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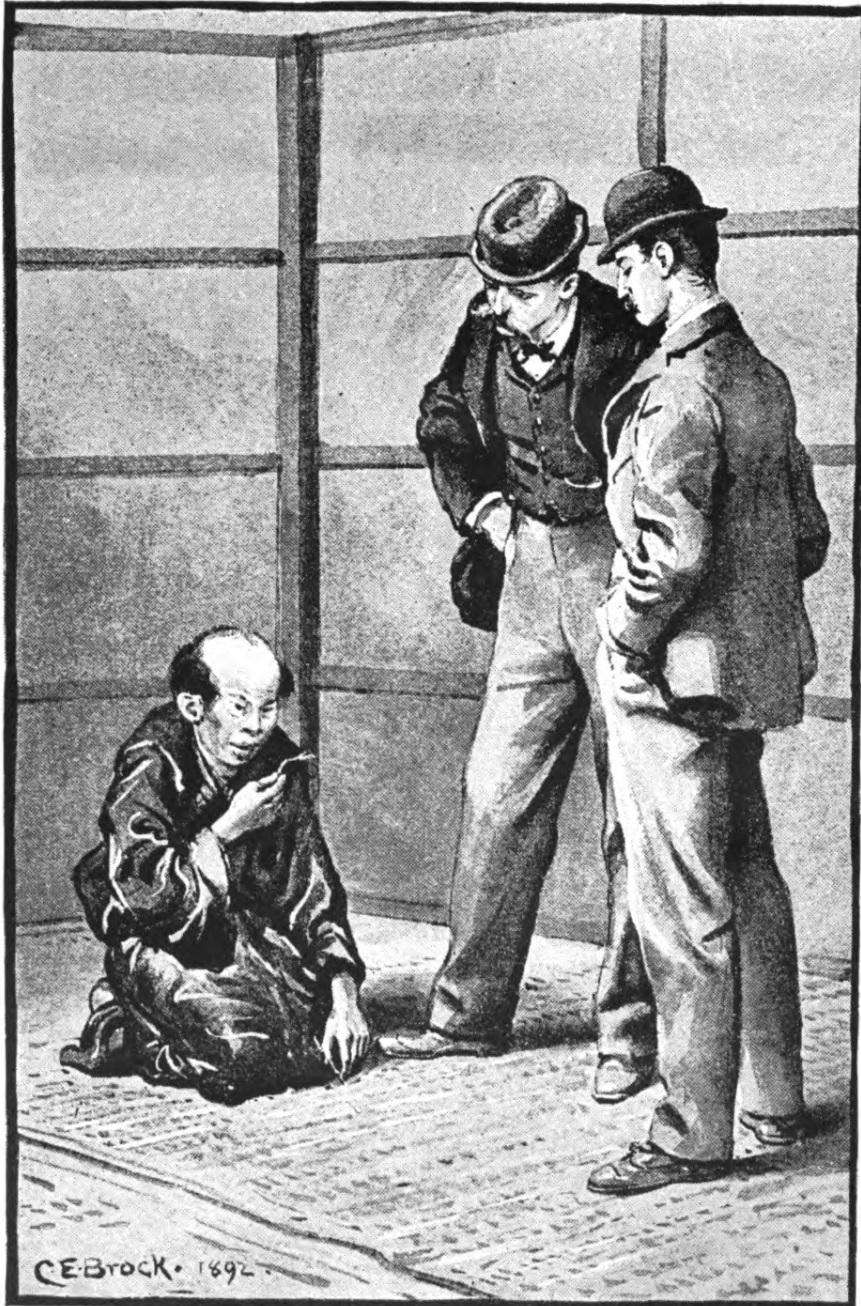
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“THE MALE MARIONETTE THEN CONTINUED HIS PARABLE.”
—P. 249.

THE
WOOING OF WEBSTER
AND OTHER STORIES

FELIX HOLT SECUNDUS—A
YOSHIWARA EPISODE—THE
BEAR HUNT ON FUJI-SAN—A
TOSA MONOGATARI OF MOD-
ERN TIMES—FAUSTUS JUNIOR,
PH.D.—FRED WILSON'S FATE.

BY
A. M.

LONDON
PATERNOSTER SQUARE

WALTER SCOTT
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FROM AUSTRALIA AND JAPAN.

OUR "SPECIAL" TELLS THE STORY OF
FELIX HOLT SECUNDUS.

IN THREE SECTIONS.

SECTION I.—ON THE PLAINS.

IT was at once a simple and a beautiful idea, and in 1886 a perfectly feasible one. The notion was to form the shipmasters into a United Society and the ships' officers into another, and by means of delegations from the bodies so organised to federate with the F.S.U.A., which is cabalistic for Federated Seaman's Union of Australia. This of course would have meant perfect solidarity in the labour of those who go down unto the deep in ships, and the owners shivered in their slippers when they got wind of the scheme. It had been conceived in the silent watches of the night, and for the best part of nine months its gestation had been a secret. Then somehow or other whispers of the approaching birth got bruited around among the capitalists, and when the baby did appear it was next door to still-born. Not still-born altogether though; it would be more correct to say that the plutocrats,

Hera-like, sent snakes to strangle it in its cradle, and that the creeping things succeeded in their mission. It was a pity, because, as said before, it was a plan that would have gone through at that time if all the Unions had been in earnest. Brisbane and Adelaide were, but Sydney and Melbourne were not, and of course we have high authority for prognosticating the speedy collapse of a structure divided against itself. So the project miscarried, and the Adelaide and Brisbane men got smitten hip and thigh, not with the jawbone of one solitary ass, but a perfect chorus of donkey-brays from the whole Plutocratic Press of the Continent. Now this was nothing short of a calamity for all concerned. Of course the notion *has* to go through ultimately,—there is no doubt about *that*. If well engineered it would have become *un fait accompli* then without any very considerable amount of friction, or of industrial waste and wear and tear. It didn't; and so both sides organised for a battle royal, and after a three years' interchange of lying expressions of mutual regard and politeness, issue was joined in 1890. The result was very expensive to both sides and glorious to none of them, but that has nothing to do with the story at present.

It was Will Hawkston that was at the bottom of the '86 plot, and if he had got his way then, Australia would be a good many mile-stones further on the road to Social Democracy than she is to-day. He felt the miscarriage keenly,—far more so than I ever fancied he could feel anything. He had worked like an intellectual Hercules in piecing the thing together, and in trying to run it through, and the breakdown of

the concern seemed to *break* him down utterly. It is true that he was in a very rickety state physically,—his wasted frame and cadaverous cheeks were suggestive at once of Will Langland, William III., and zymotic disease,—especially of zymotic disease. The only thing to be thought of was a “spell,” and I told him as much in the plainest Anglo-Saxon I could muster for the occasion. He delighted me by admitting that I was right, and that furthermore he had taken steps to get one. It seems that an old Oxford chum of his was then philandering about in the Colonies, and Hawkston had run across him at the Club. The chum in question was a real live Japanese nobleman,—a thoroughly good sort too, in spite of the unfortunate handicap of having to go through life with a *brumma-gem* prefix in front of his name. He evidently saw that Hawkston was in a bad way. He told him he wanted an English teacher for his former retainers, and asked Hawkie to undertake the job as a favour. Hawkston was perfectly willing, and so when I ventured to open my mind to him on the matter of a spell he took me utterly aback by informing me that he was to sail for Japan on the next day but one. I was glad of course, but yet in some ways my sorrow was much greater than my joy at the turn events had taken. For Hawkie had been my closest friend for the last twelve months, and I didn't at all like losing touch of him. I took a day off, and spent the four and twenty hours previous to his departure in his company. We had much to talk about, but of course only a small part of that enters into this story. Among other things Hawkie gave me a few fat MS. volumes

bound in black and closely packed with his own crabbed hieroglyphics. For Hawkston's copy is with one exception the worst I ever set eyes upon, and that exception is my own.

"Look here, old man," he said, "Allison" (that was the crack Brisbane specialist on throat diseases) "tells me that it is merely a toss-up as to whether I shall be thrown overboard or buried in a Buddhist Cemetery, and I'm half inclined to believe him. Now there are some things I know of that nobody else does, and it is just as well for the Cause—a capital C of course,"—(here he smiled sarcastically) "that some one should be able to use the knowledge if need be. You'll find them all there in black and white, and some of them will have to be acted upon before six months are over. There are other matters besides that are purely private. But I'm without father or mother, or sister or brother, or chick or child, or any relation whatsoever, and you may just as well have these volumes as anybody else. If I get better and come back, let me have them again ; if not,—then good and well, do with them even as you list."

His prospects of recovery struck me about being on a par with those of a Queensland wild-cat mine after the directors and promoter-shareholders have succeeded in unloading every shred of their scrip on a gullible London public. I would have taken any odds against the chances of his coming back,—that is, if I had been callous enough to put money on such a contingency. When I said good-bye to him he was the sickest socialist I ever saw,—those batoned in Trafalgar Square by a gallant and courageous police-force

not even excepted. But as matters turned out, there was a lot of vitality in him after all,—just as is the case with Social Democracy itself.

Well, I set to work on the volumes, as in duty bound, and found them not at all unlike the earliest attempts at literature we possess, in the variety of subjects dealt with. They constituted a sort of diary, where “impressions” of slums jostled with sarcastic etchings of high life; while ethics, and politics, and economics were mixed up together in a jumble that would have delighted the innermost heart of Moses or Confucius, or of the author of the Laws of Manou. Then there were notes on the dodges and tactics of the capitalists, and a scheme for the Universal Federation of Labour in Australia cheek by jowl with real live lyric poems, and scraps and figures that might have had some far-off connection with the Integral Calculus or the Fourth Dimension. Of course all this, with the single exception of the last item, was interesting. But there was even better in the note-books than the sum-total of everything above mentioned. Running through the tangled skein of the text was what I scarcely ever dreamt of in the case of Hawkston,—a first-class Romance. After I had extracted the political tips that might be of special value at the time, or in the near future, I set to work upon the personal factor in the notes, and soon with a little editing, and a few interpolations, I succeeded in piecing together a story that would have brought me sundry shekels of silver if I only had had the luck to be christened (let us say) Wilkie Collins.

I propose to jot down the first part of the yarn in

the style, then, of the *Woman in White*; being partly persuaded to this course by the original sin of inherent laziness, and partly from being wishful to let the man speak for himself.

There are two classes of entries,—those of 1884 and those of 1886. In the case of the former the scene is England, principally Oxford and the little village by the Thames with the brace of contradictories, "Commerce and Christ," for a trade-mark; in '86 the Southern Cross must be supposed to be shimmering down upon the love-making, such as it was. The only prologue necessary to the comprehension of the piece is that Hawkston was a Queensland native, born on the slopes of the ranges just where they sweep up and spread out into the plains. It is a hot-blooded, impetuous brood mostly that is reared in those quarters,—a generation not over much given to unbonneting to shoddy dignities or kowtowing to the conventional lay-figures of respectability and vested interests. Every child there born of woman is brought up to ride and to shoot and to stand sauce from no one; most of the males add to these rudiments of a liberal education the further accomplishment of hitting straight out with the left and getting in with the right when a chance offers. Hawkston learned all that at Toowoomba Grammar School, and then he went to Sydney University and afterwards to Oxford to get an inkling of what was utilitarian in the learning of the Egyptians, and to put on the top-dressing that is as very bird's-lime in catching a well-bred mate in the drawing-rooms. In

Oxford he was a success, came out with a first in Lit.-Hum. and another in Modern History, and was looked upon as surely booked for an All Souls' Fellowship in spite of his low and disreputable radical views; for, be it remarked, it was not after all such a very serious drawback to flirt with radicalism in Oxford in the early eighties, if it was but a mere flirtation. But there is a big difference between a mistress and a *mésalliance*, and respectable Dons were more than scandalised to find that Hawkston's intentions regarding radicalism, or, as it was then beginning to be called, Social Democracy, were not only honourable, but, to keep up the figure, even matrimonial. That, however, did not appear conclusively until the day after the exam., while the merits of the candidates were still under consideration, with, as it afterwards turned out, a strong consensus in favour of the brilliant Oriel man,—Hawkston to wit. Then he needs must outrage decency and respectability by inviting to dinner at the Bachelors' table in Hall, not the devil himself,—that would have been pardonable perhaps,—but an individual to whom the devil and his angels, and eke their heavenly adversaries, were all so many effete symbols, and negative ones at that. When the member for Northampton,—for it was the redoubtable Bradlaugh, no less, that was the guest of the evening,—walked into the place, it was as good as a play to watch the commotion at the Dons' table as soon as the word went round that that lineal descendant of the eldest of the sons of Belial was in their very midst, eating the college salt and drinking the college brew. But the indignant fluttering of their

academical robes did not seem to discompose Bradlaugh in the slightest. He looked upon the episode as a good joke, and so did Hawkston. But the latter did not look at the occurrence in that light two days later, when the result of the Fellowship election came out. He found himself passed over, and another,—and a very weak vessel indeed that other was,—appointed to the vacancy at the common-room table of All Souls. It is at this point that the Diary—as edited,—begins.

September 1st.—This is a fix, and no mistake. It is as good as being “bushed” in a lantana-scrub. Scholarship run out; no show of a Fellowship after that Bradlaugh business now. A mastership in any of the “respectable” schools,—Eton, Harrow, Rugby, and so forth,—is not even to be dreamt of. And I don’t want to leave England just yet awhile. Wherefore I purpose to join myself unto a citizen of this country, who will send me into his fields to feed swine,—*i.e.*, into his class-rooms to cram dunces with the husks of word-mongering.

September 4th.—What a glorious country this is for a man with no money! With this blessed competition-wage system there is a lot of inducement to be honest. Dick Whittington and his Cat and Hogarth’s Two Apprentices sound very, very funny indeed at this time of day. Society is mainly divided into plunderers and plundered, exploiters and exploited. There are still a few relics of fossil probity left us by our industrial individualism. But that is all. The thing itself, as a living entity, is extinct as

the Moa. Of course there is a big difference in the connotations of honesty and of keeping out of gaol. *Probitas laudatur et alget*, gets praised in the abstract, but goes with an empty stomach in the very flesh.

The above reflections are neither new nor profound, but, notwithstanding, they are true, and that's a lot more than can be said of the orthodox economic theories. They are prompted by the fact that I find that £90 per annum for eight hours' work a day is all that two firsts in Finals in Oxford bring in the competitive scholastic mart. A Queensland stockman gets as much, and he dresses in moleskins, a Crimean shirt and a cabbage-tree, and has no struggle with the incidentals of broad-cloth, un-creased unmentionables, white shirts and collars, and all the other miserable appurtenances of British Philistine respectability engaged in the pitiable game of keeping up appearances! For cheapness and a general spirit of nastiness there is nothing like industrial competition! It is a grand thing, a holy thing, a blessed thing! Therefore let us put our necks under its yoke and lift up our voices in its praise in a bovine chorus of heartfelt thankfulness for nothing!—that is, those of us who have qualms about turning licensed foot-pads, and scrambling up atop of our neighbours, and then kicking down the ladder we mount by! Body and soul must be kept together somehow; and so respectability on £90 a year let it be! Anyhow there is still time left for the propaganda. The Fabian Society is beginning to get a hold: it is giving me enough to do and to spare.

October 25th.—We are making headway; at least the “classes” show signs of taking an interest in us. We had a bumper house in Bermondsey last evening. John Burns, Champion, and one or two others spoke. I was sitting on a bench in the back of the hall when I noticed something peculiar about a woman rigged out in rather frayed and weather-worn and unfashionable raiment. I couldn’t for the life of me make out where the attraction came in. Then she shifted in her seat, and I saw at a flash what it was: it was her pose, *and the way she carried her rags*. They sat upon her like the robes of a duchess. Her companion seemed to be a flash got-up costermonger,—“seemed,” I write advisedly. I looked at his fists; there was far too little real estate about his well-trimmed nails for one of the “’orney ’anded.”

Just then the speaker concluded with a few telling shots, and was cheered to the echo. As the applause died away I caught one or two sentences the pair were exchanging under cover of the whirlwind of shouts.

“These people are no fools,” she remarked. “Who could have fancied that a speech like that would have taken with the mob? That man spoke better than most in St. Stephen’s.”

“Humph! Too much school-board hath made them mad,” answered the other with a contemptuous ring in his tone.

It needed no great insight to twig that they were masqueraders. I fancied it would be just as well to know all about them. So I kept my eye on the twain, and kept stride with them when they left.

After getting clear of the crowd they hailed a four-wheeler, and I got up behind and took a ride out of Jarvey for nothing. It was as I thought. The man is a member of the shop that misgoverns a free people by hereditary right ; the female is his lawful spouse. I got a glimpse of her features ; hers is a face that a man who looks upon it once will not readily forget.

November 5th.—This talk of an unholy alliance between the Nihilists, the Irish Dynamiters, and ourselves is all so much fudge. There is nothing to justify the Fenians in their madness ; they have the means of constitutional agitation. With the Russians it is different. The bureaucrats of Czardom seemed determined to sit on the safety-valve of Constitutionalism. If the boiler bursts they can't legitimately complain. That little Russian woman is a wonder,—a regular Perovskaia and a Vera Sassulitch thrown into one. She is not *la Pucelle* though. Jeanne d'Arc gave her life for France ; if what is told is true, Lisa has sacrificed more than that for the propaganda. To raise funds for the Centre to which she belongs,—as likely as not they are wanted for some infernal piece of nitro-glycerine devilry,—she has parted with what is incomparably more precious to a virtuous woman (she is one, too, if I am not a fool) than life—her *honour*. She is not beautiful till she speaks. Then a glow of spirituality lights up each one of her features, and she shines out more resplendent than a Vittoria Colonna. What wonderful things those Russian folk-songs are she sings ! The pace is trying me a bit. Eight hours' dunce-driving by day

and as much speaking and writing and plotting and conspiring by night are getting too telling altogether.

January 19th, 1885.—So that was the meaning of it! Czaricide no less! Poor Lisa! She is to be executed next week!

March 10th, 1886.—So it is good-bye to “hold Hingland.” Poor wretched caste-ridden, mammon-driven old country! Marx and Saint Matthew Arnold to the contrary, I cannot help now and then taking a desperate view of your social problem. But there’s hope for you in democracy and the schoolmaster after all. Anyhow, I’ve done my share of the day’s work. The medicine-man, after ten minutes’ ominous spirit-rapping on the sackful of bones that used to be my chest, tells me my only chance is the nerving air of the Austral land; so I’m off “’ome.” ’Tis seven years since the Heads faded into mist behind me, and these years have wrought changes. I go back to a home where there are neither kith nor kin to welcome me more.

June 20th, 1886.—Here I have been vegetating for the best part of two months. I am content, and I don’t like the situation, but I think that has been said by some other fellow before,—by Goethe, I fancy. He has the unhappy knack of filling up all the lacunæ in the quotation-line accidentally left by Shakespeare and the Bible. After the three of them there is now very little show left for the coining of original aphorisms. But “to resume,” as my Hibernian friend, O’Hara, the overseer,

would put it, I am content because I have been pulling up famously. When I came up here I was like a piece of lath mounted on a pair of churchwardens—I mean pipes, of course. O'Hara assured me that I must be a "man av no mane courage to vinture on such outrajisly tinder shupports." But O'Hara is plump and rotund, not to say obese, with short stumpy overgirthy understandings that would be a disgrace to even an Esquimaux or an ancient Etruscan. Symmetry is certainly not his strong point, and so his criticism must not be taken too seriously. But the fact remains that I *was* thin when I came up from Brisbane. I am just six-and-twenty pounds heavier than when O'Hara passed judgment on me, and yet I scale a full stone under my Oxford rowing weight. But at this rate I shall not be long about putting on the extra flesh. That is the effect of the bright sunlight, the free out-of-door life, and the whispering breezes that sough among the wattles and the gum-trees. Another month of it and I shall be as fit as a fiddle. But I don't like it notwithstanding. It is too slow and monotonous; too frightfully calm and smooth, altogether too materially comfortable. I ought to be down below in the towns among the workers,—although I might do something here in knocking together a Shearer's and Bushman's Union, and getting the beggars to organise. At the same time, if discontent and disquiet and unrest would only let me, I shouldn't be very sorry to grow grey in the midst of this eucalyptic cloisterdom. But what modern man since Petrarch can calmly make up his mind to dream away his life in a hollow

Lotos-land? For in spite of occasional dingo hunts and wild dashes after breaking cattle and Homeric feeds of mutton and damper and tea by the flashing camp-fires on the ranges, sweetened by sweat, yet this existence savours altogether too much of "the Gods reclining on the hills together, careless of mankind." There is a pleasure, a keen and thrilling pleasure, in warring with evil,—Tennyson's choric song to the contrary,—and here there is little chance of a good stand-up set-to with either chaos or the devil.

This station,—cattle principally,—is just fifty miles off from its nearest neighbour. The buildings are about thirty miles from the limit fence, measure in whatever direction you please. That means about 3000 square miles of country, one-half of it freehold, most of it got by a wholesale process of "dummying," which is just a euphemism for doing the Government in the eye. And as the freehold commands all the water-holes on the run, the rest of the squattage is safe,—from a squatter's standpoint, of course. That signifies that it will never be resumed by the authorities, since no settler in his sober senses would ever dream of selecting where there's no water to be had, unless he's prepared to pay more for it than for custom-house whisky. In my position of storekeeper and bookkeeper and general rouse-about I see a good deal of the "hands,"—we have imported this choice piece of nomenclature from the humane English factory system,—and something of the "boss" and his family. He is English and aristocratic, a younger son, and a possible member of the House of Fossils,—that is, if his eldest brother

drinks himself to death before he marries, and friend Bradlaugh does not succeed in turning the Alpheus through that Augean stable of respectability and vested interests. It is amusing to get him on the string about democracy and the masses, as I see I can do every time the mail comes in. He is not a fool by any means; yet he does not seem to know what way to take me and my remarks. Wouldn't he be horrified to discover the social fire-brand he has imported to weigh out his flour and tea and sugar to his boundary riders? (The metaphor is mixed, but never mind.) He will discover it some day not very far off, and then I promise myself no inconsiderable amount of amusement. But he is not at all objectionable in some respects. To those within the pale of his caste he is hospitality personified. The "swagsmen," though, curse him roundly, and more than once have taken their departure, vowing in their own lurid vocabulary to bear him in mind. This of course is a covert threat to fire his run, in spite of the £100 reward offered by the Pastoral Association "for evidence leading," etc., etc., or to cut his fences. And twice within the last month these gentlemen have been as good as their word.

His wife, the Hon. Mrs. Wingfield, is just the average "goodless ill-less" matron of the English upper classes. She might have been a woman worth knowing but for the blighting influence of a devastating attack of Mother Grundy at an impressionable age. She is kind-hearted, "lady-like" in her manners (of course), pudding-faced and conventional. There are two olive branches, regular

wild, untamed blue-blooded devils. I have succeeded in winning their heartiest respect. They tried a bit of hazing on me shortly after I came up, and were a trifle astonished when I caught them and rapped their thick skulls together in the presence of their lady mother, and then dismissed them with a blessing and a trifling castigation apiece.

I hear our loneliness is to be relieved by the proximate advent of visitors,—a pair of “new chums,” of assorted sexes.

June 25th.—She came upon me as I was cutting up a sheep in the shed; evidently she was pleased with me after a fashion,—finding me a picturesque object in a romantic landscape. That evening at dinner,—Sturgis the *pædagogus* of the establishment is my informant,—she remarked that she had found a companion to George Eliot’s picture of Adam Bede at his bench! Hey diddle-diddle! but this waxes amusing!

I knew her at a glance; no less than the *inconnue* of the meeting in Radcliffe Highway, Bermondsey, who was patronisingly pleased to admit that the democracy did really possess some culture! Of course this is an opportunity to trot out the stock commonplace that the world is a very small place after all.

She is a clipper though! The lines of the Venus de Milo and the head and the poise of the flashing-eyed goddess Athena. These aristocrats are really fine in their way. And why should they not be? They have had the show for generations. When *we* get *our* innings we will turn out products like her, not

by the score, but by the nation. *She*,—but why the devil should I trouble myself to waste paper and ink on her?

June 27th.—More arrivals to break the monotony of our eucalyptic cloisterdom. We have all the elements of a second-rate symposium without Socrates or Aristophanes to make away with the liquor. An itinerant Anglican bishop and his chaplain represent the church militant. Then there's Dutton, the Minister for Lands, to expound Henry George and to run him as a kind of Universal Social Painkiller or St. Jacob's Oil. Next we have a Bank Inspector to rave on the sacredness of "property" and the right divine to collar the unearned increment of corner allotments. To complete the list we have an infernal Manchester carpet-bagger on the outlook for pastoral and mining investments for his syndicate. He is said to be making sheep's eyes at the "widdey," for she lost her little lordling of a husband two years ago. It was he no doubt that was her escort at the meeting. Since then she has been travelling—very much interested in social problems. Humph! She doesn't look much like the orthodox blue-stocking, though.

June 28th.—To-day I was amused. I had just finished a thing on Nihilism for the *Bulletin*, and was sitting on a log looking over it before I dropped it into the mail-bag. Possibly what psychologists call "contiguity" set me a-humming that little Russian air I learned from Lisa. Suddenly,—it must have been about four in the afternoon,—the shadow of a sunshade and a woman's body was thrown over my shoulder, and I looked round.

"That is a weird melody," she said,—it was *she*, of course. "It sounds like Russian music."

"It is Russian," I answered.

"Indeed! That is very interesting. Where does it come from?"

I told her it was a folk-song I had heard from a friend. She caught sight of Tourgenieff's *Otzi Dietzi* lying on the grass, and *sans cérémonie* took it up and looked at it.

"You read Russian?" she asked, with the slightest elevation of her pencilled eyebrows.

I said I knew a little of it.

She then asked what I thought of Tourgenieff. Then before I knew where I was I was subjected to a cross-examination about Poushkin, Learmontoff, Gogol, and Goncharoff. After that she began to put "feelers,"—leading questions the lawyers call them,—which I didn't like a bit, and shunted them as politely as I could. She was a lady down to her finger-tips, and so she dropped them at once. I could see that she fancied that there was something incongruous between a Crimean shirt and a critical knowledge of Slavonic literature. I was at once amused and irritated at her. Why will these people coddle themselves with the notion that we democrats are uneducated boors?

June 30th.—What next? Are the streams about to flow back to their sources after all? I have been invited, and ultimately begged, to dine at the "boss's" table to-morrow evening. First the cubs came; then the boss; and then "mamma," as pleasant and as soft and as wheedling as you please. A



“THE SHADOW OF A SUNSHADE WAS THROWN OVER MY SHOULDER.”—P. 23.

station-hand at the Wingfields' table, with an itinerant bishop, a minister of the Crown, a lady of title, a syndicate-manager, a bank-inspector, and, in the poetical vernacular of the auctioneers, a variety of other articles too numerous to mention! Verily we are broadening down with a vengeance!

July 2nd.—In the low cant of thieftom, I am afraid I blew the gaff upon myself last night. But it was past human endurance to stand them all sitting up on end and airing their pretty air-bubble theories. I kept in the background as long as I could. In the course of the talk Her Ladyship must needs trot out her account of the Radcliffe Bermondsey episode, and cap that with her criticism of the attainments of the crowd. I couldn't endure that quite, so I remarked that I was somewhat astonished at the courage of the party. When a dozen pair of eyebrows went up interrogatively, I went on to say that it needed a pretty bold individual to venture on challenging the claims of Lassalle concerning the irresistible equipment of Social Democracy in point of culture after he and Marx had, with Ricardo in one hand and Hegel in the other, turned all the heavy guns of the philosophers and economists on private property in land and the means of production and knocked it into match-wood. I spoke very quietly, but notwithstanding the assembly started as if some one had let off an infernal machine under the mahogany. They were all upon me like a mob of garrotters, but I think I came out of it decently. I expect to get my walking-ticket soon, though. One thing galled me shrewdly. Her Ladyship thrust the discussion on to moral

qualities, and in the course of it declared that after all it was blood that told, and that the boasted democracy could never show what she called patrician courage. She asserted that in a race, for instance, a plebeian could never do the impossible, while an aristocrat certainly could and would. The phraseology was somewhat enigmatic, but I fancy I grasped her drift. She looked at me meaningly, as I thought, when she said that. But why in the name of peace should I allow that woman to "rattle" me in the way she does?

July 4th.—I don't like that carpet-bagger a bit. To-day he came down to the sheds with *her*, and some young squatters that have come over from the neighbouring runs to pass the time of day. I had taken a fancy to shoe Shylock, and was sawing away at his hoofs when the procession came on the scene. It seems the c.-b. fences a little. He caught sight of a pair of single-sticks crossed on the wall, and nothing would serve him but a chance to display his accomplishments. So he took them down, whisked one of them whistling through the air, and issued a comprehensive challenge to the neighbourhood. Now the saving grace and the savour of the salt of Australian life lies in sport. If anything can save the immortal soul of the future Republic it will be the courage that is born of the thrill of pig-skin 'twixt one's knees in front of a five-rail fence, or the crush of a Rugby scrimmage. So although the youngsters knew nothing about the sticks, they put on the masks and buckled to readily enough. The c.-b.'s science, however, was altogether too much for their untutored

native pluck, and the Johnnies got warmed all over their persons. Just about this time I finished rasping the last shoe of the four, and sauntered over to see the fun. I was more than astonished to find myself singled out by the Manchester man. I think I know the reason of the sneering ring in his words, and the mocking look on his phiz, when he addressed me in the fashion of Severus to Maximin: "Thracian, art thou disposed to wrestle after thy d—d horse-shoeing?" It meant that he wanted, if possible, to score the impudent working man who had scored off him somewhat extensively two evenings before. I saw that he felt morally cock-sure of having his revenge by basting my ribs, if I should be venturesome enough to tackle him. Which I did. Now I had passed the long vac. of '83, I think it was, in Naples with San Martelli, and knew pretty well how to take care of myself when it came to sabres. The carpet-bagger had one frightfully weak point: he exposed his elbow. So I just contented myself with rapping his "funny-bone," as the boys call it, twice or thrice not over gently, and he threw down the stick with a twinge and what sounded as twin-brother to a curse. I caught *her* eye at the end of the performance, and mischief glittered in its unfathomable depths.

July 4th.—I wish to Heaven that old beast Sturgis had told me sooner! What a muddle-pated clown of a *pædagogus* it is, albeit a thoroughly good-hearted fellow! So I was haled into the feast because, forsooth, she wanted to see a typical Australian working man! Did she wish to amuse herself by seeing me eat pease with a knife, I wonder! Confound them, if

I had but guessed! Their patronising remarks anent me after my departure, *Sturgis teste*, are something to be humbly grateful for! I think it is in *Kenilworth* that Scott paints Leicester as doing immortal honour to Will Shakespeare by tossing him his bridle to hold, or something equally condescending. We've now got a little beyond that; it seems the Australian plutocrat's way of acknowledging democratic talent is to invite its possessor in with the pudding. How kind of the modern Philistines to call for Samson,—Demos, I mean,—from the prison-house where he does grind that he may make them sport when their hearts are merry!

July 5th.—The Sydney Labour folks have sent for me. I am about all right again, and I mean to up swag and off.

July 10th.—This afternoon there was a mild bit of excitement. These aristocrat women have no end of pluck,—and why shouldn't they? They have every possible chance to foster and develop the quality. At the same time, *barring the brains*, they are as fine in their way as the Renaissance females. It is a sight to see *her* on horseback. She has a seat and hands too that the best stock-rider on the plains might be proud of. But she tackled what was altogether too "kittle" for her when she insisted on getting on Bonnibel. She is a brute, a regular out-and-out brute, as her dam was, and her grandsire before her. She comes of a strain that has turned out more devils, and killed more grooms and jockeys, than any other at the Antipodes. The "boss" protested when she made the proposal, I'm told; but what was the use?

When he went off to the out-station after lunch, she came out and ordered the mare to be saddled. It was none of my business to interfere, of course, and I didn't. But I thought I'd take Shylock out for a canter in the direction I was pretty sure she would follow. He is the only horse on the run that can outpace the mare, either in a spurt or a long course. I had got on to the stretch of open beyond the scrub that belts the station clearing when I saw a floating cloud of dust tearing along the back road like a comet with a woman on horseback for its head. I guessed what had happened. The brute had bolted; and saw, and saw, and saw as she might, the woman could no more touch that rock-callous mouth than she could hope to rasp through a capstan bar with a darning-needle. Now it so happened one of the station niggers was coming along the track, and he threw out his arms and shouted. This simply sent the mare off her course, and away she rushed to the right like a snorting whirlwind. I knocked the spurs into Shylock, for there was good need to. About six hundred yards off was a gulch with a bottom of whinstone rock and sides as sheer as a castle-wall, making fully a hundred feet of a drop. The brute was going straight in a bee-line for that; and going with the spin of the winner of the Melbourne Cup. She had a start too, and I knew, without taking much time to consider, that I just *might* catch her a yard on this side of eternity. How the gum-trees flitted behind the thunder of the four pair of hoofs! It was like the Erl King in a nightmare! I got up level with her just as we had the

brink in sight. It was no use reaching for the rein ; we should have all gone over then in a regular family party. So I let the mare go and confined my attention to the woman. I got hold of her and swept her on to the saddle in front of me, and yelled like an Indian, swinging round to the near side at the time. Shylock was the best cutting-out horse on the run, and round he came like a fork of lightning bent on business. It was a lucky thing that I had shod him a few days before. He struck all his hoofs into the turf at once, and tore it up as if a shell had burst upon it. Just then I heard a ghastly "thud" in the gulch below, and when I looked round I saw a long score on the brink and then over it,—the marks of the infernal beast when she saw that she was getting her own accursed skin into a pickle and wanted to change her route. Then I jumped down and lifted "Her Ladyship" from the saddle. I went to the brink and peered over. Atop of the whinstone lay a bright-coloured mass *very still*. From it little rills of trickling red oozed out of sight in the crannies.

She took the thing very coolly—not in the least flustered or excited,—she only paled a trifle;—that was all. Then her clear-cut face flushed like the morn when the sun's first kiss brushes the ranges, and she looked at me with a smile and said quite simply,—

"That was a gallant thing, Mr. Hawkston!"

Then, like a cad, I needs must have my fling at her.

"It wasn't the impossible quite, perhaps, but if the patrician *had* gone over that ledge, the plebeian would have been in at the death a good second."

"I know what you mean," she answered very

quietly, "and no doubt circumstances justify the retort. But I don't know if I'm wrong after all though. It is not every working man that reads Russian, quotes Æschylus, and rides to the death like a Centaur or a Paladin, is it?"

"Possibly not; but to how many do you give the chance? Give us a show and you'll find a good many Hervé Riels among us, and ten thousands of men better than I."

"With your leave we'll postpone the discussion to another time. Meantime I won't attempt to thank you. I have found——"

"A very interesting specimen no doubt," I interrupted, for now I felt a most unreasoning anger against her, and at the same time a feeling I have never felt in the presence of woman before. "But please leave me alone in future, and don't get me any more invitations to dinner."

She saw that I knew all about it. At first her head went up haughtily; then her features softened and she put her hand gently on my sleeve. (How that touch thrilled me! I felt the blood run jumping and leaping in my veins!)

"I ask your pardon," she said gravely; "you have the right to speak as you do. But I meant no offence, and I am more than sorry for what has happened."

"Don't mention it, only it is true that the people feel as keenly as you aristocrats, though perhaps you don't fancy so. But let us get stationwards."

Of course there was a lot of talk about the incident, although I said as little as possible.

July 14th.—I thought she was at the bottom of it. A fine plan truly! Yesterday the boss asked me to undertake the management of Jimboomba station with a salary of £1000 a year and a share in the profits. To-day Paidagogue informed me that Her Ladyship had bought it. A very nice plan indeed!

July 15th.—*She* came herself and asked me to undertake the post. When I said "No," she pressed me for reasons. I put her off gently at first. When she insisted I talked "straight." I told her I meant to keep below with the crowd and not raise myself on their shoulders.

"Ideal Felix Holt nonsense, is it?" she said with more warmth than I ever marked in her speech before.

At that remark, the tone of it more especially, I kindled.

"Nonsense, if you please," I answered. "But perhaps Felix Holt is my ideal, and, anyhow, I don't like to hear him sneered at. You know an ideal is at once the strength and the weakness of democracy, and in stabbing at that you touch me in the raw. Do you fancy you and your caste have a monopoly of *noblesse oblige*? I am of the people, and I intend to remain among them to the end of the chapter. You mean kindly no doubt, but you are only trying to bribe me to make *il gran refuto*."

She looked at me with a trace of wonder in her face. I fancied I saw something else there also. Then she turned, and swept away proud, erect, and stately.

I must get out of this. She wants to amuse herself with me, evidently; to make me a winter plaything,

and then cast me off with her furs. I fancy I see the whole stretch of the comedy, with all its lame and impotent conclusion. Supposing her in earnest,—which is a gigantic suppose!—it would not work. It would be glorious to be known as Lady ——'s husband! No, no! Will Hawkston! *Uxori nubere nolo meæ.*

July 16th.—To-morrow I am off for town. Things look black in the Unions there; I'm afraid we're in for a big strike. If the thing is well engineered it will be a nail in the coffin of plutocracy.

July 17th.—As I went off I saw a copy of Tennyson lying on the bench in the bush-house. It had her name on the title-page. I looked up "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," and turned down the leaf after initialing the bottom of the page. She is a most accomplished woman, but she has yet an odd thing or two to learn; among which ranks not least the fact that democrats also have pride!

December 8th.—So it is virtually all over; the defection of the Sydney and Melbourne branches has doomed the move. It would have gone through easily, if they only had stood fast. I had no idea I could feel anything so much. Never mind, though. "*Bear up my heart; thou hast suffered even doggier things than this.*" But I'm sadly run down again,—in mining vernacular, well-nigh "petered out."

And just when my immortal soul is a-hungered, the Devil, disguised as an aristocrat in petticoats, must needs start up at my elbow tempting me with bread. It is odd. I had seen her and the carpet-bagger in the streets several times, and once or twice on the

lawn of Government House. But I had carefully kept my distance, though twice I saw she wanted to speak to me. Of course the syndicate man may run her down, but I have my doubts. If he does he will find a bit in his mouth before he is much more aged.

Of course in view of the news from the South, at the mass meeting I put forth all my power to stop these fellows here ruining themselves in a bootless and hopeless forlorn hope. They were plucky though and meant fight right up to the hilt. However, I had my way. I made an ass of myself through sheer physical weakness. As far as I can make out I dropped in my tracks as I left the platform.

That evening friend Allison came. I fancied he had just dropped in for a chat. I soon saw though that some one had sent him, and I asked him who it was.

"Well," he answered, "I fancied it was your precious self. I got this note just as I was sitting down to dinner."

He showed me the paper. It was simply a few lines requesting him to call on Mr. Hawkston at such and such an address without delay. My heart gave a thump when I saw the handwriting. I then remembered that I had seen a woman thickly veiled on the back benches in the hall, when I was on the platform, and my mind at once flashed back to the Bermondsey episode. I thought a minute, and then told Allison I wasn't sorry he had come, although it wasn't I that had spoiled his dinner. He and I are

friends in the true sense of the word,—on the score of my being a 'Varsity man he will never accept fee or reward from me. "Dog doesn't eat dog," he remarks curtly when I try to remonstrate. So I spoke out plump, because I knew he can keep as quiet as the grave. I begged him if any money came to him on my account, or in an envelope in the handwriting of that note, to send it back to so-and-so. He looked somewhat surprised, and so I told him the why and wherefore. He said he would as a matter of course, but at the same time he made a few remarks about Pride that would have sounded very well from an evangelical pulpit.

Two days later the medico told me he had seen her, and that he had followed my instructions. He also took the liberty of holding forth once more on Foolish Pride. I told him he was a chip of the old block; his father being a Scotch Presbyterian minister.

To-day I met her in the Botanical Gardens. She sat down beside me on a bench under a clump of bamboos. It is odd how certain bits of scenery get painted indelibly on one's mental retina. In front, the great tawny stream, with countless craft swaying and swinging as the ebb-tide began to sweep seaward, gurgling against their hulls and moorings as it waxed in force apace. Beyond, the huge trailer-clad granite cliff, topped with its line of *châlets* and bungalows and little spired chapels. Then the smoke-wreaths sweeping up in clouds against the russet-veined scaur where the channel turns off abruptly to the right. And over all a great flood of crimson-violet light

flushing the bunya-bunyas, the palm-fronds and the bamboos now swaying and rustling and whispering in the breeze which was now kissing the surface of the reach into tiny ripples and sighing forth love-secrets overhead. I shall carry that scene with me for ever. Possibly the overpowering force of the impression was due to physical weakness, possibly because I was so wretchedly morbid. And then her presence; the supple lines of her body, the curve of her swan-like neck, the poise of her head, and a subtle odour of something that may be set down as magnetism,—that word will do to shroud my ignorance of what it really was as well as any other, perhaps,—all this set my blood tingling and my heart thumping in a way that was weakness itself. She tried to tempt me again, begged me to get better and then take charge of her station. But I steeled myself and said no. I closed the interview by telling her that there could be nothing possible in common between us, that she looked at life and its problems from one side and I from another entirely opposed; and that between our points of view there was a great gulf fixed. I told her as before I meant to keep down among the crowd; it would be better for her to keep with *her* people and to leave me alone. By this time the closing-bell had rung, and we separated at the gate of the Gardens. She invited me to call upon her on the 11th. On that day I shall be steaming northwards for Japan!

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(*End of the Diary.*)

SECTION II.—THROUGH THE TROPICS.

I HAD several reasons for going in the steerage. To begin with I had ascertained that ninety odd Celestials had shipped as deck-passengers forward, and it was the Chinese question I had to write up for my newspaper. I therefore fancied it would be a good line to get right into the midst of the saffron curse at once. I should be almost morally certain to get some "copy" out of the experience. And what is there that a "special" will not go through for "copy," especially if it means a grand first-class "scoop" over the opposition dailies? In the next place I had heard whispers of certain strange occurrences in the fo'c'sle and engine-room of the S.S. *Barracoota* on previous voyages, and I wanted to see for myself whether they were fit for publication. But the main ground I had for exposing my anatomy to fourteen days of an olfactory Inferno and general bodily discomfort was the absolute certainty of improving and edifying conversation, for Mick Donovan was going in the steerage as far as Port Darwin, and Mick was about the wittiest and most amusing specimen of iniquity it has ever been my privilege to run across. He was Milesian; his name alone was warrant sufficient for that, and if you *were* Didymus enough to doubt it, his face would have been a clincher. It had the map of Ireland painted all over it. And then his brogue, and the things it said,—especially the latter! I had met him in the

Sydney Police-Court,—but that would be a digression, and besides, I don't want to give folks a low idea of his moral character to begin with, and thus prejudice them against him.

So I put my best clothes and a shirt or two in a box where they would not be likely to get hurt, bought a pair of second-hand moleskins and a jumper from an "ole clo'" man from Judea, and shipped third-class for Hong-Kong, *via* the Queensland Ports, Port Darwin, Java, Singapore, and Saigon. I got on board and found myself in lively company. There were about a dozen niggers bound for the Kimberley Field ; one half of them blind blazing drunk, and the remainder powerfully wishful to join them. Mick was especially far gone, "o'er a' the ills o' life victorious," and a Peeler he had just succeeded in throwing overboard besides. Then we had a very much married woman of Samaria, and,—but as they don't play any part in the comedy, it serves no point to introduce the remaining members of the human cargo forward.

That is, excepting the Chinamen. They were without exception the dirtiest lot of bipeds I ever set eyes on. After we passed the Heads it came on to blow a regular southerly 'buster, and so the Yellows were kept battened down below. This continued for two days, and then they came up. Then,—but I'm anticipating.

It was rough water all the way till we ran in behind Moreton Island to pick up the passengers from Brisbane. There the wind fell and the sea spread out flat like a mill pond or a silver-streaked

pancake. Of course we were all agog to take stock of the accession to the passenger lists. *Imprimis* about forty Chinkies,—and, to judge from their looks, smelly ones. Then two or three whites in rig-outs that were certainly not meant for the saloon. But what came in for the bulk of our attention was two individuals that stood apart in haughty isolation waiting for the lowering of the first cabin gangway. But their haughtiness was most unmistakably not of the same stamp. In the man it was coarse-fibred, rude, and unrefined, the insolent aggressiveness of the purse-proud *nouveau riche*. It sat on him just as awkwardly as his fine clothes. It was not a true spiritual quality at all; strip the man of his money and it would be cringing. It was easy to understand at a glance that he was fussy, pompous, and loud-voiced. He was seemingly about fifty years of age, with a goat-like wintry beard and whiskers sticking out aggressively from his florid cheeks and straggling all over his gold-studded shirt-front. He was a plutocrat who wished to spell himself aristocrat,—there was no mistaking that. It was some notion of this kind possibly that was at the bottom of Mick Donovan's critique of his *tout ensemble*. "Shure, an' isn't it the shtrut av an am'rous jackdaw in paycock's feathers that the craythur has?" Which criticism, by the way, was for the benefit of the "craythur" himself as well as for the general diversion.

With the woman it was different. There was no brummagem about her. She was tall and lithe, with grace in each and all of her supple curves, and the hall-mark of blood and breeding in every line of her

features. Proud she was too, even a fool could see at a glance, but her pride did not sit awkwardly upon her like an ill-made, ill-fitting cloak,—it was part of her. So to speak, it was the tempering of her soul's mettle. Hers was surely the sort of haughtiness that even a democrat could respect; it was the pride that would never stoop to meanness. She was in the full flush of ripe womanhood; possibly about six or seven and twenty. It didn't need a Dalton to tell that there was no link of sibship 'twixt her and the "craythur."

The gangway went down, and, preceded by the "craythur," she set foot upon it. And here it was that my friend Mick disgraced himself eternally. He had been drinking at intervals all the way up, and although it was early morning, and he had not had time to take much whisky on board since he had been bundled out of his bunk, he yet had enough to fill him with the spirit of prophecy,—prophecy being the same as outspokenness. He had mounted on the bulwark by way of getting a better view of the landscape, and stood there with one arm round a stanchion and his right leg crossed over the left. His throat was exposed to the breezes, which at the same time inflated balloon-wise the folds of a shirt that bulged out of the sizeable hiatus between the top-band of his trousers and his waistcoat. Altogether his was a picturesque figure and pose, and when he began to saw the air with his unoccupied hand holding an unlit cigar between the fore and the middle fingers, and to declaim with the raucous voice of a fishmonger, he commanded considerable attention.

In his youth Mick had had a very severe attack of State-school education. Strong germs of the disease still lurked about in the pigeon-holes of his brain, and on occasion would burst into life with the eruptive effect of a volcano. They read queer trash in those State schools, and commit a lot of it to memory. So, overcome by the recollections of his misguided youth, Mick struck up a chorus from "Samson Agonistes," and gave it with effect, and variations thrown in appropriate to the occasion.

"But who is this? What thing av say or land,—
 Faymale av sex it seems,—
 That, so bedecked, ornate an' gay,
 Comes this way sayling
 On a dirty tug
 From Brishbane, bound for the oisles
 Av Java an' Hongkong,
 Wid all her bravery on an' tackle thrim,
 Sails filled and shtrammers wavin',
 Coorted by all the bhoys that wants a wife,
 A jackdaw shtruttin' like a paycock,
 Her harbinger, a tin-yard train behoind?"

Then, stopping abruptly, he held out his cigar and shouted in coaxing, wheedling tones that were heard all over the ship from stem to stern—

"Arrah! me lady, tip us a wink av yer luvly oiyes. It's a loight fur me seegaur I want."

