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PROBABLE

TALES

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EDITED BY

W. STEBBING

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PREFACE

THE following notes of travel have reached the Editor's hands from various quarters, and he does not vouch for the literal accuracy of all of them.

Their essential truthfulness is too apparent from their intrinsic probability to need, or be the better for, any extraneous testimony, which indeed he could not offer.

For the same reason he has thought it superfluous, while allowing the several narrators to speak each for himself, to add names and addresses.

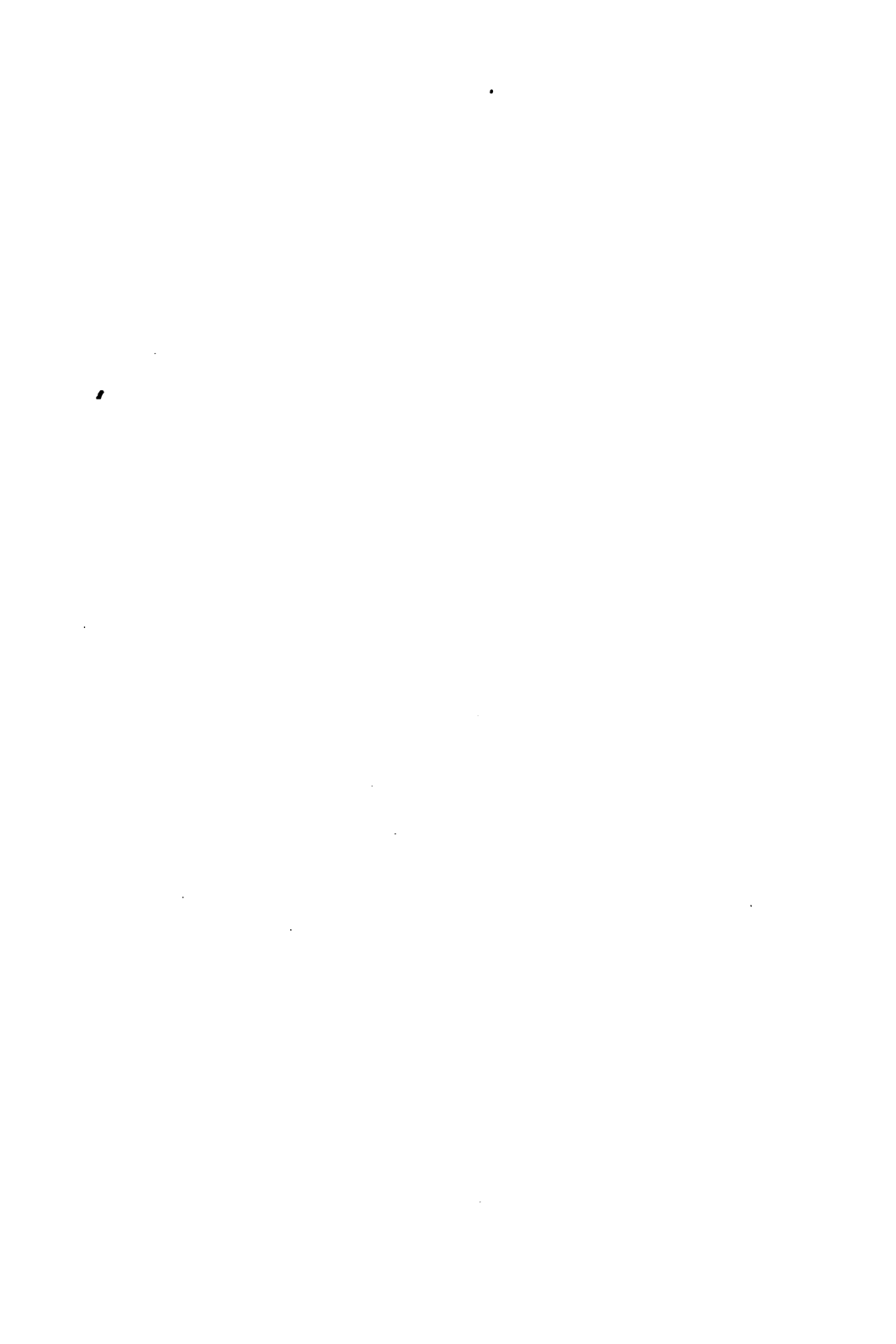
April, 1899.

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A QUARTER OF AN HOUR
AFTER



A QUARTER OF AN HOUR AFTER

NONE of the circular tours have coupons for Dampfbootlos-land. That may account for the ignorance in this country of one of the quaintest and most interesting usages ever noted by me in my very extensive experience of foreign customs. Only by an accident did I myself become acquainted with it. I had been making a short trip in the charming Mersegebirge, when I lost my Cook's tickets. They worked their way through a hole in my coat-pocket, as it flapped over the gangway of a Dantweiss packet-boat. They were at the bottom of the river before I was aware that anything was wrong. So strange is human nature that I rejoiced at my loss. The next port at which the steamer called was marked in my Baedeker as a stage on the way

to Dampfbootlos-land, where I had never been. Here was my opportunity. I hoped to recover from Messrs. Cook the value of the drowned coupons, and I should be able, at little additional cost, to visit an unexplored district. Who knows?—perhaps I might even find matter for a paper which would cover me with glory, though a mere male pedestrian, at the next meeting of the British Association.

The captain, a simple soul, credited my explanation of the absence of a ticket for Merseburg, and I disembarked, haversack on shoulder. After dining at the Erzherzog Stephan, I commenced my march. By the following evening I had crossed the border of Dampfbootlos-land, and had reached the haupstadt, Dorfeln. An inn in the High-street had an air of comfort, which was not deceptive. I saw my bedroom, washed my hands, and descended into the coffee-room. A waiter was standing there, and I ordered tea. The interval I employed in surveying from the window a picturesque group of gables. After a sufficient pause I returned to my table, which remained still unfurnished, though the same waiter stood

by it in a kind of expectant attitude. By way of saying something, I inquired if tea would be ready soon, as I was hungry and thirsty with my walk. A little to my disgust, he asked what I wanted, as if he had not heard before. I repeated the order, with a variation as to the cooking of the eggs. In a very short time my meal was laid, all but they. I filled my cup, buttered a roll, and began. After some minutes I ventured upon a query concerning the eggs. Very civilly the man asked if I would like some. In surprise rather than anger, I replied affirmatively; and off he went and fetched them.

I soon went to bed, and was up early to see the sights of Dorfeln. Fortunately, as solitary sight-seeing is dull work, I lighted on another guest at my hotel, who was bound on a similar errand. Though well acquainted with the city and people, he had been on previous visits hindered by business engagements from amusing himself as a tourist. He was a capital companion, and we supplied one another's wants. I was able to tell him why he should admire Rembrandt, and sneer at Carlo Dolci, in the well-filled art-gallery. For his part,

he gave me much more valuable information on the manners and customs of the Dampfbootlos-landers themselves.

Of one remarkable usage in particular he told me à propos of a small incident at the Campanile. I had wished to mount to the top for the sake of the view, which, however, my friend assured me would not repay the labour, the morning being wet and misty. I had insisted, and we went to the wicket. I mentioned our intention to the old custodian, and he promised to find the key. Meanwhile we stood outside in the drizzle. After a tedious pause, as it appeared to me, I went in, and reiterated my request. On that, after a look at the cuckoo-clock, he lifted his hand to a rusty key overhead, and fitted it into the lock. Now, I had happened to observe that key hanging there before, and felt I had been robbed of precious time. Perhaps I may have uttered some warm expressions; but my companion came up, and we made the ascent. He had been right. The stairs were dirty, broken, and dark, and there was nothing to see from the top. Down we quickly came. At the bottom stood the gate-keeper,

with a scrap of paper, which he handed to me. Glancing at it, I saw, not, as I expected, a legend of the tower, but a parcel of oaths in several languages, which, I dare say, I may have scattered about before our climb. "Pish! Psha!" said I, as I tore the scrawl in bits. "I only wish, my good man, you had kept us for a twelvemonth from going up your rascally cockloft, and fraying my only decent coat with its filthy walls." The elderly janitor looked pleased and satisfied as we went forth, and we resumed our explorations.

During luncheon the curious episode of the transcript of my flowers of speech came to my mind, and I mentioned it. My companion took it so very much as a matter of course, that, I suppose, my face showed surprise. "Bless my soul!" he ejaculated, "you surely have not been half a day in Dorfeln without understanding the rule of the 'Quarter of an Hour After'?" I asseverated my ignorance, and he explained. As there may be others as unacquainted with it as myself, I had better give his description.

Dampfbootlos-landers, it seems, have Celtic

blood in them. They are naturally rash and impetuous. For centuries, "Leap before you look" was their favourite maxim, and it brought them into frequent trouble. Outside and inside they were perpetually in hot water through their addiction to inconsiderate action. Never was there a people which was more chronically on the verge of an explosion both at home and abroad.

At this point I interpolated that the natives appeared to me extraordinarily peppery still. "Yes," said he; "that is the beauty of the thing. Dampfbootlos-land is always boiling, and nobody is scalded. This is how it is managed. A hundred and fifty years ago, as every schoolboy knows, there was a revolution. A new constitution was framed by the wise Periobolos. It consisted of a single article, the rule of the 'Quarter of an Hour After.' By this ordinance it is made the indefeasible privilege and the binding duty of every resident, native or alien, in the country to revise his words, and, so far as is possible, his acts, within the quarter of an hour ensuing upon their original manifestation. The obligation is

bilateral. As speaker, writer, and doer may, and should, go through a process of re-editing, so every Dampfbootlos-lander is bound, by his love and fealty to his mother country, to efface from heart and brain the memory of all that speaker, writer, and doer has by the end of fifteen minutes disavowed."

My companion mentioned many particulars, showing the loyalty of the population to the new social compact. I had myself an early opportunity of testing the theory by facts. As we finished luncheon, we heard a rush of feet pass the restaurant. We followed, and were witnesses of as spirited a faction fight as Doneraile ever saw. The scene was the market-place, where, in opposition to popular feeling, some official had put up posts and fences. They were pulled down, and instantly a battle royal commenced between the malcontents and the police, backed by the superior tradesmen. Crowns were freely broken, and blood rained from hundreds of noses. Then the hubbub ceased as abruptly as a June hailstorm. The fallen picked themselves quietly up; the conquerors retired with no exultant shouts. Torn

coats were worn with the most self-respecting decorum, and eyes peered without shame from black, blue, and green cheeks. Which side was right and which was wrong, in the quarrel, few seemed to seek, and none cared. The important matter was that everybody concerned had wiped from his mind all sense of responsibility for the outbreak. Anointed with the balm of full power of revision, bruises, bumps, and sprains speedily left off smarting.

As I grew more familiar with the country, I was constantly recognizing the utility of the institution. For instance, thanks to my friend, I received, a week after my arrival, an invitation, repeated a quarter of an hour later, to a large and magnificent dinner-party. Other guests informed me of the motive of the entertainment, which was given to celebrate a piece of domestic good luck. The eldest son of the house had offered marriage to an insinuating barmaid. As might, or might not, be expected, he perceived his folly shortly afterwards, and disavowed the engagement. The doubt was whether the quarter had not been passed. Happily, the evidence of the Astronomer Royal

proved that the public-house clock was a minute and a half fast, and the honour of the Spitzbergens was saved.

Less vital illustrations of the convenience of the custom came daily under my observation. Husbands and wives, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, authors and publishers, would hurl the most libellous epithets at each other. Long before the close of the quarter of an hour they felt the absurdity of the splutter, and recanted. Lawyers have complained to me that scarcely a bare livelihood was to be made. By a law of human nature, everybody who has entered into a contract desires to cancel, or essentially vary, it a few minutes afterwards. The other side resists, and hence we lawyers live. In Dampfbootlos-land, as a purchaser knows he is free to call off, he feels no temptation to do it. The humbler branch of the profession, which depends on assault and battery, is equally starved with the haughty Nisi Prius and Chancery advocate. I have known two bosom friends fall out over the Pragmatic Sanction, and enforce their historical arguments with their fists. Properly they should both have adjourned to

the nearest police court. As it was, on the stroke of the quarter the tempest utterly subsided, and the disputants finished between them a second bottle of old port.

Good intentions have been said, not by King Solomon, to make a dangerous pavement. In Dampfbootlos-land the pavement is not in the least slippery. The virtue of the ordinance, as well as the secret of its practical success, is that it does not exist merely on the surface of the statute-book. In the course of its operation it has created a solid substratum of national character to support it. So far as I was able to observe within the limits of an autumn vacation, Dampfbootlos-landers enjoy through it the advantages of two distinct existences. Elsewhere persons of hasty temper buy dearly the pleasure of yielding to their emotions. Whether they cause pain or not, they surely are punished. It is give and take in these matters. He who inflicts is in his turn afflicted. The more pardonable the actors upon impulse are, the heavier the retaliation upon them. They let fly things in their passion which too faithfully come home to roost a very short time after. They gnaw their

hearts in unavailing regrets that they have rendered a wife, a parent, a child, a servant, or a friend, permanently unhappy or vindictive. They are tempted by a malicious wit to a jest which stings others, and shames themselves. They strike a bargain, of which they immediately repent. One thoughtless act pledges them often to another, from which their souls helplessly revolt.

The misfortune is, many natures are so constituted that it is necessary for them to do or say in order to comprehend the folly of the deed or saying. If they simply constrain themselves to be passive and silent, they do not know how unwise it would have been to do or utter that which, once done or said, proves glaringly its own absurdity.

Dampfbootlos-landers are insured by their glorious institution against most of these inconveniences. They are perfectly natural. They have not the discomfort of walking about with a rasping padlock on their lips. They act on their impulses—brawl, strike, curse, slander, howl, to their hearts' content. I have seen dishes thrown by a flourishing attorney and

member of the Peace Society at a hardworking plain cook. I have heard husband and wife nagging at one another in a leafy villa, till I blushed to the nape of my neck, for a good fourteen minutes and three-quarters. I have been present when the craziest bids were made at auctions of old masters and sham Lowestoft. I have casually seen the patriarch of a highly respectable family pay ridiculous court to a giggling barmaid. There is no country more spontaneously or more exuberantly festive, where choleric tempers are more liberally indulged, where more frolicsome tomfooleries are practised, or where there are fewer after-headaches, throbs of self-disgust, vendettas, and poisoned dreams of the kind from which the day-sleeper does not wake up.

Through the quarter-of-an-hour-after rule everybody has a locus pœnitentiæ; and the benefit of it is largely taken. One most useful effect is, as I have intimated, the growth of a time-instinct. In other regions people indulge their tempers for various periods. One Norfolk acquaintance of mine goes on cursing and swearing, audibly or sotto voce, for half a day at a

stretch. Another is abusive, and very, for a short five minutes. A third will have a week's bout of variegated recklessness. In one such fit he compromised for ever and a day an all but absolute expectancy from a maiden aunt. No regularity in the exercise of the emotions is observed anywhere but in Dampfbootlos-land. There it is as if a physician were superintending a cat-o'-nine-tails performance, watch in hand, and finger on pulse. The tempest rises to a climax, and lulls, like a typhoon, in a dozen minutes, more or less. Yet just as furious enjoyment is extracted from it as if it had been convulsing the domestic hearth for days or months.

Remember, as I have said, that all is over as soon as the little bill is on the point of being presented for payment. The angry man, improvident dealer, or impetuous lover, merely snatches the permanently attached sponge, passes it across the slate, and the whole is as if it had never been. There is no legacy of heart-burnings, though there may be black eyes. Now and then, very rarely, that is not the result. The curser sticks to his curses, or the plunger

to his plungings. In such cases things follow their course, as in less enlightened lands; but these are exceptions. For the most part, the slate is perpetually being cleaned, and no entry is allowed to leave a durable impression.

Defects may, I dare say, be discovered in the plan. The world in general advances by irreversible and incurable jerks, out of which are hammered the springs for more jerks. I have heard it objected that the jerks in Dampfbootlosland quietly resile, so that the prevailing national characteristic is immobility. The immobility, however, it cannot be denied, has all the appearance of the most entertaining activity, which, to sensible minds, is as good as the reality, if not better. At any rate, that is my view; and if my people happen hereafter to miss me, they may know whither, with my bit of temper, I have migrated.

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MARKS AND MONOGRAMS

MARKS AND MONOGRAMS

SEVERAL of us were in Meridew's rooms last Tuesday. We were talking of the difficulty of distinguishing rogues from men of honour, wise men from fools, virtuous women from vicious, the generous from the selfish, brazen trumpets from silver. One of us had lately been shamefully defrauded by a solicitor, whom he had regarded as the soul of honour. Others of the company were capping his tale with woeful experiences of their own. All who had spoken agreed that it was the duty of every member of a community, with a clue to the depravity of persons in positions of trust, to save his neighbours from injury by plucking off the mask. At the same time, the opinion was as loudly expressed that the attempt is hopeless. Everybody who had been cheated declared that his particular traitor had been so

specious as to defy the insight of a Solomon, or of one of Dickens's, Conan Doyle's, or Wilkie Collins's detectives.

Our host, who had been silently listening, interposed. He was not sure, he said, that any supernatural acuteness was required for the discovery of base metal. He was more confident that nobody, whatever the facilities, would take the trouble to avail himself of them. He travelled a good deal, as we knew. Two years before he had visited Saxe-Hinter-Hausen. Probably all there had been to Saxe-Hinter-Hausen, and had never remarked the peculiarity which he was about to describe. That helped to prove his conclusion.

Well, in Saxe-Hinter-Hausen he had come upon an institution, which, he had no doubt, could be copied elsewhere, and with no better effects than had attended its introduction there. Every one in Saxe-Hinter-Hausen, it seems, is obliged to have a mark, just like Sèvres porcelain, explaining his capacity, proclivities, moral and intellectual, his temper, his hidden vices, and the amount of his available income and expectations. A very ingenious system—involving a

surprisingly small quantity, for the results, of espionage—exists, by which every Hinter-Hausener's character, in these respects, is accurately known. At a given age every citizen comes, quite spontaneously, to have the proper stamp impressed. The individual chooses where it shall be put, provided it be visible for any who care to examine. No more absolute security, it might be thought, could have been afforded against imposition. Yet, as James Meridew proceeded to show, Saxe-Hinter-Hausen is understood to harbour rather more profligates and swindlers of all sorts than neighbouring states.

In itself, the arrangement, he admitted, is delightful. Nothing ought to be more effectual for the prevention of uncertainty and deception. Suppose a farm bailiff is wanted, and a candidate applies, with blunt honesty disfiguring the whole of his face. Here he is accepted at once on the credentials of his disobliging countenance. The Hinter-Hausener can inspect his stamp, which proves the roughness to be only skin-deep, and show the fellow out. A Hinter-Hausener may be on the look-out for a wife, and be anxious

especially to secure good humour, the quality in which he is himself lacking. Each suitor for the post has the stamp for temper, and he can judge infallibly for himself. If he wish for comeliness, on which opinions widely differ, he need not run the risk of admiring incorrectly. Every woman is officially certified for beauty, *du diable*, or otherwise. It is the same with health, wealth, morals, and manners—all matters in which imposture has a free hand, and men cannot safely trust their own discernment, even when it is nobody's interest to deceive. The brand would seem to be invaluable in the infinity of cases in which, from the nature of things, no guidance elsewhere is procurable. It is hardly less important as a substitute for the fallacious certificates in common use. Take, for example, the ordinary instance of an appointment to the headmastership of a great public school. In England the unfortunate governing body sits knee-deep in a litter of unconscientious testimonials, and records, as worthless, of University honours. Saxe-Hinter-Hausen electors have but to inspect the marks for firmness, sympathy, practical scholarship, enthusiasm for

good, and resentment of evil; and they cannot go wrong.

Meridew was asked, as he had mentioned that each had the right of deciding the situation of his marks, how an inquirer was to know where to look. That seems to be settled mainly by small brass plates on the houses, resembling those affixed by insurance offices. They explain by simple and perfectly intelligible signs the spot on which each occupant's stamp is to be found. Sometimes it is the arm, sometimes the palm of the hand, sometimes the cheek, where it answers the purpose of a mole, sometimes the top of the forehead, sometimes the crown, as if it were a priest's tonsure. Meridew had known it to be on the ankle or the nape of the neck. Wherever it is, the first section of the Saxe-Hinter-Hausen Code ordains solemnly that it shall be deemed in conformity with the most polished manners to demand permission to look.

