

mandolin by producing a crumpled visiting card that my nervous fingers had strayed upon in the pocket of my Norfolk jacket.

"The family is not at home," said the woman, but she took the card between two muscular fingers, and I could have danced in my agitation when I saw that she was spelling out a pencilled memorandum on the reverse—"Remember the Allsopp" it ran, for I recollected too late that I had put that card in my pocket because we were to pass the Blue Peter Inn, where the bottled ales were kept. Then she read my name. Before she ended her study I said, as a desperate man:

"You have some highly interesting works of art here?"

"What have the family got here, sir?" she said with respectful ferocity.

"The pictures," I said, "the—the Bartholomew van der Hellst."

"Ah!" she returned, dryly, "them, is it? Well, come in and see them, sir."

We wiped our boots ostentatiously and meekly on a cocoanut fibre mat. She called me "sir," but I felt that "area sneak" was what she meant the title to convey to me. It came home to me especially when Yvette's umbrella got mixed under the mackintosh with a mandolin string, which twanged noisily as we stepped on the oak boards of the hall.

The hall was almost bare, stripped of all but a table and the cocoanut mat. One loud note of color, quite out of key with the sombre space, was struck by a large three-quarter length portrait in the school of, say, the Royal Academy of 1870.

The house struck chill to us as we walked creaking through its maze of ways, Yvette nesting against me, and whispering that we would have a fire in the sitting room if ever we went some again. It was a beautiful old house. It might have been, that is, if only the cheerful logs had flamed up suddenly and crackled and hissed in the great fireplaces. I know we should have claimed it as the home we used to dream of, and furnish out with beautiful things made of imaginings. But no one lived there. The rooms were only places where people had died, behind drawn curtains, and that a long while since. But—

"The picture gallery?" announced the big, grim woman, turning on us again as we entered it, and Yvette shrank from me, nearly dropping the mandolin. It was a low-ceiled, square room of great size, with dark shadowy corners, lit by three long narrow windows with square panes, three in a row.

"Built by Sir George Tuke, second barronet, in seventeen hundred and six. The carving along under the ceiling is considered very fine by 'ggins, who executed likewise those in the chapel."

She said this musingly, as if it were a lesson long learned that she had not been called upon to repeat for many years. Perhaps she hadn't. Her very voice sounded so far back in the years that its sadness sounded like regret for the second "barronet." And the pictures?

Yvette caught my arm again, and looked in my eyes to see whether we saw the same sight. There were many frames upon the walls, perhaps thirty of all sizes. But in them, where pictures should have smirked and scowled, were blind, dingy white spaces. Each picture had been carefully covered with neatly trimmed squares of old newspapers—"Morning Post," "Standard" and "The County Mercury."

The housekeeper's was a moment of sombre triumph. Then, standing under the largest frame, she went on:

"Apperodyty surrounded by ferns and gracies," by Rubens, giv' to the second barronet by Prince Eujume."

"Eut," I gasped, "don't those papers come off?"

"No," she replied firmly, "they're gummed on. It don't hurt them."

"But can't we see them?" I said. "Are they always?"

"Yes, they're always," she answered firmly. "You wouldn't like this lady you've brought here to see a picture like Rubens; I'm sure you wouldn't wish me to. The gracies are the shameless. In Sir George's time, Lord Byron came to look at those gracies, and you must have read what he was. Come, sir."

We stood in amazement while she moved on to the next picture. She would not abate a word of her ancient duty. "Gobyon Tuke, Esq., in a full—suit—of—harmer—done—by—Holbing—and—attributed—to—him—builder—of—the—old—hall—in—one—five—four—one—anna—domino."

"Wouldn't you like us to see him?" asked Yvette cautiously.

"No, ma'am," was the decisive answer. "He was a persecutor of the Wesleyans. If not, I ask you—why the harmer?"

I remember little more that the grim woman said, but we halted before each picture, and the history of each picture was summarized in bewildering fashion. One ancestor was denied us because he drank the effigy lurking under newspapers being appealed to for corroboration positive. We were almost sorry that we inquired the reasons for shrouding Mistress Bridget and Mistress Angela Tuke, by Kneller and Lely, for these reasons dealt with the costume of the Restoration period, and were given in no mincing fashion.

Then I think we came away, leaving one of our last two-shilling pieces in the waste of her great pale hand, whence it disappeared, apparently absorbed into the system, and we were conducted out and seen off the premises with distrustful coughs delivered through an em-bur-sure in her stout fingers.

The door clanged, and Yvette, seizing my hand with the one unoccupied with her mackintosh and mandolin, made me run down the path beside her.

"Come away from that hateful house. Ugh! That woman would starve canaries! How can any one live there who wasn't an extinct baronet?"

