GOOD STORIES OF THE PRESENT DAY.

It Was a Critical Time When the French Ship Hove in Sight.

"I was only 13 years of age when I left Cape Town to return to England with my uncle," said Robert Johnson, in telling the story of the ill-fated packet, the Three Princes. "This was thirty-five years ago, but all the details are very fresh in my mind."

The packet had a crew of 25 or 30 men, and left the Cape with over 100 passengers and a large freight. His uncle was an army officer named Dunning, a Captain, who was returning home on leave of absence to recruit his health. The voyage was without event until the packet had made a distance of about 600 miles. When off Cape Frio she encountered very heavy weather for two days, losing her foremast and bowsprit, and springing a leak. The injuries were in process of repair when, at dead of night, with the ship rolling heavily in the swell left by the gale, the cry of fire was heard. A general alarm had scarcely been sounded when it was realized that the ship was doomed. The flames had caught in the forehold, and were fed by such inflammable materials that they soon burst through the deck. As a matter of fact, after the first quarter of an hour, the ship's officers were unable to enforce discipline. The sailors looked upon the ship as lost, and wanted to be off in the boats, and their example had its influence on many of the passengers. Capt. Dunning and three or four other army officers stood at the boats with cocked pistols and prevented the rush which would have taken place. The ship was headed so as to keep the flames forward, and the work of lowering the boats and telling off their complement was begun by a few cool-headed men. There were boats enough to accommodate all, and when this was realized the cowards and skulkers took heart and offered their assistance. There was need of haste, and for this reason some of the boats put off without water or provisions, while others had only a very short supply. The boat in which young Johnson and his uncle got away had a four-gallon keg of water and a bag of biscuits, but the latter were rendered almost useless by the shipping of the sea, which likewise nearly swamped the boat. There were in all fourteen persons, all adults except the one. Of these four were women, three of whom were wives, and the fourth was a waiting maid. None of the boats contained fewer persons, and some of them carried five or six more. All had been provided with masts and sails and oars, and the location of the ship, about 100 miles off the cape, was quite generally understood. When the Captain finally left the ship he called the boats about him and gave such general instructions as he believed would insure their safety. He proposed to hold up for St. Paul de Loanda, then the nearest port of civilization. This was a matter of 300 miles, but could be made in four or five days and nights if the weather proved favorable. It was ordered that the boats keep together, and that at noon of that day—it was now coming daylight—there should be a general distribution of provisions, so that all should share alike.

During the later hours of night and up to 7 o'clock in the morning the breeze was very light, but the boats had scarcely got the course to steer when a bank of clouds rolled up, the breeze increased to half a gale, and the horrors of shipwreck in miniature were lowered down on each frail craft. While an effort was made to keep together, noonday came to find the fleet so scattered that the people in young Johnson's boat could distinguish only one other, and that one rapidly passing from their sight. The boat was in charge of the ship's third mate, a Mr. Weldrum. He proved to be a man without nerve or authority. Aside from Capt. Dunning, young Roberts, and the four women mentioned, there were no other passengers. This made six passengers to eight sailors, and as the Captain was the only man, the sailors seemed to feel that they had things their own way. In this the mate sided with them. The passengers were huddled together in cramped quarters, the terror of the women was ridiculed and scoffed at, and while the sailors drank their fill from the water keg the people amidships were supplied with scarcely enough to wet their tongues. Capt. Dunning indignantly protested against their treatment, and was coolly answered by one of the sailors that if anybody was to suffer it should be the passengers. The boat was overloaded anyhow, he said, and if he had his way he would pitch all the women overboard. This speech opened the eyes of the Captain to the fact that he had a heartless lot of men to deal with, and that unless some sudden disaster or prolonged voyaging they would stick at nothing. He rejoiced exceedingly over the thought that he had brought his pistols with him. In case of a conflict the one single man would be a match for the eight.

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon, after the last boat had passed from sight, the little craft was struck by a squall and her mast snapped in twain. It was a close chance that sail and mast did not go overboard, but the case was bad enough as it was. It was a quenching of fire in the land, with a smart sea following, and, although a shift was made to use an oar in place of the mast, more or less water was shipped, and the progress of the boat was greatly lessened. However, the squall did not long abated and the sea went down, and the terror-stricken women revived enough to call for water and food. Water was given them in small quantities, but the biscuit had long ago become a doughy mass which no one would taste. When they mounted for the third time hunger they were roughly ordered to "shut up" and to be thankful that none of them had been thrown overboard to lighten the boat. The mate had by this time lost all his authority, and was observed to be on the best of terms with all the men. There was no compass in the boat, and as the weather continued cloudy the sailors lost their reckoning. But for this they would have attempted to carry out a plan which one of the women overheard them discussing. This was to pass the passengers of such money and jewelry as they had brought along, pitch them overboard, and then make for the land, trusting that they might hang off and on until picked up by a ship.