We all of us admired the custom, which, it was clear, put everybody where he ought to be. The value of men, women, and children, which elsewhere is the source of insoluble

controversy and perplexity, manifestly need never be disputed in Saxe-Hinter-Hausen. Almost indignantly we inquired of Meridew the meaning of the doubt he had intimated on the perfection of the system in practice. He told us that eyes in Saxe-Hinter-Hausen have in some odd way contracted a remarkable habit of never fastening themselves on the place where the mark is. A lock of hair may fall over it, and people would not for their lives request its removal. In exact proportion to the completeness of their right to look is the delicacy which forbids them to see it, though it stare them full in the face. Meridew assured us that he has been gazing for an hour at the stamp on a banker's brow of audacious dishonesty, while half a dozen beneficed clergymen and a Queen's Counsel, bred in the Old Bailey, were committing all their savings to his keeping. Hinter-Hauseners, moreover, have become, more by instinct than intention, exceedingly crafty in the choice of positions for the marks where they are least likely to be noticed. Though anybody can discover the places simply by a walk past the houses, and though the owners,

it is asserted, would never exhibit the smallest umbrage were use made of the knowledge acquired, there is a tacit conspiracy to hide and not find. Every Hinter-Hausener acts as if he might, could, and should conceal his brand from his fellow-citizens. They, in their turn, strive, very successfully, to have the air of being wholly ignorant of the existence both of marks and of a title on their side to study them.

A fashion even has grown up of leading and being led elaborately astray. Meridew informed us that the obligation, religiously observed, to be stamped has rather oddly induced a taste for the impress, in addition to the true, of counterfeit marks. The fashion is followed by the most straightforward Hinter-Hauseners no less than by the shiftiest. A lady who has been stamped for beauty will, at her own expense, have blazoned on her chin a mark, as spurious as it is superfluous, for wit and genius. A statesman will exhibit a cipher implying that he is an Antinous, when he is more like Silenus. A lawyer, as clever as his clients in Portland, will be labelled prosaically veracious.

An incurably stuttering poet will be inscribed an orator. Obviously such monograms can have been assumed merely as ornamental trifles or watch-chain charms. In Saxe-Hinter-Hausen, however, while the real marks are utterly neglected, the make-believes are contemplated with as admiring gravity as if they alone were realities. Whenever, by an accident, probably through the gaucherie of a foreigner, a genuine mark has actually been perceived, and there can be no pretence that it has not been, Meridew declared he had seen both owners and spectators blush, as if they had been caught looking into a shop window at an immodest photograph.

His general moral from his Saxe-Hinter-Hausen experience is very paradoxical. It is that men prefer equally to deceive and to be deceived, and that it is an absurd waste of time to try to disclose to one what sort of being another is.

A SURVIVAL

A SURVIVAL

WHEN I am tired out, I confess there is no place to which I better like to go than to Baranel. Old-fashioned, sleepy, unprogressive, guide-books say. Very possibly; and that is why I like it. But, though everybody fancies that he knows Baranel, I do not believe there is a less understood principality in Europe.

I am not at all sure that I shall myself be able to describe it as it really is. To begin with its geographical situation, even that is remarkable, and not generally comprehended. For example, it lies in the Ardennes, and yet possesses a minute morsel of seashore. The peculiarity is convenient for me, as it enables me to journey thither by water, as I prefer. I am fond, too, of its single little coast town, Port de la Cour d'Amour, as it is quaintly called.

Imagine a fortified citadel on a cliff, overhanging a harbour, with not a collier or a gunboat, yet in which a fleet of ironclads could ride without jostling. This is Port de la Cour d'Amour.

You leave the quay, climb to the gate, step under the lowered portcullis, and are back in the Middle Ages. Of course, you will have taken letters of introduction. You had better put off delivering them till the morrow, or you will be allowed no chance of trying a Port de la Cour d'Amour inn. Nothing is burnt but wood, and, as it will be autumn when you arrive, a fire is comfortable. You will soon be ensconced in a huge ingle, which has room for a supper-table as well as yourself. The claret is certain to be perfection, as will be the broiled chicken and mushrooms, with the attendant kickshaws. Then to bed, to sleep the slumber of the just in lavender-scented sheets, under the tutelary guard, inside, of a pictorial galaxy of fox-hunters leaping breakneck ditches, and of a watchman calling the hours, and the quarter of the moon, without.

Here are my notes of my first visit to Baranel which all its successors have generally resembled. Immediately after breakfast the blast

of a horn announced the arrival of the Baron de Courbevoyes. He had received by flying post overnight the letter with which my friend, the Baranel minister in London, had furnished me. He was come in his coach-and-four to carry me to his chateau. The moment we quitted the little city, with its gabled houses, we plunged into a vast forest, with occasional clearings and hamlets. I caught glimpses of merry peasants dancing on village greens. I saw troops of deer flitting down the woodland glades. After a drive of a dozen miles we reached the house. The exterior is just as Van der Stern, the Flemish contemporary of William of Wykeham, left it. The baying of hounds signalled our arrival, and half a dozen lacqueys in gorgeous liveries hurried out to welcome us.

In the hall blazed a huge fire of oak logs. The walls were hung with antlers and arms. Madame de Courbevoyes received us in a parlour exquisitely tapestried, crowded with hawthorn porcelain, and adorned with Persian carpets. My host escorted me to my room, where he left me to rest till dinner-time. That was proclaimed by bugles, and I returned to the hall, where a

large company was assembled. The retainers sat below the salt, and behaved with perfect decorum. During the repast a minstrel played and sang of the famous deeds of dead and gone Barons de Courbevoyes. Everybody retired early to bed, in preparation for a boar-hunt on the morrow betimes. The Baron has the exclusive privilege of the chase for thirty miles round; but he rejoices to see his tenants and the lesser gentry gathered about him and enjoying the pastime. A gay throng surrounded the chateau in the morning. The Baron took me under his especial charge; and I had the honour of planting the first spear in the quarry. I never spent a more delightful day from the commencement to its close, when a torch-lit procession, bearing the slain beast in triumph to the chateau, wound up the festival.

The day after opened with a trial, at which the Baron presided. Though no lawyer, he arrived intuitively at the right decision, which the audience entirely approved. He possesses absolute criminal jurisdiction in his domain, and has been known to send an offender to the gibbet. Hanging in chains is still a regular

punishment in Baranel, though, through the Baron's liberality in inviting to his hunting-parties, the necessity for practising it seldom arises. The Baron owns all the land in the country, except a few old allodial patrimonies. Nowhere, however, are rents lower. He has even been able, in periods of dearth, to return, by means of his foreign investments and estates, much more than the total of his receipts for several previous years. His only real peer is the mitred abbot of the neighbouring monastery of St. Hubert. One afternoon he drove me over to see its marvellous scriptorium, which goes on being continually enriched by its staff of indefatigable penmen and illuminators. Everywhere, indeed, throughout Baranel the arts flourish in their best mediæval form—only the results necessarily are expensive. Tourists must not expect cheap reprints or photographs. The introduction of such things is strictly prohibited. The penalty for violation of the law is nearly as severe as for the shooting of a deer. On my visit to the Courbevoyes Gaol, which has nothing of the character of a reformatory, I found that the single inmate was a man caught

in the act of smuggling into his cottage a chromolithograph.

As pretty a sight as I remember ever to have seen was a wedding the week before my departure. Marguerite de Spenholme was the bride, and Hugo de Valence the bridegroom. The whole had been arranged, I heard, by the Baron. Both were his wards, and he had the disposal of their hands at his unchallengeable discretion. After much deliberation he decided upon their marriage without consulting them. He judged the union of their contiguous properties convenient. By a happy accident the two discovered, after their guardian made them pledge their mutual troth, that they had long been in love with one another. Baranel, I need hardly say, is without railroads and tramways. There is no penny post. If agriculture is rather primitive, farmers never go into the bankruptcy court. Serfdom has not been abolished, and all the Baron's servants belong to the estate. No domestics understand their duties more completely, or discharge them more cheerfully. Neither they nor the outdoor bondsmen have been educated at board schools.

Generally they do not know how to read or write; but they have received an admirable practical training in manners and morals—the girls at the Béguinage, and the lads from the Order of Teaching Friars. The lack of book-learning is the less felt that, for the amusement of the winter evenings in hall and cottage, scores of harpists and story-tellers perambulate the country, sure of a hospitable welcome.

In the villein class itself exceptions to the rule of illiteracy occur. One rainy afternoon the Baron, after beating me at tennis, fencing, and shovel-board, suggested a visit to Roger Wiseheart. Down stairs and along corridors he led me for a quarter of a mile or so, till we came to a little quadrangle encircling a bright, fragrant garden. In an angle was a door, at which he rapped. On hearing an invitation to enter, he opened it. We found ourselves in a large, low room, surrounded with books and pictures, in delightfully orderly disorder. At a spacious table sat an elderly man in a velvet skull-cap, whom I had encountered at different times about the chateau. His manner evinced courteous familiarity with the Baron,

who, on his part, showed a pupil's affectionate respect for a beloved master. We had a long and interesting conversation. Roger Wiseheart, it appeared, is the author of most of the lovely ballads sung at night. From his fancy have also emanated the fascinating tales, some comic, some tragic, which are recited about the hamlets and in the foresters' huts. He brought out for us several rare manuscripts, and an astonishing collection of Roman coins, belonging chiefly to the age of the Antonines. Referring to the productions I now knew to be his, I expressed my regret that he had never published them. He seemed amused at the idea. He simply answered that when a poem is sung, or a story told, the author may be confident that it is because the singer, reciter, audience, appreciate it; when a book is bought, it is that the purchaser has no intention of reading it.

As we walked away, I was intimating my wonder to the Baron that M. Wiseheart had not travelled, to reap some reward of his genius in the shape of foreign flattery. "He has only to ask permission, if he would like it," said the Baron; "but I can imagine nothing more alien

from his taste." I could not guess how Wiseheart's travels should depend on the Baron's leave, though I did not care to inquire. Another guest enlightened me in the course of the evening. This brilliant man of letters is, it seems, a serf. He would be liable to arrest and a flogging if he tried to leave Baranel without a formal licence, though, in fact, the Baron has often pressed manumission upon him in vain. For one of his habits and temperament, after all, there could be, said my informant, no more satisfactory existence than confinement to a home like the chateau, with the adoration of all its residents, and the restful feeling that it is his fate never to be parted from it.

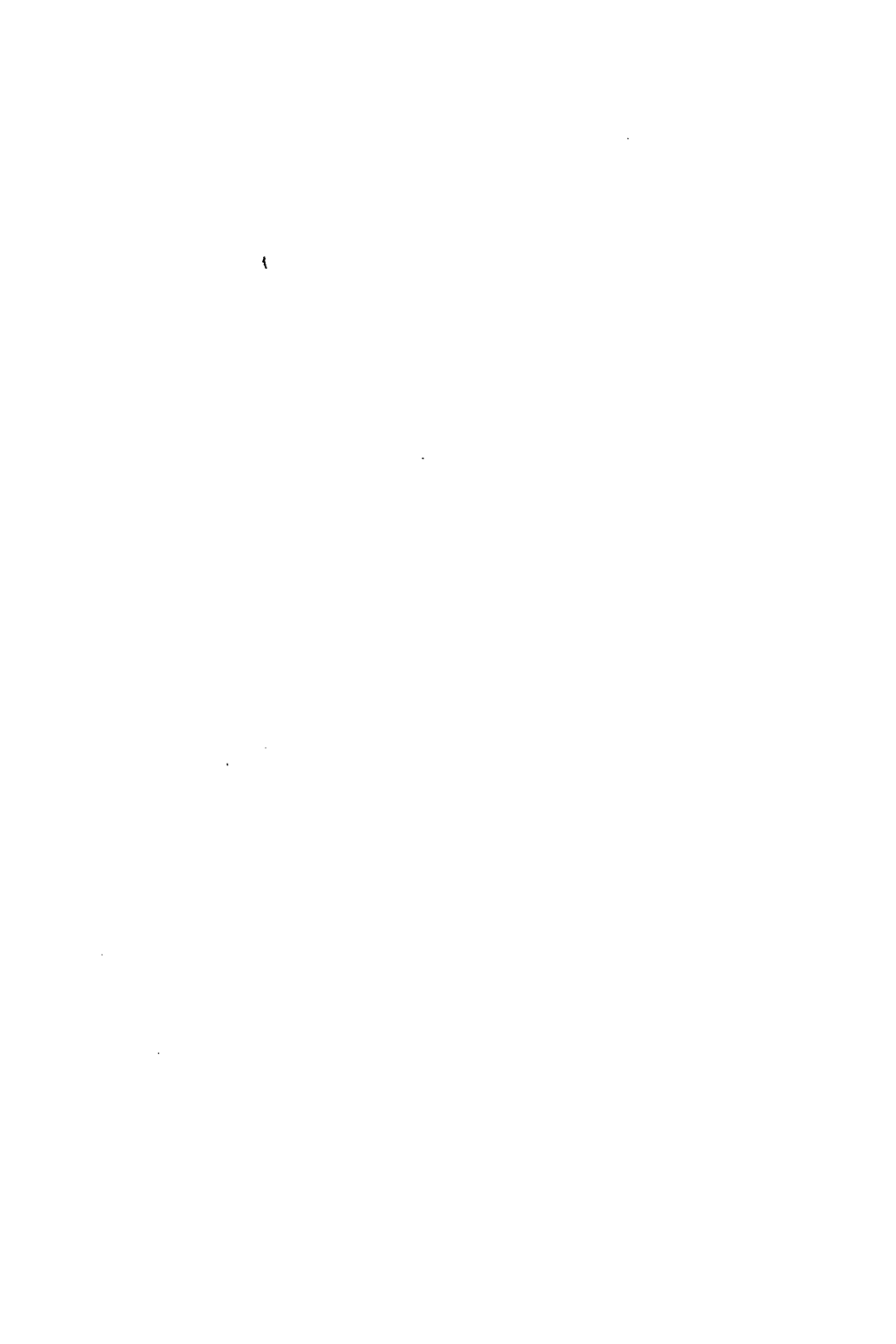
All the circumstances of life in Baranel have a charming congruity, which, to natures like Roger Wiseheart's, is better, I dare say, than any amount of freedom, flattery, or wealth. The fairies, of whom he dreams, still, unless evidence goes for nothing, frequent the hill caverns. Now and then they have stolen a babe, restoring it a generation later magnificently dowered with jewels, beauty, and health. Baranel houses have not lost the trick of being

haunted. The ghosts of dead heroes and love-lorn dames flit, to the awe rather than terror of the wayfarer, among the sylvan solitudes. Tournaments are held, and courts of love and honour. They are the most serious business of a people which has neither manufactures nor politics.

The state is styled a Principality. More really it is a feudal Commonwealth, with a Doge at its head, whose duty as a ruler is to maintain a brilliant Court, and conduct incessant pageants. I do not suppose that the territory has ever contributed any notable scientific, or mechanical and industrial, inventions or discoveries for the world's use; but the standard of manliness and self-respect has always been high. Not seldom Europe has had opportunities of judging. Baranel gentlemen have a fashion in youth of accepting commissions in foreign armies. If a desperate feat has to be accomplished, they insist upon being chosen to do it.

Both Baranel and the rest of Europe being what they are, I cannot help thinking that the perpetuation of the little state is justifiable and desirable. Necessarily it is not practicable for

the globe at large to be constituted on the same system. In the first place, room would fail. The Baranel population is at the rate of twenty to the square mile. If it multiplied, it would have to change either its manner of life or its country. Again, there is not money enough for a series of Baranels. The Baranel annual income is £175 a head, and two-thirds of it are derived from property abroad. Perhaps, too, the local demand for vice is insufficient, since the Baranel criminal average is represented by .65 in the thousand. It is the neighbouring principalities which, being rather disproportionately flagitious, bring the average right. As, however, there happens to be a Baranel, and only one Baranel, it is lawful to hope that it may continue for ever to remind modern generations of the pleasant features in the past, with few or none of the distasteful drawbacks. This, I have no doubt, was the view taken at the latest Aix-la-Chapelle Congress, which, by a distinct protocol, recognized the polity of Baranel as immortal, and outside alike the International Truant Extradition School Board Code and the Farthing Postal Convention.



A CONDENSING PROCESS

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It has always been a subject of surprise how Mingrelia has run ahead of all its neighbours and competitors. The state is comparatively modern. Mingrelians, though intelligent and energetic, are not manifestly superior to corresponding classes elsewhere. Yet the fact is notorious. I happened to spend last winter in the country, and I think I have arrived at a solution of the puzzle.

Strangers seldom winter in Mingrelia. The climate is detestable, and the roads, being, from the enormous traffic, of the consistency of semolina pudding, are all but impassable. I had no choice, having been appointed commissioner to take evidence on the spot for use in a suit before Mr. Justice Shuttleworth. The business itself would hardly have detained me

long enough to procure for me insight into the remarkable institution which I am about to describe, except for a little legal accident. By Mingrelian law it is, it appears, criminal for a foreigner to administer an oath within the local jurisdiction. Consequently I was prosecuted. I was obliged to give bail not to return home till I had been tried for the unintentional offence. I had no briefs waiting for me at Lincoln's Inn, and I drew five guineas a day as long as I was in Mingrelia. So I did not much mind, especially as the trap into which I had stumbled was made very soft and comfortable by the courtesy of my legal Mingrelian brethren.

One morning after breakfast, when I was wondering how I could kill time, one of my native bail, who amiably looked after my entertainment on the pretext that he was bound to see I did not expose my recognizances to estreatment, ran in with a proposal. "I dare say," he remarked, "you have never been at a Condensation. One is to be held this afternoon, and I have brought you a ticket." Not knowing in the least what he meant, I thanked him profusely. Putting on my hat and overcoat, I accompanied

him to a great hall not far off. We showed our cards, and were ushered into a gallery. The area was filled with a large number of youths of all conditions. After we had waited a little time, an usher came to the entrance and called out a name from a list. Its bearer speedily passed back through the hall on his way out with a certificate, which he showed with a self-satisfied countenance to the acquaintances he met. Another was summoned, and reappeared quickly in his turn.

In and out they walked in rapid succession. Sometimes they held certificates, sometimes not; sometimes they were cheerful, sometimes rueful. One of them called was a lad seemingly known to my companion, who watched for him with a little anxiety. As he re-entered the hall he flourished a paper in the air, together with a collar of S.S. In a tone of the greatest pleasure my friend cried out, "Well done, my Lord Chief Justice!" Turning to me: "Not three and twenty," he said, "and at the head, or all but the head, of his profession! How pleased, to be sure, will be his father, the attorney!" It was clearly, I thought, some elaborate joke, of

which I did not choose to seem unaware. However, after a time, the proceedings grew tedious. My acquaintance saw I was tired, and proposed an adjournment. "After all," he remarked, "you see here only preface and titles. You would be more interested with the inspection. I might get you in with a little brass."

He led me downstairs and into a labyrinth of corridors. We stopped at a door, which he boldly opened. "Witnesses to character," he cried to the official, who let us in without remonstrance. Inside there was a court fitted up with a bench for the judges, others for counsel and solicitors, and a box for witnesses.

A young man, evidently of the class which composed the crowd I had been observing in the hall, stood in a kind of dock. Counsel for the Crown was examining him. He was asked for what he was a candidate. He replied that he hoped to be a bishop. Thereupon ensued a long investigation. The candidate, who had an eye-glass, with a supercilious smile, and wore his hair parted in the middle, back and front, was made to explain why he considered the episcopate his vocation. His answers seemed not entirely

to satisfy his interrogator. At last he was put aside in a room by himself, with sherry and biscuits. Then the witnesses for and against him were called in turn. From them all the youth's idiosyncrasies, his likings, and the likes and dislikes of others for him, were elicited. Afterwards the advocates were heard. Finally the bench, after painful deliberation, decided adversely. The aspirant for lawn was called in, and informed, politely and sadly, that he had passed for a ladies' doctor. He bowed and left. Next entered a young fellow of much assurance. To the inquiry as to his choice of a career, he responded that he meant to be a tea-broker. He did not seriously mind, however, whether he were that or something in currants. The Court decided that he would make an excellent attorney-general by the time he was twenty-eight. In the mean time he was bound apprentice to an ex-lord chancellor to be trained.

The celerity with which the tribunal transacted its work was astonishing. It adjudged privy-councillorships, millionaireships, deaneries, the poet-laureateship, aldermen's gowns, bank-directorships, rate-collectorships, and a

seat in a scavenger's cart, without the slightest hesitation. Occasionally there was a grim episode. A youth would come in with a gay, bright, conquering air, and go off with a term of penal servitude. One, or I am much mistaken, withdrew straight to the gallows. Was it all a farce, or a charade? When I intimated as much to my friend, he looked to see if I were affecting ignorance. "Bless my soul!" he ejaculated, "I supposed everybody knew our ways. No, indeed; it is all serious enough. We let our children develop freely, and according to their bent, till they are twenty. Then the State interposes paternally. You know, the character is formed by that time, and most of the faculties are fully matured. A young man has made up his mind who and what he will be, and elsewhere may or may not reach his object. At any rate, he arrives, if at all, when he is worn out in body and brain, and is no better than his own shadow.

