SOCIAL DUTY.

The doorbell rings,
the parlor shrieks;
My lady comes a-calling,
In toilet dressed,
Her veil close pressed;
The formal talk's appalling.

The style, the day,
The church, the play—
Whatever line she fancies;
Ten minutes pass;
She says, "Alas,
Time flies!" and off she dances.

No real word said
From front door to head,
He thought to live in beauty;
Her face she thinks,
When man's the next?
She's doing social duty.

—Ella A. Cowley-Ward in Woman's Home Companion.

A DIPLOMATIC ADVENTURE.

How an Effort Was Made to Obtain Possession of an Important Letter and the Result Thereof.

I was wandering through the grounds of a London exhibition one evening when a short, foreign looking man, clothed in evening dress, approached me and said in a low tone:

"Have I the honor of addressing Mr. Godfrey Vance?"

He handed me a letter, saying abruptly: "Be good enough to read this letter. It will serve to introduce me."

The communication was from Count Antonio Delarocca of Milan, whom I had aided some months before by carrying off for him a famous Greek statue from an English country house. It was very brief and merely said:

Sir—This letter will introduce to you my good friend, Herr Fritz Moskovitz, who is anxious for you to undertake for him a difficult mission. I have told him that you are the one man in England who can hope to carry out such a work with success, and, wishing you all good fortune, believe me, Yours, Delarocca.

We left the exhibition grounds at once, going to my abode.

"In the first place, my good sir," he exclaimed, talking in an excited undertone—"in the first place I must tell you that this business is difficult almost to the point of impossibility. Friday morning next about 3 o'clock Count Rodenholtz will cause to be posted or post with his own hand at the pillar box facing his house in Percy street, Mayfair, a certain letter addressed to the Berlin foreign office. It is absolutely vital to me and to the cause I represent that that letter should never reach its destination, and I am commissioned to pay $10,000 to the man who will hand that letter to me intact—exactly as he finds it."

"Is not 3 a. m. rather an unusual hour for the dispatch of diplomatic communications?"

"Most certainly it is, but the count is not like other men. For the past four years—in fact, since he first came to the embassy—he has been in the habit of posting this document between 3 and 4 o'clock Friday mornings."

"I presume that the obvious and old fashioned method of obtaining the letter by force is out of the question. Otherwise we might waylay the person posting the letter, overpower him and depart with the document."

"Useless, quite useless, for it would simply mean that the outrage would be discovered almost immediately, and then the contents of the letter would be telegraphed to Berlin, defeating our plans most entirely. No; the essence of the whole affair, my good sir, is that the letter should be removed and handed to me without the embassy people having the slightest knowledge of the fact."

Next morning I went to Percy street, Mayfair, to survey the embassador's house. Thirty-one Percy street, the mansion in question, was a dull looking, gray abode exactly similar to the other houses in the street. Facing the house on the other side of the street was a pillar box—the receptacle, it seemed, where the count was in the habit of posting his communications to Berlin.

Had the pillar box been a receptacle easily shifted the matter would have been as easy as smoking a cigarette, for we should simply have had to divert the policeman on the beat away from the street by means of a fictitious drunken disturbance, and then we could have driven up in a van and carried the box away. But I must think of something else.

And then of a sudden there flashed upon me an idea, coming whence I knew not, but it seemed to me that a voice spoke in my ear, and this is what it said:

"Substitute another pillar box on the opposite side of the street. Placard the genuine box with a notice saying that it is temporarily disused and that letters are to be posted opposite. Clear the streets of the police by means of a row and wait with a van at the corner of the street till the document is posted. Swoop down—collar the box and drive off."

I jumped into a cab and drove to a certain hostelry in the East End where I knew I should find plenty of my pals, who for a few dollars would throw themselves into any adventure of the kind.

In a few words I conveyed to them what I wanted done. Two of the men, burly fellows, known as Jim Thursday and Bill East, were to devote their powers to quarreling and getting "run in" at the corner of Percy street, while another two were to keep watch at the corners of the street. The remaining man, Tom Rogers, was to assist me in depositing the pillar box and removing it when the time came.