The next day broke fair, with but little wind and moderate seas. The land breeze, Capt. Dunning's notion, was dead ahead, but the sailors disputed this and, as after events proved, headed out into the Atlantic. The water keg was emptied that morning, one of the men drinking at least half a pint, while some of the others did not get quite above three mouthfuls. The storm having passed, the sun came out hot and the weather became muggy, and before noon there was real suffering. Each woman was fully dressed, and each had brought with her more or less jewelry. As the weather cleared up the bedraggled and suffering wretches had little or no hope left. Capt. Dunning sought to encourage them, but they crouched down in the boat and refused to better their condition. When the breeze came sharp upon the sailors after noon, it now being forty hours since they had eaten. A part of them insisted that the course was wrong, and were for heading another way, but the wind settled the question by blowing entirely out.

"There was much wrangling among the sailors during the afternoon," said Johnson, "and two or three times I saw knives drawn. My uncle asked no questions, nor were any put to him. They ignored us entirely, except now and then to curse one of the women for groaning out. I was in good flesh and a hardy boy, and up to this time I had not suffered for the want of food. It seemed that I could drink a whole pale of water, but I fought the idea away as much as possible, and secured considerable satisfaction by holding a pebble in my mouth. When the sun went down and the calm still held the sailors were cursing in a way terrible to hear, and my uncle whispered to me that he expected something dreadful to happen before morning. What it was I did not ask him, for I was under the influence of a delirious dream. As the boat lost steerage way the sailors had congregated forward, while the passengers had moved aft. We were thus divided off. The nearest one to the sailors was Miss Richardson, the lady's maid. She had been overcome from the very outset, and since getting away from the ship had been lying in a stupor. I can't say that she wasn't dead when the darkness of that night shut down. My uncle pulled some of the women farther astern as night came, but I do not think she was one of them.

"I set out to keep awake a I might, but sleep soon overcome me, and it was morning when I awoke. It was the angry voices of the men which aroused me, and I found that my uncle had moved to the centre of the boat and had his pistols out. Three of the men had oars uplifted and the others had drawn their knives. There was something of a breeze, but the boat was left to itself. I looked around to find Miss Richardson gone, and I soon understood the situation. A couple of hours before daybreak and while my uncle was asleep the men had pulled her body forward. I cannot say that they turned cannibals. There were blood stains under their feet, and it appeared as if they had drunk her blood at least. This they denied to a man afterward, declaring that she was dead, and that the corpse was flung over to lighten the boat and make more room. However that might have been, they had sprung up at daybreak and demanded that one of the women be given up to them to appease hunger and thirst. My uncle argued and coaxed and threatened, but in the end he had to bring out his pistols and declare that he would shoot the first man who approached. They were a desperate lot of fellows, but there was that in his demeanor which made them pause. The result, I think, would have been a rush at him, for they seemed reckless of their lives, but for a sight which I was the first to discover. It was that of a sail in the north. As soon as I had shouted my discovery a truce was tacitly agreed upon, and both oars and sail were put into use to work up to the stranger. It was a French ship bound around the cape, and she had already picked up two of our boats. She ran down to us in a couple of hours, and we found the crews of the Captain and the bo'sun's boats safe and sound on her decks to greet us.

"Of all the boats only one was lost, the others being picked up by an English brig. Of the four women in our boat Miss Richardson's fate has been told. One of the others was dead when they came to lift her up, and the other two were so near perishing that it was weeks before they were restored to health and strength. My uncle made a report to the Captain of the ship, but as that officer was burdened with his own personal troubles he did not carry the matter further, and no investigation was ever made by the legal authorities."

For Sharks, Devil Fish, and Stingarees.

"One of the strangest voyages I ever made," said Capt. Croxon of New Orleans, "was in the summer of 1858. I had a three-masted schooner named the Southern Belle, and was in the coasting trade. It was about May 1, and I had run into New Orleans with a consigned cargo, when a stranger came aboard one day, looked the craft all over, and finally introduced himself as Joseph Harper, a native of the State. He said he was a man of wealth and leisure, and was thinking of chartering a schooner for four or five months. He was a quiet, middle-spoken man, well educated, and a perfect gentleman, but there was something just a bit queer in his actions. He looked at you in a furtive way, as if he thought you mistrusted him, and he had a habit of giving a sudden start and looking all about him, as guilty men are supposed to do.

"What sort of a charter do you suppose he wanted to make? You'll hardly believe me when I tell you that he took a seat in my cabin and gravely informed me that he believed it his duty to go forth against sharks, stingarees, and devil fish. He wanted a stanch craft, and he proposed to go along and help make war on the reptiles mentioned. He didn't act like a crank, and I could not laugh at him, and he didn't appear to be insane so that I could cut the matter short. He offered to fit the schooner out for a six months' cruise and pay me so much per month in cash, and he talked business just as straight as any man you ever heard. I put him off for a day or two, but he came again. Then I made some inquiries about him, and I found that, while he was a stranger to all, he had plenty of funds and was considered all right in his head. As I was the sole owner of the schooner, and as his offer was a far better thing than I could hope for in another direction, I began to think more favorably of it. The result was that he put several thousand dollars to my credit in the bank, bound me in a legal way to cruise where he directed, and then went ahead to fit up the schooner. From the hour of signing the papers he lived aboard. Not only that, but he stuck close, not in a sailor's suit, and completely disguised his identity. My mate, whose name was Burrows, thought strangely of this, and insisted that the man was a lunatic; but after a bit we concluded that he was a crank who went up upon the sea as a hobby subject, and no further action of his surprised us.

