MRS. DENISON'S DIAMONDS.

By BARRY PAIN.

(Copyright, 1899, by Barry Pain.)

CHAPTER I.

CHARLES VISHNAGER was the son of "Hartley's Chest Protector." That is to say, "Hartley's Chest Protector," made familiar by millions of posters and billions of advertisements, had brought fortune if not fame to the father of Charles. In due time the father had died, and the Chest Protector had been turned into a limited company, and Charles Vishnager bought himself a lordly pleasure house with some shooting at Rockport. He was a Master of Arts at Oxford, a Justice of the Peace, a member of the Carlton, and a prospective member of Parliament for Rockport. He was an excellent young man, wealthy, good-looking, a grave politician, and yet good company, a thorough sportsman, and a man of some reading and considerable taste. He was popular, and the only man who spoke of "Hartley's Chest Protector" in connection with Charles (or, to speak more accurately, Charles Ernest) was Charles Ernest Vishnager himself.

At the moment at which this story opens Vishnager had been for no less than four months in love with Mrs. Denison. Mrs. Denison was aged twenty, and had already been a widow for a year. She no longer wore mourning, and let it be generally understood that Denison had disliked the practice. She and her soft woolen mother, Mrs. Carew, were to stop with Lady Harston at Arbrow, about twenty miles from Rockport, until the end of November. Then Mrs. Carew and her daughter were to go to Rockport, where Vishnager would be their host and his sister their hostess until after Christmas.

But on the 25th of November Vishnager, in spite of the assurance of the almanac that November has only thirty days, felt he had still too long to wait. So he told his sister that it would be a civil thing to run over and see old Lady Harston. He would have luncheon there and come back in the afternoon.

Ellen Vishnager, his sister, aged thirty-five, neither plain nor beautiful, unmarried, and of a jealous temperament, asked him not to be obvious. She was naturally a little sore about the fact that when Charles married Mrs. Denison—and the marriage seemed a certainty—she herself would no longer be the hostess at Rockport. And she liked being the hostess and she liked Rockport. Also she was quite fond enough of her brother to resent his coming under any other feminine influence. She knew that he must marry some day, and would have considered anything else unreasonable; but when the day grew near she disliked it. And the day was drawing near now. Besides, she had a contempt for masculine strategy. Why on earth could he not have said, "I am going over to see Mrs. Denison because I cannot wait for her arrival here within a week." That was why she said somewhat bitterly that he was not to be obvious. He answered blandly that he did not know what she meant. Then he drove to the station and took a convenient train, and walked from the other station up to Arbrow.

There the men were all out shooting, except the brilliant Richard Wilkins, and the women were uncommonly glad to see Vishnager. Wilkins was less pleased. He was the kind of star that wants a firmament to itself; and when he said bright things to Vishnager, Vishnager always replied that he did not understand him. This was not entirely true, and it made Wilkins angry.

After luncheon the two men were compelled to sit together for the space of a cigarette. Richard Wilkins wore a dark blue suit with peculiar buttons, a soft black tie, of the same shape and almost the same size as a woman's sash, patent leather shoes with pointed toes, and socks with adornments upon them. Also his hair was rather lovely. Charles Ernest Vishnager wore brown boots, and a noisy tweed suit and a red tie with a horse-shoe pin in it, and his hair was of the same length as the fleece of a tooth-brush. He was clean shaven and could afford to be; also he was eighteen inches taller than Wilkins. It was good of Vishnager to ask Wilkins what his next book was to be, for Vishnager liked the work of Wilkins so little that he was not even interested in it. But it was wrong of him when Wilkins described the book at some length to go off into a doze and wake with a start because he had dropped his cigarette. Wilkins went into fits of forced laughter over the incident—the kind of laughter that has absolutely nothing behind it. Vishnager apologized in about three words and went straight to Mrs. Denison. To her he said that by all accounts Wilkins was a clever young chap, and she replied that in her opinion Mr. Wilkins was an ape.

Vishnager thought that Eva Denison looked tired. She did, and she explained it. The fact was that she had done a foolish thing. She had allowed her vanity to get the better of her common sense—she said as much. She had taken her diamonds from the safe custody of the bank, and was carting them about the country. Consequently she never had a moment's peace. Had he read of the theft of the Duchess' diamonds from the train the other day?

"Yes," said Vishnager, "I saw it, and she was careless with them. She left them in the charge of a maid, who must have been rather a flighty person, and the maid let them go out of her hands for a minute. A minute's always enough, you know."

"Know? Of course, I know; I never think of anything else!"

"Well, then, don't let your diamonds go out of your own hands. Better still, have them kept in the safe, except when you are wearing them. There must be a safe of a sort somewhere here."

"There is an enormous safe, but then they keep the ordinary servants' silver in it, and consequently the butler has a key. Of course, he is the usually old and faithful person, and Lady Harston would trust him with untold gold, and all the rest of it, but I don't feel that I know him well enough to give him my poor little diamonds."

The diamonds, by the way, had cost £20,000, as Vishnager very well knew.

