MERIEL STANLEY, POACHER

By GRANT ALLEN

MERIEL STANLEY is a singular instance of the natural woman still surviving in our midst. And the natural woman is at war with our civilization. I never see poor Meriel without an inner shudder, when I think of the end to which fate and her own temperament must inevitably hurry her. That shapely brown neck, straight and firm as a column, is all too delicate for a rope. Yet a rope it will be, or I am no true prophet.

When I say that Meriel is a natural woman I mean what I say, for good and for evil. See her leaning her elbows on the gate that leads from Sir Walter's copse out on to the heather-clad moorland—a tall, lithe figure, with keen, brown face, eager, wistful eyes, and wealth of black hair just peeping from beneath her pink-and-white sunbonnet—a bronzed woman of the people, quivering with suppressed emotion to the tips of the fingers—and you can guess at once the salient points of her character. Hers is the impassioned temperament, embodied in a sound and vigorous frame: take her as a specimen of the natural woman, a savage still at heart, but a savage of the best type, capable of great love, great revenge, great devotion, great self-sacrifice, great crimes, great repentances, but not of anything mean or small or commonplace.

The savage has in him, in the germ, all that the best and worst among civilized men have developed separately—except one thing—consistency. He can rise to splendid heights of generosity and sink to vile depths of cruelty and shame; but all is momentary; what he cannot compass is sustained action or sustained feeling. He is a creature of moral impulses, for good or bad. The passing mood, the passing emotion sway him. And Meriel is like that. She can love; she can hate; but she cannot be steadily or persistently anything.

In spite of her strange name she is not a gypsy. At least not consciously. Much gypsy blood lurks unknown in the wild region of Dorset, where the Stanleys live; and Meriel has associated with gypsies and poachers from her childhood upward. She can even "patter Romany" a little, though only as an outsider; but her people have long been settled in this district, and if ever they were members of the Stanley clan, have forgotten it long ago in all save their surname. As to her fantastic Christian name, Meriel, that came to her from an aunt, who inherited it in turn from five generations of female ancestors. Meriel was christened by that name, though the clergyman who baptized her tried hard to modernize and vulgarize it into Muriel; but her mother stood up stoutly against such new-fangled nonsense. "'Twas always Meriel with the Stanleys and the Tibbalds," she said, with true pride of race, "ever since I heard tell of 'em; my maaid shall be Meriel, passon will it or passon nill it." And Meriel she was from that day onward.

It may surprise you to learn that Meriel was ever christened at all; for when she was a bairn, the nearest church to Greydown was at Upton Parva, seven long miles off across the moor as the crow flies; and the people of Greydown in those days recked little in most ways of churches and parsons. "They were a barbarious folk up here, zur," Meriel's father said to me one day, in a rare burst of loquaciousness, for he is a silent man: "I don't suppose you'd 'a found a more barbarious folk anywheres in England, go forty year back, than the Greydown people." And he was quite right. The hill itself stands mainly in Dorset; but it lies at the upper end of three river valleys, and at the junction of three shires; so for ages it was the refuge of all the gypsies, the horse-copers, the sheep-stealers, the poachers, the miscellaneous riff-raff and outlaws of the neighborhood. Nowadays, their descendants for the most part are honestly occupied in broom-making and basket-weaving; but they do not take readily to steady labor, preferring to be free and to be their own masters—a natural taste which I will confess I share with them. Nevertheless, even in their worst days of barbarism, the Greydowners always christened their children in church, and were married by parson; not that they attached much religious importance to the rite in either case; but they liked the importance of it; that was the regular authorized way of doing things, and they would wish the settled folk down yonder at Upton to know that the Greydowners were every bit as good Christians any day as they were. Because you are a broomsquire, that is no valid reason why you shouldn't behave like other civilized gentlefolk.

"Then you really were christened Meriel?" I said to her once, interrogatively. And she answered, half-laughing, "Yes; I was christened all right, zur; but I don't suppose it took." And I think she was right; for a verier pagan than Meriel Stanley it would be hard to light upon. As a girl, she grew up on this high, wild moorland, running about shoeless and stockingless among the gorse and heather, and trapping leverets, and browning her shapely legs with paddling in the ponds after newts and tadpoles. To this day, she can tickle trout against any man in Dorsetshire. Her father's cottage lay among tall bracken in a valley or bottom just below the gibbet—that gibbet on which the murderers of the warfaring woman were hung in chains a hundred years ago, and which long remained a terror and a warning to evil-doers, the sole symbol of civilization, repressive civilization, in these lonely uplands. You can tell the cottage from others about by the climbing red roses and by the great stacks of dry heather piled outside the door, and waiting to be made up into farmhouse brooms, such as are used for rough work in yards and stables. Before Meriel was ten years old, she knew as much about jays and weasels and hawks and foxes as Sir Walter's gamekeeper. She could show you the mottled brown eggs of the night-jar, lying loose on the bare ground without nest or shelter; she could find the wren's callow young and the baby stoats in the copse; she had observed at what age the soft little hedgehogs begin to get their prickles hardened, and where the woodcock probed with their long, straight bills after grubs and worms in the soft, spongy moss of the peat-logged hollows. At eighteen, she was tall and beautiful, with wild, unkempt hair; hair long and black and straight and wiry, without a suspicion of curl in it, recalling perhaps the remote Indian blood of her gipsy ancestors, once Jats of the Punjaub. A handsomer girl of her wayward peasant type I have seldom seen. Let me try to describe her.