Then a new difficulty arose. How was the pillar box to be obtained?

"What is to be done about getting a box?" I asked the men. There was silence for a moment, and then East, scratching his head, said gruffly:

"Try old Bennett, the iron founder in Goodge street, wot got five years' stretch for passin flash coin. 'E's out on ticket now and is up to makin a fancy pillar box as soon as wink at yer."

Having bidden them hold themselves at my disposal for final instructions, I went straight to Goodge street, where I found the worthy Bennett in a surly mood owing to sickness of trade. He smiled when I asked him if he could build for me a pillar box to the government pattern in the time at our disposal.

On reaching home I wrote briefly to Herr Moskovitz informing him of my scheme and adding that I hoped to have the pillar box and letter safely at my house between 4 and 5 on the following Friday morning. I asked him to be waiting at my residence to receive the document and to bring the promised reward with him, as I would only part with the letter in exchange for the same.

All went well, and on the following Friday morning the van with the pillar box, my assistants and myself set out for Percy street, where we arrived at 3:10. I noticed with satisfaction that the night was very dark, which fact was of course advantageous. I at once dispatched Thursday and East to do their "quarreling act," the other two men taking up their places at the corners of the street.

At 3 o'clock I heard loud shouts and curses proceeding from our two friends, and a moment later two policemen were hastening in the direction of the noise. The coast thus clear, we drove up to the embassador's house and in a twinkling deposited the dummy box, which was an exact duplicate of the genuine article on the opposite side of the street.

"Now for the notice of temporary disuse," I said with a laugh, and in an instant afterward the mouth of the genuine pillar box was closed with gummed paper and the following notice posted in front of the time table of postal deliveries:

Notice.—This pillar box being in temporary disuse, the public will oblige by posting communications at the temporary box across the road. By order.

This work completed to our satisfaction, my pal and I climbed back into our van and drove noiselessly down a side street, from which we could watch all that happened outside of Count Rodenholtz's mansion.

I confess that, hardened and experienced as I was, a terrible thrill of nervousness went through me as I stood in that van with my companion waiting. The return of the policemen from the station before the conclusion of the business would ruin all; nay, if a chance youth on the way home from a dance were attracted by the notice on the box and lingered to look at it, we might be equally overthrown.

It was therefore with a feeling of relief that amounted to positive joy that I beheld at about 3:15 the door of the house open and a young man, evidently the embassador's secretary, glide into the street. He held in his hand the letter, and I saw him run up to the genuine box and peer at it for a moment in surprise.

Then, with some expression which of course we could not catch at that distance, he crossed the road and, having deposited the letter in our box, returned with all speed to the house.

Not a soul was in sight—the street was silent as the grave. We quickly tore down the notice which had done us such good service and removed the paper from the mouth of the box. Three minutes later we were driving away quickly in the direction of my house. We arrived at 4 a. m. and found Herr Moskovitz awaiting us in intense excitement.

"Well," he cried, gesticulating with both hands, "well, have you succeeded?"

"Perfectly," I replied. "Here is the box and here is the key. We have not touched or looked at the letter, believing it to be private."

"You have acted well," he returned quickly. "And now to obtain the letter."

With hands that trembled so violently that he could scarce insert and turn the key the excited man knelt down and drew forth the envelope. As he looked at the superscription a cry of disgust escaped his lips, and he tore it open. One glance at the letter seemed to suffice, and it transformed him utterly. He strode across the room and shook his great fist in my face.

"Fool! Simpleton! Imbecile!" he yelled, each word having the malignity of a blow. "You have failed after all and made a fool of yourself and me."

He flung the letter at me and darted from the house, uttering curses as he rolled down the stairs.

I took up the letter and read these words:

Dere Mary Anne—Master gittin up late tonight, as per usual, with his blessed letter stin and such like. I 'ave a few minits to rite to say as how I 'opes this finds you as it leps me, in 'elth an spirits, tho' dog tired, and pleas to meet me at the Marble arch at 8 sharp next Sunday, from your luvvin GEORGE.

