

ON THE STAIR.

A rare, sweet smile lit up her perfect face,
And wreathed the scarlet of her tender mouth;
Her warm breath swept across my cheek,
Like winds upstealing from the fragrant South.

The sweet good-by still trembled on her lips,
All warm with kisses I'd been leaving there;
As I looked backward from the silent street,
She stood above me, on the ivied stair.

The moon, within the great, unsleeping blue,
Smiled out, and all the east was pale with dawn,
Ah, love, I had not thought 'twas half so late,
Where had those hours in dreamful swiftness gone?

I'd tarried long, so loth to say farewell
For even one short week—an age of woe;
So loth to kiss those pleading lips good night,
And she was sad, dear heart, to have me go.

And, as I saw her there beneath the vine,
Sweet smiling down upon me from the stair,
I'll always keep her picture in my heart—
Her eyes love-bright, and moonlight on her hair.

And when this weary, waiting was at dead,
And all these excited hours are changed to light,
We will not part at midnight on the stair,
But I will kiss those eyes to sleep each night.

ODDS AND ENDS

Of Literary Bric-a-Brac from Chambers' Journal.

"Taste and try, before you buy," is a very wise rule, if it could only be followed; but in this world most things must be taken on trust; infallible tests are as rare as infallible remedies.

It was the custom among the Nestorian Christians, immediately upon the conclusion of the marriage ceremony, to carry a newly-made wife to the house of her husband's parents, and place an infant in her arms and three sets of baby clothes before her. If she succeeded in dressing and undressing baby three times to the satisfaction of the critical matrons there assembled, well and good; but if she failed she was sent to her old home again, to stay there, a wife and no wife, until able to face and pass a second trial.

Sakti Kumara, the hero of a curious Hindustani story, preferred testing a damsel's capability before tying the knot. Master of a prosperous and profitable business, he came to the conclusion that a wife was wanted to complete his happiness, and determined to go in search of one. Adopting the guise of a fortune-teller, and carrying some rice bound up in his cloth, he started on his travels. Whenever he encountered a girl that pleased his eye, he asked her to cook his rice for him. Some laughed at him, some reviled him, none seemed inclined to comply with his modest request, and it seemed as though he would have to take his rice home uncooked. At last he reached Swira, where he beheld a beautiful girl, who, instead of ridiculing or abusing the strange traveler, relieved him of the rice, and bade him be rested.

Then the kindly maiden set about preparing the rice. First she steeped it in water, then dried it in the sun, and, that accomplished, rubbed the grains gently on the ground, removing the awn without breaking the rice. Calling her nurse, she despatched her to sell the bran, and with the proceeds purchase an earthen boiler, two platters and some fuel. By the time this commission was executed, the rice had been brayed in a mortar, winnowed and washed, and was ready to be put in the boiler with five times its bulk of water. As soon as it had swollen sufficiently, the boiler was taken from the fire, the water cleared of the scum, and the boiler put back, and the rice constantly stirred by the pretty cook until she was satisfied it was properly done.

By turning the boiler mouth downwards she extinguished the fire, and, collecting the unconsumed fuel, despatched the old woman to convert it into butter, curas, oil, and tamarinds. This achieved, she told the enraptured Sakti Kumara to go and bathe, and not to omit rubbing himself with oil.

Having obeyed orders, the wife-seeker was directed to seat himself upon a plank on the well-swept floor, on which were already laid a large plantain leaf and two platters. His charming hostess then brought him water in a perfumed jug, and administered two spoonfuls of well-seasoned rice and ghee, preparatory to serving up the remainder of the rice mixed with spices, curds, butter and milk; of which Sakti Kumara ate his fill, and then indulged in a siesta with a mind at ease, knowing his quest was ended.

As soon as he woke he asked the girl to become his wife, and she being willing, the necessary ceremony was gone through without delay; and the supposed fortune-teller took his bride home, to astonish her as the Lord of Burleigh astonished his rustic love; but the Hindu lass was luckier than Tennyson's heroine, for we are assured that she lived long to worship her husband as a god, to pay the most assiduous attention to his household affairs, to superintend the regulation of the family coming in due course, and made her house such an abode of bliss, Sakti Kumara was well paid for the trouble he had taken to get a good wife, and tasted in his well-ordered home the joys of Paradise.

