THOMAS REED'S NEW RULES

THE SPEAKER STILL BLAZING A PATH IN THE WILDERNESS.

Why He Wants Three Committees on Elections—How He Secured Them—Rules Changed to Meet an Exigency—An Analysis of the Contested Election Cases—The Largest List Known Since the Organization of the Government—33 Cases.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21.—Thomas B. Reed is positive. He is peculiarly original. He has ideas and convictions, and the nerve to carry them out. He has blazed a new path in the wilderness of parliamentary law. Jefferson's and Cushing's manuals are already giving place to Reed's "Manual of General Parliamentary Law." His friends say that it is progressive. The action of the Democrats in the House in the Fifty-third Congress, with regard to counting a quorum, certainly indicates that his friends are right.

Speaker Reed's experience in the Fifty-first Congress has given him a new idea for the Fifty-fourth Congress. In the Fifty-first Congress Mr. Jackson of West Virginia was unseated by the Republicans before any rules whatever had been adopted by the House. It was done under the Speaker's interpretation of general parliamentary law. He decided that he had the right to count a quorum of those present and not voting, so as to get the contested election case before the House. When an appeal was taken from this ruling it was sustained by the Republicans. This made the great Maine man's ruling law. Under this action of the House Mr. Jackson was unseated. The House afterward emphasized the ruling by incorporating it in the rules.

In the Fiftieth Congress there were eight contested seats. Seven of them were settled by the House. In the Fifty-first (Tom Reed's) Congress there were seventeen contested seats, and only twelve disposed of. In the Fifty-second there were six contested seats, and only four settled. In the Fifty-third there were eleven, and only seven brought before the House. In the Fifty-fourth Congress there are thirty-two contested seats.

There are more contested seats in Tom Reed's second Congress than in any other Congress since the foundation of the Government. It seems apparent that the usual Committee on Elections will be unable to settle all these cases upon their merits before the expiration of the term. Mr. Reed has promptly revised Jefferson's, Cushing's, and Reed's manuals. He has opened a new path in parliamentary practice. The present House is now acting under the Reed rules of the Fifty-first Congress. Through Joseph G. Cannon of Illinois he has amended the rules for the appointment of committees by providing for the selection of three Committees on Elections instead of one. This new rule has been promptly adopted by the House. Ex-Speaker Crisp of Georgia fought the amendment, preferring to stand by precedent. Thus a new rule has been framed to meet an exigency. In future Congresses, if the Democrats have control of the House and a similar exigency arises, it is safe to say, judging from the past, they will follow the example set by Speaker Reed.

The three committees provided under the amended rules will have fully as much work as any single committee had in former Congresses, where their work was incomplete.

In the debate on the amendment it seemed singular that no reference was made to State or national political Conventions. There the first thing done is to ascertain who were really elected delegates. The Committee on Credentials does its work promptly, and the nominations and platforms are made after the rights of the contestants are ascertained. The organization is not completed until the contestants are settled. It would seem to be equally as important that similar action should hold good in the House, although neither Republican nor Democratic Conventions are yet acting under the Reed rules.

In view of the unprecedented action of the House, whether progressive or otherwise, an analysis of the contested election cases before it is of some interest. I take them in the order in which they were returned to the Clerk of the last House.

The first is the case of W. C. Robinson against George P. Harrison in the Third Alabama (Opelika) district. A Congress without a contest from Alabama would be an anomaly. In this Congress there are four contests from that State. Harrison was elected to fill a vacancy in the Fifty-third Congress, and at the same time and by the same vote elected to the Fifty-fourth Congress, and there is a contest in the Fifty-fourth. On the face of the returns Harrison has 5,006 majority. Robinson is said to be an "Independent Jeffersonian Populist." It is very much such a contest as McDuffie made against Turpin in Tom Reed's first Congress. Turpin was unseated, although he had on the official returns over 13,000 majority. Singular as it may seem, McDuffie now appears as counsel for the "Independent Jeffersonian Populist." He charges alleged fraudulent Democratic votes.

The next contest is that from the Fourth Alabama (Selma) district. W. F. Aldrich contests the seat of Gaston A. Robbins in the certificate showing 3,088 majority. Aldrich is a Republican endorsed by the Populists. The contestant alleges manipulation of the returns. Years ago this same district was contested by well-known Jere Haralson, a coal black Republican member of the Forty-fourth Congress, now serving a term in the Alabama penitentiary. Aldrich's lawyer is the Hon. Charles M. Shelley, an ex-member of Congress, who has had considerable experience, his seat having been contested four times.

The third contest is that of A. T. Goodwyn, a Populist, against James E. Cobb, in the Fifth Alabama (Tuskegee) district. Mr. Goodwyn married a granddaughter of President Tyler. The returns give Cobb a majority of 548. It is Cobb's fifth term in the House. The contestant alleges errors made by the Board of Canvassers. J. V. McDuffie, who has Robinson for now, appears also as the counsel of Mr. Goodwyn.