"We had," he continued, "the same institutions as the rest of you. Our generals and our admirals were all gamey; our chancellors were jobbers who had forgotten their law; our

statesmen were wordy windbags; our popular authors wrote 'Daniel Derondas,' 'Lothairs,' and sequels to 'Locksley Hall,' without having composed the first parts. Suddenly we resolved to act with common sense. We arranged means for discovering the end to which special talents naturally lead. On adequate proof of their possession by a candidate for any appointment, we ordained that indisputably, and the moment he was fit for it, he should have it. We assure him of the prize he deserves, instead of leaving him to the wasteful agony of pushing or, worse, of waiting. I do not mean that he is given it at once; but he has the proper training in place of a miserable suspense, which answers no purpose unless to sour and debilitate. We put him where he is judiciously ripened for his work, without the needless consumption of fruitful energy. We reckon that we save, on the average, a dozen or a score of years at the most telling period, and that no successful men in existence have half the amiability of ours.

"A man usually," he went on, "is the soundest judge of his own capacity. We,

therefore, give the initiative to the individual, reserving to the tribunal the right of affirming or negating. Though you happen to have witnessed a few misapprehensions, I can assert positively that the errors in the selection of a vocation are, on the whole, rare. Often the Court, at its fortnightly sittings, has only to assent to proposals. The most painful case is when a lad, having reached the stage of life at which the law requires a choice, can or will make none. In general, the reason, as might be imagined, is because he has depraved proclivities. Any one finally adjudicated incapable of a healthy preference for a particular pursuit is quietly put out of the way in such a mode as not to vex his worthy family. The result is that our leaders in every profession, our eminent merchants, manufacturers, ecclesiastics, lawyers, doctors, writers, are enriched and glorified without the soil upon their souls of preliminary intrigues and trickeries. Our burglars, swindlers, and cutthroats similarly are comfortably lodged in gaol, or beneath it, many years before, abroad, they are still sowing their wild oats. Our system simply is to

dispense with the second volume of a three-volume novel.”

I had always noted how young the celebrities in Mingrelian public life, in every department, looked. Now I discovered that they are young, and not merely well preserved. After moulding on the right patterns their brains, hearts, and ambitions when youth has all its springs in working order, they had been furnished with abundant opportunities for growing into their exalted places. There is no flavour of parvenus about them by the time they have mounted. To the nation the economy of mental and moral raw material has been inestimably large. The system has been to it just what the invention of the spinning-jenny was to cotton a century ago. No envy, jealousy, or spite is harboured at the news of the elevation of this or that personage. Years previously his destination was known, and no Mingrelian ever questions the infallibility of the decision. The country is too grateful for having its work done effectually to quarrel with the arrangement which has brought about the result. In the method consists, in fact, the secret of the

notorious ability of Mingrelia to do everything, except perhaps road-making, at once more cheerfully, more generously, more promptly, and more completely, than any other community has found to be practicable.

A FAMILY ARMISTICE

A FAMILY ARMISTICE

I AM acquainted with a town, I need hardly say not my own, where a curious custom is followed. In Kampen on the Yssel all families are bound by law to celebrate a species of jubilee every three years. An annual festival was tried at first, and found to be too severe a strain. So the Council and Stadtholder decreed five centuries back that it should be triennial. The Jubilaum is not a make-believe, a mere commemoration; it is a real *bonâ fide* jubilee, when things are done, or rather replaced. The idea of the Israelitish institution was that men should be given fresh chances. The same is the intention of the Kampen festival—only at Kampen the revival is of a less materialist character than in Palestine. Kampeners are accustomed to make large investments in plant,

both manufacturing and agricultural. They have timber-yards full of seasoned and seasoning pine and ash; they have prize cattle, and dairies lined with Dutch tiles. In every way it would be too inconvenient for them to have to turn out and begin life anew at the end whether of three years, seven, or fifty.

Their system is different, but as real; and at my last visit to the Zuyderzee I had abundant opportunities for seeing how admirably it works. As everybody knows, no family circle exists without serious and lasting feuds. They may have arisen out of important conflicts of interest, or from the veriest trifles. Dissimilarities in the nature of the source do not affect appreciably the gravity of the inconvenience, alike to the individuals concerned and to their neighbours. With time the intensity of the discord deepens, while the area widens, till the abyss tends to appear unfathomable, and incapable of being bridged. When, in the year 1093, Stadtholder Jan Meer was compiling his code for Kampen, it seemed to him that compulsory but temporary refraternization was the true mode of dealing with the trouble. He was

aware that it would make a hell upon earth to attempt to force relatives to live together when they hate one another at heart. His scheme, which finally he persuaded the burghers to adopt, was for short periodical reunions. The plan has long survived him, and almost the memory of him, and is still the most cherished of Kampen traditions.

No day is fixed for the whole population ; on the contrary, the object is to spread the festivity over as wide a space of time as possible. Every family, at the taking of the triennial cheese census, has to notify its next Jubilaum. The local authorities then proceed to arrange that the various days shall not clash. At Kampen itself every street probably will have one each week, or each fortnight. A village in the Kampen territory may have one or two a month. After the settlement of these preliminaries the head of the family, three months before the celebration, sends out invitations to the adult relatives. If, as often, genealogical controversy render the headship uncertain, a person is designated for the duty by the Butter Market Inspectors. The invitations

must not be for less than a day, and frequently are for a day and night, or several. The duration of the gathering varies with the means of the family, and, yet more, with the normal character of its feeling. In all cases the spirit manifested at the time is identical.

The Kampen point of honour is that, from the minute of arrival to the departure, good-fellowship and amiable affectionateness should reign. Thus I have myself seen how entirely put aside for the Van Heyden Jubilaum was the interminable lawsuit about the respective rights at Newmarket of the seven spinster Van Heyden sisters in their grandmother's gingham umbrella. At dinner at the mansion of Dierick Bouts the guests were telling good-humoured stories of the mode in which the silver salt-cellars had come into the household. I happened to have heard a week before that murder had nearly been done when the host seized possession of them on his father's death. One afternoon in the public Lustgarten I noticed a couple of gentlemen playing a tennis match with the most delightful thoughtfulness for one another's weaknesses. The taller was a little handicapped

by a patch over his right eye. My companion explained that it was the consequence of a tussle the week before with the other, his brother, in church; the dispute had ended in an appearance of both before the burgomaster for brawling.

By practice, and from a keen sense of the merits of the institution, Kampeners have reached all but absolute perfection in the art of burying the hatchet at a Jubiläum. For the anniversary, low and high, rich and poor, ignorant and accomplished, manage to be courteous, genial, and even loving. They tell old stories, and do not look bored. They are not above receiving good advice. They can skate over the thinnest ice without breaking it. It might be supposed that the players in the comedy would be ashamed of being observed performing; that they would keep to themselves, like a wounded crustacean, until their claws were grown again, and they were free once more to nip. On the contrary, they act the parts of happy kinsfolk so naturally that it never occurs to them to be shy of notice. They ask strangers without scruple to a Jubiläum; they

arrange parties of pleasure to public places. One of my greatest treats at Kampen was to saunter about watching jubilee manners. The custom, by the way in which the celebrations are spread over the year, gives Kampen the air of perennial gaiety for which it is famed.

When, however, a tourist becomes acquainted with the people, an even odder experience is to see the same persons immediately after. There would, it might have been supposed, be some awkwardness in reverting on the morrow of a Jubilaum to the attitude of spiteful animosity habitual among near relatives. For Kampeners there is no such difficulty. They resume the normal temper and the normal demeanour the instant they have said good-bye and passed the neutral boundary, commonly the first railway station, or penny-omnibus-fare stage, at the termination of the anniversary. They send to and fro their lawyers' letters, they taunt, they slander, they recriminate, they bully, they cozen, they envy, they overreach, they undermine. They behave in general after the fashion inevitable with humanity, when the accident

of sharing the same sort of blood has forced it to compress contradictory likings into a cast-iron mould they do not fit.

That is the beauty of the Kampen institution, which alone has enabled it to weather the ages. If the Legislature had sought to make citizens fraternal and kindly by Act of Parliament, it must have miserably failed. Its success is due to its full recognition that relatives will and should be let bicker—"it is their nature to"—but that, at the same time, in the flood of congenital bitterness there is a drop of native blood-bred affection. The infusion is much or little, according to circumstances. But, at all events, a single day out of one thousand and ninety-five, or six, may fairly be appropriated to its service. To strive after more would have introduced a hypocritical farce, with the danger of an abrupt reaction to murderous, Cain-like enmity. By proclaiming nothing beyond a twelve or twenty-four hours' truce, the law-giver has secured simply a brief respite, of which the best haters are pleased to avail themselves, in order to brace their tempers for fresh paroxysms.

So carefully is the article framed to ensure against Utopian extravagances of a show of mutual loving-kindness, that it expressly forbids engagements during the Jubilaum to abandon lawsuits or other manifestations of ill will. Pledges of the sort are treated by the courts as acts of duress, and are liable to penalties as contempts. Beyond the day itself a species of neutral territory in point of time extends, during which compositions of domestic quarrels are regarded by justice with marked disfavour. I myself heard Baron von Schwag, one of the kindest of men in private life, refuse, with very warm expressions as to the quarters probably occupied by the testator, to take out probate of the will of Jacob Leries, which had been executed the morning after the Leries Jubilaum. Jacob Leries, by this will, with expressions of regret that the Leries family should have been rent in pieces for twenty years by a dispute over the Van der Helst succession, consisting of a Delft tea-set, renounced his own share therein. In addition he left £2000 to each of his male and female Leries relatives out of his deceased wife's property, on condition that

they agreed to keep the crockery in a cabinet inscribed with the family name in the Leyden Museum.

Baron von Schwag, when rather more cool, took occasion to comment generally on the intention of Jubilee Day law. It was designed, he showed, simply to keep alive the spark in everybody of family affection. For that the sacrifice of a day was not too much. To infer thence, or to suffer, that the emotion of a few hours should obliterate the settled rage and mutual dislike of years was absurd. If the consanguineous instinct had genuine power, it could exert it in the many months before Jubilee Day came round again. It had no warrant for relying on the casual intoxication of a dozen or more hours. Wise Kampeners of my acquaintance have always upheld strenuously the truthfulness of the Baron's principle. They have mentioned various cases in which unstable emotional relatives have let themselves be impelled by the effervescence of Jubilee Day to simulate abiding affection towards brothers, sisters, stepmothers, or cousins, with the worst effects. Just for an interval they have preserved the peace. Then

Nature has avenged herself by deplorable outbursts.

On the other hand, I have heard of cases not a few in which, with proper caution and delay, the due nurture of the tiny element of family kindness at the triennial festivity has developed a really delightful and permanent glow of instinctive sympathy. A longing has set in which distance from Jubilee Day has intensified instead of chilling. Months and weeks have been counted to the next celebration. The pleasure of saying "Check" in one or another paltry squabble with kinsmen has perceptibly abated. At last sworn foes, having contracted insensibly a habit of passing their time together in the friendliest intercourse, have been astonished by a formal summons to lay aside rancour they no longer feel, with their overcoats, hats, and umbrellas, in the cloak-room of their jubilee host.

Obviously such consequences, when they occur, deserve to be cordially welcomed. For the credit both of human nature and of Kampen legislation, they are honourably recorded in the civic annals. I must confess that one or two

candid friends of mine among the burghers have intimated a kind of satisfaction at the comparative rarity of these household reconciliations. They have boasted that a peculiarly agreeable feature of Kampen society is the celebration of jubilee days by circles which harbour a variety of reciprocal antipathies. I was myself present, I remember, at a gathering which was by no means entertaining. The guests were amiable and well bred; the host and hostess were attentive, cultivated, and opulent. Nevertheless, there was a want; and late in the evening one of the party explained it. 'You see,' he said, 'things have dragged a little in comparison with the affair at my wife's cousins', the Crazy-Medlars', where I had the pleasure of meeting you last week. The fact is, since last Jubilaum my own people have all become excellent friends. Though I do not mean that Jubilee Day is as flat among us as with the Van Gurglikows, who have carried off among them all the Dunmow and Monthyon prizes for universal benevolence and virtue, still, it is a sad falling off from what it was while we were incessantly in Chancery and the police courts.'"

It is just as my acquaintance suggested. The special charm of a Kampen Jubilaum of the orthodox type is that it is an interlude in the midst of an anarchy of cross words, cross looks, and cross thoughts. It is perfect holiday and rest; every minute is like a ray of sunshine in a dark place, the momentary vision of a very far-off home. After, or amid, thirty-six months of fiery temper-tortures, it is something to have a day's taste all round of fingers dipped in cold water from Paradise.

BEGINNING AT THE RIGHT END



BEGINNING AT THE RIGHT END

IN the kingdom of Aral, where they do everything so much better than here, the national system of education is the most practical of any with which I am acquainted. Put shortly, it may be said to consist in the education of one's masters.

Education in Aral, as elsewhere, was not long since based upon the established principle of setting the elders in all degrees to train the juniors. As elsewhere, the results were only partially successful. Fathers formed their sons, and mothers their daughters. But households did not go on the better for the matured excellence of the discipline the children imbibed. The heads of the family were the rulers and managers, and the children suffered cruelly from misgovernment. The same was the school

experience. It was of little use that pupils tried hard to learn. All in after-life raised the constant and just complaint that their teachers had not known how and what to teach. So, again, it was as between employer and employed. From factories and farms rose the same cry. Masters were always endeavouring to instruct their servants, and the whole was lost labour. At the works the hands toiled skilfully and indefatigably. Suddenly it would appear that, acting faithfully as ordered, they had turned out goods of a sort which markets rejected on any terms. A household might be perfectly drilled and absolutely docile, when some afternoon an officer of the Bankruptcy Court would enter, and turn everybody into the street, because the head had been speculating for a month or two on a boom in Argentines.

Casualties like these were perpetually occurring. At length the entire junior and subordinate population of Aral, having just undergone a series of domestic and foreign crises, lost patience. It determined, in its various grades, to take the matter into its own hands. Beyond the possibility of contradiction it had been

discovered that the system of teaching at the Board and Denominational elementary schools, at the Aral equivalents, composed of unpronounceable syllables, for Rugby, Eton, Harrow, Marlborough, Westminster, and Winchester, and even at the establishments of the Aral Girls' Public Day School Company, Limited, was radically and scandalously wrong. All the Kangrad First Classmen and Urogenj Wranglers, as well as the students who had confined their ambition to a Testamur at Responsions, had discovered that they might as usefully have been picking oakum. Daughters, on marriage, lived in a vale of tears on account of the daily refusal of their husbands to dine on offal, as they styled their food, or to sit out animated debates between them and their maids. Sons cursed the folly which had thrown them upon life with no knowledge how to spend. Cotton-spinners and iron-workers were not disposed to starve with Christian resignation because their capitalist paymasters had chosen to glut the world with their wares. Constituencies would have dearly liked to hang their representatives for the bad laws they passed and expected the

country to obey. Everything was perversely wrong, though, and it almost seemed because, no children, pupils, servants, and artisans could be more tractable, industrious, and pleasant-tempered than juvenile and working Aralians.

Vast public meetings were held of all the subject ranks in their different degrees, down to the infants in perambulators. The children in arms sat heavily upon their nurses, and the maids upon their mistresses. Clerks arraigned the blunders of their principals, soldiers the awkwardness of their officers, congregations the stolidity of their pastors, artists the bad taste of patrons, wives the infirmities of husbands, railway passengers the obstinate incapacity of directors, and children of parents. In not a few instances a subordinate in one relation, after having adjudicated sternly on the shortcomings of his superiors, had the rope fastened about his own neck, or stood in a white sheet, in another character, an object for the ridicule and execrations of a crowd of other menial judges.

That was the beauty of it, which took the sting from the ordeal. Everybody had in turn to be condemned, as well as to condemn, and

the one experience balanced the other. The native sweetness also of the Aralian temper softened the roughness of the process. The so-called superiors recognized graciously their defaults, and submitted to their sentences with the most amiable candour. They admitted, one and all, their gross incompetence, though how, they asked, could it have been otherwise? They had themselves only been trained to obey; they had never been trained to train others. Education had commenced for them in the silliest way at the wrong end. They were ready enough to begin over again, if their young friends, their kind servants, and the rest would be at the pains to school them.

Obviously that was the proper course. With the assent, sooner or later, of all sides, arrangements were made for turning over a fresh leaf. Committees were elected in the schools, primary and secondary, for the reorganization of the curriculum on a sensible basis, and for fitting the teachers to conduct it. Years ago, on my first visit to Aral, I remember being much edified, on going into an infant school, at the sight of several most capable, if diminutive,

babies explaining to a new mistress, a full-grown giantess, that they did not require her to draw idiotically and twiddle her fingers. I do not mean that there was no friction. At the famous school of Mount Airuk, where I was the headmaster's guest, I had noticed a little uneasiness, which, however, speedily subsided. The occasion, I learnt, was the decision of a majority of the boys, chiefly in the lower forms, to do away with "memoriter Virgil," and to substitute Browning's "Ring and the Book" for the first decade of Livy. At Kuna the nailers had, I heard, a slight difficulty a short time back in obliging an elderly millionaire to pass an apprenticeship to the management of works he had just bought, and fancied he could govern by the light of nature. But he saw the necessity, and put on an apron without further demur. I have even been told that the medical superintendent of the Asylums Board's renowned hospital at Port Aralsk was not always as courteous as eventually he showed himself, when the patients first enlightened him on the proportion of port they liked with their beef-tea. Still, in general, as everybody acquainted with Aral will admit,

it was delightful to see with what urbanity and, gradually, even enthusiasm the old ruling classes fell into line.

I suppose the propriety of the revolution was so exceedingly obvious. The moment one comes to think of it, the system, as it exists, is seen to be preposterous. Parents manifestly discipline children for the children's sake, and not their own ; yet they seldom have taken the least trouble to ascertain from the children what they want. In manufactories the prosperity of the operations is of consequence to the hands most of all. The barest justice, therefore, evidently requires that they should have the right to ensure that their employers are qualified to guide. Wherever you look, it is apparent that, for the world to be administered satisfactorily, they who are governed ought to be empowered to demand proof that their rulers have been effectually taught their functions.

To provide for the education of our masters thus is the primary business. It is much more important than the education of ourselves, which, for the most part, is other people's

affair. It is to be regretted that many states beside Aral have been very slow to appreciate the same truth, and slower still to realize it in action.

IPSILAND

IPSILAND

IN Bruton's Collection of Voyages, I lighted the other day upon the narrative of Captain Amyas Sparfote's expedition to Ipsiland. Bruton is a very rare author, and it is at least ten thousand chances to one that my readers have never seen a copy of his book. So they may be grateful for an abstract of the description written by Captain Sparfote's rather long-winded chaplain.

Ipsiland lies, or lay in Captain Sparfote's time, in lat. 1037. H.M.'s frigate *Goshawk* touched there on July 29, 1863. The capital, Ipsiburg, had so very civilized and prosperous an air, as seen from the beautiful and capacious bay, that the Captain did not hesitate to land immediately. As the boat ran ashore, a well-dressed and well-mannered gentleman accosted

Captain Sparfote, inviting him and his brother officers to his house. Other Ipsilanders were present, and attended the strangers to the mansion of the entertainer. They were all human beings ; that was certain ; and they were very courteous. They even spoke excellent English, only with a slight and agreeable Somersetshire accent. Yet, as the Chaplain, the Rev. Hugh Greenhatch, explains, the Captain, himself, and the rest found it harder to render themselves intelligible to their hosts than if they had been cast away among gorillas.

The difficulty commenced very soon. After the party had walked some distance, the Captain happened to inquire if his host's residence were much farther. The islander looked surprised, and civilly regretted his absolute inability to gather the meaning of the question. On their arrival, wine was brought, and the butler was serving the third lieutenant. He declined, remarking that his betters should be helped first. The Ipsilanders wanted to know what was meant by betters. Apparently the new English books circulate in Ipsiland, and a famous poet's latest production was discussed.

The Chaplain expressed his view that the writer was more successful with lyrics than with the drama. Again the natives stared. They saw that something was meant. Nobody could for the life of him guess what it was. On their way back to the quay they strolled about the market-place, where a fishmonger was selling. A salmon attracted the purser, though he thought the price exorbitant. He said he would give fivepence a pound less. The vendor could not make out whether the stranger were not mocking him with nonsense words. A lofty mountain overhangs the harbour, and the officers began comparing its height with Teneriffe. A crowd gathered to listen to their odd ideas. "Higher than!" mimicked the bystanders, much as if they were calling out "Godam!"

