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ALICE of OLD VINCENNES

By MAURICE THOMPSON

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE DILEMMA OF CAPTAIN HELM.

ONCLE JAZON, feeling like a fish returned to the water after a long and torturing captivity in the open air, plunged into the forest with anticipations of lively adventure and made his way toward the Wea plains. It was his purpose to get a boat at the village of Ouiatenon and pull thence up the Wabash until he could find out what the English were doing. He chose for his companions on this dangerous expedition two expert coureurs de bois, Dutremble and Jacques Bailoup. Fifty miles up the river they fell in with some friendly Indians, well known to them all, who were returning from the portage.

The savages informed them that there were no signs of an English advance in that quarter. Some of them had been as far as the St. Joseph river and to within a short distance of Detroit without seeing a white man or hearing of any suspicious movements on the part of Hamilton. So back came Oncle Jazon with his pleasing report, much disappointed that he had not been able to stir up some sort of trouble.

It was Helm's turn to laugh.

"What did I tell you?" he cried, in a jolly mood, slapping Beverley on the shoulder. "I knew mighty well that it was all a big story with nothing in it. What on earth would the English be thinking about to march an army away off down here only to capture a rotten stockade and a lot of gabbling parlyvoos?"

Beverley, while he did not feel quite as confident as his chief, was not sorry that things looked a little brighter than he had feared they would turn out to be. Secretly and without acknowledging it to himself he was delighted with the life he was living.

He began to like walking about aimlessly in the town's narrow streets, with the mud daubed cabins on either hand. This simple life under low, thatched roofs had a charm. Everybody cried cheerily, "Bon jour, monsieur, comment allez-vous?" as he went by, always accompanying the verbal salute with a graceful wave of the hand.

But it was always a glimpse of Alice that must count for everything in Beverley's reckonings, albeit he would have strenuously denied it. True he went to Roussillon place almost every day, it being a fixed part of his well ordered habit, and had talk with her. Sometimes, when Dame Roussillon was very busy and so quite off her guard, they read together in a novel or in certain parts of the odd volume of Montaigne. This was done more for the sweetness of disobedience than to enjoy the already familiar pages.

Now and again they repeated their fencing bout, but never with the result which followed the first. Beverley soon mastered Alice's tricks and showed her that, after all, masculine muscle is not to be discounted at its own game by even the most wonderful womanly strength and suppleness. She struggled bravely to hold her vantage ground once gained so easily, but the inevitable was not to be avoided. At last one howling winter day he disarmed her by the very trick that she had shown him. That ended the play, and they ran, shivering, into the house.

"Ah," she cried, "it isn't fair. You are so much bigger than I. You have so much longer arms, so much more weight and power. It all counts against me! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" She was rosy with the exhilarating exercise and the biting of the frosty breeze. Her beauty gave forth a new ray.

Deep in her heart she was pleased to have him master her so superbly; but as the days passed she never said so, never gave over trying to make him feel the touch of her foil. She did not know that her eyes were getting through his guard, that her dimples were stabbing his heart to its middle.

"You have other advantages," he replied, "which far overbalance my greater stature and stronger muscles." Then after a pause he added, "After all a girl must be a girl."

Something in his face, something in her heart, startled her so that she made a quick little move like that of a restless bird.

"You are beautiful, and that makes my eyes and my hand uncertain," he went on. "Were I fencing with a man there would be no glamour."

He spoke in English, which he did not often do in conversation with her. It was a sign that he was somewhat wrought upon. She followed his rapid words with difficulty, but she caught from them a new note of feeling. He saw a little pale flare shoot across her face and thought she was angry.

"You should not use your dimples to distract my vision," he quickly added, with a light laugh. "It would be no worse for me to throw my hat in your face."