The fourth contest is that of T. H. Aldrich against Oscar W. Underwood, in the Ninth Alabama (Birmingham) district. T. H. Aldrich is a brother of W. F. Aldrich, who is contesting Robbins's seat. Underwood has a majority of 1,166 on the face of the returns. Aldrich alleges that he has proved a conspiracy to perpetrate fraud throughout the district.

The fifth contest is that of W. H. Felton against John W. Maddox of the Seventh Georgia (Rome) district. Maddox comes to the House with 1,562 majority. Mr. Felton is a Populist. Just twenty years ago Felton was an Independent Democratic member of Congress from Georgia. Felton alleges that a correct return from the district would give him 485 majority. Mrs. W. H. Felton appears as one of the attorneys for the contestant, associated with Col. William W. Dudley and Louis T. Michener of Indiana.

The sixth contest is that of Hugh R. Belknap against Lawrence E. McGann of the Third Illinois (Chicago) district. McGann has 31 plurality. There will be no trouble about this case. McGann honestly acknowledges that he does not believe he was elected, and will give up his seat. This action may make McGann Mayor of Chicago.

The seventh contest is that of John I. Rinaker against Finis E. Downing of the Sixteenth Illinois (Macoupin) district. Downing's certificate shows 40 plurality. He is the editor of the *Virginia Inquirer*. Rinaker is a Republican. The allegation on the part of the contestant is errors in interpreting and rejecting ballots, illegal votes, wrongful refusal of ballots tendered by legal voters, and errors and mistakes in counting and recording the vote. The district was represented in the last Congress by George W. Fithian, author of the Free Ship bill.

The eighth contest is that of George Denny, Jr., against William C. Owens of the Seventh Kentucky (Lexington) district. Owens, it will be remembered, received the Democratic nomination after a desperate struggle with W. C. P. Breckinridge. He is undoubtedly the handsomest man in the House. On the face of the returns Owens has 91 plurality. Denny, a Republican, alleges that the proper returns would give him from 327 to 753 majority. His counsel are William W. Dudley and Louis T. Michener of Indiana.

The ninth contest is that of N. T. Hopkins against Joseph M. Kendall of the Tenth Kentucky (Prestonburg) district. The district is located in the mountains, and is said to distill more and better whiskey than any other Congressional district in the United States. It was formerly represented by the Rev. W. P. Taulbee, who was shot by Judge Kincaid on a stairway in the Capitol some years ago. Mr. Kendall's father succeeded Taulbee, and was succeeded in the same Congress by his son, the father having died. On the face of the returns Kendall has 253 majority. Hopkins alleges frauds, irregularities, and violations of the law.

The tenth contest is that of H. Dudley Coleman against Charles F. Buck of the Second Louisiana (New Orleans) district. Coleman was a Republican member of the Fifty-first Congress and voted against the Force bill. He was a Confederate soldier. One peculiarity of Mr. Coleman is that he wants to be known as H. Dudley Coleman. His attorney ought to know this, for in his brief he mentions him as H. D. Coleman. On the face of the returns Buck has 7,653 plurality. Coleman alleges fraud, violence, and terrorism.

The eleventh contest is that of Taylor Beattie against Andrew Price of the Third Louisiana (Terrebonne) district. The evidence in the case has not been printed. On the face of the returns Price has 5,708 plurality. Price is a sugar planter who made a great fight against the repeal of the bounty on sugar.

The twelfth contest is that of Alexis Benoit against Charles J. Boatner of the Fifth Louisiana (Claiborne) district. Boatner was a prominent member of the last Congress and not long ago challenged Mr. Hearsey of the New Orleans *States* to a duel. The matter was settled by the intervention of friends. Benoit alleges that if the vote had been properly returned he would have 1,609 majority. Dudley and Michener appear among the counsel.

The thirteenth contest is that of William S. Booze, Republican, against Harry W. Rusk of the Third Maryland (Baltimore) district. Rusk appears to have 529 plurality. Booze alleges that he was deprived of a large number of ballots cast for him at the election, and that a number of ballots were improperly counted for Mr. Rusk, as shown by the recount and inspection of the original ballots. He also alleges that bona-fide voters were refused the right to vote, and that a large number of fraudulent and illegal votes were cast.

The fourteenth contest is that of Robert T. Van Horn against John C. Tarsney of the Fifth Missouri (Kansas City) district. Van Horn is an old Republican member of Congress. This is not the first time he has been in a contest. He is the editor of a newspaper in Kansas City. Tarsney is a Union soldier, who was thirteen months in Andersonville prison. On the face of the returns Tarsney has 740 plurality. Dudley and Michener appear as the counsel for Robert T. Van Horn. Van Horn alleges gross frauds and crimes perpetrated by the registration and election officers in the interest and for the benefit of the Democratic ticket, including the contestee.

The fifteenth contest is that of John Murray Mitchell against James J. Walsh of the Eighth New York district. The testimony is not in print. The allegation is bribery.