"Carpenters came aboard to fix up cockpits for him, and when that job was finished a runway was made to draw up captured sharks upon, and a small steam engine was put aboard for hoisting them in. He hired an engineer at $30 a month and board to take charge of the latter, and we took aboard ten tons of coal to run it. He provisioned the schooner, and he bought the very best of everything. The stores for the crew were better than those supplied for sea captains' cabins, and the cabin stores were equal to those of any passenger steamer. He had half a hundred shark and other hooks made, bought chains and ropes and lines, and one of the last purchases brought down consisted of twenty-five barrels of salt beef for shark bait. He wanted to take on 200 live dogs, but I convinced him that the beef would answer just as well.

"Our first objective point was the Florida coast, and after reaching Santa Rosa Island we began our work. From that point clear around the coast to Charleston you can hardly run amiss of sharks and stingarees, though you won't have much luck in hunting for an octopus of any size. Our man was greatly excited when we got on sharking ground, and he couldn't keep still until we had made half a dozen captures. The first day brought us seventeen—all man-eaters. When one was hooked we drew him close up by hand, slipped a running noose over his head, and then he was hauled around to the runway and the ropes were carried to a drum and the engine started. We had an extra deck of rough boards for the fish to land on, and the sharks were despatched by blows of the axe and knives. Harper was as much elated over each capture as a General would be to win a battle, and a careful record was made of weight, length, and species. We were at it a whole week before he tired of the slaughter, and he might have held on longer if sharks had been more plenty. They finally became suspicious of us, or took alarm from some unknown cause, and at the end of the week the baited hooks were no longer a temptation. Our catch was from 17 to 28 a day, making a total for the week of 164. The smallest of these was large enough to bite a man in two, while a score or more were monsters which could have got away with a horse in two or three bites.

"We then ran around to the Georges to fish for stingarees. This fish, or reptile, or whatever you may call it, lies in the sand bars, and feeds mostly on soft-shell clams. We had to anchor the schooner and go out in small boats, and we made but eight captures during the week we lay there. I rather expected that a couple of weeks would carry us from the case was just the opposite. Every fresh victim seemed to add to his zeal, and we ran further into Appalachee Bay and put in another week at sharking. The fish were there as thick as flies around a sugar bowl, and in the seven days we captured 312. Nine of these had been drawn aboard and despatched we had no further use for him. The remains were thrown overboard, and the living would fight for him before our eyes. We got one chap there fully twenty feet long, and whenever a crowder came near us Harper would have a boat sent off to tell her what luck we were having in killing off the common enemy. At the end of the third week he became restless with desire to capture an octopus, and we set sail across the gulf for the Florida coast. I had heard of the creatures being plenty to the south of Cape San Antonio, and that was the first locality. We ran in pretty close to the Isle of Pines, found a safe anchorage, and the iron was hardly down before Harper had our boats in the water to examine the reefs thoroughly. We were searching three days before we found one, and he was a small fellow who was more anxious to get away than to fight back. Then a wrecker recommended the islands to the east of Santa Cruz, and we up anchor and stood for the new ground.

"We passed to the south of Santa Cruz, and brought up among the Antigua group, fishing for sharks and catching a matter of fifty on the way. We soon had cause to believe that we had struck a Paradise for octopus. The very first one discovered a devil fish on a reef within a quarter of a mile of the schooner, and, as a harpoon was darted into him, he flung four or five of his terrible feelers into the boat, and would have taken one of the men overboard had the fellow not hung desperately onto the gunwale. The man who was gripped was partially paralyzed, for a couple of days and unquestionably suffered much pain. Harper's first act on returning to the schooner was to present the man with a $20 gold piece, while the rest of the boat's crew received half the amount. It was plainly understood that the engineer, cook, steward, mate, and myself should be exempt from these boat excursions, but Harper was so delighted with his catch that We were not idle, however, in their absence. The shark hooks were always out, and it was a poor day when we did not have at least a dozen sharks aboard.