"It's quite true," she continued, "that I hardly ever get any sleep at night. Every five minutes I seem to wake and hear a step. Once the wind blew rather roughly against my window, and I thought it was a man trying to get in. I'm wretched. I wanted to wear the diamonds at your dance at Christmas, and I wish I had left them at the bank now."

"Look here," said Vishnager; "you can't go on like this. You don't want to wear the diamonds again while you are here, do you?"

"No, certainly not."

"Well, give them to me. I've got a safe in my dressing-room, which would take most burglars all their time. There is only one key to it, and it never leaves me night or day. Any attempt to open it at night rings an electric alarm at my bedside and at the same time switches on the light. I sleep with a revolver handy. Come now, is that good enough for you?"

"Good enough? It's much too good and kind. If you would take my diamonds back with you and keep them for me until we come to Rockport I should be too much obliged to you."

"Really," he said, "it's nothing to make a fuss about. I am only too glad if I can be of any service and take this terrible weight of wealth off your mind for awhile."

And so that afternoon, while the men, back from their shooting, sat about in the drawing-room, drowsy and almost speechless, and the women chatted freely and Richard Wilkins was tremendously brilliant to Lady Harston, dashing off Vishnager in one terrible epigram, Mrs. Denison, who had been talking quietly apart to Vishnager, slipped out of the room and ran upstairs. She returned with two large morocco cases in her hand and gave them to Vishnager.

"They are all right," she said, "and you can't guess what a weight you have taken off my mind."

"Doesn't it rather give the show away," he said, "to carry them like this? Let's ring and have them wrapped up."

"No," she said, "I wouldn't let them be for one moment in the hands of the oldest and the faithfulest. I'll get some brown paper and do them up myself. No, it's no trouble. I love doing up things."

She brought a large sheet of brown paper and went to the writing table. There she made the two cases into one parcel and sealed it profusely with the armorial bearings of the Harstons.

"That makes it look horribly precious," said Vishnager, "but I'll take my chance. I haven't told anybody I am going to walk from here to the station with twenty thousand pounds' worth of diamonds under my arm, and the proceeding is not so usual that dishonest people will be on the lookout for it."

For a moment or two Vishnager let his eyes stray round the room, comparing Eva Denison with the other women, much to the disadvantage of the other women. She was very simply dressed. As a matter of fact, she spent rather more on being quite simply dressed than most women spend on elaboration. Then Vishnager rose, said good-bye to his hostess, refused with thanks her offer of the dog-cart, and started on his walk to the station.

By this time it was quite dark. He had hardly gone five yards before he had entirely forgotten how precious was the parcel which he held under his arm. He remembered it a quarter of an hour later, when, as he passed down a dark and lonely lane, a man rushed out from the hedge and tripped him up. He got up at once. The man made a grab at his watch and Vishnager hit him in the face. Then the man ran away. As he did so, Vishnager remembered that he had dropped the parcel. He had to strike a match to find it; but he did find it. It was a little muddy, but the seals were unbroken and untouched. He had no further adventure until he deposited it in the safe in his dressing-room.

CHAPTER II.

Ellen Vishnager did not like Eva Denison, but of this, since Ellen Vishnager was not a particularly ill-bred woman, Mrs. Denison was absolutely ignorant. So were most of the other occupants of the house, except Vishnager himself. Once, when Charles and his sister had ten minutes' talk together, he said that Mrs. Denison's mother, Mrs. Carew, was a charming old lady—so simple, so unsophisticated. "I understand that she leaves all business matters to her daughter." And he implied that the result had been much to her advantage.

"Her daughter, by the way, clever though she is, seems to me to have something of her mother's simplicity."

"Something of her mother's what?" exclaimed Ellen.

"Simplicity. Dresses simply. Doesn't make a great show, like the rest of you."

"You shouldn't talk about women," was Ellen Vishnager's retort, "you really shouldn't. You don't know enough. Do you know how many dresses Mrs. Denison has brought here for a stay of one month?"

"Of course not!"

"Well, as it happens, I do. The average woman dresses to attract the man. That she can do as a rule in a three guinea costume out of the Edgware Road. Mrs. Denison dresses for the experts—the women; the people who really know. She wants to make us gnash our teeth, and she does it. She will not be able to wear half the dresses she has brought with her. She won't have the time. And they are all of them absolutely perfect. She is as vain as a peacock and as extravagant as a Jubilee plunger; and, speaking for myself, I cannot see where her beauty is."

"Well, I can," said Charles. "As for the vanity, I doubt it."

"Go on," said Ellen, "keep on doubting. She spends at least two-thirds of the day dressing, and she has spoiled what might have been fairly pretty hair by dyeing it the fashionable color."

Charles said that this was preposterous nonsense. His sister continued: "I know dyed hair. I couldn't be mistaken about that. I must say I should like to see her get a check. She will cut us all out at the dance with her diamonds. There are none like them in the house, and I doubt if there are any in the county. I do wish to goodness somebody would steal them before the dance came off. I could almost do it myself."