The sixteenth contest is that of Timothy J. Campbell against Henry C. Miner of the Ninth New York district. This testimony also is not in print. The allegation is bribery.

The seventeenth contest is that of Henry P. Cheatham against Fred A. Woodard of the Second North Carolina (Halifax) district. Mr. Cheatham is a negro of much ability and influence, and was a prominent member of the Fifty-first and Fifty-second Congresses. The returns show a plurality of 5,308 for Woodard. In this district there was no fusion between the Populists and Republicans. In the rest of the State there was. Howard P. Freeman, the Populist, received 5,814 votes. Mr. Cheatham alleges that 2,000 votes have been given to Mr. Woodard which were not cast for him, and that more than 4,000 votes cast for the contestant have been abstracted from him. He alleges that in one county the majority of 100 for the contestant has been returned for a majority of 1,600 for the contestee. The contest interests negroes throughout the country. On Dec. 17 Mr. Hitt of Illinois presented a memorial of James A. Booker and thirteen others of Little Rock, Ark., praying Congress to give the colored citizens of the United States at least one Representative, and seat the Hon. Henry P. Cheatham of North Carolina. He also presented a similar memorial from P. M. McIntosh and ninety-four others of Okolona, Miss., and Nelson Blackburn and thirty-seven others of Memphis, Tenn., praying Congress to seat the Hon. Henry P. Cheatham.

The eighteenth contest is that of Cyrus W. Thompson against John G. Shaw of the Third North Carolina (Fayetteville) district. On the face of the returns Shaw has 994 plurality. Thompson is a Populist. Dudley and Michener appear as counsel for Thompson, who alleges that an actual majority over Shaw of 447 was changed into 994 for Shaw.

The nineteenth contest is that of Charles H. Martin against James A. Lockhart of the Sixth North Carolina (Mecklenburg) district. Martin was a Populist with a Republican endorsement. Lockhart's majority on the face of the returns is 444. Martin contends that he had from 1,154 to 1,675 majority, and that it was upset by the rejection of the entire vote in different precincts.

The twentieth contest is that of George Washington Murray against William Elliott of the First South Carolina (Charleston) district. The certificate gives Mr. Elliott 1,737 majority. Murray is a coal-black negro, and was a member of the last Congress. This is the old Beaufort, better known as the Black district of South Carolina. Charleston was afterward put into the district by the Tillman Legislature as a punishment for its anti-Tillman proclivities. Mr. Elliott has repeatedly represented this district, and his seat has always been contested. Murray alleges that the district contains 32,878 colored voters and 11,451 white. He also alleges that he had an actual majority in the district of 2,010 on a total vote of 4,714 for Murray and 2,704 for Elliott. The negroes of the nation show their interest. A Mass-meeting of Illinois, on Dec. 17, presented and filed a petition in the House from ninety-five negroes from Okolona, Miss., and thirty-eight negro voters from Memphis, Tenn., praying Congress to seat George Washington Murray.

The twenty-first contest is that of Robert Moorman against Asbury C. Latimer of the Third South Carolina (Abbeville) district. Moorman is a Republican. The returns show that Latimer received 5,778 and Moorman 985 votes. Dudley and Michener are Moorman's counsel. Moorman alleges that 8,595 votes polled for him were rejected. He also alleges that there are 17,803 blacks of the voting age in the district and 14,280 whites.

The twenty-second contest is that of Joshua Wilson against John L. McLaurin of the Sixth South Carolina (Darlington) district. The returns give McLaurin 5,719 majority. Wilson is a Republican, and contends that the correct vote was 8,902 for himself and 8,102 for McLaurin.

The twenty-third contest is that of Thomas B. Johnston against J. William Stokes of the Seventh South Carolina (Orangeburg) district. The returns give Stokes 4,702 plurality. Johnston was running as an independent Republican against William M. Brayton, a regular Republican. Brayton is credited with fifty-six votes. Johnston alleges that the election officers were all Democrats. He contends that if the vote of the district had been received and counted as it should have been done under the law he would have had 4,143 majority. Dudley and Michener are Johnston's attorneys.

The twenty-fourth contest is that of J. H. Davis against David B. Culberson of the Fourth Texas (Jefferson) district. As no testimony has been filed the contestant may have abandoned the contest. The returns show 1,958 plurality for Culberson. Davis was a Populist. Mr. Culberson has the longest term of service of any Democrat in the House, and is the Chairman of the Democratic caucus. His son is Governor of Texas.

The twenty-fifth contest is that of Jerome C. Kearby against Jo Abbott of the Sixth Texas (Dallas) district. The returns give 344 plurality for Abbott. Kearby is a Populist. He alleges frauds and illegal returns whereby the will of the people was defeated. On the face of the returns Judge Abbott has 344 plurality.

