose your reputation, however, if you do not set about it more thoroughly than that; and the four novels which I began in January in two English magazines, one American magazine, and an illustrated paper, were all commenced in the second week of December. (I had finished two novels in the last week of November.) My original plan was to take them day about, doing about four chapters of each a month; but to give my reputation a still better chance of absconding, I now write them at any time. Now-a-days I would never think of working out my plot beforehand. My thinking begins when I take up my pen to write, and ends when I lay it down, or even before that. In one of my stories this year I made my hero save the heroine from a burning house. Had I done that in the old days they would have ridiculed me, but now they say I reveal fresh talent in the delightful way in which I re-tell a story that has no doubt been told before. The beaten tracks, it is remarked, are the best to tread when the public has such a charming guide as myself. My second novel opens with a shipwreck, and I am nearly three chapters in getting[Pg 166] my principal characters into the boats. In my first books I used to guard carefully against the introduction of material that did not advance the story, yet at that time I was charged with "padding." In this story of the shipwreck there is so much padding that I could blush—if I had not given all that up—to think of it.



Instead of confining myself to my own characters, I describe all the passengers in the vessel—telling what they were like in appearance, and what was their occupation, and what they were doing there. Then, when the shipwreck comes, I drown them one by one. By one means or another, I contrive to get six chapters out of that shipwreck, which is followed by two chapters of agony in an open boat, which I treat as if it were a novelty in fiction, and that, again, leads up to a chapter on the uncertainty of life. Most flagrant padding of all is the conversation. It always takes my characters at least two pages to say anything. They approach the point in this fashion:

Tom walked excitedly into the room, in which Peter was awaiting him. The two men looked at each other.

"You wanted to see me," Tom said at last.

[Pg 167]

"Yes," said Peter slowly, "I wanted to see you."

Tom looked at the other uneasily.

"Why did you want to see me?" he asked after a pause.

"I shall tell you," replied Peter, pointing to a chair.

Tom sat down, and seemed about to speak. But he changed his mind. Peter looked at him curiously.

"Perhaps," Peter said at last, "you know my reasons for requesting an interview with you here?"

"I cannot say that I do," answered Tom.

There was another pause, during which the ticking of the clock could be distinctly heard.

"You have no idea?" inquired Peter.

"I have no idea," replied Tom.

"Do you remember," asked the older man, a little nervously, "that when old John Vansittart disappeared so suddenly from the Grange there were some persons who believed that he had been foully murdered?"

Tom passed his hand through his hair. "John Vansittart," he muttered to himself.

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"The affair," continued Peter, "was never cleared up."

"It was never cleared up," said Tom. "But why," he added, "do you return to this subject?"

"You may well ask," said Peter, "why I return to it."

And so on. There is so much of this kind of thing in my recent novels that if all the lines of it were placed on end I daresay they would reach round the world. Yet I am never charged with padding now. My writing is said to be beautifully lucid. My shipwreck has made several intelligent critics ask if I have ever been a sailor, though I don't mind

saying here, that like Douglas Jerrold, I only dote upon the sea from the beach. I have been to Dover, but no further, and you will find my shipwreck told (more briefly) in Marryatt. I dashed it off less than two months ago, but for the life of me I could not say whether my ship was scuttled, or went on fire, or sprang a leak. Henceforth I shall only refer to it as the shipwreck, and my memory will do all that is required of it if it prevents my mistaking the novel that contains the shipwreck. Even if I did that, however, I know from experience that my reputation would[Pg 169] be as safe as the lives of my leading characters. I began my third novel, meaning to make my hero something of a coward, but though I worked him out after that patten for a time, I have changed my plan. He is to be peculiarly heroic henceforth. This will not lose me my reputation. It will be said of my hero that he is drawn with no ordinary skill, and that the author sees the two-sidedness of every man's character. As for the fourth story, it is the second one over again, with the shipwreck omitted. One night when I did not have a chapter to write—a rare thing with me—I read over the first part of this fourth tale—another rare thing—and found it so slipshod as to be ungrammatical. The second chapter is entirely taken up with a disquisition on bald heads, but the humor of it will be said to increase my reputation. Sometimes when I become despondent of ever losing my reputation, I think of taking a whole year to write one novel in, just to see what I really could do. I wonder whether the indulgent public would notice any difference? Perhaps I could not write carefully now if I tried. The small section of the public that guesses which of the four-in-hand writers I am may think for a moment that this story of how I tried in vain[Pg 170] to lose my reputation will help me toward the goal. They are wrong, however. The public will stand anything from us now—or they would get something better.