At luncheon that day Charles brought down a brown paper parcel, sealed with the arms of the Harston family, and placed it before Mrs. Denison.

"I don't want these," she cried, "they're much safer where they are. But I must just have a look at my little darlings."

She stripped off the paper and opened the morocco cases one after the other. For a moment she looked aghast. Then she smiled.

"No good, Mr. Vishnager. You very nearly took me in, but not quite! I'm not in the least distressed. You'll have to give them back sooner or later."

She laughed again, pushed the cases aside, and took a little sip at her wine glass. Without a word Vishnager picked up the cases and opened them one after the other. Both were empty.

"I am sorry to say," he said quietly, "that I'm not playing any joke at all. How it has happened I cannot conceive. I took the diamonds home in the parcel as you gave them to me and placed them in my safe myself; and they remained there, to the best of my knowledge, until I brought them down to you just now. See!" he picked up the paper. "Here are the seals which you yourself affixed."

"Yes," she said. She looked a little horrified and distressed, but managed to smile. "We shall find them again, I hope."

"That," said Vishnager, "is a certainty. I made myself responsible for their safe-keeping, and we shall undoubtedly get them back. You must excuse me for a moment or two while I send a couple of messages."

During the rest of luncheon the conversation was naturally taken up with the loss of the diamonds. Many amateur detectives proposed many astonishing theories. Vishnager himself suggested nothing at all.

After luncheon his sister came to him in great perturbation.

"This is awful!" she said. "How do you think it happened?"

"At present," he replied, "I don't and can't think how it happened. But I thought she bore her loss very well."

"Certainly," said Ellen. "I should not mind losing twenty thousand pounds' worth of diamonds myself, if I knew I could get as much or more, given back to me by somebody who was responsible. And that is her idea and yours. It is not my idea in the least. I can't see where the responsibility comes in."

"I will explain it later," said Vishnager. "There is just one thing I want you to promise me," continued his sister. "Don't have the police in."

"Why not?"

"It makes such a scandal. Besides, every one of the servants would leave. And these detectives never do any good."

"I'm sorry," said Vishnager, "but I have sent for them already."

When she went away Charles tried not to reflect on the fact that his sister had always disliked Mrs. Denison, had expressed a wish to deprive Mrs. Denison of her diamonds, and was now anxious that the police should not be called in. He did not for one moment suppose that she had taken the diamonds with any intention of keeping them. He did not care even to suspect her of a vulgar practical joke. However, he soon reassured himself. His sister had no key to the safe, and the parcel, when he took it out, was, apparently, in the same state and with the seals in the same position as when Mrs. Denison had placed it in his hands.

CHAPTER III.

The police came and went and discovered nothing. The house was searched by detectives, every room of it from top to bottom. The servants did not leave. There was no particular scandal. But the diamonds were not found. At the same time the detectives were pretty certain of the precise moment when the diamonds had been stolen. One of them, a genial and pleasant man, took Vishnager carefully over the events of the day when he had visited Arbrow and brought the diamonds back to Rockport. Vishnager reached the point where the tramp had made a snatch at the watch chain and the parcel had been dropped.

"Yes," said the detective, "that was when they went."

"But," said Vishnager, "I picked up the parcel again."

"No," said the detective, "you did not pick up 'the' parcel; you picked up 'a' parcel."

"But," said Vishnager, "the cases were in it, and I recognized them; and Mrs. Denison recognized them as the cases which she handed to me. The only thing is that they were empty."

"Nothing is easier," said the detective, "than for two jewel cases to be made exactly like two others. I have no doubt that a particularly smart gang has had its eye on these diamonds for some time past, and the first thing it would do would be to prepare cases exactly similar to those in which the diamonds were kept."

"It was in the drawing-room they were packed up——"

"The drawing-room is on the ground floor. It was lighted and the curtains were not all drawn. One of the gang in the garden could easily have watched and seen the original cases being packed up in brown paper. What is simpler than for the thief immediately to pack up his cases in brown paper and wait his chance? You leave the house with the parcel, and he follows. He pretends to make a grab at your watch chain, and you drop your parcel. He picks it up and leaves the dummy. You pick up the dummy and carefully hide it in your safe. And unfortunately some days elapse, during which the thief has every chance of getting clear away with his spoil. By this time probably every stone has been taken out and reset in different forms so that it would be impossible to trace them or recognize them. Of course, what we've got to do now is to look for the supposed tramp. He has got a long start, and I am afraid there is very little chance. But still, we shall do our best."

"And now," said Vishnager, "I will remind you of one little thing which seems to me to knock your theory on the head. The parcel was sealed with the Harston arms. The parcel which I handed to Mrs. Denison at my own luncheon table was, as you have yourself seen, secured with exactly the same seal."