The twenty-sixth contest is that of A. J. Rosenthal against Miles Crowley of the Tenth Texas (Galveston) district. The returns give Crowley 1,397 plurality. Rosenthal (Rep.) received 10,870, and McBride, a Populist, 7,874 votes. Crowley was born in Boston, went to Texas a poor boy, and has become a power in the Galveston district. Rosenthal alleges that he was cheated in the count.

The twenty-seventh contest is that of R. T. Thorp against William R. McKenney of the Fourth Virginia (Petersburg) district. The returns show 864 plurality for McKenney. This is the district from which John M. Langston secured a seat on a contest in the Fifty-first Congress. Thorp, the Republican, alleges violation of the statutes, and fraud and corruption generally.

The twenty-eighth contest is that of George W. Garnett (Dem.) against Claude H. Swanson in the Fifth Virginia (Danville) district. The official returns show 2,333 plurality for Swanson. The allegation is that the election was unfair, fraudulent, disorderly, and illegal, and that it is void because the law under which it was held is void.

The twenty-ninth contest is that of J. Hampton Hoge (Dem.) against Peter J. Otey of the Sixth Virginia (Lynchburg) district. Otey's official plurality is 2,814. The evidence is not printed. The allegations are fraudulent returns.

The thirtieth contest is that of Jacob Yost against Henry St. George Tucker of the Tenth Virginia (Staunton) district. Tucker's official plurality is 837. Mr. Yost was a member of the Fifty-first Congress and an editor of a Shenandoah Valley newspaper. He claims that 1,300 of his votes were illegally thrown out by the canvassers. Yost's attorney is ex-Congressman James D. Brady of Virginia.

The thirty-first contest is that of A. M. Newman against J. G. Spencer of the Seventh Mississippi (Port Gibson) district. Only a notice of contest has been made and no testimony has been filed. The returns show that Spencer had 2,649; Newman, Populist, 1,355, and Barr, Prohibitionist, 173.

The thirty-second contest is that of J. J. McDonald against W. A. Jones of the First Virginia (Fredericksburg) district. Notice was given of the contest in the House Dec. 20. The allegations are as yet unknown. The returns give Jones 4,654 plurality.

This abstract of the cases will give the reader an idea of the work to be done by the three Committees on Elections.

The contestants are usually allowed $2,000 for expenses, and when seated are paid for services and mileage from the beginning of the Congressional term. The lawyers undoubtedly get a fair share of the money allowed the contestant, while the contestee receives his salary during the time he serves. Indeed, in the Forty-eighth Congress a contestant was seated thirty minutes before the expiration of the time and received the salary for the full term, $10,000, and $2,000 for expenses. Mileage increased the amount to over $18,000. At that time there was no limit for expenses.

If these cases are to be carefully considered and judgment rendered according to law, Speaker Reed certainly did a wise thing when he blazed the way for the three Committees on Elections.

AMOS J. CUMMINGS.

THE VENEZUELANS.

Their Racial and Industrial Characteristics.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* The English newspapers in commenting upon the aggressive attitude of Lord Salisbury toward Venezuela have given prominence to very contemptuous characterizations of the South American people in general and the Venezuelans in particular. As the British Government has impudently attempted to evade, by a bogus indemnity claim, the real issue involved in its controversy with Venezuela and the United States, which is solely a question of right to territory forcibly occupied, so the British press dismisses in arrogant fashion the claim of Venezuela to fair and considerate treatment as a nation.

According to the London journals the Venezuelans are a "mongrel race," not measuring up to standards of European civilization, and therefore not entitled to ordinary international comity. The inference is that England may consequently deal with them to suit her convenience and pleasure—despoil them of one-sixth their territory, blockade their ports, seize their custom houses, grab their rich gold fields, and take to herself the mouth of the Orinoco and all the vast inland commerce having its outlet there, with no more compunction and no more sense of accountability than in the case of some heathen African or Asiatic tribe.

It is painful to observe that this monstrous malicious and false English journalism finds its echoes in certain American newspapers which pretend to a dispassionate spirit in discussing the Venezuelan question. Of course it is notorious that the editorial policy of these newspapers touching foreign topics is uniformly shaped by British sentiment. But even on this score it is hard to account for the repetition in the United States of British venom against Venezuelans as such. The New York *Evening Post*, for example, ought to be well enough instructed to understand how Venezuela and Venezuelans are really regarded in the commercial world. On this point it is sufficient to say that the Venezuelan export trade of New York alone reaches nearly $5,000,000 a year.

The barbarous British insinuations have not even a plausible justification, for the Venezuelans are in many respects quite equal of itself condemn any people. It will hardly be maintained that the Spanish, for instance, are "mongrel" because of their admixture of Moorish blood, or the Chilians, Peruvians, or Mexicans because of their Indian strain, in the same sense that the present ruling race in Chili, Peru, and Mexico is a blended one the Venezuelan is, but not otherwise. When the Spanish came to the New World they brought no women with them. They found Indian women a very fine and intelligent race, and their descendants inherited the bravery, grace, and beauty of the native tribes.