"We cruised around the islands for a matter of six weeks, having the best of luck, and we should have put in several weeks more but for what happened to Harper one day. He had become perfectly crazy on the subject of devil fish, and would have hunted them by night had the men been able to stand it. We had killed about thirty, large and small, when the boats put off one afternoon to inspect a reef on the east side of Guadeloupe. There were numerous channels cut through the reef, and as the boat was working through one of them an octopus—or devil fish, pretty flat, mind—in four feet of water. Harper himself buried the harpoon of him, and next moment five or six of those terrible feelers were over the gunwales of the boat and making fast to the men. Harper fell down and coiled under a thwart, but one of the feelers followed him and fastened onto his hands and across his face. The men were provided with sharp knives and hatchets, and they speedily cut themselves loose, but they were a used-up lot when they returned to the ship. The fowler which caught Harper had to be cut off piece by piece, and for thirty-six hours I looked upon him as a dead man. When he began to mend he was sick of that sort of fishing, and as soon as he could crawl about we went back to the Florida coast for sharks. We worked down to Charleston and back to New Orleans before the season expired, and the record made will never be beaten, as we were probably the only crew who ever went or will go on such an enterprise. We captured 34 devil fish, 72 stingarees, and 2,581 sharks. We got in five months to a day, and upon our return to New Orleans Harper presented me with the stores left, gave the engine to the man who had run it, and presented every one of the crew with a sum of money. He made me promise to hold the schooner for him another year, but he did not come for her. Did I find out anything more about him? Oh, yes. He died in an insane asylum that winter."

An Undertaker's Assistant's Mistake.

BRIDGEPORT, Sept. 18.—In a neighboring town death entered an estimable household at midnight and an undertaker from this city was summoned by telegraph. On arriving at the house the undertaker sent his lady assistant to an upper chamber to prepare the corpse. Taking her box of bandages, sponges, &c., the assistant said, as she thought, to her room indicated, but instead she entered the room of a young lady, a member of the bereaved family, who had fallen sound asleep from exhaustion caused by her constant attention at the sick bed. The attendant had an old-fashioned razor dip. Which she set on the stand, and, dismissing her cab on the bed by the side of the sleeping beauty, she began operations. Taking a soft sponge, she carefully washed the face, observing what was not unusual, that the flesh was still warm. The young lady slept on, for which a fine-toothed comb was drawn through her long and luxuriant hair. She rose with a suddenness that upset both the attendant and the box of ointments. Both ladies gave a shriek that could have been heard for blocks away, and as soon as a minute could be struck, for the candle had been overturned and extinguished, expunctions followed. The attendant believed the corpse had come to life, and the awakened damsel thought she had been disturbed by a burglar. The household below was aroused, and they followed the undertaker in quick succession to the scene of the disturbance. Although the death bed cast a gloom over the household there was a quiet laugh when the situation was explained.

MR. ST. MARTIN'S DAY.

At 2 o'clock the other morning a cab rolled noisily up Fifth avenue and stopped at the entrance of the pretentious apartment house wherein Mr. Goncourt St. Martin, bachelor, club man, and swell, has his chambers. A long and narrow foot, clad in a varnished leather pump, which dangled from one of the windows of the cab indicated that Mr. St. Martin himself was within, and the porter came hurriedly out to assist that distinguished gentleman to alight.

"Is he werry bad, Johnsing?" asked the porter of the cabman who had crossed his legs and settled himself for a tranquil view of the subsequent proceedings.

"Orful," said the cabman dismally. "He's bin playin' poker. It tuk two of us t' git 'im inter th' keb."

"There ain't no danger of your comin' down here an' givin' me a hand, is there Johnsing?"

"None whatsumdever," said the cabman, sedately. "I wuz near kilt helpin' t' get 'im in; you kin take 'im out. I'm no hog. I know when I've got enough."

At this moment, very much to the surprise of the two men, the long foot was withdrawn, and the door of the cab kicked open. Then Mr. St. Martin floundered out suddenly and stood in the middle of the sidewalk, blinking rapidly at the electric light as he tried to fix his glass in his roving eye. He was in irreproachable evening attire, but his white waistcoat was somewhat rumpled and his hair was over his eyes. Though his legs were well apart he rocked like a ship in a gale.

"Por'rer!" he bellowed at the top of his lungs, as though that functionary were miles away. "Por'rer!"

"Yes, sir," said the porter nervously.

"Wh'z man?"

"Your man, sir? He's gone home these two hours, sir."

Mr. St. Martin was plunged by this news into melancholy and gloom. For a long while he swayed thoughtfully on his heels, shaking his head ominously. Then he straightened up by a great effort, and bellowed more loudly than before:

"Por'rer!"

"Yes, sir: I'm right 'ere, sir."

"Wh'z 'ouse?"

"Th' house is directly in front of you, sir."

Upon this Mr. St. Martin dashed forward without more ado, slid airily through the vestibule, scudded along the corridor, flung himself into the elevator, gave the rope a wild yank, and shot upward with a triumphant whoop, and all doors open.

For an instant the porter stood rooted to the spot, and then with a frightened look hurried into the building, followed closely by the hackman. By this time the elevator was shooting violently past the fifth floor, with a fair prospect of going through the roof, with Mr. St. Martin sitting snugly and solemnly in one corner. The porter swung himself into the shaft, clutched the rope, and reversed the engine, just in time. By the exercise of great care he brought the elevator down to the level of the street, again discovering Mr. G. St. Martin still in the corner, and in a state of beatific slumber. In this condition he was taken warily up to the second story, and rushed violently into his rooms before he quite came to himself. The gas was already burning, but not all of it, so the arrival went about unsteadily, and added to the illumination by lighting every jet in the suite of apartments. Having achieved this he bowed gravely to his reflection in a mirror, hung his coat over the bronze shoulders of a Psyche that stood in the corner, overturned a screen, deposited his pumps in a vase, disposed of various other articles of apparel by shying them at pictures and bits of bric-à-brac, made another profound obeisance to the mirror, and divested himself of his shirt.