The ship needed careening, and the Ipsiburg dockyard contained all appliances and skilful workmen for the purpose. There could not, moreover, have been more civil and complaisant officials. As the country is exceedingly fertile, and happens to produce commodities much valued in Great Britain, and to be defective in staple British goods, it might have been hoped

that the expedition would be the cause of the commencement of mutually advantageous relations between the two Governments. The happy prospect was entirely marred by the two short words, "more" and "less." The more the ship's company and the Ipsiburgers saw of each other, the deeper and wider yawned the abyss. Both sides became more and more indignantly conscious that they possessed no common ground.

An extraordinary session of the Ipsiland Royal Society was held for a debate on the nature of the curious strangers. It had been positively ascertained that they were virtually incapable of considering any subject by itself. Everything was less or greater than something else, better or worse, cheaper or dearer. These were not mere figures of speech, as had originally been supposed. Investigation had proved that the minds were as cranky as the dialect. Every thought had to prop itself up and measure itself against another thought. "The poor, dependent folk!" was the conclusive and irrefutable verdict of the Ipsiland philosophers.

It might not have mattered so much if the

strangers had recognized their defect, or, at least, had been tolerant of Ipsiland prejudices. But they were as contemptuously compassionate, and at length there was an explosion. The Chaplain and Surgeon were guests at a very intellectual tea-party given by an Ipsiburg lady of culture and means. They had rendered themselves familiar with the local literature, and joined in the conversation on a recent publication by a celebrated Ipsiland novelist. In all innocence the Chaplain, while lauding the work, observed that nevertheless he could not rank the humour of the tapster as highly as that of Paul Pry in the writer's earliest production. The Ipsiburgers present could not comprehend the drift of the criticism. They inferred, however, not entirely without ground, an intention to insult their favourite author, and to represent him as in his dotage. They grew incensed by the well-meant efforts of the Surgeon to explain. Gradually they became so wrathful that both he and the innocent offender took their hats and retired. The outraged company ran after them to the beach, reviling.

Captain Sparfote, from his quarter-deck, noticed a gesticulating group, and supposed some of his sailors had been drinking. Being a strict disciplinarian, he had his galley at once out, and hastened to arrest the culprits. He landed at the same moment with the commander of the Ipsiland corvette *Positive*, whom he acquainted with his surmise. They walked together to the scene of the agitation, and, as ill luck would have it, Captain Sparfote chanced to mark the number of buttons on the other's uniform. For the sake of talk, he observed that his companion was fortunate in having fewer to do and undo than himself. Somehow the Ipsiland officer, who was yet more puzzled by comparisons than the philosophers, imagined a sinister significance in the words. He retorted with heat, and a fresh little mob assembled round them. All Ipsiburg seemed gathering on the shore. Captain Sparfote, recollecting the fate of Captain Cook, slowly and cautiously beat a retreat with the Chaplain and Surgeon. As soon as they were safely on board, for precaution he had a few shots fired to disperse the rioters. The Ipsiland corvette commander,

who also had embarked, replied from his vessel, and speedily a naval fight was in full progress. H.M.'s frigate *Goshawk*, having sunk the *Positive* with her whole crew, steamed out of reach of the shore batteries. The next morning she quitted the Ipsiland waters, none too soon. Since that period, as may easily be believed, there has been no intercourse between the isles of Ipsiland and Great Britain.

On the *Goshawk's* return, I find from Bruton that a learned debate was held at the Philological Institute in Camden Town on the supposed habits, tenets, and tongue of the Ipsilanders. I do not find that the Institute came to any definite conclusion, except that the Ipsilanders represent the Lost Tribes. The majority otherwise were clear only that life without a more and a most, a less and a least, is simply impossible. The scanty minority was led by one crusty and antiquated member, who declared it both practicable and convenient to judge things and men on their own merits, and not by reference to something else. As, however, his habit for the half-century, during which he had been a member, had been to

characterize any who disagreed with him as each one more of a born idiot than another, his judgment can scarcely count for much in the controversy.

More to the point, perhaps, is a statement which the steward of the Institute extracted in the taproom after the meeting from the ship's cook. He inserted it in his ledger, whence Bruton disinterred it. He has printed it as a note to the Rev. Hugh Greenhatch's account. Samuel Spratt, H.M.'s ship *Goshawk's* cook, had no prejudices or prepossessions against or for degrees of comparison, since he could not spell, and stuttered. Having to market to supply the messes, he necessarily, however, saw much of the natives. He appears to have described them accurately to his interviewer. Ipsilanders, it seems, are all of the same height, though no sense of a monotonous uniformity is produced; on the contrary, the prevailing impression is of variety. Each is of his own type, and has to be classed separately. So with the houses. They cannot be described as little or big, superior or medium-sized. Each is itself, and fits its tenant. Distinct ranks and social

differences do not exist. Yet everybody has his own place.

Spratt evidently had little trouble with the people. He was not shocked by their downright simplicity, as were his officers. Ipsilanders liked him, too, and his common sailor mates, while they looked suspiciously at the Captain, Lieutenants, Doctor, Chaplain, and even the boatswain. He did not know why they favoured him, unless it were that they once happened to hear him and a gunner say to one another that "comparisons are odorous." The Ipsilanders had no notion of the meaning of the saying, any more than the speakers; but they were fascinated by the sound. Whenever the men came ashore on a spree, a crowd would quickly surround them, and make them repeat the sentence for a half-hour at a time.

After all, Spratt's testimony does not amount to much. It is negative rather than positive. Still, there seems to be more substance in it than in that of the Chaplain. At any rate, it does not look as if we were ever likely to learn about Ipsiland from any other source.

A FEMININE PLOT

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No more connubial land, I suppose, at the present, exists than Istria. From one year's end to the other it is all giving and taking in marriage. A stranger cannot go there on a week's ramble without receiving at least a couple of invitations to wedding-receptions. He had better have a known wife at home, or he may find before he leaves that he is himself newly engaged. The great champagne growers of Epernay have a particular brand for export, which is called "Istr. Hymen. Sweet." Every church you enter is dressed with orange flowers, and occupied by a wedding-company. All the public gardens are perpetually being paraded by cooing bridesmaids and best men, who have to while away the rest of the afternoon before the evening dance.

Truculent bachelors, who have never been to Istria, will sneer, "What a vista of livelong discord and squabbling!" No; that is the best of it. By universal testimony, nowhere is life more comfortable, cheerfully placid, and agreeable. Every sort of talent is admirably developed. Poetry is not, as elsewhere, an extinct art. It even has plenty of readers. Novels are bright, and racily flavoured. As in France, they do not invariably come to an end on the wedding-day, though, unlike the French habit, their heroes do not invariably make love, unless in the most honourable way, to their neighbours' wives. Women's rights are not the favourite topic in society; yet women enter into everything, and exercise illimitable influence. The country overflows with ideas, which are realized with masculine steadiness, and sparkle with feminine fancy. The single industry which does not thrive in Istria is the promotion of clubs. Clubs, while not absolutely unknown, are busy only in the afternoon. That signifies penury for stewards, secretaries, and the rest, who elsewhere count upon much evening conviviality, with the incidental commissions, for

the accumulation of a provision for their declining age.

A few centuries ago, I am told, things were altogether different. Marriage, as a popular institution, was become almost obsolete. I do not mean literally that the custom had been abandoned. Persons of great wealth married that they might leave heirs to it. Likewise people with none married that the rich might have objects for the expenditure of their superfluity. The order, which in its several sections constitutes the real nation, had given up the practice. As everybody belonging to it freely acknowledges, the middle class is a land's true backbone; and when I speak of the middle class, I mean mainly, of course, the professional, in its many ramifications. There are the lawyers, from the Attorney-General to the unrobed magnates of Bedford Row. There are the doctors, medical and surgical baronets, and flourishing general practitioners. There are the tale-tellers, the historians, and the journalists, from the staff of the *Times* to magazine essayists. There are architects, clergy, military and naval officers, fellows of colleges, Civil servants, and

headmasters. With them have to be socially reckoned painters, sculptors, stockbrokers, publishers, and directors of companies. Many others are admitted, at their own request, within the circle, on proof of their capacity to speak the professional shibboleth. The middle class forms opinion, and has constituted itself the mouth-piece of Providence for the promulgation of intellectual fashions. Decorous and self-satisfied, it has always been the recognized model, above all, of Istrian domestic morality; and at the period of which I speak, it had begun to discover that marriage is a mistake!

The view, paradoxical as for depositaries of morality it appears, and fatal as it must be to half of humanity, was not, in Istria, altogether inexplicable. Istrian middle-class incomes were not, and are not, profuse. They commence at £200, and run up in time to sums varying from £500 to £1200. Naturally they sometimes transcend these limits. Middle-class Istrians, without quitting their order, may earn from five to ten thousand a year. That is neither necessary, nor common, nor, on the whole, convenient. Born and bred middle-class

Istrians do not disburse easily beyond three to four thousand a year within their class; and the vast majority of them strongly object to quitting it. In general, they cannot spend more than a certain moderate amount; and, equally, they cannot comfortably content themselves with much less than that amount to spend.

The scale of Istrian living had indeed been rationally, though rather rigidly, regulated from of old. Every middle-class man had so to live that it should be impossible for his circle to know for certain whether he possessed a revenue of hundreds or of thousands. He had to dress like a gentleman. He had to belong to a good club, where he passed most of his leisure hours. He dined there when he was not engaged to a friend's house. He had to keep cash enough in his pocket to play a game of billiards, or rubber of whist, and lose, though such diversions were not obligatory. He had to go to the Alps, Carpathians, or Corfu in the autumn. As his income in the ordinary course expanded more or less, he might increase his outlay. Concert and opera tickets would occasionally be bought. He might venture upon the luxury of

a little charity. He might give more little dinners at the club, or at Barcola. He might possibly join in hiring a wild-boar chase, or mile of a salmon river. Even, little as it mattered where he slept, he might move into the Ring from Wasagasse.

The accidents of life changed for him according to the ebb and flow of his pecuniary circumstances. The modifications were all immaterial. The one essential point was that he should be seen, on a footing of apparent equality, where the best members of his class were seen, at all the hours, after sunset, during which his class is on view. That was the law of life and the decree of fate in Istria, from the beginning of legal memory, as it is the rule still. It is a beautiful ordinance; but at the period in question circumstances were rendering its observance, in matrimony, difficult. As men grew up, and slipped, after the customary manner, from the parental nest, they found they could manage fairly, on the whole, on the £200 a year which destiny, whether acting through the family purse or through professional earnings, supplies to all well-conditioned young

gentlemen at twenty-five. At thirty it was better still for a bachelor ; for probably the income had by that time moderately risen. Only, about that period also an idea would spontaneously spring up that it was convenient to marry and settle. About that period their fathers and grandfathers had married and settled ; and why should not they ? When, however, they acted on the principle, or impulse, the consequences were extremely serious.

Apparently their fathers and grandfathers were not accustomed to live at clubs. They had not regarded a little card-playing, opera-going, whitebait-eating, Chateau-Margaux-drinking, and grouse-shooting as the necessaries of life they were to their sons and grandsons. They had lived humdrum, poky lives up and down the Istrian Fleet Street, Bloomsbury, and Strand. Married life on £200 a year was no more commonplace to them than had been bachelorhood upon £60. Luxury commenced for them, if ever, after marriage, when their incomes had mounted among the thousands.

Their children began where they had left off, and did not at all like to climb down. They

could not, whatever their inclinations, with the brides they chose. Istrian middle-class young ladies acted as if from twelve to fifteen hundred a year were an elementary condition of respectable human existence. They dressed, danced, fed, accomplished themselves, and talked, from the society papers, at that rate. They had never learnt to manage a household, and, least of all, a household of a couple of maids. The unfortunate husband of one of them had to divest himself of the whole of his waistcoat pocket-money, and her, too, of hers. Gradually it dawned upon the middle-class male that there was a remedial alternative to an unendurable Purgatory before the Paradise of £2000 a year was reached. Simply he had to refrain from marriage. He could leave the recruiting of the invaluable middle class to immigrants forcing their way in, with less fine feelings than his, from below. It mattered little to the newcomers that their early married days were sordid and prosaic. They had not been born in the purple. They lost nothing in having to put off to mature manhood the enjoyments of clubland. The leg of mutton and rice pudding, and other

penurious incidents of matrimony at thirty, were no privations to men who had never been parties to the domestic outlay of more than a hundred or two a year.

No arrangement could have been more rational for the youthful philosophers who framed it than the acceptance of a class celibacy. It would have been a perfect solution of the difficulty had it not left rather out in the cold the middle-class young lady. To be a middle-class young lady till five and twenty is sufficiently pleasant. A girl in that rank is well educated and well dressed. Her parents have, or live as if they had, a large income for their highly reputable station. She shares in all the innocent amusements of her circle. She enjoys the full benefit of picture-galleries, concerts, plays, balls, at-homes, society scandal, and lending libraries. Very possibly she drives and rides sometimes in the Park. She can count upon a large circle of intimate friends. In the autumn she goes to the seaside, country, or Highlands. After twenty-five it is less delightful. She knows she is tending towards confirmed spinsterhood. That might not be a melancholy fate, in

the existing circumstances, if they were sure to go on existing. Their abrupt termination is not unlikely; and, at all events, they cannot go on for ever. If her father leave a fortune, as he may not, her part of it is sure not to be much. An unmarried lady with £150 to £200 a year is in a dissimilar situation to a bachelor brother with the same income. That, however, was the end to which, it was manifest, in the mass, middle-class young ladyhood was inevitably approaching in the Istria of several centuries back.

Its doom would have been irreparably sealed but for the wisdom and courage of a new and more glorious Joan of Arc, Arabella Smith. Miss Smith organized a movement which has absolutely regenerated Istria. By her oratory, by essays, by letters, she awakened her sex, of the middle class, to the frightful danger, which had already begun to reveal its calamitous reality. Her method was at the first to bring home to young women of her rank that, as they were, they were a poor price to offer to middle-class young men of thirty to forty for what they gave up. She commenced by instilling

humility. She explained the comfort in which men lived, and at how moderate a cost. She exposed specimens of club cookery side by side with the domestic joint, or with the horrible made-dish of the west and south-west regions. She showed how smoothly the wheels run in a Ring club, and how sadly unlike is the experience of family life on £200 or even £300 a year. Under her direction, Herr Ziller composed a striking fantasia of familiar nagging on a single string, which was adopted as the Istrian national anthem.

When the female middle-class audience was immersed in speechless despair, she would open another phase, of possibilities. Appealing to the feminine spirit of adventurousness, she would dilate on the glory of leading a forlorn hope, and planting the connubial flag on the citadel of the originally celibate enemy, man. It could be done, she showed, only by demonstrating that a wife was the most economical, labour-saving apparatus that had ever been invented; that she was more ornamental than Birket Foster's cottage-door sketches, or Rhodian plates; that she was more entertaining than a

club smoking-room; more even-tempered than a club coffee-room waiter; that she was better fun than the noisiest variety singer. Middle-class single women, she urged, owed it to their order to devote themselves, severally and collectively. Any who had the exceptionally good luck to capture a husband, must, openly and unmistakably, for all the world to note, so bewitchingly flatter and cajole him as to set his free brethren longing for slavery.

The crisis was recognized as extreme, and her protests convinced the dullest and most arrogant. Rome was not built in a day; and men, after being out at grass, were not persuaded in a moment to resume the bygone collar of wedlock. They resisted stoutly, and even called in the aid of legend. Positively it passed current in the secret places of Pall Mall, against all physiology, as well as against the Book of Genesis, that middle-class man and middle-class woman are descended from a different middle-class Adam and Eve. At all events, with or without the concurrence of science and theology, they were determined not to put their heads into the halter.

Nevertheless, they were caught at last. With mild persistency, by precept and by example, it was proved to them that two human beings, a young man and a young woman, being of the right class, do not spend, as had been calumniously alleged, three or four times as much as one, but less than twice. They spend less than twice, and derive twice the comfort and amusement. That was not all. It was established indisputably that marriage is a profitable partnership. While the original income is more advantageously spent, the breadwinner learns how to double or treble it. Whenever he has the germ of a remunerative thought, his wife seizes its various bearings, and encourages and assists its development. Without being the least of a taskmistress of the Frau Dürer type, she will throw about the theme such a happy radiance of interest and curiosity, that he cannot but nurse and ripen it as a labour of love into paying flower and fruit.

Half a man's energies, especially in an intellectual career, are wasted upon the worries of life. These Istrian conspiratrices cultivated the art of mitigating and healing worries, which henceforth

ceased to exact their normal toll. Their predecessors had been rather famous for chafing a scratch into a sore. If a friend exerted the duty, or privilege, of candid criticism of an article, speech, sermon, or sonnet, a wife, after bringing and reading the review or letter to her husband, had exhibited her sympathy by detecting and imparting to him a multitude of ill-natured motives in the censor. Acting on Miss Arabella Smith's perhaps not very moral counsels, they of the new school adopted an opposite method. Naturally and affectionately they invariably took their husbands' side, right or wrong, with the most unscrupulous partisanship. At the same time, they poured in oil and honey, or even wine. On her own account as well as his, and for the maintenance of her respect for human discernment, a wife could not bear to suppose that others were too malignant or too stupid to perceive and admire genius. She made herself to believe, and him to believe with her, that the assailant was merely playing at sarcasms; that, in earnest, he was either only desirous to prevent his idol from sleeping on his laurels, or afraid, on his own

behalf, to be accounted too indiscriminate a worshipper.

Matrimony, in short, revived and cultivated on the Arabella Smith basis, became, in time, as may readily be understood, a Paradise, into which the whole of Istrian middle-class youth grew eager to rush. The wedded state became the fashion, as celibacy once had been. Apart from the material end, Istrian young ladies themselves discovered new charms in the hunt for husbands, as remodelled. Formerly they had betaken themselves to it, and they had regretted the threatened prospect of its termination, chiefly because they had no alternative pursuit. Henceforth a genuine taste for husbands, as pleasant companions, and not only relieving officers, sprang up. It was felt to be delightfully exciting to be training and running a lawyer, a doctor, a politician, a writer, an artist, in the race of life, where the prizes were undoubtedly due to the woman not less, if not much more, than to the man. There was no little pleasure, moreover, feminine nature being what it is, in something of a virtuous and kindly sense that the rougher and more

unperceptive masculinity was being wound round the little finger, and induced to feel acute pleasure in doing, as it imagined, of its own mere motion precisely what finer wits had predetermined for it.

A foreigner, even on a first visit to Istria, has no difficulty in comprehending why matrimony is there the most cherished of institutions; his only wonder is that there ever was a period at which it appeared to be on the point, for the reigning middle class, of downright extinction. I am not sure that the revolution has been altogether beneficial to the manners and modesty of the masculine sex. It may have led to a certain arrogance in husbands, plunged into a domestic Capua, and taught to esteem themselves born autocrats. That a body of very poor creatures should be suffered to cheat themselves into the undoubting faith that they have wills of their own, when they have none, can scarcely be right or entirely moral. I confess I have myself no very strong liking for the prosperous middle-class married Istrian man, whom every vacation tourist meets in the Alps and all frequented reputable holiday

resorts; but I fully share the general admiration for the middle-class Istrian girl, whether married or apprenticed to the matrimonial calling.

Marriageable Istrian women of the particular rank in question are indeed, in these modern days, commodities so notoriously precious and coveted, that I have heard the males of the class are somewhat jealous of their attractiveness. At home it has been suggested that the spectacle of Istrian connubial felicity might excite a middle-class matrimonial epidemic in both hemispheres. Such a demand, it is threatened, might be raised for Istrian girls to teach abroad the mystery of economical domestic happiness as to starve the supply, still at present abundant, for the home market. Rumours are current of the formation of an Istrian league *pro aris et focis*, to arrest the danger. I cannot believe that a liberal Government like the Istrian would ever permit itself the violence of an inhibition of the export of brides. Yet, in these days of protectionist recrudescence, it would be rash to trust much to the strength of free-trade orthodoxy. The one safe course is for

other states to render themselves independent of foreign political caprices by adopting the easy Istrian system, and furnishing adequately their own matrimonial bazaars.