It is the rarest thing in Venezuela to see a full-blooded negro, and whenever one is encountered in a seaport town it may safely be wagered that he is either an immigrant or a native from the British West Indies. Slavery was abolished by the decree of March 24, 1854. It was the law of Bolivar that the children of slaves who were the offspring of masters should be free. This provision was a remarkable one, in view of the prominent names, which explains the frequency among Venezuelan mulattoes of the names of illustrious families.

But the distinctive Venezuelans, so far as they are modified from the original Spanish type, are the descendants of Indian ancestry. The pure Indian population of Venezuela is to this day very considerable, constituting about 15 per cent. of the total. According to Government statistics compiled in 1889, there were at that time 1,000,000 Indians in the country, of whom 240,000, or nearly 74 per cent., were classed as civilized, showing that the capabilities of the Venezuelan native races are of a respectable order. Indeed, some men most distinguished in Venezuelan history have been of pure Indian extraction. For example, President Paez, whose memory is venerated by his countrymen next to that of Simon Bolivar, was nearly if not quite a full-blooded Venezuelan Indian.

It used to be the studied practice of European aliens in Venezuela to assume an arrogant and presumptious bearing in their relations to the citizens and officials of the country. This was particularly observable in the high-toned gentlemen of the consular service. Every petty commercial representative of European power fancied himself a great diplomat and a personage of distinction, on whose part it was condescending to deal on terms of equality with the President of the republic. Guzman Blanco changed all that. He gave the British President to teach a much-needed lesson to the foreign representatives—particularly the English. He let the governments of the world understand that Venezuela must be treated with the respect due a civilized nation. He set his hand on the egotistical Consuls, and categorically refused to have any diplomatic intercourse with them, requiring them to keep strictly within their narrow limits as mere commercial agents. In his dealings with Ministers he found it necessary to adopt the same policy. Guzman Blanco, during the first seven years of his Presidency he dismissed, successively, the Ministers of Spain, Holland, France, and the United States for breaches of decorum. The Spanish Minister had made himself ridiculous by making a public display of himself with a common woman. The case of the United States Minister, Mr. Pile of Virginia, is well remembered in diplomatic annals. This gentleman ventured to present himself to the President on some occasion minus coat. President Blanco very sharply reminded him of his forgetfulness of etiquette, and shortly afterward sent him about his business.

Venezuela requires no vindication of her claims as an eminently progressive country in all essential respects. Her development during the last ten years has been remarkable. Previously to 1886 her public school system was very unimportant, only 1,312 pupils being in attendance at the public schools in the year mentioned, while now the attendance exceeds 100,000. An absolute separation of church and State has been effected, civil marriage is insisted on, and other admirable and progressive institutions have been established. The Constitution makes Presidents ineligible for re-election, and it is the earnest endeavor of Venezuelan statesmen to establish the politics of the country on a firm footing of peace and order. The financial system of Venezuela is the admiration and envy of all South American countries, the single gold standard being in force, and the public debt being of quite insignificant proportions.

The calumnies spread by the British press and parroted by a few American journals cannot injure Venezuela with any who really care to know the truth, but they create impressions and prejudices in certain quarters which should not be permitted to pass without correction.

VENEZUELAN.

Bound to See the Joke.

From the Chicago Record.

They were talking of phonographs.

"I heard an amusing story about an old farmer the other day," said the commercial traveller.

"Interest always attaches to the doings of the agricultural classes," said the Englishman, hitching up his chair with a look of interest.

"He had just driven into town with his mules to sell a load of pumpkins and he stopped in front of the phonograph store.

"'What air them fellows doin' in there with spouts in their ears?' he asked.

"'Those are talking machines,' answered a man in the doorway.

"The farmer was a little incredulous, but he finally left his mules and went in. The tubes were placed in his ears, he dropped the nickle in the slot, and a brass band began to play.

"'Whoa, there!' shouted the rustic, darting out of the store, 'them mules o' mine won't stand no brass band.'"

At first the Englishman looked anxious, as if he expected to hear the rest of the story. Then suddenly he burst out laughing.

"Great joke on the mules, eh?" he shouted.

THE DOCTOR'S ADVICE.

M. C., Scranton.—What can I use for thickened skin on the hands?

Take our Thyroidine, extract of the thyroid gland, three times daily.

N. L. H., Easton.—State symptoms of kidney trouble.

Cardine, extract of the heart, probably indicated.

R. T., Brooklyn.—I write to ask what I can use to make my skin white; it is of a very dirty color.

Natrolithic Salts, with frequent bathing and out-of-door exercise. Cardine, extract of the heart, three times daily.

T. L. Y., Allentown.—I have been suffering from functional weakness, and it has affected my whole system. Am very nervous; have pains in my kidneys, liver, back, and chest.

Our Testine and Cerebrine, taken alternately.

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A SAMPLE LARGO GIRL.