The lady looked up at him half amused and half angry. But her escort jumped with rage, and said something about d—d insolence. Now, in spite of the implied compliment in the peroration, it struck me that Mick's address was insolent, and a reflection upon the manners of the third cabin. So I picked up

a bucket and shied it at him. It hit him on a soft spot behind, and Mick went overboard. Moreton Bay sharks have a bad name for voracity, and that morning we had seen several black fins cleaving the surface of the water ominously like a knife not so very many fathoms from our anchorage; so when Mick went down into the waters of the deep there was some excitement. He was eventually fished out without any serious damage, and he came on board dripping like an ancient sea-god and perfectly sober. Of course he wanted to fight me, but as there was no room for a ring we compromised the thing by a "shout" for all hands. "Shout," be it explained, is Australian for "standing" drinks for the crowd. And that was the end of the episode.

I think I remarked there was no room for a ring,—the trouble was that with the forty extra Chows there was no room for any lawful amusement whatsoever. They littered every crack and cranny of the deck with expectorations and all kinds of filth. It was beastly and disgusting. A Zola, with his keen nose for smells and abominations of every sort, might have found some joy in the thing; but, realist as I am in the sense of writing about life as it is, I couldn't see where its redeeming points came in. There is but little pleasure in fashioning a work of art out of dirt. But that's not to the point. What is, is that we made representations to the authorities about the matter, and got badly snubbed for our pains. Then we waxed wroth and held an indignation meeting. After sundry expressions of opinion, Mick took up his parable.

"Bhoys," he said; "it's outrajis and clane agin

the principle av incouragement tu local indushtry. It's divil a bit av soap I've seed amongst the colliction since the day I set fut on board. So I propose that we sind a dipytashun av wan and a shtick to ripsisint the needcessity av a ginral clanin' up amongst the haythen. An' so be ez yez hev no manner av objection, I'll be that silf-saime dipytashun mesilf, and I'll be bould to take my friend Johnson's malacca along, as I misdoubt not it has consid'able powers av pirswaysshun."

It was at dinner after dark that this motion was made, and it was seconded and carried *nem. con.* Furthermore, it was acted upon without delay. Mick went out and opened the interview. It was the brogue that took the floor first, and it was really and truly eloquent. But by-and-by the "shtick" got a chance of expressing its sentiments too, and soon it was doing the bulk of the talking. And, as Mick surmised, it *did* have "considerable powers av pirswaysshun." It cleared the deck between the bridge and the third class bunks as if it had taken the contract by piece-work and wanted to get through with it quickly. Not that the job was scamped. Judging from the Mongolian exclamations that must have been meant for oaths, the Pigtails seemed to be fully alive to the genuine workmanship of the performance.

"Now, bhoys," said Mick, as he rolled down his sleeves and seated himself at the foot of the table with a dirty pack of the Devil's Books in front of him; "it's a plan av campaign we must have, or we'll be downed by the dirthy bla'gards av Sassenach landlords,—Chaneymen, I mane,—intoirely. This sort

of conversashun is very improvin' at dushk, but like moonloightin' it won't do by day at all, at all. The govirmint, I mane the or-f-cers, will be pokin' their dirty noses into the mather, and the pore wurrikin maan will be throdden under the fut av appreshun as usual. So we'll foight at long range."

"How shall we do that, Mick?" asked one of this audience.

"Now, ye omadhaun av the son av a dirty Cocka-too farmer, isn't that just what I'm goin' to dimonstrate? You know them shpuds we gits for breakfast, and tiffin, and tay, and dinner, an' all?"

"We do," came in a chorus from all round the table, for we had plenty of opportunity to make their acquaintance. ("Shpuds," be it explained, is Hibernian for "spuds," which again is Anglo-Saxon vernacular for "potatoes,"—that is, at least in all civilised countries.)

"Well, thin," proceeded Mick, "thim 'shpuds' is not fit to loine the bowels av a pig, let alone the innards av a whoite Christian dimocracy. But they're just the very shtuff for bombardin' the haythen wid. Now, bhoys, div yez moind me? We'll just collar every blessed muther's son av a murphy that comes to this end av the shop, and if the haythen *are* obstropulous by daylight we'll tache them how to spell 'shpuds' in civilised handwritin'."

And we did. After breakfast first one odoriferous Celestial and then another ventured over the dividing line we had chalked across the deck as a sort of *shubiki-gwai*, and perched on the load of timber that covered the scuppers. There they sat and grinned

and chattered like a lot of jabbering simians, or a flock of carrion-crows that had been flying in a dust-storm for a month of Sundays. Mick gave the word to prepare for action—"Wid shpud cartridge load." We each marked our man, and then a typhoon of sloppy sweet-potatoes smote the invaders with such unerring velocity that the rout of the Moko at Hakata was a bagatelle to the stampede that ensued. We had to repeat the dose only twice to get perfect release from all disquieting malodours.

We then got to work to set our house in order, and had everything in such spick and span array that news of the reformation travelled to the first cabin, and some of the passengers came forward on a visit of inspection. Of course we received them courteously, and by way of politeness, as Mick phrased it, he strolled aft to return the call on the following day. But he had his nose put sadly out of joint. He came back expressing his sentiments in phrases that were forcible but unfit for publication. It seems that it was the cut of his clothes that was the matter. The costume he went calling in was certainly picturesque, but then it was as certainly neither fashionable nor well cut. Besides his boots and his wide-awake, it consisted of but two items: a pair of moleskins that hadn't seen water since I knocked him overboard, and a flannel shirt that had reached the farthest limits of shrinkage. It left his throat freely exposed and also his chest,—a great brawny Orson-like chest with the tan running out of sight in a tangled undergrowth of matted hair that might have served a gorilla for a beauty spot. The

more fastidious among the males in the saloon didn't like it, and the females were all very much scandalised. So representations were made to the skipper instanter, and the skipper talked to Mick as he would to a Chinese deck-hand, and Mick came back with his blood on the boil and his tongue wagging eloquently.

"It was that blank-blank-blank-blank Podgett that did it," shouted Mick excitedly, waving his arms like the sails of a wind-mill or a semaphore trying to be unusually expressive. "But I'll——"

What Mick proposed to do cannot be put on paper. No more can the epithets wherewith he hit off what seemed to strike him as the salient points of Podgett's physical and psychological get-up. They were neither conventional nor correct,—they were eminently original and luridly forcible.

"An' thim newspaypers till us we're a dimocracy! Shure an' it's only blandatherin' us they are whin they sez it. What's the good av ayquality an' wan man wan vote if there's tu be wan law fur the thramps—that's thim—an' another fur the gin'lmen—that's us? Shure an' Parlimints are no better than the thimble an' three-pay thrick if that's the outcome av their ligislation!"

It is needless to observe that these remarks have been somewhat carefully edited, and that in course of the operation they have lost the main part of their virility. But in the original they were altogether too full-blooded for the delicate hot-house morals of the "young person" who does so much for the best interests of British literature.

"Bhoys," finally wound up Mick, slapping his right hand into the palm of his left with the sound of a

dynamite-blast in a tunnel, "I'll tell you, we must put on our cump'ny manners, and nixt toime they calls we must be not at 'ome. Div yez moind me now?"

We didn't see that this in itself would be much of a retaliation. But then, most of Mick's ideas were conveyed in tropes and figures that, like certain diplomatic documents, allowed of considerable latitude of interpretation. So we simply set this down as a sort of metonymy, and waited the course of events to clear up the full import of the expression.

We weren't kept long in suspense. The following day we arrived at Cooktown and shipped a few more returning Chows that hadn't enjoyed the advantages of an interview with the "dipytashun av wan and a shtick," and the benefits of the education imparted thereby, and who consequently transgressed treaty limits with the audacity begotten of ignorance. Several of them came and got atop of the timber, and one huge lump of small-pox pits and smelliness, with a wonderfully ribbon-bedizened pig-tail, perched himself on the winch just outside the passage under the bridge.

"Bhoys," said Mick, when his eye had taken in the situation, "you will now plaze make a colliction av shpuds. This is a free counthry an' a whoite man's land, an' we're not goin' tu hev haythens an' Chaney-men pokin' dirty jokes at dimocracy."

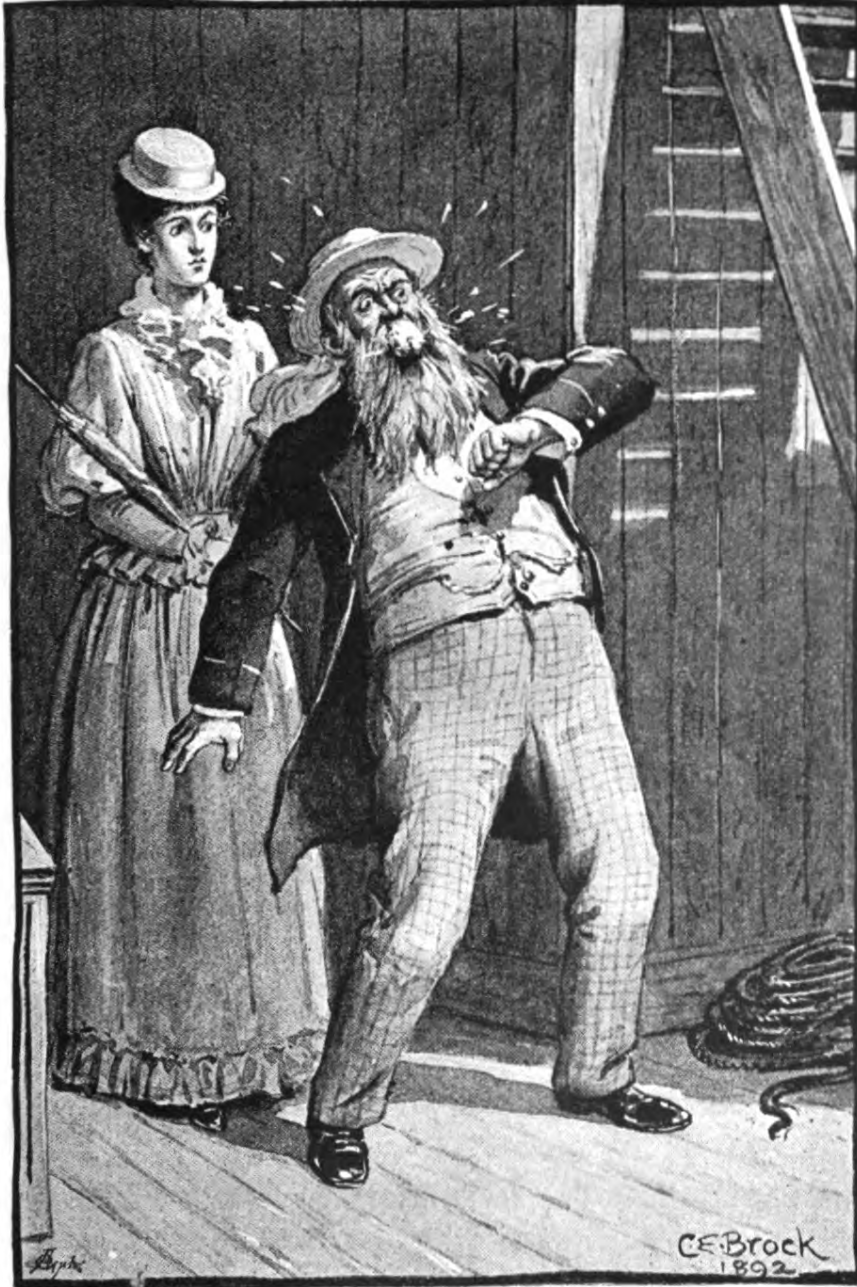
We soon cleared the decks of all save one. The Chink on the winch sat there with all the stolidity of a Burmese god, mainly because by some strange accident no one had made a mark of him.

"Bhoys," said Mick, when he noticed him, "it's an

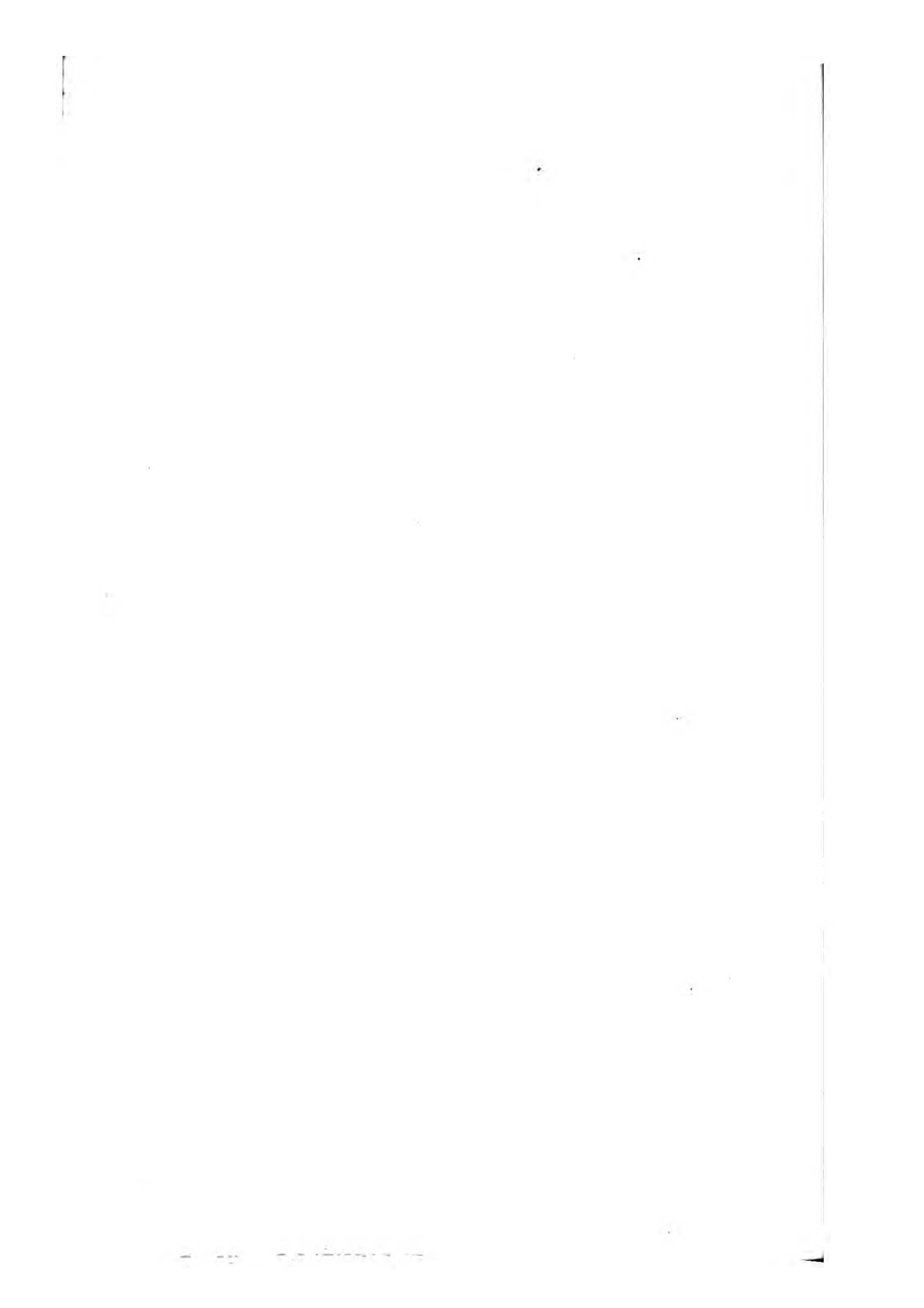
Aunt Sally that we'll make av 'im. Three shots fur sixpence; the proceeds tu go in ririshments fur the cump'ny afther thir pathriotic exirtions. An' it's mesilf that'll take fust shot."

Now I was standing next to Mick in front of the third-class bunks, about a dozen yards from the Chinaman to be "shooted" at. Right over his head I caught sight of female habiliments and a male escort approaching down the passage,—the Viscountess (I forgot to say that she was that) and Mr. Podgett no less. Mick must have seen them too; from what followed I'm sure he did. He was an unerring shot. Like the seven hundred chosen men of Benjamin, he could sling "shpuds" at a hair's-breadth and not miss. But this time he *did* miss; that is, he didn't hit the Chinkie. The great wet, sloppy potato just grazed the root of his pig-tail, and flew right on and caught Mr. Podgett in the face just as he emerged from the alley-way. It hit him on the chin and went to fragments. Some of them flew in great splotches over the Viscountess's bodice.

It was a ludicrous sight. Her Ladyship drew herself up to her height and swept one haughty look over the deck, while old Podgett jumped with rage, his beard bristling with "sphuds" and passion, like an infuriated Sultan out of an Alhambra burlesque. As ill luck would have it, I was standing in front of the crowd, and the woman's eye fell upon me with magnificent contempt. I knew that she set me down as the culprit. Then she turned round and swept off, with Podgett quivering with impotent rage behind her.



“IT HIT HIM ON THE CHIN AND WENT TO FRAGMENTS.”
—P. 48.



"So," screamed Mick in high glee, "*we're* not at 'ome this toime, ladies and ginl'men, and we're very sorry. That'l pershuade thim not to thrifle with the feelins av dimocracy nixt thrip."

The following day the steamer went through Albany Pass. It is the prettiest spot within the whole stretch of the Great Barrier Reef, and we were all agog to see it. The Viscountess came on the bridge, and by some accident her looks travelled down on to our deck and her eye caught mine. I never saw such a look of scorn in all my life. I was clearly very inky in her black books.

Nothing of any further consequence happened till we got to Port Darwin. It was there my work began, and lurid work it was. This place is the nearest approach to Inferno it has ever been my fortune to strike, Port Said not even excepted. I had to do it, and I did it thoroughly, exploring all the iniquities of the opium dens and so-called lodging-houses, and actually taking tickets in a Pak-a-pû bank. As I stood waiting for the pak-a-pû drawing I was accosted by a white woman. She looked very worn and jaded, but still there were the remains of beauty in her face. She began to speak of the place; she evidently knew it well. She took a look at the pak-a-pû ticket, and held forth on the mysteries of the game. She went in to see the result of the drawing; to judge from the numerous salutations she received there (some of them apparently of a jocular nature) she reckoned quite a host of acquaintances among the Celestials. Of course my tickets turned out blanks, and I took my leave.

The white woman sympathised heartily over my discomfiture and came along with me. She was very communicative; the store of quaint and curious information on everything bearing on China town she possessed was wonderful. And every bit of it she willingly placed at our disposal. For a good hour she continued to pilot me into tortuous windings and devious labyrinths, acting as a model cicerone all the while. And be it remarked that, although the themes on which she dilated were ticklish subjects to handle, there was not a single expression in her language that the most fastidious purist could possibly object to. There was not the slightest *souçon* of coarseness to be detected in any of her remarks, and Heaven knows there was ample opportunity for it. Hers must be a sad history,—but that's neither here nor there at present. What is to the point is that as I was saying good-night to her before getting down to the wharf, who should pass but the Viscountess! When she saw us she switched her garments aside with disgust, and swept on as if we had been a couple of plague-spots. Clearly she had made up her mind that I was about as bad as they make them.

The steerage was utterly depleted of Caucasians at Port Darwin, and I saw that I should feel lonesome if I didn't shift my quarters; besides, an odd six dozen Cingalese navvies and a few extra score of Chows took passage forward here. The prospect accordingly had all the appearances of being over-smelly, and I determined to shift my camp. So I saw the local agent, and squared the difference in

the fares. When I got on board again I went aft and began to stroll up and down the quarter-deck as if I had a perfect right to do so, which indeed I had. But the old martinet of a Philistine of a skipper didn't know that, and when he came and ordered me forward he got his nose put out of joint not inconsiderably. I asked him *why* I should go forward, and when he began to talk of kicking me if I didn't move at once, and generally behaving like the nigger-driver he was, I just pulled out my ticket for his inspection, and then, before his very eyes, wrote out a formal complaint about his insolence, read it to him, and sent it off to the company. I furthermore hinted to him that I wasn't even then quite done with him. As a matter of fact he subsequently got one of the finest drubbings I ever gave a human being with the point of a pen in print, and he didn't like it. The moral of it all is simply,—don't be needlessly and offensively insolent even to a tramp; he may be a newspaper man in disguise, and it is just as well as not to give gentry of that kidney a show of getting their hand in.

This encounter had taken place in the presence of a few of the globe-trotters. It was comical to notice the different ways they seemed to view the thing. An old Major-General of the Engineers entered into the joke thoroughly, and chummed with me straight-away on the head of it. But the majority of the select were disgusted, notably Mr. Podgett. Her Ladyship also regarded my advent to a seat at the first cabin table with withering dislike. But I didn't bear her any grudge on that score; she had her

reasons, sound and substantial. The man who wilfully bombards the nattiest of tea-gowns with "shpuds" is nothing short of a cad. And she was clearly impressed with the belief that it was my hand that had launched that sloppy potato. Besides, she had seen me in queer company by night, and altogether she had no doubt concluded that she had better than good grounds for setting me down as a thorough-paced blackguard. Not even when I pitched the moleskins and the singlet overboard and appeared in all the glory of a brand new suit of clothes and a clean "biled rag" did she relent in the least. In spite of my first-class ticket and my new and sprucely-cut garments, I was still in her eyes at once common and unclean. And she avoided me as she would a moral leper.

This, however, did not put me out in the least, as I did not have the slightest wish to cultivate her. I had no thought of writing novels in those days, you see; if I had had, it might have been different. I was not piqued in the least at her conduct; she belonged to one world and I to another, and for her world and the things it set store by I had a contempt just as intense as the scorn she doubtless felt for me. And yet before a week was out we were on more than speaking terms. We were chums,—that is, as far as such a relationship is possible 'twixt male and female. And the happening of the thing was in this wise.

At Port Darwin I had found such a multitude of topics to deal with, that in spite of rolling off copy by the yard when I was ashore I had still a solid six

columns of arrears to get through after coming on board. So during the whole blessed stretch of daylight that followed our departure from Palmerston I lay up flat on the poop scribbling for all that I was worth. The Viscountess, in common with the other trotters, passed and repassed me a score of times, and of course saw what I was at. When I started in to finish off the thing on the next forenoon, her woman's curiosity was gently tickled, and she asked the Major-General who I was and what I was doing. At least he told me so; but inasmuch as there was no necessity for telling people my business, I merely laughed and passed on to another subject of conversation. Next day I had nothing to do but to admire the beauties of sea and sky, and a little of that goes a long way with a moderately active man. So I went down below and rummaged out some books from my valise and set to work to kill time with them. Among them was a copy of *Æschylus* I had got from Hawkston. I read this all through the afternoon, till the sun flopped down into the sea over the shoulder of Tumboro, just ahead of us, and the stars came out with a rush. Then I rose and leant over the taffrail, watching the coruscating waters flashing from the screw and listening to the churning of the engines and humming of the wind in the shrouds, for a night breeze had sprung up. Possibly *Æschylus* was the connecting link, but anyhow I got thinking of Hawkie, and unconsciously fell a-crooning the strange and weird and outlandish melody he used to whistle when he was in the dumps. I may have kept on for the best

part of five minutes, when I suddenly discovered that I had an audience of one listening to me. It was the Viscountess who was honouring me with the loan of her ears. When I turned round she stood hesitatingly, seemingly in two minds about something or other, and then she passed round the compass-box in front of the wheel and disappeared on the other side of the poop. That evening at dinner I twice caught her looking at me. I thought it a bit odd, but I didn't trouble to consider the reasons of this strange and flattering condescension on her part. A cat might look at a king, and therefore a real live dowager Viscountess had a perfect right to feast her vision on a literary vagabond itinerant—that's what a lady acquaintance once contemptuously termed me—if her fancy set that way.

Next day something happened. After doing the Chinese business I meant to go on, and lie off for a spell with Hawkston in Japan. He was teaching at some outlandish place in Kiushiu, and so I got out the map of the Mikado's realm and a letter of his to make out the itinerary I should have to make after reaching Nagasaki. I stretched myself out flat on my stomach in my usual corner, on the starboard side of the poop, beside the wheel. When I had been there about ten minutes I heard the Viscountess ordering the Chinese steward to place her chair just opposite to me on the port side. I could see her sitting down from the tail of my eye.

Just at this minute a capful of breeze sprang up and turned over my map. As I was straightening it out again the wind caught Hawkston's letter and

whisked it—not overboard, but right into her Ladyship’s lap! I cursed inwardly at having to speak to her, but there was no help for it. So I got on my feet, and, lifting my hat, was going to apologise for the accident, when she met me half-way with a kindness and courtesy that fairly took my breath away. I noticed, however, that she started violently when she caught sight of the letter; she first flushed all over, and then turned deathly pale, and then again waxed as red and rosy as the warm blood of ruddy health could make her.

Of course I apologised for troubling her. She handed me the letter, and remarked that it was certainly less objectionable than moist potatoes. If I *had* thrown that unfortunate “spud,” this would have been scoring off me with a vengeance. But as I hadn’t, I took the opportunity of clearing up her misconception on the point, and explained firstly that the missile wasn’t meant for her at all, and secondly that I wasn’t the marksman in question. This broke the ice utterly. She laughed a clear, ringing, hearty laugh that would have set me at ease at once if I had happened to feel at all embarrassed, which I didn’t in the least.

“Well, I am glad to be set right about this matter,” she said, “although I had half made up my mind to forgive you on account of that somewhat severe lesson in manners you gave the Captain. What did you mean, though, by saying that he would yet hear more of the business?”

“Not much. Only when he gets back to Sydney he will find his character limned for him in the

Telegraph in a fashion that will make him feel a trifle uneasy, pachydermatous brute though he seems to be."

"Ah!" she laughed, "I'm right, I see. I told General Chester that you must be a special correspondent. Is it not so?"

I saw I had hopelessly given myself away, and so I didn't deny it. She was evidently a 'cute woman, and I began to respect her.

"Bring a chair over here and let us talk," she went on.

I accepted the invitation readily enough, for brains in man or woman always command my sincerest regard.

And she *had* wit too—a flashing, steely wit, a wit that was like her frame, lithe and supple and flexible, yet wondrous firm withal. After six sentences you could perceive, if you weren't uncommonly dense, that her culture was not of the mere afternoon-tea drawing-room order at all. She was touched up with none of that conventional brummagem veneer that nineteenth-century young womankind are wont to smear all over a skin-deep intellect as a sort of spiritual bird-lime for catching husbands. No, her culture was not laid on; it was evidently bred in the bone, and rooted in the soul. She struck one as a sort of throw-back or reversion—(that's the correct Darwinian slang, is it not?)—to the women of the sixteenth century—to such types as Vittoria Colonna, to those women whose amusements lay in construing Plato, and commanding their brother's troop of *condottieri* pending the time he lay in chokee held to ransom, and who went in for foils instead of tennis-rackets, and got their complexions from hunting and hawking and cross-country scampers, instead of from tight-lacing

and the rouge-pot. She might have walked out of "Much ado about Nothing,"—a *Beatrice* who had been once through the mill of matrimonial experience, and with a dash of something peculiarly her own thrown in by way of lending additional piquancy to the character. Anyhow, that was the way I felt inclined to size her up before I had talked half-an-hour with her; and when I come to review the summing-up, I'm inclined to think that it is about as just as one of Judge Hannen's, and that is saying something.

As I have hinted, her talk was clever,—brilliantly and caustically clever. After half-an-hour of it I began to reflect, as I answered her in the greatest possible economy of words. And the colour of my reflections was of this cast:—No man or woman with brains a cut above those of a rabbit goes to the trouble of doing anything out of the ordinary without some satisfactory motive therefor. Now her Ladyship had in a measure gone out of her way in honouring me with the request to anchor myself in the lounge where I lay spread out. Possibly she merely wanted to amuse herself by taking me out of the winding. Possibly she was a victim to the normal globe-trotter malady,—the wretched itch for scribbling,—and being on the book-making lay meant to study me for material. Possibly,—but what was the good of surmising? It was neither one nor the other, nor any of these things that she was after, as the sequel will abundantly show.

It wasn't at all difficult to keep in touch with the general drift of her talk. We hadn't to waste breath

and effort in establishing the fundamental axioms of life. These were taken for granted tacitly, and we swept along like a pair of Schläger-fighters on the *mensur*, exchanging blow for blow and knocking out no inconsiderable shower of sparks in the friendly encounter. It was delightful. There was no feeling of our being incommensurable quantities. (From the sensation of being an incommensurable quantity with a lovely woman may the good Lord deliver me,—but this by the way.) That is until she shifted the current of discourse on to music, and then I brusquely remarked that I meant to “pass” in that particular deal. I furthermore added, by way of explanation, that I knew the difference between the “Old Hundred” and the gurgle of pale ale from the neck of a beer-bottle on a thirsty day, but that all other tunes struck me as being as like each other as a family of *Dromios*.

“But I overheard you singing to yourself over the taffrail there,” she said, looking towards the sternpost.

“Crooning, you mean,” I corrected.

“Just as you please, then,” she replied. “That was a very strange and weird melody. Where did you pick it up?”

“A friend of mine used to relieve the tedium of the night-watches in our cattle camp with it, when we were overlanding,” I said.

“Indeed! That is interesting,” she remarked, looking at me closely.

“Yes, there is a bit of romance tacked on to it, I believe. Hawkston, the man that sang it, had a history. I happened to be thinking of him at the

time I stood there, and I suppose that's the way I got humming it to myself."

"That letter that blew away was from him, was it not?"

"Yes," I replied with some wonder. "It was. What makes you say so?"

She laughed lightly, and I fancied a trifle uneasily.

"Oh! nothing, only a guess. Women have quick imaginations as a rule. We don't reason; in many cases it is not at all necessary."

"Now, how the devil did she ever guess that?" I said to myself. "She is a smarter woman than most I have met."

But of course I didn't say so to her.

She dropped the subject, and made a new break, only to come back to it on a different tack.

"I see you have a map of Java there. I should like to have a look at it," she said.

I told her that I *did* have a map of Java, but that it was below, and that I would fetch it for her; the one I had on the deck was a map of Japan.

"Japan!" she said with a slightly rising inflection. "Oh, that letter of yours is from there; I see the Nagasaki post-mark on the envelope."

I had the envelope lying in the lounge beside me, patent for her to read.

"Yes," I said, "that is so. But I will fetch you the map from below."

And I made a move to get up, but she made a restraining motion with her hand.

"Please don't trouble. I am very much interested in Japan, and know nothing about the geography of

that quarter of the earth. Give me a lesson in it, please."

I spread out the map, or rather the atlas of four plates, for that is the way Hassenstein has got up his maps of Mikado Land.

"So this is Nagasaki. That is where Mr. Hawkston is, I presume?" she asked.

I explained that it was the nearest Treaty Port to Nakatsu, where he was, and hence the post-mark.

"What is he doing there?" was her next question.

"Well, he is supposed to be teaching a Japanese Count and a hundred of his former retainers, but his main business would seem to lie in drawing his screw and getting well again."

"What do you mean—he was in bad health?" she asked, with a quick turn of her swan-like neck and a tinge of anxiety in her crisp and clear-cut words.

"Bad health! Utterly run down, and completely out of gear. And no wonder either; he did a dozen men's work in the last strike. Seemed as if he wanted to do for himself. Burnt the candle at both ends, and generally went on as if he had been at the head of the forlorn hope at Badajos. Likely enough there was some petticoat or other at the bottom of it; there generally is, meaning no disrespect to present company."

"Ah!"

"Yes, that snatch you caught me murdering last night is a bit of the story."

"Indeed!" she said with an intonation that meant, "Tell me all about it."

"However," I said, rising and answering her tone

rather than her words, "we shall have to put it off till another occasion. In the first place we are losing all the scenery, and in the next we are steaming right into a thundercloud, and we shall be in the midst of a roaring deluge in less than five minutes."

We had just finished the circumnavigation of the huge shoulder of Japara, which, thick and massive and impenetrably forest-clad on its fire-riven and lava-scorched mountains, forms in Java the counterpart of Mount Garganus on the Adriatic side of Italy. We had just changed our course to due south, to run right into a blinding downpour of rain (lit up by dazzling lightning flashes) that swept the deck from end to end with its fury. No more talk was possible, and when this stopped we found ourselves in the roadstead of Samarang.

That evening I played poker with the General in the smoking-room. Just as we called for a nightcap preparatory to turning in, we heard some one running their fingers over the piano in the saloon below. Then came a surprise!—Hawkston's tune was sung and played with a softness and a feeling that were overpowering. How the mischief had she got hold of it? If she had picked it up from hearing it when I crooned it over the taffrail she must be more than quick in the uptake. She sang words to it too, and I hadn't. What the words were I couldn't make out, but there was no mistake about the melody itself.

Next day I left the boat before she appeared on deck, and that was the last I saw of her for a week. I was fully occupied with the Chinese question, while she had gone on to see Solo and Djokya and the

Boer Buddha Temple. Our next meeting was at Buitenzorg, the Simla of the Dutch East Indies.

It was amusing in its way. The hotel there—I forget its name—is perched right on the edge of an upland plateau, with its back verandah looking over a beetling, precipitous ravine, furrowed by two crystal streams swirling along at mill-race speed between their frond-lined banks. Away beyond is a stretch of paddy-fields running up into coffee plantations, which in their turn sweep up to the first curve of Salak, a huge, sullen-looking, fire-belching mountain mass, densely clad with tropical green stuff, which shelters pythons and tigers and lots of other things all equally nasty. But the view from this verandah is superb, and it is the aim of all lovers of the picturesque to locate themselves in the rooms that give upon it. Now I knew that, or rather my newest companion did. He was a Welshman with whom I had chanced to foregather in Weltewreden. He had a copper-coloured nose nicely variegated with indigo spots and blotches,—the result of misguided amateur experiments in a chemical laboratory,—and a pronounced and deep-rooted dislike to youngsters. He found there were two rooms with a southern exposure; but they were not contiguous. They were separated by one which was already occupied. As I was putting myself in order at the washstand, a sound of villainous romping burst forth next door, much to poor Jones' disgust. The dividing walls did not go up to the roof quite,—there is no ceiling in many Javanese hotels,—and he shouted out his displeasure to me over the two partitions between. He said something about

confounded kids—confounded wasn't the precise epithet he used, but it will serve—that was really ill-natured and snappish, not to say in shockingly bad taste; that is, supposing the occupants of the intervening room were not guiltless of a knowledge of English, as Taffy in his rashness had presumed. There was a sudden stop in the romps, and a voice I recognised at a flash said quietly and gently, but at the same time very crisply—

“Hush, children, we are annoying somebody.”

There was just the smallest tinge of irony in the intonation of the last word. Thereupon I called out—

“Jones, you've caught it this time, and you deserve it.”

He was a good-humoured fellow, and I knew pretty well that he could afterwards be brought to see the joke easily enough.

When I went outside I found the Viscountess already in a lounge chair on the verandah. I could see that she was not sorry to meet me again. We chatted till dinner-time, and then we sat together at table. She asked me about my plans, and on my telling her that I was free for the following day she claimed my company.

Now, as it chanced, next day was wet. When it rains in Java it comes down in a deluge; so instead of “doing” the gardens as she had proposed, we had perforce to stay indoors. As luck would have it, I had got up early, and for lack of nothing better to do I set to work to put the final touches to the Romance I had dug out from the labyrinths of Hawkston's

diary. Of course I had brought his MS. volumes along with me to return them. When she came into my room I had the MS. on the table. After some casual remarks she suddenly broke in—

“By the way, Mr. Johnson, you said something about a romance in connection with your friend Mr. Hawkston. For nothing better to do to-day, suppose you turn story-teller for my benefit.”

I told her what I was doing, and said that as she and Hawkston would never cross each other in all likelihood, no great harm would be done by reading her the excerpts I had made from his diary. So I wheeled an arm-chair up beside the window for her and began.

She was evidently very much interested from the start. As I read on—with a running commentary, of course—I could see that she was immensely so, especially when I came to the runaway episode and to the conclusion, not that she ever lost much command of her repose of manner.

“Well,” I asked, “does that amuse you? What do you think of Hawkston?”

“Only that there is a dash of the Knight of La Mancha in this Australian Felix Holt. He strikes me as occasionally tilting at windmills of his own erection. He is evidently a noble and a gallant fellow, though. But what a morbid pride he has!”

“Pride!” I said; “yes! loftier than the pride of Lucifer. And that’s the Australian Democracy. It’s no use trying to play any Clara Vere de Vere tricks with that. They’re all very well in a raw sodden nook-shotten England, but under the fiery sun of the

plains and the ranges they simply will not do. A man there stands upon his manhood, and upon that alone, and to keep that condition of things we social democrats mean to fight as long as soul and body hang together. And Hawkston is just as thoroughly Australian in that respect as there is any need for. The little woman misunderstood, no doubt. She may have been the daughter of a hundred Earls—of a thousand for all I know—and one to be desired in every respect. But I know enough of Hawkston to swear to it that if she made the slightest attempt at patronage, or gave the slightest hint that she was abasing herself in stooping to him—pouf! why he would just be the man to save her the sacrifice, and ring down the curtain upon the performance at the end of the second act. As I read him, he will treat women frankly and chivalrously, but he will never be a woman's poodle to humble himself to her whims and surrender his whole being at her bidding. He won't kneel at her feet as gentlemen do in high-flown yellow-backs."

"You speak frankly and forcibly," she said, flushing a trifle,—perhaps with anger. If it was, I didn't care a cent.

"It's our fashion under the Southern Cross. It is this way, you understand. We don't wish to be rude or impudent or aggressive; we simply say what we mean. We *haven't learned to fear folks yet*; and that fear is the source of seven-tenths of those miserable lies and subterfuges that a good many fools mistake for politeness."

Just at this juncture the bell went for tiffin, and

the discussion of Hawkston was adjourned *sine die*. Next morning I said good-bye to her for good as I thought, inasmuch as our ways separated. She was to remain in Java for some time longer, while I had to make for Singapore in quest of fresh phases of the Yellow Agony.

SECTION III.—IN YABAKEI OF BUZEN.

IT was early morning. We had just emerged from the matutinal tub and were lying on the bamboo-clad embankment of Nakatsu Castle in all the glory of *yukata*, and feeling fit as an old Homeric Hero when ἐκ ῥ' ἀσάμινθου ἔβη δέμας ἀθάνατοι ὁμοῖος.

Below us was the stagnant lotus-covered moat, and beyond the faintest hum of life in the alley-ways of the old and sleepy town. It had been raining overnight, and the drops were sparkling on the twigs like brilliants on a Duchess at a State Ball, while all along the inner curve of the horse-shoe range that swept up behind us, the mountain-torrents were flashing down in the gleaming sunlight like so many great supple, sinuous, glinting Pythons. Seaward, over the gables of the big Buddhist temple in Tera-machi, the reaches of the Suwo Nada shone and shimmered,—a huge silver-burnished shield with the crag-peaked island of Himeshima a dull copper boss in the centre.

I had brought out my usual armful of Hawkston's classics, for it was not often in my life that I could afford to loll away a whole solid day over a dog-eared

Sophocles, or a muchly bethumbed Lucretius. But I could then, and I did. This morning, by luck, I struck the opening of the fifth *Æneid*, and as Hawkston placed a camp-stool for himself and sunk into it with a luxurious sigh of physical content, I gave him the full benefit of the passage :—

“*Interea medium Aeneas iam classe tenebat
Certus iter, fluctusque atros aquilone secabat,
Moenia respiciens, quae iam infelicis Elissae
Conlucent flammis. Quae tantum accenderit ignem,
Causa latet ; duri magno sed amore dolores
Polluto, notumque, furens quid femina possit,
Triste per augurium Teucrorum pectora ducunt.*”

“Don’t you think Pius *Æneas* was an utter and an unmitigated brute to treat Dido as he did?” I queried.

Hawkston started quickly: I saw he had caught my drift; but of course he wasn’t going to say as much.

“I do,” he answered sharply; “but not for deserting her. He couldn’t do less; he didn’t belong to himself; he was Fate’s man, entrusted with the destiny of his nation. But it was another matter to go love-making and philandering with her, or rather to allow her to do so to him—it is all much of a muchness—and for that, in view of everything, he ought to have been kicked till he howled like a patent syren steam-whistle.”

“Well, what would you have done in his case?”

“Done! Most likely made an utter ass of myself!”

“Judging from what I know of you, I should think it highly probable,” I answered very dryly, turning round my head as it lay propped on my left elbow

and looking up into his face meaningly. "I'm going to talk straight to you; I ought to have done the business when I gave you back your MS., but your usual regiment of afternoon visitors began to file in just at the moment. Now, by your own showing you're nothing short of a blooming calf. Why the deuce didn't you give the woman a show to speak out what was on her mind? I'm just as good a social democrat as you are, but I shouldn't have been so deucedly touchy in this business as you've been, my son."

"I'd advise you to——"

"Mind my own business, you were going to say," I interrupted quietly. "But at present I have none of my own, and so, by way of keeping my hand in, I just take a passing interest in other people's. You know I'm a newspaper man, and a newspaper man can't possibly exist unless he has something toward to amuse him. Now, as I read the romance, you are just off on the wrong tack entirely. There is no Clara Vere de Vere nonsense in the business at all. It's all Honest Injun, or I'm an idiot. Now, you know better than I that we can never racket our fad through till we get all the brains and intelligence on our side. And that woman has lots of both, and besides, cold and icy as she seems on the surface, she has got a heart surging with bubbling sympathy for the right, and boiling with indignation at the wrong."

"How do *you* know?" he inquired with an angry flash in his eyes.

"Why, from yourself, to begin with. Do you think I've subbed copy and written leaders for seven years

without learning to read between the lines of most compositions? Yes! altogether you've done a very nice day's work over this affair, and you've a lot to be proud of in connection therewith. Why, think what we couldn't accomplish with a few women like her to do the blooming Egeria for us and our crowd! It's not her money we want,—it's *herself*. And here you are, like Æneas, Fate's Man with the destinies of Australian Social Democracy practically in the loof of your right hand"—(this of course was an adroit bit of flattering exaggeration)—"and yet you fail, fail miserably, taken by the pitiable Pius Æneas standard even—and that too by your own showing."

Hawkston flushed as he got up. He spoke never a word, but he just stepped behind me and gave me one of the most tremendous kicks I ever received in my life. No bones were broken though. He then turned on his heel and sprang down the embankment. Three minutes later I heard his voice calling the roll in school. I fancied there was an unusually cheery ring in its tones.

I chuckled to myself as I turned over on my back with Virgil to keep me company. For the last week I had been in Heaven, in a manner of speaking. I had polished off the fag-end of my "copy" on the way up from Hong-Kong, and here I was now with nothing earthly to do but to lie off and "spell" to my heart's content. And that was something ahead of a first-class luxury after a seven years' grind of journalistic hack-work in a country where you have now and then to do thirty odd hours at a stretch with the mercury at 100° over-night even in the basement

cellar, and Lord only knows how much in the machine-room up aloft, where the presses clank and groan red-hot to the touch, and the "comps" strip to the buff and gasp for water as they wipe the sweat from their foreheads by the apronful,—a seven years' grind with scarcely a single sportive interlude that might be called a break. We are a young country, but we have got our journalism down fine. There you must be ready to write upon anything and everything at a moment's notice,—from a Change in the Ministry down to the Price of Fish, and you must write stuff too that can be read just as it comes from the tip of the pen. There is no revising of proofs there even unto a sixth edition, and sending the final revise back patched and powdered and befrilled like an after-glow superannuated beauty of Queen Anne's time. The devil stands over you as your pen tears along fast as a twenty-one knot racer with splotches and blotches flying from the cut water, like Black Care astern of the Charioteer in Horace, and woe be unto your own mother's son if you can't last the pace! You can't doctor up telegrams four days old; and intelligence that has got beyond its first bloom of youth is a wall-flower in that quarter. Under the fierce and fiery stars of Queensland neither news nor corpses will keep. Funerals always take place within four and twenty hours after the departure of the deceased, for it is wonderful how quickly meat goes bad in a country where it is a crowning glory to have a thermometer that goes 110° when your neighbour's records a beggarly 108° only. And so with news. If you think of keeping it for next day the chances

are all in favour of your being utterly cooked. The other "rag" will as likely as not get wind of the thing and "scoop" you. Now, when an odd "scoop" or two means a drop of three or four thousand in the circulation, it is serious, and most papers simply can't afford it; at least mine couldn't, and so for seven long years I had lived in a regular *Sturm und Drang*, in which Parliamentary Banquets, Police Court Cases, Shipwrecks, Executions, Murders, and Sudden Deaths were the most striking and picturesque objects in the landscape. Wherefore now I was happy,—and meant to keep so till next time. Oh! the joy of doing nothing, or what was infinitely better still,—what you jolly well pleased after seven years' forceful straining at the oar!

I had got to my present haven of shelter, from Nagasaki *via* Shimonoseki, after sundry exciting adventures which can find no place here, inasmuch as they would be digressions from the main thread of the discourse. I was delighted to find Hawkston almost as good as ever,—verging on plumpness in fact, and for him beastly lazy and lacking in energy. That was only on the surface though; as time went on I discovered he had not been letting the grass grow under his feet,—a fact the plutocrats have since found out to their bitter cost. But that has nothing to do with the story.

Only one thing at all marred my hedonic empyrean of repose. That was a liability to fits of shakes and shivers. We had lain unduly long in the river off Saigon, and malaria had there marked me for its own. So from Hong-Kong up I had had occasional bad

half-hours, and even now it was not infrequently quinine for breakfast, quinine for tiffin, and the same likewise for dinner. But it didn't altogether lay me prostrate upon the flat of my back, and in spite of it I contrived to see somewhat of the scenery of the place. When Hawkston was drilling his *samurai* in the mysteries of ciphering and spelling, in the pronunciation of "leetle dug," and in the niceties in the mouthing of "r" and "I," I used to start off "prospecting" on my own account.

And that prospecting was worth while too. Of course I have seen fine bits of country in my time, — a man hasn't globe-trotted so much as I without doing that. But of all the landscapes I've seen, whether under the rays of old Father Sol, with the breezes of Heaven fresh-blowing pure and sweet scudding in frolic across them, or on the walls of picture-galleries, there is not a single one that could summon the mountains of Buzen before the tribunal of Paris with the faintest show of bearing away the apple. They are simply wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, — utterly indescribable on paper. It is only an artist on canvas, with brush and paint, that could do the faintest approach to justice to them, and even he would kick himself with dissatisfaction when he had put all the cunning his right hand could compass into the work. Such a combination of contour and colour and sky must be unique in this planet of ours; this globe is over small for two such fairy-lands. My happening upon it was in this wise. The first day after my arrival in Nakatsu, I took a fancy to a spin across the fields, inasmuch as I had

had no chance of a regular "breather" since I had shipped at Sydney. So just as Hawkston went off to the schoolroom I donned my flannels and looked about for a landmark to make for. Right in the middle of the curve of the horse-shoe range was a long, lumbering mountain-pass with a fronting wall of perpendicular rock, its whole extent all sheerly so, except at one spot, where a corkscrew seemed to climb up to the plateau that formed its summit. Its elevation might be 2500 feet, possibly a few hundred more. I guessed it must be about nine miles to its base, and about one more to its crown, and that between eight and twelve o'clock, when Hawkie came from his work, I could easily do the trip there and back again. That was nearly four hours for twenty miles,—one mile of which would evidently be a scramble for an Angora goat going up, and on the other hand simply a matter of four minutes in the down-coming. So I started off with the stride we used to take in paper-chases over Shotover Hill and Bagley Wood and Cumnor Rise, much to the astonishment of the unclad lieges in the rice-fields I had to skirt. For the matter of the first six miles all went well; then I began to be reminded that shipboard life is not good for training and keeping hard, especially when complicated by occasional rounds of shakes and shivers. In spite of it all though I made fairish time, and after a series of dashes at the spirals of the corkscrew I reached the summit in a little over two hours, but utterly blown. I stopped to find if there was any wind to spare in the neighbourhood, and as I did so I turned round.