Meriel's head is shapely and well poised on the shoulders—a trait which you will find almost always accompanies the impassioned character. Her neck is erect, and she carries herself proudly. The pose reminds me at times of the portraits of Dante. And, indeed, though it may sound odd to compare this wild English moorland girl with the proud, sardonic Tuscan poet, I can recognize in essence a certain community of type between the two. Her eyes are dark and shy, but with sudden flashes in them. The eyebrows and eyelids are black and abundant. Her long, straight hair flows down on her shoulders when loosed—as it often is—or else is gathered up into a great careless bunch at the back of the head, with folds covering the ears, which recall Charlotte Bronte. For, her unessentials, Meriel is just a Charlotte Bronte undeveloped. Her features are somewhat large, but soft in outline; her chin strong; her mouth has sensuous, thick lips, redeemed by the exquisite curve, like a Rossetti portrait. The hands are long and slender; the fingers have a curious, tremulous movement; the whole emotion of the woman comes out in them at times, as it comes out in her heaving bosom, her flashing eye, her close-set lips, her strange, wistful expression. She impresses me always as vaguely longing for something above her—something she has never known and never will know—something from which her class and her lack of education for ever divide her.

You must know Meriel pretty well, indeed, before you begin to suspect how much there is in her. Like most people of intensely passionate natures, she is not given to speech; her thoughts and feelings lie too deep for words; and even if her pride did not prevent her from saying at all times what she feels, her mere lack of vocabulary would suffice to keep her from voluble self-revelation. Nor is she by any means demonstrative. It is an error to suppose that emotional natures are necessarily given to expressing their emotion either in words or gestures. The exact opposite would be truer. Emotion hides itself. Meriel's manners are quiet and reserved; she is not fitful or restless; you cannot often see how profoundly she is thinking or feeling; only at rare moments does some accident reveal the real depth of her nature. Once I caught her at sunset by the two-step stile that leads from the moor into the Lammas fields. She did not hear me coming. I crept up behind her, admiring her lithe form, silhouetted against the red sky, as she leaned on the stile and gazed at the crimson and orange clouds before her. When I drew quite near, she turned round with a short sigh. To my surprise, I saw she had tears in her eyes. "That's a beautiful sky, Meriel," I said. She clasped her hands and answered, "Oh, beautiful; beautiful! A sky like that makes one cry, zur, don't it?" Then, as if she had let herself go too much, she turned and fled, like the wayward forest-haunting thing she is. For a month after, whenever she saw me, she seemed to slink on one side, as if ashamed of having let herself be discovered in the act of admiring nature.

A girl of so deeply emotional a temperament could hardly grow up without loving much and loving often. The full wealth of her soul could only expend itself on those she loved profoundly. Even as a child, I remember, she used to creep out of the cottage on summer nights, and go to a spot in the copse where the badger nested; there the badger cubs would steal out, undeterred by the presence of that other wild creature, and play clumsily with their mother in the sober twilight. And Meriel adopted one and loved it, as other children would love a dog or a pigeon. The choice was significant. That sympathetic heart could waste its affection on the veriest bear. Perhaps it was well, for what sort of men could poor Meriel hope to captivate among the chair-menders and basket-makers of her wild moorland home? It is not the man that the woman really loves—especially such impassioned women as this—it is the ideal she makes of him. And a passionate character like Meriel's will erect a golden image of some gamekeeper or some groom, and bow down to it in secret as devotedly and earnestly as a lady will bow down to her dissolute dragoon or her worthless, drunken, cross-country rider. Idealism works this miracle; it is as easy to idealize a laborer or a navvy as an insipid curate or a sneering stockbroker.

When Meriel was sixteen, her passion was for the footman at the great house in the valley—the footman with blue livery and padded calves, who spent half the year at the town house in Mayfair, and half at Greydown. Not that she ever told her love; it is not the way of girls like Meriel to wear their hearts upon their sleeves. I doubt if anybody save myself, who am a novelist by trade, and therefore observant of these little signs of emotion, ever so much as guessed it. But day by day, when Alfred was about, Meriel would hover near the gate of the great house, waiting and watching, amply repaid if the hero of her young love came out on his way to the village on some errand, and gave her a passing nod and a "Good day, young woman." She gloated over his livery, I feel sure; gloated over it with the admiration which an earl's daughter feels for a hero's uniform. But Alfred went away some months later "to better himself" at Brighton, and after mourning him for six weeks, Meriel fell a victim to the charms of the stalwart young policeman who arrested Ted Vaughan for causing incendiary heath fires at Highdown Firs. This, of course, was sheer treason to her class; family honor intervened; Septerius Stanley, her father, was the friend and associate of gypsies, and poachers, and tramps, and horse stealers; he could hardly let his daughter consort uncensured with a mere policeman. And the young policeman himself was not likely to care for so disreputable a connection. In the essence of things, it is true, Meriel was as far above him as a poetess is above an ordinary young city man; but the essence of things, I fear, counts for little or nothing in matrimonial matters. Meriel had to give up her stalwart policeman, and console herself later on with Ted Vaughan himself, when that noble young savage came gaily out of prison.

But every man and every woman has one great love in a lifetime; and after many lesser trial trips, Meriel Stanley found hers at last in Joe Arundel, the poacher. You may laugh; but I can tell you an affection like Meriel Stanley's is no laughing matter; the fact that she could idealize a great hulking rowdy and bully like Joe is in itself a strong proof of the woman's deep poetic nature. Outwardly tranquil of demeanor, a dreamer, and brooder, Meriel has yet a profound admiration such as the natural woman always feels for the man of courage and the man of action. Do you remember Homer's Andromache? She is the true type of the impassioned woman of these lower grades and lower races—the woman who can love and endure much, to whom crime and bloodshed are but natural attributes of the hero she worships. Hector had attacked the town where Andromache lived, had sacked and burned it, and slain her father and mother, and had carried her off as his wife after the primitive mode of "marriage by capture." And did Andromache hate him for those deeds of violence with all her soul? Not a bit of it; she accepted such little episodes as part of the established order of things, and clung to her Hector, and loved and cherished him, and worshipped him with a worship passing that of the willing chooser. "But Hector," she says to him in that immortal passage which has stirred the hearts of a thousand generations, "but, Hector, thou to me art father and mother, and thou to me beloved husband." Meriel Stanley is a survivor of barbarism cast in the same mold. She could have worshiped the man who stole her from her home and slew her parents, if only he had qualities she could respect and idealize.