Some people are never satisfied, however fortunate they may be. A nursemaid in the service of an English family in Russia, left her place to get married, but had not been long wedded ere she complained to the Natchalaish of the district in which she was domiciled, that her husband did not love her as he should do; and on the official inquiring how she knew it, replied: "Because he never whips me." Doubtless the disappointed one meant what she said, but she might have changed her note had her desire been gratified; like the young wife suddenly bereaved

of a rich old husband, who refused to believe her dear partner could be so cruel as to leave her, crying out: "He's alive doctor; I'm sure he's alive; tell me, don't you think so?" This piteous appeal the physician met by suggesting the application of a galvanic shock, and offering to apply the apparatus. "Oh, no, no!" exclaimed the grief-stricken widow; "hard as it is to bear my fate, I will have no experiments against the law of Nature; let him rest in peace!"

When it is desirable to put any one to the test, there is nothing like doing so without warning. An actor fond of playing practical jokes at the expense of 'utility' men, heard that one of them—his particular aversion—had boasted that if any trick was played upon him he would turn the tables in a way that would astonish the actor. The latter, of course, resolved to test the boaster's readiness on the first opportunity. He did not have to wait long for the chance. One night, when the house was crowded, the carpenters failed to get a set scene ready in time, and a 'dead stick' ensued. Knowing his man, the stage-manager entreated the joke-loving actor to go and 'gag' for a few minutes. 'Certainly,' replied he; and seeing the utility man at the wing, he seized him by the wrist and, spite of resistance, dragged him to the centre of the stage, and said: "Your sister then, has been betrayed. Tell me the story!" The frightened fellow had no story to tell, to the crafty joker's delight. Whether the audience in front and the manager behind were equally pleased, the record saith not.

In olden days the burgesses of Grimsby were wont to decide which among them should be mayor, by a very odd process. Having chosen three of their number as eligible for the position, they blindfolded them, tied bunches of hay at their backs, and conducted them to the common pound where a calf awaited their coming. He whose bunch of hay was first eaten by the calf was pronounced most worthy of the mayoralty, and installed into office accordingly.

William Thompson, the once famous Mori chief, adopted a shrewd method of deciding which of his two sons should succeed him. As they stood before him as he lay sick unto death, he suddenly addressed himself to the elder, saying: "Shortland, take down that gun and shoot the white man standing outside the hut." The youth was about to obey the order, when his brother intervened with: "Why should you kill the man? what harm has he done to us?" Then said the old chief: "Yes, that is right. You have what is wanted—sense and discretion. You will take my place when I am gone." And so the succession was settled.

When the American Colonel Ellsworth wanted a chaplain for his zoneaves, he sent word to the applicants for the office to meet him at the Astor House at a certain hour. The room was full of aspirants to the chaplainship long before the appointed time. At last the clock struck the hour, and while it was striking, in walked another candidate. The colonel rose from his seat, held out his hand to the last comer, and said: "You are my man; I can depend upon you, for you come at the appointed time."

The colonel's reasoning was as inconsequential as that of the stage carpenter whom Edmund Kean heard thus settle the pretensions of impersonators of Hamlet: "You may talk of Henderson and Kemble and this new man," said the carpenter, "but give me Bannister's Hamlet. He was always done twenty minutes sooner than any one of 'em!" Self interest is a sad warper of the judgment, and devises very strange tests. Going over the graveyard of the 'Old Meeting' at Birmingham, with the clerk, Joshua Vernal asked him who was the greatest man lying buried there. "This is he," answered Mackey, pointing to a grave: "I get five shillings a year to keep it in order." "But what was he? What did he do?" inquired the incredulous Joshua. "Why," said the clerk, "he invented the holding of thimbles!" Vernal thereupon pointed to the grave of a distinguished scholar as being that of the greatest man there; but the clerk pook-pooed the preposterous suggestion, saying: "No such thing; I only get a paltry shilling for that grave." His test of greatness was a purely professional one, like that of the Norwich barber who confidentially told the Mayor he did not think much of 'this British Association; nine out of ten of them don't shave at all, and the others shave themselves.'