I then saw something to reward me for my exertions upward. One great rolling carpet of luscious green was spread on the floor of the pancake crescent that lay between the foot-hills and the sparkling sail-flecked azure shimmering in the forenoon sweltering sun like a flood of molten silver. But this was simply a flea-bite to what was to come.

I fared up across the gently rising plateau, and found it to be extensive,—sizeable enough to hold two tarns in its bosom. The upper of these gave birth to a brawling mountain torrent that sped in swirls along a boulder-fringed course, to tear in a sprayey rush adown the seaward cliffs with a wind-swept moan that rose and fell like the tones of an Æolian harp. Right above this was the extremest verge of the polygonal circuit. It curved up all round into mounds with the swell of a woman's breasts. I mounted one of these. And then! The sight that burst upon my eyes is simply indescribable. I rubbed them, and then pinched my anatomy to make sure that I was not in dreamland. When I made sure that I was really on mother earth after all, I began to try to take it all in. I spent just six hours at this occupation, and had even then not got half through with the job. I got back to Nakatsu to find Hawkston organising a search party to hunt for me.

As I have said, the panorama from Hachimensan—such is the name of the mountain I had scaled—is indescribable. At all events I am not going to attempt to describe it here. During my sojourn with Hawkston I went there a dozen times if I went once,

and I mean to go yet again. Among other things, it looks down upon Yabakei, the crowning glory of Japanese scenery according to Rai Sanyo, the poet-historian of Dai-Nippon. Though almost unknown to the ruck of foreigners, utterly so to the monstrous regiment of globe-trotters, it is, thanks to him, a household word among the natives of the country from Kiushiu even unto Karafuto. And no wonder. For the best part of half a score of miles it skirts the mountain roots,—a narrow gorge with walls of rock a sheer five hundred feet above the river, limpid clear, that scours tearing and roaring and flashing around the Cyclopean boulders in its bed. Aloft, rocks,—here scarred and bare and rifted, there moss-grown and creeper-clad,—seem to start up on the verge of the awful precipices and join in mortal combat in the battle-smoke of the cloud-drift that ever and anon enswathes them. It is Tempe and Münden and Roncesvalles with reminiscences of the Otera Gorge all rolled into one, with something else besides.

The place is accessible to the tourist from two directions. The easiest way to reach it is from Shimonoseki *via* Nakatsu. The other route is a case of four days overlanding from Nagasaki, across the plains of Hizen and Chikugo, and up the valley of the river of that latter name to Hida in Bungo. The road from that spot to Nakatsu threads the whole stretch of the defile. It is necessary to grasp this firmly to understand what follows.

The second Friday after my arrival I arranged a trip through Yabakei to Hikôsan, one of the most famous among the peaks of Buzen. I started off in

the morning with the intention of climbing Hachimensan once more, and then coming down into Yabakei by a hill-path I had discovered, and waiting at the little inn below the monastery of Rakan, where Hawkie was to join me before nightfall. We meant to pass the night there, and then fare further afield with peep of day.

But there are sometimes rain-clouds hanging about the summits of these hills, and it was my luck to meet one of these right in the teeth as I breasted the parapet of the plateau. I was soaked through and through in no time. I went ahead notwithstanding, but by the time I reached the inn at Rakan I was shivering like an aspen-leaf, or a beggar receiving a charity-dole from a Philistine to the sound of a trumpet. I got the people of the *yadoya* to understand what the matter was, mainly by a liberal draft on the resources of the language of signs. They wanted to put me to bed in the best room, but inasmuch as it looked uncommonly chilly I got them to let me spread myself out in a little four and a half mat *zashiki* behind it. The floor of this *zashiki* was some eighteen inches above the level of the reception-room below. Just opposite the corner where I threw me down was a slit in the paper, and through it my eye could rake the whole of the other room and all that transpired therein. It was about five in the afternoon when I made the hotel. By this time the rain-clouds had lifted,—driven off seaward by a rousing wind that was coming up screaming and whistling from the south and increasing in vehemence apace. It began to roar and boom and bluster

among the cliffs and crags in a way there was no mistaking. It was a typhoon, and a pretty lively one too at that,—aloft on the peaks of the range a regular out-and-out “buster,” as we should phrase it at the Antipodes. I swallowed a dose of quinine,—by good luck I was charged with a phial of the precious stuff,—and lay back beneath the mountain of *futon* piled atop of my quaking anatomy. By-and-by the turmoil of the tumultuous brattle of the blast and the threshing of the bamboos on the shingles of the roof acted as a sort of lullaby upon my senses, and just as the gloaming was melting into the dusk I dosed off into the outskirts of dreamland. I was vaguely conscious of a change in the direction of the wind; the moaning sound of the white-maned cascade just below the inn grew louder apace, and as its sobbing rose into fitful wails, I knew in consequence that the tempest was circling and veering round in the rifts and the gulches.

I was just sinking into a feverish dose, when over all the hurly-burly of the elemental strife outside, my ear caught the rush and jangle of wheels, a sudden halt, and a loud insistent cry, which I took to be the Japanese for “open and be blown to you.” Next ensued a scurrying among the *nesan* of the establishment, and while one opened the *amado* of the *genka* another placed lamps and cushions in the adjoining room. Then followed a weltering flood of agglutinating honorifics and a general polishing of foreheads on the *tatami*. I peeped at the performance with amusement (for I was a griffin in the land in those days), and looked for the advent of the guest,—he

must be of no small moment in the locality,—with some curiosity and interest.

It takes a fair amount to astonish a newspaper man, but I must confess to being utterly and completely taken aback by what followed. To begin with, it was a woman in European garb that stepped into the room. And a real European she was too undoubtedly, a good eighteen inches taller than the average Japanese lady, and with all the free and unfettered grace of movement that comes from treading mother earth in silk stockings and patent leathers instead of waddling duck-fashion on *tabi* and *geta*. She was thickly veiled and kept her hat on, but somehow I could have sworn that I knew her. I pinched myself again to make sure that I was really in my sober senses. When I was as good as convinced that I was not at all “off my chump,” I looked once more, and felt a strong inclination to call out. It was my aristocratic female chum of the *Barracoota*.

But I virtuously stifled my inclination, and lay back with a grin, silently laughing to myself, spite of the shakes.

When I again put my eye to the slit she had removed her head-gear, and there was her proud, dark face in all its radiant glory. She was flushed and braced by her tussle with the wind, for it must have been right in her teeth during the last two *ri* of her drive down the gorge from Hida. I knew at once she had come from that part, because I heard her ask the guide, who was outside the threshold of the room, if it was not possible to push on and reach

Nakatsu that evening. I heard him suck in his breath and assert that it would be "difficult," which in plain English means "Can't be done nohow" in this country of overwhelming politeness.

With a short sigh she gave orders to bring in her baggage. Like all itinerant females, she had a fair amount of fixings—three kuruma-loads, I judged, when I sized up the sum-total of the cargo dumped upon the floor. Even if I hadn't known as much before, I would at once have set her down as an old traveller and a woman of resources. Of course there were no seats in the place, the nearest chair being twelve miles off in the policeman's box at the gate of Nakatsu Castle. But that didn't matter. By a skilful disposition of boxes and shawls and wraps, she extemporised something in the fashion of an Oriental divan, amidst a chorus of "He! Ha! Ha! Kekko! Rippa na!" from the admiring denizens of the shanty. She went out, and then shortly came in and sat down, and, placing her left elbow on her knee and her chin in the palm of her hand, gazed pensively before her, with a wonderful play of lights and shadows scudding across her faultless, clear-cut features.

She sat in this pose for perhaps the best part of ten minutes, when there came a furious battering on the door, and Hawkston's voice rang out loud above the storm, demanding where the devil I was. She started and flushed all over, and clutched the bosom of her dress, her fingers hooking convulsively in its rich and glossy material. It was the only time I had seen her in the least startled out of that haughty yet

easy repose of manner that I was inclined to set down as having been imbibed with her lady mother's milk. But startled she was that time,—like a fawn when the stag trumpets forth the alarm of the winding of the pack.

Hawkston was well acquainted with the people of the inn, and so did not stand on over much ceremony about finding his way for himself as soon as he got over the threshold. He made for the best room straight, and threw back the *shoji*. Then there was a brace of stifled exclamations, and next a long and death-like pause. You could hear only the ticking of the clock on the wall, and the boom of the wind in the pass, and the rustling thrash of the bamboos on the roof.

She was the first to recover herself, and at once took the initiative in making the running. Hawkston was evidently utterly floored. However, he came up to time when she stepped forward with outstretched hand and a look on her face such as I had never seen on it, nor he either before me, as I shrewdly suspect. Pride and haughtiness melted from it swift and sudden as the Hokkaido snow in June, and graciousness and sweetness and the love-light flushed and beamed in its stead, coming with a rush as come the flowers in the Yezo meads when they throw their winter mantle from off them at a twitch. I never realised till then what a dread and potent thing a woman's gracious winsomeness could be. Strong, strong, in sober truth, needs must be the man that means to stand fast and firm against such weapons as the Viscountess then had armed herself with. I

saw at a glance that Hawkie's fall was fated,—surer than most things written in the book of doom, and I laughed softly, joying with all my soul in his overthrow, although the malaria was shaking me as a terrier shakes a cat.

“So,” she said, with a smile for which a man might well place his immortal part in jeopardy, “we meet again, and as usual in most romantic circumstances!”

“It seems so!” was the answer, Hawkie trying to keep cool and unconcerned-like as far as politeness would let him,—though I knew his heart was thumping like a twenty-five ton steam-hammer talking to pieces of armour-plating.

I saw that she was watching him as you watch the play of a boxer in the ring that you've got to tackle next bout.

“Yes,” he went on, as she said nothing in reply to the three monosyllables he had answered her with, “this is an odd meeting!”

“Your look seems to ask how it came about,” she said slowly and softly, still watching intently. “What if I said that the fame of Yabakei has travelled afar, and that I've made a pilgrimage to the spot?”

“Then,” thought I to myself, “your Ladyship would be uncommonly near to telling a regular whopper. If what you say is true, you must have cat's eyes. Half-an-hour ago I heard you say you wanted to push on to Nakatsu to-night, and folks don't usually choose the pitchy mirk for taking in the points of Yabakei!”

But I saw she was merely fencing to gain time, and to be sure of her ground before opening the

attack,—if she should be under the necessity of having to do so. She motioned Hawkston to a seat on the divan, and he sat down. I then caught a full sight of his face; it was as pale as a ghost's.

“Well,” she resumed, as Hawkston remarked that Yabakei was well worth the trouble she had taken to reach it, “I'm going to be frank and open. And I beg of you to meet me in a similar manner. It wasn't Yabakei, or scenery, or sight-seeing, or anything like that that brought me. When I saw you last time I asked you to call on me three days afterwards. You didn't, and so I have had the trouble of coming to call on you!”

“Indeed!” he replied. “The business must be important and weighty!”

“It is—very. Why did you not come to see me in Brisbane as I asked you?”

“I had my reasons!”

“I should fancy as much at least. And what were they? I'll tell you,” she went on quickly, and motioning him not to interrupt. “It was simply pride first, pride second, and pride third. It was very chivalrous in you to put me under obligations as you had, and then to do all you could to make me feel them!”

“I did nothing of the sort,” he said hotly, with a start. “But you wanted to make me your pensioner, and I will become no woman's hanger-on!”

“You mistake,” she said, gently placing a hand upon his sleeve. “But don't go on persisting in this hideous misunderstanding. You think I want you to give up your aims, your work, your 'crowd,' as you call it;—you see I can talk your language. I don't.

It is your staunchness there that first won my regard. I said I would speak plainly, and I'm doing it now. This is altogether too deadly serious to admit of fencing and playing at cross purposes. That day beside the scaur-brink—(here she shuddered slightly, though her face flushed with a little more colour than before)—I guessed how it stood with you. Proud, proud, the pride of a fallen archangel! It was that speech of mine at Wingfield's dinner that lay at the root of the evil. I *did* make it to test your mettle,—that I shan't deny. And I found yours ring true, as I've never yet found man's. Then when you left the station I saw you meant to read me a lesson. But your pride led you astray; you misread me. From any one else it would have been an insult only; from you it was a rankling wound. Then I waited, thinking a chance to make you understand would come. Once in the Gardens I was near it. But I was afraid,—the sole and only time in all my life. Then you were generous"—(here was a most pronounced touch of the old biting sarcasm in her tones). "And you did your best to give me another chance, and to make it easy for me."

"I did what I thought was best!" he interrupted huskily.

"Of course you did!" she said ironically; "but it was for the very worst. Now I'm going to speak out plainly,—to throw all the mock modesty of my sex to the winds. I have money, and power, and some small share of brains, and I want to use them aright. I can do better things than merely make doles to beggars and teach orphan boys to read and orphan girls to

sew. The world is not to be mended to any great extent by dilettante charity and humanitarianism of that protoplasmic order. You know that as well as I do. You've said it and written it a hundred times. You want to reconstruct, not to tinker. Very well, here is what I have come three thousand miles out of my way to ask: 'Will you let me help you?'

It was at once bold and brilliant play. But when the stakes are lifelong happiness or misery, it is well to keep a straight bat, and to lay on the wood with all the power one can put into the strokes.

She looked straight into his eyes, watching his face with all her soul. I could trace the curves of her bosom by the heaving of her dress.

"How do you mean?" asked Hawkston, slowly looking at her as if he were wrestling with a dream. "You don't——" and he stopped. But a great blaze of light was springing up in his eyes.

"I do," she said, with a defiant ring in her words. Then she threw out both her hands in front of her.

"You are a most unaccommodating man. Why will you not meet me half-way?"

At this I felt inclined to get up, shakes and all, and punch Hawkston's head for him, and knock him down, and kick him till my feet were sore when I got him there.

But just then he—— At this moment I was taken with a most tremendous fit of shivering, and had to pop my head under the *futon* to deaden the chattering of my ivories. I kept in that position for ten minutes perhaps. When I looked out again they were both standing in the middle of the floor, he with his arm



“THEY WERE BOTH STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FLOOR.”—P. 84.

round her waist, and her head upon his shoulder. They were a pair to look at too. As I marked them I thought how utterly they knocked the stuffing out of what pedants and schoolmasters set down as a horrible example of "bad grammar" in Milton:—

"Adam the goodliest man of men since born
His sons; the fairest of her daughters Eve"—

as if forsooth poets ever think of wooden-headed dominies and their dry-as-dust canons of style when they take pen in hand!

They were billing and cooing like a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons, and I felt awkward, and generally very much *de trop*. So I ducked down again under the *futon*, and thought what asses folks make of themselves when they are fatuous enough to "get shook" on each other.

At last their conversation began to show signs of sanity and coherence, and he ultimately asked her a straightforward, sensible question.

"But however did you discover my whereabouts, sweetheart?"

Although "sweetheart" was a vocable against which my whole soul revolted, I yet picked up my ears and listened to her reply.

"How did I find you out? By the sheerest accident. We had a special correspondent who had come on board in a disguise that was a triumph. At first I set the fellow down as a thorough-paced blackguard,—('I knew that already, your Ladyship,' thinks I to myself),—but he turned out a disappointment and fraud as far as that went. At Port Darwin he trans-

ferred himself from the steerage to the saloon, and signalled his advent among decent people by reading our bullying captain a lesson on manners it was a luxury to listen to. My curiosity in the man was excited, and I watched him pretty closely ; and from putting one thing and another together I was in a pretty fair way of guessing his trade. One evening I went up on deck to think in the dusk—I shan't tell you of what—and that Russian Volkslied you used to sing was coursing through my head. Suddenly the air broke out astern of us, weird, spectral, uncanny. At first I fancied it must be imagination running riot. But as I strained and listened with all my soul in my ears, strung to the tenseness of a bow bent to the breaking, the thing went on and on. Only the execution was rough, and here and there the quaver of a false note. ('The devil!' I muttered.) I started up, and there was our steerage friend leaning over the taffrail. He looked round all of a sudden. I felt almost driven to ask him on the spot where he had picked up the air, but reason told me I could get at it in a more seemly and natural manner by waiting. So next day I easily found means to make his acquaintance. The very fates in their courses fought for me ; a letter he had on deck was blown by the breeze right into my lap. Women's eyes are quick where their hearts are concerned, and I thrilled as I recognised your handwriting. Then I set to work to worm out of him all about you, and although he is no fool, I succeeded in no mean measure. I got him to read the Romance, as he calls it, he has culled from your diary. I once or twice fancied he had detected my identity ;

if he did, he was very careful to give no hint of having done it."

"Whew!" interrupted Hawkston. "That's it, is it? Of course he must have; he is uncommonly sharp at that sort of thing! Why? He is the man who worked out the mystery of the Stuart Murder Case, when the detectives were utterly baffled. And you may be absolutely certain that he violated the secrecy of my MS. not without grounds he thought amply valid for doing so."

"That may account for the moral reflections he garnished the latter with by way of commentary. If he did know all about it, he told me some of the—I shan't say rudest—but plainest things I ever listened to in my life!"

"The brute," muttered Hawkston. "I've a mind to cut him for ever!"

"That's the thanks a fellow gets for meddling in other folks' love affairs," thought I to myself. "Hang me, if I'll ever play at a go-between again!"

"No," she said. "If it hadn't been for him, my future would have been bleak and cheerless indeed!"

For some seconds neither spoke, but they stood looking unutterable things.

Now in a Greek Drama this is just the sort of spot where the Chorus would have struck in to liven matters up a bit, and generally help pass the time of day. So, with a sense of serving the eternal fitness of things, I ransacked and rummaged the pigeon-holes of my memory for something more or less

appropriate to the occasion. I never saw much good in these poet fellows myself, 'cept that they come in handy now and again in a case of the description next door. I took what came uppermost, and, as luck would have it, I struck upon what Archdeacon Farrar characterises as the most beautiful song to a woman in the English tongue. You could have heard a pin drop on the *tatami* in the neighbouring room as I gave the thing with all the feeling and effect the shivers would let me throw into it :—

“ There’s a woman like a dewdrop, she’s so purer than the purest ;
 And her noble heart’s the noblest, yes, and her sure faith’s the
 surest ;
 And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre,
 Hid i’ the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape
 cluster,
 Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck’s rose-misted marble ;
 Then her voice’s music—call it the well’s bubbling, the bird’s
 warble !
 And this woman says, ‘ My days were sunless and my nights were
 moonless,
 Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark’s heart’s outbreak
 tuneless,
 If you loved me not !’ And I who—ah, for words of flame !—adore
 her,
 Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her—
 I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,
 And by noontide as by night make her mine, as hers she makes me !”

Then, when I finished, Hawkston took two seven-leagued strides across the mats, and dashed open the *shoji* with needless and most inconsiderate violence.

“ You scoundrel !” he began. “ Here you are at your devilry again ! I’ve a good mind to punch your head !”

“ Anyhow,” said I, with my teeth a-chatter like a mill-hopper, “ if you will persist in your inhuman and misguided wrong-headedness, at least be Christian enough to fix me with a dose of quinine before you open the show. These shakes will be the death of me ! ”

“ Oh, Mr. Johnson ! Oh, poor fellow ! ” exclaimed the Viscountess, when she caught sight of my plight as I lay trembling among the *futon*. “ Where is the medicine, Will ? Quick ! I’ll give it him myself.”

And she did. As I watched her jewelled taper fingers with their pink nails manipulating the glass, I concluded that it wasn’t such a bad thing to have malaria when there was a Viscountess in the neighbourhood to dose you. Her sympathy was cheap at the price.

After all, you see there are points in hobnobbing with aristocrats,—females for choice.

THE WOOING OF WEBSTER.

TOLD UNDER THE JOGASHIMA LIGHTHOUSE,
MISAKI, JAPAN, JULY 1888.

“I-YAH! Here we are! Down among the wind-whisked tussocks there is good!

‘ Brother, let us take together
An easeful period.
There is worse than to be as we are—
Cast out, not of men but of God!’

Although it's petticoats that's the matter with us,” Webster muttered as he threw himself down upon the seaward slope of the gorse.

“Now then, you crack-brained descendant of a line of lunatics, what are you after, and what halting doggerel is that?” I asked, as I accepted his suggestion and planted the breadth of my back among the bracken.

“It's peace and quiet, and relief from the sight of flounces and petticoats, and of female ankles, slim, beefy, and intermediate, that I'm after; and as for the poetry, your imputation is a dirty libel, for which I've a mind to punch your head!”

“Don't, for goodness' sake! Once in a lifetime is ample. I shall never forget the way you got in that

jaw-smasher. Confound you! It sets my teeth all on edge and my head humming like telegraph wires when the wind is screaming across the Plains of Heaven* to think of it now, and it's the best part of twenty years that lies on this side of that blow."

"Well, and didn't you deserve it, my son? I had come up, a raw Scotchey,—first time south of the Grampians,—and you and your eye-glasses, and your rings, and your scarf-pins, and your watch-chains, and your seals, and your other fal-de-rals, must needs poke clumsy jokes at Sandy's Glengarry and the architecture of his clothes generally, with a few rasps at the matter of his 'awkcent' in the passing. Well, Sandy turns on his heel and comes right up to you, and tells you that if these were Oxford manners he didn't think much of them. Then you all sniggered, and made audible side remarks,—talking *at* a man and not *to* him,—which after all is only a dirty woman's or parson's trick,—and as your nose seemed to support the most aggressive and discomposing eye-glass in the whole crowd, I just brought the back of my left hand across it as forcibly as I could without irretrievably ruining its frailty. Remember what happened next?"

"Ra-ther," I answered ruefully; "or at least part of it."

"Was it two rounds, or three now?" he went on meditatively. "Perhaps it was three. Anyhow, I recollect I had just knocked you over, and was taking down my sleeves, when a scout rushed up with the

* A plateau near Yokohama.

news that the lists were out and that the Scotchey had got the first scholarship."

"A promising beginning for a Damon and Pythias friendship, wasn't it?"

"With an Englishman, yes! You see you are queer folks south of the Tweed. If a man is to get on with you he must do one of two things: he must either give you a thorough, jolly good hammering straight away to begin with, or he must conclusively show that he can do it if you give him any occasion to. After you've broken the ice in that way, and shown John Bull that you've grit in you, he is one of the finest fellows to get along with in the world. Sticks to you like a leech when you get into a tight fix, and gives himself no end of trouble to get you out of it, and won't let you say even so much as 'thank you' for his pains! Oh! you've got your good points, you Southerns, but a man has to begin by fighting you to find them out. If he licks you, so much the better; though if he makes a good stand-up set-to of it it's enough. Yes, my son, we got on very well afterwards, although we Balliol Scotchies used to get called 'hard-headed brutes,' by way of a compliment."

He relapsed into silence, and puffed vigorously at his dearly-beloved meerschaum.

That meerschaum was a joy to look at, and, as Webster said, a still intenser joy to smoke. But that last averment had to be taken on trust, inasmuch as Frankie took very good care to let no one put the thing to the practical proof. That cutty was for Webster's own cheek, and for it alone; and any one with the temerity to defile the stem of its sheeny

sanctity with an unchaste and adulterous kiss would in all likelihood have come in for something a good deal more lurid and lambent than the curse of Reuben itself. You might flirt with any or all of the odd 20,000,000 petticoats in Japan without Frank ever so much as hinting that you were either a thief or a poacher; but just touch that precious pipe, and you might mistake the hole he usually kept it in for the front entrance to Tophet! Swear! Swear, do you say? Sakes alive! a sailorman's parrot was nothing to him! He would blaspheme in thirteen different languages, not counting dialects, among which latter Bullock-drivery and Aberdeenshire Scotch had the most pronounced and pungent flavour of raciness and profanity.

For the best part of ten minutes he lay still, and said nothing, and I was equally eloquent. It was at Misaki, two summers ago,—or was it three? Right in front of the mill-pond they mis-name the harbour lies a great ill-conditioned hobbledehoy sort of a lump of an island, called Jogashima. Folks are not quite agreed what purpose Providence had at the root of its wisdom teeth when it dumped it there. Professor East says its circuit must have been meant as a short-distance sailing course. But then, on a matter of this sort, East's opinion is not worth half the price of a second-hand pair of braces. He is a crank on yachting, and so far gone on it is he too that he not only makes it an unholy engine of systematic Sabbath-breaking, but he seems in imminent danger of losing his immortal soul over it into the bargain. He has been heard to assert that if he croaks and goes aloft,

and finds that there's no provision for periodic sailing races among the Saints, he means to petition the authorities to let him have a passport to navigate an asbestos 27-ft. rater on the Lake of Fire and Brimstone.

We—that is, one-half of a detachment that afterwards became martyrs to science—were camped in the single house on the landward shore of this island, just at the mouth of the mill-pond. There were two Daigakko Professors besides East, with a consignment of nitro-glycerine and infernal machines sufficient to dismember the whole Royal Family of Russia, and to leave something over for fireworks to celebrate the joyful event. Then there was Webster, sub-editor of the *Yokohama Snorter*, who had come down to write up the expedition for his rag. I had come along, partly out of a mild curiosity, and partly to kill time.

This afternoon, about five o'clock, a steam launch had run in with a cargo of petticoats from the Treaty Port. Webster looked at them getting into the punt to land with holy horror writ large on every wrinkle of his ugly phiz, and then he tapped me on the shoulder and asked me if I shouldn't like to sniff the evening breeze up under the Lighthouse. I don't dislike female society at all,—there are lots of good points about it,—but Webster did, and I didn't like to be thought unneighbourly. So I said I didn't mind; and here we were.

It was very beautiful, and very picturesque, and very romantic; but more than ten minutes doing nothing beyond watching the dip of the sun over the shoulder of Fuji gets abominably slow. So I gave Webster a

kick in the ribs, and inquired the why and wherefore of his misguided misogyny.

“Don’t punctuate your impertinent remarks on tender parts of my person with your dirty shoe leather in that way, please, and I may see fit to gratify your curiosity!” he said, catching me by the foot and almost wrenching my leg off.

He sat up, and, taking out his tobacco-pouch, began to refill his pipe with more than the care of a mother administering the feeding-bottle to her four months old first-born.

“Well, it is this way, you see. In the matter of women my virtue has been deficient from the start.”

I couldn’t help roaring at this compendious statement, made as it was with such grave and portentous solemnity.

“Well, you’re a shallower fool than I took you to be, and that’s saying a good deal,” he expostulated, evidently considerably ruffled. “I don’t mean to say I have been an immoral man in the usual sense of the word,—’cause I haven’t, or at least only so in moderation. But Socrates says—rake the cinders of your classical recollections for the precise Dialogues—that virtue and knowledge are the same thing, and I’m inclined to believe he’s on the spot when he says so. Now I’m speaking in the Socratic sense. I didn’t know any women when I was a brat. I had no sisters. I never ran across any females, except cows and cats and hens, when I was a youngster, and consequently when I tackled them as a grown-up I came an immortal howler! Hey! ho! But I did come the blooming idiot with them!”

He clasped his hands over his drawn-up knees, with the stem of his dearly beloved between his two forefingers and the middle one, and looked dreamily and weariedly toward the smoke-wreaths oozing slowly and heavily from Oshima.

“What sort of a howler did you come?” I asked at last.

“What sort?” He placed the pipe in his mouth and struck a match. “Oh,” he said slowly and nonchalantly, as he threw the flickering vesta over his shoulder, “oh! I only took them seriously!”

“How?” I queried. “Spin us the yarn. Out with the autobiography!”

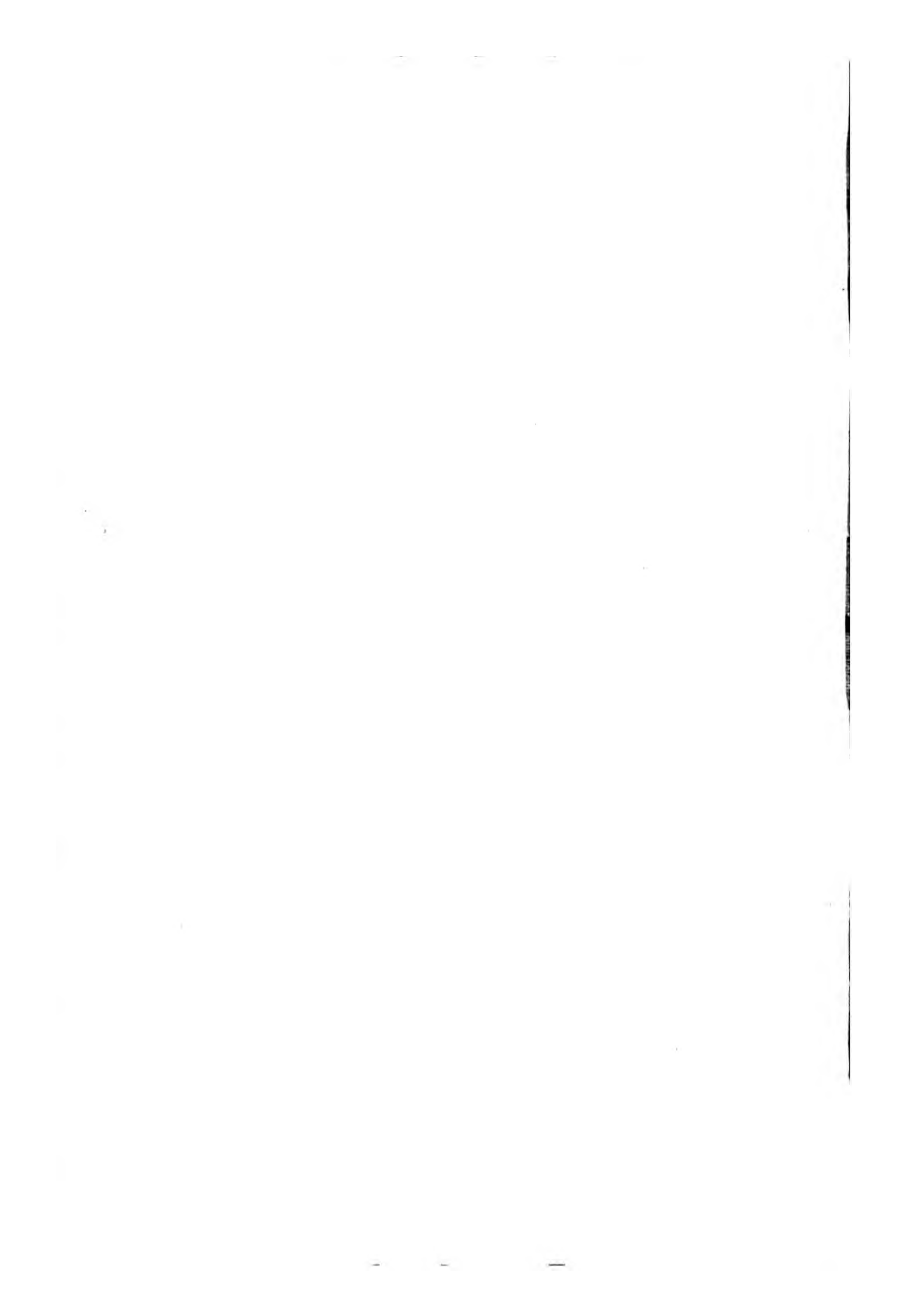
“No, that’s altogether too big an order. But say! You knew me in Oxford. Well, a woman sent me there, and that wasn’t so bad. You knew me ten years later in Australia.”

“Yes. Shan’t forget the fine morning I pinked that ’gater for you in the Fitzroy. That was a near thing, my boy!”

“It was. It was an odd meeting. I fancied it was a cedar log, and I was much discomposed when it snapped at me. That was a fine shot of yours. But never mind that. I say a woman sent me to Australia. That was bad. And it was a woman that drove me from Australia, which was worse. Now the latter two episodes are not for publication—at least just at present, because they’re other folks’ secrets as well as mine. But the first piece of foolery will help to pass the time of day till these minxes think it time to retire for a fresh coat of paint. So



“I PICKED IT UP AND GAVE IT TO HER.”—P. 98.



here's how it came to pass that you got that first-class licking in Balliol quad.

“It was in the kirk that the mischief had its commencement. There was a gallery round three sweeps of the circle, and the pulpit occupied the fourth. I sat down below, to the left of the rostrum where the Holy Man of God ranted and banged the Bible, and raised the stoor from the cushions in aureole-like clouds. *She* sat in a plush-cushioned seat in the front of the gallery to the right side of the Laird's pew, which was just *vis-à-vis* the Devil-dodger in action. My seat had no cushions; they weren't fashionable in our quarter of the kirk, you see. The benches we sat upon might have been built for stools of repentance; they were hard enough and uneasy enough, anyhow. Yet I wouldn't have swapped positions with any soul in the building. Because, you understand, I could feed my e'en on *her* all the time, during the prayer even, through the slits 'twixt my outspread fingers.

“Of course, I was below her,—in some ways. My folks had been swinkers and hedgers and hinds and drudges on the lands of a master off and on for generations. That is my father's forebears. But, notwithstanding that, we have our coat-of-arms, and can trace ourselves right away back to the day of Bannockburn, when we got them. My mother—she died when I was a brat in the cradle—was a Macdonald of Glencoe. And if we didn't have the dollars to maintain our dignity, we had pride enough any way to say nothing about it. My governor, in spite of his drudging, was the most outspoken wight

in the country-side, and made Minister and Laird alike sit up and listen when he had a mind to. When the innovation in the posture of prayer came about in the kirk, he stood up like the valiant man he was and led a forlorn hope of one against the embattled authorities. God rest his soul—he had spunk and smeddum for a barnful.

“But he had also a plentiful lack of bawbees, because he was too honest to get rich by over-reaching his neighbours. Therefore his son had to work. I was thirteen when I was introduced to the dignity of labour and the blessings of industry, and twelve hours a day was the tale of my toil, and fourteen on Saturday, which was pay-day—it being highly proper that apprentices should be duly prepared to appreciate the holy calm of the Sabbath. I didn’t put on much flesh at that business. You can’t get into anything like decent condition on half-a-crown a week, which was the sum-total of my income. Four hungry years of this soul-eating treadmill, during which my only joy was stolen snatches at books I kept hid in holes all over the shop. And then one day I met *her*. She was on her pony; and in that hat and tight-fitting riding-habit you might guess she was a picture, and you would be right. She dropped her whip and I picked it up and gave it to her.”

Here Webster put his left palm on the crown of his head and brought it slowly down the side of his face, finishing the motion with a quick outward sweep of the opened fingers.

“Whoo-osh!” he said. “She gave me a flashing

smile, and her e'en went through me and thrilled me like a battle-song. I stood still in my traces, with my blood tingling and my heart thumping, and a commotion among the molecules of my sowl such as I had never felt before and never will again! Even all the gloriousness of the best Glenlivet is powerless to produce it.

"Ah, mè! I was drunk, drunk, reeling drunk with love! That was on a Saturday; I didn't sleep all that night, yet on Sunday I was as fit as a fiddle. I didn't pay much heed to the Rev. John MacFadyen's homilies on Original Sin and Hell-fire and Damnation For Ever that day. But I was thinking; and by the end of the sermon I had made up my mind, and then when it came to the psalm, although I can't sing worth a cent, I got up and joined in 'I to the hills will lift mine eyes,' with all the stern determination of a death-doomed Covenanter before Drumclog or Bothwell Brig. That swelling outburst of the weird old wailing battle-tune that erstwhile sounded by the lonely tarn and on the bleak hill-side put the sword of the Lord and of Gideon in every one of my three-and-thirty vertebræ, and I determined to do it.

"*It* meant wooing and winning and wearing her, and it was to be done in the way that Scotchmen climb usually,—through the University. I had heard something about Bursaries at Aberdeen, and I found out more, and I meant to get one. Just then, as luck would have, a new dominie had taken to wielding the tawse in the Parish School, and he had been fourth bursar in his time, which was no small beer for a schoolmaster. I went and saw him, and told him

what I wanted, and he said if I meant business he would give me a trial. He gave me a fortnight's show, and then he asked me to help him in the school. Those were the times I worked! Sixteen hours a day, and sometimes two-and-twenty, and two meals to keep the machinery in motion. I had a fireless closet to sit in, where the rats played hide-and-seek beneath the door in summer, and the snow came drifting through in wreaths in winter. Hardship! Pouf! It was none! In a case of that sort you haven't time to feel it! Every Sunday I saw *her*, and that was meat and drink and fire enough for me in those days.

"Well, I contrived to pack away in a little more than one year the work that takes most folks six. At last the competition came. It was a tussle. My heart sank a bit when I looked round on a sea of two hundred and forty faces all on the same errand as myself, and all meaning business. But I thought of the plush-cushioned pew in the front gallery of the Auld Kirk, and I screwed my courage up to the sticking-point, and I went in with all my heart, and with all my strength, and with all my soul, and with all my mind.

"We finished on a Wednesday; on a Saturday the result was to be announced.

"On the afternoon of that day the quad of King's College was seething with a roaring sea of student life. At last the Senatus room door swings open, and the Janitor with a mace as big as himself steps out. We have just time to catch a glimpse of the long file of Professorial robes that flutter solemnly behind him,

when we are carried on the crest of the crush right into the hall, which looks like a cross 'twixt Pandemonium and Donnybrook Fair. Meanwhile the Faculty has filed on to the platform by a side door, and the Principal sits him down in his chair of state, in all the dignity of robes of office, and (wonder of wonders), for once in his life, of clean linen. Gradually the uproar subsides, and the Principal slowly upends himself, clears his throat, and begins.

“Gentlemen! (tremendous cheers) you will now learn (A voice, “The hundred and nineteenth psalm”) the result of the competition for Bursaries just held. And I hope you will behave yourselves, for this uproar is perfectly disgraceful!’

“The Secretary of the Senatus opens a roll of papers, coughs, and then, in mellifluous accents, takes up his parable—

“‘The first Bursary to be disposed of is a Simpson Bursary of £35 in annual value, and has been awarded to the first in the order of merit, Francis Webster.’

“That was a moment, my son! A moment worth two years, six years, ten years of an ordinary life! I have never heard, and never shall ever hear, music like that cheer. You see, I had just as good as breasted the tape first from fifty yards back of scratch in the quarter, and they knew it and shouted like wild things! No! no!” he sighed, “that comes but once in a lifetime!”

I said something about the ovation that greeted him when he spread-eagled seven Victorian wickets for 46 in the Intercolonial on the Sydney Association Ground.

“Pouf,” he said, flipping his fingers, “that was nought! That was only for honour and glory; *this* time I was fighting for *her*. And it was only *her* that was in my mind when the desks were jumping and the room was ringing with the cheering. Ow! The best game is but poor fun when you’re only playing a lone hand for your filthy, dirty self!

“Of course I was the talk of the parish, and next Sunday I got far more attention from the congregation than the minister himself. She came right up to me at the door at the skailing of the kirk, and she shook me by the hand and said, ‘Oh! I am so glad, Mr. Webster.’

“Heavens! man, that touch sent the blood swirling through my veins like the rush of the Dee in spate! I walked home with her, in Elysium, but worshipping humbly.

“Then I went to college and sat down to the stroke. The previous pace now told heavily on me, and I could bucket no longer. Then I broke up physically and could do no work, and folks thought I was done for. I wasn’t though. In the midst of it all my head was as clear as a Queensland sky when an eighteen months’ drought is hanging there, and just sixty degrees cooler. I didn’t work much, but I worked with a purpose, and never threw away a single shot. In those times there was a pith, a verve, and a spin in my stuff that was not of myself at all. It was inspiration. I was a poet in those days!” he said softly and absently; “a real, live poet!

“Man, you needn’t laugh!” he protested. “It was true! No! I didn’t pour out my immortal soul in

agonies in the Poet's Corner of the *Aberdeen Free Press*, or spoil good ink and paper by scribbling halting doggerel. But a 'maker' I was for all that, and a right powerful 'maker' too. The music of energy was humming in my head when I went to sleep, and singing in my heart when I awoke.

"I lived on the hill-tops and trod on rolling clouds, and although my fleshly knees tottered and my breath came hard in pants, I felt in my soul the mighty tread of a charging Highland battalion. I was strong, strong, strong in those days!

"Well, the exams. came round, and I was right on the spot, and I knew it. You know that springy sensation through all your frame when it's your day out with the leather, and you *feel* that the batsman is not born of woman that can keep you out of the wicket? Well, that was me that time! There were five events, and I ran clear first in four of them, and first equal in the fifth. And that, my son, is a record in the old shop even unto this day! And to this day I marvel how it was done. There were smarter men than I in the race, but they *weren't in love*, you see, and that perhaps made all the odds.

"Of course this brought me nearer her, but still I veiled my eyes, and adored from afar of. What was in my mind I kept to myself hard and fast under lock and key in its innermost recesses.

"Next year came, and I braced me again for the tussle. And well I had need to, for half-a-dozen better men than I had sworn to press me hard and lower my colours between them. I was to be pounded front, flank, and rear with horse, foot, and

artillery simultaneously. But I didn't fear or flinch.

"At Christmas I reached home, and went, of course, you know where. Sometimes I would meet her on the road; she once remarked that it was wonderful the number of times accident brought us across each other.

"One afternoon I met her in company with a local squireen, Kinnaird by name. He was a man that held his head high when he went among poor folks, and generally rated himself at an outrageous social valuation, all because his father had been a laird, and he hadn't to work for his living. Once, three years before, he had thrown the bridle of his horse to me at the town hall door as if I had been his flunkey, and I hadn't quite forgotten the favour. I just lashed the brute across the quarters, and Kinnaird had to trudge home through the mud on shank's mare, swearing many an ugly curse by the way. Well, this afternoon, of course, when I met her, my bonnet went off like a shot, and I got a flash of her eyes that was as meat and drink to my soul for a week of Sundays. But my lord of a lairdie would have it, an't please you, that my salute was an obeisance to his squireenship, as if forsooth I'd ever stoop to unbonnet to a cuif like him. So he stared at me with an insolent puckering of his eyelids, and honoured my insignificance with the curtest of impudent nods, by way of acknowledging my kow-tow. That was too much for the first-born son of my mother to stomach, so I wheeled round on my heel with the red bluid i' my veins hottering like water

bubbling in a pot when the fire is lowing beneath it. Miss Murray just then went into Lyons the draper's shop, and my lairdling gets strutting up and down like a rooster on his own midden, and swinging his cane, waiting for the end of her marketing. So I step right up to him, and remark very quietly—

“ ‘ Mr. Kinnaird, my head is as good as yours, and perhaps a trifle better, and when I lift my bonnet your hat has to come off too ! ’

“ He looked dumfounded, and then blurted out something about insolence and impudence, with adjectives prefixed.

“ I said nothing more, but just swept his head-gear into the gutter, by way of teaching him manners. He tried to cut me across the face with his cane, and he did. But next second it flew into flinders, and then it was fists on both sides. He was a man, four years older and thirty pounds heavier than I ; but he was heavy and lubberly, and whisky-sodden, and I was lithe and limber as the best in those days. We hit out, and then I feinted, and dodged and caught him a right-hander under the chin, just on the apple of the throat. It lifted him off his legs, and landed him, frock-coat and all, atop of his tile in the slush. I didn't wait for *her* to come out, but next time she met me she smiled in a way that told me she had heard all about it, and that I hadn't been crossed out of her good books in consequence thereof. Yes, my son, when a woman's involved, never put up with sauce ! Hit out, clean and straight, and if there is to be any mercy shown to the other fellow, leave that part of the business to the Lord !

“Well, the second session came to an end, and I was in it again right up to the neck, with four firsts and a third, the latter of which was a slight miscarriage by reason of a raging toothache I had on the day of the exam. Folks told me I was as good as made (which I was half inclined to believe), and that I was a genius, which I knew perfectly well was so much arrant bosh. But I wasn't fool enough to proclaim the source of my strength from the house-tops. Strength, did I say? I'd better have said weakness.”

He paused, and his face darkled as if he had just raked up an evil memory.

“Yes!” he went on. “Weakness,—worse than womanly weakness! I was as good as made; therefore I was entitled to speak. And I did. Twelve pages of closely-written note-paper was the extent of the statement,—twelve pages of the hottest and intensest copy I ever threw off. I told her all,—the whole thing from the beginning, simply enough, without either beating round the bush or rodomontade. At least I didn't think it was rodomontade, it was all so unaffectedly genuine. I meant every word of it right up to the hilt. Now when I come to consider the matter, as a piece of composition, it *may* have been a trifle over-florid.

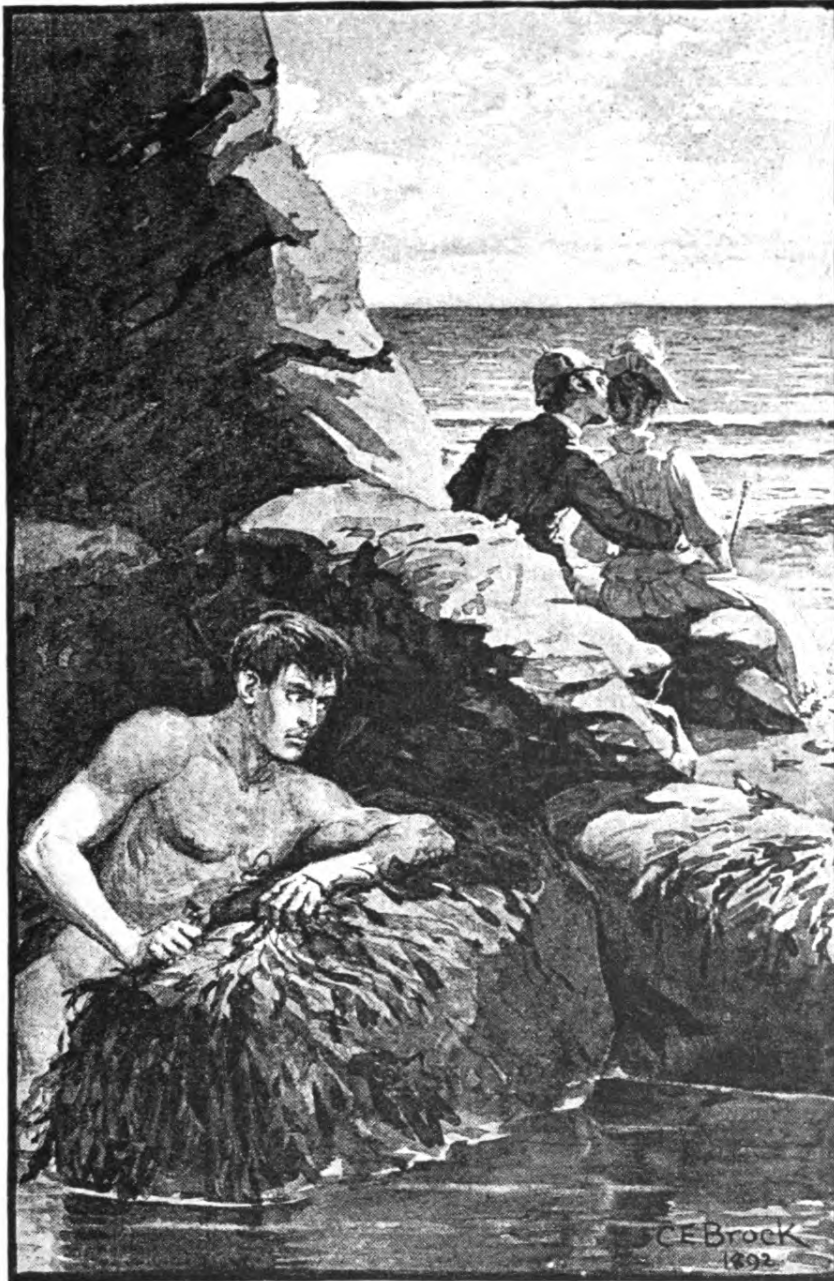
“In a week I got an answer. ‘Very much honoured, and highly flattered,’ and all the rest of the formulæ that some months afterwards I discovered in the ‘Lady's Complete Letter-Writer.’ But she didn't promise ‘to be a sister to me’ in so many words, and so I didn't lose hope. Of course

she didn't say 'yes'; but then, according to all I had read about women folks in story books, that wasn't quite their way under the circumstances. So I carried her letter about with me in an inside pocket, on the left of my waistcoat, and read it over twenty times a day, with thrills running all through me, when no one was near to see me playing the blooming idiot.