Now Joe Arundel, the poacher, was the whispered terror of his own neighborhood; from childhood up, Meriel had heard all her own set admire and describe with glowing praise the bold acts of this brave and sullen desperado. Joe had been three separate times in prison—a proud distinction; he was even gravely suspected of having murdered the game-keeper, whose corpse was found wrapped up in faded leaves at the bottom of the chestnut copse by Deadman's Hollow. Joe did not admit the impeachment, but neither did he reject it. He tossed his head and looked arrogant whenever the subject was alluded to in his presence. Too proud to deny, he was too cautious to boast. Meriel would stand by and admire him silently. It was not Meriel's way to be demonstrative either of affection or admiration, only by the quick twitch of her bloodless fingers, by the knitted brow, by the eyes steadily fixed on her chosen hero, could one tell how immense was her admiration for the man who had defied the whole banded power of the law and the county, and exposed himself to the risk of a rope for his last portion. Her fists would clinch themselves till the nails dug into the palms and almost drew blood, while Joe talked in dark hints of some little brush with Sir Walter's keepers, or vaguely alluded with picturesque mistiness of thought and language to some fight with the police over a brace or two of pheasants. For, brought up as she had been, passionate rebelliousness was almost a necessary feature of Meriel Stanley's character. She hates law and order with the natural hatred of a hunted creature. What have they ever done for her and hers save harry them into prison or hound them to the workhouse? The gentry in her eyes are so many oppressors of her wild, free kind; they would drive all the world from the heath and the copse into service or the factories. Meriel wants none such. For her, the open moor and the wide air of heaven!

Joe, for his part, did not readily discover that Meriel was in love with him. Joe is not by nature an intuitive creature. He can read the tracks of bird and beast in the snow far more easily than he can read the marks of human feeling or human passion. And Meriel is not the sort of girl to fling herself at any man. She falls in love, it is true, easily and rapidly; her passions have the barbaric quickness and certainty. Almost at sight, she says, "I love that man," or "I do not." But she says it to herself alone. Torture would not draw from her the overt confession. In that, once more, she is thoroughgoing savage. Your savage woman loves desperately, but in silence. She is coy and wayward. She flies like a squirrel from him who pursues, and then turns and smiles, not because she wishes to escape, but because some deep instinct of her race teaches her that to fly is the proper part of woman. But I could see from an early point in this growing passion how Meriel was letting her love for Joe swallow up her entire nature. She would sit on the logs by her father's house when Joe came round, with her strong, small chin poised on her open hand, and listened while Joe talked to Septerius Stanley, as rapt as if Joe's few jerky, inarticulate sentences were the purest flowers of human eloquence. Did ever man talk like Joe? Did ever man look like him? Six feet two—though a trifle hulking and shambling in gait, I must admit—with a scar on the left cheek won in open fight with those oppressors of the human race, the police, and with courage enough to go on to the bitter end, till fate landed him at last in that lofty position in death he was bound to occupy. Meriel looked and sighed. He was a king among poachers.

Night after night she would creep out by the copses where Joe might be found, and as he skulked past her with his bleareyed ferret, would suggest to him casually in a careless voice where the best pheasants were likely to be found, or point out which path the keeper had last taken on his even round through the chestnut plantation. She knew as much of woodland lore as Joe himself, I fancy, and Joe accepted her hints with ungraceful country awkwardness. Still, he thought her "a knowing one," and told her so sometimes. Meriel's brown cheek flushed red through the russet at words of praise from her hero's lips. Anybody but a fool—or Joe—would have known she was in love. But Joe, though a sharp hand at a trap or a net, is not remarkable for the quickness of his instincts.

At last one evening as they stood together by the copse (the merry small rabbits gamboling all round them, and the corncrake rattling), Meriel told him some points she had observed about the hare's "forms" in the heath; a new wrinkle even to the experienced poacher. Joe gazed at her and smiled—smiled from ear to ear with expansive appreciation. "Meriel maaid," he said slowly, with open mouth and hanging lip, "'ee do know a thing or two, 'ee do! There bain't dree maids on Greydown hill knows as much as thee, maaid. If thee an' me was to come together, us 'ould do a good traade in the poachin', 'ouldn't us?"

Meriel's heart beat high; Meriel's cheek flushed crimson. He had recognized her at last, then; this prince of men had spoken! She drew away a step or two, with her quick squirrel glance. "Doan't 'ee talk like that, Joe," she said, and gave a little toss of the proud black head—yet her voice was tender. "I bain't one for the men. They'm all deceivers."

It dawned across Joe as she withdrew her face, that Meriel really liked him. Joe was a lady's man in his way; but his way was not Meriel's. He slipped his arm round her waist. Meriel tried to evade him; though 'twas a formal evasion. The proud heart was won long ago. Tears stood in Meriel's eyes. Joe Arundel had chosen her!