I saw through the whole business at once. The man was merely a valet or butler, and the letter was a servant's communication to his sweetheart instead of an embassador's letter to his government. We had come away too soon.—Pittsburg Press.

A Social Formality.

"What do you propose to do with this man?" said the stranger in Crimson Gulch.

"We ain't goin to do nothin to him," said Rattlesnake Pete, "only jes' show him that we don't feel under no obligations whatsoever. We're goin to take him out an stan him up in a wagon under a tree with a rope aroun his neck, an then we're goin to drive off an not have any more sociability with him."—Washington Star.

THE DAMOSEL OF ONE DIMENSION.

Let others celebrate the charms
Of ladies fair, with figures ample,
Of whom the Mediterran is
The Venus serving for example;
I strike my lyre in praise of one
Who makes no vulgar, vain pretension
To fascination through the depth,
The damosel of one dimension.

The plump, though pretty, now appear
But coarse beside her girlish slimness,
Whose type of creation shows
No trace of flabbiness or grimness;
Although this Muse she'd never suggest
The type you might call taffy frutti,
Her slender form, today, represents
Describes the landed line of beauty.

I, looking on her for its length,
Absorbed with growing quickness
My orbs close and precipitate,
Receiving soon both breadth and thickness;
How Turks delight to feast their eyes
On fat (both pass my comprehension);
For me the latest woman is
The damosel of one dimension.

Her one dimension is enough;
The line that emulates the willow's
Own supple grace is better worth
Than fleshpots flesh that rolls and billows.
But does my lady know my charms?
Alas, I'm filled with apprehension
Lest she should abandon and spoil
My damosel of one dimension.

—Mary Norton Bradford in Boston Globe.

TURNED THE TABLES.

The Surprise Was For She Who Had Planned to Surprise.

That surprises do not always surprise those for whom they are intended is one of the peculiar things about surprises, and this fact was well illustrated one day this week in an east end house. The lady of the house received word from a friend that she was coming out the next day for lunch. Now, it happened that the next day was the day on which the servant girl had her day off, and the lady of the house made up her mind that she would surprise her friend by getting up a nice lunch prepared by herself, for she had the reputation when they were young ladies of not being able to cook, while her friend had the reputation of being an excellent cook.

The day her friend was expected the lady went to market and laid in a supply of all the good things which go to make up a fine lunch. She went home and lighted the fire and prepared for the cooking. Just then she discovered that she had forgotten to get some fruit and told her young daughter to tell her friend when the latter came that she would be back in a few moments. She went to the store and, meeting some of her friends, staid quite awhile, forgetting how time was flying.

In the meantime the friend arrived, and, being told that her hostess would soon be home, she went into the kitchen, and, seeing the good things there, she went to work and cooked and prepared the lunch. When the lady of the house arrived home, she was astonished to see the table set and a most appetizing lunch on the table. The surprise she had intended for her friend was a surprise for her.—Pittsburg Chronicle-Telegraph.

Warned by Those About to Die.

Camille Flammarion, in a French periodical, asked people to answer the following question: "Have you ever had while awake the impression of having seen a human being and had that impression coincide with the time of the death of that person?" The astronomer tells the result of his investigation in the Nouvelle Revue.

He had 4,280 responses, of which 2,456 were negative and 1,824 affirmative. Of the affirmative replies he examined 782, who recited 1,120 cases, all of which he regards as authentic. In his article M. Flammarion merely gives the experience of the subjects as related to him and does not attempt to account for the premonitions.

It might be said, however, that the fact that 40 per cent of those who wrote to him had had telepathic experiences does not indicate such an average among the human family. The three periodicals whose readers he asked for information have a large circulation, and it is safe to say that every reader who has had premonitions of the death of a friend wrote to Flammarion, while the others would not regard it as worth while.

Philosophy of a Six-year-old.

Some bright little girls who live in West Ninety-sixth street were recently taken by their parents to see the wonders of the "zoo" at Bronx park. As they reached the habitation of the wolf they found the beast just devouring a live sparrow as a portion of his dinner. The eldest little girl, becoming excited and indignant over the spectacle, stamped her foot, exclaiming, "Oh, you cruel, wicked wolf, to eat that dear little sparrow! What a monster you are!"