A REMEDY FOR THE RISE OF
FRIENDS

A REMEDY FOR THE RISE OF FRIENDS

EVERYBODY, who is not a dog-in-the-manger, or a vintager hired in the morning, hopes that his or her friends will rise in life. All well-constituted persons, among whom none of the few aforesaid exceptions can be reckoned, rejoice when the hope is fulfilled. Briefless Smith and Brown are delighted at the accumulation of papers on the table of Jones. They mention with keen pleasure that, after twenty years of plodding, he is at last reaping the advantage of having been born with a fifth cousin in the other branch of the profession. Their feelings are ecstatic when, finally, the favour of a Lord Chancellor's sister-in-law procures for him elevation to the Bench. An extensive circle of clerical college acquaintances partakes the same sentiment on the

nomination of that worthy, but not very eloquent, divine, John Robinson, to the See of Newport. Painters are equally grateful to an obtuse public for running wild with admiration of Cockaleekie's "Herod contemplating the Dead Infants after Supper by Torchlight." They read, with a tolerant smile, the prophecies in the weekly papers of his certain election into the Academy at the next vacancy. Soldiers and sailors gloat over the birthday-lists of honours secured somehow by their comrades. Mrs. Hewitt, the wife of Colonel Hempson Hewitt, loves the sound of "Lady," as she has to entitle the wife of the new Sir Alan, who was with them in India. Every one knows the eager sympathy with which the T. Mulready Smiths admire the lovely place the Pogsons have just bought, out of tallow, for some £20,000 at Wimbledon. In short, nothing in the frequent vicissitudes of human existence is more gratifying to its students than to observe the derivative happiness of the unfavoured majority in the reward of the merits, such as they are, of the lucky minority.

Still, there is another, and less pleasant,

side to the picture, everywhere except in Araucania. At the bestowal of the decorations, offices, and prizes, all is pure enthusiasm. The circle to which the recipient belonged states how highly it esteems itself honoured in his person. Then a little reaction occurs, from no fault of anybody, only of circumstances. It is so difficult for either side to be sure how it ought to be treated by, and how to treat, the other. Is the Judge to be called, as of old, Jones, out of court, by his old companions practising before him? How is it fitting to accost the Right Reverend Johnson, with his Fatherly legs full in the public view? It is troublesome to have to consider when to put in, and when to leave out, the prefixes of honour to which intimate acquaintances are become freshly entitled. It is a perplexing question to answer whether to continue or to sever old social relations. Mrs. Twentdrop does not like either to ask, or to leave off asking, the Margaretsons to bring the brougham and high-steppers to dinner at six o'clock in Barnsbury from their new mansion in Mayfair. A vast heap of embarrassments is connected with the

ordinary incident of the ascent of most worthy individuals out of their own class into a higher region. So far as I am aware, England has never elaborated rules for mitigating the inconvenience. It is the more astonishing, as in a country with which all travelled Englishmen are familiar the problem appears to have been solved most completely.

Last winter, out of the season, which may account for the phenomenon that the usage I am about to describe remains a local peculiarity, I happened to be in Araucania. I was staying with the King, whom I had known in Paris. They sleep softly, and dine luxuriously, at the Araucanian Court. As we strolled along the boulevard in the evening after dinner, I saw carriages setting down at the door of a public edifice, something between a church and a town-hall. "Ah!" said his Majesty, "the new Chancellor's friends, I suppose. By-the-by," he went on, "you were at his lordship's installation this morning. You might like to see the sequel." Naturally I said I should. Consequently his Majesty tapped at a low side-door, which was opened by a discreet official. This

gentleman led us up a little staircase. From a window at the top I could see into a spacious room occupied by a score or more of persons, chiefly men, tolerably well dressed, and apparently intelligent. They were seated at separate small tables, drinking a dark liquid, hot and steaming. His Majesty remarked the number, which, he said, was larger than usual. Probably, he conjectured, the suddenness of Lord Kaskkow's rise accounted for it. He must have had many close acquaintances, whom his brand-new grandeur would perplex.

After a few minutes I felt a heaviness in the air. I wondered whence it came. "Oh!" replied the King, "only from the laudanum-and-rhinoceros-brain mixture; but we have had as much as is good for us; come along." We left the place, and continued our saunter. As we walked, it occurred to me that ~~that laudanum-cum-rhinoceros-brain~~, which could only for a few minutes be safely inhaled at a height of thirty feet, must be very unwholesome for the potations of elderly gentlemen. "At all events," explained the King, "you must admit that it is very effectual; it is warranted to kill in half an hour."

Hardened as are the nerves of old travellers to fresh experiences, I confess that I stopped in some amazement. "Do you mean," I asked, "that by this time they are all dead in there?" "Dead," said he, "as red herrings. Why, that is what they went for. Nobody made them. All volunteers, you know."

I inquired further, as may be imagined; and this is what the King told me. Araucania, as everybody is aware, is a stirring country with an active population. Men constantly are emerging from their own classes. The nation, as a whole, benefits greatly by the movement. For the residuum of the circles from which the successful issue the displacement is, the King said, rather troublesome. He mentioned a variety of cases resembling closely those to which I have alluded as occurring in England. He was much interested when I told him of the similarity, though surprised, as he thinks highly of British practical sense, at the failure here to apply a remedy. In Araucania they have a very simple specific, which I had seen that night in operation. It seems that, whenever an Araucanian gains a step, it is lawful

for companions, who must remain in juxtaposition to him, while socially and officially estranged, to commit a sort of Happy Despatch. Suicide in all other instances is severely forbidden. In this it is encouraged, though without any compulsion.

The procedure is beneficial, according to his Majesty, from two points of view. Necessarily it frees the new-great man from a dilemma. He is glad not to have to be hail-fellow-well-met with a man who can no longer think his thoughts, return his dinners, or speak his language. It is a relief not to have to be civil to the other's middle-class acquaintances, to the daughter's husband, the managing clerk, and to the family friend, the curate, who would soon be writing to beg for a Crown living. He is pleased, and her Ladyship yet more, not to be invited to luncheons, at-homes, garden-parties, in stuffy little rooms, and villa croquet-lawns. But it is for the sake less of him than of his late equals, that the sacrifice really is sanctioned. For them it is intolerable to be always knocking against him. They do not know how to look, or how to speak. As he is obliged to be just

above their heads, and they cannot avoid being down below at the foot of the ladder, there is no way out of it but an anæsthetic dose.

His Majesty went into details. The law, he said, endeavours to hinder needless withdrawals. A soi-disant old friend has to prove his status before he may order a glass of laud-cum-rhin. It is not enough for a girl to declare that life is not worth living since dearest Gladys was engaged to the nephew of an Ulster baronet. She has to demonstrate that the bride and she will be continually liable to meet in the same drawing-rooms, and will not know how to behave to one another. The arrangement has been instituted to save respectable people from mutual embarrassment, to which no fault of theirs, and circumstances alone, have exposed them. The privilege is grossly abused when it is made to subserve the fatuous fancies of foolish creatures who are angry at being left in their proper obscurity.

The fact is, said his Majesty, that the single defect of the system is its excessive popularity. For example, on his own election to the throne, some hundreds of men, whom he did not know

from Adam, had insisted upon drinking the mixture. He could preserve half the landlords in the west-central quarter of his capital from ruin through the premature deaths of their best tenants only by the publication of a solemn declaration, under the Privy Seal, that he should never think of confusing them by references to schoolboy acquaintanceship, for that, on his Royal word, he had never set eyes upon one of them all his life long.

However, these are petty difficulties, which beset the working of every useful institution. Altogether, the practice, his Majesty repeated again and again to me, has answered admirably. I can easily believe it. Since I returned to Addlestone to find that James Ghrimes, gentleman, the worthy though scarcely world-renowned Town Clerk, has been knighted, my wife, daughters, and myself have been seriously tempted to wonder why Araucania should retain a monopoly of so satisfactory a social sedative.

ANOTHER JUBILEE

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JUBILEES of a peculiar kind are among the institutions of Kurile. To the founders of the State of Kurile it seemed ridiculous that men should not have a chance of beginning over again in a lifetime. The body renews itself frequently. It should be the same, they considered, with the social, mental, and moral circumstances of human existence. At moderate intervals they invited the entire community to recommence. Ten years was the period they fixed for their Jubilee. It is not exclusively a material recommencement, as with the Hebrews. Kurilians, who have forfeited their inheritance, certainly may, if they like, as in ancient Palestine, re-enter. The actual owner never resists ; and occasionally the right is claimed. It is regarded as rather a trivial thing. Naturally it could not be as important

as in some countries ; for in Kurile everybody is well provided for pecuniarily. Every Kurilian is held to have a title to as large an income as he can prove himself, according to his class, competent to spend on himself, by himself, and for his own proper needs and enjoyment. The amount varies with the rank and position. Thus, as each Kurilian's individual wants have been cut down to a point at which the State can and does, when requested, satisfy them, the Jubilee title to the resumption of estates is more of theoretical than practical interest. The one theme of real importance to the community is the fresh start the Jubilee offers in non-material questions, matters of character, sentiment, and conduct. I was myself in Kurile last year, which was Jubilee year, and witnessed the work of the institution.

When the silver trumpets are heard at dawn on June 1, which is Jubilee Day, every Kurilian wakes with a thrill at feeling himself his own master once again. So that he abstains from interference with the liberty of his neighbours to act likewise, he is absolutely free to think and be thought of without respect to the past.

He may in politics for ten years have been a red-hot Tory. He can wake an Advanced Liberal. He may have been a member of the English Church Union. Henceforth, without the least fear of being reproached by its council as a pervert, he may resort to the hall in Farringdon Street. Some ancient sorrow may have been bowing him to the earth, a blight of the affections, or grief for departed relatives, who have not remembered him in their wills. Jubilee Day rolls the healing waters of oblivion over the pain. The past ten years may have been a time of disappointment and defeat. He may have had a farce hissed off the stage. From rivalry for the Laureate's succession he may have subsided to the post of poet to Pears' soap, or patent braces. His Muse will recover full power to preen her feathers once more on Jubilee Day, and wing Parnassus-wards.

There is no weight which Jubilee Day does not remove. Some highly respectable persons have been known to be betrayed into writing another man's name at the foot of a cheque or bill. They may have strayed into a habit of wife-beating, or other peccadillos. Courts of

justice properly look with severity upon such transgressions. With less discrimination, society follows suit. A gentleman or lady, who has purged an offence by a term in prison, finds it nevertheless very difficult to revolve subsequently in the ordinary circle of dinners and evening receptions. On and after Jubilee Day the oyster-knife is given back to the hand. A convict can from that moment, if otherwise qualified, open the shell of society with as little protest from itself as if his penal record were immaculately clean.

With a Kurilian himself it rests altogether to decide what of the past he shall retain, and what expunge. Unless he choose to remind people, he will never be reminded that he has been a gaol-bird, that he has been jilted, or damned, plucked for his degree, or gazetted as an undischarged bankrupt. The Jubilee necessarily is negative. A cross-grained, ill-mannered reprobate will not be hailed at Kurile clubs as a courteous, frank, honest gentleman, because it happens to be Jubilee year; but his past is not cast up in his teeth. He has the option for it of complete forgetfulness and forgiveness.

In Kurile no uncomfortable embarrassment is, I can state from my own observation, ever experienced at the process of clearing the old tablets. The sole sensation, as the anniversary comes round, is curiosity concerning the new revelations of character. All the world is on tiptoe to ascertain, on the first blare of the silver trumpets, the fresh light in which individuals will show themselves. Husbands, wives, parents, children, friends, customers, employers and employed, are all on the alert to discover changes for the better, if not for the worse. A finished coquette, who has been tightening her waist and rouging her cheeks for the last decade of her sixty years, suddenly turns into a comfortable elderly aunt, to the relief of her whole family. A broken-down penitent upper-circle thief leaves off his contrition, with less danger to the pockets of his neighbours than when his remorse was most demonstrative. Everybody goes about peering into everybody's face to see in what colours the owner intends for the next cycle to appear. Whatever the result, no surprise, so far as I could perceive, is ever evinced, or, I should say, felt. Habit has made a second

nature of the Kurile code of politeness, which would be fatally infringed by any expression of amazement at the repudiation of old brands, or by a suggestion of inconsistency.

Socially the effect of the system is delightful, if at times bewildering to a foreigner. All stagnation is at an end. The fountains of the great deep are broken up. The wettest of human wet blankets grows instantaneously lively and festive. Ultimately, as might be expected, the change is less extraordinary. Just as a recipient of the Grand Cross of the Philanthrope à la Soubise of Samoa is content, after the first rapture, to lay it in silver paper in a quiet drawer, so a good many Kurilians, at the close of a gay Jubilee Day, would like to wrap their Jubilee talent up in a napkin. Not a few ex-forgers, who began life ten years since with brilliant prospects, now capable of reopening, have even been known, I was told, to slink back on June 2 to their local police stations, and beg leave to go on reporting themselves on their tickets as before. On the Superintendent's remonstrances, they have pressed trembling hands on their hearts, and asked whether the Kurile Charter could take

the pain and the identity out of those. But the Constitution is positive on the point, and they have been obliged to become again free agents.

It is satisfactory to be able to add, on good authority, that in several cases of the kind the rigour of the rule has been justified. Criminals have resumed their original careers of virtue, and verified their early promise. On the other hand, the consequences, I am informed, have often been found less agreeable in instances in which the privilege of letting unsavoury by-gones be by-gones has been seized most greedily. But that is the fault of the men, and not of the system. At all events, though they may have terminated the second decade worse even than the first, they have had their other chance, as all humanity ought to have it. By law they might even enjoy a third, or a fourth, though it seems they do not commonly avail themselves of their full statutory privilege. The principle of justice, as well as the sentiment of compassion, is not the less contented that a short shrift and a long rope are rumoured to be more than usually in request in Kurile on the immediate eve of Jubilee Day.

TOO LITERAL

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THE Mesopotamian people, not the present very different and more rational nation, but its predecessor, once, being very prosperous, comfortable, and a prey to ennui, determined to try Christian charity "brut," for a change.

As everybody knows, the Church, being constantly inspired, and at liberty therefore to interpret her principles for practical use, has introduced rather considerable modifications. With liberal common sense she has diluted most of the over-strong precepts of brotherly love, good will among men, kindness to neighbours, especially the malevolent, and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. Mesopotamians, as her faithful sons and daughters, had for ages acted on the regulated theory, and flourished under it exceedingly. By land and sea they had fought with every State they could provoke to

arms, big and little, particularly the little. For the sake of their antagonists, who required gentle compulsion to understand the merits of Mesopotamian wares and institutions, they had made them all in turn to bow the head. They had trafficked with them, above board and below board, selling poisonous drugs to one, fire-water to another, and muskets warranted to burst to everybody. In no transaction had they come out the losers. Now, at last, in the satiety of ease and affluence, they passed in a fortnight through three readings in both Houses a Bill for the establishment thenceforth throughout the United Kingdom of Mesopotamia of Christian Charity pure and simple.

What is more, they observed it. I have read the history of the transaction in the Continuation of the Mesopotamian Alison, in fifty volumes royal octavo; so there can be no doubt about the matter. The results seem to have been the funniest imaginable. With much self-denial the State had agreed to be itself bound; and it forthwith showed its sincerity. Among the territories, accommodation land, as it styled them, which it had wrested by force or treachery

from other friendly nations, was the impregnable fort of Bussorah, on Karasmian soil. Mesopotamia never found it of much utility; but its appropriation certainly was very vexatious to Karasmia—which was always something gained. Well, when, a month after the Bill became law, the Karasmian Government lodged its customary formal annual demand for the retrocession of the enclave, to its profound surprise the Foreign Secretary of Mesopotamia answered “Yes.” The Imperial Parliament acted analogously on the subject of Wessex. As every schoolboy knows, Shah Muley Hassan, in the fifteenth century, annexed the Isle of Wessex, in the German Ocean. Ever since it had been a Mesopotamian dependency. Probably, as the islanders are ignorant, turbulent, and conceited, freedom would at any period have been a dangerous boon for them. They are, however, poor. Consequently they had some right to grumble that wealthy Mesopotamia, which properly maintained a costly diplomatic staff throughout the European continent, had been in the habit of throwing the entire burden upon the Wessex Exchequer. The Mesopotamian

plea was beautifully logical. It was that Mesopotamia, being in Asia, could not need European embassies. Obviously they were maintained for the sole benefit of Wessex. Wessex litigiously demurred; and had to pay. In the first Mesopotamian Budget introduced after the enactment of the Christian Charity ordinance, a charge actually appeared for the European Legations!

The effects upon private Mesopotamian life were still more remarkable. The lawyers had genuine cause to complain. They had gone through an expensive training, and married, and had families—only to find their knowledge of legal subtleties, and the art of aggravation, for the most part, superfluous. The doctrine of easements, and ancient lights, and specific performance might as well have never existed, for all the benefit they yielded now to the profession. No third mortgagee any longer seized hold of a plank by buying up a shadow of a first mortgage in order to squeeze out a second. When a series of contradictory decisions proved that neither plaintiff nor defendant was right or wrong, the litigants would divide the subject of dispute, and the costs.

In every quarter all sorts of neighbourly—in the Samaritan's sense—offices were continually being done. A poor man might have been run over in front of a nobleman's palace. Without more ado the doors would be thrown open. Instead of being doubled up in a cab, and transported to the hospital, the patient was nursed into health in a splendid apartment. He never fancied, on recovery, that he was entitled to outdoor relief for the rest of his life from the same source. One of the most agreeable consequences was the disposition which gradually grew up to take for granted that nobody desired to deceive, defraud, or pain. Words which previously would have been resented rancorously for the innuendoes discoverable—without the smallest real basis—in them, would furnish nothing but genuine amusement both to speaker and to hearer, when the possibilities they contained of a malignant construction were detected. A customer buying pears at a strange greengrocer's was not afraid to let the fruiterer choose for him. A mistress trusted to her cook's superior sharpness in marketing without injurious suspicions that her account would include a commission upon

purchases. Kindness, honesty, veracity, and self-sacrifice worked and throve side by side without mutual detriment.

A clergyman was not afraid to mount the pulpit and preach the most candid and the roughest truths on commercial rectitude to a congregation of small shopkeepers. A collector warned an uninstructed dealer that a priceless Persian saucer was not Delft. A wit at a dinner never tried to cap his rival's pet story. The wife of a workman earning fair wages gratefully declined a share in a city church dole. A rich man's clever son won a scholarship, and refused to touch the proceeds. A schoolmaster worsted in an argument confessed that he was beaten. No one imputed to another that taste, or French accent, or manners, or bonnet, boots, or the use of aspirates might advantageously be mended. A society had to be founded to preserve, for antiquarian purposes, family nagging from becoming a lost art. The offer of a warranty with a horse was treated as an amiable formality. If occasionally a dispute on some business transaction arose, the sole question was how most liberally to apply the rule that everybody

should do to others as he would that others should do to him.

The wonder was how simple the system was as soon as it was brought into working order. At first there was a little natural doubt how far the sense of righteousness and generosity would compensate good citizens and good Christians for the spoliation they apprehended they should have to bear from adherents to the old paths. The presumption was that the abiders by the law would be in the minority. Nothing of the kind. Practically all classes accepted the new or old-new polity. They found that it made marvellously little difference in the long run. It appeared that for ages they had all been plotting, cheating, plundering, bullying, plaguing, and tormenting one another, with the same general results as if they had been following the Christian ideal.

No doubt there were exceptions. Some bill-discounters and West End money-lenders, burglars, receivers, wife-beaters, habitual drunkards, horse-coopers, intriguers with friends' wives, and the like, rejected the law, in accordance with an option which it gave. They might

have gone on living in Mesopotamia, if they chose, and as they chose. There it seemed as if a richer harvest than ever awaited them. Somehow they did not choose. They were peevish, captious, and discontented. They called the forbearing, generous attitude of the population religious persecution. They declared that they could not breathe; that there was a plot to choke them. In a brief time they concluded their pending housebreaking jobs, sharp practices, and verbal brutalities. Then, after just enough delay to make a grievance that no notice was taken, they deported themselves, their goods, and professional tools into Khorassan.

It may be asked why the Christian model thus successfully revived in Mesopotamia ever ceased to exist, as unfortunately and notoriously is the case. The reason, I understand, was that the surrounding nations, after a time, could no longer endure to be treated in a Biblically neighbourly fashion. Every transaction with Mesopotamia set their blood boiling furiously. At length they united in a mighty confederation for the suppression of the anti-social fanaticism,

as they held it to be. After remonstrances, met with a mild doggedness which intensified the rage of the Orthodox Allies, war was declared. The proclamation would have been issued long before, but for a fear that Mesopotamia would insolently turn the other cheek to the smiter. They need not have been alarmed. The ideal Christians discovered in their faith a well of heroic patriotism. They defended their natural frontiers with the most brilliant and the sweetest courage.

All the spite and forces of the League were unable to produce the slightest impression, when artifice did what strength had failed to accomplish. The Allies pretended contrition for the attack, lying like Trojans. They proffered friendship with apologetic meekness. Their overtures were willingly accepted; and both sides solemnly agreed to disarm. Mesopotamia acted loyally on the covenant, whereupon, without preamble or notice, the hostile legions crossed the border, and massacred the whole guileless population. The victors, who had to bury the dead for fear of a pestilence, found, I have somewhere read, the silly bigots lying

one and all with a smile upon his or her obstinate countenance. In place of the extirpated race the Allies settled the Mesopotamian emigrants, whom their hosts in Khorassan could no longer stand. From them they exacted no other condition than that they should rob, cozen, lie, lust, hoard, and self-torment, and call themselves Christians still. Hitherto, travellers in Mesopotamia say, they have given no cause for complaint of a breach of these engagements.