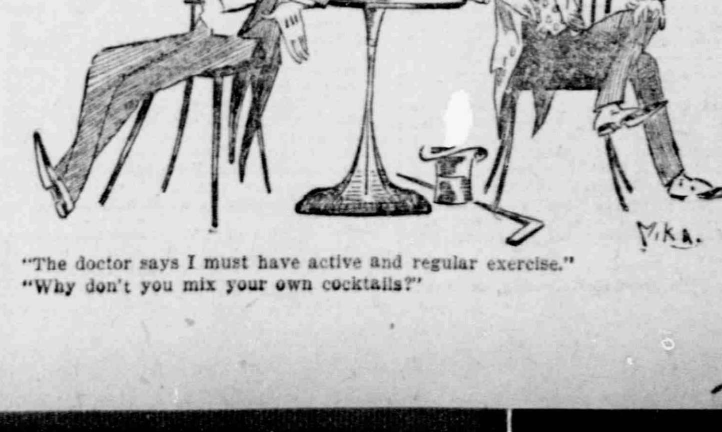
After that they met nightly on the moor among the tall green gorse, or else in the copse where Joe killed the keeper. That thrill of romance and terror suited Meriel's fancy well; she felt about the copse as some Homeric maiden of Ilion might have felt about the spot where her lover had slain in open fight a mighty man among the Myrmidon. Educated and cultivated, she would have wandered by herself and read Shelley and Rossetti; as it was, she stole off to meet Joe in the copse which had been the scene of his greatest and most successful encounter with the despotic forces. By and bye, she began to talk to him tentatively of marriage. Joe didn't think much of that—Joe was not by nature a marrying man; he took it they might get along well enough by themselves without the passon and the passon's fees. But there, Meriel's will was iron. All the Stanleys from all time had been duly married in church, and she wouldn't go back upon the tradition of the family. "Passon to Upton Parva won't want to marry we," Joe objected grinning. "Then us can go to Exeter," Meriel answered with grave earnestness, "but married I will be, and to none but thee, Joe Ar'ndel." After that, Joe felt that there was nought for it but to give way. He gave way with a bad grace, and entered a church for the first time since his christening. "It pleases 'er, an' it don't hurt me," was the explanation he gave to his poaching pals of his unsportsmanlike conduct. At the same time he made it clearly understood that he did not mean to let his new state seriously interfere with his manner of living.

Once married, Meriel went on loving her worthless husband with the unvarying and incredible devotion of an impassioned nature. Nothing he could do to her seemed to alter her affection. Her man might come home drunk and beat her; that was only natural; men are built that way; and was it not to be expected that a splendid creature like Joe—six feet two in his shoeless feet, and broad shouldered to match—should knock about a weak woman who loved and admired him? Meriel was no shrew. Souls capable of deep feeling are seldom scolds. She endured it all—and worse—because it was Joe's pleasure. Her first baby came. Meriel positively idolized it—her baby—Joe's baby. I doubt if any child in the squire's nursery was ever so much made of as the poacher's brown boy, with his father's eyes, and black hair like his mother's. Not that she talked of her little one much. Meriel never talked much about anything that moved her inmost soul. She had learned how to do without sympathy. But one day as I passed her cottage in the glen she was seated on a log out side the porch where red roses clambered, holding out a foxglove spike to please her baby. "That's a fine boy, Meriel," I said, looking at him. Tears came into her eyes once more. "Yes, he's a tidy little man, zur," she answered, holding him up to be admired. "They do tell me he favors Joe." And she said it as she might have said "He resembles the prince, his father." The fierce, suppressed earnestness of her tone fairly touched me. "I never saw a prettier baby in my life," I replied. She looked up at me—a shy glance—with gratitude in her eyes; but she answered nothing. Her thoughts were too deep for such words as she knew. Only a poet could have uttered what was passing within her.

I said at the beginning I could never see Meriel without an inner shudder at the fate which is in store for her. What fate? you ask. Well, it seems to me inevitable. I have a sort of premonition of the very way it will come. Some day, Joe will get into a quarrel with some other man about a woman—the other man's wife, and Meriel's rival. The two will fight; and the other man being quicker, though less powerful than Joe, will get him down and hold him. Then Meriel will rush in to her faithless husband's aid, and stab his assailant. She would never stab her rival—she is too proud for that, but she would stab the man who for her rival's sake dared attack her hero. The rest follows of course. And those who read the report of the trial in the papers will only know that a poacher's wife, a very bad lot, the daughter and associate of criminals, was sentenced to death for murdering a man with whom her good-for-nothing husband had been quarreling. But I know all, and in some dim way, I can feel for poor Meriel.

(All Rights Reserved.)

VERY REGULAR.



"The doctor says I must have active and regular exercise."
"Why don't you mix your own cocktails?"

SHORT MENUS, LONG BILLS.

That Is What One Finds in All the Restaurants of Europe.

From the San Francisco Chronicle.

What a nation eats is quite as characteristic of its taste as its costumes, dialects, and flags. A platitude? Well, be it so; it is nevertheless a great fact, and one that carries in its kernel the main obstacle in the way of universal peace, for this difference in taste is unreconcilable with the idea of an ecumenic fraternity and away beyond the reach of diplomacy. The chef is a greater man than the Emperor. He controls the royal humor through his majesty's digestion. Spiers & Pond and the Gattis wield a greater influence in London than Lord Salisbury, and who doesn't know that Delmonico is the dictator of New York?

France has hit upon a plan that presents the most practicable and the shortest road to an international regime dietetique, and that is through the medium of mysticism. The chef is professor of esoteric feeding, and from his scientific brain is evolved those miracles of sumptuary nomenclature that commend plebeian dishes, like sugar-coated pills, to the most fastidiously epicurean palates. Go where you will—in the United Kingdom, on the continent, in Asia, Africa, or America; take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea—and wherever you find a restaurant, that evangel of universal brotherhood, the modern menu bristles with Gallic refinements. It has consigned Volapuk to the tomb of the Capulets. The Frenchman who would indignantly reject sauer kraut may greet a dish of choucroute a la Allemand as a gastronomic beatitude without compromising his patriotism; and no intelligent Polynesian could misunderstand or resist filet de missionaire a la long cochon. Tastes, as a rule, are merely a mental operation. Reform these by a common standard and you have already converted the sword into a plowshare and the spear into a pruning-hook. But the millennium is still a long way off.