"Yes," the detective said, "that looks like a difficulty on the face of it, but I am afraid it is only on the face of it. Lady Harston's house had been carefully watched for some days in all probability. Her ladyship herself tells me that men had been found sneaking about only a week before, pretending to be in search of work and so on. Mrs. Denison is one of the many women who are fond of using sealing-wax. She sealed, I am told, most of her letters, even quite unimportant letters, and she used the Harston seal. You may be sure that a smart gang would have noticed that. Simply as a precaution—a thing which might be useful—they would have got a facsimile of that seal on the writing-table. There are scores of ways by which they could have done that."

The explanation satisfied the detective very much better than it satisfied Vishnager. At last he took his courage between his teeth, went to his sister, and said:

"I am going to ask you a plain question, Ellen. Are you, by way of a practical joke, hiding these diamonds until after the dance?"

His sister said that he was a brute, went to her room and cried for sixteen consecutive minutes. Then she washed her face and came back pitying. The loss of the diamonds, she explained, had probably unhinged his mind. But since he supposed she could do a stupid, vulgar thing like that, perhaps it was better to give her assurance that she could not do it, and had not done it. Vishnager said that he had not supposed; he had only asked. She replied that he would not have asked if he had not supposed. Vishnager went out into the garden, swore a good deal to himself, and wished there were no women in the world and no diamonds. Then he came back to the police theory again. He did not see how the scheme could have been carried out without some confederate in the house. On further reflection he decided that the confederate would not be a servant. He would be somebody who heard the talk in the drawing-room, who had opportunities that a servant would not have. And then there suddenly dashed across his mind a recollection of that brilliant gentleman with the sash necktie, who hung about the house and did not go out shooting with the other men. Nobody knew much about Richard Wilkins except that he had written some clever books, and he had always given Vishnager the impression of being rather an outsider. Also, Richard Wilkins had left Lady Harston's on November 26.

Vishnager's next step was to find out where Wilkins went to. This was very easy. He had gone to London. Vishnager remembered that there is a place in London known as Hatton Garden, and his suspicions deepened.

Vishnager intended to give the police a day or two more. Then he was going up to London to see Messrs. Streeter about replacing the stolen diamonds. And when he went he made up his mind to call on Mr. Richard Wilkins at his flat in South Kensington.

Mrs. Denison kept up her spirits wonderfully. On the night before Vishnager's intended departure for London she was particularly brilliant at dinner, and her brilliance was by no means ill-natured. On the contrary, during the last few days she had been very gentle and sympathetic, and Ellen Vishnager's hostility toward her had begun to waver.

"I am so very much more sorry for you," said Mrs. Denison, "than I am for myself. And you must persuade your brother to give up that mad notion about getting other diamonds to replace those which have been lost. It is too absurd; I could not possibly take them. I do not dream of taking them."

This impressed Ellen Vishnager.

The host was the last man to go to bed that night. As he stood in the hall it struck him that there was a frost in the air, and having the country gentleman's interest in the weather, he thought he would go out and have a look at it. It was a beautiful, clear night, and Vishnager held in his hand a cigar which had reached an interesting point. He might as well wander down the garden and finish it. He went back to the house and put on a hat and sauntered forth again. The frost had undoubtedly come. The lawn was hard beneath his feet. As he stood there by a tall clipped yew hedge he looked up. At that moment an upper window of the house burst into brilliance. The light had been switched on the inside of the room. He tried to puzzle out whose room that would be, and had just concluded that it was his sister's, when Mrs. Denison, in a very pretty dressing-gown, walked to the window. She stood before the looking-glass in the window, smiling and posing, admiring herself.

Vishnager stared and stared.

As Vishnager was a decent sort of chap it was not a thing which in the ordinary course he would have done, but there was a special reason. The reason was that Mrs. Denison wore in her hair a diamond tiara, and round her neck a diamond necklace. Vishnager considered that he had never seen her look so lovely. But he went back again to the house and into the library and smoked three more of those very excellent cigars. As he did so he realized that he did not at all want to marry Mrs. Denison, but that there was some other thing which he did want to do and would do.

He did not go to London on the following day. He said that he had heard from the jewelers and that it would not be necessary yet.

CHAPTER IV.

Vishnager found Mrs. Denison in the library alone.

"I am glad to find you alone," he said. "I wanted a chance of talking to you."

"I knew you did," she said quetly. "Let us talk then."

Vishnager was surprised.

"Do you also know what I wanted to talk about?" he asked.

"Yes. You know now that the diamonds were never in the cases which I gave you in the drawing-room at Arbrow. You had forgotten that you never opened the cases then; in fact, you gave the detectives the impression that you had actually seen the diamonds before they were packed up. You also know that those diamonds are still in my possession. There is a curious attraction about diamonds for a vain woman, and I am very vain. I cannot go for many days without wearing them, so long as I have them. I need not necessarily wear them in public, but I must put them in my hair and round my neck and see how I look. The other night, as I stood before the glass, I heard your step in the garden below. I did not see you, but I knew your step."

"Well," said Vishnager, "it is rather a bad business, isn't it? How was it the detectives did not find the diamonds in your room?"