SHOW SUNDAY AT KOMOTAU

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BUSINESS took me last autumn to Prague, where I fell ill of typhoid fever. In consequence I was unable to travel homewards till the first week in November. I took my seat in the night express, which arrives at Komotau a little after eleven, and halts just time enough for a cup of coffee. Nobody stays at Komotau, at all events in November. Neither should I if the engine had not broken down. As it was, I alighted, pretty well by myself, for the train was almost empty. I drank my coffee, and then the solitary waiter in attendance proceeded to lock up. I asked how long I should have to wait till another engine, for which they had telegraphed, came from Teplitz. I was told it could not be at Komotau till two, at earliest.

It was a disagreeable dilemma for a convalescent. The night was damp and cold. The

buffet was about to be shut. No waiting-room was open. The sole refuge from the gusty platform was the reeking buvette, which the third-class passengers, though few, crowded, and poisoned with bad tobacco. I turned to the departing waiter, who was yawning. He lived near, and was in haste to reach home. But he made a suggestion. It was Komotau Show Sunday, he said; and—foreigners were queer—he did not know but that it might amuse me, as there was nothing else to do, to go into the town. I supposed he meant that some local festival had been held. Though I could not hope it would have lasted to midnight, I had no preferable use for my compulsory leisure. I plunged, therefore, down the muddy road which led, I was told, to the city a mile off. I soon saw lights which guided me, and, after a dismal walk, I entered the streets.

To my vexation rather than surprise, nobody remained abroad. Yet every thoroughfare was brilliantly illuminated, from the houses, not from lamps on the pavement. Each ground floor had at least one window lighted up, in a way to show as distinctly as possible some object

within the room. I had struck the place at its fashionable quarter, and here the decorations were exquisite. Komotau is wealthy, if not very large, and its prosperous citizens have taste. On an easel before one window was a glorious canvas, nymphs and Pan in pursuit, which it needed no signature in the corner to trace to Titian. Another exhibited a lovely Venus, a statue, Canova all over. Hard by I gazed upon a diamond tiara, which outshone the lamps. Elsewhere were plates by Palissy, or engraved gems, the handiwork of Cellini. Here rested a gorgeously inlaid Stradivarius; and there an illuminated Book of Hours, or a first state of an Albrecht Dürer etching. No house displayed more than a single treasure; and the variety of the exposition was inexhaustible.

The clue to the enigma was not extremely obscure. Every household showed its most precious possession, and to no spectators. Komotau is, as I have said, a thriving town, populous for its size, and, normally, as dull as ditchwater. Now, it was a city of the dead, beaming with light, and marvels of art. The owners themselves were not present to see or

be seen. Apparently, by an unwritten law, households stay away from their Show-room, but within, on Show Sunday. Komotau has no criminal class against which it is necessary to guard, and the railway brings no strangers thither in November. It could occur to nobody that the night express would break down and disgorge an Englishman on Show Night.

So, on and on I strolled, contemplating the strangest museum I had ever entered. I explored the poorer as well as the richer localities. In all Show Sunday was being honoured. The borderland of bare respectability and the one-storied tenements of the working classes had their goods of price, like their betters. A gorgeous chrysanthemum embellished one window. Another paraded a toyship in full sail. In another an uniform coat with gold epaulets recalled the pride of a decayed family. Everywhere, too, was the same characteristic, of utter loneliness. None appeared, to proclaim ownership and challenge applause.

I recollected at last that it must be time to turn towards the station. By good luck, a lamp

in a window lit up at a street corner a direction to the railway. Without retracing my steps I followed it, and was quickly on the outskirts of the town. Severely well-behaved though Komotau is reputed to be, the quarter wore the dishevelled, untidy look of a refuge for the shamed outcasts of civilized existence. The dark suburban road, which I had originally traversed, I could see opening a little further on, when, from the opposite side of the way, I noticed a flicker from a small window half underground.

I crossed over, speculating what there could be to display. One feeble, glimmering taper made darkness visible. I could just make out a cradle, and within, calm, content, fearless, a tiny figure with closed, blue-veined eyelids, and hands folded on its breast, grasping a violet. At first I fancied it was a waxen image, though none but a Gilbert or a Thornicroft—and the notion was absurd there—could have moulded it. Then, as my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, I thought I saw a second figure in the poor cellar; and it, at all events, was alive. It was the only life I had perceived that night in Komotau. Yes, I was right. Bowed down

beside the cradle, with wild eyes fixed upon that it held, I made out a meanly clad, shrunken woman. How woe-begone, and hopeless! How proud! Was it a baby she was showing for her treasure—her baby, and dead?

But I had no leisure to wait; and when I reached the station, the train was preparing to start. The borrowed Teplitz engine shrieked as I climbed into my carriage. Off we sped into the night, leaving Komotau and its silent Show little more than a dream. I have since searched every guide-book, and never discovered an allusion to the custom. A queer business altogether! Strangest of all, whenever the spectacle comes back to me, it is the cradle and its hungry-eyed guardian that fill the forefront of the scene. Somehow, that dead babe seems to my recollection to have been the only living love in Komotau.

ULTRA-INVENTIVENESS

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LAST autumn, in the course of a pedestrian tour, I found myself in Hohenbrettel. Everybody knows Hohenbrettel on the map. Most school-board children could describe the Hohenbrettel watersheds, the amount of its national debt, and the form of helmet worn by its police constables. But I much doubt if a score of Englishmen have in the flesh crossed its borders since the Foreign Missions Committee of the defunct Social Science Congress held one of its feasts of reason there.

I do not suppose that I am likely myself to repeat my visit. Never was there a more forsaken, retrograde land. No electric bells, no water-gas, no microphones, no aërated bread, no halfpenny post, no steam-hand-painted Japanese crockery, no house-to-house-delivery railways. I was at the principal hotel, so ranked by

Baedecker. The rolls were of the morning's baking, made by hand. The tea was simply tea-leaves in boiling water. The eggs were common natural hen products. The beef, served at dinner, had been fed on mere grass, not on the nutty, aromatic oilcake from the Huddersfield shoddy mills. The coffee had been roasted over a wood fire, and ground in a little mill on the cook's knee. The beds had the old-fashioned, superannuated feather compilations, instead of patent watch-springs, which repeat the hour whenever you turn over. I was awakened by cock-crowing, supplemented by the voice of an antediluvian boots, and not by a steam-whistle. The wine tasted of unadulterated grape-juice, without a drop of St. Helen's sirup in a hogshead. Everything was coarsely innocent, even to the rain, which was allowed to drop from the clouds as it would, without a reminder from dynamite spray.

The novelty pleased for a day ; but I became impatient at the absurd length to which the joke was carried. If Hohenbrettellers were country bumpkins, I should not have minded so much. In fact, they are persons, for the

most part, of brilliant imaginations. I have never known a race more apparently ingenious or bird-witted. Yet the entire state and its citizens have, as it were out of malice prepense, been stagnating for a hundred years at least.

One evening at supper, after a day spent in observing curious indigenous oddities, I fell into conversation with a native in the coffee-room. He was friendly and agreeable, and asked me how I liked Hohenbrettel. I evaded a direct and ungracious answer by mentioning, as in reply, that I had stayed a fortnight, though I came for a day, and that I had worn out a pair of boots on the city pavement. He proceeded to inquire what I thought of the Royal Patent Museum. I had to confess that I had never seen or heard of it. That, he remarked, was unfortunate, since unquestionably it furnished the most interesting spectacle in the metropolis. But, as he consolatorily added, the want could readily be repaired, if I did not object to a companion. I said what was fitting and courteous, and he made an appointment for us to meet the next morning. Both of us duly kept it, and he escorted me to the building,

which certainly I should never have found by myself.

He lighted upon a curator he knew, by name Herr Güngl, and, introducing me, begged him to point out the principal curiosities. With this invaluable assistance I passed a most improving morning. Nowhere have I inspected a more extraordinary miscellany of engineering wonders. It is a museum and works in one. The cases contained examples, exquisitely kept, of every invention devised by human brains, from the days of Prometheus and Tubal Cain. Below, in the immense range of shops, hundreds of machines were all in operation, turning out innumerable marvels of art and science. In a noble library, to which not a murmur from the manufacturing babel could penetrate, sat scores of sages elaborating infinite new mechanical combinations. Nothing, I am persuaded, exists, or can be conceived as existing, which this institution, in its several departments, is not capable of constructing with a rapidity, certainty, and minute completeness unattainable in any other known region.

After my fancy had been intoxicated into

a species of delirium by a legion of new ideas, my two acquaintances carried me off to lunch at the Museum restaurant. We had chops from the gridiron, and ate them, and the toasted cheese which followed, with three-pronged forks. The repast was washed down with home-brewed. At the risk of impoliteness, I could not help intimating my sense of the contrast between actual life in Hohenbrettel and the spectacle presented at the Patent Museum. Herr Güngl finally caught the drift of my comments, and explained.

The Hohenbrettellers, as I had perceived, are conversant with all the arts and their applications. He could not, nor did he wish to, deny that they practise none of them. It was, he told me, not always so. A couple of thousand years, more or fewer, since, they were in the habit of utilizing mechanical comforts and luxuries in every conceivable direction. Unfortunately, at last, the whole population, being cumulatively, and in each fresh generation increasingly, quick-witted and energetic, forced the inventive faculties to such a pitch of restless progress as absolutely to defeat its object.

Herr Güngl is deeply read in the ancient Hohenbrettel annals; and they tell, as he sketched it to me, an almost tragical story. The instant that, in any field of industrial investigation, a discovery had been made, another, in slight advance, superseded it. Expensive plant had no sooner been set up than it was rendered obsolete. A week after families had transformed their kitchen ranges, so as to cook by hydrochloric acid, a new gas would be patented which dispensed with stoves altogether. Coffee beans would give way to horse-liver powder, only for that to be ousted in favour of Barking Compost extract. The Guncotton Battery Emission railway system had been hardly a year at work, when the Balloon Bicycle Company sent the whole of its stock down to zero, ruining half the clergy and half-pay officers in the kingdom.

The result appears to have been a positive deadlock so far as commercial enterprise was concerned. Mills and forges could not be worked with profit. Consumers did not care to cultivate a taste, not knowing how speedily they might not have to leave it off. A lady

would scarcely think it worth while to buy an iron-slag cloak for the winter, when it was nine chances to one that, after the first week of frost, every self-respecting woman had to dress in aluminium-waste. Ultimately the Legislature intervened with an utter change of the Patent law. Patents hitherto had been granted to individuals for all things, and for unlimited periods. Henceforth, Parliament enacted, there should be but one patentee; and that is the State. All inventions are held to be made on behalf of the State, which rewards the authors according to their merits. By a fundamental article of the Constitution, the State is bound both to buy, like bullion, every one which is offered, and to keep it. By an unwritten ordinance the State is equally obliged to refrain from any utilization of such deposits.

According to contemporary chroniclers, the revolution was received with an universal sigh of glad relief. The law is popularly known as the Hohenbrettel Magna Charta; and no suggestion for its repeal or modification has ever been mooted. The fire of Hohenbrettel brains is as intense as of old. Inventors pursue

their researches and compare notes with indefatigable zeal and corresponding success. The Patent Museum every few years has to expand itself with a wing here and a wing there. More and more students frequent it. Only, the general scientific fervour is contented to exhale itself philosophically in theories and models. Were the ancient inhibition to be taken off, Herr Güngl expressed his undoubting belief that his countrymen are grown much too wise to be tempted to abuse, for the confusion of domestic life, researches which have their proper destination in the domain of pure intelligence, and nowhere else. Certainly I can so far corroborate his assertion that I have since visited him at home, and have seen that he must hang up at night his singular mechanical sagacity on the Museum pegs along with his working-coat. His standard of domestic comfort is not at all superior to the average level in the country at large, which is very much that of a company of Englishmen hunting in the Rockies, or Mashonaland.

Meanwhile, as the November afternoon drew in, we went on with our talk by the light of four wax candles. I had seen in the Museum a

new kind of water-gas in use, unimpeachably safe, and as extraordinarily cheap. At the cost of a penny a day, it was warranted to give the light of a thousand candles. It had, I was assured, been illuminating an empty cellar in the Museum for upwards of six months without supervision. In fact, its existence had been forgotten. I could not forbear hinting at the wasteful blindness implied in the neglect of such a cheap substitute for extravagant beeswax close to the building which held it. Herr Güngl did not detect the irony in the remark. He merely assumed that I was interested in the principle, which he in consequence very lucidly discussed and illustrated. It did not occur to him that a point was involved of practical utility, still less that there was money in it. That, I need not say, is not a common-sense-like manner of regarding the proceeds of human science. But, at all events, British commerce is not bound by the irrational self-denying Hohenbrettel ordinance; and some ingenious friends of mine intend to take out a patent for the Hohenbrettel "Ignifat."

IN RETIREMENT

IN RETIREMENT

IT is quite a mistake to suppose that people, when they are dead, go far away from their usual haunts. They remove simply, as it were, into the next street. Like a fashionable but devout Roman Catholic, or a Ritualist lady, they enter a retreat. Numbers of my dead friends I am constantly running up against as I walk about. I know them, and they know me—only, it is not good manners to show recognition.

They have grown tired of the occupation they had taken up, or which had taken them up, and they have chosen to go dead in order to break with it. One of my intimates, for example, was thrust into a Judgeship, when he would have preferred to be deciphering corrupt Greek texts. He had to die to be free for the pursuit he loved.

I sometimes pass him, on a side-path, taking a constitutional in the Park after a hard spell of Æschylean puzzles, and looking supremely contented. Not a few others of my acquaintances have had no way of escaping from their stucco South Kensington mansions but by giving formal notice through the *Times* that they had shuffled off their mortal coil. They are lodging in Pentonville, and saunter up and down the City Road rejoicing in their release. Some of the most inveterate diners-out of society I have recently seen, from the hot rooms in which I was cooped in evening-dress, inhaling the cool June night air, and gazing placidly in. It must be the merest chance if an At-Home card ever penetrate to their retirement. Sometimes, however, it will. Intermittently I have gazed into the eyes of a soi-disant ghost elbowed about a drawing-room, and looking as bored as in what by a polite fiction is called life.

The world is packed more closely than many people fancy. It is divided into layers; and death signifies only a migration from one compartment to another. If the dead choose, they

have but to come back. Ordinarily they do not choose. Some day or other they may. What a hubbub there will then be with the interchange of reflections, and criticisms, and mutual claims, a hundred and fifty deep, to the same things, to the same ideas! For the present, naturally enough, the dead are satisfied with their solitude. But even there they are entirely accessible to anybody who would see and talk with them. They are close by all or any of us.

A SOCIAL COMPROMISE

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THE Principality of Lichtenfels is not one of the Great Powers of Europe. Perhaps not all foreigners who even have happened to visit it may be aware of its existence. I myself remember discovering, to my surprise, by an inscription on an upright post, that I had unwittingly traversed its whole extent. Yet it deserves to be remarked for an experiment it tried, or, for all I have heard, may be trying now.

Once upon a time the State of Lichtenfels had fallen morally into a bad way. The pure deevilry of Peebles is matter of history. Peebles can have been nothing to Lichtenfels. The whole body of citizens, Prince, nobles, burghers, soldiers, peasants, traders, artisans, and menials, had contracted a promiscuous habit of depravity.

They were a scandal to their neighbours for the license they took and gave. Each had many vicious propensities, and indulged them all freely. At length their cup was full. The Grand Council of the Grisons was out of patience with the evil example the Lichtenfelseners set. It had seriously discussed the question of abating the nuisance by force. Condign action was threatened, and doubtless would have been undertaken but for a revolution in the offending country.

A friar of holy life and burning eloquence from Bermondsey chose this hotbed of dissoluteness for his field of labour. His name was Roger Boanerges, and he justified it. After six weeks of indignant oratory, he produced among Sovereign and subjects the most overwhelming contrition, and then he disappeared. Possibly it was as well. Had he remained, he might have persuaded the population to affect an ascetic self-control which could not have lasted. Happily a worthy local politician, of much influence with his countrymen, caught their hearts at the rebound. He turned to serious good the emotional spasms. When he had

matured his scheme, he introduced it before the Legislature in statutory shape. He had to contend both with the Conservative Sensualists and with the Radical Puritans. In a plain-spoken, sensible address, he set before the Assembly the limits of its powers. While he expatiated on the abominable tedium of a national course of miscellaneous vice, he gently ridiculed the good friar's notion that full-blooded Lichtenfelseners could be induced permanently to lead the lives of saints. The utmost, he said, to be required of them, or desired, was that they should not all run mad together.

His specific for the consolidation of a feasible modicum of decorum was that everybody should be bound by law to select a vice, and register it. Any subject, on reaching years of discretion—that is, legal discretion—was to be called upon to engage that he should go wrong in a particular direction, and not otherwise. If, after a sufficient trial, he should find that he had mistaken his sort of vicious proclivity, he would have to apply to the Court of Quarter Sessions. That authority was to be empowered to dispense him from its further pursuit, and to license him to a

different weakness. The rule was to apply, with his Serene Highness's entire assent given in advance, to the Prince as well as his people. The sole distinction proposed was that the Sovereign, on account both of his temptations and his responsibilities, should be invited to register two legitimate vices instead of one. I may, however, incidentally mention that his Highness obtained a special enactment in the next Parliament abolishing his prerogative. He found one legitimate vice as much as body, soul, and Civil List would comfortably stand.

So convinced was the lawgiver of the wisdom of his golden mean, and so desperate was a majority in the Parliament at the actual dilemma, that, after a cynical discussion, it was resolved to let the experiment be tried for a term. On my second, and conscious, visit to Lichtenfels it had become an institution, to which the nation was fondly attached. Lichtenfelseners attributed to its adoption the high level of moral excellence to which, as they informed me, the world agreed that they had attained. No arrangement, at all events, could be at once simpler and more subtle.

Full age in Lichtenfels is deferred somewhat beyond the customary period. For males it is fixed at thirty, and for females at twenty-five. At those ages all are summoned to present themselves at the Town Hall, and declare their respective vices. Generally there is no difficulty, and everybody has his or her choice. At the same time, there necessarily is a possibility of some inconvenience, if the whole of a rising generation happened to select one identical depravity. The result would be a wearisome monotony in the local society, and also a risk of jostling. Consequently a census is periodically held of the number of owners of the several ordinary vices. In the rare event of an excessive run upon one in particular, young persons are requested to accept another as like as may be in spirit to it. I was told that they seldom object.

In general the ceremonial is brief, and of course. The youth or maiden certifies, with witnesses, his or her specific foible, and is given a warrant to practise it without penal liabilities. That is all, except payment of a fee graduated according to the applicant's

circumstances. Thenceforth, within bounds of the ordinary rights of others, the ticket-of-leave holder is at liberty to go and be vicious along a definite groove.

One gentleman I myself saw certificated, just in time, as of an irascible temper. As he went away, he met face to face a quiet citizen, who, to leave the path free, began dodging him, first on one side and then on the other. Nothing to the irritable can be more exasperating. Losing his temper, if he ever had it, the licensee at last struck smartly at the other with a heavy cotton umbrella. A tussle followed, and the combatants had to go to the police office. There it came out that the object of the attack had a license for nervous stolidity. The magistrate decided that neither was criminally to blame, as each had kept within his indemnity. None but civil compensation could be exacted. Thus, the aggressor had to make good to the other the hat he had battered. The prosecutor, having shown himself handier with his fists, had to pay the artist who painted out his adversary's black eye. Each left the court without a stain upon his character.

On a subsequent day I assisted at the registration of a kleptomaniac, an interesting young lady, with an air of innocence irresistible for shopwalkers. She was well off. A friend has since informed me that she moves in the best society of the Residenz Stadt, though no silver spoon is safe within a hundred yards of her. Fortunately she is rich enough to be able to pay for all she appropriates.

Really some of the scenes, as the swearing in proceeds, are most instructive and entertaining. I recall with constant amusement the catechizing by the clerk of the court of a fellow who had come for a "romancing" paper. As the examination continued, it was clear that by romancing the most audacious lying was meant. Still, lying is an ordinary vice, like picking and stealing. Obviously it is convenient that the leading practitioners shall be identified.