You are in London. Are you hungry and well equipped in the matter of shillings? If so, go to the Cafe Royal, near Regent Street Circus and Picadilly, or to Holborn Restaurant at Southampton row. Take a table in the grill room; it is better form. Besides, it denotes that you do not exist on a plane with the herd, and that you are an extreme epicure, regardless of cost. Everything is en regle At high-class restaurants in London you find good cooking, because foreign cooks are employed. In this respect they differ from the boarding-houses, where the charwoman takes charge of the range when the cook is suffering from a temporary indisposition by reason of her having taken something for her influenza.

Crossing the channel to France, one finds the menu somewhat varied, but the system of charging is identically the same, except that there is a little more subtlety in practice. British coins are accepted in payment, but the shilling counts only for a franc, while it is worth 4 cents more, so the caterer combines money-shaving with his legitimate vocation. But that is a small matter, and one which the traveler may guard against by providing himself with French money beforehand. Two and a half francs (50 cents) will pay for a good dinner at a restaurant which one need not be ashamed to patronize.

"Huitres et escargots" (oysters and snails) are coupled together on the menu. Oysters may be omitted, but snails never. At many of the a la carte refectories a small tray of the "escargot" vermin is brought in and placed alongside of your plate. It may suit a Frenchman. The French are a brave people. I am not French.

Garlic? Yes, in the common eating-houses, but never obtrusively present in the better-class restaurants.

Ireland alone can claim a dish that carries and blazons its nationality all over Europe. "Irish stew" is always a possibility, though not always recognizable on the bill of fare at first glance. An instance illustrating this, and also showing the charming ingenuousness of the Italian who presents his bill to a customer, occurred in Venice. I usually took my meals a la carte, and had learned enough to require my bill itemized before I left the table at each meal. The first item on the menu under the head of "entrees" was "Irisch Stieu—50 centimes." I could read it but one way—Irish stew—and it was ordered, together with other things. Having finished my meal, I requested the garcon to bring my bill. The first item was "Irisch stieu—1 franc and 50 centimes." I called his attention to the discrepancy between the charge on the menu and that in my bill.

"See here, cameriere, how is this? The bill of fare has 'Irish stew, 50 centimes,' and you have charged 150 for it in my bill."

"Oh, that's all right. I'll show you," he said; and taking the menu, he hunted around and found a list under the head of "Plats Garni," in which meat and potatoes were included inter alia.

"You see," he said, "the Irish stew is 50 centimes and the extra franc (100 centimes) is for the meat and vegetables in it."

"No pour-boire to-day," I said; "put that 'plats garni' in your pocket; that's where you intended it should go."

Tamed Tarantula that Does Stunts.

From the San Francisco Call.

Mr. Goodin, of Texas, owns a pet tarantula which he calls Joe. The tarantula responds to his name and gives many tokens of intelligence and affection. He lies perfectly quiet on his back, lets his fangs be exhibited, and makes no attempt to use them to any one's harm. At his master's command he shakes hands with one of his long legs, and he loves to be fondled and petted. He has been in captivity more than two years, and apparently has no longing for freedom. He is large, cleanly in his habits, and will not allow any refuse in his cage. He eats only once in three or four weeks, and throws away his old clothes and puts on new ones once a year. His food consists mainly of large crickets and grasshoppers. Goodin is fond of animals of all sorts, and has a great control over them. Wild birds often follow him for long distances, and other untamed creatures show a similar inclination.

HERD KINGS IN COMBAT

Fierce Moonlit Battle of Two Wild Stallions.

GRAY WAS MONARCH OF THE RANGE

Of Thoroughbred Ancestry, He Led His Harem Over Arizona Plains, Conquering and Killing All Rivals—Hunters Came by Night Upon the Scene of His Greatest Fight—With Teeth and Heels, Two Magnificent Animals Battled to the Death.

"Although the buffalo has about disappeared from the Western plains, the wild horse is still there," said A. J. Daggs, of Phoenix, Ariz. "Of course, one does not see the vast herds of the pampas of South America, yet they roam over the range in large numbers and display all the qualities that become the free-born equine. I have seen them in droves of 75 to 150, led by the stallions that are the best fitted for leadership.

"The Arizona wild horse is practically an importation from California. They came there when the latter State passed a law providing that horses should be confined to the land of the owner and not allowed to wander at large on the range. Some men had a sort of quasi-ownership of the horses which grazed on the range. They were not bronchos, but many of them were thoroughbreds which had become partially wild. These herds were therefore driven out of the State and taken across the desert to Arizona. Those that I have noticed most particularly were located in the Mogollon Mountains, in Coconino and Navajo Counties. They were as wild as Rocky Mountain sheep, keeping out of the sight of men, and carrying on many a bloody conflict with rival bands.

Gray Monarch of the Plains.

"I have seen them out feeding on the range, the mares browsing steadily on the fresh, sweet grass, and the stallion, ever-watchful, raising his proud head every moment to scent the approach of man or some equine antagonist. Their habits are peculiar, especially when they go to water. They only drink once every two or three days if the water is not easy of access. When they get ready to quench their thirst the leader gives the signal to his charges, and off they gallop at a furious pace for twenty miles or more without a stop until they reach the stream or pool. The dust rises in clouds from beneath their hoofs and the earth shakes with the thunder of their headlong rush. When they arrive at the watering place they drink till their sides are distended, and they walk slowly away, feeding as they go.