His attempt at levity was obviously weak. She looked straight into his eyes with the steady gaze of a simple, earnest nature shocked by a current quite strange to it. She did not understand him, and she did. Her fine intuition gathered swiftly together a hundred shreds of impression received from him during their recent growing intimacy. He was a patrician, as she vaguely made him out, a man of wealth, whose family was great. He belonged among people of gentle birth and high attainments. She magnified him so that he was diffused in her imagination, as difficult to comprehend as a mist in the morning air—and as beautiful.

"You make fun of me," she said very deliberately, letting her eyes droop. Then she looked up again suddenly and continued, with a certain naive expression of disappointment gathering in her face: "I have been too free with you. Father Beret told me not to forget my dignity when in your company. He told me you might misunderstand me. I don't care. I shall not fence with you again." She laughed, but there was no joyous freedom in the sound.

"Why, Alice—my dear Miss Roussillon, you do me a wrong. I beg a thousand pardons if I've hurt you," he cried, stepping nearer to her, "and I can never forgive myself. You have somehow misunderstood me, I know you have!"

On his part it was exaggerating a mere contact of mutual feelings into a dangerous collision. He was as much self deceived as was she, and he made more noise about it.

"It is you who have misunderstood me," she replied, smiling brightly now, but with just a faint, pitiful touch of regret or self blame lingering in her voice. "Father Beret said you would. I did not believe him, but"—

"And you shall not believe him," said Beverley. "I have not misunderstood you. There has been nothing. You have treated me kindly and with beautiful friendliness. You have not done or said a thing that Father Beret or anybody else could criticise, and if I have said or done the least thing to trouble you I repudiate it—I did not mean it. Now you believe me, don't you, Miss Roussillon?"

He seemed to be falling into the habit of speaking to her in English. She understood it somewhat imperfectly, especially when in an earnest moment he rushed his words together as if they had been soldiers he was leading at the charge step against an enemy. His manner convinced her even though his diction fell short.

"Then we'll talk about something else," she said, laughing naturally now and retreating to a chair by the hearthside. "I want you to tell me all about yourself and your family, your home and everything."

She seated herself with an air of conscious aplomb and motioned him to take a distant stool.

There was a great heap of dry logs in the fireplace, with pointed flames shooting out of its crevices and leaping into the gloomy, cavelike throat of the flue. Outside a wind passed heavily across the roof and bellowed in the chimney top.

Beverley drew the stool near Alice, who with a charred stick used as a poker was thrusting at the glowing crevices and sending showers of sparks aloft.

"Why, there wouldn't be much to tell," he said, glad to feel secure again. "Our home is a big old mansion named Beverley Hall, on a hill among trees and half surrounded with slave cabins. It overlooks the plantation in the valley, one of the oldest and best in Virginia." He looked at her now with a gaze of concentrated interest, under which her eyes fell. "Why, this is romantic," he exclaimed, "absolutely romantic! And you don't know how you came by this locket? You don't know who was your father, your mother?"

"I do not know anything."

"And what does M. Roussillon know?"

"Just as little."

"But how came he to be taking you and caring for you? He must know how he got you, where he got you, of whom he got you. Surely he knows"—

"Oh, I know all that. I was twelve years old when Papa Roussillon took me, eight years ago. I had been having a hard life, and but for him I must have died. I was a captive among the Indians. He took me and has cared for me and taught me. He has been very, very good to me. I love him dearly."

"And don't you remember anything at all about when, where, how, the Indians got you?"

"No." She shook her head and seemed to be trying to recollect something. "No, I just can't remember. And yet there has always been something like a dream in my mind which I could not quite get hold of. I know that I am not a Catholic. I vaguely remember a sweet woman who taught me to pray like this: 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.'"

And Alice went on through the beautiful and perfect prayer, which she repeated in English with infinite sweetness and solemnity, her eyes uplifted, her hands clasped before her. Beverley could have sworn that she was a shining saint and that he saw an aureole.

"I know," she continued, "that some time, somewhere, to a very dear person, I promised that I never, never, never would pray any prayer but that, and I remember almost nothing else about that other life, which is far off back yonder in the past. I don't know where—sweet, peaceful, shadowy, a dream that I have all but lost from my mind."