"In the vacation I was in the country, and saw her once or twice a month or two afterwards. She was wonderfully kind, although there was something in her manner now and then I couldn't quite understand. Sometimes I even got an uneasy suspicion that she was quizzing me; and once I was as sure as death that she was laughing at a matter that I thought very grave indeed. And a worshipper doesn't like to be made a mock of by the flashing-eyed goddess Athena, when he is so serious and devout in his adoration as I was. And day by day this uneasy feeling waxed apace.

"At last the crisis came, and its happening was on this wise. I used to go pulling with a mate of mine round by the old Castle on the cliffs. A devil he was to sit behind when he was in fettle, for he had the style of a Hanlan and the stay of a Beach. I used to cook him by taking the stroke thwart, but that has nothing to do with the story. One evening we went out for a spin, and not far from the Castle-scaur we passed close in shore, just clearing the rocks with our feather. I saw some shells on the face of the cliffs I wanted to get, so I stepped out, and Daulton—that was my chum—sculled out into the open and left me. I saw a few other specimens on a ledge about thirty yards

away, and I wanted to get them. Swim was the only way to reach it, so I stripped at once. I had just climbed up by the dulse and tangles when I heard the crunching of footsteps on the shingly beach round the ledge, and the murmur of voices, one of them a woman's. I crouched down where I was, waiting for them to pass, for folks there are more particular in the matter of clothes than they are in Japan, and I was arrayed in what was full dress in the Garden of Eden before the fall of sinful man. But pass they didn't. I heard a shuffling among the shingle, and recognised with holy horror that they had sat them down on a boulder. As I caught the tones of the lady's voice, my heart jumped up into my mouth, and I felt my person blushing all over, worse than if I had been caught eating pease with a knife. I heard her laugh a little mocking laugh, and an answer came to it in tones that made my ears tingle with anger. They belonged to Kinnaird. He was sacrilegiously familiar too, and called her 'Marian.' I wanted to knock him down ; but although it is usual to strip for the ring, it doesn't do to be too much stripped in the presence of ladies, and I just dug my nails into my palms by way of keeping my hands out of mischief. Then my ear caught a 'cheep' there was no mistaking. A cold sweat came out all over me. I was as furious as the Jews when the King of Syria sacrificed swine in the Temple : my idol was being smashed. It was a bitter moment. Then my own name was mentioned as the subject of a sentence where the predicate was most decidedly and pronouncedly uncomplimentary.



“THEN MY EAR CAUGHT A ‘CHEEP’ THERE WAS NO
MISTAKING.”—P. 108.



“‘Frank Webster,’ she said in the dulcet tones that used to thrill me like a war-trump. ‘George, dear,’—I felt as if I had been pithed—‘you can’t be so silly as to think that any girl could care a rush for that high-flown young fool. Only it’s such fun, you know, to draw him on. It’s as good as a play to listen to him mouthing and ranting about honour and duty, and all that nonsense. He’ll not be able to support a wife for years, and if he were he would drive nine out of ten ladies crazy with his moonshine before the end of the honeymoon.’

“And again the soft, silvery laugh came floating round the crag, mockingly bitter.

“At last they rose, and I loosed my hold and dropped into the water. The current ran strong with an under-suction, and I felt much inclined to let it carry me down in its rush. But I didn’t.

“When Daulton came to pick me up, he asked me if I had seen a ghost or a mermaid.

“‘Yes, a mermaid,’ I said; ‘... *ut turpiter atrum Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne.*’

“I don’t know how I got back, or what happened for the next few months. And then——”

Here there was a long pause; Webster’s face was as lifeless and lustreless as a lump of stale damper, or a heap of calcined chips that had once been *billets-doux*.

“Well, and then?” I at length queried, giving him a poke in the ribs by way of flapping his thoughts off the banks of the Acheron, where they had seemingly roosted.

“Oh, then!” he said with a start and a quiet, bitter

laugh, "I just went to the devil. Not rampageously and with a racket, you know, but decently and in order. I meant to quit the country and everything therein at the end of the next session, and I just set to work to kill time meanwhile. I was what Homer calls *analkis*, utterly and thoroughly *analkis*. There was a powerful loosening of my moral and intellectual knees, and I just drove quietly onwards towards immortal smash. Drink? No! I wasn't built that way then, you see. I hadn't cut half my wisdom teeth at that age, and didn't know a tithe of the things that are good for sinful man. I hadn't learned to appreciate whisky then, and hated the very smell of it. No, it wasn't the other thing either. I just did nothing, or rather I allowed higher mathematics and physics to go to the devil, instead of wrestling with them like a man, as I ought to have done that session. I read snatches of Philosophy, and became a mild sort of Cyrenaic. And novels and romances, and all the literary pastry, and jam, and sponge-cakes, and the rubbish generally that gives you incurable mental dyspepsia, I devoured till I was surfeited and scunnered. I sometimes looked back at the work that lay behind me, and wondered how the mischief I did it. Towards examination time I did try to pull up a bit and make up the leeway, but the stuff I did was as pithless and worthless as moist muck. I was no better than one of the gibbering, bloodless, fushionless shades in Hades. I felt that I had become a *thing*, a mere intellectual eunuch, and when a man feels that way the best he can do is to take a bucketful of prussic acid and invite his friends to

the funeral. Well, the smash came, and it *was* a smash! A miserable last prize in one class, gulfed in another, and ploughed in the third. Ploughed, man, actually ploughed! Only think of it! Ploughed, man, ploughed! The First Bursar and First Prize-man utterly ploughed! The whole place rang with the deed of shame I had just wrought in Israel. Ow, man, but it was Marah-bitter to meet the pitying looks of mockery that shot me through and through, turn me whichever way I could. And the cackling sneers of triumphant noodles rang in my ears like the crackling of thorns under a pot."

He stopped again, and I noticed his fingers twitching nervously over the pipe stem.

"Ay," he went on, "I mind it all as if it had happened yesterday. I was standing at the inner entrance of the Quad, with my shoulder against the wall and my bonnet plucked down over my brows. It wasn't to keep off the dazzle of the sun, 'cause I was standing in the shade; it was to—— On every side in the sea of seething humanity I heard nothing but 'Webster, Webster, Webster,' and Webster's disgrace. One of the Profs. that had talked of me as the 'coming man' and a 'star' passed through, and he lowered upon me with anger and contempt. Man! that look irked me sore, and I felt as if salt had been rubbed into the raw.

"I was standing under the cage where the notices were pinned. For nothing better to do I looked up at them and began to read them mechanically. I went over them every one, with the letters all blurred and run together in my head, and never a notion of

what they meant. There was one small square of paper in the centre of the lot, and somehow I ever came back to that. After I had looked at it six times I began to have an idea of what it said. And then my soul began to work, and light came into my head, and a purpose began to form itself. As it grew and came from darkness into life, I felt my strength returning in full force, and I clenched my teeth and my hands in my pockets, and I straightened myself where I stood, and my back-bone again became stiff, and I swore I would do it or die. And of a sudden life leapt into my head once more, and I lifted it up and looked the best of them in the face unabashed, and began to bandy words with the bitterest of the mockers. And soon they saw that my tongue had again got its edge, and one by one they shifted out of reach of its rasp. I felt the blood tingling with lusty strength in all my veins, because I knew 'that the hair of my head had begun to grow after that it had been shaven.' It was the announcement of the Balliol scholarship election that I had read, and I had purposed to be the man that was to be elected, or to burst myself like a shower of sky-flaring fireworks.

"The tussle was ten weeks off, and if I ever did a man's work it was that time. I went through my books as a sea of fire leaps through a stretch of six-foot grass, with a roaring autumn buster astern of it to give it a hoist ahead. A pretty face is all very well to dream about, but revenge is stronger fuel to keep the furnace aglow. Of course I don't mean the knife-in-the-back revenge of the coward; that's a sort of thing I know nothing about, and I don't want to make its

acquaintance. But I had been down, and had been kicked,—and foully kicked too when I was down, and oh! it was luscious to think of what would be toward when I got on my pins again! But at the same time I kept quiet, and pretended to moon and to fool, and to drivel and to spend my days and my substance in doing what was worse than riotous sin—viz., in doing nix.

“Her? Oh yes! I met her, and she also had her peck at me. She tried to rub it in after the fashion of her sex. But I took it all mildly, as weak as a pitiful sheep. Then the next time she saw me coming she passed by on the other side; and one day when I called she was ‘not at home.’ But you see that did me good; I was already case-hardened and steeled, and that made me steelier still.

“One morning I disappeared, and neither man nor woman knew whither I had departed. It was then your honourable nose became acquainted with the backside of my sinister fist, and of course you know the rest of it. Yes, it was a goodish bit of work, though I say it myself that shouldn’t. But *those* were the days that were!

“Of course I came back splashed and spattered all over with glory and kudos. The Prof. that had glowered upon me as the archangels frown upon the damned wrote me a five-page letter of compliments and good advice. I took the compliments with a wink, and filed the good advice for future reference. You bet I made some of my quondam friends smell more than the scent of cayenne pepper seasoned with their own asafœtida. I don’t think they ever tried

that trick again. When I went back I discovered my undoing had been the making of me. I had got a lesson, a dour and bitter lesson; but I gave as good as I got, with possibly an allowance for unearned increment chucked in as boot to the bargain. No, no, my son, it doesn't do to turn the slapped cheek overmuch among ordinary folks. If you're hit, give the smiter room for repentance, and the biggest thrashing you can administer to help to furnish the chamber. Anyhow, I had got on the line once more, and I told myself quite cock-a-whoop-like that a petticoat would never derail me again."

"You ran pretty well as long as I knew you, I'm bound to say," I remarked.

"Ay, maybe. When you knew me I was a fairish man, I don't deny. But whisper! I could keep the length, I could keep the pace, I could put in work both from the leg and the off, *but all the same a lot of the devil had gone out of the bowling*. Iyah! There's nothing like a pair of eyes that you might light your pipe at for putting spin into a man's work! That I avow."

"And what did *she* say to you when you came back?" I asked.

"Say? Well, now, that's just where the odd thing came in. Three weeks before I went to Oxford there had been a regular financial crash in the country, and Kinnaird was in it up to his neck! Of course she helped him out with her sympathy! Not much! She just left him to flounder and welter and lair in the mire, and wrote him with ink compounded of indifference and 30° of frost. When I came back

she wrote me too ; such a sweet little note of congratulation, scented, and with sympathetic affection rustling in every fold of the dainty toned letter paper. But I didn't wear my head under my arm any longer."

"Of course, you answered?" I ventured.

"In common politeness, I did. And I took the answer myself," he replied grimly. "Ay, I recall the last time I met her as clearly as if I saw the whole piece played down there now for the benefit of us twain."

He pointed to the swell below now ruffled by the darkling wind, and being kissed good-night by the sun's upper rim dropping behind the shoulder of Fuji.

"It was about the tail-end of afternoon tea when I lifted the knocker, and had the door opened for me by the hussy herself. And faith, it was well that there was nothing about the casings of my soul, 'cept cinders and chunks of scorixæ, and Dead Sea fruity ashes, and dour and lifeless lumps and streaks of what had once been an erotic lava-torrent running and seething and raging, scorching Ætna-hot. If there had been anything in the shape of spiritual tinder about me, that look of hers would at once have licked it into a lowe. But there wasn't ; my heart was icy and stony and steely, as void of sentiment as the scarred scalp of Shirane San is of verdure. The love that had dirled and thirled in every fibre of my being, from the top of my head to the tendon Achilles, turning my emotion into one huge volume of poetry, and my brain into an intellectual dynamo, was as dead as a ring-barked gum-tree, or a blood-wood smitten by

the levin-bolt. I saw her now as she was in the very flesh, with all the ideality washed out. For me she was no longer a Goddess, or an Alruna maiden at whose knee one might reverently bend one's head and draw in wisdom and inspiration and strength to strike the blows that only men can deal. She was now a woman, and nothing but a woman; what would make a gouty, old, leering, lecherous Major Pendennis put up his eye-glass and rap out between a dozen mess-room expletives, 'a d—d fine woman!' All that she was, and just that. There was the same firm litheness in her well-poised figure and her sculpturesque limbs, and the same fine scent in her Annie Laurie-like neck and bosom so coyly hidden beneath her lacy kerchief, but now to me she was but flesh, flesh, flesh, which God Almighty meant only to be kissed. And I had come sworn to kiss it, and then go my way. And I did."

"Was that square, do you think now, in cold blood?" I asked.

"Square! of course I do! It's but few folks that have done me scaith, and yet come off so easily as she did. That evening I had within me the courage that laughs. What's that, you ask? Well, there are several kinds of pluck, you see. First, there's the

" 'Courage of the Dorian mood,
 Such as raised
 To height of noblest temper heroes old
 Arming to battle, and instead of rage,
 Deliberate valour breathed, firm and unmoved,
 With dread of death to flight or foul retreat.'

That's the sort of stuff that made Thermopylæ

immortal, and the swads of the *Birkenhead* undying when they drew up on the quarter-deck for their funeral in the sharks' bellies. It's first. You know the chances are every jack one of them agin' you, and you've simply got to die with your company manners on, and a heavenly smile playing all over your ugly phiz. Then there's the dare-devil dash, when you throw yourself with a cheer upon odds twenty to one, and count upon coming out all right at the other side of the scrimmage, but yet are not *quite* cock-sure of doing the trick. That's number two. Then there's the case where you've all the trumps in your hand; the case where you've collared the bowling and have nothing to do but to wade in and slate, as cool as a cucumber and a ha! ha! of triumph struggling to escape from the downward side of your diaphragm, and only kept back by a Christian consideration for the feelings of your enemies. That's the courage that laughs, my son. I've had it before I've got to the second round in the ring; I've had it before I've rowed a hundred strokes in the race. I've had it on the back of a buck-jumper, and I had it that evening, and, ah me, it *was* sweet; sweet as the forbidden fruit in Eden!"

"And possibly enough like it, it turned to the dead-sea fruit of ashes in your mouth," I remarked.

"Maybe it did, and maybe it didn't. Well, I could see that this trip I was taken seriously, or in other words, like a man. I never cared much for the insipid shallowness of drawing-room afternoon chat, but that time I splashed about in its tiny wavelets and ripples with the gusto of a brat in its bath after a cake of

Pears' soap. My lady—we were alone of course—did make one or two breaks towards the sentimental, but I gave her no show. She opened her glorious eyes with mild astonishment as she seemed to realise the fact that by taking thought I had added more than a cubit to my stature since the last time we met. Then I was but lowly,—I had knelt at her knee. Now I had risen higher. I would throw my arm about her waist, and kiss her on the mouth! I saw that she read me as clearly as she could read print, and I don't think she was *very* much enraged, although she did seem a sort of trembling all over, and generally looked tense and tight, like the strings of a *koto* all ready for the thrumming of the player. 'Ah, ha! my fine lady,' think I to myself, 'there's been a sort of *ō-jishin* in the relationships between us twain. It's not me, but you, that are the instrument now, and it's not you but me that am the performer, and by the Lord above I've a mind to play a tune upon the fibres of your soul that will make up for some of those disquieting discords you were kind enough to set a-jangling among the molecules of my mental and moral make-up!' But I didn't. It's mean to wreak a masculine revenge on silly and misguided females, and I let her down easy. So when she looked at me like a startled deer, and I saw she read me, I just laughed as a batsman laughs when he slogs the bowler to the chains for four and makes the winning hit, and I put my left arm round her waist,—by this time I had risen, and we were standing opposite to each other,—and with my right hand I drew her face down, down, down, towards my own,

till her breath played fast and quick upon my cheeks, and her eyes grew soft, and her lips met mine in a long and clinging kiss, such as women-folks don't mean for mere make-believe, and her head sunk forward and rested on my shoulder as if the Lord Almighty had built it expressly for its permanent support. Then she looked up into my face and started. She saw it all,—they're quick, women are, in things like that, and she flushed all over red as the dying rays darting from behind Fuji's flanks there, and she covered her face with her hands, for by this time mine was set and hard.

“‘Yes!’ I said. ‘There is no use for words to this piece of music. You *made* me,—or rather you caused me to make myself, between which two things there's not perhaps any very great gulf fixed, and for doing so I'm your debtor. But at the same time you did your best to send me straight to hell, and you've ruined my belief in women right to the beyond of forever. So we'll call the thing quits. Only you might have made an Excalibur of me, instead of the conscienceless curse of a Muramasa blade as which I'm bound to go forth into the world all along of the distemper you infused into the steel when it was a-forging.’”

“Stuff!” I remarked. “You never said anything of the kind to her! Why, what could she know of Muramasas? You might as well have rated the girl in Greek iambics.”

“Well,” he corrected, “it was words to that effect. You've no imagination. Anyhow, she understood my drift, and curtsied me out and said good-bye with a

throaty sob that made me feel worse than a beast. The wind was sighing and moaning in the tree-tops as I went out through the old kirk-yard, and altogether I felt that life was a valley and existence a curse, and that there were some triumphs that ought to put your tail further down atween your hind legs than any drubbing you ever got."

"I'm glad to see there's that much grace left in you, old man," I said, by way of endorsing the sentiment.

He threw himself back flat on the gorse and clasped his hands behind his head, evidently rummaging in the dusty pigeon-holes of his memory. For three minutes nothing was heard but the mechanical puff, puff, puff of the dry smoke he was now enjoying, and the moanful sougning of the night breeze in the long waving grass around us. At last he sprang up, and, knocking out the ashes from his cutty preparatory to stowing it away in its case, he meditatively observed—

"'Tis queer how old scars will show even when you fancy time has closed them up for ever. It was at the Cape in '83 that I met Alec Wilson, a townie of mine. Of course we went over all our friends. It was with a quaver that I asked after Marian Murray?

"'Dinna ye ken, mon?' he asked incredulously. 'She married Rogers, of the Town and County Bank, four years ago, and has three fine bairns already. She's a captain of the Gourdonshire Volunteers, for her man's entirely under her thoomb, an' it's her that gies the orders. Lord, man, what's the matter wi' ye.'

“ I answered it was only a stitch in the side, and that I was subject to stitches. He recommended whisky, and I took it. I felt my hand shaking as I raised the glass to my lips.

“ Only imagine,—the mother of three children, and captain of a company of volunteers! Now, why the devil did my heart go off that way, I'd like to ask? Why, man, it was in my very mouth!

“ But come along, the launch is screeching for a start, and the petticoats are getting into the punt. Look out, my dear! Your ankle's very shapely, truly, but there is no real occasion to show so much of your silk stockings to the Professor!”

Webster jogged off down the hill, and I followed. Poor devil! I little fancied that was about the last yarn I was to have with him. A fortnight afterwards we laid him in Yokohama Cemetery. It was his heart that gave way.

A YOSHIWARA EPISODE.

I.

THE engagement was to be a three years' one, and the consideration was to be at the rate of £17 *per mensem* during the first twelve months of the term, £25 for the next, and £30 for the final spell of servitude, such remuneration to be suspended and the agreement to be summarily determined in case "the said John Wilson Whitmore shall at any time wilfully neglect or refuse or from illness become or be unable to comply with any of the provisions herein contained, or to obey any of the orders of the said Patrick Maloney, or to perform any of the duties devolving upon him under this engagement."

In return for the sums of filthy lucre above-mentioned, it was laid down in black and white—mostly in black—what J. W. W. was to do. Clause 3 of the document was penned as follows :—

"The duties of the said John Wilson Whitmore during the said engagement will be to report all law cases, meetings, theatrical performances, and sports in the Settlement and neighbourhood, also to write paragraphs and 'locals,' correct proofs, and generally to promote the interests of the said newspaper; and the said John Wilson Whitmore shall during the said engagement conduct himself with all due diligence, honesty, sobriety, and temperance, and shall diligently and faithfully perform the said duties and devote his whole time and attention thereto, and shall use his best endeavours to promote and extend the interests of the said newspaper, and shall in all respects

diligently and faithfully obey and observe all lawful orders and instructions of the said Patrick Maloney in relation thereto, and shall not without his consent divulge any secrets or dealings relating thereto.”

Furthermore, J. W. W. was inhibited from either directly or indirectly having anything whatsoever to do with any newspaper in Japan, China, or India for the limited term of twenty years after the determination of his contract.

Altogether the agreement was iron-clad, and of the first-class too at that. But then beggars must not be choosers; and although young Whitmore was not exactly a mendicant, he was perfectly well aware that he was only one of a swarm of 124 impecunious ink-slingers that were all nibbling voraciously at this self-same identical journalistic bait, which, by the way, illustrates not unforcibly what a glorious thing the competition-wage system is for the capitalist. If we consider—— But really this is not the place for a treatise either on Socialism or Political Economy.

So John Wilson Whitmore had sat him down and totted up all the *pros* and *cons* in connection with a three years' expatriation on the before-mentioned terms, and sundry others which it is beside the purpose to extricate from the tangled welter of legal slang wherein they were mired.

He reckoned that by keeping on for a dozen years at his present twelve-hours-a-day grind, subbing and reporting and proof-reading for the *Preston Argus*, he might have an off-chance of getting an opportunity to blossom out as the mysterious and omnipotent WE in the leading columns of some second-rate provincial

rag or other. In that case he might cherish expectations of a salary that would enable him to think seriously of burdening himself with the maintenance of another man's daughter,—which, in seven cases out of ten, is a fatally accurate and comprehensive periphrasis for matrimony,—of a bi-annual week's holiday on the "Continong," and of an unending struggle with rate-collectors, doctors' bills, monthly milliners' accounts, and the other inevitable consequences of social suicide. Of course it sounds abominably cynical to put the matter in the dull, prosaic manner aforegoing, especially so in a youth of one-and-twenty, with the down on his upper lip just beginning to threaten his weekly expenditure with the addition of an extra threepence for the services of the barber. But at the same time such was what the way he did put it amounted to, although perhaps he did not employ the above identical vocables in setting forth the merits and demerits of the situation.

For Whitmore was a man with some ambition. He wanted to rise. And he knew perfectly well that rising in England is no easy task. Not so many years back merit almost invariably found the way blocked by birth and privilege; now, as often as not, it is capitalism that is the stumbling-block and the rock of offence in its path. And at this time of day, when the country is being turned into a regular warren of companies and syndicates and gigantic swindles,—beg pardon, I mean "trusts,"—it is bootless to draw encouragement from Dick Whittington and his Cat, or Hogarth's Virtuous Apprentice. "A fair field and no favour, and let the best man win," is a

very taking and fetching cry indeed ; but it is merely a cry and nothing more. Jack Whitmore, young as he was, knew enough of practical economics to be alive to the fact that in the England of 1882 A.D. it was *not* the best man that won ; it was the man with money who invariably scored. And as Jack had none too much of the commodity, he made up his mind to find out what chances brains had abroad, seeing there was absolutely none for them at "'ome," in his particular line at least. Besides, he reflected to himself, Japan was, according to all accounts, a wonderful country. Of course, in a way it is ; in fact, it is so in several of them, but none of them happens to be exactly the one that Jack had in his mind when he sat down to chew the cud on the prospects in store for him in the far Orient. He was thinking of opportunities of shaking the Pagoda-tree, of feathering his nest, of making unto himself friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, which are all so many mere figures of speech for making one's pile, and becoming filthily rich. Now, with perhaps the single exception of Spitzbergen, or mayhap Iceland, there isn't a worse country in the Northern Hemisphere for the object Jack's fancy was set upon than Dai Nippon. In his foolishness he was dreaming of "squeezes," of looting temples, of marrying Japanese Princesses, and of goodness only knows what other moonshine besides. Now, although there are occasional "squeezes" in Japan, and pretty considerably big ones too at that, they are not very much given to coming in the direction of foreign newspaper men. They are chiefly confined to Japanese Governors and

Yakunin, Chinese mandarins, and the Compradores who supply the Russian Fleet with stale bacon and inferior coal—(short measure too, of course). Looting temples was never much in fashion in Japan at any time, and in the year of grace '82 would have infallibly landed any one engaging in the industry in the cells of the Consular gaol. As for marrying Japanese Princesses, it simply can't be done. The Japanese have the best of it when it comes to a question of this nature. Several Japanese males have married high-class European ladies, with noble blood in their veins even, but not one female of the Peerage of Dai Nippon has as yet allied herself in lawful wedlock with the red-bearded alien. But of this fact Jack Whitmore, like a good many others, was blissfully ignorant, and he smiled complacently when he looked into his cast-iron contract and observed that although it said a lot of terrible things about engaging in any newspaper work in the East without the permission of Patrick Maloney, Esquire, it mentioned never a word against making love to the female aristocracy of Japan after the expiry of the engagement, nor even in the course of it, provided it were done with "all due diligence, honesty, sobriety, and temperance."

So he made up his mind to put his autograph to the document; and he did. Exactly four weeks thereafter he sailed by the P. and O. boat, second-class, for Yokohama, with bushels of good advice from his old Methodistical parents, a grand new repeater and a "gold albert" like the back-chain of a dray,—a memento of respect from his brother pressmen in

Preston,—and a lot of other miscellaneous belongings, among which was a packet of long silky auburn hair and a plentiful paucity of cash.

In two months' time, after a series of adventures which have nothing earthly to do with this story whatsoever, he set foot on the English *hatoba* (jetty) at Yokohama. His first act on landing was to allow himself to be swindled out of six times the legal tariff for disembarkation. His next was to drive off in a rickshaw to one of the second-rate hotels; two more *kuruma* followed with his traps, the drivers whereof, rightly presuming on his ignorance of the vernacular, unblushingly discussed the limit to which it would be possible to bleed the green *ketójin* (foreigner).

Next morning he hied him forth in quest of the office of the *Yokohama Chronicle*. Now, inasmuch as it is the blocks and not the houses in the streets that bear the numbers in Yokohama, this was a work of some small difficulty. At last, however, he fetched up in front of a sign-board there was no mistaking,—that is, a portion of the legend; for the major part of it was in a scabble of Chinese characters that looked considerably worse than hieroglyphics in an advanced shape of intoxication. But the centre-piece spelled *Yokohama Chronicle*, and that there was no doubt about. So he jumped up the steps and entered.

A thick-set man, with a close-cropped beard, a pair of spectacles, and a face with the map of Ireland writ large all over it, was sitting behind the counter. It was August, and consequently swelteringly hot, and he was evidently dressed, or rather undressed, in keeping

with the season. A shirt open at the front, with sleeves rolled up, displaying a pair of arms that Providence evidently originally meant for the service of the slaughter-yard, and breeches kept in position by a broad black belt of leather, such as pirates generally have in pictures, were the principal items in his make-up. To this individual Mr. Whitmore addressed himself.

“Is Mr. Maloney in the office?” he inquired.

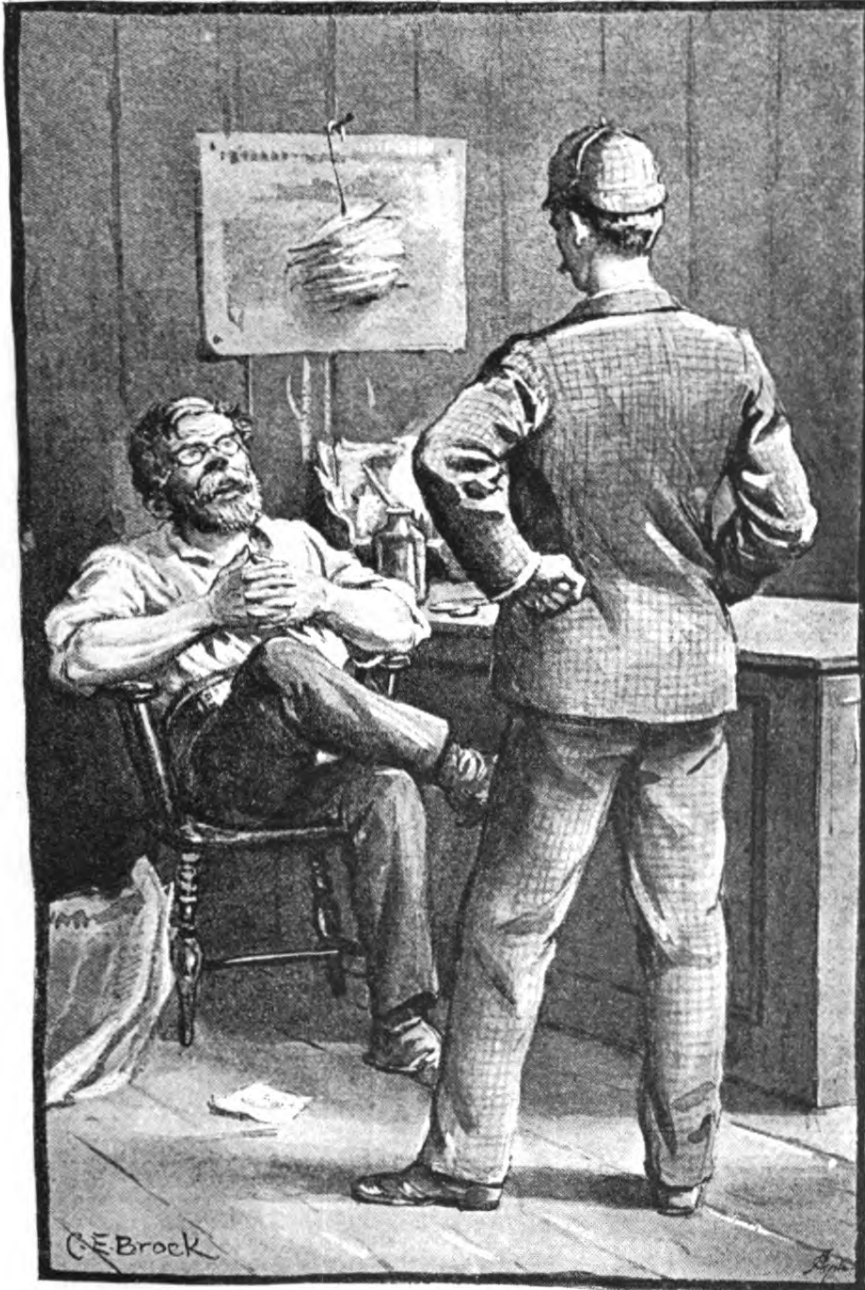
“Misther Miloney!” responded the keeper of the threshold, with a rising intonation, as he dropped the newspaper he was reading—(Whitmore noticed the scissors and the paste-pot at his elbow)—and looked over his spectacles. “Misther Miloney, is it? An’ shure it’s mesilf that am the very idintical gintl’man. An’ fwhat is it that Misther Miloney can du fur yez, me bhoy?”

Whitmore informed him who he was, and said he had just arrived.

“An’ sure it’s mesilf that am glad to see yez, young man. Come in here and lit mi oiyes have a squint at yez.”

Whitmore accepted the invitation, and passed behind the counter. Mr. Maloney leant back in his chair, and, interlacing his fingers and twiddling his thumbs, allowed his vision to range all over the newcomer from the top of his head to the soles of the new tan shoes he had put on expressly for the interview.

“Yis,” he at last broke out. “Yez luke a loikely young griffin enough, an’ wid a trifle lickin’ intu shape I’m thinkin’ ye’ll du. An’, begorrah! young man, it’s



“MR. MALONEY ALLOWED HIS VISION TO RANGE ALL OVER THE NEW-COMER.”—P. 128.



mesilf that am the man that's willin' to take yez in hand, and tu du that silf-same lickin'!"

Whitmore was just a trifle taken aback at this bluff and blunt reception. However, he had come out prepared to meet any and every contingency, so he made reply to the effect that he was glad to learn that, so far, he was deemed satisfactory.

"Av coorse," interrupted Mr. Maloney, "ye're green, as green as a gooseberry in early summer,—enny wan can see that wid his oiyes shut toight as a dhrum-shkin. It's the lickin' intu shape as does it, me son, and it's mesilf that'll make the foinest journalist av ye out av Dublin City."

Whitmore said he understood that Mr. Maloney was the proprietor of the newspaper, and asked who the editor was.

"An editor is it yez want? Shure, thin, there isn't a bloomin' editor on the primisis 'ceptin' an' savin' mesilf. An' don't yez think that I ain't tu good for the job? It's just foive-and-twinty years' experyins I've had in the post, an' it's forty years sins I began to set toype; if that don't fit a man fur tu be an editor, just tell me fwhat does, an' it plaze yer honour, young man!"

To this Whitmore said nothing. He thought a lot, though, and the burden of his reflections was that it was a queer shop he had fallen into.

"Hullo! though, that remoids me," said Mr. Maloney, starting suddenly and picking up a bunch of keys. "Tu-morrow is Sunday, an' folkses loike a big payper on that day. Yez can hev a holiday till Monday, young man, when oi'll fix yez mesilf.

Hoy, Tummy," he called out at the top of his voice ;
"come hyar !"

A quick, intelligent Japanese youth, in spruce occidental garb, rushed out of the room to the right, and, fixing his pen behind his right ear, stood expectant for further orders. Mr. Maloney slowly subsided on to his knees in front of a black tin-box, and, selecting a key from the bunch, he inserted it in the lock, and turned it with a wrench. He raised the lid just far enough to admit of the insertion of his arm.

"There," he said brusquely, as he fished out two manuscripts, without deigning so much as a glance at them. "How much 'ull that mayke?"

"Tummy" ran his eye over the paging and said about four columns.

"Fower col'mns, is it, me son? Thin we'll give 'em foive. Here, take this. It's good policy tu give 'em lashions av 'mather' av a Sunday mornin'. An'," he went on, "there's the supplimint besoides. Take this, and this, and this, and this,"—here he fished out document after document from the box,—"an' the man as says I doan't run a ripper av a payper 'll hev ter pike a boan wid Pathrick Maloney!"

"Now," he went on, re-locking the box with a twist of his fetlock-like wrist, and starting to his feet, "I'll just make bould tu tell yez fwhat." Here he placed his hand impressively on Whitmore's shoulder. "Just be off and look about yez, and hev a gin'ral holiday afore yez sit down tu work, for it's divil another holiday ye'll git till yez desarves it. An' that won't be fur some toime. On Monday you'll come down tu this office at ayght o'clock sharrup, and it's

meself that'll hev the honour and glory of inthrojucin' yer nose tu the groindshtone. Be off wid yez now, an' if ye must go gethin' dhrunk an' hauntin' houses wid an oncertane repytashun, don't say that Pathrick Maloney was the man as intherfered wid a little harmless divarshun."

The old gentleman removed his hand with a wink and a smirk, and stalked solemnly to his seat behind the counter. Then with a rustle he took up the newspaper he had dropped on Whitmore's entrance, and with a lordly wave of his stumpy digits gave his newly-imported sub to understand that the interview was at an end.

Whitmore went out vaguely wondering. It was a strange reception truly. However, he acted upon it to the extent of taking his holiday. After exploring Main Street, the swamp, and the native town, he made for the Bluff, and got back to his hotel a little before the fashionable dinner-hour universally observed in the settlement, for they are tony folks in Yokohama. He went into the reading-room. Just as he sat down a waiter brought in the *Chronicle*, still wet to the feel, and redolent of the printing-office. He opened it with some curiosity. He glanced at the pars. first; and it struck him the work was somewhat mixed. When he turned to the leading articles,—there were two of them,—he saw to his mingled horror and amusement that the issue was positively piebald.

It so happened that a civil case of some importance had just been decided in the Consular Court,—a case in which each of the parties had done his best to

show that the other was a rogue, a swindler, and a scoundrel, and all of course with the appropriate adjectives prefixed. Now both wanted to get the ear of the public on the matter, and as both were subscribers to the *Chronicle*, and both were, moreover, in the way of contributing "mather,"—that was Mr. Maloney's generic and compendious term for everything that embraced the elements of pen, ink, and paper,—both had chosen Mr. Maloney's "payper" as their "organ" for the occasion. Each had insisted on his "matter" going in as an editorial. Now, inasmuch as next day was Sunday, "Misther Miloney" was by no means loath to oblige them both, for he liked to issue a thumping big paper for Sunday, with two editorials at least, and three if possible. So he accepted both contributions with thanks, and handed them over to "Tummy" for insertion. And inserted they were too as utterances editorial. Now, it being a sheer case of Codlin and Short of illustrious memory, these contributions, printed cheek by jowl as they were, did not bring the *Chronicle* any great or lasting reputation for consistency; but they were piquant and entertaining, and imparted an air of spiciness to Mr. Maloney's paper that was utterly wanting in the other sheets of the Settlement. But, although everybody in the Settlement read those two leaders from beginning to end,—a thing that can rarely enough be predicated of leaders generally,—Whitmore saw quickly enough that it was not so much for kudos as notoriety people bought the publication he was to be connected with. And of course between these twain

there is a great gulf fixed. Whitmore was young and callow in those days, and made the common mistake of youth when it finds responsibility thrust upon its shoulders for the first time,—he took himself and his position far too seriously. Accordingly he blushed again for very shame as guffaw after guffaw of laughter at the expense of the *Chronicle* grated on his ear. During dinner these articles were almost the only thing spoken of, apart from some little items of local scandal that he could not understand. He got through the bill of fare as quickly as he could, and catching up his hat hastened out into the street. He wandered all along Main Street and the Bund, and then passed into the rearward quarters of the Settlement, with their rum-mills; their crowds of sailors, drinking and swearing oaths apparently culled from a Polyglot Dictionary of Profanity; their seething rabble of pimps in the guise of rickshaw coolies; their warren of odoriferous pig-tailed Celestials; and the sworded Japanese policemen strutting around as if they were the owners of the whole Vanity Fair, and, furthermore, proud of it. The sight interested him, and roused him from the despondency he was falling into.

“Plenty of good copy to be got there!” he muttered *sotto voce*, the professional instinct coming uppermost and asserting itself in spite of the virulence of the dumps he had succumbed to.

He then left the flaring saloon lights behind him and wandered off along the sluggish canals with a dripping welter of fog mutely writhing above them. As he got into the gloom a great sea of loneliness seemed to engulf him. The strange, indescribable

aroma from the tea-firing godowns filled his nostrils with its heavy, lethargic odour. Then the three long-drawn, mournful notes of the Blind Shampooer's whistle came wailing through the mist with all its melancholy eeriness, and Whitmore, in spite of himself, shuddered, as if in Ghost-land.

II.

Whitmore had been the best part of a twelvemonth in harness, and yet he was but little nearer wealth than he was the day he landed. Translate £17 sterling into Mexicans or *yen*, and it will figure out at something between 100 and 110, even with the money-market deluged with silver. Now it is not given to man,—at least to the Caucasian man,—to get rich on 100 dollars *per mensem* in Yokohama. It simply can't be done, and Whitmore's face elongated considerably at the end of the third or fourth month of his sojourn as he took in the financial situation in all its bearings.

But although there is scant opportunity of laying anything by for a rainy day except an umbrella, it is yet possible to have a good enough time of it as long as fair weather lasts in the Treaty Port. *Imprimis* there is sport, which, by the way, is the salt and the saving grace of life in the Orient. Without it the chances would be greatly in favour of the whole community going utterly to the mischief mentally, morally, and physically. First of all there is the race-course at Negishi, open and high and windy, with its grand-stand free to the salty breezes that come

whistling up from the gulf below, and with the heavy Hakone Mountains and Oyama dwarfed by Fuji for a background. It is there twice a year, and oftener when a plausible excuse can be invented, that the foreigner and such of the natives of the land as have been converted to the gospel of horse-flesh hold high equine carnival. Thither Whitmore had already betaken himself, bent on pleasure as well as business, for he was a sensible young man in some ways was Whitmore,

“ Holding him worse than an ass
Who shakes his head at ‘a neck on the post,’
Or a quick thing over the grass.”

And in these performances he had found much spiritual joy, and a sensible diminution of his infinitesimal savings. Then there was rowing and yachting and swimming to be had at the boat-house, and at the other end of the settlement, just within easy hail of the *Chronicle* office, was the cricket and football field. After all this there were chess clubs, literary societies, billiard tables in the hotels galore (the “chit” system was in vogue in running them too), and afternoon tea and scandal in plenty. All these luxuries, together with hot baths and a few others that I had rather not mention, are to be had cheap,—dirt cheap, and Whitmore invested liberally, accordingly. But on the top of the sum-total of the above there were still other means of diverting the tedium of his few spare and unemployed moments. On his way out he had got acquainted with a Japanese official, who happened to be possessed of a set of tools for *shogi* and *go*,—games over which it stands on record

that more than one unregenerate heathen has badly perilled the safety of what the missionaries call the immortal part of him. Now Whitmore was a crank on chess-playing,—had been secretary of the crack club in Preston. His soul hungered and thirsted after chess while on the P. and O. boat, and not finding it he had condescended to open a mild and innocent flirtation with Japanese *shogi* and *go* by way of keeping his hand in,—very much after the fashion in which the respectable dollar-grinder takes a Japanese musume in tow, while the *Seiyo no okusama* is recuperating at home. And, as often happens in the latter case also, Whitmore's moral sense in the matter of chess became totally perverted, and it came to pass that his soul clave closer unto the Japanese games than it did unto the legitimate pastime. He asserted that *shogi* and *go*,—the latter especially,—were more scientific and satisfying than the intellectual Torture-Spiel of the West. His defection was complete. *Shogi* and *go* he played whenever he had a chance, frequenting the little shanties where their votaries most do congregate,—generally in antiquated garments and horn spectacles. In process of time he became somewhat of an expert, and even by the date we speak of had got unto himself a certain small reputation as a player.

But it was Japanese fencing that was his favourite method of killing time cheaply. It is seemingly a fascinating occupation when one gets addicted to it. For myself, I never could for the life of me see where the fun came in in two fellows getting themselves up like a pair of mediæval scarecrows

and hammering away at each other with two bundles of bamboo-rods, shouting and screaming and footing the steps of an original and soul-perturbing waltz all the while. But tastes differ, of course, and on this point Whitmore's had been, as in the case of *go*, thoroughly perverted and debased.

But in the midst of all this he was all the while sadly depressed at the thought of how little gold what he had fondly regarded as a Pactolean stream contrived to leave in his exchequer as it ran its monthly onward course. He already recognised that his hopes of taking journalistic England in the rear were not by any means flecked with roseate hues. "Squeezes," he had fully made up his mind, were not to come in his way. So far they had all gone in a contrary direction,—mostly into the pockets—or the Japanese substitute for pockets—of his cook and *boy-san*. He was slowly but surely coming to the conclusion that his present *métier* was to act as prop and mainstay to fifteen of His Imperial Japanese Majesty's subjects, for to so many members did the households of his two factotums tot up. Then making a fortune by splicing a heathen Princess he saw was nothing short of a night-marish chimera. He had got five-and-twenty *yen* out of the local Governor by giving him opportune notice of some secret information he had become possessed of; but that had happened only once. And that sum had just sufficed to liquidate the chits of an ordinary month's billiards, where the luck had been pretty even. No! He saw with an inward sinking, and a growing massive feeling of discontent, that he had not as yet struck the path that leads unto millionairessdom.

Like other fools before him, he began to think that the whole thing, outside of corners and syndicates and trusts, now resolved itself into a question of luck. And of course the means of taking action,—the which philosophers tell us is the criterion of belief,—on this conviction of his were not at all far to seek. The great Manilla lottery swindle has one of its octopus-like tentacles in every treaty-port in the Orient. Several times Whitmore had seen the results of the monthly drawings pasted up behind the bar in his hotel, and in spite of himself his thoughts began to run on the possibility of his getting a good square start by one chance shot at this first-class iniquity. As time went on he felt himself more and more tempted of the devil, and one day he actually did rush into Messrs. Reade & Roberts's, and come out with a \$6 50c. worth of the chances of a fortune.

“What would the old lady at home say to this?” he asked himself, with something akin to holy horror. “She would pray about me on bended knees for two hours every evening if she got wind of it. Heigh-ho! but there would be much ‘wrestling of the speerit’ if she did know all about her hopeful son’s doings since he landed in Yokohama.”

The latter part of this soliloquy, uttered with outstretched arms and a chasmic yawn in the early hours of a Sunday morning, had the insignificant merit of truth to recommend it. For J. W. W.’s ways of late had not been ordered strictly according to the drift of the maternal stream of advice. His morals were not a bit worse than the average morality of the Treaty Port; in truth, they were perhaps on the

whole a shade better. He wasn't, as a rule, given to lying, except perhaps professionally; and that special kind of fibbing, although from some points of view the very deadliest form of untruthfulness, is generally regarded by all the world and his wife as simply so much of the day's work. All newspaper men, with one or two notable exceptions, indulge in occasional perversions of veracity,—that is, when the "Policy of the Paper" demands it. In this they are exactly like diplomatists, "those honest men sent abroad to lie for their country's benefit." They are not nearly so bad as lawyers, whose sole duty it is to prove the worse the better reason at the bidding of every rapsallion with the cash to fee them. They are intellectual courtesans pure and simple; the journalist is merely a moral demirep.

But professional untruthfulness in J. W. W. would not in itself have driven his good old mother to her orisons. The old lady would have quietly asserted that no doubt something could very well be said for both sides. Whitmore had once given way unto wrath, and administered a sound drubbing to a lout at the boat-club. His maternal relative wouldn't have troubled the Lord Almighty over-much about that; no matter however far gone on religion a woman is, she must cherish an admiration for pluck and masterfulness, albeit it is a sneaking one. But if her ear had chanced to catch the chink of the ivories on the green-cloth, and her eye to light upon the liquids that moistened the clay of the coatless performers,—and furthermore, if she could but have overheard the more lurid snatches of the dialogue

that helped to pass the time of day, or rather of night, as her hopeful wasted his hours at twenty cents per game,—it is to be feared that her knees would have become even as the knees of the lady whose lines are cast in scrubbing out the floors of school-rooms and offices. And then his ongoings with petticoats, I was going to say ; but Japanese charmners, as a rule, don't wear any to speak of.

In that respect his conduct would not have been a model for a member of a Y.M.C.A., although even in his sinning he had kept well within the *μηδὲν ἄγαν*. But this lottery business would have been the most unspeakable of griefs to old Mrs. Whitmore. She would have looked upon that as a pretty low-lying stage on the downward grade to Avernus. Whitmore repented bitterly in spiritual sackcloth and ashes before the evening was over. However, he consoled himself with the thought that after all it was only a matter of six-fifty, and that that six-fifty would likely enough have gone for something nearly as bad if he hadn't chucked it into the bottomless slough of the Manilla lottery-abomination.

So he did not allow the recollection of the ticket to lie too heavily on his soul. He did not build any hopes of riches upon it. He so far forgot all about the matter that one evening he took out a miscellaneous assortment of correspondence from his pocket, and wondered at first what the soft, flimsy, tissue-like paper was. Then he recollected, and by way of a joke,—he was in the company of a young lady at the time,—he tore it in two, and told his friend that he was presenting her with the half of his fortune.