At first, I have been told, the ecclesiastical authorities opposed the system. After an Archbishop had been convicted of indulgence in half a dozen separate forms of misconduct, Convocation gave in at the request of his grace, who took the benefit of the Act. Provision has long

been made for it in the Church Services, where a blank is left in several prayers for an exception of the one legalized temptation. The arrangement has been found comforting by the devout who happen to be naturally unable to abstain from sarding the sugar, or cheating at cards. On the whole, the decided official view, both clerical and secular, when I was in Lichtenfels, was that the system worked well. The quantity of the individual vices had diminished; and the authorities dwelt on the immense advantage they derived from the facility for tracing evils home to their sources. Vices being known can be guarded against. Anybody who objects to having his portable property abstracted, his character filched away by slanders, his quiet disturbed by a neighbour's outbursts of anger, or his domestic peace endangered, has but to migrate to a quarter fairly free from adepts in the special moral obliquity he dislikes. Even if he cannot interpose a barrier of space between it and him, he may at any rate console himself with the scientific principle that gases pent up are more noxious than when they are free.

Certainly it is astonishing to what a degree

the flavour, according to Lichtenfels experience, fades out of depravity when a man is at liberty to indulge it as he will. The zest of vice, affirm the sages of the Principality, is its lawlessness. It loses its sparkle in the grey light of a certificate. At worst, they argue, it is satisfactory to be secured against the growth of a crop of wild oats from a single germ. Commonly there is a gregariousness in vice, which, they boast, is absent from vice in their country, though that, I feel obliged to observe, is not entirely a spontaneous effect. The truth is that, when a Lichtenfelsener will not be content with a proper single-barrelled misbehaviour, he is deported to a neighbouring spa. But we have to do with things as they are in Lichtenfels, and with Lichtenfelseners in Lichtenfels. People who are not satisfied with the moral health of a Sovereign State in which every resident citizen has but one besetting wickedness, must be hard to please.

CONSCIENCE-MONEY

CONSCIENCE-MONEY

I do not suppose it would be easy to find a more commonplace town, in its general aspect, than Campolato, the capital of the little free state of the same name in Dalmatia—at any rate, in comparison with its notorious opulence. For centuries it has been accumulating riches out of the dress beads called bugles. Thus, from a fashionable and peculiarly odious feminine taste in dress, it has gradually become one of the most populous towns in Europe. Though personally I detest bugles, my visits to the anti-rheumatic baths of Basso often take me through it, as probably they take many of my readers. Like other people, I have been always in the habit of entering with reluctance, and leaving with pleasure.

Now, last autumn I discovered reasons for

reconsidering my dislike of the place. A friend travelling home with me fell ill there, and I had to stay to nurse him. The bankers on whom I had letters of credit proved extraordinarily courteous. One of the firm in particular, Signor Bruno, insisted on showing me constant attention. One evening I was dining with him, when he expressed his regret at my compulsory detention. However, he said, Campolato possessed curiosities precious, if not regularly beautiful, which escaped notice among its more conspicuous attractions. My stay, which had never before been prolonged beyond a couple of days, would now, he proceeded, enable me to study these at leisure. I trust that I managed to prevent my countenance from betraying acquaintance with the acknowledged fact that Campolato is, as it is styled in the guide-books, the dullest, ugliest city in Europe. At all events, I accepted the offer with effusion, when, as he said the next morning happened to be a free time for him, he asked if I would allow him to act as my cicerone.

He arrived in due course at my hotel, and by ten in the forenoon we started. Certainly

he was right. A few doors from my hotel he rang a bell at a shabby house. A slatternly maidservant answered. He said we wanted to see the pump, and she ushered us into the back yard. There stood the pump, the loveliest bit of wrought-iron work that Quentin Matsys ever turned out. Signor Bruno conducted me thence to a blind alley close by, directing my notice to a bust above a squalid little porch, Michel Angelo all over. Retracing our footsteps to a main thoroughfare, we paused before a grocer's shop. Over the front window ran a frieze of coloured pottery. Whenever I traversed the street, I had been in the habit of keeping my eyes carefully turned away from what I had a right to assume was a vulgar advertisement. Now, at the Signor's request, I examined it. "Luca della Robbia!" I exclaimed: "by all that's wonderful!"

Up and down he guided me. Here it was an exquisite oriel from Venice in a police station. There it was a Nuremberg gargoyle at the end of a broken gutter-pipe. He brought me inside a brick box, called a Wesleyan chapel, to admire a painted glass window, which Chartres

could hardly match. Buried in the sooty lilac bushes of a square was a perfect Venus, lovely though modern, with Gibson's name on the pedestal. In the Campoloto equivalent of Wimpole Street a balcony, from which Spanish maidens doubtless listened in the days of Ferdinand and Isabella to love-lorn ditties below, absolutely enchanted me. In a dismal disused little churchyard we found a gigantic magnolia tree, full of the freshest and most fragrant blossoms, with a watchman, all its own, to keep it clean.

The wonders were innumerable. None had the least relation to the surroundings. They were all independent, with not the slenderest affinity to one another. They were so little appropriate to their localities that I could easily pardon myself for not having noticed them, or indeed one of them, on my brief visits. Whether the particular spot were, as often, peculiarly squalid, or, as not infrequently, decorated and pompous, the exquisite things were equally incongruous and exotic.

Naturally my admiration, which was sincere, was mingled with manifest perplexity. My

companion had anticipated both sentiments. By the time my brain was completely dazed with the extraordinary congeries of miracles of art, and some of nature, in unexpected quarters, he had compassion on me. He took me into a restaurant, a prodigy of bad taste in all its sumptuous embellishments, but able to supply a perfect risotto, and delicious ortolans, with *lacrima Christi* as unexceptionable. After an excellent luncheon, he explained :

By a statute of immemorial antiquity, estates proved over £100,000 within the territory of Campolato are liable to a special duty in the nature of betterment. Every considerable Campolato fortune is known to be due originally to commerce with the less fortunate outside world, and to owe something in return. Accordingly, each has to defray the cost of supplying a foreign ornament to a spot connected with the career of the deceased. The main object is to pay an equitable tribute to the region from which the dead man's prosperity sprang, by relieving it at a good price of some of its neglected products as unlike bugles as possible. As he has not himself performed the duty, it is necessary to saddle

his memory posthumously with it through topographical associations. Thus, the place selected for the monument may be the scene of his birth or his death. He may have sweated shirtmakers or journeymen tailors in a lane. He may have been caught picking pockets there in early youth. He may have made it the scene of a play, which, being damned, brought him back a penitent Prodigal to the paternal shop. Executors and administrators are allowed full liberty to choose both the site, so that they can show a certain moral appropriateness, and also the nature of the embellishment, if only by spending the statutory percentage they discharge part of the owner's obligation of conscience to the source of his opulence.

Generally legal representatives feel little personal interest in the matter. They are not usually, being Campolatins, enamoured of foreign art. Perhaps, on the whole, it is better they should not be. They escape a good deal of pain at the indigenous sights they are compelled to endure. But all, at any rate, cherish a generous scorn for parsimony, the money not being their own. Where there is an alternative

of more or less in the outlay, the more is constantly chosen. Rather reluctantly I must confess that the result is beneficial. Much of the work which I contemplated is not merely rich and rare, but charming.

However, while I admired many objects which I had passed by without notice previously, I was conscious, at the end, of equal disappointment at the pervading tastelessness and level dulness of this most uninteresting of big towns. Formerly I had accepted the vulgarity placidly. It was the nature of Campolato, and its inhabitants, I had thought, were without opportunities of knowing better. In the face of scores, hundreds, thousands of lovely works of art, they can plead no such excuse. Why are their area railings so hideous, when they could copy from Matsys? Why do not their local sculptors imbibe a little of the spirit of Donatello, half whose works they have transported from Florence? Why is their poverty so mean, and their wealth so tawdry?

I expressed my view freely to Signor Bruno, who was evidently a person of cultivation. He had demonstrated it by his very judicious

criticisms on the objects of imported art which he had pointed out to me. But I soon observed that, while he was not in the smallest degree offended, he did not follow my meaning. He imagined that Campoloto, though curious in foreign antiquities, had little to learn from them. The reason why I, in common with other foreigners, had been unaware of the existence of the miracles of alien beauty in his city, he evidently thought, was the dazzling abundance of native excellence. I was too polite to attempt to set him right. My only fear is that on my next visit to Campoloto he will be as benevolently pertinacious in exhibiting to me the atrocities of native art as he has been in guiding me to the latent specimens of a perfection which he and his fellow-citizens are determined shall not be contagious.

DOING WITHOUT

DOING WITHOUT

EVERYBODY knows where the Isle of Man is ; but not everybody is acquainted with the situation of Sodor. Indeed, I have sometimes heard that former Bishops of Sodor and Man were accustomed to spend the whole of each Season in London for the purpose of ascertaining from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel where their principal diocese was. Of late, however, the learned, that is to say, the very learned, have rediscovered the island group thus designated ; and a most interesting country and people I can, by personal observation, affirm it to be. In recent years I have made several voyages thither, and have taken notes of many peculiar manners and customs.

It may, or may not be, a defect in the political education of the Council of Thirty,

which, from time immemorial, has ruled the group with absolute authority, that it has never heard of Mr. Herbert Spencer. The superiority of the community to the individual is its guiding principle. Provided the general welfare can be advanced, it does not mind in the least how far the comfort of individuals is sacrificed for the purpose. Consequently, it has always experimented freely with its subjects in the hope of arriving at the secret of human perfection. Humanity, in the present form, has been developed, in the opinion of Sodor statesmen, infinitely too much at its own casual discretion. As they have not been consulted in the process, they do not feel at all satisfied that the existing bundle of human attributes represents the best result. They suspect that even it often means the worst. In any case, they have thought it their duty to take specimens to pieces, and try the bits in independent combinations.

In the first place, they have always been much exercised by the tendency of humanity to run into the vice of redundancy. Development is a fine name often bestowed upon a depraved propensity; and civilization, falsely

so called, favours it. A habit of multiplying necessities and wants, with the corresponding physical apparatus, has been unduly encouraged. Sodor, as its administrators do not attempt to deny, has not in the mass escaped the vice. Certainly life in general is no less complex there than elsewhere. In some respects I should say it was more so. That, however, is not the fault of the Government, or of the Constitutional theory of existence, as expounded in the State Archives. On the contrary, without attempting forcibly to correct aberrations wholesale, the Executive Council has endeavoured to suggest to Nature the course she ought to follow by producing a reasonable number of living examples of the reforms in the matter of structural simplification, which it relies upon her good sense gradually to accept, and imitate at large. It will not require, I hope, many words to explain and justify the Ministerial mode of action.

A Sodalitian, like another man, occasionally meets with an accident which deprives him of a sense. His sisters may explode gunpowder in his eyes, and blind him, for fun. He may

grow stone-deaf from age, or annoyance at hearing the praise lavished upon a popular author. He may lose the power of locomotion from paralysis, or from the amputation of both legs. He may be deprived of the sense of smell from excessive snuff-taking, or of taste from indulgence in turtle, red pepper, chutnee, and curry. He may be converted into a mute through having his tongue, during his travels in Tartary, cut out for divulging the confidences of Mongolian Freemasonry. In all these cases manifestly extreme inconvenience will be suffered from absence of early training in the art of Doing Without. The Council of Thirty, being penetrated with pity for imaginable victims of these calamities, resolved long since to ascertain how far the several senses might be dispensed with, I will not say, voluntarily, but deliberately. That it has demonstrated the entire feasibility of the enterprise is obvious. Authority in Sodor, being autocratic, invariably proves its point, whatever that may be.

I found no difficulty in the collection of instances. Sodalitians are ordinarily a well-grown, vigorous race, in full possession of all

the orthodox corporeal faculties. The presence, therefore, among them of an unusual number of blind, deaf, and dumb, of cripples, and of persons without the sense of smell, or any ostensible palate, was the more observable. I was constantly encountering one or another exemplar of such defects, and could verify his competence for supplying the want.

A blind man was the nimblest wicket-keeper in the Invincibles eleven. A second was champion racket-player. A third was a railway signalman, who had assisted at a dozen collisions, with loss of life, and been as often acquitted of charges of manslaughter. He did his duty by a conjunction of two senses—the most vivid hearing, and a marvellous sense of touch. He could have written a biography of an approaching train from the quiver of the spectacles, which, somewhat comically for a blind man, he was accustomed to wear. A deaf and dumb acquaintance, whom I frequently met at dinner, was rather more elaborate in his arrangements. He could read the words on your lips. That was easy enough. As the oral part of the Van Praagh system is unknown in

Sodor, it might be supposed that it was more difficult for him to keep his share in the conversation. He managed it by making your mouth do double work. In his waistcoat pocket he kept a minute silver tweezer. With it, whenever he wished to interpose a remark, as was uncomfortably frequent, he opened his neighbour's mouth, and rattled the right mechanical movement out of lips, tongue, teeth, and palate. I became used to it; but I recollect with a shudder my early experience of the forceps down my throat.

My perfumer in Sodor was born without the sense of smell. He had accumulated a handsome fortune out of patents for scents invented by him. Insects, as is well known to naturalists, particularly night-insects, have the most extraordinary subtlety of smell. Mr. Fetass, as he was named, utilized his keen sight and sensitive fingers for the observation of the nerve action of an insectorium stocked with night-moths and beetles. In his living and buzzing laboratory you might see him gazing downwards, like a watchmaker, only more intently. A tiny lepidopter or coleopter would be in one slender hand, and an assortment of leaves and flowers

in the other. He saw, or felt, or both, the thrills of the insect, hardly conscious of captivity, as the breath of the plant struck its sensorium. Each varying pulsation was infallibly registered by him. No ordinary perfumer could rival him. All in the trade, with the gift of smell, were obliged to trust servilely to the gross human instrument battered by pocket-handkerchiefs out of all artistic delicacy. He was free from the clog, and was able to command the counsels of legions of ethereal coadjutors.

It is almost more surprising that the privation of a palate has been equally supplied in Sodor. The chef at the supremely Apician Locust Club, christened, not with relation to John the Baptist, but after that refined Roman dame, Locusta, is wholly palateless. He has never tasted, in the literal sense of the term, food in his life. Yet what an artist! His menus were a harmony. Hungry or not, you could no more pass a dish than tolerate a Beethoven sonata played by an infant prodigy.

He worked his miracles all by smell. The sense of smell vibrated in him as spontaneously as touch and sight in my perfumer. He sat on

the roof in a bower of Cairo lattice-work, listening, as it is no metaphor to say, to the scents from stew and fry, baking, braised, roast, and boiled, as they rolled in waves up the chimney. In the kitchen, over the pots and pans, they were, he declared, too much mixed. He needed to be a little way removed to discern each apart. I fancied that he alluded to the confusion of sweets and savouries in the different courses, which had to be dressed simultaneously. He corrected me rather sharply. He explained that he was not likely to be embarrassed by the conflict of scents from diverse dishes. He had to guard merely against the intersection and overlapping of various flavours from the same. Every dish, cooked by a cook, he showed me, has a number of strata of flavours. They should all be preserved in their correct order and gradation, or it is chaos. From his airy post by the chimney-stack he could intercept each fold as it rippled up.

Not for himself, whom Nature, assisted at a bygone genealogical stage by the Grand Council, had sufficiently provided, but for the benefit of destitute tasting cooks, he had devised

a very ingenious smell-gauge. The ozometer recorded every undulation of scent as it ascended. He would call down the chimney—a special one, not the cooking chimney, for fear of disturbing the flavours—and direct the preparation of a little kickshaw. As it was being dressed, I could observe the ozometer colouring as expressively as the blush in a maiden's cheek at her first proposal. One morning, when I happened to be up there with him, he wrote, in fun, a polite note to the chef—a full taster—at the Junior Lucullus Club, next door, to say he was out of sorts. He should be greatly complimented if his brother in art would stimulate a sick man's appetite by one of his delicious entremets. The rival chef accepted the little joke as serious, granted the request with effusion, and came to dress a masterpiece. With good-humoured malice my companion, seated with me aloft, pointed out the revelations of the gauge. At last he became frightened for his chimney. "I shall never get the flue clean," he cried, as he removed the instrument from the cowl. It was all muddy and streaky, with an utter discord of flavours fighting and embroiled. The finished

dainty was brought to us. I just tasted, and perhaps, if I had not witnessed the evidence to the contrary, might have been pleased. As it was, I knew better, and was disgusted. My friend did not need to taste. Indeed, he could not. He smelt very reluctantly, and tossed half to a hungry dog in the back yard. The rest he sent down with his grateful compliments to the glorious and esteemed chef, who, he hoped, would enjoy it as much as he had. "His poor œsophagus!"—for he is a man of education—he sighed; "but," meditatively, "that is used to it."

I may have somewhat enlarged on the success of the discovered substitute for taste; but I feel that a little prolixity on such a topic needs no apology. When it is considered that most cooks have physical taste, and how they use it, everybody will allow that the Council of Thirty is well advised in concluding that the sense is a calamity, and had better, for that profession at any rate, be suppressed.

I have heard patriotic Sodalitians boast that their wise Councillors have devised how to improve away even the recognized animal

appliances for locomotion without detriment to the exertion of the locomotive faculty. I am somewhat inclined to question their title to the particular triumph. Local men of science, I have understood, believe, indeed, they are on the track of learning how to insert electrical springs in the small of the back, thus enabling that part of the person to do double duty. They are alleged to have gone so far as to petition the Grand Council for authority to amputate a few score legs, in order to secure for the experiment the indispensable basis of a felt privation. But I do not know this of my own knowledge. The substitute for the usual limbs which I saw actually in use was not very different from that familiar among ourselves. When a Sodalitian has lost the physical power, or mental energy, for visiting interesting scenes on his feet, he visits them after the fashion of many Englishmen. That is, he simply says he has been there. For practical purposes the substitute is amply sufficient. That, however, as I remarked to a Sodalitian, is not to adopt a co-ordinate sense in the place of its lost peer. It is to enlist a superior gift, that of fancy, in place of an inferior,

legs and feet, which can hardly claim the dignity even of a sense.

Still, it seems hypercritical to point out flaws and failures when so much has been accomplished. Sodor science has succeeded in demonstrating that the senses are not several, but one in their source, and in their essential working. They are, in their diversity, convenient equivalents for the attainment of the same end, the establishment of communication between mind and the external world, which is represented by other human minds. When by an accident all five senses are not prepared to perform the duty, four have to do the whole. Conceivably the task might be thrown upon three, two, or one. Thus, in case of necessity, taste might bear the load alone. In accomplished elderly gourmands it frequently does. A world is easily to be imagined in which the entire race would be possessed of a single sense, and go on about as satisfactorily as existing humanity with five. For the purpose, all which is required is that none should have more senses than the rest. As soon as individuals have a plurality, they start a public opinion

that any with fewer than themselves are cripples.

Probably, if a whole people existed with less than five senses, it would arrange to put down insolent reduplicating monstrosities, for the comfort, ease, quiet, and contentment of the majority. In Sodor itself that consummation has not been reached, from some little defectiveness of public spirit in the masses. They are not ready in their thousands to let themselves and their issue, for a trifle of a few scores of centuries, be curtailed of one or more of their senses, which have been proved by irrefutable precedents to be virtually superfluous. Doubtless they would consent if they had the prospect themselves of enjoying the resulting simplicity of physiological structure. They are not equal to the self-denial of going blind, deaf, halt, dumb, or tasteless, that their rather remote descendants may be released from the yoke of carting about a quantity of mere encumbrances. Hitherto, therefore, the Thirty have had reluctantly to confine the learned societies to a limited number of subjects to illustrate the adequacy of four or three senses in the place of five. How even

this regulated supply is in the first instance obtained I could not learn. Apparently some gentle compulsion is practised. At all events, after a sufficient number of generations, Nature gracefully resigns herself to the requirements of philosophy. The progeny of successive witnesses to an heroic theory are born such as their forefathers were made, and, in addition, with the appropriate instincts to compensate excisions.

Experiments like those here described are not the only specimens—far from it—of the working of an enlightened autocracy in the Sodor archipelago. But they suffice to indicate the success of pure science collaborating with an iron will in pruning the extravagant luxuriance of uninstructed Nature.

A BALANCE OF TEMPER

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THE Arawakas are an Indian tribe settled in the depths of the forests of Guiana, which only within the past half-century accepted Christian civilization. By some mistake along with it they adopted a very curious institution, which may probably be taken as evidence that they retain a considerable element of original barbarism.