Miss Marion, aged 6, looked at her incensed sister with a philosophical air and said, "What do you want the wolf to do—shoot it and cook it first?"—New York Tribune.

Talent.

"Mrs. Bingley is a wonderful woman."

"In what way?"

"When she takes the second prize at a card party, she can appear so tickled with what she gets that she always makes the winner of the first prize jealous and dissatisfied."—Chicago Times-Herald.

An Unwonted Aspect.

"This is Mrs. Gushleigh's portrait, is it?" said the caller. "I should hardly have recognized it. The chin doesn't look at all like hers."

"Perhaps," suggested the husband of Mrs. Gushleigh, "you have never seen her chin in repose."—Chicago Tribune.

The manufacture of straw is one of the most important industries of Germany, giving thousands means of support.

A baby begins to be a human being when it is between three and four teeth old.—New York Press.

THOSE FRESH EGGS.

A Boer That Was Not So Childlike as He Seemed to Be.

It must not be supposed that the presence of the English in the Transvaal has not had a sharpening effect on the dull intellect of the Boer.

Since the Transvaal Boer has made the acquaintance of the Britisher he has come to learn, among other things, that the English prefer fresh eggs to stale ones and that one of the tests employed to judge of an egg is to shake it to see if it rattles in its shell. A shopkeeper newly arrived from the Transvaal relates how one morning a Boer farmer entered his shop and offered to sell him 72 dozen "fresh laid eggs."

"I looked at the former," says the shopkeeper, "and, feeling a little distrustful, looked at the eggs. They were beautifully white and apparently new laid. Still, not feeling sure, I shook about a dozen. I felt ashamed of my suspicions, for the yolks were quite firm.

"The end of it was I purchased the lot and then sent word to my customers that I had a consignment of fresh eggs for disposal. The lot went off like lightning at 1 shilling apiece. For two whole hours customers for eggs trooped in and out of my shop in such numbers that at last I put up the price to 1s. 4d. each. I was considering whether I should not sell the last 50 at 1s. 6d. when one of the egg purchasers darted into the shop in a state of suppressed excitement.

"Before she could speak there entered another. In fact, in less than five minutes the shop was full.

"Although they all spoke at once, I soon discovered that I had purchased 72 dozen newly washed hard boiled eggs and, what is more, had paid for them. I sent a couple of my men through the town, but the artful Boer had ridden off. I had looked forward to making between £20 and £40 out of the transaction, but I lost £10."—London Mail.

A Dispatch Rider's Coolness.

One of the most remarkable instances of self possession on record is accredited to a gentleman who arrived recently at Cape Town. He rode a bicycle, and his dispatches were made up in a brown paper parcel which he carried in his coat pocket, so that if he saw trouble ahead he could command the safety of his parcel to the open veldt. He was riding swiftly and on turning a treacherous corner found himself face to face with a party of about 20 Boers who had been looting, or, in their more charitable phraseology, commandeering. He at once dismounted and said, "Good day," and as his "get up" was excellent one of the Boers shook hands with him.

This gave a little respite and enabled him to collect himself. Yes, he said, he was coming from Kimberley and was looking for work. He preferred looking for work to taking up arms. Before the Boers sought to search him he brought out two hard boiled eggs, which he offered them. They refused, and then he produced his brown paper packet of dispatches and said he had two sandwiches which they could have. His seeming kindness was his salvation, and the Boers were satisfied. They gave him plenty of advice and told him to keep his sandwiches as they had a sufficiency of biltong.—London News.

Mill Owners Becoming Wary.

A German manufacturer who recently visited Pittsburg was greatly surprised in the difference in the welcome he received eight years ago and at the present time. At the former period the manufacturers entertained the foreign visitors lavishly and showed them all the wonders of natural gas and the resources of their plants. All this is now changed. He requested permission to inspect certain mills and see the improved machinery and methods in vogue. He was surprised to find that it was impossible to obtain the required permit. Other foreigners have succeeded in entering some of the mills, but the manufacturers are becoming more and more chary in granting facilities for the inspection of their plants. There was a time, and it was not so long ago, when foreigners did not care to enter the mills, but at the present time they are very anxious to do so. It should be remembered that abroad in very few cases are foreigners ever allowed to inspect plants, and there is no reason why we should grant favors which we cannot receive in return.—Scientific American.