In this tranquil and serene manner did Mr. G. St. Martin retire for the night.

About eight hours later a ruddy-cheeked English servant, with his arms somewhat encumbered by ice pitchers and soda water bottles, let himself into Mr. St. Martin's apartments with a latch key and cast an experienced eye over the blazing gas and the general disorder.

"The noosance," he said softly—it was by this endearing title that he always referred to his master in his soliloquies—"have seeminkly been up to his little tricks, as usual."

After he had straightened things out he went into the bedroom: spasmodic snorts and the noise of heavy breathing led him to the bedside of his master, and discharged the cork of a soda water bottle with a resounding report. Upon hearing this Mr. St. Martin sat bolt upright in bed, looking purturbed and fluffy, and seizing the bottle in both hands, quieted the hissing and spouting contents by holding it down. He fell back exhausted after this effort and lay there blinking at his attendant.

"Watson," he said, "I have observed with pain and grief that you have recently fallen a victim to the demon drink; likewise cards, women, and horses. Beware, Watson! Beware! and get me my letters."

"Yes, sir. The man's at the door, sir."

Five minutes later an agonized and piercing shriek rang out from an inner room. The pedestrians across the way glanced up at the windows interestingly, and one or two, including a small and statuesque groom, who stood with folded arms at the head of a saddled mare at the door, did not cease staring at his own nose. He knew by experience that the yell signalized Mr. St. Martin's first plunge into his morning bath.

Presently the owner of the sorrel mare drifted out on the sidewalk and climbed stiffly into the saddle. He sat there buttoning his brick colored glove thoughtfully—a fat, round-shouldered, pursy little person, dissipated in appearance, with a single glass hanging over the breast of his coat, thirty years old, and rather shaky.

"Any orders, sir?" asked the little groom, touching his hat.

"Yes; be at the club. Go tell Watson to get me a box at the theatre to-night and send Miss—er—Miss Whatdovecaller a bucket of roses, and bring the cart around at 4."

Then he settled himself well on the saddle and moved up to the Park, taking a sharp gallop along the reservoir, where many stout old gentlemen and handsome girls were riding. He dashed out of the upper end of the Park toward a road house, where he drank a big glass of brandy and seltzer, and still half drunk gave his thoroughbred the rein again, riding her hard and fast until he struck the pavement, and handing her over to his groom at the club door in a drip. But he had brought a little color into a face that had been haggard when he started, and he was content. In the breakfast room were many other correctly dressed and self-contained looking club men, who nodded to Mr. St. Martin composedly.

"Gad, Goncourt," said a twenty-year-old wreck, who was laboriously sipping absinthe and wondering if he would have sufficient strength to breakfast on a pint of Chablis and an egg; "you look like a two-year-old."

"Yaas," said Mr. St. Martin, walking up to a mirror and regarding himself with entire satisfaction. "I'm feeling pretty fit, thanks."

He drank a cocktail or two, ate some chops, omelette, and fruit, and then, remembering that his yacht was out of the water, having the barnacles scraped off her graceful hull, he and the twenty-year-old wreck—who had given up the idea of breakfast—drank two wine-glasses of brandy and lighted two fat cigars and drove to the river front in a hansom. They watched the men at work for half an hour, and then drove back to the Columbia billiard rooms and played three games of cushion caroms for a stake that made the attendant gasp when he heard it mentioned casually.

Mr. St. Martin drifted back to his chambers, fell into the hands of his valet, was shaved and anointed, and came forth in a startingly short time wonderfully in a silver beaver hat, a frock coat, white overgaiters, light gloves, and a fresh red rose. Two massive bays were champing their bits, stamping, and making a great ado in front of the door. Their coats were like satin. In front of them was the imperturbable little groom, still with folded arms—he was scarce as high as the pole—and behind them a showy T cart. Mr. St. Martin climbed up to the seat, gravely arranged his coat tails, placed his toes together in front of him, tilted his hat a little forward, seized the reins and whip, and rolled in great state through the Park with the tiger at his side.

At 6 o'clock he drove back to Delmonico's, joined a group of acquaintances who drank with great regularity at short intervals and talked about stocks, women, horses, and yachts. After an hour of this, Mr. St. Martin drifted into his lodgings again, emerging shortly afterward in elaborate evening dress. He took his way with great dignity to a big house further up Fifth avenue, tapped on the glass panel with his ring, and when the door was opened by a footman, Mr. St. Martin beckoned to that astonished man lai mysteriously and drew him craftily outside.

"What's goin' on ?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

"Dinner, sir, of twelve covers," still more hoarsely.