Naturally they are a hot-tempered race. An Arawaka flames up on the smallest provocation. He explodes if a cabman ask him a sixpence too much, if the moral of a play be not to his liking, if a fellow-guest at a dinner-party express political opinions opposed to his. Never was there a more peppery people, regarded individually. A word, or a look, acts as a spark ignited in a powder magazine. Any one among

them is constantly ready to suspect his neighbours of evil practices, and of the most shameless malevolence. Perhaps it may be supposed that this is what I mean by my reference to the partial character of their Christian culture. Nothing of the kind. Every Christian population manifests the same propensity, without detraction from the highest scale in the ranks of humanity. At all events, among the Arawakas there is an equivalent reserve of coolness, which ought to be counted in their favour. The moment one tindery temper in their midst begins to flame, the rest of the mass goes down to zero. In precise relation to the quantity of individual passionateness is the common fund of deliberate and chill reasonableness.

In fact, Arawakas, while they personally are addicted to fits of fury, collectively are peculiarly calm. No nation is more averse from noise and discord. All who happen not at the moment to have been put out are terribly afflicted at the spectacle of ungoverned wrath. It is a misery to third parties to be anywhere in the neighbourhood of such a scene. Till a few years back they endured the torture; and then they

found a way of escape. A sage among them made the great discovery of a Balance of Temper. He noticed that, as I have mentioned, one Arawaka in a passion means a score or a hundred in serene equability. Accordingly, he used the excess to qualify the surplus.

He proceeded by a measure which had the effect of hotchpot. As he could not extract anger and placidity, and pound them together, he mixed up the human subjects of the several emotions in active life. By a statute which he persuaded the Arawaka legislature to pass, he had it declared lawful and compulsory for all in a condition of placidity to interfere for the restoration of tranquillity among the explosives. Formerly they had looked on, uncomfortable but passive, while a tempest raged in a friend's or neighbour's breast. Henceforth it became incumbent upon all the sane to bring buckets and drown the conflagration.

In fully civilized countries, whenever a storm blows up, the undisturbed majority forms a ring within which the effervescence enjoys entire liberty. Arawakas in similar circumstances consider it their primary duty to smother it.

They effect the end they desire with a scandalous disregard for natural equity. Persons who fly into a passion properly should suffer the consequences. They have no right to be immoderately infuriate without bearing the penalty, whatever it may be. Let them commit assault and battery, because they have been treated with injustice, and be condemned at Bow Street to pay forty shillings, or a month. It is highly moral; and they will have an opportunity at Holloway of learning a lesson of self-restraint. If they become more rancorous than ever, it is their own fault, and they may probably have fresh occasions for feeling their folly.

Under the Arawaka ordinance nothing of the sort happens. The crowd springs out of the earth, just as in a truly Christian land, at the first sound of strife. Instead, however, of fomenting the discord by its sympathetic and stimulating attitude, down it pounces upon the combatants. It commences by separating them with gentle violence, and then it catechizes each on the source of the outbreak. By the law, it is straightway answerable for a pacification on whatever terms. Usually both sides are in the

wrong, and ought to be exemplarily cuffed for flying out about nothing. The duty, nevertheless, of the bystanders is to make each regard himself as in the right, and as left in possession of the field. The struggle may be over an extra penny for an omnibus fare, or the title to a free fishery worth a couple of thousand pounds. The passenger has to be permitted to think he has resisted an unjust demand, and the conductor rides off triumphantly brandishing his penny. Similarly, the riparian owner is persuaded to take out of the rates the price of his alleged franchise, while the champions of popular privileges remain free to catch their gudgeons and sticklebacks.

The one unscrupulous resolve of the Arawakas is that on no account will they have brawling, and the sense of injury, which is like the letting out of water. They treat dissension, which is an individual and occasional evil, as a fire, or an accident, or death; and they have constituted themselves a vast insurance society for the grant of compensation. Without the least care for ethics, they do not pause to examine whether the sufferer be not the victim, as commonly,

of his blunders or intemperateness. Selfishly they regard solely their own nerves, and they insist upon sparing them the smallest jar. I wish I could affirm, from my repeated inquiries on the spot, that the moral order of the universe avenges itself for the audacious contempt of its rules. Individual peacemakers, and the State, ought to be seen to be subjects of organized and impudent pillage. A system of conspiracy should be found to exist for the extortion from the public of a solatium for unreal grievances. Tempers, so profitably soothed, should betray an unlimited and universal propensity to inflammability. On the contrary, statistics show a constant and steady decrease in the demands upon the funds, private and public, for the assuagement of choler since the statute in question was enacted.

The object of the legislation had nothing to do with the cure of passionateness and vindictiveness. The Arawaka community chiefly loves ease. It has accustomed itself to treat gusts of anger as necessities of humanity which are certain to arise, and must be pampered into repose, not stifled. I know no population less

imaginative, less prone to look ahead, or more given to consultation of its own temporary comfort. Yet, very curiously, its cold-blooded dilution of individual blasts of heat with the prevailing cool seems to be having the effect of reducing the average temperature all round.

I have myself observed a husband and wife manifesting every symptom of a tremendous altercation, when an acquaintance has chanced to be announced. He would have had a disagreeable time of it in persuading the disputatious pair that one or the other was outrageously in the wrong. He might even have had to divert the lightning from his own head by inviting the couple to a little fish dinner at Aromaia, or by buying a box of caramels for the children. His presence might have been thought a premium upon the continuance of the contest rather than a motive for its abatement. But with the ring of the obligatory peacemaker's bell faces have softened, and at the sound of the peacemaker's voice in the hall the combatants have regarded one another as lovers.

That, I understand from the records of the Arawaka Charity Organization Society, which

bears little affinity to its namesake in the Adelpi, is the general experience ; and I hardly know whether to rejoice or to mourn over the phenomenon. I presume the truth is that barbarians, even though so pleasantly behaved as the Arawakas, retain certain savage instincts, and would rather dispense with their anger altogether than in the long run endure to be bribed and coaxed into parting with it.

EXCHANGE NO ROBBERY

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I WAS reading the other day, in the new and revised edition of Hakluyt-Browne, an account of the manners and customs of Griqualand, which interested me extremely.

Everybody knows how very ill people do their own work. A congregation sits under a minister, and, when it attends to his admonitions, is astonished at their exceeding irrelevancy. As Robinson, the draper, is aware, the preacher might have chosen a text exactly adapted to pinch the corn of Weybridge, the grocer, and has absurdly neglected the opportunity. A client who has lost his action, in which right, if only rightly set forth, was transparently on his side, is painfully conscious of the failure of Nappy, Q.C., to take the proper tack. Parochial officials notoriously neglect their

duty. A butcher does not cut his joints with understanding or justice. A noble and learned lord has shown over and over again how, to call in either an architect, or a physician, is to ensure the rottenness and ugliness of buildings, and the decrepitude of patients. Every mistress can see the incompetence of the modern housemaid to sweep a room. There is not a critic, who, to the manifest assurance of experts, like the writers of books, and the painters of pictures, has the least perception of the elementary conditions of literary and pictorial art.

Everything is everywhere, and flagrantly, out of gear, from the gross ignorance of the persons whose duty it is to perform special functions. So it is in England. So it was in Griqualand. At last, however, the Griquas, a woolly but intelligent race, and not half so patient as Englishmen, resolved to apply a drastic regimen to an acknowledged evil. They met in council at the royal kraal, with the medicine men, missionaries, travellers in schnapps, Bibles, and rifles, British South African Company's pioneers, and others, in attendance. After much discussion the assembly arrived

at several unanimous conclusions. It was agreed, firstly, that all who have work to do do it badly; secondly, that the work nevertheless has to be done; and, thirdly, that the remedy is to appoint everybody to conduct everybody else's business.

Not merely was the final resolution embodied in a law, with the consent of king, chiefs, distillers, and the Paramount Imperial and Royal Power, but it positively was carried forthwith into effect. The system was established, which now regulates affairs in Griqualand. To it the perfection with which the Griqua administration confessedly is conducted, doubtless is attributable.

This is the way in which things are managed. Every Griqua chooses, or has chosen for him, his vocation, as in Europe. As in Europe, he goes through the ordinary apprenticeship or other training. Indeed, I gather that more than European vigilance is exerted for the purpose of securing that he shall learn and be able to apply his knowledge. Clergymen are taught the signs by which a heretic may be scented, or, if more expedient, let alone. The intending lawyer is made to bristle with

special pleas and demurrers. The grocer is instructed as to the exact proportion of chicory requisite for olfactory demonstration to his customers, if not to the sanitary inspector, that the coffee is pure Mocha. The banker is nursed on the principles of political economy and the theory of exchanges. The laundress goes through half a dozen years of soapsuds without soda. The medical student must, for his diploma, produce proof of presence beside fifty hospital death-beds. In short, the curriculum in all respects, I understand, is most carefully arranged, and as sedulously followed. Then, when all are launched on their respective callings, it is strictly provided that none shall actually pursue any one of them.

That is to say, everybody does something, and most energetically—only, as it happens, the work is ostensibly his neighbour's, and not his own. A volume appears with the name of J. Ellis on the title-page. It is reviewed by a writer with the name, published or not, of W. Willis. The fact is that the book is by Willis, and the notice by Ellis. Occasionally the inversion of parts is both simpler and more

collective. Thus, in a campaign, though the army is mustered for an invasion of the enemy's territory, it is the sailors who march. When a naval demonstration is ordered, the troops embark, and send the hostile fleet to the bottom. Each force, acting on a strange element, settles the matter with as much gaiety as if a game were being played. When a Griqua lady goes to market with her cook and house-keeper, it must be especially amusing to watch the proceedings. The market women, without hesitation, tell Madam what she wants; the cook prices the goods; and Madam pockets the usual commission. Nothing, I am assured, could be more satisfactory. There is no squabbling over figures; and it is Griqua wives, not husbands, who quarrel with their dinners, unless poor male human nature mix up temper and indigestion with the sauces.

The settlement is so ingenious and methodical that, it seems, a stranger would hardly detect the transposition of characters. A clergyman ascends the pulpit in the robes and hood of his profession and degree. There is no deception. He is the Rev. Charles Snellpost, as described

in the announcement of the charity sermon on the church doors. Even the handwriting of the discourse may be his own. All its topics, objects, and ideas have been contributed by a select committee of his hearers. Consequently they are much more to the point, and profitably personal, than had they been authentically the preacher's. In such an instance the substitution obviously is easy, and operates automatically. It is, however, really no less simple when a First Lord, who has had to be hoisted on board his flagship like a bale of cotton, takes the command of the Suaheli Squadron, and bursts the boom across the strait of Bab-el-Mandeb. It works even yet more smoothly when an actor lectures Shakespeare on what he meant by Macbeth, or ought to have meant.

The exceptional dexterity of the Griquas is shown by the ease with which a man will adopt, not merely one but an entire series of characters for which he was not originally cast. In Hakluyt-Browne, Huntingdon-Jones, the South African traveller, in a note, describes a scene at which he was present in the Griqua Bail Court. A cause célèbre was being heard, in which the

public was concerned, on the score of morality, even more than the parties. Consequently the gallery was crowded. He says the laymen and laywomen aloft were by turns judge, jury, witnesses, counsel, and attorneys. The effect upon himself, the single neutral spectator, was extremely odd, on account of the unusual positions in which the performers sat, and also from the continual interchange of duties. Otherwise, the alien functions were discharged so naturally, and shifted with such versatility, that, he writes, unless he had been certified of the facts by One who Knew, he should have supposed the instructions to counsel, the arguments, the evidence, the verdict, the judgment, and the applause, promptly suppressed, from the bench, had all proceeded from the orthodox sources.

A little courage may have been needed to decide upon such a revolution. In its success there is nothing very surprising. Obviously, as a leading Griqua journalist remarked to Huntingdon-Jones, it is ridiculous not to commit the management of business to the people immediately interested in the results. For example, as between the clergyman and his congregation,

lawyer and client, doctor and invalid, clearly the second member of each pair is better informed of the circumstances and requirements, is more nearly concerned in the efficacy of the treatment, and, therefore, should be more competent to apply it, than the first. Apparently, as I must confess, the same principle ought to apply to the prerogative of trying and sentencing, as between magistrate and prisoner. I do not observe in Hakluyt-Browne that the Griquas have gone as yet to this logical length. But, in general, there can be no doubt. Take, for instance, the common instance of vendor and purchaser. Is it not self-evident that the former best understands his goods, and the latter the state of his purse—that, consequently, the vendor should select, and the purchaser should regulate the cost?

All honour to the Griquas for having discovered this master secret of the way to obtain from men honest and zealous work! Yet, of course, such is human envy, the novelty of the institution has been questioned. Everybody knows Willson-Tucker. I was dilating to him at the club on the marvellous merits of the

Griqua system, when he rudely declared that Huntingdon-Jones need never have stirred a step from Bloomsbury if he had nothing fresher and better to see and describe. According to Tucker, the usage of attempting to do other people's business has been understood in England for centuries, and is at the root of all bad British work. On reflection, I may not be entirely sure that he is wrong about the presence of a germ, at least, of the institution, and about some results of its operation, in the United Kingdom. The more credit, therefore, say I, to Griqualand, where, if Huntingdon-Jones be right, it works admirably.



HOLLOW



HOLLOW

MR. JOHN GRISLER is a gentleman of means, who at one time lived in a handsome villa outside Chipping Camden. He is also a student of human nature, and, when he was already middle-aged, he made an interesting discovery.

I knew him first in London, where he is passing the later years of his patriarchal life, having found that the air of Chipping Camden disagreed with him. You seldom meet a more agreeable companion than John Grisler. He takes things so easily, and things take him so easily. It is not that his path has been invariably smooth. He has buried three wives, each a treasure of conjugal devotion, as I have heard from himself, none too easy a critic. By each he had children, as well as a fortune. The

money, though in strict settlement, somehow made itself wings. So did the children. They have not all died. A few have, and, I am afraid, in rather sad circumstances. My heart aches for poor Mr. Grisler, as I think of one case. A daughter had married without his consent. Her share of her mother's property was, therefore, not available for her use. Her father, a good judge of the selfishness of husbands, would not allow the rash young couple to touch a penny. She had children; and her husband, who had the repute of an amiable, honourable gentleman, was a briefless barrister. They sank deeper and deeper into poverty, and she, from privations, at last into a decline. On her death-bed she sent entreating her father to come. He came, and she prayed him to take charge of her babies, if not of her almost equally helpless husband. But he is a man of principle, and refused, I have no doubt with agony. He has kept his word.

His sons quitted him too. By the time our acquaintance commenced he was perfectly lonely, yet not unhappy. We see much of one another at a club, a rather lively one for a person of his

age and sorrows. By accident the name of Chipping Camden was once mentioned. I had recently spent a day there, and was enthusiastic about the place. He was also, to a certain point. He joined with me in my admiration of the noble Minster, its Saxdale Chantry, and the stupendous tower. He sighed regretfully as I spoke of the picturesque open market, the best in the kingdom for ducklings. He admitted that no provincial museum contains a finer collection of ichthyosauri. When I carried on my eulogium to the manners of the residents, which had seemed to me indicative of sweet dispositions, he stopped me mournfully. I then learnt that he was a Chipping Camdener himself, and had occupied Verbena Villa in the suburbs for thirty years. His three wives, who lie in the churchyard, were Chipping Camdeners too; and several of his children are still settled in the immediate neighbourhood.

I remarked that probably then he often visited the town. "No," he said, with a benevolent sigh, "I never go; I cannot bear it." I refrained from further inquiries. Plainly a tender nature must have suffered cruelly from

the loss of his excellent wives, and from the undutiful behaviour of his sons. But a subject once started will not let itself drop; and that was the case with Chipping Camden. As we smoked, he recurred to it rather abruptly. "Well, my dear young friend," said he, "the fact is, I made a discovery which took the flavour out of Chipping Camden." I expressed all proper curiosity, and he told me what it was.

In fairy mythology descriptions are given of fascinating elf-women with hollow backs. They are charming to look at. They sing like angels. They dance like gossamer balls. They are all that is fatally bewitching. But there is nothing inside. They are only fronts, like dickies. That was precisely what Mr. John Grisler had ascertained the inhabitants of Chipping Camden to be, all except himself. He did not mean it literally. They had shoulder-blades, and flesh upon them. They dressed in broadcloth and silk, which would not have yielded beyond the nap to the finger. They never betrayed to the senses their peculiarity and deficiencies. Still, there the want was, and Mr. Grisler detected it. He had long

suspected something out of the common, or, at all events, unlike the common make. By a series of skilful, painstaking experiments he got at the full and melancholy truth.

Yes ; it must have been melancholy to learn that his neighbours were all nothing but animated pictures, or plaster figures economically moulded and cast with a view just to presenting a decent front. At the same time, he confessed that with the sorrow something of relief was mingled. "You see," he said, mournfully and profoundly, but with the becoming composure of a man of high moral courage, "when you are thoroughly convinced that there really is nothing inside, that your neighbours simply are nicely shaded, well springed and oiled, and respectably clothed automata, it is surprising how easy it is to deal with affairs. A high-principled man, such as I have humbly tried to train myself to be, is much more unembarrassedly, if I may coin a word, high principled when he has to think of himself and his own standard of right and wrong alone. He can pursue his object of carrying out his own ideas of the True, the Beautiful, the Delightful, so

much more directly when he knows he is free from the vexatious obligation to consider whether other people's rights stand in the way of his appropriation of the necessary material means for his generous aims."

He proceeded to give me a number of autobiographical illustrations of his meaning. Outside his villa, for example, was a meadow belonging to a tradesman in the town. For the health and amenity of Chipping Camden it was very important that it should be kept an open space. As the property of a man in business, not rich, and liable to the temptations offered by jerry-builders, it was in perpetual danger of bricks and mortar. The one chance of its preservation was to throw it into the grounds of the contiguous Verbena Villa. Mr. Grisler amused me much by explaining how, eventually, he succeeded. His plan was to encourage the establishment of a rival shop. In the end the consequence was the ruin of both; and he triumphantly purchased the field cheap at an auction ordered by the Bankruptcy Court. As he observed, he could not, with a comfortable conscience, have carried into effect his little

scheme, unless he had first satisfied himself that the honest grocer and his enterprising competitor were but cleverly contrived out-sides.

That is a single specimen. He acknowledged his own amazement at the universal operativeness in a practical way of the discovery. Every act of life was given through it a pleasant little obliquity. One who has only his own true—remember, his true—interests to consult, and his duty to himself, together with the eternal verities therein involved, finds that they are incessantly clamorous and importunate. The whole activity of his friends, fellows, foes, is scarcely enough to minister to his virtuous cravings. When all is seen converging to a self, as the sole reality with an inside, and with a solid presentable back, to it, that centre swells, hardens, and waxes into ideally noble and luxuriant proportions. A personality cribbed and cabined on all sides by a pervading sense of a heap of equal personalities cannot develop as it otherwise might. That was not Mr. John Grisler's case at Chipping Camden; and he seems to have used his opportunities with a

clear perception of all the duties they imposed upon him.

But, he admitted to me, it was hard and, ultimately, ungrateful work. Endowed yourself with full animation, an all-round figure, with the proper complement of bowels, you pine at last in the constant company of bloodless shadows, as you know all else to be. You grow impatient also at the absurd pretence they will from time to time set up of having individual insides of their own. They grimace, and protest, and are spiteful at being put to the service of a positively existing fact, like yourself, as if they were somebodies, when you know, and know they know that you know, what counterfeits they are. It was as bad, he grieved to say, with his sons, who were shams too, like other Chipping Camdeners, and with his married daughter, a sham also. The only two realities beside himself in the parish were two other daughters. They were excellent girls who devoted themselves to their father, when they might have acted as the independent entities they happened to be. Only, unluckily, they both died a little over twenty, and he was left alone among shadows.

In the circumstances, being at liberty to live where and how he pleased, with no estate, only a competent Government annuity, and no dependents who were not hollow-backed, and with a perfect conscience and digestion, he had quitted Chipping Camden for ever. For the rest of his days he intended to stay in London. That is to say, he should, if he found men or things amenable to the requirements of his inner development. I asked if Londoners had more of insides than Chipping Camdeners. He answered that at first he hoped they had. Unluckily, the experience of transactions with them showed they were equally hollow. At all events, they were, I trusted, amiable and complaisant automata. "So so," he replied. "But, happily, I am not exacting."

Of course, I did not believe all his talk, though I did not tell him as much. But I have seen a good deal of him since, and have watched his conduct to others. It is much what I suppose it was during his residence at Chipping Camden. From it I think I can gather why he grew tired of the place and of his neighbours there. Anybody with a vigorous sense of the

unsubstantiality of shadows is apt to treat them as such. After a time they begin to be angry that they have been found out. Mr. Grisler meets a number of outsides at our club itself. He frankly treats them as what they are ; and I notice that they do not like it.

I might not like it myself, if I were a mere outside. Mr. Grisler, however, compliments me upon being all-round. I dare say I am ; for I have discovered that most of my neighbours, like his, are hollow. That is an infallible sign, he assures me, that a man's self is solid.

THE END.

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