"Because they searched the room and did not search me. The diamonds have never left me. I am wearing them now, hidden."

She opened her big eyes wide and looked very straight at him.

"Why do you say it is a bad business?"

"Because I should have been bound to replace those diamonds, and they are of very considerable value. In fact, your little act of vanity the other night loses you twenty thousand pounds—and loses me still more."

"Indeed?" she asked.

"Yes. It loses me my faith in you, which certainly was worth far more than that to me. However, I only wanted to say that I am going to make things easy for you. Something can be arranged. We can invent a story that——"

"Stop," she said, "or I shall lose my faith in you also. You might possibly have purchased those diamonds and offered them to me, but I should not have taken them. No power on earth would have made me take them."

"Then what was your motive?"

She laughed.

"I am afraid I must give you some of my very private and personal history, if it won't bore you. You know that I managed all my mother's business affairs for her?"

"I do. She told my sister that you managed them excellently."

"But I did not manage them excellently. They are well looked after now, because I had a lesson which taught me that there were many kinds of business which I did not understand and that I had better leave in the hands of competent men. The lesson would have cost my mother about ten thousand pounds. I did not want her to know anything about it, and for that reason I wanted to sell my diamonds and replace the money. But I did not want my mother to know anything of the incident or to know that I had sold my diamonds for the purpose. I did not want my friends to know that I had sold the diamonds. The sale of diamonds is rather a humiliating confession of financial weakness, you know. So I arranged that it should be believed that the diamonds were lost or stolen, and that I should sell them. It was a mad idea and not very well carried out. I am sorry I ever had the idea, but I was not counting upon your replacing the diamonds at all, and I would not have taken them from you. I have been a fool in my desire to avoid humiliation, and I have been very vain. I have given you a lot of trouble, for which I am sorry. But I have not been dishonest.

A very long conversation followed, and Mrs. Denison looked particularly happy at dinner that night.

* * * * * * *

A few days later the detective's theory was triumphantly vindicated. A parcel was found sealed with the Harston arms, containing two jewel cases with one diamond tiara and one diamond necklace, hidden under some stones in an old quarry. It was Vishnager himself who fond it and the detective has not done bragging about it yet. He has an additional theory that the thief left the parcel there, meaning to come back for it on the following day, when he was prevented, probably by arrest for some other offense.

And Ellen Vishnager is quite reconciled to the idea of her brother's marriage, which is to be next month.

SPY OF MODERN PARIS.

Concierge Expected to Keep Track of All Lodgers.

From the Spectator.

The old-fashioned, monarchical method of spying has been strangely supplemented during the last five years. When Carnot was murdered, in 1894, the whole of France was seized with panic, and a bill against the anarchists was pushed through the chamber in the late autumn. The Deputies, anxious for their favorite watering places, accepted the wildest provisions, and the concierges of Paris were promoted, almost without opposition, into informal agents of the police. Henceforth there was a spy in every house, whose duty it was to record the habits, the friends, the pursuits of all the occupants. The plan, no doubt, was borrowed from Russia, and truly it reflects no credit upon the republic. For a worse instrument of tyranny and blackmail was never invented, and it is most contemptible because it will always remain ineffectual. The honest concierge is still amenable to bribes, and a villainous locataire would take a peculiar care to win the respect of his legal guardian. Moreover, by his station and upbringing, the concierge is deficient in intelligence, and it is more than likely that he shows his limitations in befogging the police. Nor can he hide from his clients the responsibilities of his new position. He will tell you, inadvertently, of course, the address of a friend who has escaped your notice, or he will reveal, as it were, by accident, that he has a perfect knowledge of another friend's peculiar failings.

The situation is not dangerous, but it is not pleasant, and though habit accustoms one to suspicion, it is difficult to accept without question this return of democratic France to the practices of "monarchical barbarism." Louis XVI perished upon the scaffold, and the descendants of his executioners have intensified the petty tyranny which cost him his life. Nor has this tyranny decreased of late. The affair has dipped France deeper in the mire of terror, and to-day not only are citizens watched, but their letters are unscrupulously opened.

No man whose political convictions are well known and unpopular need expect to receive his correspondence through the simple channel of the post. On the contrary, it will be read, censured, and perhaps suppressed. Nor is the simple foreigner exempt from this scrutiny, and a Jew's best method of communication is a special messenger. The other day M. Dreyfus, the brother of the condemned man, pointed out quite simply that he had been shadowed for five years, and there is no doubt but that all his correspondence has been austerely sifted. These restrictions upon the liberty of the subject would cause the wildest uproar in England, which is not a democracy.

An Ink Wiper.

From the New York Teachers' Magazine.

Query—Do all knee-breeches Greater New York public school boys wipe their pens on their stockings? The practice seems startlingly general. Can public opinion carry the fastidious teacher here whither she would?

It is a study hour; an ink well is closed; a notebook pushed aside; down goes a pen to take a turn or two about a stocking leg!

"Garvin, is that a nice thing to do?" This from the teacher, only loud enough to be heard by a selected neighbor or two.