"One sees some magnificent specimens of horseflesh among these wild droves. There is one I must tell you about; for if there ever was a king among his kind he was an emperor. He was a thoroughbred iron gray, slightly flea-bitten stallion, a little over twelve hundred in weight, clean-limbed and absolutely perfect in form. He had a mean head, showing that he was a fighter. His eye was keen, and when he arched his neck and gazed around he looked as if he could peer into the future. He was a jealous monarch, and no stallion was ever allowed to approach his harem. I watched him a great deal. It was not often that I could get closer to him than a mile, but I would get up on a hill or a near-by butte and look at him for hours through a powerful spyglass.

Knew No Rival on the Range.

"He was particular in the choice of his mares. They were all of fine strain and able to run away from the ordinary horse. His progeny have since made records both in harness and under saddle, and the colts were much sought after. He used to kill every broncho stallion that came near his herd. He would hear the neighing off in the distance and would raise his head, sniffing the air and scanning the horizon. Finally he would locate the audacious male, and off he would gallop, fairly splitting the wind. No horse could run away from him, and it was not five minutes before the combat would end in the death of the broncho, who could not withstand the furious biting and kicking of the big gray.

"He became famous throughout the whole country. I think he had a name at one time, for he was once a chattel before he got out on the range and sniffed the air of freedom. He was admirably fitted for leadership. A horse has to be, for his life is one continual combat. He has to be the most courageous, and sagacious and powerful of the stallions. He is forced to kill his rivals, and must know how to control his herd. The latter trust absolutely to his generalship. The gray was not lacking in this respect. I have seen him heading his charges in some particular direction. He would arrange them in sections, biting them and kicking them gently. After he had started them in the course he desired, he would gallop around the herd and take the lead at his long, swinging gallop.

Thrilling Equine Battle.

"So far as I have ever known he had but one fight which gave him any trouble, and I was fortunate enough to see that. I had been out hunting in the Mogollon Mountains during the day with a party of friends, and we were late getting home. We were on foot, and it was lucky that we were, for a single neigh from our steeds would have given the alarm. The moon was shining brightly, and its rays lit up the rugged landscape with a weird gleam. It was a ghostly scene, and we sat down on some bowlders to look on it.

"All at once an uncanny, shrieking howl, as of some soul in dire distress, floated through the air, sounding near at hand, and yet far off in the distance. We mounted a little jutting crag overlooking the broad plain, which stretched away for miles, and there we saw a wonderful sight. The broad expanse, lighted by the full moon, was dotted with horses of all sizes and colors. For several minutes we were dumfounded by the sight of the animals stretched out over the plateau busily feeding on the succulent grass.

"Suddenly upon the clear night air sounded a blood-curdling neigh, as clear as a bugle-call. Immediately the herd stopped feeding and stood with heads erect, an army awaiting the command of its general. Another prolonged neigh, pitched in a higher key, and, like a whirlwind, the whole herd bolted up the plain, as orderly and regularly as the best disciplined cavalry, the flanking and rear detachments posted with studious exactness. At their head was the mighty gray stallion.

Advancing to the Encounter.

"They did not go far, but circled around until they were only 200 yards away from us, in plain view. A wild neigh from far out on the plain was followed by the thunder of a thousand hoofs, and up galloped another herd, headed by a gigantic stallion of dark hue. They stopped within 300 yards of the herd we first saw. The leader of the last herd went in and out among his subjects, and finally he sprang from the compact mass, and galloped about, stopping every little while to paw the earth and repeat his warlike neighing. The gray stallion, though a little smaller, answered his challenge, and came out from the herd of mares. When within 200 yards of one another, the two beasts came to a halt, turned and faced their respective herds, pawing the earth and neighing fiercely, bending their shapely necks, and making the preliminary flourishes of two swordsmen about to indulge in a duel a la mort.

"This lasted for about ten minutes, when both animals wheeled and rushed for one another like cannonballs. Nearer and nearer they came in their mad career, and we were waiting for the moment when the two grand beasts must come together with tremendous impact. But, no! for when within twenty feet of each other they came back on their haunches and stopped short. They eyed each other cautiously, as if waiting for an opening, and then with a last defiant neigh they leaped to the encounter.

"The struggle lasted for full ten minutes, and no words can describe it. It was a clash of giants, Hector and Achilles, and no conflict around the walls of ancient Troy ever brought greater prowess into play. The two champions rushed at one another time and time again like immense catapults. They fought with tooth and hoof, and no other sound could be heard but the furious shock of their titanic bodies as they met in the throes of mortal combat. The two herds which had meanwhile come nearer to the scene, gazed on their leaders as if carved in stone. We crept closer that we might view the fight.

"The great beasts could be seen rearing in the air, and the beams of the moon in that clear atmosphere gave to their forms a supernatural size. At times they were locked together like wrestlers, their teeth tearing each other, and their hoofs striking out in all directions with the force of pile drivers. Their labored pants sounded in the deep stillness like the puffs of locomotives, and it was evident that both were tiring. One more terrific collision, and all was over. A sharp rally, and then the ghostly form of the big gray stallion reared alone, and on the ground lay the prostrate form of his foe. The victor gave a few exultant neighs, short and trumpet-like, while he lashed his fallen antagonist with his heels.

The Gray Triumphs.