"Well, begad," said Mr. St. Martin, candidly. "I'm fuddled, and so's that ape Watson. We've mislaid the card, and I can't tell t' save me whe' I'm invited this week or next."

"This is your night, sir. I heard 'em sayin' you wuz always late. They hav'nt got past th' fish yet, sir."

He led Mr. St. Martin in, and gently pushed him into the dining room. The late comer smiled with great good nature, met the battery of eyes and the quiet chaff with unruffled suavity, and swore by the moon that his man Watson had gone to sleep in his master's rooms, after bolting the door on the inside, and that it took half an hour to wake him. Then he sank into a chair beside a vivacious young married woman, and she quizzed him unmercifully during the rest of the dinner, while he gazed at her somewhat foggily, but with undaunted admiration.

At 9 o'clock a gentleman looking somewhat flushed with wine sat bolt upright in his box in the theatre regarding the reigning light opera divinity with an approving eye. An hour later he had managed to scrawl an invitation to supper across his card, and received from the messenger the following cordial reply written in pencil on a piece of brown wrapping paper.

MY DEARSHUM: Youre kind note received and me and my dear mother should be pleezed to eat with you after the preformance as sudgested, and I am ever your

LITTLE ONE.

P. S.—The flowers are lovly.

Mr. St. Martin read this thoughtfully.

"Who the deuce introduced this fashion of havin' mothers?" he asked the toes of his boots confidentially. "Every bloomin' actress and chorus girl in town has produced a mother within a year. They never had 'em before, I know, but now, they're as inevitable as champagne."

This insinuated gently to the mind of Mr. St. Martin that he was thirsty and he went out and drank beer sociably with a theatrical manager whom he met in the lobby. After this he fell peacefully to sleep in the cab of the ubiquitous Johnson; that unfortunate man being under contract to dog his footsteps from 6 o'clock every evening until he finally wound up at home. Johnson took up his stand with the other wicked cabs at the stage door and kept a bright outlook for the light opera queen. An hour and a half later she bustled out with a dozen cheerful farewells to the chorus girls, who were going home, and throwing a bright little smile to Johnson, she jerked open the door of the cab and dropping tumultuously into the seat beside Mr. St. Martin, cried ecstatically as the cab rolled off:

"Oh, you dear, good-natured old boy. I'm just as happy as a clam at high tide, and the bracelet was lovely and you never called us you said you would yesterday, but then you never do, you sinner. Do you know I received seven mash letters to-night, and my new blond wig for the second act doesn't fit at all, and did you see that provoking cat of a woman try to take my applause when—"

"I say," interrupted Mr. St. Martin, trying to get wide awake all in a moment, "wher's mother's? Mus' have s'm mother's, you know."

"Land sakes!" gasped the queen in alarm. "I'm blest if I didn't leave the poor old girl on a keg in my dressing room."

So they went back after her, and presently all three were seated in a cosy supper room with two obsequious waiters hovering over them. The mother was a lady with a very simple "presence," several chins, a buttery smile, great urbanity, and an appetite of unswerving force and order. Mr. St. Martin having partaken of brandy in the morning, cocktails at breakfast, cooling drinks in the afternoon, spirits and champagne at Delmonico's, half a dozen brands of wine and a cordial or two at dinner, and considerable beer thereafter, was in his usual condition for that time of night. He mingled an air of sudden hauteur with his affability at times, staring with an air of wierd fascination at the mother, and suddenly when the wine glass fixed gently on the menu, while she tapped her white teeth with a flacon on which glittered a thousand-dollar diamond.

"Waiter," she said dreamily, "I'll have s'mysteres—little ones you know on th' deep shelf—an' some of those nice little snipe on toast and some corn and tomatoes and sweet potatoes cut into dear little chunks an' fried and s'm sweetbreads and peas—I forgot to order fish, but you might bring anything fresh—and then lemme see—er—a lot of fruit you know and tarts and oceans of fizz, and that will be all just now."

"Sure, I'll 'ave th' same," said the chaperone complacently.

"Give me dev'l crab an' snack of porter," said the host.

"Oh, yes," cried the queen artlessly, "bring me a devilled crab, too."

"Sure, O! wouldn' mind havin' wan mysel'," added the mother; whereat Mr. St. Martin patted the old lady affectionately under the chin, called her a dainty little duck, and vowed that she should have a dozen crabs if she wanted them.

The supper having gone off with the brilliancy that usually distinguished the feasts over which the big-eyed stage divinity presided, the ladies were sent home in a roomy coach, while the host gave himself once more into the hands of the watchful Johnson. He was driven to a gambling club, where he dropped into a little game of draw poker with four other younger sons of rich New Yorkers, including the twenty-year-old wreck.

"S'm man," said Mr. St. Martin ponderously, "drink seltzer when they play. Gamblers do that too. Gen'lmen drink bran'y t' giv' um nerve. I think bran'y."