But to tell the truth, his work did not leave him over much time to lapse into backsliding and iniquity. Mr. Maloney had told him, "It's mesilf that am the man tu keep yer nose tu the grindstone," and his words were true. He did keep this new sub well up to the mark. In fact he worked him without stint or mercy. Firstly, he had to write the whole of the *Chronicle* day in, day out; all except the "Supplimint," which Mr. Maloney still edited after his own ideas and devices. Now, although this "Supplimint" was a sore trial to Whitmore's flesh, it was not so disastrous to the best interests of "me payper" as it seemed. To tell the truth, it supplied a "long-felt public want," there being no other comic paper in the settlement at the time. With the exception of this, then, nearly the whole of the leaders and pars in the sheet had to be turned out by the sub single-handed. Of course he did get a certain amount of assistance of a sort from the individuals,—they exist in every community,—whose vanity is tickled by seeing their productions in print. Ladies and gentlemen with this amiable weakness are very much beloved and esteemed by the professional journalist,—*their* empty vanity is satisfied at the expense of *his* bread and butter. It is just like missionary and professional teachers in the Japanese Government service,—only a good many shades worse when you get down to the bottom of the ethics of the two cases. Whitmore was especially pestered by a lady who fancied herself a Yokohama edition of Sappho, and a scribbler who aspired to the *métier* of Devil's advocate for every man and

institution in the community. This latter individual, —a fairly well-paid official with little or nothing to do for his screw,—spent the best part of every morning and evening concocting anonymous letters carping at everything, from irregular sexual morality down to bad grammar and “literals” in the other papers,—all three included. Like the devils of St. Mark, his names were legion, and like them too, he was a somewhat unclean spirit,—one of your nice folks with nasty ideas. So people who took the trouble to study the letter-column of the *Chronicle* would only shrug their shoulders and remark, “There’s Peeping Tom a-stirring the mud again.” On the odd days when he found nothing to carp at in shaky spelling and tottery syntax, he would get out a blue pencil and amuse himself by correcting the literals and mistakes in the *Chronicle*. Then he would bring them in and expatiate upon them with the air of a Gordon-Bennet lecturing a reporter he meant to send about his business. Now this is just about as exasperating a thing for a journalist as any that muchly-persecuted individual can be called upon to endure. Whitmore submitted to it at first with no very good grace, it is true. But as Mr. Peeping Tom became more aggressive and overbearing in his remarks the sub’s bristles began to stiffen, and one day his back went up and his brows came down. Then ensued a logomachy in which Whitmore did the bulk of the talking. Tom tried in vain to stem the wordy current from the overflowing dam of journalistic wrath. When he did get a few vocables in edgewise they only served to make things worse. They precipitated

a cataclysm which Tom found a good deal more awesome than the big earthquake that had tumbled all his chimneys about his ears some three years before. Mr. Maloney was in the machine-room at the time, and ran in on hearing the uproar. He was in time to see a pair of coat-tails flying down the steps of the front-door with Whitmore tenderly rubbing the toe of his slipper as if his foot had just knocked against some very hard substance.

Once,—in the legitimate pursuit of copy of course,—Whitmore had spent the best part of the night in what Mr. Maloney euphemistically characterised as a “house av oncertain repytashin,” and awoke in the morning to make two discoveries. The first was that a local European resident was in the habit of making deposits in the capital of the establishment for longer or shorter periods, and drawing fabulous interest for his investments. This worthy was no less an individual than the pure and immaculate Peeping Tom. Whitmore carefully filed this and put it away in the pigeon-holes of his memory for future reference and use. His second discovery, all things considered, was really a brilliant one. It was that a newspaper had duties other than purely secular ones. So when he reached the office he penned a long advertisement notifying the fact, and went on to inform the public in general, and missionaries and clergymen in particular, that he meant to devote two columns every Tuesday to religious subjects. This last departure took the community by surprise, and for the first fortnight it answered well enough. Whitmore escaped the drudgery of writing two

columns of "locals," and the missionary vanity was at first tickled by seeing itself in print. But the hot weather set in, and the missionary-men had to retreat to the hills to restore their shattered and exhausted health. Along with a break-down of supplies of "matter" came letters from the local unregenerate, the burden of which was, "Stop my paper. If I want a religious magazine I shall order from home." So this move had to be abandoned, and Whitmore had to grind out his two-and-fifty inches of pars on Tuesday as well as on the other five lawful days of the week.

And this self-same par-grinding, trying enough as it was, was only a fraction of the drudgery in the day's work. First there was the knocking into shape of the so-termed Translations from the vernacular press. They were done on the cheap,—thirty dollars a month being the wage of the transcriber. His productions were fearfully and wonderfully made. Their import had to be got at by guess-work, just like Reuter's telegrams, or an utterance of the Delphic oracle. When Whitmore, mainly by dint of imagination and a general sense of the eternal fitness of things, had made out their drift, he had to put the ideas into Queen's English. Then next morning one of the other sheets would infuriate him by confidentially telling him and the public that the Japanese newspapers had said nothing of the sort he had made them say. He hadn't much time, though, to indulge in temper, proof-reading, most likely, then coming in to challenge his attention sole and undivided. He had to read proofs and revises of Directories, and Time-tables, and Expresses, and Play-bills, and sometimes even of Hotel Menu Cards.

Then as often as not he had to wrap up the newspapers, and address them. All this, of course, came under the elastic and compendious heading of "generally forwarding the interests of the *Chronicle*," especially so the address-writing.

What with all this on his shoulders, together with the unholy hours the young man kept, Whitmore's health began to give way, and the doctor told him a holiday was the only thing to be thought of. So by way of saving his billet he brought out the paper early one Friday afternoon; next day, the birthday of the Japanese Emperor, or of some one else of the numerous potentates the loyal bank-clerks and quill-drivers of Yokohama make such a fuss about, he got his passport for Miyanoshita, and that evening slept at Kodzu.

III.

Next morning, as he was tying his boot-laces preparatory to starting out Odawara-wards, his eye chanced to light upon two women in the room at right angles to his. One of them was an *oba-sama*, an old lady with hair already showing threads of silver streaking it here and there. Her face was a fine one,—high-class Japanese undoubtedly, Whitmore muttered to himself,—but it showed signs of trouble. In matters of grief Japanese are the reverse of demonstrative, except, perhaps, in the theatre. There the women, and eke the men sometimes, if the truth be told, sob and weep for mere mimic griefs as if their heart-strings were on the point of snapping. As many tears are shed as at an Irish wake, only they

are shed decently and in order, and without any of the lugubrious howling evoked by hysteria and potheen. But in the case of a death, or of any other grave misfortune in a Japanese household, the men are wont to meet the matter with a smile, while the women folks are in the way of tholing patiently and in dignified silence. Now, this fact was well known to Whitmore, and, bearing it in mind, he readily enough came to the conclusion that the brace of females in the neighbouring room must be very hardly hit indeed over something or other that was more than pretty serious. They were woe-begone utterly,—even when the old lady smiled, as she did once, there was a world of sadness in the smile that went to Whitmore's heart like a knife.

But the girl,—for the younger of the two was little more than that, just hovering on the extreme verge of the twilight that flushes with a rush into the emotional and physical development of the full woman,—was in sorer plight than the other. If Whitmore had known two things,—the story of the tragedy before him, and his Classics,—which he didn't, he would have immediately thought of his Lucretius, and the sacrifice of Iphigenia in Aulis:—

“Nam sublata virûm manibus tremebundaque ad aras
Deducta est ; non ut, solemni more sacrorum
Perfecto, posset claro comitari Hymenæo ;
Sed casta inceste, nubendi tempore in ipso,
Hostia concideret mactatu mœsta parentis.”

Just then the bell rang in the station beyond, and they languidly raised themselves as the *kodzukai* came

to usher them across the line to the up-train. Whitmore stood gazing after them as they crossed the street and disappeared through the ticket turnstile. Then he threw his knapsack across his shoulders, and struck out for the hills. But in spite of himself he could not get rid of that fair young face with its weight of woe. Our Lady of Sorrows, as he chose to christen her, haunted him all the way up the tortuous climb to Miyanoshita, and even when he got to sleep at night in Fujiya's she troubled his dreams. Next morning he met a chum from Yokohama, and with him he spent the best part of the day in a healthy heel-and-toe to Ojigoku and Hakone. At the end of it he felt his lungs swelling till his chest seemed like to burst. It was as if he had eaten of Samson's honey from the lion he had slaughtered. Next day he set out for the Treaty Port a new man. In the flush of recovered strength he made the rocky heights ring with the music of glee as he sped featly on from turning to turning of the cork-screw descent to Yumoto. Just as he passed the bridge that spans the torrent there, he met a *kuruma* crawling up the slope slowly and sadly, and the words of the song he was singing died away upon his tongue. The fare was the old woman he had seen at Kodzu two days before, and her look was as the look of the widow of Nain's as she stood by the bier of the only son of his mother. Whitmore saw from the bows and salutations that greeted her that she was known in the place; so he stopped at a tea-house, called for refreshments, and entered into conversation with a view of worming out her story. It was not a

difficult matter to get at it,—or at least the outlines of the romance.

Whitmore listened to the half-dozen gossips who eagerly poured out the tale, supplementing and interrupting each other all the while with the volubility of Japanese Members of Parliament. As he pieced the *disjecta membra* of the recital together, he saw at a glance what the lie of the land was, and his brows knit close and his heart ached sore as he thought of what would be toward that night in a certain establishment in Yokohama. He sang no more on his downward trip.

However, by the time he got to Kodzu, he had made up his mind that the business was no affair of his, and he did his best to get rid of all thoughts of it.

“What’s the use of troubling?” he muttered to himself. “What can’t be cured must be endured, although, to tell the truth, I shouldn’t like to be in that poor girl’s shoes this night!”

With that he began to think upon the fine pile of arrears of proofs he would have to tackle when he got back; for, holiday though Saturday had been, he knew that the comps. had been kept working at the new “Railway Guide.” Three hours later he was once more back in the office wrestling with an extra daily allowance of chaos and the devil. When he was coming back from tiffin, Roberts, of Reade & Roberts, called after him as he passed their door. He turned on his heel and entered the shop.

“Well, you are a strangely-built fellow,” Roberts began. “Here you’ve had \$5000 in gold lying waiting you for the last three days, and you’ve

never so much as troubled to tell us what to do with it!"

"What's the joke now?" asked Whitmore ironically.

"Joke! it's no joke, luckily enough for you. Didn't you buy ticket No. 21,612 in the last Manilla drawing?"

"Yes, the more fool I, I did!" said Whitmore, with something that sounded very much like a groan.

"Well, 21,612 has drawn the fourth prize, and if you hand it over now I shall be pleased to cash it for you, less the commission, of course," he added with a wink.

Whitmore fumbled in his pockets, and at last fished out five of the ten sections of No. 21,612. He looked at them ruefully.

"Well," he said, "it seems I did speak the truth by accident."

"Oh, never mind," said Roberts cheerfully. "You'll get over that; it happens to every newspaper man occasionally."

Whitmore made an impatient gesture.

"It's not that that irks me," he said. "I gave a friend the half of this ticket, and told her I was giving her the half of my fortune!"

"*Her!* Whew! Well, young man, all I have got to say is that it is a mistake to part with half a Manilla lottery ticket. It is sometimes an expensive gift, as you have just learned by experience," remarked Roberts sententiously and impressively. "But the half is the half, after all."

He took out a ready reckoner and a slip of paper, and, after some figuring, remarked—

"Well, this, at the present rate of exchange, with

commission deducted, represents just 2,736 *yen*. If you give me your receipt you may have our cheque for that amount."

The thing was settled in a minute, and Whitmore went out feeling as if he had just risen from a perusal of the *Arabian Nights*. He got through his arrears, went to his hotel and dined, and at nine o'clock found himself in the street. As to whether he was standing on his head or his feet he was not exactly certain.

IV.

Whitmore's nerves were all tense, and tingling with excitement. He wanted to think, but he couldn't. Two thousand seven hundred and thirty-six Mexicans! That sounded big, but it wasn't much when you translated it into sovereigns. Only about £450, —a good deal in Japan; a drop in the ocean in England. Still it was equal to more than twice the amount he could hope to save during the whole course of his contract. With that money he could now go home and lie off for a couple of years or so and read up. He knew his own weaknesses pretty well; there were considerable inconveniences in having to root out one's Scripture history from Cruden's Concordance, and in extracting one's classical quotations from the fag-end of Webster's Dictionary. There were other things that wanted furbishing up a bit besides. Altogether, his general style needed toning down a bit. He had been much chaffed about making "the eagle *eye* of officialdom *smell* out offences." He had made a would-be suicide attempt

to jump off the *hatoba* into Eternity (of course with a capital E), and when the *Post* had characterised this as a piece of juvenile rodomontade, he had retorted ably and vigorously enough until by some outrageous mischance he compared the writer who penned the criticism to Barabbas on the Cross.

Now here was a chance to strengthen the weaknesses of his armour. By working a very little he could make his windfall run over four years,—five if need be. He had even visions of getting called to the Bar, and of goodness only knows what else. That was in the event of his deciding to make use of the money. But he had by no means made up his mind to do so. It seems ludicrous to put it on paper, but the truth was that conscientious scruples entered into the matter in no stinted measure. No doubt it sounds odd to be told that a fellow's conscientious scruples are lax enough to permit him to "burst" \$6 50c. on the very much off-chance of ever seeing a cent of his investment again, and yet become sufficiently rigid to step in and interfere with his legitimate enjoyment of the fruits of his iniquity when he has had the surpassing and surprising luck to actually reap them. But odd as it was, it was only sober truth.

The fact is that it is given to few men to entirely shake off the fabric of early beliefs that training, education, and, more than all, home associations weave around them, nay, in some cases *into* them, entangled with the innermost and finest fibres of their psychology. Whitmore had been brought up in some respects not unlike friend Paul. It is true he had not sat at the feet of Gamaliel, but he had sucked in wisdom at his

mother's knee. And her sense of conduct was possibly, if anything, a trifle stronger and stricter than even the great Doctor's of the Pharisees. And this sense of conduct she did her utmost to develop in her only son, wrestling nightly in prayer for "a watering of the good seed she sowed by day, and a harvest of wise purposes in his manhood that might be even as a crown unto the grey hairs of her head." I really don't know whether the above is the exact phraseology of her petitions, or a bad paraphrase of two lines of *Æschylus*.

And that sense of conduct so unsparingly and sedulously inculcated occasionally lay the reverse of lightly on Whitmore's adult soul. To-night it pressed heavily upon it in very sooth. As he fingered the deposit receipt in his pocket,—he had banked the money immediately on getting it,—he kept on asking himself what his good old mother would say to wealth come by in the fashion he had secured his windfall.

"Say!" he muttered to himself; "I know jolly well what she would say! She would tell me that it would burn a hole in my pocket. She would tell me to throw it in the sea, and pray God to sink it ten thousand fathoms deep. I know she would. But shall I do it?"

He paused for a minute as he asked himself this, right on the centre of the Bund. He tilted his hat back on his head, and stood with a hand in each of his trousers pockets, bulging them out till, viewed from a standpoint either immediately fore or aft, he looked like the conventional Dutchman of Marryat's novels. Then as, after a moment's reflection, he removed his

right hand and put his hat on square, he ejaculated with a knowing wink of his left eye—

“Not much!”

Then he buttoned his great-coat tight, drew his muffler closer about his throat, and pulled on his fur-lined gloves, for he began to realise the fact that it was cold. He stood staring out over the bay, flecked here and there with gleaming steamer-lights and the pale glimmer of the waning crescent moon that now began to shimmer on the ripples of the wind-driven surges of the roadstead. The breeze was blowing stiffly from the north; whistling down from Tsukubasan with the icy cold of Yezo and Siberia rustling on its wings. Great masses of murky scud were now and then racing athwart the wan and shivering moon, pregnant with threats of rain or mayhap of snowfall, for it was now well on in the penultimate days of December. From time to time the surge came growling shorewards, occasionally spurting a white horse-tail of spray across the *hatoba* with a sharp and angry swish as it broke upon it with dull reverberant thuds.

Whitmore stood watching the scene for a few minutes, still as if he were in a trance. Then he raised his head and looked northward. In that direction a glow of ruddy lights shone out brightly a mile or so beyond the limits of the Settlement. He looked at this a minute and then started.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed, suddenly slapping his thigh. “I had clean forgotten! Now’s the time!”

He bawled out “Kuruma,” and immediately he was “rushed” by an eager mob of rickshawmen, all driving against him with the shafts of their vehicles. They

seemed to spring from the shadows like Roderick Dhu's clansmen from the rocks and the broom-tufts. Whitmore let out with his left, and summarily knocked one or two of the more aggressive into their vehicles, and then jumped into one of the neatest of the rest.

"Number 9!"

That was all he said. But the man seemed to understand, and darted off at racing pace towards the patch of sky glowing with the reflection of the lights that had caught Whitmore's attention.

V.

Whitmore was whirled on past the railway station and along the shore, his face and ears smarting and tingling with the stinging surface wind from the north. He drove by the *kobansho*, or policeman's box, receiving an elaborate salute from its occupant, and was whisked in through the gate of the Yoshiwara right into the full blaze of the garish lights streaming from the parti-coloured lanterns swinging at the doorways and from the cages. He dismounted, and strolled past the *saké* shops and tea-houses, and what he once called in the *Chronicle* gaily-bedizened be vies of frailty on exhibition, squatting, pipe in hand, in long rows behind their lacquer brazier—each house with its distinctive crest—with the whole *entourage* repeated in duplicate in the huge plate-glass mirrors that in most cases formed the panelling of the walls of the show-room. Through streets on streets of this description he fared, with their motley crowds of all nationalities and tongues

and colours. English Jacks elbowed their way through throngs of pig-tailed Chinamen, here and there jabbering and chaffering and cheapening the wares the fox-visaged, bullet-headed *gyu* kept on crying and extolling and thrusting upon the favourable notice of this huge Japanese Vanity Fair; fair-haired Scandinavians and Teutons and Slavs jostled with swarthy niggers and Lascars and seedy-boy firemen from the mail-boats in the offing; while scraps of French and the languages of Southern Europe set you a-thinking of Alexandria and Port Said and Ismailia in spite of yourself. All this shot over a fabric of native texture, by way of embroidery as it were, was not unsuggestive of the basement of the Tower of Babel, with the Devil and the Flesh as skipper and first mate respectively, after the Lord had worked his own sweet will upon the philology of the original Volapük, and reduced it all to chaos and confusion.

Past all the smaller houses Whitmore fared, and made direct for a great and stately pile of buildings, with massive doors and latticed balconies, and a flood of light pouring from its front that made the garish splendour of the other establishments look pale and wan and mean. Over the door was a sign-board with the word NECTARINE in huge gilt letters.

The journalist entered the doorway, and sprang up the steps.

He was evidently well known there; by the half-dozen *gyu*, or keepers of the entrance, he was received with a seemingly endless succession of prostrations and "honourably welcomes," and assertions that it

was such a long time since they "had had the honour of honourably hanging him in their honourable eyes," which, though meant for a compliment, was a thumping black lie, for Whitmore had been there the previous week. But in a country where politeness counts for so much, and veracity for so very little, strict adherence to the letter of the truth is not to be expected generally, and certainly not in the Yoshiwara at all,—except by accident. Anyhow, Whitmore was not sufficiently pedantic to think it worth while to contradict them, or to argue the matter with them. One of the earliest effusions of the Japanese Muse he had succeeded in construing ran—

" *Jōrō no makoto to**
Tamago no shikaku
Areba, misoka ni
Tsuki ga deru."

If that was a received maxim in the matter of a *jōrō*, in the scientific slang of the immortal Euclid, "how much the more was it so in the case of a *gyū*?" So he made answer in the conventional lies appropriate to the circumstances, and accepted the invitation of the group to "do an honourable bending of his honourable loins," which is high-stepping Nihougo for "Take a seat, please!" The journalist seemed to have attained the footing of a *persona*

* "When you find a truthful courtesan or a square egg, then will the moon come out on the last night of the month."

N.B.—According to the old Japanese calendar, which went by real "moons," not by artificial "months," it would have been a miracle for the moon to come out on the last night of the month—*i.e.*, on the night before new moon.

grata in the establishment. And appearances in this matter were more trustworthy than they are usually; "seemed" really squared with "was."

He had gained this more than questionable honour in a way that was very simple. Of course he had made himself acquainted with the run of this world-renowned Agapemone soon after his arrival in Yokohama. He professed to have done so professionally; saying in the most matter-of-fact, unblushing fashion that as a newspaper man it was his bounden duty to do so. Journalists, he explained, ought to know everything,—all sorts of wickednesses, first of all, for choice. Such was his theory,—not by any means a fruitless or an unworkable one. He had gone upon it boldly, and, if the truth must be told, had scored pretty heavily once or twice in consequence. It was often more than mere scraps of gossip that he had picked up in haunts that respectable folks do not, as a rule, care very much to be seen in. He had cherished remote and far-off thoughts of blossoming out as a realistic novelist when he got to the other side of the water again. His collection of material for writing the history of *la vie privée* of an Oriental Treaty Port was even at this early date both choice in quality and unstinted in quantity. But he prudently determined to refrain from working it up artistically until he should be safely out of reach of the shot-guns and riding-whips of the Yokohama community. So he simply went on amassing data, and making notes.

One evening, in the pursuit of this legitimate and laudable vocation, he chanced to light upon the

Nectarine in the midst of an uproar that seemed a cross between Donnybrook Fair and Pandemonium slipped from its moorings. He entered, and soon found out the source of the ruction. It was drink that was the matter. A young fool of a millionaire globe-trotter had taken on board a cargo of champagne that put the Plimsoll-mark feet out of sight. He was audibly declaring the fact that he meant "to paint the adjective place an adjective red all over." His ideas of pictorial art were peculiar. He had a six-shooter, and with it he began to pop away at the plate-glass mirrors, varying the performance by showing how close he could go to hitting the back view of the *kodzukai* without actually drawing blood. Whitmore stepped in, got behind him, and, knocking the "gun" out of his grasp, pinioned his arms so forcibly that he writhed again. The journalist let him struggle till he was exhausted, and then he talked to him with, as the trotter afterwards put it, "a wisdom far beyond his years." The journalist ultimately got him to see what Matthew Arnold would have called "the sweet reasonableness" of deferring the performance till his hand was steadied a bit, and sent him off to the "Grand" in a *kuruma* with three men. Ever since that night Whitmore had been looked upon with much favour by the management of the hostelry,—that is, by all with one exception.

That was one functionary in the establishment whose main title to honour and glory was his storage capacity for *saké*. He boasted that he could make away with tubs of this liquid. When he had got a certain quantity of it in him he became

quarrelsome and nasty. Whitmore had seen him once at this critical point. My lord having become pot-valiant must needs show his mettle, and by way of proving his manhood he slapped Omatsu, one of the *kyuji* or women waiters of the place,—a woman who, out of Japan, would be hit off as “a lady of a certain age.” Now one of Whitmore’s maxims for work-a-day life was “Hit a man and help a woman.” By way of carrying out this in its entirety he got between Omatsu-san and her assailant; caught the latter by the neck of his *yukata* and his *obi*, and rushed him off the back verandah, where he was giving the exhibition of his doughty prowess, right into a great stone water cistern, at that time full and running over. Tajima-san splashed impotently in the icy cold water for a minute or so, and at last scrambled out, dripping like a sea-god, and laughing with the wrong side of his mouth. Ever since that evening he bore the name of Whitmore in mind with the sense of a debt that some day had to be paid,—with compound interest too, should occasion offer. So, shortly after the journalist sat him down, this Oriental Margites shifted uneasily from one knee to another, and with an inclination that was two-thirds bow and the remainder squirm, called him by his professional name, and spoke unto him what he meant to be winged words.

“*Shimbunya-san*, when are we to have that honourable match in honourably drinking the august *saké*? As for this honourable evening, how is it?”

Whitmore shook his head, and said that he had not come prepared for the contest, and that therefore that

"not drinking *saké* this evening would be good," which is Japanese for a refusal.

Just then he looked up and caught Omatsu-san's eye as she stood slightly in the shadow behind the circle they formed. She beckoned and nodded to him eagerly, from which he gathered that she wished him to join issue with the pot-valiant challenger.

It should be explained that Tajima-san had time and again invited Whitmore to measure soakage capacity with himself, and once the journalist had gone so far as to promise him an encounter. But spite of Omatsu-san's signals of encouragement the quill-driver remained proof against pressing. He had come on an errand that called for tact, and possibly enough for the exercise of all the wits he had about him, and *saké* swilling under these circumstances would not be advisable in the least.

The thing was dropped, and conversation quickly drifted on to the matter that was uppermost in the journalist's head. The *banto* opened the subject by mentioning an addition to the *personnel* of the hostelry, who had just come in the day before, and who was to make her *début* this very evening. He went on dilating upon her accomplishments and charms, mixing her mental with her physical points in a way that was certainly far less objectionable than Boulton's brutal hawking of his wares in the taverns of Mitylene, and at the same time with much less of that sniggering indecency which old Charles Reade lays to the charge of the monstrous army of prurient prudes. But at the same time it was not



“RIGHT INTO A GREAT STONE WATER CISTERN.”—P. 159.

entirely elevating to listen to his discourse in all its details. Whitmore had no need to pretend to be interested,—he was so deeply. So, after allowing *banto-san* to flow on to the end of his fleshly panegyric, he begged the pleasure of an interview with the paragon. No sooner was the request preferred than it was granted. Omatsu-san was told off to conduct him; she marshalled him to a room in the *nikai*, and as she opened the door she begged him to be gentle. Whitmore asked why.

“Why,” she said, “the poor thing has been crying as if her heart would burst ever since she set foot in the place!”

“*So desu ka ?*” was all Whitmore’s answer, as he strode into the room.

The girl sat on the sofa arrayed in all the gorgeousness of Oriental magnificence; only she was *minus* that fearful and wonderful *chevaux de frise* of tinsel hair-pins, and free from that repulsive scent of oil that Japanese women affect so much. Her hair,—Whitmore noticed its glossy luxuriance,—was twisted and piled upon her head, and kept in position by a silver arrow thrust through it like a skewer. She was utterly woe-begone and overcome, although she did make a brave effort to rouse herself and to receive her guest with the politeness and cheerfulness her miserable trade demanded. But when Whitmore took her hand,—in spite of himself he marvelled at its symmetry, its pink nails, its long, taper fingers glittering with flashing rings,—she shivered and shrank from his touch as if he had been a leper.

But she quickly recovered, and nerved herself to

make the sacrifice to the Minotaur with all beseeching grace.

The journalist took in the situation at a glance. It was not acting ; or, at least, it was only the simulated politeness that was so. Under ordinary circumstances he would infallibly have set the whole thing down as a fine piece of artificial coyness, a bit of virginal fencing, a mere carrying out of the instructions in which doubtless she had been well schooled since her coming "to do that fearfully which was committed willingly." For young as he was, he was in many respects a cynic. For the two-and-twenty years he reckoned, he had read pretty extensively and closely in the book of life, the dirty pages inclusive, and knew enough to be on the outlook for the seamy side, especially in such an environment as his present one. His experience furthermore had been bought at a pretty high rate ; his good-nature had been traded upon not once but a hundred times, and on each occasion he had vowed with a plethora of strong language that it should be the last time he would be "had" by any biped born of woman. Wherefore he was now suspicious, and always on the outlook for motives and false pretences.

But he had learned enough of the story at Yumoto to perceive that the girl was not playing a part ; at least the part she acted was not the one he would have suspected in an ordinary case of the kind.

So he dropped her hand at once, and seated himself at some distance from her. He began to ask her questions, which at first she tried to evade, but which by-and-by she answered fairly and squarely, and in

accordance with the true state of the facts, as Whitmore knew well enough.

At last, without any beating or lacking, he asked her if she wished to get back to her mother. The flush on her cheeks was answer enough to the query. Then her head drooped again, and she burst into tears as she wailed forth—

“*Dekimasen.*” (It is impossible.)

“I don’t know about that,” replied the journalist stoutly.

Then he called for Omatsu-san, and began to query her about the financial part of the business.

“Well, then,” at last Whitmore blurted out, slapping his thigh with his right hand like the blow of a sledge hammer; “seven hundred *yen* let it be. Young woman, you pack up your traps, for you’ll be out of this to-morrow morning.”

Then, without waiting for a reply, he dashed out into the passage. Omatsu-san followed him like a flash. Just as he was on the point of jumping down the staircase she caught him by the arm and held him fast.

“Gently, gently, *Shimbunya-san,*” she said with a strange smile. “If you listen to an old woman you may do better. Come here with me.”

She took him aside into an empty sitting-room and shut and locked the door. At the end of five minutes they came out, and the journalist leisurely and listlessly sauntered downstairs, and once more joined the group in the *bantō’s* office.

He was received with a volley of eager questions regarding the latest Peri added to this Mahomet’s

Paradise. He answered casually and in an off-hand manner, and then complained of a powerful thirst.

The *banto* immediately ordered one of the servants to open a bottle of beer. But just at this juncture Tajima-san squirmed forward with a bow and a leer on his face.

"Now, *Shimbunya-san*, as for our contest with *saké* cups, how is it?"

"Well!" returned Whitmore, "I really had no intention of having a drinking-bout when I came to-night, but as I have promised you an encounter sometime, and am now as thirsty as salt fish can make a man, it is just as well to have the event now as at any other time. What stakes shall we drink for?"

Tajima-san's sallow face lighted up with a sickly smile of satisfaction at this, and suggested, with a Uriah Heapian writhe, that perhaps 50 or 100 *yen* would be a big enough stake to put upon the encounter.

"Well!" said the journalist, "that's a big run for a poor man to lose, but as I'm in funds to-night I don't mind going even better than that. See, that's what I put into the bank this afternoon."

He showed the *banto* his bank receipt for 2,700 *yen*, and the almond eyes of that worthy gleamed with cupidity.

"Well, then, perhaps 500 *yen*?" he suggested insinuatingly, for he was pretty sure in his own mind as to which of the two had the biggest co-efficient of saturation.

"No, not 500 *yen*," said the journalist. "I'll tell

you what I'll do. You paid 700 *yen* for that girl upstairs. Now, I'll place that sum on the event against her. If I lose, you get 700 *yen*; if I win, she leaves the house with me at once."

This proposal seemed to take them all aback at first. They sucked in their breath and held their heads on one side as they noisily knocked out their pipes on the brazier, and muttered, "*Do desu?*" in the superlative of perplexity. At last the *banto* proposed that they should have a *sōdan* (consultation) on the subject, and his proposal was accepted, and a *sōdan* they had. They returned at last and informed Whitmore that they fell in with his idea: 700 *yen* against the girl. An umpire was fixed upon, and Omatsu-san was charged with supplying the liquor.

So, after due preparation, down they sat in front of the cask this somewhat aged Hebe produced for the performance. This cask in itself was a wonder. It was a neat little barrel of the same shape as, and several sizes larger than, those the *vivandieres* of the French army are in the way of slinging over their shoulders when on the march. It was varnished, and hooped with strong sheeny metal rings, and had a silver cock in place of the spigot that invariably does duty as the sphincter muscle of Japanese *saké* tubs. It was a novelty to Whitmore, and evidently a wonder to the whole establishment, who overwhelmed Omatsu-san with an avalanche of queries as to where it came from, how it was made, when she had got it, and so on. She answered all these by a lengthy account of its genesis, of the way she had acquired it, and especially of the magical flavour it was supposed to

impart to liquor that had been cradled in the depths of its stomach. Whitmore, however, observed that she maintained careful watch and ward over it, keeping the profane herd from all touching or handling of it, as if it had been a piece of sacred furniture from the shrines of Ise. There was a peculiar small arrangement on the top, over which Omatsu contrived to drop one edge of her long sleeve.

At first they drank from the ordinary Japanese *saké* cups in the ordinary Japanese style, pledging each other and exchanging cups, Tajima-san all the while giving utterance to an unending flow of the polite commonplaces appropriate to the occasion, to which of course Whitmore replied in kind.

After they had filled and emptied their tiny cups for the twentieth time, Whitmore protested against the slowness of the thing, and loudly called for tumblers. As Tajima-san was nothing loath, tumblers were brought.

At the same time also Omatsu-san fetched in two largish teapots. One of these she filled from the cask and handed to Tajima. She then put the other to the tap and passed it to Whitmore.

"Let each honourable guest keep his own honourable teapot!" she said in a tone that sounded like giving orders.

They filled their glasses from the teapots, and toasted each other.

As Whitmore put his glass to his lips he started slightly, and darted a furtive glance at the waitress. Omatsu-san's face was as grave as a judge passing a death sentence on a criminal. They drained their

glasses to the bottom, and Tajima smacked his lips with delight as he stretched out his to be replenished.

“Kekko! Kekko! Prime stuff this is!” he exclaimed, with the approval of a connoisseur.

Whitmore pulled a wry face in spite of himself.

They went on draining glass after glass. At last Tajima-san began to show bags gathering underneath his eyes, while the eyes themselves became at first inflamed and red as danger signals on the railway line, and then dull and heavy and fish-like. Whitmore, much to the astonishment of the room, as yet showed never the suspicion of a sign of tipsiness. Only from time to time, as he set down his empty tumbler, he made grimaces that tended to show that his relish for the liquor was not quite so hearty as his antagonist's.

At last Tajima began to be demonstrative. He took to waving his glass above his head and singing war-songs in a voice that waxed raucous and husky apace. Then he became affectionate, and showed a disposition to embrace Whitmore, by way of sealing the eternal esteem and regard he had just been loudly and emphatically expressing for him. After a few more tumblers his hilarity suddenly gave place to ill-temper, and he threw his glass at the journalist's head,—missing it by a hair's-breadth,—and told him that he was only a beast of a *ketójin*. Next his head fell forward, and after still one more round of the glasses he collapsed side-wise in a heap. Then he shifted on to the flat of his back, and wagging his hands, commenced to crow like an octogenarian

rooster with a cold in his head. The effort was altogether too much for him; a few minutes afterwards he was snoring and moaning in the midst of a fuddled nightmare.

This was a *dénouement* totally unexpected by the audience. They looked in surprised amazement at Whitmore, who seemed only a trifle flushed on the cheeks and the forehead, and then in scarcely disguised disgust at the snoring heap of incapability on the mats. His defeat, they realised, cost them seven hundred *yen*, and all chances of the golden harvest they had counted so surely on reaping a few short hours before.

The *banto* roughly shook Tajima-san, now no better than a human wine-skin, by way of rousing him, but with no result from beyond the variation of his stertorous snores by a few grunts that might well have come from a pig suffering from asthma.

He finally raised him and let him down with a vicious flop on the mats, and then turning round, admitted a "*makemashita*" (a defeat) on the part of the house. He evidently felt the thing keenly; but he made a strong effort to maintain an unruffled politeness, although his hand shook and his voice sounded hoarse and cracked, as if it came forth from a throat baked as dry as a cinder. He reached over for one of the teapots, intending to slake his burning thirst, and, as luck would have it, he took up the one Whitmore had been drinking from. Just as he was pouring the liquor into the cup, the journalist all of a sudden seemed to give the first tokens of intoxication. He tried to raise himself to his feet, but instead of

doing so he lurched violently against the *banto*, upsetting him and throwing him sprawling over some checker-boards that had stood behind the party during the contest. The boxes of black and white stones went flying in a piebald shower all over the floor, and at the same time the teapot and the cup were dashed from his hands, and went crashing through the window into the street. In the midst of the confusion that followed, Omatsa-san and the *saké* cask disappeared from the scene.

"Hullo!" said Whitmore, staggering to his feet and seeming to balance himself with an effort. "Now, be good enough to hand over the stakes, and call *kuruma ni-dai, ni nin-biki*."

But here a difficulty arose. The girl had been staked, it is true, and won, but it had been the girl, and nothing but the girl. Not a word had been said about her clothes, and every stitch she wore was the property of the house. This was very soon made clear to the newspaper man, and he felt angry at first. However, he calmed down, and asked for particulars. Five hundred *yen* was the sum the mother had signed bonds of indebtedness for on this score, and till this five hundred *yen* was liquidated, it was bootless to think of removing the girl from the place. So, feeling that he had been "had" cunningly enough, Whitmore produced his cheque-book to write an order for the sum, when an idea seemed to strike him. He half returned it to his pocket, and then took it out and opened it again, and filled up a cheque and tore it out.

"See here," he said to the *banto*, holding out the paper, "this is a cheque for 500 *yen*. But I've just

got the better of you on the hazard of the *saké* swilling, and I think it square to give you a chance of your revenge. There are checker-boards and *go*-stones. You are reputed to be skilful as to the *go* game. Then *banto-san*, as for a game, what say you? As for playing for this, how is it?"

At these words the *banto's* sombre features lighted up like a landscape when the sun breaks through the banked-up clouds and scatters the rain-scud before him, for he saw a clear prospect of retrieving himself and the house,—a prospect that was even as a very twin-brother to a certainty for two strong reasons. The first was that he believed that on even terms he was more than a match for the foreigner with the *go*-stones, and the second was that he fancied the odds were now overwhelmingly in his favour; for, as indicated by the huskiness of his tones, and the unsteadiness of his gait, and the all-over-the-shop impression his general style conveyed, the journalist was already well on the way to intoxication. So the *banto*, although at first pretending to demur, snatched at the proposal with secret eagerness. When he saw that his simulated hanging back was to be taken seriously, he rushed on the hazard as a hungry pike darts at an unexpected piece of offal. But he stipulated for an increase of the stakes; he wanted to risk another 700 *yen* against the girl and Whitmore's check.

So the board was placed in position, and down they sat on their heels, one on each side of it, the *banto* painfully polite in the exuberance of the compliments he paid Whitmore's reputed skill. He suggested an

exchange of *saké* cups before starting, but the Englishman remarked that would come in better as an after-piece.

“As for the odds, *Shimbunya-san*, what say you? Your honourable self, as I hear, has just attained the honourable first class, and my unworthy side attained the third class in the last tournament in Tokyo; therefore, as for the usual difference of *ni-moku* (two eyes), how say you?”

Whitmore answered that what he proposed was “about square,” and opened the set-to by placing two black stones on the board. Under ordinary circumstances, with a stake of 1200 *yen* depending on his skill, *banto-san* would not have proved so recklessly chivalrous as he apparently did. But he fancied that, taking all the bearings of the present lie of the land into account, he could indulge with absolute safety in the showy luxury of a little cheap generosity. The odds he gave the journalist were just the odds he would have had to give him at a public tournament, in accordance with their respective classifications.

For be it explained that in connection with *go*, as in fact with all games of skill or kinds of sport,—*shogi*, fencing, archery, wrestling, everything of such a nature, in short,—there are great annual (in some cases six-monthly) tournaments, at which the rank and order of players and contestants are settled by rules and regulations hard and fast and rigorous.

In the case of *go* there are nine classes of players, the first class being the lowest, and of course the more numerous. The ninth or highest class consists of one single individual, the champion of Japan, who

takes the title of Honnimbó. When two players of different classes join issue, the weaker takes the black stones, and besides, if he be one class below his opponent, he gets a handicap of one *moku* in his favour,—that is, he has the privilege of placing one black stone on the board before the game begins, and so on, one additional *moku* for every additional class between him and his higher-placed antagonist. The game is played on a square wooden board. Nineteen straight lines cross each other at right angles, making 361 *me* (eyes), or crosses, at the points of intersection. These may be occupied by a hundred and eighty-one black and a hundred and eighty white stones. The object of the game is to enclose these crosses, and to capture as many of the adversary's men as possible. There are on the board nine thick black spots, placed at the angles, the central point, and the middle points of a smaller square of 169 *me*. These are called *seimoku*, and it is on these that the weaker player must place the extra black stones he receives as odds before opening the game.

When he gave the Englishman the odds, *banto-san* reckoned that he was not really risking much, as he counted upon beating his antagonist utterly, on the score of the immense difference between a player with a clear head and one whose stomach had just been turned into a *saké* vat. They played on at first leisurely and at their ease. Whitmore drew first blood, and corralled a few of the white stones; however, he soon had to pay for his success. He found that meanwhile *banto-san* had established a nice ring

on one of the edges of the board, following this up a few moves afterwards by summarily annexing a round dozen spaces in a quarter the journalist had clean forgotten to watch. Whitmore became flustered and excited. The *banto* watched him carefully out of the tail of his furtive eye, and chuckled inwardly as he thought of the effectual way the *saké* seemed to be doing its work inwardly. Surely it had verily delivered the venturesome *Ijin-san* as a spoil unto the long-nailed fingers of his hand. But suddenly, to his surprise, the journalist appeared to pull himself together, and by a series of seeming flukes that the recording angel might well be justified in entering in the category of miracles, he enclosed the Mongolian in two quarters when he was on the point of making a haul that would have been decisive, and more than retrieved his lee-way.

By this time the excitement was running high. News of the encounter that was toward had spread throughout the house, and all the inmates that could find their way open to do so had pushed into the ante-room where the contest was in progress. Gyu, waitresses, musumes, and guests were all crowded round in a large and thickly-clustered ring, watching each move and each turn in the strife with as much eagerness as if they had had fortunes depending on the issue. Among them was O Harusan. She had heard of what was toward, and down she came and crept in timidly, with her heart thumping and her pulses throbbing as if her veins were swept by waves of liquid fire. At first she kept well in the background, out of sight of the board;

but as the excitement waxed apace, and muttered exclamations broke from the on-lookers in front, her excitement became over-mastering, and little by little she edged her way towards the innermost ring of the surrounding circle of spectators, till finally she stood in the front row immediately behind the Englishman. She mustered up courage to count up the scores, and found that her freedom trembled in the balance. 24 *me* belonged to the *banto* and 31 to Whitmore. Just then *banto-san* made another coup, and ringed a good half score of the black pebbles. This brought his record to five *me* ahead of her champion; and besides, it was near the end, so near that but little hope of a bettering of his luck remained to Whitmore.

But, at the same time, unlike chess, it is with *go* as it is with cricket,—a game is never lost till it is won. So Whitmore, although his hand shook and his body swayed from side to side, mopped the streaming perspiration from his face and puckered his eyebrows close looking for a loop-hole of escape. But never a one could he find, in spite of all his puckering and his peering. All held their breath expecting an end of the game at the next move. To everybody it seemed as if the only thing left him to do was to bow his head and murmur *Makemashita* (conquered) as gracefully as he could. That is to everybody except one. One pair of eyes,—great open, staring eyes,—there was that saw further than all the rest. Often in her home among the hills, and in the long days she spent with her uncle at the hot-springs, had O Haru-san killed the heavy hours with the *go*-stones, and, like many Japanese women, had

acquired an expertness at the game that was phenomenal. So, when in the midst of the subdued murmur of exclamations that heralded Whitmore's overthrow in the venture, she bent down and whispered as softly as the fall of an autumn leaf—

“In the right-hand corner, *Shisho!*”

Whitmore looked a minute at the board and then he made a move. A ripple of scarce suppressed excitement ran through the on-lookers. The out-lying fringe of spectators pressed up close and the radius of the ring formed by the throng squatting around the players contracted very close.

The *banto's* hand went up to his head, with an exclamation that in any other language but Japanese would have been a sounding and heartily-meant imprecation. He saw at a flash, as did the on-lookers with their proverbial eight eyes, that all was over. Not another move was possible.

It was maddening. Bested by a drunk man, and for twelve hundred *yen!* The fellow had surely the Devil's own luck.

He scratched his head, rubbed his horn-spectacles, and felt for his beard, but never a scintilla of hope came out of the friction. He pushed the board from him with disgust and perforce acknowledged it finished.

Whitmore sprang to his feet with a shout, and, regardless of all decency and the feelings of his antagonist, executed a wild *pas seul* on the mats, winding up the performance by coming down with a flop on the floor in the corner. As he fell he put out his hands to save himself, and one of them came in contact with a *shinai* or bamboo fencing-stick.

He jumped up and with this began to lay about lustily, clearing the room in a trice.

Now it so happened that the recruiting agent of the house, Sugihara by name, was in his immediate neighbourhood when he fell, and it was his head and shoulders that came in for the major share of the whacks. It was with his own *shinai* too that he was belaboured, for Sugihara's one redeeming virtue was a fondness for the fencing-ring and its sword-play.

He took his cudgelling with no good grace, and at first looked very nasty. As likely as not he had serious thoughts of answering the strokes of the bamboo with a dose of finely-tempered Japanese steel, but as he reflected the consequences of so doing would certainly be awkward, he bridled his rage with an effort, and bethought him how he might have his revenge after a safer and more profitable manner.

So he bowed politely and addressed the newspaper man in the sweetest of honeyed accents—

“Now, *Shimbunya-san*, you have conquered in two contests, but what do you say to a third? As for *kenjitsu* (fencing), how is it?”

Whitmore stopped all of a sudden and looked at him. Then with an unsteady lurch he threw up his left arm and proclaimed that as for *kenjitsu* he just loved it, and that he was ready to meet any man on the ground either for love or for money, or for both, or for anything else he liked to mention.

Sugihara-san, after an eager and hurried consultation with the management, suggested twelve hundred *yen* against the girl with her belongings.

“Twelve hundred *yen*! Shtuff!” hiccoughed Whit-



“WHITMORE EXECUTED A WILD ‘PAS SEUL.’”—P. 175.



more, again trying to balance himself on one foot, and almost coming to the ground in a heap as the result of the performance. "What—hic—a beggarly—hic—shtake! Say two thousand, three thousand, four—hic—thousand, and make it something—hic—worth—hic—fighting for!"

Sugihara did not answer at once; he went aside with the *banto* a second time, and another excited colloquy ensued. At last Sugihara and the manager came forward and accepted for two thousand *yen*. Surely at last they reasoned the luck must turn. In sober truth they seemed to be more than justified in thinking so; for in Japanese fencing a man needs a clear head and all his wits about him, and a much smaller cargo of liquor on board than Whitmore now carried, for he was not only next door to drunk; he seemed to be positively reeling, staggering, hiccoughing drunk. True it was that his reputation as a swordsman was about on a par with Sugihara's, both being reckoned as fairly well up in the third class of fencers. But now he was no more fit to fence than he was to fly, the *banto* remarking that he had often seen a European sailor taken off to gaol by the police for being in a far more capable state than he. So he thought if anything was sure, the chances of Sugihara's recouping the losses of the house were. They sent out for one of the policemen,—Kiyoura was his name,—and told him the state of affairs, and asked him to stand by as umpire. He consented willingly enough.

In the centre of the block of buildings that constituted the establishment was an open courtyard paved with flags. On this the verandahs and the balconies

of the two upper storeys gave,—the verandahs being quite open and unprotected, the balconies sheltered by sliding glass *shojis*. To this spot they adjourned as the convincing ground. A *kodzukai* brought out two complete fencing kits. One suit with its *shinai* was thrown down at each side of the court, and Whitmore was asked to “do an honourable making of a selection.” He staggered up first to one heap and then to the other, and lurching back to the first again he alleged that he thought it would do.

Without more trouble they stripped and began to climb into the toggery.

Of course all the concourse that had watched and witnessed Whitmore’s indoor performances came crowding on the heels of the gladiators. They disposed themselves along the verandahs, between the pillars, at some spots massed in ranks three deep. Nor was that all. The noise of the previous excitement and of the approaching contest had penetrated to the farthest recesses of the house, and every living soul under the roof was gathered to witness the scene. The balconies were occupied by a throng of girls, their rich and gorgeous robes and glittering hair-pins flashing and gleaming in the flaring gas-light as the quick motions of their heads and arms and bodies marked the thrills with which their pulses throbbed. Below, on the verandah, were more scarlet, and hair-pins, and brightly flashing eyes, and breasts heaving, and cheeks flushing with unwonted colour under the powder.