"Soon there was a movement in both herds, and with the same military exactness we had noticed before, each body rushed forward. There was no warning signal or challenge of attack. It was a spontaneous desire for combat. It seemed as if the very heavens were falling in. The din and crash as they swept together was terrific, and in the clear moonlight we could see the rolling mass of the contestants surging like a huge wave over the plain. At the end of a few minutes, and as suddenly as it had commenced, the battle terminated, and the two herds slowly separated. We noticed that the conquered stallion already had a successor, which led the mares of the defeated troop away. We then saw some of the results of the conflict, for here and there the plain was dotted with the bodies of the dead.

"The great gray led off his herd, limping, but victorious. He afterward fell a victim to the bullet of a cow-puncher, who complained that he was demoralizing all the horses in that part of Arizona."

A PECULIAR THIEF.

His Passion for Horse-stealing Results in Twenty-five Years in Jail.

From the Philadelphia Press.

In Bellville, Ill., Capt. William Pepper, who has spent twenty-five out of the thirty-five years since the war in the prisons of Illinois and Missouri, has just been sentenced, at the age of eighty-four, to spend, under the habitual criminal act, twenty years more in the Chester Penitentiary.

He is one of the most remarkable criminals known to the authorities of the Middle West.

Since 1864 he has spent his ten years of liberty in stealing horses and trying to escape the results. He stole persistently and consistently. That is his only offense.

"Every man's life is laid out to him," he says, "and he has to live it. I have lived the life laid out for me."

He has spent in stealing horses the lifetime of a man of ordinary longevity. His prison record does not antedate the war, but he is said to have served his apprenticeship many years before the strife between the North and the South. Since then he has served five terms in prisons.

Pepper has operated principally in Illinois and Missouri, but empty stalls all over the Central Western States have testified to his prowess. He is considered to rank as a horse thief with Gen. Neff and Hermann Brinkmann, and of both of these he was an associate.

Neff died a year ago in Chester Penitentiary. Brinkmann is serving a term at Chester for robbing smokehouses in St. Clair County last winter.

Before he was taken to the penitentiary he said:

"I never stole horses for gain, but always on impulse. I was born in Kentucky. My people were raisers of fine horses. Love of horses was bred in my bones, I guess. When I saw a fine horse an irresistible longing to possess it always overpowered me. I had to have it and I took it. After I had it I did not care for it any more and I sold it for what I could get.

"The only wish that I have now is to be permitted to die among my people in Calhoun County, but I suppose I will have to die in the penitentiary. I have done wrong, but I hope the Lord will forgive me, and the people, too. But I hate to think of having to die in the penitentiary."

He was convicted first in Adams County shortly after the close of the war, and was sent to Joliet. Since that time he has served three terms in Chester and one in Jefferson City. He was sent to the latter place from St. Charles, Mo.

Fourteen months ago he was pardoned because it was not believed that he could live more than a few days. He returned to his people in Calhoun County, Ill., where he speedily recovered—if he ever was really sick—and in a short time was at his old tricks again.

"The Fox" is the name by which Pepper is known to the police. He has a simulated article of piety that is hard to distinguish from the real thing.

He is stooped with age, has a habit of standing with his hands lapped over his waistband—an attitude expressive of humility—wears respectable grayish Galways and speaks in a wheedling, tremulous voice.

His eyes do not participate in the deception. They are the blue of finely tempered steel, suspicious, penetrating, and wonderfully alert. They are the eyes of a hunted man. One cannot look into them and forget them.

Pepper's lugubrious piety is well calculated to deceive the farmers with whom he does business. It completely fooled J. Woods, of Farmington, Mo., with whom the captain had a transaction four weeks ago.

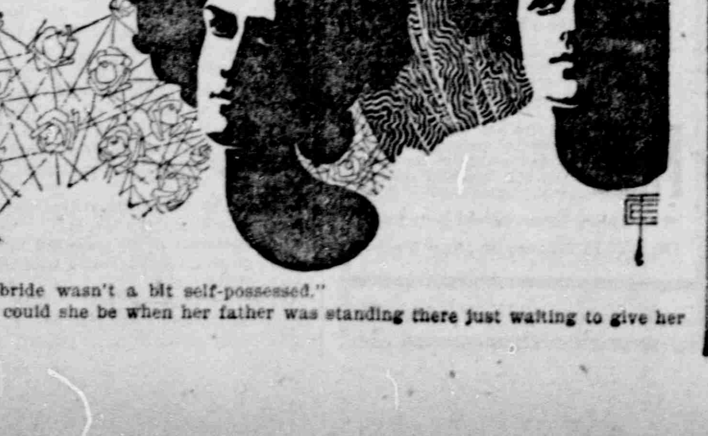
He dickered with Mr. Woods for the purchase of his farm, and the price was agreed on. The captain wrote to his son at Alton to bring the money. While he was waiting he said he believed he would ride across country a few miles and see an old friend.

Would Mr. Woods loan him a horse? Mr. Woods did the handsome thing. He ordered a blooded mare hitched to a buggy and Pepper drove away.

When Mr. Woods read of the arrest of Pepper he wrote to Sheriff Barnickol about his experience with "the fox."

"Tell the old man," he wrote, "that I am sorry for him and hope he may yet repent and become as good a Christian as he made me believe he was. Tell him he cannot undo what he has done, but he can have godly sorrow for his sins, and I hope he may repent and get to the glory world."

CRUEL FOR HER.



"The bride wasn't a bit self-possessed."
"How could she be when her father was standing there just waiting to give her away?"

RESCUE IN MIDWINTER

Struggle with a Mad Woman in River Full of Ice.

SHE TRIED TO FIGHT HER SAVIOR

The Well Known Life Saver, Peter McNally, Tells of Jumping Into the Charles River One Snowy Night and Remaining in the Freezing Water Fifty Minutes, While He Struggled with a Crazy Woman—Felt No Ill Effects from His Bath.