We ran through the garden, whose features were those of the Sluggard's—here burned and waste with the summer heat—here rank and lush and tangled. At the corner of the elm-grove we turned to look at the house.

"Look!" shrieked Yvette, "on the roof—beside those red tiles, what's that?"

From some recess in midforest of chimneys, something furry and pink stole out, and, poising for a moment on a gutter edge, slithered down by a gutter pipe and scampered toward us.

"Run!" said Yvette.

And run we did, pursued from that weird house by its demon, a gaunt, long haired, pink cat.

We left it behind when we reached the road.

We did not play any more that day, but came home footsore.

ling upon us as a golden surprise and making us coo with delight."

"At present we have spent two shillings," and Yvette giggled over with recollections of the Old Masters.

It had rained a little, and we drew up our chairs to the first fire of the year under the little chimney piece with the two shellhouses and the clock that had stopped.

The window blind flapped and creaked until Yvette roused herself from the comfortable chair nook to fasten it. Her fingers were touching the blind cord when the bottom of the blind was pushed back suddenly, and Yvette jumped back with a little cry. It was the demon of Farringwater, the huge pink cat, who, putting his forefeet carefully together on the ledge, leaped thence to the shelter of the tablecloth, from which a minute later he deliberately emerged to stretch himself on the rug, with loud purring that invited familiarity.

We are hospitable people—my wife and I—and we found ourselves kneeling beside the demon, uttering solicitous "poo-poo" or "pussys," and offering milk and hard roe, parcel of that with which our last herring had been delicately furnished.

"I believe he's dyed," said Yvette; "I'm certain he is, he comes off on my handkerchief now he's a little damp. That woman must be very hatter-mad. And what on earth has the pussy Perstan tied round its neck?"

A little cocked hat note. A soaked leaf from a metallic notebook. We untied the piece of twine it was strung to, flattening it carefully, and this is what we read, knocking our heads together in our new excitement:

"If you get this bring the police and lock her up. There will be a reward if you like, but look sharp. You'll hear me shout if you make row enough."

"Her' must be the housekeeper demon," said Yvette, devouring the sodden pencil legend, "unless it means her familiar the cat. And who is it she has locked up? Do you think it is the persecuting ancestor appealing from durance under 'The Morning Post'?"

"It's too weak—this little handwriting."

"And he's modern enough to know about the police," said Yvette, "and look how he spells him. There's only one 'I' in police, isn't there?"

"We have no chance," I said, "of arriving at a consensus of the opinion of the force, for there is only one of him in Lynchurch, and he's P. C. Kelly, who is staying on leave with his mother, the widow. I admit that one 'I' is a starveling way of spelling him."

"We can't go to-night," said Yvette, decidedly; "your boots are so wet."

"In the morning, then," said I, "the cavalcade shall start, and this time we'll hire a wagon—we won't walk there again."

Yvette was biting her thumb and gazing at the pink cat who was sleeping on his well warmed side, replete with milk, purring mildly as in his dreams he followed droves of purple mice to a catty doom.

Said she: "My theory is that the old family butler is kept chained up by that woman while she bloats on his board wages."

"It may be," I answered, "but oh, Yvette, what an adventure for two shillings!"

IV.

It was early morning—early, that is, for us to have arrived at far distant Farringwater. Policeman Kelly, with whom I had often shared tobacco when I met him in his holiday short sleeves on the seafront, had put on the official with his blue coat and silver buttons, and between the jolts of the cart that brought us had in luminous but disconnected sentences sketched me the respectful attitude which the instructed citizen should assume in his relations with the force.

I listened to his artless talk which mingled with the babble of Yvette, who was explaining the advantages of a seafaring career over that of an author to Kelly's cousin Jim, who remained an unconvinced seaman. Battle and breeze were absent from his own professional conversation, which ran with somewhat excessive detail to a description of the provisions consumed, unwillingly by himself and others, on board the coaster John and Charles Wesley off Cardiff.

I was a little nervous, for it occurred to me that even the presence of P. C. Kelly would not justify a forcible entry into Farringwater Hall, but I think I betrayed little diffidence as I led my posse from the lane, where we left the wagon in charge of an open mouthed boy, up the avenue and across the neglected garden to the green, moist portico. Halted there, a straggling line of four, I gained time by again handing round the crumpled leaf from the metallic notebook, now almost illegible.

Then, as I reckoned all along, Yvette, who had got the pink Persian in a basket, took the reins of power. I handed over my command very cheerfully.

"Come," she said, "we're going to deliver this thing, whatever it is, that wrote this. So, Y. Kelly, you come to the door with me, and we'll

talk to the cat's mistress about the pink cat until we get an entrance, then we'll make a plan. You two others can patrol round the house, and come if we whistle. Quick! out of the way, she's coming."