Presently four deuces came into his hand, and, after raising the pot to the limit, he called for one card, throwing his fifth card across the table. There were several other big hands out, and the betting went up at twenty-five-dollar rates.

"What you got there, old chap?" the wreck inquired, finally tossing his last yellow chip in the pot.

"Got winners," said the author of the disseration on brandy; "four jacks, gentlemen."

"Where's your fifth card?" asked the wreck.

"Gad I forgot to pick t' up—here 'tis under my chips."

"You lose the pot," said the other; "it goes to the next highest hand."

"Is that the rule?"

"That's the rule everywhere," chorused the others.

"It's your deal," said Mr. St. Martin, without a glance at the wealth in the middle of the table as he passed the cards along.

A little later the author of Johnson might have been heard arguing with a somewhat befuddled gentleman in a cab at the entrance of the great apartment house on Fifth avenue. Mr. St. Martin asserted solemnly that it had been the stupidest day of his life, and insisted upon having some more. It then fell asleep while he talked, and his two retainers got him to bed before he had thoroughly awoke again.

BLAKELY HALL.

MICKEY FINN AND THE EEL.

There was no bird on Cooney Island whose plumage could compare with that of Mrs. McGee's drake. Doolan's rooster was the more graceful on land. But if the drake waddled as he went down the dusty road, he was the very embodiment of grace and beauty as he sailed on the surface of Brown's pond, his proudly arched neck and rainbow-tinted back reflecting the rays of the sun.

The drake foolishly roosted very low. Mrs. McGee's barn was raised upon stilts to keep it out of the pool of water underneath. Into this pool every night, just at sunset, the drake, heading a long procession of wildly quacking ducks, serenely waddled his way.

There was a time—before the waters of Brown's pond were used to turn the large wheel of the lime mill—when goldfish flashed through the pond. Tradition says, moreover, that a mermaid had been caught there.

"Dade, yes," said Patsy Kane, may I be choked wid a rope if I didn't see an eel pulled out o' that pond, an' th' shkin in him 'ud make wan leg in a pair o' pants for Jack Doolan!"

This statement being received with some incredulity, Patsy qualified it by saying that the eelskin trouser leg would have suited Jack's little brother.

"An' phwat was he caught wid?" said Mickey Finn, who had designs upon the eels in the pond.

"Liver," was the reply, "fried liver. The fryin' makes it tough, an' it 'll stick on th' hook."

Mickey and his friend Doolan illogically assumed that if there were eels in the pond twenty years ago there must be eels there still. But the boys were in favor of worms for bait in preference to liver, tender or tough.

Late that night they hunted through the dewy grass of Stumpy Field with a lantern looking for nightwalkers. Three of these nocturnal ramblers were caught. Fat, juicy fellows they were, too. It was the opinion of the boys that no sensible eel would refuse such tempting morsels. Notwithstanding that the worms showed a squirming objection to close confinement, they were dropped into a bottle labelled "Laudanum—poison," with a paper cork, and stowed away in Mickey's pocket, with the remark:

"Shure, worms is wake. They can't shove out th' cork."

Next morning as the sun peeped up from behind Berkshire hills, Mickey and Doolan stood before Mcgee's barn. There were undefined sounds of life from under the barn. Subdued quacks and a faint beating of wings told of a coming train of webbed feet.

"You stand right here by this hole, Doolan," said Mickey, "an' when th' drake comes out grab him by th' bill, so he can't squawk."

The sounds became louder. There was a seeming harsh protest by the drake to some duck dilatory in making her toilet, and a splashing in the water. Doolan stood over the hole, his hands stretched downward and his heart trembling on his finger tips. Out waddled the duck. Standing in the opening he looked off toward the east, as if to greet the coming day, when Doolan's strong grip seized him about the bill. Despite his struggles he was thrust under Doolan's jacket and a piece of twine tied securely about his bill, for the well the boys knew the strength of Mrs. McGee's arm and her deftness with the poker or anything that came handy should the drake once give tongue. Doolan could feel the heaving of the drake's breast, as he vainly tried to give vent to his injured feelings.

A belated milkman driving furiously down the road was the only living thing in sight when the boys reached the pond. Mickey took from his pocket a piece of chalk the size of a lead pencil and about three inches long and tied a hook. The line was fixed to the drake's leg, and the largest worm from the laudanum bottle was impaled upon the hook. Removing the string from the drake's bill, Mickey dropped him. He flew half way over the pond before he touched the water. Then he sailed around in a large circle, preening his rumpled feathers. After he had become himself again he paddled to a cove in the pond and began feeding in a way that ducks have in shallow water by tilting his body downward, leaving the end of his tail sticking up. This continued for half an hour, when Doolan began to get tired. But Mickey encouraged him by the assurance of his firm belief that there were eels in the pond, and of his confidence in the drake as a fisherman. Mickey was right. The biggest eel in Brown's pond was at that moment gliding around in the vicinity of the drake, looking for what contributions to the food supply had been made by the brooks during the night.

Suddenly the drake's tail disappeared. A few bubbles rose to the surface.