At one corner were crowded all the clerks and door-keepers and bath-house men ; in front of them

all, with a sly smirk flickering around his sallow lips, the *banto* or manager of the establishment, who had already saddled himself with no small load of hectoring from the owners next dividend day,—that is, supposing Sugihara-san fails to right with his *shinai* affairs that have been pulled all awry by this crack-brained *saké*-swilling lunatic of an *Ijin*. The Europeans who chanced to be on the premises were also there all *en évidence*, nothing loath to see the fun; for it was a piece of work such as globe-trotters don't have the luck to witness on every trip. Among them were four or five English naval officers from the fleet. They had just appeared upon the scene in the course of spying out the nakedness of the land, and on learning the outlines of the piece just about to be staged, they called out lustily to Whitmore to "go in and win."

At which salutation he deigned to turn round, kiss his hand to them three times, and, balancing himself upon one foot, troll out in maudlin quavering tones something about "England, Home, and Beauty,"—and followed it up by hiccoughing out afterwards: "All in small caps, of course; no d—d italics!"

"Why! Confound the fellow! He's as drunk as a fiddler at an Irish wake, or an overdue liberty man in the paws of the marines!" sang out a bluff weather-beaten faced salt in the tones of a voice trained to hail the main-top in a tempest. "D—n it all, lads, I don't think we ought to let this go on! He's sure to fall a spoil to that ugly-mugged heathen there, together with his 2,700 dollars and the girl and her trimmings and all into the bargain."

Whitmore heard him, and turned towards him.

"Say, Capin!" he hiccoughed, "it'sh—hic—alright—hic! My fathersh—hic—a rich—hic—man. Never—hic—mind me!"

And he staggered over in front of the group of officers, and winked at them knowingly and solemnly, and with owl-like gravity. They had to roar with laughter in spite of themselves.

At this time he was drawing on the gauntlets, and as he did so he stretched forth one of his arms.

"By Jove! Just look at the fellow's limbs! Aren't they magnificent?" exclaimed another of the officers in an aside to his friends.

He was right; they were splendid. Not at all thick and dumpy and gnarled like Sugihara's; his arms were long and even slender in appearance, but the muscular development on them was a wonder. As he slightly bent his forearm upwards the biceps and other muscles moved like a veritable network of flexible steel links under the pink and glowing skin. The forearm itself, too, was a model of symmetry, with sinews like so many strands of whipcord.

"And what a devil of a reach he has!" went on the man who had just spoken. "If he were only in his senses, instead of in a fuddle, the fun would be worth the watching!"

The combatants were now decked out in their toggery, and began the performance by each going down on all fours and polishing the flags with his forehead by way of evincing a sense of deference. Then they sprang up into position, and stood on their guard watching each other intently.

For a minute or so the stillness was deathlike. All the crowd, although thrilled with expectation and flushed with excitement, were hushed in silence so deep that you could hear their laboured breathing or the dropping of a pin. Just then, as if to complete the scene, the first white flakes of the snow-storm that had been threatening began to flutter down timidly, ghastly pale in the ruddy light of the gas-jets.

As the twain stood watching each other, the suspense began to wax painful, even past endurance. At last, just as nerves were strung tense to the breaking, Sugihara uttered a pealing screech, and, disengaging over to the right, levelled a vicious chop at the right wrist of his opponent. Whitmore staggered back over his *hakama*, and the blow fell short. Then began a hailstorm of cuts, which Sugihara continued to shower upon him, trying to drive them home all the while with shouts that sounded like veritable war-whoops. To the on-lookers the way in which Whitmore escaped seemed nothing short of a miracle. So far he had made not the slightest attempt at taking the offensive; he had merely parried, and that too in a way that appeared to succeed more from sheer luck than from skill. He was unsteady, swaying about like a reed in a breeze. But somehow his lurches always just took him beyond the scope of the forcible remarks Sugihara levelled at his person with his weapon.

“Why, confound it! The fellow has got the luck of a drunk man with a horse!” muttered the captain, as blow after blow fell harmless either on Whitmore’s *shinai* or in the air.

At last, as Sugihara had made cock-sure of his mark, the Englishman staggered, and down he went like an ox in the shambles. Sugihara's swinging cut just grazed the crest of the helmet as Whitmore fell. The whole thing now seemed over, as the latter on the ground was apparently entirely at the mercy of the Japanese swordsman. It was not all over though, far from it. As Whitmore went down his right foot caught in the left leg of Sugihara's *hakama* and jerked him sharply forward. The result was the Japanese also measured his length on the flags.

They were both on their feet in an instant. But now there was a new departure. Whitmore still did the bulk of the defensive work, but once or twice he contrived to rap his antagonist in a way that was nasty. Nearly all Japanese fencers have some one favourite stroke. Often, to get this in effectively, they will expose themselves in a fashion that is a good deal more than risky. Now Sugihara was no exception to the rule. He had a certain stroke which would no doubt have been very effective if he could pull it off. He had tried time and again to get it in, but with never a grain of success, except the time Whitmore went sprawling on the floor. However, he went on trying the usual feints that led up to it, and at last he thought he had his opening. Whitmore seemed to lay himself open, and with a shout that rang through the whole house, Sugihara raised himself on his toes and brought down the blow like a steam-hammer worked by lightning. Half a second thereafter he was the most astonished man on the spot. Whitmore jumped in, and, holding his *shinai* with the

right only, he got in two left-handers on the throat, smack after smack, that sent the Japanese flying in a confused heap into the corner of the court.

At this the excitement, which up to this point had been in a measure kept under and pent up, burst out in cheers and clapping.

“Even as it is, the fun *is* worth watching!” commented the lieutenant who had spoken before. “It is magnificent! But I’m afraid the sober heathen man will win after all. The luck’s been all against him up to this point!”

“It’s something *I* can’t understand,” said the captain; “seems amazingly like an accident done on purpose.”

Sugihara came out of the corner in a trice, and again faced Whitmore,—this time with some evident caution. Then a strange thing happened. All of a sudden Whitmore seemed to square his shoulders and to straighten his back as if the sword of the Lord and of Gideon had just passed into each one of his three-and-thirty dorsal vertebræ. His head went up, and his eyes flashed, and through the lower part of the mask his teeth could be seen clinched and hard set, as if he really meant business at last, and had only been fooling till now. He no longer merely glided aside from Sugihara’s rain of flail-like cuts; Whitmore met them, and then went in with play like so many flashes of forked lightning upon his head, his arms, his ribs, till to the spectators he seemed to be literally hailing blows. The Japanese had been all the while shouting himself hoarse, while the Englishman fought on, letting never a sound or a

syllable escape from behind the barrier of his teeth. Furthermore, Sugihara had sprang and jumped and danced about, when he thought to level a blow he meant for the final and convincing argument in the discussion. Whitmore, on the other hand, in spite of all seeming to the contrary, nimbler on his legs by far, scarcely ever broke ground further than to advance or retire as need demanded; consequently he was still fresh on his pins long after the other was panting hard, with a tremulous shaking loosening his knee joints.

Now he watched and waited. In the midst of his rain of blows he purposely left a chance open for Sugihara's favourite stroke. The Japanese fell into the trap, and, laying for his cut, he brought his *shinai* down like a living whirlwind on the spot where Whitmore's head had been the thousandth part of a second before the blow fell. Then as he tried to recover himself the Englishman gave him the point on the throat just under the fastening of the mask, and, taking advantage of the uttermost inch of his tremendous reach, lifted him high in the air off his feet and landed him on his back on the flags with every breath of wind driven out of his body! He lay there like a log, limp and lifeless.

His seconds rushed forward and tried to raise him. They took him by the waist and bobbed him on the floor. But it was bootless. Kiyoura-san looked at him for a minute or so, and then waved his handkerchief to the right. All was over. For the third time that evening had the stars in their courses fought against the house.

VII.

Then followed a scene the like of which the Nectarine had never seen before, nor ever will again. The spectators on the verandahs and the balconies clapped and waved their hands and cheered like wild things. Even the male hangers-on of the establishment could scarce forbear adding their quota to the applause. As for the sailor-men, they jumped down the steps, caught Whitmore in their arms *sans cérémonie*, tossed him shoulder high, and bore him round the court and then off to one of the reception rooms in triumph. Kiyoura-san followed with the chattel part of the stakes.

Meanwhile the *banto* and the management generally were in no hilarious mood. When Sugihara fell like a log on the flags, the sallow yellow of their faces turned to an almost livid white, and their lips and the corners of their mouths twitched again with anger and vexation. The *banto* sprang up, and calling to the others to help him, roughly began to drive off the girls to their rooms. They went perforce, but sorely against the grain; that is, all but O Haru-san. She stayed where she was, beside one of the pillars of the verandah, with her right arm wound tightly round it. Her head was buzzing with the hum of blurred confusion. The noise of clashing blows still sounded in her ears. All that she knew was that she was free to leave the house, but that idea was in itself enough to fill her mind to overflowing.

She had followed the various phases of the combat with feelings strung to the tensest. If life really

means nothing more or less than the sum-total of sensations felt by individuals in this their earthly pilgrimage, O Haru must have aged by not a few twelve months during the odd ten minutes of that lusty bit of *shinai* play. At first her soul went down into the depths of a sea of despair, and its weltering waves well-nigh whelmed her. The *Ijin* was tipsy, and because tipsy, mad to venture on such a risk in his present state. She followed each blow with her heart in her mouth, much marvelling how it was her champion came by no hurt from the lashing storm of cuts the other drove upon him. Then when he went down she shuddered, and covered her eyes with the long sleeve of her garment. Then she heard the exclamations of surprise evoked by the sudden turn that followed, and she looked up again to find Whitmore on his feet never a *rin* the worse for his tumble. When he landed those two awful left-handers, swift as lightning flashes, upon the other's throat, she clasped her hands upon her heaving bosom, and all her pulses thrilled and throbbed with hope rising high. As the thing waxed near the finish she thought her heart would burst, and her two great eyes followed each cut and movement, glowing like two great moons of fire. When Sugihara clattered on the ground, and Kiyoura-san stepped forward, she felt faint and dizzy,—so faint that she clasped the verandah post perforce, to keep her from falling in a swoon.

She stood there in that position after the others had left the place,—alone and unnoticed for the best part of five minutes perhaps. Then she heard

voices; one among them too that thrilled her every fibre.

“Yes,” Whitmore was saying (she was quick to notice that now his words rung crisp and clear, and that the maudlin raucousness of his voice in the fencing ring had vanished), “yes, it’s not a bad night’s work. But where’s my fair captive, the prey of my bow and of my spear, or rather of my storage capacity and of my *shinai*? Oh, here she is! Do with her? you ask. Well, now, that’s just what I’m doubtful about. Let me see. I’ve got altogether with her a matter of 2000 *yen*, besides all her fancy toggery, that would fetch heaven only knows how much at a church bazaar in the old country. Hullo! old man, you do look like a bear with a sore head! (This to the *banto*, who just then reappeared, looking as glum as one of King Richard’s Jews who had newly parted with a few thousand sequins to save the remainder of his back teeth.) Never mind, though, just drop a note to Peeping Tom, telling him he needn’t sneak down for his dividends on the fourth Sunday morning of this month, and it will be all right!”

“Do with her?” he resumed, turning to the officers. “Why, of course, I’ll do the square thing; at least, I’ll give her a show. I’ll send her home by the first boat that leaves Yokohama, and have her educated like a Nuneham girl. Then—— Oh, bother it! Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. *Hei, kuruma Sancho! Hayaku! Hayaku!* Come along, young lady; in the words of my Hibernian boss, ‘It’s mesilf that’s the bhoy tu fix yez!’”

“I say, old man,” interrupted the lieutenant

curiously as the coolies were arranging the girl's luggage in one of the rickshaws, "you might do us a good turn by giving us your recipe for sobering up all of a sudden, as you seem to have done."

Whitmore looked at him cunningly for a moment. Then he took him by the sleeve, and led him out of earshot of the crowd.

"Recipe, is it you want? Well, don't get drunk to begin with. When you join issue with a Jap in a drinking-bout, get him to do all the *saké* swilling after the first few rounds!"

"But how can you do that?"

"Get Hebe to put TEA into YOUR tumbler. And that reminds me that I have to settle with Omatsusan yet."

"Well, I'm blowed!" was all the sailor-man's sage comment.

THE BEAR HUNT ON FUJI-SAN.

I.

PROFESSOR WILSON resolved to give a party to the bachelors,—that is to say, he determined to invite all and sundry of his acquaintances who either did not have European helpmeets at all, or who did have, but who for the nonce were resignedly wrestling with a spell of the festive martyrdom of grass-widowhood. So he opened the Directory, and sat down to hammer out invitations to an “informal,” or, as his misspelling machine insisted on putting it, an “infernal” supper; for that type-writer of his, which he manipulates like a Morse telegraph or a Singer’s sewing-machine, has its own peculiar ideas of orthography. It seems to have been originally built on lines purely phonetic; but the Professor has been trying to convert it from the error of its ways for the past two years, and has only succeeded in hopelessly mixing the drink, and in making it turn out stuff that looks like a Japanese comp.’s first shot at setting up badly-scribbled copy. However, on this occasion most of the *invités* understood what was meant, and most accepted. I didn’t get a card, because the Professor bailed me up in the compound, and asked me by word of mouth.

“Black-coat?” I inquired.

“Black-coat, or anything you like, from that up to

a *fundoshi*, or both included, and nothing besides," he blurted out at me over his shoulder, as he shambled off to his lecture with a cudgel as big as himself, and a pair of boots that once had had heels.

Dudishness is not Wilson's strong point. When he first came to Japan he *did* have a bell-topper, and actually put it on once. That was the first time he went to meet his "boss," but he made the concession to propriety and Philistinism with much inward groaning and travailing of spirit. When he reached home he went outside to spoil the nests in his fowl-yard, and returned with their contents in the chimney pot. He put it down on the settee in his study, and then, in a fit of absent-mindedness, he tried to seat himself on the top of it. Since that date, as a married Scotch Professor once plaintively and sombrely confided to me, there has been a steady sartorial decline going on visibly in Wilson. Japan, you see, is a Capua. But it acts differently on different natures. In some folks it is the intellectual grip that becomes feeble and flaccid. In other cases it is liver that is the matter. Some men have been known to start newspapers, collect all the subscriptions and the ads. for a year in advance, and stop publication after the first issue. Others have been known to pocket the contents of the church plate and then skip off to 'Frisco for the welfare of their souls and the good of their health. Drink has done for another lot, while too much *geisha* and *samisen* have often caused the folks at the Rokumei-kwan to shake their heads and gently murmur over their empty glasses, "Another

good man gone wrong." Others have blown out their brains, and still others have taken liberties with their jugulars. Some of my scientific friends say it's electricity; I think it's original sin.

Anyhow, it is so in Wilson's case most undoubtedly. It was that fig-leaf apron business that gave the first and fatal indication of pristine moral obliquity in human-kind, and it is in the matter of clothes that Wilson has gone all wrong.

But that's neither here nor there, and has nothing to do with the supper. It was a grand affair, and no mistake, for there's no meanness in Wilson. When he does take a thing in hand he is not the man to make two bites of a cherry. He set all his household to work, and made them work like so many niggers. He piled all his chairs and tables into his studio, and sent out for more. He had in all the cook's sisters and cousins and female relatives to the fourth degree removed, and bade them wait at table. They were all arrayed in the gorgeousness of brand new *kimono* and *obi*, and looked so fetching that you began to understand how it was that Cook-san was so revoltingly ugly himself. There had been so much beauty lavished on the other members of the family that none, not even a redeeming grain, remained for him. For he was hideous, and when he did condescend to grin audibly, you couldn't help mistaking him for Satan in a good humour. He is a stout, squat-set individual, with a shock bullet-head glued on to his shoulders in much the same fashion as those decapitated Japanese criminals used to be stuck on to the pillory. His eyes are always heavy and fish-like,

wonderfully eloquent of low cunning and copious libations of *saké*. Sometimes it's sherry, Wilson says, and he should know, because he pays the bill. But the animal could *cook*, and he did cook that evening, and no mistake, and covered himself with gravy and glory all over.

It didn't take long to thaw the ice and to set the guests' tongues a-wagging. It sounded like the ground-floor of the Tower of Babel. There was a feast of wit and flow of soul in five different languages, without counting dialects. *Imprimis* there were Doctors Horn and Egmont, who carry about locked up in the secret cupboards of their consciences all the fashionable maladies of Tokyo. They know all about this Ambassador's gouty toe, and all about the root of that Minister's chronic ill-temper; but that has nothing to do with the story. Although they're Deutsch, they can both tell stories in English that make you fall off your seat with cackling. Then there was an Italian Count who was fully up to the form of the Apostles at Pentecost. He told *risque* yarns and cracked jokes in all the languages of Europe, and in several of those of Asia besides. He fell back upon the resources of Oriental philology when his subject-matter became too indecent for artistic treatment in the languages of the West. I believe that was because he didn't know Latin. Latin of course is *the* tongue in which you can express all kinds of nastiness without a blush. Gibbon gives us solid fragments of indecency wrapped up in Latin footnotes, and Professor Chamberlain ventures on some first-class realism with its aid in

his translation of the *Kojiki*. Truly a glorious thing is Latin,—it is a high and lofty privilege to be acquainted with it.

There was Rossignol, who had served his time in the French army in Tunis as a full private. He too “had been a corporal wanst, but had been rejucied.” A Japanese Professor of Economics, who had also come out high in the Moral Science Tripos at Cambridge, was in the vice-chair, and made things hum in his own immediate neighbourhood. There were besides a stray Irishman or two, with just “a broth av a brogue;” two portly specimens of John Bull, that might have stepped out of one of Punch’s cartoons; and the ubiquitous and much-travelled Scot. You can scarcely heave a brick in the streets of any Treaty Port in the East without hitting a “Sandy,” and getting cursed in Doric for your kindness. The chances are, furthermore, that the anathema will be couched in the Aberdeen dialect. I like to hear the “twang” of it, even when it is speaking Japanese. Aberdeen Scotch and *Yedoko no kotoba* make a cross that effectually puts a set on Riyobu-shinto. Then there was a tall, lanky American, with a well-shaped head on his shoulders, and a handsome dark Vandyke face that somehow, in spite of its good looks, gave you a misty notion of dyspepsia or unrequited affection. It was altogether a splendid and magnificent function, and we were soon all well on the way to sworn universal brotherhood.

When we had all got about half mellow, Wilson proposed an adjournment to the drawing-room for a “little entertainment” he had provided for us. We

adjourned. It was a Japanese conjurer and ventriloquist, with his assistants that he let loose upon us. They were splendid and first-rate, and we were all hopelessly broken up! There was not a sound in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, that they did not reproduce for our edification and amusement. They gave us an imitation of the rooks and crows in parliament assembled, and all wanting to speak at once, like the legislators in the Japanese Diet, who want to reduce everybody's salary but their own. Then they gave us doves a-cooing and tom-tits a-wooing, and you began to feel awkward, just as you are apt to do when married folks get mutually demonstrative when you call in on an afternoon to leave your card. Next a dog that was being slowly tortured to death in the interests of science in the medical compound adjoining began to howl, as they docked another inch of his tail, and immediately the room was sobbing and moaning with a pathetic canine appeal to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Anon we were treated to something that threw the chorus of the *Batrachoi* of Aristophanes into the shade, and began involuntarily to prospect for the second Plague of Egypt in our boots and pockets. Next the place seemed turned into a saw-pit, and then into a fowl-yard. This was succeeded by the beauty in the bellow of the blast, and the grandeur in the growling of the gale, and the eloquent outpouring when the lion is a-roaring, and the tiger is a-lashing of his tail. But the finest thing was the grizzly; it was the plantigrade bully of the Rockies to the life.

Rossy was sitting near to me when all this was going on. I noticed he had stopped laughing, and was serious. That meant he had put on his thinking-cap, and when Rossy puts on his thinking-cap you may lay heavy odds that there is some devilment or other getting hatched, and yet not lose your money.

"By Jingo!" he said at last, coming down on my thigh with a blow that might have been a wallop from a shark's tail; "I see the thin end of a thousand dollars sticking out there!"

I remarked that I'd much rather see his liberality exercised in parting with them than with his friendly caresses; for the fellow hits like a twenty-five ton steam-hammer that's got neither conscience nor consideration for the feelings of what it comes down upon.

However, I got over my grumpiness and asked for further information. He said the thing wasn't for publication, and that besides he wouldn't trust any newspaper man out of gaol. I knew it was no use trying to pump him just then, so I gave him up and turned my attention sole and undivided to the performance.

Well, the party broke up, and some of us went home, and some didn't. The last thing that I remember was a bleared and blurred vision of our host, balancing himself first on one foot and then on the other as he tried to mix a bucketful of whisky and soda for the ventriloquist. He did finally succeed in filling up all the infinity of vacuum in the conjurer's seemingly sponge-like and bottomless stomach, and as I dropped off into a fuddled

dose I fancied I saw that worthy man on the flat of his back, helplessly waggling his dumpy hands, and trying to crow like an impotent barn-fowl. Altogether the function was a magnificent success.

II.

Mr. Coolidge, of Boston,—the man with the Vandyke face and the look of dyspepsia *cum* unrequited affection referred to above,—was really in a bad way. He was in love ; hopelessly over ears and far beyond the summit of his stuck-up collar, submerged in the mire of the tender passion. And the worst of it was that he was stuck, bogged, utterly “laired,” as a Scotchman would say. He couldn’t get back, though he did once try all he knew to make a masterly advance in that direction. No more could he get any forwarder. He simply struggled weltering there, vainly trying perchance to find bottom in the slough of amorous despond.

It was a Miss Kitty Dawson that was the matter. She was neither English nor American ; she was Canadian, a B.A., a Mus.B., and some folks enviously inclined declared a B.S., which, in her case, was short for blue-stocking, and not for brandy and soda, as it usually is. She could play, she could sing, she could compose oratorios. She could sketch, she could paint,—pictures, I mean, and not her face, for that never needed the laying-on of artificial colours, her own natural one being always as fresh as any rose,—and she could talk philosophy and write books and

newspaper articles. It was this last accomplishment of hers that accounted for her presence in Japan. She had come over by the C.P.S.S. to get impressions, and to retail them at so much per column to a syndicate of wideawake journalists. I don't know whether she could cook or sew the buttons on her husband's shirts when she got one; but my idea is that in a case like hers it really doesn't much matter. You see, there is such a thing as a division of labour, and it's outrageous to expect a female Admirable Crichton to excel in the hodwork of domestic drudgery.

Coolidge had heard of her, and had contrived to get introduced. He next contrived to fall in love, as already delicately insinuated. He then tried to contrive to marry her, but that wasn't so easy. She didn't want to marry,—at least just then. She said so, and as much as delicately hinted that HE,—the right man, that is,—had not yet "come along." Now, although that was bad, it was not utterly crushing. Anyhow, it was a great deal less unsatisfactory than the *Though-I-cannot-be-yours-I-will-never-wed-another* sort of thing.

There's something radically wrong with the moral make-up of a girl who is mean enough to come this high-falutin' sort of nonsense. It strikes one as being altogether too selfish and dog-in-the-mangery. But Miss Kitty wasn't built that way; she was honest, and, in spite of her fine head, had a first-class digestion, and was altogether a healthy and well-balanced young woman, mentally, morally, and physically.

Now Mr. Coolidge had a sister, and although sisters

are usually only first-class nuisances, there are exceptions. The other fellow's sisters, for example, are likely to be exceptions. Now Coolidge found his sister useful and helpful. She was a bosom friend of Miss Kitty's, and the mill-dam in which the current of her confidence emptied itself. Therefore when she hinted to Coolidge that Miss Kitty had made up her mind to call no one lord and master who had not shown himself a hero, he was fully inclined to believe it, and felt hot and cold by turns all over. He wasn't a coward; no one could say that. But then opportunities of picking up a Humane Society's Medal don't offer themselves every morning, and it was no use going loafing round day after day in the wake of Kitty on the off-chance of a hoodlum insulting her, and giving a fellow a show of knocking him into immortal smash for his pains.

But at the same time Coolidge made a mem. of the thing, and waited. For he was no fool, was Coolidge. He didn't make himself too cheap by any means. He was in earnest, and was bent on winning, and he saw pretty soon that Miss Dawson was not the sort of girl that one could afford to make an ass of oneself over, if she was really to be the means of making one foreswear bachelorhood for good. So he quietly dropped all protestations of the tender passion, and worked the friendship racket for all that it was worth. He made himself useful in a hundred ways, and all so unobtrusively that Miss Dawson took the whole thing quite *au naturel*.

When she got her commission from the syndicate to write up the East it was not surprising for her to

learn that Mr. Coolidge had business in that quarter also. What did surprise her, though, was to learn just as she was starting that he was one of her employers, and that it was to his influence mainly that she owed her present trip. When she heard this she sat down and, placing her pretty dimpled chin in the palm of her left hand,—left elbow resting on left knee,—indulged in the luxury of five minutes' consecutive thought. On that speaking countenance of hers there was an irregular march of the scud of discontent, varied by detachments of pleasing thoughts. When she got up there was just the suspicion of tenderness in her looks, and of what one who didn't know her would have called the love-light in her eyes. But it wasn't that, or at least if it was she would have indignantly denied it. But she did not, as she at first thought she intended to do, write to give up her commission. She was too sensible for that, and she had now been the best part of two months in Japan.

She hated the rush and the racket and the bustle of hotels, and wanted a quiet place. A peripatetic journalist or artist has rough times of it in Japanese hotels, having as a rule to submit to being interviewed twice every twenty-four hours, and to being made to talk all sorts of nonsense in perpendicular columns of "chops," and the footprints of a fossil fowl-yard in the vernacular press of the day following. So she was wise, and went to board with Rossy and his wife. Coolidge soon discovered her retreat, and as a natural thing, of course, quickly succeeded in making Rossy's acquaintance. It was not very difficult to do that,—except perhaps for a bill collector or a missionary.

Coolidge and Rossy soon got beyond a mere nodding acquaintance, and the former made the latter a confidant in his troubles. It was balm in Gilead for Coolidge to find a sympathetic listener as he unbosomed himself of his hopeless passion. Sixteenth-century folks used to ease themselves of their despair by slashing out the initials of their flame on live oak-trees and so forth, but that sort of thing is now played out. It takes a lot of imagination to get much comfort out of a chunk of wood, even though there's sap in it. Rossy was much ahead of any piece of timber for purposes of this nature. For he had fellow-feeling and sensibility and—oh! lots of things that were very consoling in a case of the description.

Well, one day Rossy startled Vandyke out of the bottomless pit of despair by getting up and offering to lay even money with him that he'd be a Benedict within six months, the stakes to be handed over, either at the end of that period, in case Miss Kitty was still cruising around like Diana in petticoats and blue spectacles in the guise of a literary globe-trotter, or otherwise on the day of the execution. Coolidge looked incredulous, and then Rossy put it another way.

"Suppose the thing were fixed for you, would you be ready to part with a thousand dollars?"

"A thousand dollars! Two of them, and glad to make the bargain."

"All right!" returned Rossy. "The other 'thou' will do to cover expenses. Now you just put yourself in my hands, and leave it entirely to me. And mind

when I'm skipper there's to be no back-talk on board *my* boat."

Next morning at breakfast Miss Dawson suddenly asked Rossy where he had got that lovely bear-skin she had seen in the room downstairs. Rossy shifted uneasily on his seat, and said she must be mistaken; there was no such thing in the house that he knew of. Now that was not altogether a lie, but it wasn't very far off one, for there was a splendid pelt of a defunct grizzly in the *jinrikisha* shed adjoining at that very moment. But it didn't suit him to say so.

"Why, talking of bears now, this *is* most interesting. But surely there must be a mistake. Just read that."

She handed over that morning's copy of the *Snorter*, with her finger at a sensational heading of "Pilgrims Chased by a Grizzly on Fuji-san." If the heading was sensational it was well backed up by the text that followed. It was vivid and graphic, and picturesque and dramatic,—all that it was, and more. It was really a fine piece of writing, although I say it that shouldn't, for it was myself that wrote it, and jolly well paid I was for doing it. I got 50 *yen* per column for it, five *yen* being ordinary *Snorter* rates, and the other 45 *yen* being for the skilful exercise of imagination.

"Well, now," answered Rossy, "that is strange! Of course there are no grizzlies in Japan, except those imported by the showman. Only, now when I come to think of it, that's just where the mischief comes from. A week or so back, I saw in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* that a *shiroi-kuma* had escaped from a

menagerie that was trying to cozen the heathen out of their cents in Shizuoka, and that it had disappeared in the forest at the base of Fuji."

"Oh, that's in Yoritomo's old hunting-park, is it not? How romantic!" said Miss Kitty, clapping her hands.

"Romantic, but not for the man or woman that meets his bearship, I should say! And, talking of that now, what about your trip to Fuji? Of course you can't go alone. That's all nonsense. Certainly there may be exaggeration in this bear-story, but it would be awkward for you to get chased. Of course I can't go with you on the 16th, because I have business that will keep me away from Tokyo all that week. But now that I think of it, I can fix the thing, for a good friend of mine, and a compatriot of yours, is talking of doing the grind about the same date. Now, I'll see him, and make certain. I'll get coolies for you, and put you up to all the wrinkles, and do all I know to get you up and down without inconvenience. Shall we say settled?"

After some little tacking and beating,—for Miss Dawson was a woman,—it was agreed that Rossy should do as he proposed.

III.

The landlords of Subashiri, I was going to say, are the biggest and most voracious sharks out of the sea; but that would have been speaking altogether too fast. Where the globe-trotter most doth congregate, there the land tends to become sharkiest. In Hakone it is

bad, in Enoshima it is worse, and in Nikko it is simply awful. But all these plague spots are as flea-bites alongside of the Fuji district. There the tariff seems to rise in direct proportion to the elevation of the ground. At Gotemba you find they will charge you about twice as much as they would a fellow-countryman of their own. But if you are not a consummate first-class ass you won't think of raising ructions over that. The supposition is that you give extra trouble, or at least that if you don't you ought to. Besides, in the extra impost there is a nice little sop to your vanity: by implication the local Boniface sets you down as a citizen of a nation of millionaires, and up to a certain point it is not at all unpleasant to be mistaken for a peripatetic Vanderbilt. But the line has to be drawn somewhere, and when it comes, as it does come in the huts at the top of Fuji, to paying just six times as much as your Japanese friend for fare and accommodation a trifle inferior to his, you begin to fancy that it is possible after all to set too high a value upon the accident of being born white, and upon the privilege of paying income-tax to Her Gracious Majesty, and upon the other benefits and blessings of the British Constitution.

Well, these Subashiri folks, holding as they do an intermediate position as regards elevation, have also an intermediate tariff. They put it on stiff, very stiff, to begin with, and then expect you to cover up the enormity with a top-dressing of *chadai*. That was what they tried with Mr. Coolidge and Miss Dawson's party, at all events, and possibly too with others. For the good of the hotel treasury, it is to be

hoped that the swindle was attended with more success in the case of "others" than it was when an attempt was made to play it off on Coolidge and Dawson.

The mischief happened in this wise. Rossy had said he would get a trustworthy coolie as guide for the party, and he had been as good as his word. The coolie had met them at Tokyo station, and had been a veritable guardian angel ever since. So when the Subashiri landlord showed signs of a disposition to fleece, he met with vehement and outspoken opposition from a quarter totally unexpected. However, he fancied he saw what the matter was, and talked of a commission for the guide. To his astonishment this only made matters worse, and, after a long and vigorous *yakamashii*, he had at last to sign and content himself with submitting to the disgrace of presenting an honest and a reasonable bill. He then gave himself up to a profound consideration of the enormity of honesty being found in a guide for the Fuji district. He had just smoked and knocked out his sixteenth pipeful in coming to the conclusion that this coolie must be an outrageous *baka* not to have accepted his proffered tip for an open show of doing a squeeze, when the horse-hirer from up the street came in with a similar story about the hiring of ponies to go to Umagayeshi.

"It was simply disgraceful; such a simpleton as this ought to be taken in hand by his friends, and locked up in a lunatic asylum. And then the rudeness of the fellow too! The way he talked to one, and the names he misnamed, things were really too

disgraceful. Certainly he must have been very highly bribed by the foreigner! But why in the sacred name of Business could the *baka* not take an honest commission from honest folks in addition?"

Meanwhile Miss Dawson and her escort were well on their way towards Umagayeshi, which they reached at last without any startling adventure. There the horses were sent back, and the party, consisting of the two Europeans, the coolie guide from Tokyo, and two *goriki*, or mountain coolies of the locality, addressed themselves to the ascent.

After entering on the bridle-track above Umagayeshi, the road gets steepish, in some pinches just steep enough to justify a man in placing a strong right arm around a slender waist to help its owner along her onward and upward passage. In one or two very stiffish spots Mr. Coolidge had presumed to offer this attention without any unpleasant consequences following thereupon. Only Miss Dawson blushed furiously when her eye chanced to light upon the snigger that was breaking the Tokyo coolie's phiz all into fissures, like a landscape touched up by a baby earthquake. At the next semi-vertical she gently slid uphill out of Mr. Coolidge's forwarding embrace, and Mr. C. instantly fell to blessing the coolie *sotto voce*, in the style adopted by the Mt. Ebal division of the offspring of Jacob. The coolie must have caught or guessed the burden of certain of his remarks, for the grin on his features now began at one ear and ran right round to the other.

Miss Dawson, besides being a really clever girl, had a considerable allowance of the indescribable gift that

makes a good pressman. One ingredient in it is a power of quiet and unobtrusive observation, the knack of getting folks to set you down as a nobody, or as a born idiot, and of just taking them all to tiny little pieces, and sizing them up so nicely when you've successfully lulled them into the notion that you aren't worth watching. Not that Miss Dawson could ever be taken for nobody, much less for a born fool,—the disguise would have been altogether beyond her capacity, great as that in some things undoubtedly was,—yet she could observe without attracting attention, or rousing the suspicion of the individual she happened to honour with her attention. So when they reached the top of the flight of steps leading into the little temple of Ko-mitake, where the priest seems to drag out a sinful and miserable existence by branding cudgels with spidery legends for the pilgrims, she sat down with a flop and a catching of the breath, and inquired of Coolidge, when she recovered her wind, if he hadn't noticed anything peculiar in that coolie.

“Only that he is deucedly impudent and forward! I have a good mind to——”

“Now, now you are all wrong! I'm sure he is very nice. And do you know I think I must have seen somebody very like him before. And do you notice that he actually *walks*,—fair toe-and-heel work, not a hobble-hobble-jerky up-and-down forward motion like a man brought up on chop-sticks and Japanese *geta* from his tender childhood. Don't you notice also—Good heavens! what is all this?”

She might well ask. A terrific babel of yells and

shouts and terrified screams echoed down through the wood, and in an instant a long string of twenty or thirty white-robed pilgrims tore like a whirlwind in at one end of the little shrine and out at the other and down the steps in front of it, with the bells they had tied to their waists clashing and jangling as if the whole country-side were in flames.

"*Kuma, kuma, shiroi kuma,*" they shouted in mad fear as they rushed down the rickety wooden steps in a herd like the devil-possessed Gadarene swine into the sea. The priest and the customer with whom he was chaffing about the price of a cudgel cast one terrified glance over their shoulders, and then joined in the general uproar, and made for the door as if a band of *soshi* had just got in by the window. For it was something even worse than *soshi* that was at the bottom of it all. Miss Dawson had just time to catch one glance of a huge, clumsy, unwieldy monster of the Rockies advancing upon her, pawing and grunting, and to see Coolidge snap out a six-shooter and open fire, before she fell off in a dead faint into his arms.

.
About a fortnight after Rossy came into the office in such a guise that I could scarcely recognise him. For the glory of Rossy was his moustache, and, alas, his moustache had disappeared! Poor old Rossy! he did look very glum and melancholy, and generally cut-up and out-of-sorts. Now it is no good being hard upon a poor devil when you see he is so hopelessly foundered as he was. Anyhow, if you are mean enough to insist on chaffing him, at least give

him a drink to begin with. So I gave him the best stuff I had in the house, and then he allowed the cat to get out of the bag by the thousandth part of an inch at a time.

"Of course," he wound up, "when I saw that she was landed all right I made off after the bear, for as he turned round to skedaddle and got Coolidge's third fire just right astern of him, the brute gave vent to a yell that could come from nothing short of a human hit in a tender place. I ran down and found him lying in a clump of bushes moaning and bleeding like a homicided porker. Of course the other business came off all right ; I saw the execution,—the wedding, I mean,—at the American Legation this morning."

I remarked that there must have been money in the affair.

"Yes," said Rossy, meditatively stroking the sprouts of his up-coming moustache ; "yes, there *was* money in the affair, I admit, but there was also a deuced deal of real hard work. Now, just look here,—first there were fifty dollars for that bear-skin,—it was the only one to be got for love or money in Yokohama at the time. Then there were fifty dollars to you for writing that stuff about Pilgrims and Bears on Fuji,—it was just about fifty times as much as it was worth. Then there was the hire of that ventriloquist codger,—three days at ten *yen* a day, which, with his expenses, *saké*, and what not, just came to thirty-nine *yen* twenty-six *sen* four *rin*. And then that confounded fool Coolidge must needs forget to draw the bullet from the third cartridge he slapped into his six-shooter. That cost me just 500 *yen*! He hit the



“SHE FELL OFF IN A DEAD FAINT INTO HIS ARMS.”—P 207.

poor old chap in a soft spot behind, and there was the very deuce to pay. He meant to have us all up for every offence from murder down to shooting out of Treaty limits, and of course that wouldn't have suited my own particular book at all. So after a deal of parleying and lying and general untruthfulness, we at last compromised the affair for the figure named. When the old fellow gave me a receipt he grinned, and said he wouldn't at all mind making a target of himself at that rate once a month, because it wouldn't interfere with his other business! That old brute had me properly, and it takes a pretty good man to get the drop on Lucien Rossignol, let me tell you! Then there were my own expenses,—loss of time, mental anxiety, and so forth,—say another 100 *yen*. Now, let me see," he went on, taking out his pocket-book and jotting down figures; "there's fifty and fifty—that's a hundred; and thirty-nine, say forty—one hundred and forty—six hundred and forty; seven hundred and forty in all. That leaves something like a matter of twelve sixty to the good. But it has been dearly earned—confoundedly dearly earned. The peace and harmony of the Rossignol household have gone for ever since the day I scraped off my moustache to go playing the goat on the slopes of Fuji-san!"

A TOSA MONOGATARI OF MODERN TIMES.

WE were sitting on the pebbly beach of Chiusenji,—or rather Webster was sitting, and I was lying spread out on the flat of my back with my wide-awake down over my nose. I don't mind a day's work when there is work to be done, but we were out for a holiday. Now if there is one thing more than another that I loathe, abhor, and inwardly detest, it is that beastly unseasonable energy that was such an abominable flaw in Webster's otherwise perfect character. Here we had come for a quiet spell, and the very first thing he had done to begin it was to drag me about, prospecting all the accursed waterfalls from Kirifuri even unto Kegon, winding up the performance by bursting and breaking me all up in clambering up the Jacob's-ladder sort of ascent that leads to the sky-scraping summit of Nantai! That was on the very first day after our arrival at Nikkô, and I had come to the conclusion that it was just about enough for a start. So next morning, when Webster proposed to rush me off to Yumoto, and from thence into the Phallic-haunted wilderness beyond, I simply struck, and refused to budge. It was fine to listen to the bullock-driving vocabulary in which he expostulated and tried to convey an adequate sense of his disappointment. In a sort of fashion it brought back old times,—it

recalled with a mellow and subdued hallowedness the gum-trees and the ranges, the wild race after breaking cattle, the crack of the stock-whip, the damper, the Chinikie washerman, Crimean shirts and moleskins, and—oh! heaps of other things, all more or less equally poetic and romantic. But move I would not, not even when he began to chivvy me with *Komeya's* pillows and cushions. However, I had consented to be rowed over to tiffin on the other side of the lake, and here we were quiet and happy and contented, feeling that there was no joy like calm. At least I did,—Webster, as usual, was energetic. He was pelting stones at an empty beer-bottle bobbing and floating in the water (its contents had just served to moisten our clay), and pelting at it too as if he had taken a competition contract to smash it.

Apart from the splash, splash, splash of his ineffectual shots, the silence was unbroken and profound. The sun had got away behind us, and the pine-clad heights in our rear were duplicated in the waters below; across the lake the woods on Nantaizan were flushed with a glory of afternoon sunshine. But in the midst of it all there was an eerie feeling of depression and sadness; you somehow felt that the day was dying, and that it was pathetically conscious of its doom. This is a feeling that is often thrust wonderfully strongly upon you in the solitude of the bush and the ranges of Australia,—a feeling that is indescribable in so many words, but whose most marked characteristics are a melancholy yet peaceful resignation to the inevitable, and a conviction that you've had your day, and that now you can but drift

quietly on to the falls of Lethe, where every one has to take the final plunge. It was perhaps some association of that sort that set me humming a snatch of Lindsey Gordon's "Sick Stock Rider"—

" I've had my share of pastime, and I've done my share of toil,
 And life is short—the longest life a span ;
 I care not now to tarry for the corn or for the oil,
 Or for wine that maketh glad the heart of man.
 For good undone and gifts misspent and resolutions vain,
 'Tis somewhat late to trouble. This I know,—
 I should live the same life over, if I had to live again ;
 And the chances are I go where most men go."

"Hullo!" said Webster, stopping his pelting.
 "You know the 'Stock Rider'?"

There was a touch of inquiring wonder in his tone that I didn't at all like.

"What are you a-givin' us?" I asked sarcastically, for there is not a larrikin in Australia between the Leeuwin and Cape York, and from there round to Perth, that doesn't know his "Stock Rider" as well as his multiplication table, and a good deal better than his Lord's Prayer. It is perhaps the most distinctively Australian thing that has ever been penned. It catches the atmosphere of the country in a way no other piece of verse has ever done or will ever likely do. It is quite *sui generis*. You can't recite it; no more can you sing it. It sounds ridiculous in either way. But you can chant it,—in a slow, mournful, melancholy, jogging measure, just like the pace of a dead-beat horse after a round dozen hours after cattle. I have often heard strong, bearded men chanting it with the tears running down their faces.

Even in our Bohemian Clubs, the Yorick in Melbourne or the Johnsonian in Brisbane, I have seen the room reduced to a lachrymose state by performers who knew how to handle the thing.

So I was a bit nettled when Webster asked me if I knew it, for every one who has been in Australia is supposed to know it like his alphabet. Therefore I answered crisply and crabbedly.

“Don’t get on your ear, old man,” expostulated Webster; “I meant no offence. Only it reminded me of one of the strangest things I have run across since I came up here. Did I never tell you about it?”

“No; but never mind, it isn’t too late to enlighten me, you know. Heave ahead; this is just the spot for improving conversation.”

“It was on the borders of Tosa and Awa—ever been there?”

“No, I ain’t like you, a bloomin’ peripatetic with an unappeasable itch for thrusting his nose into quarters hitherto untrodden by the white man’s shoe-leather. But, as I remarked before, heave ahead.”

“Well! if you haven’t been there, go! It is one of the loveliest spots in Japan.”

“Humph! Is there anything else to recommend it?”

“Well, the female portion of the inhabitants is quite in keeping with the scenery. The women are undoubtedly the loveliest girls in the country to the south and west of Kyoto. And they are kind too; in fact, they are occasionally embarrassing in their devoted attentions.”

"Poor martyr! I'm sorry for you!"

"At present *they* are neither here nor there; although I do have a yarn to spin about one of them. I was talking about the country. It is ravishing. You come up from the Kochi side some nine *ri* or so and reach the top of Sui-tatte-toge. From the cabin beside the blasted pine tree at the summit of the pass you look down upon a sea of skeleton-like snags in the grey and leafless *buna* forest beyond."

"Ring barking?" I queried.

"Not a bit of it," he answered; "natural. They grew that way, as gaunt and scraggy as a bevy of unclad witches out for a spree. You plunge into the gloom of the wood and get the creeps and shivers instanter. By-and-by, though, this changes, and after ten minutes of plunging downwards three yards at a stride you strike what seems at first blush to be an extensive study in landscape gardening in fairyland. You come down upon the Yoshinogawa at Kuroishi, and meet with a streak of scenery that I would just like to see you trying to describe. You lay yourself out for impressionism, but that would take the starch out of you as sure as my name is what it is. The river runs in a regular gulch between walls of slatey-rock and over a bottom of the same material. From it the hills on both sides run up to 1200 or 1500 feet at an angle of something like 60°. To their summits almost they are terraced and tilled, and planted in a fashion passing belief. White-washed houses, perched eagle-eyrie wise on their basements and retaining walls of slatey-grey, glint and gleam in the gorgeous

Western sunlight that pours in a crimson-violet flood adown the glen. Anon they peep out from beneath clumps of shady *sugi* trees or feathery bamboos. The wealth of tints in the strips of maple wood is perfectly bewildering. Here and there waterfalls and cascades come dancing and tumbling down the mountain flanks. And below is the river, now quiet and still, and deep and opalesque, and anon roaring and foaming and tossing like a white-maned war-steed as it sweeps in spray over a boulder-strewn bed, whirling huge pine and *sugi* boles adown its flood onwards to the timber-yards of Tokushima."

"I say, old man, it would take a lot to beat that bit of pathos. Why, Claude Melnotte and Como shrivel into dwarfish insignificance!"

He shied the empty luncheon basket at me and hit me, and then went on.

"The way winds down the valley, but it is only a bridle-path, and it runs on as if it were drunk. It scrambles up and down the face of the cliffs like a love-sick spider chasing his sweetheart. It is first up and then down, and *vice versa*, till you begin to anathematise variety in elevation as heartily as Job ever cursed the day he was born. At one moment you are 1000 feet up in the clouds, and at another you are within a fifty-feet jump of suicide in the Yoshinogawa. It's beastly trying after you have been pumped by thirty odd miles a-foot, as we had been that day.

"But there's a lot in Mark Tapley's philosophy, and we thought it just as well to be jolly. Sasaki struck

up a choice piece of metrical if not musical Nihongo, and I caught the infection.