Beverley's sympathy was deeply moved. He sat for some minutes looking at her without speaking. She, too, was pensive and silent, while the fire sputtered and sang, the great logs slowly melting, the flames tossing wisps of smoke into the chimney still booming to the wind.

"I know, too, that I am not French," she presently resumed, "but I don't know just how I know it. My first words must have been English, for I have always dreamed of talking in that language, and my dimmest half recollections of the old days are of a large, white house and a soft voiced black woman, who sang to me in that language the very sweetest songs in the world."

Beverley listened as one who hears a clever reader intoning a strange and captivating poem. To his mind it was clear that she belonged to the Tarleton family of Virginia. Youth always concludes a matter at once. He knew some of the Tarletons. But it was a widely scattered family, its members living in almost every colony in America. The crest he recognized at a glance by the dragon on the helmet with three stars. It was not for a woman to bear. But doubtless it had been enameled on the locket merely as a family mark, as was often done in America.

"The black woman was your nurse, your mammy," he said. "I know by that and by your prayer in English as well as by your locket that you are of a good old family."

Like most southerners, he had strong faith in genealogy, and he held at his tongue's tip the names of all the old families. The Carters, the Blairs, the Fitzhughs, the Hansons, the Randolphs, the Lees, the Ludwells, the Joneses, the Beverleys, the Tarletons—a whole catalogue of them stretched back in his memory. He knew the coat of arms displayed by each house. He could repeat their legends.

"I wish you could tell me more," he went on. "Can't you recollect anything further about your early childhood, your first impressions—the house, the woman who taught you to pray, the old black mammy? Any little thing might be of priceless value as evidence."

"There is absolutely nothing more to tell," she said. "All my life I have tried to remember more, but it's impossible; I can't get any further back or call up another thing. There's no use trying. It's all like a dream; probably it is one. I do have such dreams. In my sleep I can lift myself into the air just as easy and fly back to the same big white house that I seem to remember. When you told me about your home it was like something that I had often seen before. I shall be dreaming about it next."

Beverley cross questioned her from every possible point of view. He was fascinated with the mystery, but she gave him nothing out of which the least further light could be drawn. A half breed woman, it seemed, had been her Indian foster mother, a silent, grave, watchful guardian from whom not a hint of disclosure ever fell. She was moreover a Christian woman who had received her conversion from an English speaking Protestant missionary. She prayed with Alice, thus keeping in the child's mind a perfect memory of the Lord's prayer.

"Well," said Beverley at last, "you are more of a mystery to me the longer I know you."

"Then I must grow every day more distasteful to you."

"No; I love mystery."

He went away feeling a new web of interest binding him to this inscrutable maiden whose life seemed to him at once so full of idyllic happiness and so enshrouded in tantalizing doubt. At the first opportunity he frankly questioned M. Roussillon, with no helpful result. The big Frenchman told the same meager story. The woman was dying in the time of a great epidemic which killed most of her tribe. She gave Alice to M. Roussillon, but told him not a word about her ancestry or previous life. That was all.

A wise old man when he finds himself in a blind alley no sooner touches the terminal wall than he faces about and goes back the way he came. Under like circumstances a young man must needs try to batter the wall down with his head. In Beverley's case the clash was profoundly disturbing. And now he clutched the thought that Alice was not a mere child of the woods, but a daughter of an old family of cavaliers!

With coat buttoned close against the driving wind he strode toward the fort in one of those melodramatic moods to which youth in all climes and times is subject. It was like a slap in the face when Captain Helm met him at the stockade gate and said:

"Well, sir, you are good at hiding."

"Hiding! What do you mean, Captain Helm?" he demanded, not in the mildest tone.

"I mean, sir, that I've been hunting for you for an hour and more over the whole of this town. The English and Indians are upon us, and there's no time for fooling. Where are all the men?"