CAPN'N HALL'S DAUGHTER AND HER MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

Cook and Housekeeper at Fourteen, a Crack Shot and a Woodchopper, She Goes Fifteen Miles to School in Her Sharpie—A Dresser of Dolls, a Fearless Boatman, and a Student of Navigation.

KEY LARGO, Fla., Dec. 16.—The children of these Florida Keys seem at first sight to be little men and women, with none of the sports or amusements of childhood. Any boy or girl of them can tell to a dot when the tide will be full or half out, the direction of the wind, or the state of the moon. They know all about the reefs and the red sectors and the market price of pines and early tomatoes. None of these things, however, will they tell to a stranger unless they are so safely cornered that escape is impossible, and then they tell them with great hesitation, and eyes cast down. They are as bright as any other children, and in a struggle with the world they could do more toward taking care of themselves than most youngsters of like age; but they are entirely unused to seeing strangers, and when a stranger appears they draw back into the shell like a gopher. The stranger must win their confidence before they will admit that they have voices above a whisper or eyes to see higher than the floor.

Two or three boys and girls come chattering and laughing down the beach, eating jelly cocoanut or slabs of pineapple. The abundance of these things does not destroy the taste for them, and young people and old are continually eating them. There is no break in the merriment till they turn a corner and see a stranger sitting on Skipper Hall's piazza. Actually a stranger! Such a thing is entirely outside of their experience. Instantly the talking and laughing cease, and the broad brims of the straw hats are pulled downsto shelter the astonished faces. They walk demurely by, looking neither to the right nor to the left, nor anywhere but at their little bare toes in the sand. When the house is passed, and the danger is averted, they stop under a distant cocoanut tree, and Skipper Hall's little girl runs out the back door and joins them. A long and earnest conversation follows, in which the host's daughter is evidently explaining matters. It would be highly entertaining to hear what she says; but that is not for a stranger to know.

The skipper's daughter proves in a short time to be a first-rate fellow, whether to romp with, sail with, or board with; a good fellow, and a good example of the little girls of the Florida Keys. It is through her, if at all, that the confidence of the youngsters is to be gained. Mary Victoria Hall (the Victoria of course being a delicate little compliment to her Majesty) is in the neighborhood of fourteen, as far as years go, but nearer forty in the knowledge of things to make herself and her father comfortable. For the approved methods of making "light bread" or hot biscuit, of baking fish, or preparing crawfish or lobsters, it would be hard to find a better authority. She is the housekeeper; and in a region where the custom is to wash dishes before using, instead of after, and to scour a pan only when the black crust becomes thick enough to bear, her kitchen and her pans are as bright as a pin. When it comes to sailing a boat, she is too polite to show how she pities your ignorance; she merely says: "let me do it," and does herself what the stranger is making a painful balk of.

It took at least five or six days of living in the same house with this young lady, eating of her best dishes and giving her no doubt a great deal of extra work, to establish any sort of acquaintance with her. No hour of the morning was too early for her to have her fire crackling and the breakfast a-cooking; but at table she was as demure and silent as a wax doll. The presence of a stranger was over it all, and she could not find her tongue. And whether she was the barefooted little maid of all work or the mistress of the mansion in her afternoon rocking chair, the silence was almost unbroken. There was a great difference in her appearance in these times; the morning Mary was not in the least likethe afternoon Mary. She began the day much such a girl as the most casual reader might imagine, in a short dress, without shoes or stockings, hair flying in the wind, a child of nature from top to toe, with plenty of tan and freckles, and a thought for nothing but her work.

To go through the day in this way, however, might have given the stranger the idea that she was only a little barefoot girl, and that was not to be thought of. So, soon after the work was done, Miss Mary appeared in a costume much grander, though not half as becoming; shoes and stockings, and dress of better texture and make, and some ornaments, and the various little fixtures that girls of all ages, even in the Florida Keys, use for the proper impressment of a stranger.

The demureness and silence of the little mistress of the mansion might have gone on indefinitely if it had not been for the intervention of a mutual friend, no less a person than Prof. Marcius Willson. One day when the skipper was out fishing the stranger took up a book from the parlor table, and it proved to be a copy of "Willson's Fourth Reader."

"Is this one of the books you study in school, Mary?" he asked.

"Not that one," she replied. She was in the full glory of shoes and stockings at the moment, and perhaps a little more dignified than usual. "I finished that two years ago, and I'm in the Fifth Reader now. I am very fond of Mr. Willson's readers; he tells so much about all the birds and fishes."

In the next dozen words it came out that the stranger had been acquainted with Prof. Willson, and from that moment the ice was broken. The affection of this little housekeeper of the keys for a series of school readers can be compared only with the feelings of a modern reader for his favorite novelist. Books are not plenty in this part of the world, but such as there are, are read frequently and carefully. All the glowing sentences that ever were written might pass unnoticed, but descriptions of the fish that came out of the water, and birds that sing in the trees are of constant interest.

"Is he a very, very old man?" she asked. Evidently the idea that the author of those books was a real live man was new to her. She had always regarded him as we regard Shakespeare or Milton.