"It don't show," (stolidly.) Was there ever a better example from ancient Sparta to modern America of that widespread, deep-rooted belief that a crime is not more than half criminal till society's ears have been shocked and aggrieved by its publication!

TOWN RUN BY WOMEN.

Kansas Municipality Controlled by the Fair Sex.

From the San Francisco Examiner.

Mrs. Marie Totten, wife of Charles Totten, a prominent merchant, was elected Mayor of Beattie, a town of 500 inhabitants in Northern Kansas, at a recent city election. Her majority over James Wall, the present Mayor, was 87.

There were two tickets in the field—a woman's ticket, headed by Marie Totten, and the man's ticket, headed by James Wall. Both sides made a strong campaign.

Although election day was windy and stormy, the women all put on their heavy wraps and went bravely to the polls. It was their only chance to rescue the little town from ruin.

Beattie has been for the last two years so overrun with saloons and joints that it was impossible to live there comfortably. The women felt keenly the disgrace, and not long ago held a convention to devise some means to change the town's ways. They planned to put a ticket in the field in the next municipal election. That was ten months ago. Every night when the husbands and grown sons came home from their work the housewives would bring up the subject of saloons and what a disgrace they were to Beattie.

Little by little the women unfolded their plan, only to learn the opposition they would meet with. Hence, two months before the election the campaign opened, and the "strongest" men and women were placed on the tickets, and the soliciting of votes was on.

Mrs. Totten was a very popular woman, as was Miss Gussie O'Nell, candidate for clerk, and they made a personal canvass together. The men got most of their votes from the liquor element. Election day, despite the inclement weather, saw every woman in town driving a rig, taking voters to the polls. As a result, several hundred men cast votes for the woman's ticket.

There were numerous rows at the polls between men and women, but when the votes were counted it was found that the women were elected by majorities ranging from 50 to 100.

The Police Judge and City Marshal are men, but they have declared their intention to resign and turn over their offices to the women.

The inhabitants of Beattie generally are pleased with the results, and as Mrs. Totten is clear-headed and said to be quite capable of anything, she may serve many more terms.

She is forty years of age, while Miss O'Nell, the clerk, is only twenty-three. Neither has served in office before, nor have any of the other women elected. All the other woman office-holders are over forty years of age. They will engage the present male office-holders to show them how to attend to the business. Mrs. Totten is quite wealthy, and will use much of her own money during her administration in repairing the town's streets and parks. Their terms of office are for two years.

A large proportion of the city employes, including the police, will be women. It is believed that an attractive but dignified policewoman would enjoy a moral authority far greater than that of a mere policeman. No Kansas man will dare become drunk and disorderly under the eye of a policewoman.

The women expect to achieve great results in the Street Cleaning Department. Their duties will be to keep the streets of Beattie as clean as their own homes, perhaps even cleaner, because their devotion to public affairs will not leave them much time to spend at home. In fact, they will keep the streets as clean as their homes ought to be.

An important measure of reform will consist in hanging artistically draped bags on all lamp-posts, in which citizens will be required to drop all scraps of paper and other light rubbish.

It is generally believed by the citizens of Beattie that the women will prove themselves more capable of resisting bribery than the male office-holders. They are not subject to the genial but misleading influence of strong drink, and they are proof against the blandishments of other women.

Adopting the principles of municipal reformers elsewhere, the Mayor says she will observe the same business principles in engaging city employes that she would in engaging a servant girl.

SAFEGUARDS THE HENCOOPS.

Electric Wires Regarded by the Darkies as Hoodoos.

From the New York Telegraph.

"One of the best things that the South has ever had," said the Colonel, as he sat back in his chair and lighted a cheroot, "is electricity. The proper use for the subtle fluid has not only lighted up the dark places, but it has acted as a deterrent to thievery. It is the darky's hoodoo and planters give thanks every day for its presence and use.

"The colored man of the South is loose-jointed in his moral code. He gobbles your chickens or breaks into your meat house without calling it stealing. He recognizes no proprietary interests when his stomach yearns. I used to try to protect my fowls and bacon with bear traps and alarm bells and padlocks, but the darkies always beat me in the end. If they couldn't get into my meat house by door or window, they'd cut a hole through the foundations. Up to about ten years ago one had to sit up nights with a shotgun across his knees to guard his fowls, and he might get up in the morning to find 200 pounds of bacon missing or the storehouses robbed of meal or flour.

"The colored man was frightened of electricity from the start. There is something of the supernatural in it to him. You can't get one in a hundred to talk through a telephone, and they never ride on a trolley car without being prepared for a calamity. In my district, when we came to know how the colored man regarded the unseen force, each planter set about taking advantage of it for the protection of his chattels. We passed hand batteries around and gave exhibitions, and after a marauding darky had received a shock to loosen his teeth he was ready to listen and to believe.