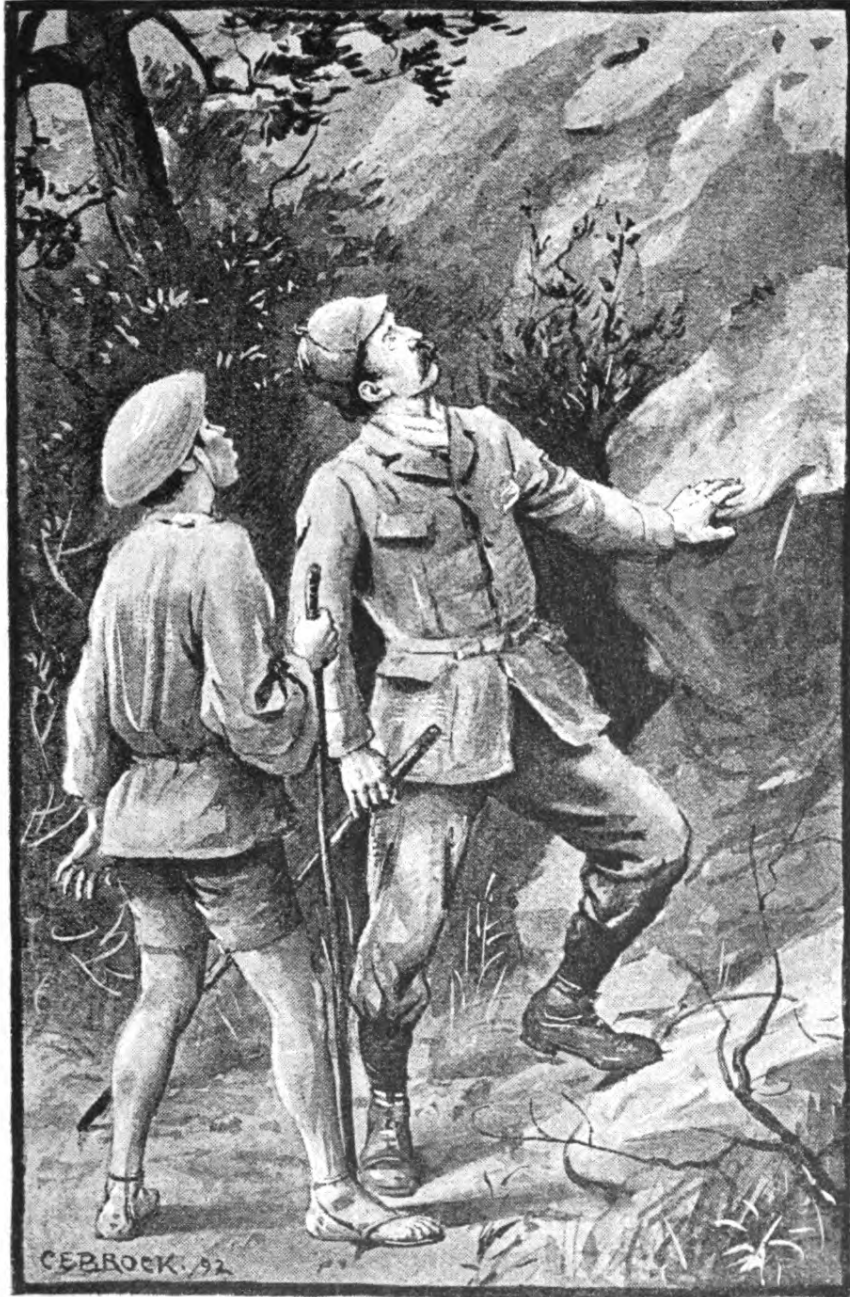
“Now, although I know well enough that my singing is several lengths to the rear of the cawing of a rasping and venerable crow, yet I *do* have a very strong liking for music.”

“The samisen, for example?” I put it.

“Yes,—even for the samisen. There are many worse things than the music at a *geisha* spree, let me tell you! But to get ahead. I never make an ass of myself by braying out loud when there is any one within earshot. But when I get away on lone hill-sides, beside mountain-tarns, in the woods,—in short, into the wilderness, I let the harmonies coursing about among my brain-convolutions have a show of expressing themselves. So as I was tramping along a level stretch of that confoundedly up-and-down *yama-michi*, I got humming the second last verse of the ‘Stock Rider’ somewhat audibly. It harmonised with the dying glory of the sunset and the oncoming of the gloaming just to a nicety. I like to take my music in homœopathic doses——”

“It wouldn’t be a bad thing if you could say as much of your whisky,” I interjected.

“No more it would, perhaps. But never mind that now. I had just stopped to catch my breath for a dash at the uphill pinch at the end of the stretch of level when I heard the air echoing away up among the rocks overhead. Naturally I was a bit surprised, and paused to listen. At first I thought it was about the funniest echo I had ever listened to. It was a long way more musical than the original it reproduced.



“NATURALLY I WAS A BIT SURPRISED, AND PAUSED TO LISTEN.”—P. 216.

Of course it at once flashed upon me that there was money in the thing if one could only lay hold upon it and bottle it up like Edison's phonograph. I had just turned round to communicate this idea to Sasaki when something happened to flabbergast and lay me out flat as a pancake. The tune was reproduced,—only as I said musically, and in the most approved Australian manner, but the *words weren't*. I caught the vocables plainly enough, *and they were not the same as I had chanted. They were the words of the following and final stanza!*"

"Stuff and nonsense, man; you had drunk too much *saké* and put away too many chunks of high-smelling *daikon* at the last tea-house, and altogether it was that confounded cucumber you ate and couldn't digest!" I remarked unsympathetically, for the basket had really hurt me.

"Now, then, you are just all abroad and out of it entirely! It was nothing of the sort! I was a good deal more awake than you are now, you bloomin' lazy lump of do-nothingness. But I felt creepy, and Sasaki seemed a bit staggered too, although he of course didn't catch the difference in the words. It was about the biggest knock I had got since the niggers stuck us up on the Palmer. I felt my hair almost rising as it went on, clearly and distinctly and in mellow tones that would have brought the house down in a mining-camp:—

' The deep blue skies wax dusky and the tall green trees grow dim ;
 The sward beneath me seems to heave and fall
 And sickly, smoky shadows through the sleepy sunlight swim,
 And on the very sun's face weave their pall.

Let me slumber in the hollow where the wattle blossoms wave,
 With never stone or rail to fence my bed ;
 Should the sturdy station children pull the bush flowers on my grave,
 I may chance to hear them romping overhead.'

Right through it went, and *ping overhead* was repeated over again! Then there was unbroken silence.

"I stood for a minute, and then I thought I'd give it another trial, and hummed over another stanza. But barring the repetition of the last two words of the ultimate line there was no response. Then I tried another with the same result, and then a verse of 'Scots wha hae,' the only outcome of which was the repetition of 'victory' by the craggy walls of the gulch. It was uncommonly eerie and creepy. I hurried on as fast as I could in the gathering gloom, and was precious glad to reach the poor *yadoya*, a few miles below Kuroishi.

"About half-an-hour after supper the landlord came and asked me for my passport to show to the policeman. I went out and gave it him myself, as I always make a point of making friends with the guardians of the peace. They are a real good sort in the main, and you bet it pays. A pressman can get many a wrinkle out of them. They usually carry all the scandal of the country-side in their note-books, and they are as often as not confirmed gossips. Anyhow, I have often got them to expand, and Ito-san was no exception to the rule. But unfortunately he could not stay; he had just been sent for in haste by the *bonzes* of Burakuji, as the Guwaikokuji monk called Kichioji had just died. 'The Guwaikokuji

monk? Ah! true, I was only a traveller, but he thought everybody had heard of the foreigner who had come to Burakuji and had shaved his head. It was a thing of when? Five years ago, or perhaps six. But really he must be taking his honourable leave. Perhaps I should like to go along.' All this as he was lighting his lantern. Tired although I was, of course there was but one answer to his proposal. Sasaki rubbed his thighs and his calves ruefully, but got up and tied on his *zori*, while I got my cudgel and an extra *chochin*, and off we set. There was a pale, wan-like moon coldly shimmering in her first quarter away over to the west, while a raw, biting wind had sprung up, and was sighing and moaning among the waving tree-tops. We threaded our way in single file upwards along the face of the cliffs on the north bank of the river, and after three-quarters of an hour's laborious climbing we saw the lime-washed walls of a courtyard gleaming white and ghastly from a surrounding clump of *sugi*. We went up to it and shouted. The policeman was evidently expected; when he explained who I was, I was also admitted with many bows.

"I needn't say that I was a good deal excited, and considerably on the tenter-hooks of expectation. I began to sniff a possible explanation of that seemingly eccentric and miraculous echo. Yet, after all, it was passing strange that any one in the wilds of Tosa should ever have heard of the 'Stock Rider.' But in this life, as well as in that which is to come, you must be prepared for anything.

"Well, we were conducted into the chamber of

death. I can't tell you exactly how I felt, and I shan't try, but on the whole I seemed to myself to be in a cross between a bad nightmare and a hopeless chaos of moral and intellectual pulp. The body was lying on a quilt robed in white, and a sizeable man it must have been,—six feet on his stocking-soles every inch of it. Although tonsured and shaved in the orthodox fashion, it was easy enough to see at a glance that nature had never meant that corpse for a Japanese *bonze*. His features weren't Japanese one tiny little bit. The cut of his eyes was Caucasian, his nose eloquently so, while the tint of his complexion was north-European unmistakably. I fancied I had seen a face like that somewhere before,—possibly in some painting or photograph. Over the shaven eyebrow was the scar of a nasty contusion, inflicted years before no doubt. It was a powerful face as it lay there in all the calmness of an eternal sleep. The forehead was broad and lofty, the jawbone heavy and massive. Only the lips perhaps struck one as somehow indicative of a weakness nowhere else detectable in the general physiognomy. Perhaps it was the lips that were answerable for the Reuben-unstable-as-water-thou-shalt-not-excel impression that somehow or other emerged from the midst of the otherwise strong and hard-set features."

"What an artistic liar you are, Webster!" I remarked. "Why don't you set up as a three-volume novelist? You'd sell, old man, and no mistake."

"Believe it or not, as you like, but it is naked facts I'm telling you. Truth is said to be stranger

than fiction, and by the great Jehoshaphat! I'm inclined to think it is."

"Well, then, it's all right. Go on. What next?"

"I asked how he had come here, and was told that he had first come to stay at the monastery five years before. He was a *gakushi*, and could read the Holy Books in Pali and also in the old language of Shakya. He had brought some volumes with him, and he had offered to teach the *bonzes*. And soon he had become a Japanese, and had taken the vows, and since that time he had lived here observing all the requirements of the Canon. He was very quiet and sad, and prayed earnestly for Nirvana. And a fortnight ago he had got sick, and ever since then he had been sinking. And this evening, just between the seventh and the sixth hour (between 4 and 6 P.M.), some strange music came floating up from below, and filled all the room, and then he had started up with his face glowing like the face of an angel, and after listening with head bent forward till it had died away among the cliffs, he had also broken forth into the same tune and lifted up his voice in song. Then he fell back, and as life left him the music once more came streaming up from the river. He had died the death of a holy man and a saint.

"Of course you might have knocked me down with a feather at this, but I was wise enough to keep my own counsel. I looked at that face again and scanned every line and lineament of it. The more I looked the more the idea grew upon me that it was not in a photograph that I had seen it, but in the living flesh. A conviction too which the story I

had just listened to tended to substantiate more and more.

“I asked them to show me the books he had brought with him, and inquired at the same time if he had any papers besides. They said that he had no papers so far as they knew, but that they would bring the books. The first thing they brought was not Buddhistic at all ; it was a copy of Max Müller’s edition of the *Riga-Veda*. It was in two volumes ; from the title-page of the first the right-hand corner had been cut away. An ‘n,’ or maybe the two hind-legs of an ‘m,’ indicated that it was a wish to obliterate the owner’s name that had been the cause of the excision. However, when I came to the second it was different, and I started in spite of myself.”

“What mare’s-nest did you find there, you mad sensation-monger ?”

“No mare’s nest, by the living gods, but the name of L. F. Morrison ! Yes, I thought that would make you jump, you lazy heap of inertness !”

It did make me jump, and no mistake about it ! Even a lazier and less imaginative man than I would have been galvanised into life and a perpendicular attitude by that assertion if he had known as much of the story as I did.

“Of course,” he went on, “you knew Morrison, didn’t you ?”

“Should rather think I did ! Who didn’t ? Why, man, I used to write editorials about him every week ; and besides, I once saw Spofforth knock him head over heels with a snorter when he played against the Australian eleven.”

"Yes, he was a rattling good bat among other things, I recollect."

"Yes," I interrupted, "Gregory was standing at cover-point and he caught the ball off Morrison's head; it was a miracle that he wasn't killed on the spot."

"And a worse thing might have happened to him too! And by that same token that contusion I spoke of was as likely as not caused by that self-same delivery of Spoff's."

I didn't sneer at Webster any more. This was altogether too circumstantial to be mere invention.

"You know," he went on, "there were many theories broached to account for his disappearance. Things did look black against him,—as black as a chimney sweep or a sackful of soot. The Unions curse him up hill and down dale to this very day, and swear he sold them, and then went and did the Judas Iscariot act when he repented."

"And didn't things look uncommonly like it?"

"Maybe, but don't you believe it. Did you credit it when you heard it first?"

"I didn't, and yet——"

"Allow me, please! He rose like a political sun and disappeared like a busted meteor. If any man could have run socialism in Australia it was he. You know what he did for Federation. Why, man, he was the Australian Lassalle! The parallel is complete at almost all points. Lassalle was not of the people, yet he led them; and so it was with Morrison. Lassalle was one of the acutest scholars and metaphysicians in Europe. You know his

Heracleitus, of course. Well, Morrison had unquestionably the biggest and the widest culture of any man yet turned out at the Antipodes. His weakness was Madame Blavatsky, Sanskrit, and Buddhism. I have heard him expounding the Nyāka and Sāṅkhya and Vedānta systems by the hour, and making folks fancy they understood him too. He was about the only statesman in Australia that knew what he wanted. And yet there was a strand of weakness in his otherwise strong and determined fibre; and that strand was just the same as it was in Lassalle. Countess Hatsfeldt? Yes, and no! You knew that little brummagem piece of sentimentality and worldliness that was for ever fluttering and floating round at Government House as long as De Ponsonby represented Her Gracious in the colony? Well, she could just wind him round her little finger; and it was she and nothing else that sent him to hell. Don't look incredulous, man; I'll tell you how I know. At the bottom of the box in which he kept his books I struck a pile of documents, letters, diaries, and memoranda, and what not. I couldn't take them with me; they were relics, and as such were not to be parted with for either love or money. But I remained next day and the next and the next, and was allowed to copy them. And the result of it, my boy, is that I hold in my hands the key to a scandal of the very first magnitude. The little woman is now Countess So-and-so, with a subservient and toadying plutocracy lick-spittling her even to the extent of nausea. And Morrison! Well, poor devil, he's dead and gone, vanished from the Antipodean firmament,

leaving not a trace behind! Wouldn't folks be amazed to hear of him blossoming out as a Buddhist saint?"

"Will you make your 'find' public property?"

"Well, I don't know. I think I may, but why not invoke chance to decide? You see that bottle there, it is now a good forty yards away. If I hit that the yarn shall go no further, and the documents shall never see the light!"

He picked up a beauty of a stone for chucking, and threw. By a miracle he hit the mark just on the spot where the label "*Used by the Emperor Court*" goes round the shoulder, and it sunk gurgling in the waters below, leaving only a train of bubbles on the surface to show that it had been.

FAUSTUS JUNIOR, PH.D.

AWAY back some six years ago Frank Webster was about one of the smartest pressmen in Japan. He is dead now, and gone to—— Well, I shouldn't like to be over-dogmatic regarding his destination. He had his faults like other folks, but he had his good points too, and among them a rough-and-ready way of helping a lame dog over a stile was by no means the most insignificant; and he was not at all particular as to the sex or the colour of the claudicant canine either. He was withal a very tough subject indeed, generally in hot water, and thoroughly in his element when up to the armpits in mischief.

One day I chanced to be lounging on the verandah of the Hiogo Hotel watching the departure of the launch with the passengers for the outgoing French mail-boat, when I caught sight of Webster handing a lady on board with the air and style of a Louis Quatorze courtier. She was a fine creature, too; any one could see as much at a glance. I was considerably taken aback at the spectacle, inasmuch as I knew Mr. Frankie's circle of female acquaintances in the Treaty Port to be of a very circumscribed circumference indeed. I began to wonder what mischief could be in the wind now, and went on to cast up the *pros* and *cons* of the probability of an elopement.

After cogitating for the best part of an hour, and deciding that it was just possible that the community was to be treated to the luxury of a first-class scandal, I had my castle of cards all knocked into fragments by a forcible smack on the shoulder, and an invitation to come round to the office of the *Hiogo Intelligencer*. I went ; there used to be some splendid stuff in the cupboard in the upstairs room.

“Now,” began Frankie, “I know you’re just dying to know all about it, and I’ll tell you without any pumping. I’ve got a few minutes before the final revise comes up, so here goes. Light up!”

He pushed his cigar-box over after picking out a cheroot for himself. He then struck a match, and putting his feet on to the desk in front of him, tilted his chair back, till the centre of gravity was on the imminent brink of danger, and proceeded:—

I.

“Perhaps it was his abominable self-sufficiency that first set me against the little man. And, besides, he had the intellectual hall-mark of the Potsdam drill-sergeant stamped from top to basement all over him, and the aggressiveness of the Potsdam drill-sergeant is at once overwhelming and beastly. Also withal he was childish, and—— but it really serves no earthly purpose to trot out all his drawbacks at the beginning of the yarn.

“It was on the trip from Hong-Kong to Yokohama that I first ran across him. When I got on board the boat at Kowloon I felt seedy ; by the time we had

got into the Formosa Strait I was filthily ill. *Mal de mer?* Nothing of the sort! Malaria, and a regular stiff dose of it at that. I caught it from sleeping a few nights in Tanjong Pagar Docks, where there is slime and garbage and ununderstandable evil smells galore, amply sufficient to furnish the *matériel* of a brand new Oriental Inferno. However, they—that is the passengers and the officers—all said it was seasickness. They were horribly unsympathetic, and this little beast was the most vicious in the whole crowd. They tried to poke fun at me and my shakes, and his clumsy *maladroit* witticisms, in execrable English and in still more execrable taste, would have rasped the coarsest moral and mental fibre of the most pachydermatous Irish navy that ever did the government stroke on a state railway line. It was no use thinking of knocking him down, for I was as weak as a female cat newly delivered of nine sightless kittens. And besides, even in that pithless and spineless condition I was really afraid of hurting him; for he looked fragile, fearfully and wonderfully fragile, reminding you for all the world of one of those gimcrack spindle-shanked chairs that cause you such qualms and trepidation when you pay your duty calls on certain old maids cursed with an æsthetic moral twist. Not that he was lean and hungry-looking, or that he at all gave you the impression of being underfed. It wasn't anything of the sort that led you to bunch his *tout ensemble* with rickety and rococo furniture. For he was plump and rotund and sleek,—if you were at all inclined to be malicious and uncharitable you might even say greasy. To state

in so many words what was at the bottom of this seemingly far-fetched association of ideas would not be at all easy, yet the association in question was there undoubtedly,—strong, unmistakable, and permanent. Possibly enough it was his dumpy little feet and the slender understandings on which his squat and protuberant corporation found its support that were accountable for the mischief.

“But anyhow he was a nuisance. Yet on ship-board it does not do to be too captious; if the attempt at finding a soul of good in things evil has nothing else to recommend it, it occasionally serves to occupy you and to while away the time when you have used up all the other limited devices for getting through the heavy intervals between eating and sleeping on board an ocean-tramp. And on nearer acquaintance I found a lot of good in him. He was so amusing that between the round of shivers that made my poor existence a curse I laid myself out to study him, and to get at a workable chart of the cranklings and depths and shallows of his psychology.

“This undertaking was not a task of superhuman difficulty. It was as natural for the little man to make display of his mental garnishings and of his peculiarly strong points as it is for a peacock to spread out his tail on a sunshiny day, when the eyes of the admiring females are wide open to mark the gorgeousness of his beauty spots. Strong points I think I remarked; I ought to have said weak ones also and more especially.

“Schmoller Schmidt he called himself, and Ephraim was his Christian name. At least Ephraim

stood before the double-barrelled surname on his pasteboard, but as to its being really and truly a baptismal title I have my doubts. It has an Old Testamenty Hebraic ring about it, and Mr. Schmidt sported the orthodox and conventional emblem of unmistakable Hebraic descent. The Mount Athos of a nose which supported the gold-rimmed spectacles through which his colourless eyes blinked and scintillated was eloquently Semitic; not that I regard that as anything to be ashamed of. There is usually a good deal more than the normal 48 oz. of brains in the skull which lies to the rear of a protuberance of this peculiar cut, and the convolutions thereof are usually also of a complex and superior order. As a rule an olfactory organ like that of Mr. Schmoller Schmidt is the property of a man of a good deal more than moderate ability. And to give him his due, Mr. Schmidt along his own peculiar lines was no sawney.

“These lines, generally speaking, were Oriental literature, from Sanskrit and Pali down to Urdu and Hindostanee. But his peculiar weakness seemed to be ‘chops.’ It was his constant boast that he knew 40,000 of them, and his tallest brag that he had invented several original ideographs of his own,—ideographs, too, that were twisters to make out. For, as Mr. S. condescended pityingly to explain, the especial merit of a ‘chop’ is its complexity and reconditeness. The supreme aim of a Chinese scholar, according to him, is to write something that nobody else is learned enough to read.

“But although flapping his wings and crowing

most lustily on the ideographic dunghill he had made his own by a nine years' consumption of the midnight oil, he was not by any means given to hiding his light under a bushel when other topics came up for discussion. When people got sick of him and his Sinology, and felt a perverse but excusable desire to fall upon him and chivvy him from the smoking-room with cushions, he would at once climb down from the back of his hobby-horse and valiantly meet you on your own ground. No matter what it was you chose to talk about, you might safely count upon finding the Doctor,—he was a full-blown Ph.D. of Göttingen no less,—in the objective case. Painting, sculpture, architecture, finance, politics, sociology, and the proper way of making *sauerkraut*,—on each and all, and on everything else besides, he seemed to have 'ideas.' And he was not at all *ketchimbo* with them either; he 'parted' with them to all and sundry as a prodigal makes away with the hoardings of a millionaire father.

"He seemed to be as musical as the whiz of a musket-bullet, or the caterwauling of a cat; yet that did not prevent him from having 'notions' about Bach, and Handel, and Donizetti, and Wagner. He sadly shocked Miss Tomkins, our sole and only first-class lady passenger, by declaring emphatically with a thump on the table that the tune of 'God shave de Queen' was fit only for the nursery. He was not even put to the rout when she suggested that it might also be appropriate in a barber's shop. That evening she confided to me later on that Mr. Schmidt was like a veritable barbed wire-fence or a

well-greased football. Although I was very down in the mouth at the time with the shakes, I couldn't but laugh when she told me where the resemblance in question lay.

“‘ You see, you can't sit upon him, and it's no use trying to,' said she, after hesitating a little, her words coming like the rush of a mob of stampeding cattle, as she caught up her skirts and fled. Miss Tomkins, in short, had but little love for him, and the ladies in the second cabin did not seem to have much more. But this did not appear to occasion the Doctor any great trouble. He always found ways and means to thaw the frigidity they occasionally endeavoured to assume for his benefit. He would attack them and their remarks at table in a way that inevitably set their blood on the boil and their indignation in a flame. It was useless for them to attempt to retaliate. Their *bête noire* was absolutely impervious to their pin-prick efforts at ridicule. As far as keeping the females of the second saloon in order, a model barn-door rooster could not possibly have done better in his feathered harem. Only one of the whole community contrived to give him any bother, and that was a squaky, tight-lacing sort of second cousin of his who was travelling under his care, consigned to a petty Japanese official who had promised to endow her at the altar of Hymen with a legal and regular title to sew on the buttons that got adrift from his European garments. But even her squakiness and fireworks exhibitions of hysteria did not occasion her escort any very considerable amount of trouble and anxiety. When she did think fit to blow off

steam, he looked angry enough, and muttered raspy, impolite things in hoch Deutsch and half-a-dozen other tongues; nevertheless, he always contrived to shunt the burden of her nervous disturbances on to the other ladies in the cabin, and above all on to the Doctor. For what was the use of paying for an *Arzt*, he argued, unless you got something out of him for your money? And as he himself was always so beastly well, in spite of his glass-this-side-up-with-care appearance, he was not at all sorry that some one connected with him should find occupation to keep Sawbones off talking philology, about which his ignorance was worse than crass.

“For the Doctor of Philosophy and the Doctor of Medicine had several times joined issue on the Origin of Language and the connection of the Indo-European with the Mongolian tongues. To a man who knew even but the outlines of the question the encounter was amusing. The combatants wanted badly to hit each other, but although they drove out lustily enough, their blows were all spent in thrashing the air. They seemed never to get into grip with each other at all. The Doctor of Physic was a heavy, ponderous, slow-witted giant, his putty-like expressionless face all seamed with the scars of Schlägercuts. Yet this philological war was not exactly a case of Goliath and David. It was rather a diverting exhibition of an elephant in a china-shop bent upon charging about promiscuously and at the same time smashing none of the crockery, and of an intelligent flea out for exercise, hopping and skipping about with an idea of putting a keenish edge

on its appetite. Both performers were on the boards simultaneously, but the elephant did not tread upon the flea, nor did the flea think it worth while to operate on the hide of the elephant.

“‘But,’ Sawbones would ponderously declare, ‘Max Müller says——’

“‘Ah, Max Müller! He is a dear friend of mine. I have got such a nice letter from him! And one from Weber too. I——’

“‘Max Müller says,’ went on the Doctor still more decisively, without heeding the interruption, and laboriously sawing the air in front of him with his left hand to give point to his argument. ‘Max Müller says that the Chinese language——’

“‘Chinese language! Well, I think I know something about that: I know 40,000 characters, and I have invented several new ideographs of my own for electricity and other modern scientific terms.’ (The flea, it should be remarked, talked 199 to the elephant’s dozen.)

“‘That the Chinese language belongs to the Turanian family, and that’—the elephant proceeded.

“‘I tell you I know all about Chinese! I know 40,000 characters, and——’

“‘Any knowledge of Sanskrit can therefore be of no service to you for the acquisition of Chinese, belonging as it does to an——’

“‘But I don’t care for Max Müller. Professor Roth gave me a beautiful copy of the Mahabharata. It cost three hundred mark—three hundred mark, mein Herr; just think of that sum for a minute, and realise what it means. I was his favourite pupil.’

“‘——entirely different stem. Therefore the man who knows Sanskrit well is likely enough——’

“‘ Sanskrit! Of course I know Sanskrit! Didn't Professor Roth give me a three hundred mark—a—— *three hundred mark* copy of the Mahabharata! I was his favourite pupil——’

“‘——to be entirely ignorant of Chinese.’

“ Here the Doctor of Philosophy would start up in wrath and dudgeon, and hurl contemptuous and semi-abusive epithets at the head of the *Doctor Medicinæ*. Then he would rush off in a rage to the second cabin, where things would be uncomfortably sultry for the next half-hour. Meanwhile the Doctor would turn round and confide to me the fact that Dr. Schmidt was a conceited puppy. A quarter of an hour later Schmidt would meet me and take me aside to impart to me the secret that the Doctor was utterly guiltless of any knowledge of Comparative Philology. I was, and still am inclined to believe that both were equally veracious.

“ Of course there is a slight touch of caricature in the dialogue given above. But only really a very slight touch. The exaggeration is after all infinitesimal. When Dr. Schmoller Schmidt's conceit did get a show, it spouted like a veritable Artesian well.

“ One evening he came aft and informed the first-class passengers in a body that in one respect he was the most valuable man in the East. When we expressed our scepticism by a mild elevation of the eyebrows, and looked inquiringly for further particulars, he went on to inform us that a translation of the

works of certain Chinese sages would be simply a boon beyond price for the West, and that only a man with a peculiar combination of very rare qualifications could undertake the task. These qualifications were in the first place a knowledge of antediluvian Kanji, and in the second the inspiration of the Pierian maidens.

“‘Now,’ he went on, ‘I know old Chinese ; no one can deny *that*. And I am also a poet !’

“‘Stood him? Of course I did! He was so infinitely amusing. Miss Tomkins *did* go and look over the taffrail, when, with his thumbs in the armpits of his waistcoat, and what a respected Hibernian friend of mine would call the ‘shtrut av an am’rous paycock,’ he publicly proclaimed himself the child of the Muses. But then Miss Tomkins had a fine and delicate nervous organisation, being highly sensitive to smells of all sorts.

“‘Just about this time he thought fit and proper to honour my insignificance with his attention. I fancied it was, firstly, because I submitted to his teasing me about sea-sickness ; secondly, because I listened to him ; and thirdly, because other people had got tired of him, and wouldn’t. Anyhow, inflict himself upon me he did. On closer acquaintance I found him to have a lot of good points. If he was communicative to a fault, he was not at all inquisitive. He sketched out his future career in the Empire of Dai-Nippon for my especial benefit. He meant to attach himself to the Legation in the capital ; his knowledge of Chinese would be found simply invaluable by the Minister. In that line he was sure he had no rival in the country,

and from Secretary of Legation to Minister was not after all such a far cry. And of course it was in accordance with the traditions of the nation to have scholars and *savants* as its representatives at Foreign Courts. Was not Niebuhr once Prussian Minister at Rome, and was not Bunsen Ambassador to St. James's?

“‘And,’ he would wind up, ‘I know more Sanskrit than Bunsen did, and neither Niebuhr nor Bunsen knew Chinese at all, and I have got a thorough grip upon it. I know 40,000 characters, and besides I have invented some new ideographs of my own. Yes, my chances are brilliant, very brilliant. And besides, you know German influence is now becoming paramount in the East, and you may be sure it will not suffer in my hands.’

“During all this time, to do him justice, he never pestered me with impertinent questions. He took me entirely on trust, a thing for which I was duly grateful, inasmuch as I do heartily detest being bailed up with, ‘Who?’ ‘Whence?’ ‘Whither?’ and ‘How old?’ No! In that respect at least he was a gentleman right to the tips of his finger nails. If you knew how to manage him he was a delightful companion. Only remove the spigot from his brewer’s vat of self-conceit and stand clear, and you had an entertainment fit for the gods. The flood then flowed out and on and on in a full and clear and refreshing stream. It is true that its odour was occasionally a trifle pungent, but that did not matter much to a citizen of the world.

“I don’t know how it was, or what suggested it,—

perhaps it was his thin-cut, flexible, mobile lips, with their covering of down just struggling into sunlight,— I don't know what it was, but one day I found my head ringing with Mephistopheles' *Du übersinnlicher sinnlicher Freier*, as I sat looking at him. I couldn't help laughing at the idea after a minute's reflection. No! no! his weakness could not possibly lie in that direction. In spite of the fits of poetic frenzy to which he professed to be addicted, he was altogether too dry and passionless to ever err after the fashion of King David, or of Solomon, or of Faust. Besides, he was too much wrapped up in his own sublime personality. I put away the notion as utterly ridiculous and idiotic. And yet, but for that notion, it is extremely unlikely that Dr. Ephraim Schmoller Schmidt would ever have figured as the hero of this most veracious recital. The notion in question was one of those quick, intuitive glances into the raw of character that come goodness only knows whence. It is only years afterwards that I realise the truth of it.

“During the last two days of the voyage I was utterly downed by my enemy. I had to keep below, and consequently saw nothing of my fellow-passengers till I staggered up on deck with the idea of getting ashore. And even then it was only a sort of misty dissolving view that I got of Dr. Schmidt. He was sitting on athwart of a rocking sampan with his back towards me, and as he disappeared in the raw and rolling fog of the morning I found myself thinking of the Lord passing before Moses in the clefts of Sinai.

“When I got on land I felt as if I had fallen into the lowest depths of Purgatory, with the chances all in favour of the bottom giving way and dropping me into real live raging hell-fire. I fled for refuge to the nearest hospital, where I spent a solid fortnight spread out on the flat of my back. But of course that has nothing to do with the story.

“Thus it came to pass that I saw nothing of Dr. Ephraim for the best part of a month. One day I was returning from Kyoto,—I had gone up there after I had fled Lot-like from the hospital,—when who should flop himself down beside me in the *chuto* railway-carriage I was in but Dr. Schmoller Schmidt. He at once opened fire. To begin with, all unrequested, he discharged a broadside of autobiography. The rapidity of incident was staggering. The number of literary suns and planets native and foreign, male and female, that had taken to revolving round Dr. Schmidt within the space of one short moon was bewildering and overpowering. One could surely be forgiven for cherishing an uneasy suspicion that his system was essentially Ptolemaic; also for believing in the possibility of the appearance of some brute of a Copernicus unfeeling enough to demonstrate that the earth,—*i.e.*, Dr. Ephraim Schmoller Schmidt,—was not the mainspring of the local social system after all. For, as you know, almost every community is cursed with the existence of at least one of those awful individuals whose fad is a perpetual quest after ‘Teruth’—the naked ‘Teruth,’ and of course spelled with a capital T. They are bitter, bitter *kusuri* for self-complacency,—bitter as quinine.

But they are useful in helping to wrestle with the malaria of over-weening self-sufficiency and conceit, and so far as effective in this direction they must be regarded in the light of public benefactors.

“When I asked him about his appointment at the Legation, however, he deftly changed the subject. This I took to be an indication of the discovery on his part of what I was aware of all along; I mean the fact that there is never any lack of men of first-class sterling ability in the German Embassies. Bismarck knows better than to send mere fools and figure-heads abroad to make the Eagle a laughing-stock. And as at present, so away back in the early ‘eighties,’ the *personnel* of the Kaiserliche Deutsche Gesandtschaft in Japan was full chock-a-block with linguistic talent of all kinds. It struck me that it had begun to dawn on Dr. Ephraim that he did not by any means hold a monopoly of ‘chops.’

“At the same time, though, he thought fit to wither me with a glance of contemptuous pity when his eye lighted on the leaflet of ‘Japanese Words and Phrases’ I was then valiantly but hopelessly wrestling with.

“‘Lend me that thing for a moment, will you?’ he said brusquely; ‘I want to see when the train returns.’

“I ought to mention,—but perhaps you know,—that friend Willoughby’s ‘Vocabulary’ is adorned rearwards with a railway time-table. He looked at it for the best part of two minutes perhaps, with his occipital muscles puckered into a judicial frown, and then returned it with a scornful ‘So.’

“‘I don’t want to see the time-table any more,’ he remarked airily. ‘It is quite easy. I see the plan, and I memorise the whole thing in a few seconds. A wissenschaftliches methode of doing vork and a good memory save much troubles.’

“His eyes blinkingly challenged my wonder and admiration through his spectacles, and I did look at him with wonder, and I was going to say admiration, but that would not be true. He then went on to tell me what the mission of the great German Empire was. In the first place it was to be *selbstständig*, utterly independent of any Dreibund whatsoever. It was to crush France; it was to humiliate Russia, and it was to keep Austria, Italy, and His Holiness the Pope in leading strings. This was amusing enough, but when he went on to say that England and English influence were everywhere to be wiped from the political and industrial chess-board, I got a bit irritated.

“‘Here, in Japan, the English einfluss is becoming gar nichts. The Japanese do not love you Engländer. Their army is on the German model, their commerce will be on the German model, and everytink else also will be German. Everytink, everytink, I tell you, will fall into the hands of the Germans.’

“I asked where the cars we were riding in were made.

“‘Why, in Germany of course, and the engines too.’

“That was a lie, but I didn’t say so.

“The Japanese were at the beginning of that virulent attack of ‘German measles’ they suffered

so badly from some two or three years ago, but they were not quite so far gone in their craze as to import all their railway rolling-stock from Deutschland.

“A few minutes after this we reached Kobe Railway Station, and the multitudinous patter of hundreds of pairs of clattering *geta* sounded a relief to the drums of my ears. The Doctor said a brusque good-bye and summarily elbowed a way for his shabby brown overcoat through the crowd to the turnstile. I caught sight of his little round hat angrily battling onwards amidst a jabbling sea of bobbing shoulders, and from that day to this I have never once set eyes upon his phiz.

II.

“What has all this to do with the yarn about that girl? Just hold your whisht and we’ll come to that in good time enough. You’re so unduly impetuous,—just like a bloomin’ globe-trotter trying to outfly the swallows, or to break the telegraph record, or to do six mountains, twenty-four waterfalls, thirty-six temples, and a hotel all in one day. You’ve not the ghost of an idea of artistic development. Telling a story, man, is like courting a woman; you must lead up to the critical point by degrees. *In medias res*, you say. Bosh! Into a muddling mess, you mean! No! no! Take the straight modern tip and begin at the beginning and advance *go yururi* to, and you’ll get there all right and easy.

“But where was I? Oh, yes! Well, I did Japan, and then I had to walk off as ‘special’ to an expedition that meant to cross New Guinea. Got over!

No! I got wounded, and pretty nearly qualified as the last scion of an ancient and an honourable house. A brute of a nigger sent a poisoned arrow whizzing through between my legs about ten inches above the knee. Yes. I *have* long thigh-bones, and it's deucedly lucky. After that I was sent to write up sugar and cotton in the Southern States, and then I struck these lovely and enchanting shores for a second time, where among other things I have to run the *Hiogo Intelligencer*. Tired of it, do you ask? In the words of my Hibernian boss, 'It's mesilf that's outrajisly sick of it.' But it has its good points, but that's neither here nor there.

"You know my mate, Rossignol, don't you? Of course you do. Let me tell you, then, that you know a real live man, and not a creeping, crawly, slimy thing that has succeeded in getting upon its hind legs and obtaining tick at the tailors. He got me out of a tight fix when I was 'special' for the *New York Sun* in Tunis,—in 1880 I think it was, or perhaps 1881. It was at Kairwan,—but that's not exactly to the purpose at present.

"Well, a few weeks ago he hinted to me he had something in hand, and asked if I would help to see him through with it. He told me the argument of the piece as we bowled along to Osaka like a snail out for a holiday at his mother-in-law's funeral.

"'You see I'm a married man now, and it won't do for me to go vexing the wife. So you've got to do duenna for me. And mind, above all things you're not to contradict me when I say you don't speak French.'

“I remarked that it would need a bigger lie than that to make me call out that he was an unblushing untruth-teller,—especially in ladies’ company. For by that same token the French I do patter is a sort of cross between Joseph’s coat and the structure of the Psalmist’s body,—it is a patchwork of many colours fearfully and wonderfully put together.

“We got out at Osaka railway station, and after half-an-hour’s navigation in *bashas* and *kurumas* we found ourselves in the outskirts of the Vanity Fair of the Venice of the Orient. We plunged into it, and after threading the mazes and alley-ways of its back-slums we at last fetched up with the caserne-like Theatres of the Dotombori looming in front of us as a landmark. The neighbourhood was poor; the houses were low and flimsy, and we expected a general epidemic of dinginess and dirt and squalor, but we didn’t stumble across it. An aggressive and irritating odour of respectability pervaded the locality, and the narrow alley-way into which we were finally directed especially so.

“We went hunting around inspecting the miniature perpendicular ‘name’ cards over the doorways like a pair of sleuth-hounds on the scent for a breakfast.

“‘Hallo! Here we are!’ I said as my eye caught one particular tablet adorned with a scrabble of European pot-hooks in lieu of the undecipherable contortions of Japanese hieroglyphics; ‘*Mademoiselle Louise Balbi.*’ Now then, let us fix our neck-ties and prepare for the enemy. You first, please!’

“We were disappointed; not at home! At least that was the sum and substance of the information

we contrived to rescue from the weltering flood of honorifics that poured from the black-toothed ball of humble politeness vigorously polishing the *tatami* (mats) with her forehead in our honour.

“‘But if any honourable foreign visitors should arrive in the honourable absence of Louise Sama, would the honourable visitors condescend to honourably do an honourable hanging of their honourable loins in this poor and unworthy dwelling till she returned? Before five o'clock her august return certainly and positively would be.’

“We held a hurried council of war, and decided to consume half-an-hour in exploring the neighbouring Alsatia.

“‘Funny,’ remarked Rossignol, who had got a peep through the *shoji*. ‘She can't be so far on her beam-ends as I fancied. She told me in the train that she had nothing to eat, and that she was living in a den. Humph! the den seems to be rather a sumptuous retreat. Carpets, chairs, tables, books, and I don't know what not. It seems it doesn't do to take things too literally when it's a young and pretty woman that's your informant.’

“We set out and fetched a compass round the shows and sights of the locality. When we got back, we found that Mademoiselle Louise had become infected with Japanese notions of punctuality. Five o'clock had come, but the object of our pilgrimage hadn't. So we accepted the invitation of the painfully humble doorkeeper to step in and ‘do a hanging of our honourable loins.’

“We had expected to enter a hovel; we found

ourselves in a fairy drawing-room. The room was an ordinary six-mat Japanese *sashiki*,—only something had been done to it that eliminated its ‘Japaneseness’ almost entirely. A plain carpet and a rug or two upon the floor, a table sizeable enough for the first-cabin of Noah’s Ark, half-a-dozen or so old high-backed chairs ribbed with fretwork,—they might have come out of a mediæval Norman chateau,—were something to begin with. But they were responsible for only part, and the least part too, of the effect. It was the trinkets on the table, the photographs and prints round the walls, and, above all, the fine array of volumes in an alcove that gave one the notion of a Parisian boudoir in which artistically-painted Japanese *shojis* counted for one feature among the freaks that go to make up the furnishings of a female æsthete’s withdrawing chamber.

“‘What the deuce!’ muttered Rossignol, starting up and passing across the room at two seven-leagued strides, ‘what the deuce is the meaning of this gun? That fishing-rod I can understand; it may have been a present from a Japanese, or she may have bought it for ten *sen*,—but this gun! Let me see!’ he went on, taking it down from the peg on which the weapon was strapped. ‘By the living Jehoshaphat! it is no toy, as I fancied it might be, but a real live death-dealing chassepot!’

“He stood with the thing balanced in his hands in helpless perplexity. Then he thrust it back into its canvas case, with his forehead puckered into furrowy wrinkles.

“‘These riding-whips, too,’—he proceeded to

himself, shaking his head sapiently. 'And this photo!'

" 'Well, I do declare! If it isn't the hussy herself! Whew-ew-ew!' he exclaimed, holding out the cabinet-size to me, and looking just as if some one had tilted him on to his wrong end by mistake. The group was an interesting one. *Imprimis* a horse and a dog—the dog crouching on the ground and curled up, blinking in the acme of comfort, while a fine high-stepper of a steed had the graceful lines of his curving neck beautifully brought out by the position he had been forced to assume. His head came over the shoulder of a young cavalier in close-fitting double-breasted jacket, tight riding-breeches, and Hessians coming up almost to the knee, with enormous spurs on the heels. The left arm was thrown caressingly over the beast's glossy, sheeny neck, and the uncovered, close-cropped head was thrown back upon the animal's near-shoulder. The most prominent feature in the landscape, however, was a moustache that curled with all the bristliness and ardour of a grenadier in the lists of war or of love, and meaning business.

" 'Well, if that is not a man, it is a wonderfully good imitation of one,' said I.

" 'An imitation it is, my son,' returned Rossignol. 'The woman that marries that man will wed neither a bachelor nor a widower, nor will she be the means of driving a Benedict into bigamy. That's Made-moiselle Louise Balbi herself in the very flesh—and a pair of riding-breeches.'

" It struck me that we were in for an adventure ;

only the protagonist in the piece was deucedly slow in coming on. To while away the wait I took to overhauling the books in the alcove by way of a substitute for an overture from the orchestra.

“They were a fine lot tastefully bound in black, almost as enticing in their way as a widow of four-and-twenty in her weeds. De Musset, Béranger, La Fontaine jostled with Voltaire and the Contrat Social, while La Sainte Bible lay cheek by chowl with that most scandalous and unholy production, *Les Contes de Boccace*. Atop of the neatly-packed and labelled array lay bundles of files of old *Figaros*, so trimly and tidily folded and arranged that no creature with a real indefeasible title to the use of male accoutrements could ever have been guilty of putting them there. Let Mademoiselle Louise ride like a trooper as much as ever she chose to, she had evidently not unsexed herself in the matter of that delightful female sense of order and tidiness which, like a low voice, is such an excellent thing in woman.

“However, time went on, and we were getting to the end of our patience and our resources. It was now well on towards six, and we had got up to go when the landlord and his spouse appeared, and, flopping down on their heels, began to polish the *tatami* with their foreheads, *Gomen-nas-ai-ing*, and requesting the honourable guests to do an honourable waiting for still a little longer.

“‘Now, just watch the performance of these d——d fools,’ blurted out Rossignol with impatience. ‘Let’s listen to the duet; perhaps they’ll tell the truth by accident.’

“In the confusion of the pelting hail-storm of honorifics that rained upon us we had a lot of difficulty in pulling the narrative straight, or in fact in getting any glimmering of sense to emerge at all. So we requested one of the parties to shut up, and asked the other to proceed without an accompaniment. The male marionette, blear-eyed and close-cropped, then continued his parable,—he kept on picking fibres from the matting all the time, and looking at them for inspiration,—and told us that Louise Sama went out every Sunday afternoon to put flowers on the tombstone of a little girl that had died some time ago, and that ordinarily she got back by five o'clock. ‘To-day, because I am sick with sore eyes I did not draw her *kuruma*, and therefore she took another *kuruma-ya*, and therefore she will be a little late perhaps,’ etc., etc., etc.

“‘Humph,’ said Rossignol, ‘I see how the land lies. She’s in debt, and these cattle scent money in our visit, and the smell of hard cash is very sweet to their nostrils at this New Year’s time.’

“We could wait no longer, and so we fared forth into the shades of night and the smells of the street, accompanied by him of the blear-eyes, who kept running and peering about into the darkness like a hound on the scent. He was in a great state lest we should escape.

“We had got about three hundred yards on our way when there was a thundering clatter of *geta* and flying pebbles, and a whirlwind of streaming Japanese garments fell upon our rear with a volley of ‘*kima-shita, kimashita, kimashita!*’

“ We turned round, and had almost reached the house again, when a patch of white bounded out of the darkness with a joyous exclamation.

“ ‘ Ah, vous êtes venu ! ’

“ ‘ Oui, comment va-t-il ? Etes-vous gentil ? ’

“ ‘ Ah ! oui, et vous ? ’

“ And so on, and so on, till Rossignol was forcibly whisked into the boudoir. I stood outside in the cold with my nose all out of joint till philosophy came to my aid with a reminder that in this affair I was to be merely a *kōphon prosōpon*, and not even a second fiddle.

“ At last Rossy thought fit to shout to me to come in. I was introduced as being utterly guiltless of understanding *Parlez-vous*, which was a lie, and as *mon ami inséparable*, which is true enough when there is a row on, or as long as there is any liquor about.

“ I looked at the photograph on the wall and then at the original. Barring the moustaches, the breeches, and the top-boots, the likeness was a good one. The jacket was the same in both instances ; now somewhat old and worn and frayed, yet neat and tidy withal. It was open below the throat, where a huge white starched breast-plate with a single stud in it harmonised perfectly with the pallor of the face above it. It was a young face, possibly twenty-three or twenty-four years of age at the outside,—but experience, if not time, had begun to scabble a history upon its lineaments. The brow was low and broad ; the large watery eyes were set widely apart ; the mouth was big and prominent, with thin lips that occasionally shut with a snap of determination over

two gleaming rows of teeth that had evidently never called for the kind offices of the dentist. The ears were small, and sat like a pair of pearl shells well back from the cheek-bones. In ordinary circumstances it would have been a witching face,—it would be a powerful one under any conditions,—but now it was pinched and haggard, and when certain reminiscences were called up, wolfish. But when she smiled,—and Rossy can hold up his end of the log with any man in tickling a woman's face into ripples,—the creases disappeared and the wrinkles vanished as if by magic, and the conviction forced itself upon you that despite its sizeableness, nature had meant that mouth for kissing. But when a woman has come down to the business of keeping her immortal soul in touch with her body on Japanese food and less than nothing a month, you can readily fancy that her physical charms are apt to take flight with her impedimenta generally.

“By the time I had made this exhaustive diagnosis Rossy had got her to talk—mostly for my benefit, he said. At first it was a mere recital of what I knew already. She had been young and foolish once on a time like more of us, and her especial foolishness had consisted in coming a cropper, and bolting with a Japanese merchant, on the understanding that he was to marry her when they got to Dai-Nippon. However, on landing *Akindo-san* owned up to being already more than sufficiently ‘wived’; he had already one lawfully wedded spouse, besides a female subaltern or two to aid her in ‘manning,’ or rather in ‘womanning,’ the *ménage*. There was a quandary!

“‘What was a poor girl to do?’ asked Mademoiselle Louise, plaintively and piteously. ‘One must live somehow.’