The stranger was compelled to admit that it was many years since he had seen Prof. Willson, and that on the last occasion the Professor was not making studies of spine-rayed fishes or tropical birds, but was out in his garden with his coat off trimming raspberry bushes.

"But where do you go to school?" he asked; "there is no school near you here at Largo."

"Oh, no," she answered, quite willing to talk now, "I go to Mr. Perpall, over at Matacumbe."

"What, fifteen miles away! You cannot go there in the morning and back at night?"

"No," she replied, "I go over on Monday morning, and stay with Mrs. Perpall till Friday evening. We only have school five months in the year, you know. There are four of us go from here, and we have very jolly times. I go in my own sharpie, and the two Stirrup girls go in theirs, and Harry Knowles goes in his. We race all the way over and back, except when we stop to fish."

"But don't you get caught in storms sometimes?"

"Nearly every time," she laughed. "You don't think we're afraid of a little rough weather, do you? Mr. Perpall has a set of nautical instrument, and he has taught us all to take observations and get the latitude and longitude. I never was on a steamer, but he says I could take one in through the Straits, and I think I could. Any way, I'm sure I could take a schooner in. Suppose you had a schooner on a lee shore and a gale of wind blowing, what would you do?"

The stranger was hardly prepared for a nautical examination, but suggested looking for a soft spot to strike.

"Why, get into soundings and let go an anchor, to be sure," she laughed. "I should think any one from New York would know that."

"And when you are not at school you stay here alone, often for a week at a time, while your father is away sponging or fishing?"

"Oh, yes," she answered; "that's nothing. There's nothing to be afraid of here. Sometimes I go over at night and stay with the Stirrup girls when father is away, but generally I stay at home. There might come up a gale, and then it's better to be at home to look after things."

So much confidence was engendered in this conversation that the little housekeeper, instead of going out as usual for her afternoon walk and cutting her best shoes in the sand, produced a sewing basket and fell to work. And the work was making a new dress for a doll. The girl who does all the cooking for a family, and goes fifteen miles to school in a sharpie, and stays alone for weeks at a time, and could take a steamer in through the Florida straits, and knows how to handle a schooner on a lee shore in a gale of wind, complacently set about dressing one of the oddest dollies that ever a little girl played with. It's head was a young cocoanut and its body a bag of sand, but the apologies she made for it were all on account of its homely appearance, not that such an accomplished young woman should be playing with dolls at all.

"It's not my best," she said. "I have a very handsome one that father brought me from Key West; but those bought dolls are not as strong as the ones we make ourselves." The next afternoon there were two little girls busy with their dolls on the piazza. Word had gone forth somehow that the stranger was not dangerous, but might safely be talked to. Then gradually more came, both boys and girls, till the entire juvenility of Castle Town, two boys and four girls, were on hand, all dressed in their Sunday best, and uncomfortable, no doubt, in shoes and stockings. It took a week longer for the full dress stage to wear off, and for the youngsters to feel free to appear in their more graceful and comfortable everyday clothes.

The two boys, both bright chaps with more red in their cheeks than generally falls to the lot of these tropical youngsters, took no part in the doll parties, but gallantly opened cocoanuts and sliced pines for the entire company.

"It's one thing I'd like to live in the North for," said one of the boys, young Harry Knowles; "I'd never have to husk cocoanuts up there, for they're always husked before they're shipped. I suppose you never husked cocoanuts all day, did you? I tell you it makes a fellow's hands sore. I've husked 250 in a day, but after that I could hardly shut my hands for a week."

"You ought to show this gentleman that New York picture you have, Harry," one of the girls suggested. "He can tell you whether the ships are packed in like that."

"That's so!" Harry exclaimed; "I'll go and get it."

He ran home and returned in a minute with a well-worn illustrated newspaper containing a picture of the New York piers, with the usual array of vessels, and the Brooklyn Bridge stretching itself through the air. There were other pictures in the three houses, some in gorgeous colors, some in black and white, but this one of the ships was the one that interested the boys. The tall buildings were well enough in their way, and the great bridge that was too vast for their imagination to grasp; but the rows and tiers of ships they could understand; and was it true, they were anxious to know, that vessels were really packed in like that in New York? They had both been taught something about the development of the country, but the illustrated newspaper evidently gave them more ideas than the books.

Among her other accomplishments, Miss Mary Hall wields an axe with great strength and skill, like all the children of the keys, girls as well as boys. It is a standing rule in this part of Florida that no firewood shall ever be cut till just as it is needed. To prepare a heap of firewood and pile it up for future use is an unheard-of thing. When a fire is needed there are always plenty of dry cocoanut husks lying about the yard, and when these are blazing they must last until a new stock can be cut and the fire made hot. Often it happens that at this critical moment there is not a stick of wood of any kind, large or small, on the woodpile, and then it is necessary to shoulder the axe and go out to the thicket to procure some. The girl, who five minutes before was sewing at a doll's bonnet, comes in from the beach, or from her sharpie, with a big log of long dry stick over the other, which she proceeds to chop into short pieces. When the axe turns an unexpected corner and chops the foot instead of the stick, as it does sometimes, there is no undue excitement. The foot of the boss has never even heard of those delicate people who faint at sight of a little blood. She goes to the medicine chest, and knows from experience just what liniment bottle to take out. She bandages the wounded with some skill, and goes on with her work, while the boss of the place hops around.