We slipped round the corner of the portico just before the door opened. We heard a short parleying between Yvette's voice and the deep bass of the fiend housekeeper, and then the door shut suddenly. Peeping round the corner, we saw no one left in the portico, and I became for the first time anxious about Yvette, and wished I had not let her venture without me into the den.

"There's where the cat escaped," I said to Jack, pointing upward toward the gutter.

He screwed up his eyes, staring at the place.

"Ah," he murmured, "that's it, is it?" and he spat on his hands thoughtfully, and measured the wall with his eye.

I'm not a man of action, so I followed him obediently to the inner courtyard, which he suggested we should visit. There he disappeared under a straw loft and emerged with a long ladder, which we carried away between us without any surface indication of disapproval from a stone deaf and venerable hind who was sunning himself seated on the shaft of a long disused cart. I felt that he must be the husband of the woman we had seen in the yard on our last visit. We carried it back, I say, and, acting under Jack's direction and with Jack's rather grudgingly yielded assistance, I planted it against the wall.

"Wait a bit," said Jack.

While I waited a bit he ran up the rungs, and, laying hold of the coping stones, swung himself up and disappeared among the gables. I would have followed him, but he had desired me to wait, and Yvette might want my help, and I was not certain whether I could do that swinging up business. In five minutes by my Waterbury he came back, dropping to the ground like a squirrel.

"Come on to the house," he cried, excitedly; "I've spoken with him—Lord, Lord!"

We turned the corner again just as the door opened.

"Come in quick, quick!" called Yvette, and we followed her down the passage at the double.

In the picture gallery the housekeeper, trembling with rage, stood before an open door in the wall like a black silk lioness guarding the entrance to her cavernous private life.

"It's a secret door," whispered Yvette. "I found the spring because that knob of the carving was so worn and shiny, and touched it, but—"

P. C. Kelly was facing her like a man, though exhausted by remonstrances. He hailed my approach with the unfounded but politic statement that I was a magistrate. For a constable I thought this a good point of cunning, but it drew on me the beetling glance of the housekeeper.

"He," said she, recognizing me at once, "that he aren't. He's a stroller."

And at that moment Jack, who had lurked behind me, sprang under her arm and dashed up the little staircase behind the panel door. With a positive roar of anger, the woman made as though she would follow him, when the determination suddenly faltered, and she said mildly: "Take him and lock him up yourself, then. Now, what were you saying about my pussy cat? He's not had a drop of dye for three days, poor thing."

While P. C. Kelly paused to answer her Yvette and I crept after Jack up the stair, which ended in a little lobby and a few feet square with a door at the end, which Jack was opening with a rusty, squeaking key.

It opened, and out stepped a little man in a frock coat, covered with cobweb, his hair scanty and sandy gray over a bald forehead. For a minute he merely blinked in an embarrassed manner.

"May I ask?" I began.

"I'm Sir Crevecoeur Tuke," he said; "have you got her locked up—Mrs. Bullimore, I mean?"

He blinked at Yvette, and at once began slapping his sleeves and trouser knees, and running his dingy fingers through his cobwebby hair. My old nurse would have sketched his condition as "crooked with fluff and flock and flue"; she would have been quite right.

"What on earth?" we said.

Down below we heard P. C. Kelly summarizing the English constitution at great length to that erstwhile mystery, Mrs. Bullimore.

"She had never seen me, you know," said the Baronet rapidly, "not before I came back—been away more'n twenty years—been here about a fortnight."

"What on earth?" we were saying again.

"Come home at last," he said. "Brokin' in Johanneburg last thing—fore that, brokin' in New-Orleans. Took me into the hall, she did—that's my pitcher, don't y' know, in the hall. Said, 'You aren't a bit like it.' I never was like that, though my poor mother thought I was then. Said I was a swindler, and she expected Sir Crevecoeur home every minute."

"What did she do?" was asked.

"This is the hiding hole—we used to call it. Said I could wait till Sir Crevecoeur came home. Locked me up. Took me here, and made me go. Had to look at that." That was a grisly looking meat chopper, hanging by a string to the wall of the lobby. "Took it in her fist every meal she brought—d—n bad meals they were. Yesterday cat came with her. She's mad as a March hare—starves the cat. When I heard your voices yesterday I wrote note and tied it on, then I pinched pussy's tail, and let her out of window. Thought you couldn't help noticing her. I say, let's get out of this."

There was an interesting scene in the picture gallery. The housekeeper is as mad as a hatter, and I believe is still unconvinced; but, to our amazement, she is to remain at her post.

"She'll keep any other chaps out, after all," said the head of the Tukes, who appears to be a man of singularly equable and forgiving temperament.

"Yes, out or in," said Yvette.

He has given Jack and the P. C. 30 shillings each, and he gave me permission to sponge the newspaper off the Holbein. He stood chuckling at the picture gallery while I did so, and on my expressing admiration at the result, he pressed his ancestor, Gobyon, on my acceptance.