"The meat house is to-day surrounded by two lines of wire. So with my hencoop and store house. They are as safe as if guarded by half a troop of cavalry. By running a single line of wire around my melon patch I can keep all prowlers out. If it were known a wire ran through my peach orchard, you couldn't get a darky over the fence. The idea is that the electric current is lying in ambush and that its mission is to knock out prowlers. We foster the idea, of course, and it has brought a happy relief and a great financial saving.

"There are some queer happenings in connection, as you may suppose. The colored women refuse to use wire clothes-lines for fear of shocks, and you couldn't give a colored family a woven wire mattress. Some of my field hands won't cross a street car track without offering up a prayer, and I have a dozen old fellows who couldn't be hired to ride on a trolley car. Last fall I sent two of my hands across the country to bring home a bull I had bought of a fellow-planter. The distance was fourteen miles, and they came home about 8 o'clock at night without the bull. When I questioned them the explanation was:

"'We got dar all right, Mars Penlope, an' we found Mars Thompson an' de bull. Mars Thompson was mighty kind an' de bull was powerful slick, but when we seed dem brass knobs on dat critter's horns we knowed dat he was a 'lectric bull, an' had bin all wired up to raise de debbil on dis plantashun, an' so we dun walked right off an' left him behind.'"

COOK BOOK CRITICISMS.

Latest Style of Reviewing Novels in Culinary Verse.

From the Bookman.

The latest novelty in reviewing flavors of the literary cookshop. We give a few specimen recipes:

Concerning Isabel Carnaby, by Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler:

CARNABY CREAM.

Take a Methodist family, charming and wise,
That looks upon life with the kindliest eyes,
Add men of the world, clever women as well,
And Love, the great teacher who trained Isabel;
With original thoughts in apt phrases and fit,
Mix repartee, epigram, genuine wit;
Let humor and "gentlehood" flavor the whole,
Then daintily serve in a clear crystal bowl.

With Kitchener to Khartoum, by Mr. George W. Steevens:

ENTREE KHARTOUM A LA STEEVENS.

Have ready a Kitchener, first-rate and complete,
Take a great deal of sand and a little tinned meat,
New fellaheen grit and fine old British pluck,
Sufficient of foresight and a slice of good luck;
Stir up with a drill, and mix well with Nile water,
Season with blood and with Maxim guns' slaughter,
Frizzle it all in a tropical heat,
And serve the B. P. in a halfpenny sheet.

"The Christian," by Hall Caine:

QUAYLE A LA CAINE.

Take a storm in a teacup and flavor with Manx,
With some bad upper ten and some clerical cranks;
Add the Derby, some Scripture, the first at St. Paul's,
And serve it up hot, with some spice from the Halls.

CLEMENCY OF THE CROWN.

Czar, Kaiser, and King of Italy May Proclaim Acts of Amnesty.

ALTHOUGH the Czar has until recently been regarded as thoroughly honest and loyal in his profession of the most humane and generous sentiments, yet the fact remains that both his lieges and the world at large are still waiting for his proclamation of that amnesty for which people have been looking ever since he came to the throne, five years ago, and which would have constituted a far more practical and convincing demonstration of his philanthropy than the organization of peace congresses such as that which assembled at The Hague on Thursday. Amnesties for political offenses were looked for at the time of the Czar's accession, on the occasion of his solemn coronation at Moscow, and again at the birth of his eldest child, but no sign of clemency has been given by "The Little Father" of "All the Russias."

Yet another occasion is now offered to Nicholas for the remedy of this neglect on his part, for were he to signalize the opening of the peace congress which he has organized by the issue of a proclamation granting an amnesty for all purely political offenses it would constitute a guarantee of the good faith of the benevolence and generosity to which he gave expression in his various peace manifestoes and would be hailed throughout the entire civilized world as the most enlightened and progressive act of sovereignty that has ever been performed by any monarch since his grandfather, Alexander II, proclaimed the emancipation of the serfs, nearly forty years ago.

There were many objections raised, both on political and administrative grounds, to the issue of this celebrated ukase on the part of Alexander the Liberator; and from a purely economic point of view it may be questioned whether Russia as a nation has as yet derived as much material benefit from this freedom of the peasantry from slavery as was expected. This, however, is due to the people, who have not known how to take advantage of the priceless boon of liberty thus conferred, rather than the fault of the ruler whose edict was such as to entitle him to the admiration and regard of all the world, and to the most honored place in the history of his country.

The same objections would doubtless be raised to the grant by Nicholas of an amnesty for political offenses, and it is quite probable that in a number of instances harm might result from the indiscriminate liberation of political offenders, even if innocent of any infraction of ordinary common and criminal law. But the general effect of such an act of clemency at home, as well as abroad, would be so immense and so widespread, and would excite so much good will and regard both in behalf of Russia and of its young ruler, as to result in advantages—political, moral, and material—that would far outweigh any isolated cases of harm.

Looking to the Kaiser.