"Humboldt," said a Middlesex militia-captain—"Humboldt is an overrated man; there is very little in him, and he knows no more of geography than my terrier there. I met him once at the Russian Ambassador's at Paris, and put him to the proof. As long as he was talking of the Andes, and the Cordilleras, and places which none but himself had ever heard of, he carried it all his own way; but the moment I put a straightforward question to him, which any school-boy might have answered, he was floored. "Now, Baron," said I, "can you tell me where Turnham Green is?" Upon my honor, he knew no more about it than I know about Jericho." The conclusion was as inevitable as that drawn by the English carpenter working at the Vienna Exhibition, who complained to a newspaper correspondent: "Only fancy, sir, here's Friday—two days after the race—and we don't know what was second and third for the Derby yet; and they call this here country civilized."

A speaker at an American 'convention,' on being addressed by a gentleman as 'Colonel,' repudiated the military title, declaring he was not even a captain. "Don't you live in Mis-

souri?" queried his new acquaintance. He owned he did live in Missouri, and in a house with chimneys. "How many?" was the next question. "Two." "Then I was right at first" exclaimed the interlocutor. "You see, I've lived in Missouri, and know how it is. Over there, if a man has three chimneys on his house, he's a general; if two, he's a colonel; if only one he's a major; and if he lives in a dug-out and has no chimney, he's a captain anyhow; so I was right after all."

QUIEN SABE.

—The Prince of Wales rides about a great deal in a private hansom cab which has many comfortable improvements. Among these is a travelling clock with a luminous dial-face set in the centre of the splash-board.

—Out of a grand total of 455,649,000 bushels of wheat grown in this country this year, the production of the South was only 41,329,000 bushels, or about 30,000,000 bushels less than the actual consumption of that section.

—The late astronomer, Professor Watson, had a remarkable memory. When an undergraduate he used to memorize long passages of the Greek and Latin authors, which he sometimes in after years repeated to his friends with complete accuracy.

—The North German Lloyds line of steamships will deliver according to contract 3,000 Roumanian Jews in New York during the month of December. This is the beginning of a large immigration of this people driven from Rumania by persecution.

—Asparagus grows wild in France, and may be gathered in many forests. The wild asparagus is long, thin and green, and has a slightly acid but agreeable taste. It was first cultivated by a well-known horticulturist, Louis Therault, about 100 years ago.

—Mrs Schliemann helps her husband in all his scientific labors, superintending excavations under his direction and bravely disregarding sun and dust. She wears while engaged in this work a plain, trim dress and jacket, and carries a stout umbrella.

—Kate Fields says the marked difference between English and American newspapers is that the latter have a capacity for keen and witty paragraphs, while the former—as for example, the London Times—often devote a column to what might be condensed into a dozen lines.

—The Rev. Antonio Arrighis has collected \$10,000 in this country for the benefit of the Free Church of Italy. He will return to Italy shortly and Father Gavazzi will arrive. The latter's last visit to this country was quite successful. The Free Church and the Waldensian Church are both very prosperous.

—Lord Beaconsfield is the first Knight of the Garter since the days of Walpole who has written a novel. Few of the knights have written anything but their names, and the earlier Knights could not do that. Clarendon, who declined the garter, left a name in English literature, and might be called the father of British history as well as of British queens. Chesterfield who wore the garter, dabbled in literature as a favor, but peers who write are rare, and few but peers are raised to the Order.

—While a boy was bathing at the opening of a channel connecting the Fountain of the Virgin and the Pool of Siloam, at Jerusalem, he discovered a rock upon which were graven a number of Phœnician characters. They are small and finely wrought, but unfortunately not deeply cut. Part of the stone is submerged and hidden a silicate deposit. After the channel has been drained and the deposit carried away it is expected that considerable light on the topography of Jerusalem will hereby be gained.

—In 1805 a Scotchman wrote a big book to prove that Napoleon Bonaparte's real name was John Oswald, and that he was born in Edinburgh. A man named Oswald was known to have left Scotland and entered the army of the French Republic. He was a man of vast courage and enterprise, possessed of an indomitable will, and was an ardent admirer of Ossian. Napoleon was all this, but the facts concerning him and his family were so well known that the Scotch bookmaker's extravagant theory made but little impression and was soon forgotten.

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