Beverley comprehended the situation in a second. Helm's face was congested with excitement. Some scouts had come in with the news that Governor Hamilton, at the head of 500 or 600 soldiers and Indians, was only three or four miles up the river.

"Where are all the men?" Helm repeated.

"Buffalo hunting, most of them," said Beverley.

"What in thunder are they off hunting buffaloes for?" raged the excited captain.

"You might go to thunder and see," Beverley said, and they both laughed in sheer masculine contempt of a predicament too grave for anything but grim mirth.

"What could they do? Even Oncle Jazon and Rene de Ronville were off with the hunters. Helm sent for M. Roussillon in the desperate hope that he could suggest something, but he lost his head and hustled off to hide his money and valuables. Indeed the French people all felt that, so far as they were concerned, the chief thing was to save what they had. They well knew that it mattered little which of the two masters held over them—they must shift for themselves. In their hearts they were true to France and America; but France and America could not now protect them against Hamilton, therefore it would be like suicide to magnify patriotism or any other sentiment objectionable to the English. So they acted upon M. Roussillon's advice and offered no resistance when the new army approached.

"My poor people are not disloyal to your flag and your cause," said good Father Beret next morning to Captain Helm, "but they are powerless. Winter is upon us. What would you have us do? This rickety fort is not available for defense. The men are nearly all far away on the plains. Isn't it the part of prudence and common sense to make the best of a desperate situation? Should we resist, the British and their savage allies would destroy the town and commit outrages too horrible to think about. In this case diplomacy promises much more than a hopeless fight against an overwhelming force."

"I'll fight 'em," Helm ground out between his teeth, "if I have to do it single handed and alone! I'll fight 'em!"

Father Beret smiled grimly, as if he, too, would enjoy a lively skirmish, and said:

"I admire your courage, my son. Fighting is perfectly proper upon fair occasion. But think of the poor women and children. These old eyes of mine have seen some terrible things done by enraged savages. Men can die fighting, but their poor wives and daughters—ah, I have seen, I have seen!"

Beverley felt a pang of terror shoot through his heart as Father Beret's simple words made him think of Alice in connection with the Indian massacre.

"Of course, of course it's horrible to think of," said Helm, "but my duty is clear, and that flag"—he pointed to where la banniere d'Alice Roussillon

"That flag shall not come down save in full honor."

was almost blowing away in the cold wind—"that flag shall not come down save in full honor."

His speech sounded preposterously boastful and hollow, but he was manfully in earnest. Every word came from his brave heart.

Father Beret's grim smile returned, lighting up his strongly marked face with the strangest expression imaginable.

"We will get all the women inside the fort," Helm began to say.

"Where the Indians will find them ready penned up and at their mercy," quickly interpolated the priest. "That will not do."

"Well, then, what can be done?" Beverley demanded, turning with a fierce stare upon Father Beret. "Don't stand there objecting to everything, with not a suggestion of your own to offer."

"I know what is best for my people," the old man replied softly, still smiling. "I have advised them to stay inside their houses and take no part in the military event. It is the only hope of averting an indiscriminate massacre and things worse."

The curt phrase, "things worse," went like a bullet stroke through Beverley's heart. It flashed an awful picture upon his vision. Father Beret saw his face whiten and his lips set themselves to resist a great emotion.

"Do not be angry with me, my son," he said, laying a hand on the young man's arm. "I may be wrong, but I act upon long and convincing experience."

"Experience or no experience," Helm exclaimed, with an oath, "this fort must be manned and defended. I am commanding here!"

"Yes, I recognize your authority," responded the priest in a firm yet deferential tone, "and I heartily wish you had a garrison. But where is your command, Captain Helm?"

"Where is my garrison, you ask! Yes, and I can tell you. It's where you might expect a gang of dad blasted jabbering French good for nothings to be, off high gannicking around shooting buffaloes instead of staying here and defending their wives, children, homes and country! The few I have in the fort will sneak off, I suppose."

"The French gave you this post on easy terms, captain," blandly retorted Father Beret.