If I lay so much stress on the propriety of the Czar taking advantage of the peace congress for the proclamation of his so long-delayed and so anxiously-expected ukase of amnesty, it is because there is a persistent rumor to the effect that Emperor William intends to avail himself of the occasion to proclaim an analogous act of clemency. Some declare that it will embrace political offenses, while others insist that it will be restricted to the men, women, and children now undergoing imprisonment for lese majeste. Inasmuch as the latter consists of speaking or writing in an insulting manner concerning the Emperor or the members of his family, an amnesty for these offenses would come with particular grace from this monarch, who, as those who know him best are aware, is possessed of a heart quite as susceptible to generous and humane impulses as that of the Czar. He has shown such a remarkable degree of tact until now in the happy timing of the favors and compliments which he confers—as, for instance, when he chose the day of President Carnot's funeral to announce the pardon of several French staff officers convicted of peculiarly aggravated cases of espionage—that a general impression prevails that he will not permit the peace congress to pass away without signalizing it by some act of clemency, some display of sentiments of peace and good will toward his fellow-creatures. It would be the first general amnesty granted since his accession to the throne, now eleven years ago.

There is yet a third sovereign who may possibly avail himself of the peace congress to issue a decree of amnesty. It is King Humbert of Italy, who, more silent and certainly less demonstrative than either Czar or Kaiser, surpasses both of them in warmth of heart and in kindliness toward his fellow-creatures. At the tomb of Garibaldi three weeks ago he solemnly promised the old patriot's daughter, Mme. Canzio, that he would avail himself of the earliest opportunity to amnesty the thousand and odd prisoners who are still undergoing punishment for their participation in the sanguinary disturbances of a year ago. What better or more appropriate occasion could he find for the performance of an act of clemency of this kind than the meeting of the great peace congress at The Hague?

Humbert's Forgiving Spirit.

Of Humbert's forgiving spirit innumerable instances could be given. One of them, which deserves to be placed on record, was only recently brought to light. Some twenty years ago, while driving with the Queen through the streets of Naples, a man of the name of Passanante jumped on the doorstep of the royal carriage, and, drawing a knife, aimed a blow straight at the King's heart. Quick as a flash his Prime Minister, Cairoli, who was seated facing their majesties, with his back to the horses, threw himself between Humbert and the would-be assassin in such a manner as to shield his ruler with his body, into which the knife was plunged up to its very hilt. Queen Marguerite's white dress was deluged with the blood of the Premier, and several years elapsed before she recovered from the shock to which her nervous system had been subjected. Passanante was, of course, arrested and condemned to imprisonment for life. He died in confinement some ten years ago. A few weeks ago the death of an old woman at Frascati, who had been living there for a long term of years in a good deal of comfort and luxury, was reported to the local authorities. When they came to examine her effects they discovered from her papers that she was no other than the mother of Passanante, and that from the time of her son's conviction until the day of her death she had been maintained entirely at the personal expense of the King, no one, excepting the controller of his privy purse, knowing anything about the matter. This is only one of hundreds of similar illustrations which could be cited of the excellence of heart of this King, who enjoys the distinction of being the only reigning monarch to bear on his body the scar of a wound received in battle.

Emperor Francis Joseph's Clemency.

Clemency is one of the grandest prerogatives of a ruler, and while, of course, there have been times when it has been injudiciously exercised, yet as a general rule nothing but good has resulted therefrom. Emperor Francis Joseph, for instance, would have been deprived of the altogether priceless services of Francis Deak, the patriot, at whose bier the late Empress Elizabeth shed tears of sorrow, as well as those of the late Count Julius Andrassy, so long his Prime Minister and Chancellor, had it not been for the amnesty which he issued to those most prominently concerned in the bloody Hungarian insurrection of 1849.

Both Deak and Andrassy were sentenced to death, and narrowly escaped with their lives to England, where Andrassy was kept from starvation and harbored by a young attache of the Austro-Hungarian Consulate, who would have naturally been instantly dismissed and ruined for life had anybody become aware that he had living with him in his lodgings, and at his expense, one of the fugitive leaders of the Magyar rebellion. Andrassy never forgot the kindness of the young attache, and when, years afterward, he became Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Austro-Hungarian empire the first thing that he did was to promote the former consular clerk, who subsequently spent some years in Washington as Austro-Hungarian envoy. He bore the name of Baron Schaeffer, and I doubt whether any of the many friends whom he left in this country are aware of this interesting incident in his career.

Count Andrassy was only one of many Hungarian rebels who, after the proclamation of the amnesty, filled high office under the Crowns both of Hungary as well as of Austria, and Emperor Francis Joseph has often been in the habit of remarking that he had good cause for congratulation that so many of the condemned insurgents of 1849 should have managed to effect their escape to foreign countries, since, if they had all been hanged or shot in accordance with the sentences pronounced against them "in contumaciam," he would not have known where subsequently to find his most capable and successful Premiers and Cabinet Ministers.

France's Great Amnesty.

France, which, on the recommendation of Gambetta, issued in January, 1875, an amnesty in favor of the 2,245 men and women sentenced to various terms of penal servitude for their participation in the Commune insurrection of 1871, has had quite as much reason to congratulate herself