

Home Circle.

DROPPING CORN.

[Philadelphia Press.]
Pretty "hoebie Lane and I,
In the soft May weather,
Barefoot down the furrows went
Dropping corn together.

Sole by side across the field,
Back and forth we hurried;
All the golden grains we dropped
Soon the plow-share buried.

Blue birds on the hedges sat,
Chirping low and billing;
"Why," thought I, "not follow suit,
If the maid is willing?"

So I whispered, "Phoebe, dear,
Kiss me—" "Keep on droppin'!"
Called her father from the plow—
"Ther's no time for stoppin'!"

The cord was loosed—the moment sped;
The golden charm was broken!
No rer more between us two
Word of love was spoken.

What a little slip, sometimes,
All our hope releases!
How the merest breath of chance
Breaks our joy in pieces!

Sorrow's cup, the ough oft drained,
Never lacks for filling,
And we can't get Fortune's kiss
When the maid is willing!

GIRLS.

Mr. Ruskin has been expressing at considerable length and with characteristic plainness of speech, his views on girls and their relations to love and courtship. The subject is one which has commanded the best thought of the best minds in all ages, and when treated by so masterly a writer as Mr. Ruskin naturally attracts wide attention. Whatever interests the girls' interests everybody else whose heart is where it should be, and there is not a girl in England worthy of her sex who could fail to be profoundly interested in what Mr. Ruskin has been saying. He starts with the in-pregnant general position that there is nothing in this world more beautiful than a beautiful girl, and to this passes to say that no girl is plain who is well bred, kind, or modest; all real deformity means want of manliness or heart; all real ugliness means some kind of hardness of heart or vulgarity of education. "The wickedness of a nation," he says, "may be briefly measured by observing how far it has made its girls miserable," a philosophic observation which is tantamount to an admission that the United States is as free from wickedness as any other country on the globe.

These general assertions are not the ones which have excited controversy in England. Their truth is admitted on all hands. It is only when he comes to defining what he calls ideal love-making that he calls forth adverse criticism. His theory of that is his old one, that each girl should have four or five suitors all under vow to her at the same time. This vow should not be "an oath of allegiance" preventing the freedom of further search or choice, but only the promise of the youth, that, until he saw one better worth winning, he should faithfully obey his chosen mistress's will in all things, and suffer such a test as she chose to put him to, it being understood that at any time he had the power as openly to withdraw as he had openly accepted the candidature. It is perhaps unnecessary to remark that no girl in all England has objected to this arrangement, but there have been growls of disapproval from the men, who are of much the same composition in England as they are everywhere else. To the American girl the theory will scarcely have the merit of novelty. It has been in practice here more or less for many years, and has worked, in the main, to the great satisfaction of the girls.

Yet, even with this broad and liberal system in force, Mr. Ruskin takes a despondent view of love-making. He says that real love between young people is "an impossibility and an absurdity," and that he is convinced by what has been said about his complex-suitor scheme, that "very few young people brought up on modern principles, have ever felt love, or even know what it means, except under the conditions in which it is also possible to the lower animals." He says he could easily prove this, if the subject were not too painful, by the evidence given him in a single evening, during which he "watched the enthusiastic acceptance by an English audience of Salvini's frightful and radically false interpretation of Othello." We fail to perceive how any girl, especially if she had six pledged suitors, could be expected to exhibit to the casual spectator a capacity for real love while contemplating Othello's terrible experience. The natural effect upon a girl with only one suitor would be to make her shy of him. The awful possibility of holding vows from six possible Othellos would inevitably depress the spirits of any truly affectionate girl. Mr. Ruskin does his own theory injustice to condemn it after such an unfair experiment.

But he seems to have found other obstacles equally fatal, for he adds that if he were so disposed he could show that "true love is inconsistent with railways, with joint stock banks, with landed interest, with parliamentary interest, with grouse shooting, with lawn tennis, with monthly magazines, spring fashions, and Christmas cards." This makes the matter much more serious, and implies that there is something peculiar about the course of true love in England. In this country lawn tennis has frequently

been found to be a direct incentive to love-making, and as for spring fashions, instead of being an obstacle, we believe it to be a well established fact that their presence is often an absolute necessity both for the inception and perpetuation of the tender passion. Perhaps Mr. Ruskin does not state the case correctly about the English girls—and perhaps after all his contemplations he does not understand girls any better than other men do.—Evening Post.