"Yes, and they'll hand it over to Hamilton, you think, on the same basis," cried Helm, "but I'll show you! I'll show you, Mr. Priest!"

"Pardon me, captain. The French are loyal to you and to the flag yonder. They have sworn it. Time will prove it. But in the present desperate dilemma we must choose the safer horn."

Saying this Father Beret turned about and went his way. He was chuckling heartily as he passed out of the gate.

"He is right," said Beverley after a few moments of reflection, during which he was wholly occupied with Alice, whose terrified face in his anticipation appealed to him from the midst of howling savages, smoking cabins and mangled victims of lust and massacre. His imagination painted the scene with a merciless pen!

"Tarleton, Tarleton," he repeated.

chilled his blood. All the sweet romance fell away from Vincennes.

"Well, sir, right or wrong, your duty is to obey orders," said Helm with brutal severity.

"We had better not quarrel, captain," Beverley replied. "I have not signified any unwillingness to obey your commands. Give them, and you will have no cause to grumble."

"Forgive me, old fellow!" cried the impulsive commander. "I know you are true as steel. I s'pose I'm wound up too tight to be polite. But the time is coming to do something. Here we are with but five or six men"—

He was interrupted by the arrival of two more half breed scouts.

Only three miles away was a large flotilla of boats and canoes with canoes, a force of Indians on land and the British flag flying—that was the report.

"They are moving rapidly," said the spokesman, "and will be here very soon. They are at least 600 strong, all well armed."

"Push that gun to the gate and load it to the muzzle, Lieutenant Beverley," Helm ordered with admirable firmness, the purple flush in his face giving way to a grayish pallor. "We are going to die right here or have the honors of war."

Beverley obeyed without a word. He even loaded two guns instead of one, charging each so heavily that the last wad looked as if ready to leap from the grimy mouth.

Helm had already begun, on receiving the first report, a hasty letter to Colonel Clark at Kaskaskia. He now added a few words and at the last moment sent it out by a trusted man, who was promptly captured by Hamilton's advance guard. The missive, evidently written in installments during the slow approach of the British, is still in the Canadian archives, and runs thus:

Dear Sir—At this time there is an army within three miles of this place; I heard of their coming several days beforehand. I sent spies to find the certainty—the spies being taken prisoner I never got intelligence till they got within three miles of town. As I had called the militia and had all assurances of their integrity I ordered at the firing of a cannon every man to appear, but I saw but few. Captain Buseron behaved much to his honor and credit, but I doubt the conduct of a certain gent. Excuse haste, as the army is in sight. My determination is to defend the garrison, (sic) though I have but twenty-one men but what has left me. I refer you to Mr. Wmes (sic) for the rest. The army is within three hundred yards of the village. You must think how I feel; not four men that I really depend upon; but am determined to act brave—think of my condition. I know it is out of my power to defend the town, as not one of the militia will take arms, though before sight of the army no braver men. There is a flag at a small distance, I must conclude. Your humble servant,

LEO'D HELM.

Must stop.

To Colonel Clark.

Having completed this task, the letter shows under what a nervous strain, Helm turned to his lieutenant and said:

"Fire a swivel with a blank charge. We'll give these weak kneed parlyvoos one more call to duty. Of course not a frog eater of them all will come. But I said that a gun should be the signal. Possibly they didn't hear the first one, the deaf, cowardly hounds!"

Beverley wheeled forth the swivel and rammed a charge of powder home. But when he fired it the effect was far from what it should have been. Instead of calling in a fresh body of militia it actually drove out the few who up to that moment had remained as a garrison, so that Captain Helm and his lieutenant found themselves quite alone in the fort, while out before the gate, deployed in fine open order, a strong line of British soldiers approached with sturdy steps, led by a tall, erect, ruddy faced young officer.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Bonus With Purchase an Old New Orleans Custom.

"Lagniappe" is a purely local institution, and the word itself is a localized one, signifying a bonus, generally in kind, given to a customer with each purchase, some trifling article added gratuitously to a purchase in the retail shops of the city or the public markets.