“Of course in a way she was right. Lucretias are all very well in Roman history and story-books, but they are not so very plentiful in real life. They are grand women,—fit to be the mothers of heroes; but we don’t raise many of them nowadays, more’s the pity.

“However, Mademoiselle did not knuckle down with any considerable amount of grace to a junior command in the household of Okura Sama. She didn’t like raw fish, she didn’t like *daikon*, she didn’t like having to put her head on the *tatami* in honour of her lord and master, and she hated to play something even lower than second fiddle. So one day she arose in her wrath and addressed Okura-san in forcible language, and with the back-edge of a Japanese sword. Okura Sama appeared to understand the hint, and henceforth left her severely alone. In a few weeks he even went so far as to beseech her in the name of the 8,000,000 gods of Dai-Nippon, to honourably withdraw herself from his humble dwelling, and to restore peace to his insignificant household. Acting on the advice of an old and fatherly compatriot of her own, she complied with his request,—for a consideration. Then paterfamilias tried to work a little scheme of his own at her expense, and succeeded. When he had got what he wanted, he advised her to go into a convent. Then when she remonstrated against this proposal in dignified but forcible language, by a piece of brilliant diplomacy he shunted her on to some one else,—a

high and mighty but under-paid official in the consular service of a certain mighty nation. But I'm going to skip all this and the next few scenes in the drama.

"Let it suffice to say that the girl tried and tried again to get out of it, and back to Paris ; but do all she could, as our Japanese friends put it classically, it was 'no go.' You see it was for the supposed interest of certain parties that she should stay. And the sum of the whole matter was that at the moment of our appearing on the scene she was badly in debt, with her credit all gone, the New Year approaching, and a yelping rabble of petty merchants now bowing and scraping, now snarling and growling, for the money which she had not.

"'In three more days they will turn me into the street,' she said ; 'and from here to the Yoshiwara over yonder is a very easy passage. How much do you fancy I should fetch? A foreign woman will be a variety, quite a *mezurashi-mono*. The Japanese, I'm told, have paid as much as \$1000 for a rabbit ; surely I am worth as much as a rabbit !'

"Marah itself would have been sweetness compared to the intonation of this deliverance.

"'I have been *trompé, trompé*, by everybody,' she said. 'There was Dr. Schmoller Schmidt, a Professor in the Foreign Language School ; surely you would expect a Professor to be *un homme honorable* ; he has deceived me worse than any.'

"At this I pricked up my ears ! I thought of that voyage from Hong-Kong, and of Mephistopheles'

übersinnlicher sinnlicher Freier, once again. Could there be anything in it after all? I listened to this chapter of her story, and I found there was a lot.

III.

“The acquaintance began in the Kōenchi, or public garden. A friend of Mademoiselle Louise had become infected with a craze for the study of green stuff, and Louise had gone out with her to help in prospecting for specimens thereof. Among them they ran across Dr. Ephraim Schmoller Schmidt, although he turned out to be less verdant than he seemed at first blush. For he really could blush like a mawkish school-girl in the shivers of her first love-affair, when it suited his book to do so. And it happened to be handy for him to indulge in the performance at that moment, and accordingly he blushed all over, a ruddy ruby red. It became him very well, Mademoiselle assured us,—he looked for all the world like a naughty little cherub caught in *déshabillé* without his wings, and very much put out because he had forgot them. On that occasion he had proved punctiliously polite, and *dévoué*, very much *dévoué* indeed. His gallantry was apiece with that of Raleigh dabbing his best go-to-meeting cloak in the mud for the honour and glory and comfort and good-will of Queen Bess, or eke of old Dizzy putting a Cashmere wrap round the Imperial shoulders of Her Gracious, and murmuring amiable nothings in her ears all the time. Dr. Schmidt could be sentimental and overpoweringly complimentary to ladies

in seven or eight different languages, without counting in any of his 40,000 chops.

“So Louise was mildly pleased,—not carried off her feet though by any means,—by his style to begin with. She was very careful to make the above distinction. ‘Fall in love? No! Certainly not; that nonsense did not pay. Even then she had been over much fooled by men. But that she liked him—*Mais oui!* certainement. And as for warmer feelings afterwards? *C’était possible.*’

“As she said this she shrugged her shoulders the tiniest little bit, and stared dreamily into vacancy, or the bottom of Rossy’s hat, which lay tilted on its side on the far end of the table.

“Dr. Schmidt had found out her address, and had called. He had found her reading Alfred de Musset, and he at once rushed upon her, and, metaphorically speaking, embraced her as a sympathetic soul; for he also was a poet. ‘*Moi aussi mademoiselle. Je vous l’assure, je suis poète!*’

“I thought the declaration sounded even better in French than it did in guttural German. On board the ocean-tramp it had been ‘*Ich bin Dichter.*’ But somehow,—possibly because it was messed up with Chinese chops on that occasion,—the romance of the previous assertion of Pierian inspiration was very much *manqué* compared with the glamour of the episode as related by Mademoiselle Louise. But Chinese ‘chops,’ and De Musset! and the vast gulf fixed there between! And then,—well he could have had no ulterior designs to work upon me,—an old tough, leather-skinned, case-hardened lump of male

journalistic iniquity, but, as the sequel showed in the case of Louise, he meant the metaphorical embrace to become something more substantial and satisfying than a mere empty and stilted *façon de parler*. Kindred souls and Platonic affection are no doubt very fine as garnishings, but after all they only serve for dessert. Man cannot live by them alone, any more than he can depend upon the baker exclusively for his support. They are just like the *saké* that pre-ludes a Japanese *gochisō*, or the cock-tail you take at the bar to put an edge on before you enter the dining-room at the Club.

“And that was just how Dr. Ephraim Schmoller Schmidt meant to engineer the business, and just the way he succeeded in running it. He said he was very lonely living the bachelor life he did. Mademoiselle Louise said she was very sorry to hear it, and the Doctor then invited her up to lunch with him. She accepted the invitation, and found the luncheon a gorgeous affair. She confessed to doing justice to it, while the Doctor also tendered it all due respect. It had a most expansive effect upon him. He began to talk in verse,—in verse with a measure that was erratic and a flavour that was most pronouncedly erotic. It was a trifle embarrassing,—especially so when he went on to inform his guest in a hexameter line with a very halting foot or two, that she was the very image of the girl to whom he had been engaged! Now although the bloom may have been all rubbed off the peach ages ago, no woman likes to be addressed in this style. A mere reflected passion is hardly a complimentary thing, even allowing

that the original was not a cheap Brummagem concern with maudlin mawkishness as the only conspicuous feature about it. And to be honoured with a declaration that one is the cause of a dead-and-alive stirring among the drossy cinders of the calcined brass of an extinct calf-love,—well, it makes a woman's cheeks flush with the sense of Power!

“Here she broke into a little scornful laugh, and then trilled out a *chansonnette* quivering with sarcasm for our benefit. I wished Dr. S. had been listening.

“One can imagine what a fine theme this would have been for Euripides! The vengeance of Aphrodite far transcending Juno's pale and spiteful pin-pricks on account of *spretæ injuria formæ* would have been a tragedy out-tragedying the peripeteia of the *Bacchæ*! But when Aphrodite is going around with an empty stomach, as she occasionally has to in these days of a gluttoned labour market, she must think of other considerations before mounting the broomstick of a witch's whirlwind of fury and revenge. She has perforce to bite her lips and knuckle down to tackling the purely mundane and barren problem of making ends meet,—not an easy one by any means when the *res angustæ domi* have shrunk so badly and lost so much of their elasticity as they had with Mademoiselle Louise. So although she didn't like the compliment, she laughed with the wrong side of her face, and pocketed the slight on the off-chance that she would be able to fill the vacuum with something more tangible and substantial by-and-by.

“Possibly it was only his own patent poetic way of conducting operations; yet Mademoiselle confessed to finding herself in a state of hot and deadly siege before she could very well say how it was done. The Doctor had used the old love simply as a cover to his approaches. When he fancied he had finished his trenches and got all his batteries in position, he threw off the mask and opened fire with vigour. He began by saying some things about the old flame that were not over complimentary, and some things about the new one that were. He addressed the latter in language that bore a close resemblance to the warmest-tinted portions of the song of Solomon. He went on his knees *et fit un déclaration d’amour*. It was slightly embarrassing, Mademoiselle admitted, because in the first place his clothing was so tight about the knees that the position looked uncomfortable, and perhaps a trifle ridiculous, and in the second place because she was almost beginning to believe in his sincerity. In Japanese phrase she was ‘puzzled.’

“‘Eh, bien! Puis alors!’—

“There she shrugged her shoulders again, and threw out her left hand sideways, palm upwards, with her cigarette between the fore and middle fingers, and raised her eyebrows in a way that conveyed as much as an ordinary half-dozen chapters in a three-volume novel.

“Of course, when a woman hesitates, she is lost. Only Louise asked for something definite and tangible. The Doctor delicately insinuated that he was poor but honest, and went on to say that he

had expectations. In that he was not at all singular ; most folks have, the victims of the Manilla gamble included. The Doctor's, though, had so many probabilities in their favour that they were in his own sanguine opinion within an arm's length of certainty. One of his compatriots was on the point of returning to the Vaterland, and the plot was to jockey Mr. Schmidt into his vacant 300 *yen per mensem* billet.

“‘And then——’

“There the Doctor stopped with a rising intonation, gazed ceiling-wards with the seraphic look of an affable cherub, opened his arms to the fullest extent and embraced the sofa. Mademoiselle apologetically represented that his impetuosity was a trifle disconcerting, and coyly asked time to consider the matter. To induce her to take that particular branch of the forked roads, at whose parting she now stood, which led to his bungalow, he redoubled his protestations, and raised the bidding considerably.

“‘Well,—*que voulez-vous*? I saw him several times, but I passed only one night in his house.’

“Then it would seem the sweeping molten stream of his lava-like passion began to flag in its career, and to cool, and in a few days it was as cold and petrified as a combination of reason and Chinese ‘chops’ could make it. Meanwhile, Mademoiselle was faring sumptuously on *daikon* and *sashimi* and the elements of starvation, with a gnawing hunger by way of a cheap and unfailing relish. When she allowed this fact to filter through the P.S. of four pages of a *billet-doux* copied from the *Universal Letter-Writer*, the

amorous *savant* mounted the high-stepping steed of sentimentality and executed a series of high-falutin' curvets for her especial benefit and edification.

"In such matters pecuniary considerations were not to be mentioned. Only one kind of women took money for matters of this kind, and he wouldn't insult her ears by mentioning the epithet by which they were designated. Therefore he had not outraged her by offering her anything of the sort, nor would he ever think for a moment of doing so.

"He furthermore contrived to clinch the matter by adding the information that since he had come to Japan he had been very much embarrassed by the gifts ladies *would* persist in thrusting upon him. A certain Japanese Countess with whom he had been indiscreet had presented him with the gold studs and sleeve-links he was wearing at the moment.

"He actually shot out his cuffs and asked me if I did not consider them really *très chic*,' she said slowly with withering scorn.

"Then he had also had an affair with a German lady, and had been in terror lest the *mari* should discover it and challenge him to mortal combat. *She* also had persisted in making donations.

"At this point Mademoiselle got up and gave him something too. It was a piece of her mind and his *congé*, coupled with a not unforcible hint that she did not want to see anything more of him or of his gold sleeve-links either. Also that if he did come to her house again, he would get a taste of her riding-whip.

"However, this little breeze had the effect of fanning the infinitesimal sparks of his moribund

passion into a vehement, spasmodic, crackling-thorn-sort of flame. He vowed and protested, and poured forth his devotion in French worthy of Corneille, and in hysterical splutters and blotches of Tsuzi's so-called 'Superior Writing-Ink.'

"'If you don't believe, here are his letters,' she said, handing Rossy a packet of gilt-edged envelopes.

"'See for yourself! Je vous les donne.'

"They were a little bit comical, but of course to all cold-blooded outsiders and onlookers love-epistles are apt to sound ridiculous. But they had a distinguished feature that you don't usually find in the ordinary correspondence of folks bent on making asses of themselves in this particular fashion. I don't know whether you would call them juvenile, or senile, or anile,—they had ends of all three qualities sticking out of them. But in the midst of the streaky torrent of amorous rodomontade, you could always discern the almighty main chance bobbing up to the surface. There were reasons innumerable for not 'coming down with the dust,' and also innumerable promises that it would be forthcoming unfailingly. But the difficulties of the present situation were as lions in the path. In the first place he found his salary was scarcely sufficient for one, let alone two. In the next place, he had left Germany without doing his military service, and that was a debt that had to be reckoned with some day,—very soon perhaps. Altogether it was not his fault that he did not take steps to put her in a better position. But he loved her, loved her, loved her!

“ ‘La nuit dernière était comme ses sœurs,—presque sans sommeil. Ton image flottait continuellement devant mes yeux et tes baisers brûlaient encore sur mes lèvres. Surtout le dernier baiser—diable, il a glacé tout mon sang pour un instant, pour me jeter alors au feu infernel ! Mais, patience, tu me payeras pour cela ou je me fais trapiste ! Chacun mangera la soupe qu’il a préparée.

“ ‘Ton dévoué,

“ ‘EPHRAIM S. S.’

“The letters, in their own peculiar way, were quite as amusing as anything Prosper Mérimée ever wrote ; but the effect was produced in a different way. But of course that’s neither here nor there.

“All this time Louise was sinking deeper and deeper in the slough of despond and pecuniary difficulties. She had, by her showing, no one to befriend her,—not a soul. She became sick in body and sicker still in mind. So one day after perusing another flowery composition, in which much was said about devotion, but nothing whatsoever about dollars, she took advantage of the wind-up of the production and replied. Dr. S. had concluded—

“ ‘Si tu trouves le temps de penser à moi quelques instants ou même de m’ écrire peu de mots, tu me rendras bien heureux.

“ ‘Ton dévoué,

“ ‘EPHRAIM S. S.’

“She did write a few words explaining her position, and so far from rendering the Doctor happy, she succeeded in making him very miserable ; at least one would suppose so to go by the tenor of his reply. Here it is—

“ ‘Le 24 Juin, 1885.

“ ‘MA CHÈRE AMIE,—Je viens de lire ta lettre et te remercie beaucoup. Je me trouve assez bien, malgré cet horrible temps. Encore

deux semaines et nos cours sont finis. Mais il est possible que mon séjour en Japon soit aussi beintôt fini ; j'ai été a Kobe à cause de mes affaires militaires, et on n'a pas encore définitivement fixé si je dois partir au commencement d'août on si je peux rester. J'espère qu'on me donne mon congé.

“ ‘Quant à ta demande financière je regrette que je n'ai pas reçu mon salaire. Je pense que lundi prochain j'aurai mon argent, aussitôt que je l'ai je ferai mon compte. Un monsieur que tu connais m'a aussi demande une somme, et il sera difficile de la lui refuser, comme autrefois il a été très aimable et généreux. En cas que je suis contraint de partir j'aurais besoin de chaque yen que je possède. J'ai en beaucoup à faire ces derniers jours, mais la semaine prochaine je viendrai te voir.

“ ‘Il m'est un plaisir de l'envoyer, par ton Kuruma-ya, une demi-douzaine de bière. Bon appetit !

“ ‘Mille choses agréables, ton dévoué,

“ ‘EPHRAIM S. S.’

“ And such was the lame and impotent conclusion of this precious piece of transcendental gallantry! Faust contrives to shake off Marguerite with the gift of half-a-dozen of beer, on which he does not even pay the carriage !

“ ‘So this was the end of it?’ asked Rossignol.

“ ‘Yes ; he mistook me for a beer-swilling Berliner,’ she replied, with all the bitterness inherited from '70 vibrating in the words.

“ ‘Why didn't you send this precious present back?’ inquired Rossy, with a humorous twinkle flickering in his eyes.

“ ‘Send it back!’ she said. ‘No, certainly not! It is the only thing I have got out of him! But,’ she went on, ‘I did write asking if he wished me to return the empty bottles!’

“ But Faust found to his cost that there was an epilogue to the comedy. Rossy, true to his plighted

word, turned up on the 1st of January with a handful of dollar notes, and kicked out the cringing creditors neck and crop when they came meaning mischief. He talks Japanese beautifully under any circumstances, but it was a treat to hear him orating in Nihongo on that occasion.

“Then he started a subscription list to get Mademoiselle out of the country. Most of the boys anted up their four or five dollars, and in a few days there was enough put together to get her a ticket to Marseilles, with something over besides to give her a fresh start when she got there. See there; what do you think of that?” he asked, handing over a subscription sheet.

“Three hundred and seventy-seven *yen*,” I remarked; “that is really very decent. I notice, though, that one good Samaritan is responsible for a bigish part of it. Who is this that signs himself ‘A friend—150 *yen*?’”

Webster did not answer at once. He stroked his chin, and, cocking one eye significantly, he looked at me in a provokingly quizzical manner.

“Yes,” he said after a pause, during which light began to dawn upon me. “I see you’ve got it. It was the German Consul that worked the oracle for us there, and he worked it to some purpose. Dr. Ephraim Schmoller Schmidt *has* got his 300-dollar billet in the *Zohei-kyoku*, but he pocketed no more than the half of his first month’s screw.”

“And the girl?” I queried, as I got up to catch my train.

“The girl?” answered Webster, sweeping his long

legs off the table and starting to his feet. "Well, I guess by this time she is taking in the beauties of the seascape and landscape of the Inland Sea, somewhere on the other side of Akashi Strait. But must you really be off? Well, well, bye-bye till next time, old man. Here comes that last revise."

FRED WILSON'S FATE.

AN EPISODE OF AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPER LIFE.

I.

FRED WILSON had not been upon the staff of the *Chronicle* for a week when that "rag," as the *News*, the opposition bi-weekly, contemptuously termed it, suddenly showed portentous signs of unwonted vitality. As long as slow-going old man Manson had kept the concern running single-handed, it had struggled along in the odour of prosy respectability. But with his demise the traditions of the office were all at once rudely and wantonly upset. The late occupant of the editorial chair had certainly not been brilliant ; but he had been "safe."

"Safe, sir, as the Bank!" Mr. Walker, the largest shareholder in the venture, would occasionally remark as he carefully and deliberately wiped his grizzled moustache and twisted its extremities into pig-tails in the parlour of the "Royal," after his usual mid-day refresher. Mr. Manson, to give him his due, had had this somewhat questionable merit of safety in bounteous proportions. He was a conservative *in summis*. For Property and its "Rights" he had a holy reverence, and knuckled under to the coming millionaires of the district in printer's ink *ad nauseam*. Henry George's theories—(about which,

by the way, his notions were a trifle hazy)—and Dutton's Land Bill were as abominations in his journalistic nostrils. Darwin and "Science falsely so-called" were never-failing subjects to assail when there was little grist in the editorial mill, and the weekly leader had to be turned out perforce about something and somehow. And then the propriety of his language was just beautiful to consider! All the malodours of the city of the Cologne itself would have become ambrosial scents before emerging from the *Chronicle* office under his delicate manipulation.

"Yes, gentlemen," he solemnly and impressively said in responding for the Press at the Annual Agricultural Show dinner, as he laid the podgy fingers of his right hand with their cart-wheel gold rings on the folds of his white waistcoat, just above his watch-fob. "Yes! gentlemen! I can honestly allege that I have never in my professional career penned a single sentence or given utterance to a single vocable to which even the most fastidious and refined could possibly object. I have never put the most delicate of my readers to the blush. As regards the purity of its sentiments, I can lay the flattering unction to my soul that the Thylungra Press, as represented by *us* at least—(here he looked significantly and meaningly at Keith, of the *News*)—can be put with safety on any parlour table in the Colony of Queensland."

An utterance that was received with marked approbation by the respectable and fashionable portion of his audience, and with ironical cheers from Jeremy

Cochrane, of Palmetto ; Ned Powell, of the "Calaboose" ; and the other unregenerate at the banquet.

But with Manson's demise, and the advent of the young American "sub," all this became a thing of the past. It seemed as if a literary typhoon had smitten the corners of the *Chronicle* office and turned it topsyturvy. It had revived the paper in a wonderful way in its passage, but Respectability and Safety—(both with capital letters, of course)—had alike been whisked away upon the whir of its wings. And with them had gone all poor old fuddled Manson's pompous, meaningless, and empty Johnsonianisms. Property and Vested Rights began to quake in their shoes as they nervously clutched their breeches-pocket. The Bank agents took to shaking their heads and looking very serious indeed after the usual matutinal glance at the strangely transmogrified Daily. They actually went so far as to talk of stopping their subscriptions and withdrawing their advertisements. Nor was this all,—the godly and the fastidious were alike equally outraged. Irreverent allusions appeared which were not at all likely to please the parsons. And certain pungent "pars" now and then caused the ribald to laugh, the humorous to smile, and the "fastidious and delicate" to blush.

One morning a deputation of heads of families waited upon Mr. Walker, and with all the pompous solemnity of Bumbledom on business pointed out a certain police-court report "that was unworthy of a respectable newspaper of the standing of the *Chronicle*."

"If *this* is not stopped," said Mr. Corfield, the

spokesman, "*we* must stop our paper. How would you like *your* wimmen-folks to read the likes of this?"

Mr. Walker looked at the objectionable "matter" —"matter" was Mr. Walker's official term for all contributions of whatsoever character—and confusedly admitted that it was very wrong, nay, almost indecent, and promised to talk to the "young man" about it.

Mr. Walker's representations must have been put not over strongly, inasmuch as only four days later the *Chronicle* contrived to out-Herod Herod, and to scandalise the respectabilities of Thylungra to an extent that was simply beyond pardon, and an indignation meeting was seriously mooted by the parsons and the police magistrate.

But no such meeting came off, much to Wilson's regret. The worst result was merely the receipt of half-a-dozen angry missives giving the business manager curt and peremptory instructions to "Stop my paper." But, in spite of this, the circulation leaped ahead in a wonderful way,—among the timber-camps, on the gold-fields behind, and in the shearing sheds the boycotted newspaper became a prime favourite, and its "sub" a sort of literary demigod.

Possibly it was just as well for this Bohemian that his journalistic ability was undoubted, and above all things recognised. Had it been otherwise the tenure of his desk in Mincham's buildings would have been but brief. Mr. Manson's inefficiency had been in a measure condoned by his impeccable shirt front, by the ordered decorum of his language, and by his exemplary private life. His successor's

linen was not always clean, and his record out of office not by any means unsmudged. He was emphatically a *non-moral*, or as Mr. MacFadyn, the Presbyterian minister, put it, a decidedly immoral man. Not that he did not unfailingly and punctually pay his lawful debts in the current coin of the realm and stand to his plighted word like a British tar to his guns. He had been known even to do some madly generous things in the way of helping certain very lame dogs over stiles. Nor could any one accuse him of cowardice or meanness. But alas! there was a flaw in his armour notwithstanding.

He had barely been six months in the community of Thylungra before he had figured as the hero, or the victim of several glaringly indecorous escapades that outraged the local proprieties severely. Besides, he seemed to have a turn for liquor; whilst his mastery over the art of manufacturing new and humorous combinations of profane language gained him the unqualified admiration of Ned Powell, and Cohoun, and Polly Foggarty,—of the whole camp of publicans and sinners in fact with whom it was his delight to consort. For it was with publicans and sinners that most of his few spare hours were spent; he confided to Frank Morton, an occasional contributor to the *Chronicle*, that he preferred their society to that of the Pharisaical money-grubbing “upper ten” of the township.

“You see, Frankie, I reckon they’re much better fun; they’ve got brains, *they* have, and some feeling and sentiment too. The other crowd are too much occupied looking after river frontages in this here

world, and pre-empting corner allotments in the New Jerusalem, to suit me."

In truth, it was nothing but his sterling ability and his unimpeachable attention to duty that saved the "sub" from being turned neck and crop out of his billet. When old Thomson of the "Belle-Vue" came round to "interview him generally with a six-shooter," as Fred put it when relating the episode to Morton, over a little bit of trouble with old Thomson's daughter, Mr. Walker was indignant and shocked.

"You see," remarked Fred, as he related the incident to his crony, "I guess he was in a funk. Old Boniface had come in and got the drop on me, and told me I'd got to splice her quick. Well, you see, I *may* have been courting Jenny, and I mayn't; but I wasn't playing a lone hand in that game, and so I just allowed I *wouldn't* marry that girl just then. Of course I talked soft, and the old idiot lowered his shooting-iron, and——" Here Wilson nonchalantly stooped to strike a match on the right flank of his lower garments to light a fresh cigar.

"And you——?" said Morton.

"Well! I guess I just whipped out the office bulldog, and generally told Thomson I'd smash his fingers for him if he didn't drop his shooting-tool like a hot coal."

"Did he?"

"You bet!" quietly answered Wilson, lazily reaching forward for another match.

"And would you have done it?"

"Done it! Why, the darned old thing was empty, and if it had been loaded I'd have been in a mortal

funk about its bursting. But then, you see, it's cheek that does it. And I guess old Thomson was not *very* angry. I allow I've heard of him trying that same trick before. And then just as I remarked, 'Captured—one gun,' in walks the Boss,—and there was a bit of a ruction."

"But do you think all that was square to the girl?"

"Square! Why, of course I do! She was only trying to have the pull on me, and I guess the dice weren't loaded on my side. Look here, Frankie. You're older than I am, maybe, but I'm derved if you know anything about wimmen. There isn't a good one among the whole tribe. I'll take on hand to marry all the virtuous women in Thylungra single-handed, and yet die a bachelor. I say, old man, don't look that way; I didn't mean to hurt you. But I believe what I've said—honest *Injin*, I do!"

Morton painfully muttered something that Wilson's ear failed to catch.

"Say, Frankie, I'm not a moral man, maybe,—not very, but I'm square to my friends. Now, I've to thank a woman for all my travelling, and maybe for going down in the waves after all. But that's past. I trusted her, the vixen; but what's the good of talking? *They* made game of me to start with; now, I guess it's but square that I should have *my* fling. You see I ain't an angel!"

Soon Wilson's reputation was about as bad as it could be. Perhaps some of the tales told about him were true, and perhaps some of them were not.

Anyhow, Mr. Walker held they gave him good and valid grounds for talking "straight" to his "sub" about a change in, or rather an addition to, the *personnel* of the establishment which he had in contemplation.

"I daresay you are aware that we are to have a new bookkeeper, and it will be just as well to have a clear understanding about her," began the proprietor slowly.

"*Her?*" echoed Fred, with all his facial muscles concentrated into an exclamation point. "Why——"

"You see," Walker went on, without paying any attention to the interruption, "she's got a character to lose, and I don't want her to lose it in *this* office. Now it will be just as well for you to keep away from her. Miss Symonds——"

"What! old Symonds' step-daughter, Madge?" asked Fred, with a quick flush all over his face.

"Quite so. Now, I'll just put it this way. The girl wants to be independent and to earn her own living. Well, I mean to give her a show. But I'm not going to give her the chance of getting into a mess here. So if I just see you meddling with her, I give you my word of honour to bounce——"

"Me! you were going to say?" interrupted Wilson nonchalantly.

"No! *Her*. And at once, too! And I take it you are man enough not to take the bread out of the girl's mouth. I daresay it's all right."

This simply floored Wilson. His respect for Walker's 'cuteness and generalship rose like the thermometer when a Melbourne southerly buster

takes a chop round with a rush to the North. He went into his den, and mildly and plaintively whistling the "Last Rose of Summer," sat down to puzzle out the situation as he waited for the last revise.

II.

It was all over the question of a "u" more or less that the deadly feud between Fred Wilson and old Symonds at first originated. Mr. Symonds, who did a somewhat spasmodic business under the elastic designation of "General Agent," occasionally supplied the *Chronicle* with commercial items. Now, being English, and high-toned Conservative at that, he insisted on spelling English in the old approved orthodox fashion. So when Wilson, in "subbing" his copy, cut out all the "u's" from "favour," "honour," and so forth, there was a debating society of two. Old Symonds opened fire with a string of bludgeon-like adjectives, and got more than he bargained for in exchange in the way of a few rapier-like thrusts of choice American. The result of it was that Wilson took over the Market Column, and a coolness arose between him and the former commercial editor. In short, it was war to the knife. Old Symonds did all he could to block Wilson from getting Municipal Council and Chamber of Commerce "items," while Wilson gibbeted him weekly in his local facetious "pars" entitled *News in Nutshells*. As Wilson's remarks gained in point and vigour the General Agent waxed wroth apace, and one day

there was an encounter in front of the "Belle-Vue" between the two men. It was not of long duration though,—it was all over in one round, in which Wilson was summarily victorious.

As might have been expected, this did not at all promote brotherly love. But hostilities were not so overt as before; each felt the other to be waiting and biding his time to rise up and slay.

Next Monday morning, sure enough, the new bookkeeper appeared. Wilson wished her good-morning and passed into his den. Next morning the performance was repeated, and the next, and the next, and so on for the best part of a fortnight. Mr. Walker had naturally kept a sharp look-out at starting, and was not at all dissatisfied with the course things were taking. He quietly rubbed his hands and chuckled to himself over what he was pleased to consider his intimate and superior knowledge of human nature.

But he was not by any means the only close student of humanity about. Although apparently so quiet and indifferent, the "sub" had his eyes keenly fixed upon the occupant of the box at the top of the steps leading into the office. And he contrived to do this without being observed, in a way at once simple and ingenious, if not very honourable. He knocked a knot out of one of the pine boards in the partition of his den, and he could thence survey the young lady of the establishment as effectually as old Æneas in the Cloud took stock of nascent Carthage and the charms of Queen Dido. It is to be feared that Wilson was just a trifle assiduous in this

study of human nature. Several times Morton had come in and found him rummaging violently among the books on the shelf just over the left-hand side of the aperture, and had asked him if he kept a "cutter" there. To the questioner's astonishment Wilson blushed perceptibly, and Morton would have fancied his surmise to be founded on fact had he not seen for himself that no surreptitious flask was stowed in that neighbourhood.

The truth was that Wilson was very much puzzled by and interested in the new-comer. At first he had tried to "size" her up in his usual fashion,—the fashion in which a stock-raiser estimates a beast, or a jockey takes in the "points" of a racer; for to Wilson, it is to be feared, women were but as animals, pure and simple. So on the day after he had removed the knot, he had allowed his eyes to dwell upon the girl's physical excellencies. In truth, even from his standpoint, *borné* and inexpressibly coarse as it was, she was a fine creature. Tall, and graceful in every curve of her figure, she was as lithe and lissom as a pantheress. Then the ankle she disclosed when she tripped up the steps, holding her dress close, as she did of a morning!

All this would have been enough to set Wilson plotting and scheming even if he had had no ulterior incentive. Yet, as he watched the girl, there was an indefinable something in her face that kept him from making the advances he meditated. He could see that her face often clouded and her large and beautiful brown eyes frequently got dimmed when she fancied no one saw her. And all the time he had watched

her he had never observed the smallest indication of levity on her part. Many of the "swells" and *petits maîtres* of Thylungra found their way to her counter on various pretexts, but never once did Wilson mark her giving any of them the slightest ground to take liberties, or even to assail her with the coarse witticisms they were pleased to term "chaff." There was seemingly not a trace of coquetry about her. When Delpratt, the "swagger" squatter from Bandoona, made an excuse for entering the office and leered at her, as he settled his half-yearly subscription, she just looked at him with that calm, simple look of hers that sat so well on her face, and (to use Wilson's phrase) he "got,"—instanter.

The only male creature she showed any favour to was a little urchin of some nine or ten years of age. Every second or third day at lunch-time (for she ate her slender mid-day repast at her seat of custom), little Dicky, her half-brother, would turn up and be at once admitted behind her counter. Wilson would look on, envying the urchin wildly, as Madge's long taper fingers strayed lovingly and tenderly through Dicky's towsy locks. Then if there was a button loose anywhere, it was seen to ; if there were rents in his jacket, they were repaired ; and all was done so gently and so quietly that the "sub" afterwards confessed to experiencing a queer sort of luxurious calm as he kept his eye at the aperture. Then when time came for Dick to take up his bag and depart for MacFadyn's Academy, Wilson wished he were in his place to receive, if not the "Snib," at least the kiss with which he was invariably dismissed.

All this threw the usually reckless and devil-may-care "pressman" into a state of unwonted unrest. There was something about the girl he could not understand; she was a new type to him.

"Guess she's rather the single survivor of an ancient one," he muttered to himself one day when the "type" idea first flashed upon him; "although even in the old times Messalinas were more plentiful than Lucretias, or Penelopes, I reckon."

His curiosity and interest increased day after day. He set himself to find out as many items about this strange *rava avis* as he possibly could. He noticed that her dresses, albeit the pink of neatness and taste, were of the simplest materials, and in some places were well-nigh threadbare. And to his wonder and astonishment he discovered that the girl had left the paternal, or rather step-paternal, roof-tree, and was established at Nivens's—a respectable shabby-genteel boarding-house, whose "tone" was reputed to be infinitely superior to the quality of the daily fare there served up.

The result of it all was that Wilson "allowed" he would await further developments.

He still occasionally ran across his deadly foe, the General Agent; but as old Symonds simply scowled, and then incontinently disappeared, no fresh overt hostilities took place. All the same, the fires of mutual hate were not by any means extinguished; they were simply slumbering and simmering, and each was watching keenly for a chance to level a lethal blow at his best-loved enemy. One afternoon Wilson saw his foe irresolutely

pass and repass the door two or three times, as if he were wishful to enter, and yet had some hesitation about doing so. Finally he screwed his courage up to the sticking point, and jumped up the steps. Wilson heard him mumbling and muttering quickly and volubly, but indistinctly; the "sub" at once went over to the partition and put his eye to the peep-hole. He could just see Madge's face over her step-father's left shoulder. He was struck with the weary and pained look that sat upon it. He could just faintly catch what she was saying.

"Very well, then, go away from here. At five o'clock there is usually no one in the School of Arts' reading-room. I shall be there then. But I tell you, it's no use talking; I am quite resolved."

Old Symonds made an impatient, angry gesture, and went down the steps. Wilson remained at the aperture for a minute or two, and then, stamping about and taking up his stick, went out whistling "John Brown's body" noisily and ostentatiously.

III.

The School of Arts in Thylungra was an important social institution. It ranked immediately after the bar-rooms of the "Royal," of the "Belle-Vue," and of the other five-and-thirty "Hotels" of which the township of two thousand souls—mostly very thirsty ones—boasted. It consisted of a library and a reading-room, the former being situated at the rear of the latter, with a small deal door between them. Usually towards five or half-past five they were both equally

deserted, inasmuch as at that hour the Librarian found his way over to the "Ariadne" for his tea and a "refresher." When Madge entered the front room a calm pervaded the building. The winter sun (it was now early in May) was just sinking red like a huge ball of fire over the right shoulder of Mount Bopple, and a delicious coolness was springing up. The lizards scurried off to their holes as her skirts brushed the steps leading up to the doorway. She went in and sat down beside the tumbled heap of newspapers on the table, looking like so many white ant-hills. The only sounds audible were the faint stridulation of the cicadæ outside, and the ghostly ticking of the cheap but gorgeous clock on the partition-wall,—a generous donation from Ebnetter, the smart German-Jew local watchmaker, who knew the worth of an inexpensive and judicious advertisement. She looked up wearily as a heavy tread slowly mounted the steps.

"Well, so you're here, are you?" began the newcomer in a tone at once querulous and blustering. "Do you know I'm just getting tired of your precious tricks and madhouse airs? Do you know, you hussy——"

"Now, Mr. Symonds, it will be just as well for you to talk quietly and gently. If you don't I will refuse to listen to you."

"Refuse, will you? That's nice! I like to hear that! I would like to know when you are to come home and to behave like a lady? You are disgracing me and my family in the eyes of the whole township."

"How is that?"

"Why, by behaving as you do! Leaving your home and going out working like a common shop-girl. It's disgraceful!"

"We have already talked over that," weariedly answered the girl, "and we aren't likely to agree about it. So, in the name of peace, leave it alone. Now—just let me finish, will you—" she went on, as Symonds showed signs of interrupting her; "I don't think as you do on these points. I don't call a man who is ashamed to work a gentleman, whatever you may do. I don't think it's gentlemanly to cheat a poor widow in order to keep up 'style.' I don't think it's even manly to put on airs and yet leave one's bills unpaid. And I don't think I'm disgraced by having to work for my living."

"Cheating the widow! What are you maundering about, I'd like to know?" almost shouted Symonds.

"What every one in the place is talking about. It was only a matter of £10 perhaps, but that is a great deal to a poor woman with a family. You sold Mrs. Thomson's ground for £13, and took £9, 10s. for commission. That was really high-souled of you!"

"It was business!" he growled. "And, besides, if you'd done as I told you, you'd now be riding in your four-horse buggy, and I'd be above this sort of grubbing, coolie life."

"Well, but I won't. *That's* settled."

"Won't you, though? Why, you fool, don't you know Harris is worth £40,000 if he's worth a penny?"

"I daresay he is. But, you see, I'm not for sale," Madge answered slowly.

"What a way to speak of marriage! Why, girl, I've a mind to give you what you deserve,—a good thrashing. I'll——"

And he took a stride forward and seized her, glaring with passion. Just then there was a tremendous crash in the library. Symonds started and at once released her wrist.

"What was that?" he muttered uneasily and shamefacedly as he opened the door and peered into the room. But in the quickly thickening gloom settling murkily on the book-shelves no one was visible. When he looked round, the reading-room also was empty,—Madge had slipped away. With an oath he strode out, slamming the door behind him. He had scarcely vanished when Fred Wilson's head peered darkly through the dividing doorway.

"Je-ru-sa-lem," said Wilson, as he emerged into the street.

IV.

For some time Wilson had been badgering Walker to get a Society Editress, or at least some lady to turn in Society "pars" for the *Chronicle*, and the manager, after much humming and hawing, had allowed Wilson to have his way, and had placed a modest sum on the weekly estimates for that particular purpose. The first column of "Social Gossip" had just appeared with great *éclat*, and had "boomed" the paper to a very appreciable extent.

The morning after the episode in the School of Arts, Miss Symonds was interviewed by Wilson, and, with many qualms and doubts, consented to undertake

the charge of "Society." It meant a considerable addition to her meagre income. Truth to tell, it was welcome to her, as she had been sore enough put to it to make ends meet. She was not a genius at paragraphing, by any means; notwithstanding, the Social Gossip column was a magnificent success. It was crisp, clean, and readable in the extreme. Perhaps the explanation was to be found in the fact that it was Wilson who always "subbed" her copy.

One outcome of this arrangement did not meet with much favour in Mr. Walker's eyes. He did not at all like the frequent interviews that now were necessary between the Lady Editress and his sub-editor. But he did not venture to say anything, because as yet he had but little to go upon. So he contented himself with the resolve to keep a keen look-out for any untoward development.

Wilson he watched with especial closeness. He began to surmise that his "sub" meant mischief in some way or other, and yet he was extremely puzzled to divine exactly what form or colour it would assume. He was conscious of a change in Wilson's conduct, of which he was very suspicious. In the first place, his ear never caught the echo of any of those awful, albeit ingenious and racy profanities where-with the monotony of the office had hitherto been relieved. And the visits to Polly Foggarty's camp had ceased, while Jeremy Cochrane and Ned Powell were vociferously indignant at Wilson's failure to "melt" his monthly cheque with them in the "Ariadne." Once even Walker had heard him

receive an invitation to the hospitalities of Carindoon with a curt refusal. Clearly there was a screw loose somewhere.

Meanwhile Miss Symonds did not find her position as Lady Editress either a sinecure or a bed of roses. Every week she had to deal with a bushel of indignant letters, and occasionally a beslandered citizen came wanting to see the editor about a "paragraph to which my attention has been directed." Needless to say, it was not she that was the erring one. She could scarcely ever recognise her own handiwork after it had been through the sub-editorial mill.

One day Fred had gone to the printing-room at the rear, when all at once he heard a frightful uproar on the front premises. He sprang forward, and was just in time to witness a tragedy. Jim Byrnes, the local bully, was standing at the counter with a whip in one hand, and waving a copy of the *Chronicle* in the other.

"Ye're responsible! Don't yer go fer to deny it! My gal ain't a 'denizen,' as ye call her in this yer paragraff. She's an honest woman, she air! So take that!"

And the hulking brute struck the girl to the floor with his shoulder-of-mutton fist.

Wilson was over the counter like a flash of lightning, and on the lout's throat like a tiger-cat. He seemed suddenly to have become something like about eight feet in stature, and strong in proportion. He tore the whip from the bully, hurled him down the steps, and then pummelled him like an infuriated human



“YE'RE RESPONSIBLE! DON'T YER GO FER TO DENY IT!”
—P. 284.

steam-hammer, might and main. If ever a man in Thylungra got a first-class hiding, Mr. Jim Byrnes got one on that (for him) unlucky Saturday morning. The performance ended by Wilson dumping him on the pavement, and finally flushing the gutter with his insensible anatomy. Then he handed him over to a son of Erin, who just then appeared arrayed in all the glory of a Queensland Police Force jumper.

He sprang into the office, and cleared out the "comps" who had come crowding about Madge.

"Bring some water, you doggoned, derved idiots," he roared (these were not exactly the phrases he used, but they will do as well as blanks), "and then go to blazes!"

He took the girl's head in his arms and gently bathed her face. By-and-by she came round, and woke up to find Master Fred sobbing over her like a baby. She got up painfully and confusedly, and after a few minutes insisted on going on with her work. It was in vain that he ordered her to go home. So he went unwillingly into his den and sat down on his stool. But work he couldn't. His heart was going like a steam-pump.

"Confound it!" he muttered fiercely, "I'm going crazy, I do believe."

Although the Byrnes episode was kept as quiet as possible, it could not be entirely stifled. It leaked out, and next day the *News* spread a version of it all over the district. However, the most important items were fortunately omitted, and no great harm resulted. But Mr. Walker judged it a good text on which to preach a homily, which he forthwith

delivered. He was only brusquely told to "stop it" for his pains. That was serious.

Things came to a climax three days afterwards. It was the evening of the Queen's birthday, on which the Thylungra annual regatta regularly takes place. There was a "Grand Assembly" in the Town Hall in honour of the victorious Thylungra men and the crews from the capital, whom the former had beaten in such a thorough-paced fashion. It was really a great occasion, and the Thylungra belles robed, or rather disrobed, themselves in order to do it full and ample justice. The Lady Editress of the *Chronicle* was there, as in duty bound, to take notes of the dresses and the latest vagaries of local fashion, and next day the "Society" column would be filled with twaddle of this description,—"*Miss Noonan, pale blue merveilleux; Miss Clifford, cream satin; Miss Black, black satin, with white satin underskirt, etc., etc., etc.*"

Wilson "allowed" he wouldn't appear there. It was an assembly of the respectables, and they were not *his* "crowd." He did not know many of the Beauties, nor was he quite certain of the reception he would meet with from those he did chance to know. Yet something seemed to keep pulling at him and urging him towards the Town Hall. Half-hourly his uneasiness increased; finally it became so urgent that he thought he would just stray down the street and glance into the ball-room. Of course he wouldn't dance, no more would he stay. So he sauntered along to the doorway just as he was, and elbowed his way through the jabbering crowd of

black fellows, who with wildly rolling, astonished eyes, were gazing in open-mouthed amazement at the "white-fellows' corroboree," as they termed the "Assembly." He entered the room and looked around. The place was one glare of light and wildly whirling couples. Away at the far end, on the platform whence stump speeches were delivered at election times, and the majesty and the omnipotence of the Public (with a capital P) were proclaimed at indignation meetings, Herr Pechotch's band was crashing forth sprightly dance music in deafening peals. The kangaroo and the emu in the National arms overhead looked down stiffly and solemnly with an imbecile and fatuous stare, as if in serious doubt about the propriety of seeing so many "White fellow Mary" skipping around in such an abundant paucity of raiment. Wilson pushed his way along the wall behind the lines of spectators three deep till he got somewhere about half-way down its length. There he stood and looked at the revolving couples as they spun past him. This did not interest him much, until he caught sight of a well-known figure in rather an embarrassing situation. Miss Symonds had good-naturedly given a dance to Mr. Mucklebucket, the livery stable-keeper next door to the *Chronicle* office. Now, inasmuch as Mr. Mucklebucket's notions of sacrificing to Terpsichore were to clutch his partner low down, bend himself forward, until his body and legs formed an angle of 60° with his hip-joints as a pivot, over which his dress-coat draped sadly like a funeral pall, and then waltz round like a performing grizzly, the general effect

presented was not altogether graceful. The girl seemed to feel the situation. As she passed the place where Wilson stood, her face flushed as their eyes met. What a furious throb the "sub's" heart gave! He actually looked round in confusion to see if any one had heard it. Just then the music stopped, and the dancers began to promenade round the room. As Miss Symonds and her partner again passed Wilson's point of vantage their eyes again met. Fred felt that he was losing his head. He stepped forward, and, blushing like a school-girl, begged the favour of the next waltz. He scarcely knew what Miss Symonds said,—he was only conscious of a galvanic shock as the girl placed her finger-tips upon his shoulders, and of a stream of liquid fire running up his veins as he put his arm around her waist. Then the band struck up again and they were off. Round and round and round they went; while the music sounded like the Siren's song and the hall swam like the courts of Heaven. And Wilson could dance too; with *him* the girl did not feel ridiculous. On and on and on they spun, slowly and stately, his face flushed and his eyes sparkling with all his nerves tingling as he felt her heart beating against his. Why couldn't it last for ever? Couple after couple had retired exhausted, yet the twain floated on. On and on they swung, while all the assembly gazed in wonderment and amaze at this poem in motion from the *Chronicle* office. Then the music ceased with a crash and Fred awoke.

The awaking was not pleasant. He recognised the

fact that his dancing with the girl would do her but little good. Already he could see queer staring looks levelled at her, and skirts ominously rustled out of her way as she approached. He bent low over her as he led her to a seat, and then vanished. Shortly afterwards she too had disappeared from the scene.

Mr. Walker left the Hall about one o'clock. He had seen Wilson's mad dance, and shook his head as he looked on. Trouble was certainly at hand. He would speak out clearly and distinctly and decisively the following morning. As he, with his chin dropped into his shirt-front in meditation on the problem, strolled up the street past the office, he stopped and looked over at the window. He stood stock-still in his tracks as if he had been shot. At first he could scarcely credit his eyesight. But as he looked he became quite aware that his senses were not befooling him. There were two shadows moving on the blind,—a man's and a woman's. He was more than scandalised when the arm of one silhouette evidently went round the waist of the other. Certainly it was about high time to take action!

Next morning accordingly the proprietor went down to the office determined to take up a firm and resolute attitude, and to issue his ultimatum. As he entered there was no one in the box at the top of the steps; he asked for Miss Symonds, and was told that she had come in with Mr. Wilson a quarter of an hour before, and had been with him in his room ever since. An ominous frown settled on the managerial

forehead at this intelligence; he strode impulsively towards the sub-editorial room, and threw the door open with a bang. The sight that met his eyes made him start again, and quiver with virtuous and overpowering indignation. Master Fred had his arm round the girl's waist, nor did he remove it when Mr. Walker entered. His impudence was surely something altogether too outrageous!

"What's all this?" began Mr. Walker sternly. "A fine man you are! Didn't I tell you what would happen if this occurred. Out *you* go at once, my fine lady! If you can't take care of *your* character, I must take care of the character of this office! I——"

"Office be blanked," broke in the "sub" with a defiant flash of his eyes. "As for *her* character, I guess the man who says a word against it will have to deal with *me*."

"You know," he added more quietly, and in a matter-of-fact, confidential tone, "we were married about three-quarters of an hour ago!"

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