"He's gone intirely," said Doolan.

"Shure that's only a bite. He'll be up again afore yo'll sing yer jaw twinst," said Mickey.

This assurance proved prophetic. The drake came to the surface with a rush that scattered the spray ten feet high. His frantic cries alarmed the people on the island. Judy Flaherty, almost bursting with the importance of her news, told Mrs. McGee, between her gasps for breath:

"Th' say sarnint has your drake. He has wan o' his legs swallyed already."

This momentous intelligence started Mrs. McGee toward the pond with flying skirts and muttered imprecations. When she arrived on the scene the curious battle was raging fiercely. Weighed down by the weight of the eel, the drake rose and sank successively, churning the water into foam. Mrs. McGee ran frantically up and down the bank, crying:

"Misfa, the boy gives his tail feathers! If I only had me two hands on that shnake, wouldn't I make chicken feed out in him? Mickey, swim out an' save him, an' I'll give ye th' yaller gosling wid the black tail."

Against the warnings of his many friends, Mickey waded into the pond, kitting the line close up to the drake's leg, he came ashore with the bird under his arm and towing the eel behind him. Mickey's legs resembled the spokes of a swiftly revolving wheel as he ran awkwardly from Mrs. McGee's avenging clutch. By the aid of Mrs. Finn's steelyards it was ascertained that the eel weighed 6½ pounds. Then the hook was taken from its mouth, and for three days it swam around on the bottom of Mrs. Finn's washtub, its sea-green back and greasy movements exciting the wonder and admiration of all Coney Island.

After the boys had satisfied themselves that a captive eel will not eat bread crumbs, nor bite sticks thrust at him, they decided to serve this one up as an offering to Mrs. Finn's fondness for fried eels. But just here a difficulty arose. There was no pan on the island big enough to fry it in. However, Mrs. Finn remembered that Mrs. Coogan, who lived in Wilbur, owned a pan of enormous size. Mrs. Coogan kindly loaned the pan for the occasion, with the understanding that she was to be given the eel. When the day for the feast arrived, the company assembled was altogether out of proportion to the size of the chief dish. The widow Flaherty was there, as didn't taxed eel for fourteen years. There was also invited the para ytic, Paddy Magnus, who could faintly remember having eaten stewed eels "wan'st in th' year whin th' steeple was blowed off th' Catholic church, but niver chewed fried eels; an' I hav' a kin'ly curiosity t' see how does they taste." Besides these there were

Some friends from Hester,
And some from the Bridge,
And some from around by the Eddyville Bridge.

The eel sizzled merrily in the pan. A savory odor filled the Finn shanty. The boys impatiently lifted the lid "to see was he gittin' brown." The guests drummed impatiently on their plates until Mrs. Magnus had been supplied with a piece of the tail and Mrs. Flaherty's jaws started in motion. Very quickly did the biggest eel Brown's pond has ever produced disappear; and while the company toasted Mrs. McGee's drake, the crow sat under the stove dissecting the eel's backbone.

THE DEATH OF CORNWALLIS.

A Page in Virginian History Hitherto Unpublished—Uncle Manuel's Story.

From the Chicago News.

The negroes are naturally great romancers, and the last scenes of the Revolution having taken place here supplied the people with an astonishing fund of anecdote and reminiscence, and the negroes were not slow to take their share. The flurry of 1812, when a British ship came up the James and Uncle Manuel's sacking of Hampton occurred, afforded the very old negroes, who might possibly have been born at the time, with personal experiences enough to establish them as mine-singers. They seem to have agreed to lump their recollections and traditions together, and it is no uncommon thing to find a venerable darky who not only clearly remembers "de resolution," but took an active part in it, and was on terms of personal intimacy with Washington and Lord Cornwallis both.

One of the most famous of these was a certain Uncle Manuel belonging to one of the old families here, whose account of the siege of Yorktown was infinitely more graphic and interesting in every way than the commonplace narratives of the historians. Uncle Manuel was a preacher on Sundays and agricultural factotum the rest of the week. He was the terror of the little darkies round about, but adored by the children of the planters in the neighborhood. Who never read of any event in history of which Uncle Manuel was the hero, or heard, nor ever heard of any place in the geography that Uncle Manuel hadn't been to. He had seen Napoleon Bonaparte "somewhar near de Norf Calliny line, he didn't 'zactly recomember," and had viewed Niagara, "the latter, however, disappointed him very much, and didn't throw up half as much spray as "de whale dat got stranded in de rubber, an' when he snort he blowed de shingles off'n yo' pa's new barn." "De battle of York" was his piece de resistance, and he would talk about it as much as a circle of childish faces around him begging: "Now please, please, Uncle Manuel, do tell us about the Revolution." Uncle Manuel, like a bashful young lady asked to sing, required considerable urging. "Now, children, you know I don' do no such thing." But did.

"Yes—yes—but tell us some more." The fact was Uncle Manuel's accounts could not become monotonous, because he never told them twice the same way.

"Well, honey, I spack I have to try an' tell you sump