For the origin of the custom of giving "lagniappe" and the history of the word one must go back to the early colonial traditions of Louisiana. The old creole legend runs that when Louisiana was ceded to Spain the Spanish venders opened their shops in the French quarter side by side with the old French marchands. A great rivalry sprang up between them.

In the quarter lived an old Spanish gentleman who had a pet monkey. Whenever he went to make his purchases of groceries or provisions he took his monkey with him. Joco, as the monkey was called, was a great thief. While his master would be making his purchases he would quickly seize upon the nearest articles that suited his fancy, nuts, fruits, candy or the like, and eagerly devour them.

He was so quick and dextrous that he would have the article between his teeth before his master or the vender would be aware. Now, the colonial Spanish had a provincial word, "el niape," signifying one who is skillful or dextrous. Joco became so well known in the stores for his great dexterity in grasping whatever came in his reach that the Spanish, like the French, fond of giving nicknames, called him "El Niape."

Whenever the old Spaniard, who was very liberal in buying, would appear with his monkey, as he would conclude his purchases the marchands would hand him a stick of candy, a handful of nuts or the like, saying, "This is for El Niape." The little children, seeing the monkey get a bonus of candy, fruit, etc., thought they ought to have some, too, and would hold out their hands after every purchase for "el niape."

The custom grew, and as the two races, French and Spanish, amalgamated the creoles softened the old term "el niape" in the half French, half Spanish, "lagniappe," the term used today.

The pleasant institution of this petty gratuity was looked upon as such a gracious and kindly custom that it took firm root among the various nationalities that poured into New Orleans after the American occupation. Bold must be the vender who would refuse in New Orleans to give "lagniappe" to the little child who holds out its hand in confident expectation. In many shops it is used to encourage custom. To such an extent had this gone some years ago that a bill was introduced into the legislature to abolish "lagniappe."

There was such a hue and cry in favor of the old custom that the bill was postponed indefinitely. It was declared "lagniappe" was one of our own Louisiana institutions, peculiar to ourselves, a generous old time custom that in its open heartedness had nothing in common with the mercenary spirit of the age.

Other things might go, but "lagniappe" must stay. And so it did, a kindly relic of a day that is gone, a custom that often puzzles the stranger, but which has only to be explained to make him more than ever pleased with the warmth and the glow that come from the heart of this Franco-Spanish city in the bend of the crescent.—New Orleans Picayune.

THE REICHSTAG GASPED.

When It Roared After Mommsen Called Bismarck to Order.

Mommsen's absentmindedness led him into all sorts of predicaments. One of the most amusing of these was concerned with his first—and last—appearance in the reichstag. While Bismarck was chancellor of the empire Mommsen was elected to the lower branch of the imperial parliament by the Social Democrats. The student body escorted him from the university to the reichstagsgebaude and through the galleries, prepared to give their favorite professor's maiden speech "a good sendoff." What happened is thus described:

"After he had taken his seat Mommsen was observed to fumble in his pockets and draw out a paper that the students supposed was the speech in question. No sooner had he done this than Bismarck arose to address the house. As usual, silence the most profound reigned until the chancellor had begun to fill the chamber with his resonant and powerful voice. But not the slightest attention did Mommsen pay to the great Bismarck. The eminent historian sat absorbed in his paper, which he held close up to his nose after his usual manner.

"Suddenly, without warning, a most amazing thing happened. Bismarck, he who ruled Germany with a rod of iron, was in the middle of one of his most earnest addresses, when up jumped a member of the reichstag and cried:

"'Stop! Stop! Stop!'

"It was Mommsen. The spectators were horror struck. Bismarck stood aghast. But Mommsen, peering excitedly about him with his almost sightless eyes, again raised his voice and shouted:

"'That foolish student! That foolish student! Is he going to talk all day? What foolish student is it that talks, talks, talks, as if we had nothing to do but listen to his talk? If he is not quiet at once I shall call the attendant and have him removed.' And Mommsen resumed his seat.