Peter S. McNally, one of the famous life savers of this country, was in Washington recently. When gossiping of some of his experiences, he remarked that his most desperate and dangerous adventure in the water was in midwinter near Boston.

"In the month of December, 1887," remarked Mr. McNally, "I rescued a woman from drowning, and the recollection of that incident will always remain fresh in my mind as long as memory lasts. It was just after midnight on a bitterly cold night, the thermometer registering about five degrees above zero, while the water must have been as cold as liquid air.

"I was crossing Warren bridge, which spans the Charles River between Boston and Charlestown, on my way home, when a woman attempted to end her life by plunging into the icy waters below. I prevented her from carrying her purpose into effect, but came very near ending my own life in trying to save hers.

"Just beyond the drawbridge, I observed a woman on the opposite sidewalk acting strangely and I watched her. But a few moments elapsed when she looked wildly around her, and with a quick movement she sprang for the railing, and mounting it threw herself into the waters twenty feet below. As she was climbing the rail I cried out to her, but she paid no attention to me.

"The wind was whistling anything but a merry tune at the time, and although I was wrapped up in an Irish frieze overcoat I was not even comfortable. I had on a pair of heavy rubber boots, too, for the snow was deep. The general conditions were not such as to induce one, however hardy, to go in swimming, and when that woman went over the bridge rail it struck me that she could have selected a better time.

River Full of Floating Ice.

"However, I knew that I was in for it, and so I ran to the spot where she had left the bridge and at once mounted the rail. A glance at the river was enough to give one an attack of chills without entering it, for it was filled with floating ice. It was dangerous to jump into it, for to strike a piece of the ice was liable to injure and render powerless the strongest swimmer. But there was no time to be lost and I plunged overboard, not waiting to remove my overcoat or rubber boots as I was afraid I might lose her in the darkness under the bridge.

"A strong ebb tide was running at the time, which was carrying her toward Charles River bridge at a fair rate of speed. She was struggling frantically to sink herself, for her skirt had formed an air bubble and was really as effective as a life-preserver would be in keeping her afloat. Swimming up, I caught her by the back of the neck and jerked her up on to her back and started for Howe's boathouse, adjoining Charles River bridge, where I was forced to release my hold for a time, and, removing my coat and boots, caught her again.

"By this time we were beyond the bridge and I headed for the Hoosic Tunnel Docks, where I knew there were fenders to which we might cling until assistance arrived. Catching the fender which runs along the front of pier 4, I called for help and the night watchman appeared on the wharf above. He was very much excited, and catching a boat hook which had a long handle he began to spear me as if I was a piece of floating driftwood. I was quite ready to fight the dangers of the icy waters and battle with a rum-crazed woman, but did not expect to be called upon to face a mad man with a harpoon, for the heavy iron boat hook answered the same purpose that a whale lance would. After the heavy spear had been driven dangerously close to my head two or three times, notwithstanding very vigorous protests on my part, I pushed off with my burden and moved down stream.

Fifty Minutes in the Water.

"Up to this time we had been in the water over half an hour and I was benumbed with the cold and felt that I would lose control of my muscles before long. When we pushed off to continue our journey down stream my charge became vicious and began to struggle, to scratch and bite, and she managed in the struggles to get the fore finger of my left hand into her mouth, which she bit to the bone, and almost severed at the first joint. A scar now marks the finger, extending all the way round. She also bit me upon the wrist and attempted to bite my face.

"The struggle was awful; she was a powerful woman, and it was only by the exercise of all the strength I could muster, and the application of the tactics of the brutal street fighter that I managed to subdue her. In effecting rescues it sometimes becomes necessary to be brutally humane.

"We continued to struggle most desperately until the dry dock slip at the navy yard was reached, when I managed to get my burden upon the landing steps. A few minutes before we reached the steps she fortunately became unconscious. The battle for life certainly couldn't have lasted much longer, for I was completely exhausted and could scarcely move a muscle. With the assistance of a navy yard policeman we got upon the wharf—we had been in the water almost fifty minutes.

"She was taken to the police station and cared for, while I was driven home, took a hot drink and went to bed. I awoke in the morning in excellent physical condition, considering the frightful experience of the night before, suffering only from stiffened muscles, as a result of the severe labor in subduing the maddened woman."

"It Came Out All Right."

From Judy.

The village blacksmith stood within the shade of the chestnut tree. His heart was heavy within him as he bewailed to the new parson his hard lot. "It is very different to what it was sir," he said. "It's hard now to get a living, what with the rise in food, and, worse than all, the competition."

"You mean the young man who has recently opened a forge at the other end of the village?" queried the minister.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, well," answered the minister, preparing to take his departure, "you must go on trusting and hoping," and with these words of comfort he left.

A few days afterward, passing the same way, the minister stopped to inquire as to how things were going. This time the blacksmith met him with a cheerful visage. "Things are looking up," he explained; "I went on trusting and hoping, as you advised, sir, and it's all right now. The young man's dead!"

University Societies to Compete.

Special to The Post.

Morgantown, W. Va., Jan. 10.—The literary societies of the West Virginia University have elected their representatives for the annual June contest for the regents' prizes. The Parthenons elected as declaimer, Miss Dana Douthat; as essayist, Miss Frances Leech; as orator, E. L. Long; debaters, J. A. Meredith and John D. Vannoy. The Columbians elected as declaimer, Miss Gillian Jamison; essayist, Miss Grace Brahm; orator, E. I. Ireland; debaters, C. P. Swint and Tusca Morris. As representatives in the preliminary contest for the honor of representing the university in the annual inter-collegiate contest, the Parthenons elected C. N. Smith, F. L. Bowman, and A. W. Smith. The Columbians elected W. W. Hughes, V. T. Tustin, and F. F. Richards.