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[Pg 173]

## RULES FOR CARVING.

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*Rule I.—It is not good form to climb onto the table.* There is no doubt a great temptation to this. When you are struggling with a duck, and he wobbles over just as you think you have him, you forget yourself. The common plan is not to leap upon the table all at once. This is the more usual process: The carver begins to carve sitting. By-and-by he is on his feet, and his brow is contracted. His face approaches the fowl, as if he wanted to inquire within about everything except that the duck is reluctant to yield any of its portions. One of his feet climbs onto his chair, then the other. His knees are now resting against the table, and, in his excitement, he, so to speak, flings himself upon the fowl. This brings us to

*Rule II.—Carving should not be made a matter of brute force.* It ought from the outset to be kept in mind that you and the duck are not pitted against each other in mortal combat. Never wrestle with any dish whatever; in other words,[Pg 174] keep your head,

and if you find yourself becoming excited, stop and count a hundred. This will calm you, when you can begin again.

*Rule III.—It will not assist you to call the fowl names.* This rule is most frequently broken by a gentleman carving for his own family circle. If there are other persons present, he generally manages to preserve a comparatively calm exterior, just as the felon on the scaffold does; but in privacy he breaks out in a storm of invective. If of a sarcastic turn of mind, he says that he has seen many a duck in his day, but never a duck like this. It is double-jointed. It is so tough that it might have come over to England with the Conqueror.

*Rule IV.—Don't boast when it is all over.* You must not call the attention of the company to the fact that you have succeeded. Don't exclaim exultingly, "I knew I would manage it," or "I never yet knew a duck that I couldn't conquer somehow." Don't exclaim in a loud gratified voice how you did it, nor demonstrate your way of doing it by pointing to the *débris* with the carving knife. Don't even be mock-modest, and tell everybody that carving is the simplest thing in the world. Don't wipe your face repeatedly with your[Pg 175] napkin, as if you were in a state of perspiration, nor talk excitedly, as if your success had gone to your head. Don't ask your neighbors what they think of your carving. Your great object is to convince them that you look upon carving as the merest bagatelle, as something that you do every day and rather enjoy.

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## ON RUNNING AFTER A HAT.

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Some don't run. They pretend to smile when they see their hat borne along on the breeze, and glance at the laughing faces around in a way implying, "Yes, it is funny, and I enjoy the joke, although the hat is mine." Nobody believes you, but if this does you good, you should do it. You don't attempt to catch your hat as it were on the wing. You walk after it, smiling, as if you liked the joke the more you think of it, and confident that the hat will come to rest presently. You are not the sort of man to make a fuss over a hat. You won't give the hat the satisfaction of thinking that it can annoy you. Strange though it may seem, there are idiots who will join you in pursuit of the hat. One will hook it with a stick, and almost get it, only not quite. Another will manage to hit it hard with an umbrella. A third will get his foot into it or on it. This does not improve the hat, but it shows that there is a good deal of the milk of human kindness flowing in the street[Pg 180] as well as water, and is perhaps pleasant to think of afterwards. Several times you almost have the hat in your possession. It lies motionless, just where it has dropped after coming in contact with a hansom. Were you to make a sudden rush at it you could have it, but we have agreed that you are not that sort of man. You walk forward, stoop, and——. One reads how the explorer thinks he has shot a buffalo dead, and advances to put his foot proudly on the carcass, how the buffalo then rises, and how the explorer then rises also. I have never seen an explorer running after his hat (though I

should like to), but your experience is similar to his with the buffalo. As your hand approaches the hat, the latter turns over like a giant refreshed, and waddles out of your reach. Once more your hand is within an inch of it, when it makes off again. There are ringing cheers from the audience on the pavement, some of them meant for the hat, and the others as an encouragement to you. Before you get your hat you have begun to realize what deer-stalking is, and how important a factor is the wind.

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