"Do you think it is safe to leave your little girl alone here when you are away on your trips?" Skipper Hall was asked.

"Safe?" he replied. "Why not? There is nothing here to hurt her. She has been quite able to take care of herself since she was six or eight years old. That is one advantage that our youngsters have here on the keys. They soon learn to look out for themselves. If she goes out in her boat, she knows how to manage it as well as I do; and suppose anything happened to the boat and it disappeared altogether, what then? She would simply swim ashore, she or any of the rest of these boys or girls. They can all swim like ducks.

"If I should be away for a month," he went on, "she would get perfectly easy about me. She knows just what is to be done and knows how to do it. When provisions begin to run low she watches for the trading schooner, and when it comes along she goes out to it in her sharpie, and tells the Captain what she wants or sends a line to the agent at Key West. In three or four days later the schooner comes back, and Mary goes out to her and gets her goods. She attends to all this when I am here, so my being away makes no difference. Storms? Yes, the schooners do get caught in storms sometimes, so that we can get no provisions. But that is only an inconvenience, never a real hardship. There is no time of year when we cannot get enough food out of the garden to keep us going at least for a few weeks. The cocoanuts are always with us, and one can starve while there are cocoanuts on the trees."

"But you have strange workmen on the island sometimes, specially in the pine-cutting season; colored men that you know nothing about. Don't you consider that a risk?"

"What risk do you think that, Mary?" the skipper called to the next room. "My friend wants to know whether you're not afraid of the darkies who come to Largo to cut pines."

"Afraid of them!" she exclaimed, stepping up to the open door. "I guess not. I'd like to catch one of them inside of my fence. I don't allow any colored person to come inside the yard when father is away, and they all know it."

"But suppose the power of your eye should fail to impress them?" the stranger suggested.

"Oh, I don't let them to keep out, and still they might come in."

"Show our friend what you would do in such a case," the skipper told her.

The young housekeeper, navigator, and doll's dressmaker stepped into her sleeping room and returned in a moment with a cocked and loaded shotgun in her hands. She opened and explained the loading apparatus, tilted the barrel forward, and rammed her finger into the muzzle to show that it was perfectly clean; all as coolly as an experienced woman might do it.

"I'm sorry we are short of cartridges," the skipper said, "for I should like to have Mary show you a little of her marksmanship. I bought her that gun nearly four years ago, and I think she knows how to use it as well as any man in the keys. She keeps herself and her dolls well supplied with bird's feathers and wings with it. I have tried to convince her that it is cruelty to animals to shoot birds for their feathers; but she generally cooks the birds for dinner, so I can't say much about it. However, you see she is prepared to hold the fort against invaders. You'll find that all the girls along the beach are about the same way. They are all handy with a gun or a boat. Next time we have a good lively sea on I'll get her to show you what she knows about sailing a boat."

That time came soon enough. A heavy wind from the southeast made a strong sea that broke on the beach in little cataracts, and whitened all the water between the keys and the outer reefs. The sharpies at anchor off the beach plunged about furiously.

"Now, Mary," said the skipper, "if you want to show our friend what you know about a sharpie, now's your time. What do you say to taking him a little run out to the Alligator?"

The girl looked at her father's visitor and smiled.

"I'm willing," she said, "but I don't believe he cares much to go in this white water."

She showed by that that she was as good at reading faces as at handling a boat, for the stranger had no burning desire to venture out in that foam in a sharpie, particularly with a young girl for a skipper. The piazza and a pipe offered far greater attractions.

"It's just a fine day for a spin," the skipper urged, and his tone said as plainly as words, "the girl's all right; but we'll see how the man likes it."

"It's twenty miles out to the Alligator light," Mary interposed. "We might run out around the Triangles, that will be shorter. I'll go and get ready, if you think you would enjoy it."

There was not much that a man could say under the circumstances except to declare that nothing would please him more; so well as a run around the Triangles in that smother of foam; and the girl disappeared to make ready.

"She's got to make her toilet!" the skipper laughed. "That's about the only point that Mary and I don't agree on. I tell her that she needs for a boating costume is a boy's shirt and trousers; but you wouldn't catch her going out even with me in trousers, for fear we might meet some one. The girls have their own fashion for a boating dress, and there's no use trying to change it."

What a girl of the keys could wear for a boating costume was something that the stranger had wondered about. The dress must be one that would bear wetting, and that would dry quickly. The voluminous skirt, with its folds and furbelows, clearly would not answer,