"For perhaps a minute the stillness was like unto that which abides in the grave. Then a great burst of laughter awoke the echoes and rolled up to the roof, and in it Bismarck had to join, for the explanation of the great historian's outburst was evident to all. The paper he had been examining was one connected with his duties as a professor, and he thought he still was at the university. With his mind intent upon the paper, in which he was deeply interested, undoubtedly Bismarck's powerful voice sounded in his ears like the monotonous buzz, buzz, buzz of a bee. When he awoke to the nature of his surroundings and learned who it was that he had commanded to keep still, 'Old Mommsen the Orphan' was overcome, and never again could he be induced to enter the reichstagsgebaude."—Frank Barkley Copley in Critic.

Our Calendar.

It was not until the date we now should term 532 A. D. that a monk named Dionysius Exiguus, a Scythian by birth, suggested that all Christians should adopt the epoch of the birth of Christ as a starting point for counting time. At that time the precise date of the birth of Christ had actually been forgotten. Dionysius made researches and eventually decided that it occurred on the 25th day of December, in the seven hundred and fifty-third year from the foundation of Rome, and to this date the Christian world has ever since adhered, though it is now well known to be incorrect. At first it was suggested that the Christian year should commence from that day—Dec. 25. But this was found inconvenient, and eventually the ordinary Roman usage of commencing the year on Jan. 1 was adopted, so that our calendar dates from New Year's day of the seven hundred and fifty-fourth year from the founding of Rome.

Dead Dogs and Corks.

The Parisian ragpicker is a well known character to all who have traversed the streets of that capital at night, but he has a colleague concerning whom little is said or known, the "dead dog" and "old cork" collector. Why these two industries should go together is inexplicable, but such is the case. Dead dogs are by no means bad property. The skin fetches from twopence to threepence when it has not become deteriorated by long residence in the water. The fat is worth fivepence the two and one-third pounds, and the bones also sell for a trifle. The corks are by no means so valuable, as after they have been cleaned and pared they will only sell for fivepence per hundred. The profession is only sufficiently lucrative to maintain a few members (2 francs a day being the average gain), who reside for the most part in that chiffonier quarter, the Rue Petit, Cite Philippe.—London Globe.

Cardinal Wolsey.

If Quentin Matsys had a picture on the easel Wolsey was ready to purchase it. If there was a curious clock it was secured for him. His fondness for tapestry amounted to a passion. Trusty agents ransacked the continent to procure choice sets of arras, new and old, for the rising palace. If the owner generally preferred Scriptural subjects, as became a prince of the church, he also collected many hangings wrought with scenes from classic or mediæval story. Thus, while the walls of one chamber set forth the history of Samuel or David or Esther, those of another glowed with the labors of Hercules, the woes of Priam or the "Romaunte of the Rose." In the rooms where he received visitors the tapestries were changed once a week.—Macmillan's Magazine.

THE SCIENCE OF A LIGHT.

Cheap Acetylene Gas Was Discovered by an Accident.

Cheap commercial acetylene gas was discovered by accident. Willson, a scientific experimenter, believed that nearly all metallic oxides could be reduced to a metallic state by heating them to an extremely high temperature by the voltaic arc in the presence of free carbon. Aluminium had been successfully reduced in this way. Mr. Willson wished to obtain metallic calcium. He therefore mixed a quantity of quicklime with pulverized coke and brought the mixture to a high temperature by the action of the voltaic arc. He expected to obtain a white metal, but instead he appeared to produce nothing but slag. This was thrown into the yard, and one day at noon while the boys were having their luncheon they picked up these bits of slag and threw them at each other. One piece fell into a pail of water and produced a bubbling effect and a strong odor. This attracted Mr. Willson's attention, and upon investigation he found that the strong smelling gas was extremely inflammable. Further investigation revealed that it was pure acetylene gas.—Sir Hiram Maxim in Harper's Weekly.