I took it, after all, you know.

He is a grateful man. "I'm bringing out some gold mines," he said; "come up to town and be a director. Stand you in a good thing, very likely."

We all left the hall together the same day, in the cart. Sir Crevecoeur stood up and waved his hand to his tenantry, the deaf elder and his wife and the still doubting maniac, Mrs. Bullimore.

"Give that pink cat some milk and things," he shouted. "Blow it out, how y' expect to keep a cat from runnin' away if you don't? Blow it out!"

She picked the cat up and disappeared with it. Yvette thinks she took it away to be "redipped same color."

The cart jolted and Sir Crevecoeur sat heavily in my lap.

I am going to be a director and sit on a board.

—E. Nesbit and Oswald Barron, in Black and White.

CLIFF DWELLERS IN CHINA.

A STRANGE SETTLEMENT, LIKE A COLONY OF SAND SWALLOWS.

From The Springfield Republican.

Professor G. Frederick White, of Oberlin, who started on a tour around the world several months ago, reached China just before the Boxers' outbreak had assumed dangerous proportions, and at once made an excursion into Mongolia, returning later to Tien-Tsin. From there, on June 2, he sent an account of a singular and interesting village of Catholic cliff dwellers which he visited in Mongolia. It is quite probable that the native Christians he describes have since been massacred. Professor White prefaces the description of the village with a few brief paragraphs about the curious nature of the territory in which it is situated:

"The eastern border of Mongolia and the northeastern part of China are largely covered with loess (loess), one of the most interesting and puzzling of all the geological deposits. Its German name comes from the valley of the Rhine, where loess is found in considerable quantities. The inhabitants of the Mississippi and Missouri valleys of the United States are familiar with the deposit in the bluffs at Vicksburg, Kansas City, Omaha and Sioux City. During the siege of Vicksburg the people took refuge in spacious rooms dug out in the deposit at a considerable depth below the surface. At numerous places along the Missouri River it stands in perpendicular exposures more than a hundred feet high, and city streets are cut through its long, perpendicular sides, which stand like a wall for many years. When a section breaks off from the cliff it always leaves a perpendicular face.

"Yet the deposit is so soft that its surface can be readily cultivated, and it can be handled with a shovel at any depth. The material principally consists of extremely fine sand, with a little lime intimately mixed with it. It is so porous that the rain which falls upon the surface passes entirely through the deposit, preventing the formation of springs of water until an impervious stratum is reached underneath it all. It endures drouth better than any other soil.

"The most extensive development of the loess anywhere in the world is in Mongolia in an elevated region from 3,000 feet to 5,400 feet above the sea, but it has been eroded by water during long geological ages into a very uneven surface, with numerous narrow valleys from 1,000 feet to 3,000 feet deep, with innumerable tributary gullies coming down the sides of the intervening ridges. Many isolated peaks, also, rise to an absolute height of from 6,000 feet to 7,000 feet above sea level. Into this rugged region has drifted during a recent epoch an immense amount of fine dust which constitutes the loess. That it has been blown in by the winds is evident from the positions in which it lies. It appears almost exactly like a series of immense snowdrifts that have accumulated behind the barriers which have caused lulls in the wind, permitting the suspended particles to settle in protected places, while it has been swept bare from the exposed positions.

"These deposits of loess are specially valuable because of their fertility. But in Northern China it is of especial interest in furnishing cheap, comfortable and salubrious dwelling places for multitudes of people. In a recent excursion through the eastern part of Mongolia, outside the famous city of Kolgan, I saw a large number of such villages excavated in the drifts of loess hanging on the sides of the mountains. In walking over the grassed surface it was no uncommon thing to stumble against a chimney protruding from a habitation below. From a distance the side of the hill looked like an exposed bank pierced with innumerable swallows' nests. The interior of the houses are clean and comfortable. When the walls have been moistened and smoothed over with a trowel they have a hard finish which does not crumble off. The rooms are uniformly dry and are warm in winter and cool in summer. On the sloping back of a hill several stories of such houses are often seen above and slightly back of each other, the roof of one being the front dooryard of the house above it."

THE MOST MUSICAL TOWN.

From the Gaulois.

Do you know which is the most musical town in the whole world? It is Desterd, in Brazil. One of our readers who resides there writes: "In our town, which contains scarcely fifteen thousand inhabitants, possessed of small means, there are three hundred pianos and seven choral societies. The three suburbs again boast of six musical societies—two for each." If the manners of this town are not exceptionally sweet proverbs are of no account.



BEGGAR—WILL YOU BE SO KIND AS TO GIVE ME A PAIR OF THE DOCTOR'S TROUSERS? LADY—SORRY, BUT I'M THE DOCTOR MYSELF.—(Meggendorfer Blätter.)