THE MEANEST MAN ALIVE.

"Somewhere on this earth," says Carlyle, "lives the meanest man of all, if only we can find him." He has been found. For twenty-seven years a faithful old horse had toiled for this man. He had bent his stiff knees and strained his rheumatic legs long after animals of half his service had been turned out to pasture for permanent rest. But the old horse was ambitious. He had stayed on the bus. He had switched his tail on the willow-trees for so many years that it had grown short and stubby, and there was an awkward fold in his under lip, which had grown unmanageable since the bit had worn the corners of his mouth away. This veteran had drawn thousands of tourists from the depot to the Cataract house at Niagara, and patiently fought flies or gnawed the manger while the proprietor flogged them. He was a party, but not a participator, to their robbery, and if the sad-eyed brute could have spoken he no doubt would have warned the unsuspecting passengers to beware of the hotel and depart while they had means enough to reach their homes.

The old horse got hay sufficient to keep him alive while his strength lasted, but the other day he gave out and the promising child of sin who owned the best concluded to make a show of him, as his value for other purposes was gone. The Cataract house is near the brink of the whirling, boiling, blinding torrent that leaps over the American falls a few rods below; and, taking the animal out to a point close by last Saturday night, this son of Belial and his crew pushed the faithful old brute in.

There was a fearful struggle, for even a horse regards with terror that awful chasm to which the boiling channel leads. At a point twenty-five feet above the fall the horse regained his feet, and supported by a sharp rock that rose out of the foaming river, held himself firm against the force of the waters. There he stood, casting piteous—almost human—looks of appeal toward the shore.

Then that peculiar and unique inhumanity which can be found nowhere else, it is to be hoped, but at Niagara, cropped out in a new place. Men gathered on the banks and began hurling rocks and stones at the poor brute. Finally, they drove him from his support; but, by what seemed almost supernatural strength, he breasted that dreadful torrent, and, making a last struggle for life, reached the shore at Prospect Park and clambered up the bank. The gallant old animal had accomplished what no one believed possible, and would have been a relic worth preserving, but a broken leg made him worthless, and so a brave policeman came forward and ended his life by a shot through the head. At last the old horse died as a horse should—on the green sward, under the green trees, and beneath the blue sky.

There may be words in Spanish or Russian that would fitly characterize the action of the dog who could thus treat a worn-out servant. There is nothing in English, and so we leave the subject. Only this: When you visit Niagara the Cataract house and the persecutor of this dumb beast are things to avoid.—Chicago News.

LEAP YEAR.

This is Bis-sextile or Leap Year. We add a day to February in leap year, but the Romans counted the 24th of February twice and the day was called by them dies bissextus—the sextile or sixth day before the 1st of March. The term "leap year" comes from the fact that in ordinary years the day of the month which falls on Monday one year will fall on Tuesday the next year, but it a bis-sextile year it would leap over Tuesday and fall on Wednesday.

An Irish tradition of the year is that the ladies may propose, and if not accepted, may claim a silk gown. St. Patrick was walking along the shores of Lough Neah one day when he was accosted by St. Bridget in tears and was told that a mutiny had broken out in the nunnery over which she presided, the ladies claiming the right to pop the question. St. Patrick said he would concede them the right every seventh year, when St. Bridget threw her arms around his neck and exclaimed: "Arrah, Patrick, jewel, I daurn't go back to the girls w' h such a proposal; make it one year in four!" St. Patrick replied: "Bridget, acushla, squeeze me that way again and I'll give ye leap year the longest of the lot. St. Bridget, upon this, popped the question to St. Patrick himself, who of course could not marry, so he patched up the difficulty as best he could with a kiss and a silk gown.—New North West.

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