Boston's Bohemia.

"Here (in Pinckney street) is the freedom of the Latin quarter, with but a small amount of its license," writes Margaret Allston in "Her Boston Experiences" in The Ladies' Home Journal. "Human nature bears a close family resemblance all over the world when judged by communities with similar earmarks, but in America individuals merely pose as Bohemians. They seldom come up for decent to the 'Simon pure' article of foreign cities. America is eminently a respectable country, well washed morally and with considerable respect for the neighbors' opinion. Americans become bohemianized in Paris, but seldom in Boston, where the spook of Cotton Mather and other standards of respectability still hold sway with a grim, cadaverously shudder at a bishop. In truth, this Boston Bohemia stands for good spirits and innocent unconventionality and is several times more virtuous than Boston society, no matter how pretentiously and flamboyantly the little country tries to disprove its virtue."

Kruger's Prophecy.

The following extract from a letter written shortly before the war in the Transvaal, from an official of President Kruger's government to a correspondent here, is, viewed in the light of recent events, almost prophetic:

"As I predicted to you four years ago, war is upon us. We are again compelled to fight for our firesides, but do not despair for us. Our strength is very much underestimated. Every home is an arsenal, every man, woman and child can shoot, and the righteousness of our cause directs our aim straight. The first victories will be with us, and you need not be surprised after these victories to see the Dutch from all over South Africa flocking to our banners. The English may, of course, be ultimately successful, but I believe there is a future for the men of my race in South Africa."—New York Tribune.

An Era of Doubt.

"I guess I'll throw it away," said the fair girl despondently.

"What are you going to throw away?"

"My autograph album. Affairs are getting so that people don't believe in any signatures until you have called in a whole lot of handwriting experts."—Washington Star.

AN ARCTIC MYSTERY.

A Ship Lost Over Fifty Years Ago Appears and Disappears.

Captain Jansen of the British bark Silicon, lately arrived at Philadelphia from Greenland with a cargo of cryolite, tells a strange story of the curious discovery of a derelict which drifted into the harbor of Ivigut shortly after the Silicon arrived there to load. The incident was so strange and so uncanny that for days it affected the spirits of Captain Jansen and his crew.

In those arctic solitudes the adventurous seekers of cryolite look for the arrival of no ship other than those of their own handy little fleet. The captain of the Silicon dropped into unconscious poetry of describing the occurrence. Never in his long career as a navigator has the mariner been brought face to face with an experience so weird and to the superstitious sailorman so foreboding of disaster and death.

"When we arrived at Ivigut," he said, "the bleakness of the arctic night was almost ready to come upon us. The surroundings there are never cheerful at their best, and in the dark season they are indescribable in their aspect of awful desolation. The Silicon was docked at the pier in front of the little town, the only vessel within 1,000 miles.

"I can remember that I often stood near the shore while the few miners worked under the fitful light of the polar sun and thought how lonely the bark looked in the midst of that awful solitude. We were not there long, however, before we had company.

"Three days after our arrival the lookout, whom I always had on the watch for floating ice, reported a sail. To my surprise, it was in the north. From the frozen regions beyond the polar circle a dismasted wreck bore down upon the Silicon. The miners ceased their work; the crew gathered upon the deck of the bark and watched her coming in silence. With scarcely a swish as she cut through the icy water, borne by some strange current, she passed to the northward of the Silicon and grounded on the beach."

When the first moments of surprise were over, Captain Jansen and his men examined the strange craft. It was an ancient, battered vessel without masts, bulwarks or name. The hulk had been a brig, and it seemed that she was a Russian. Her hatches were on, her cabin doors fast, and her hull was buoyant. Her little cargo consisted of skins and furs, and they were in prime condition. No papers were in her cabin, but a letter in the forecastle said that she had been abandoned in 1848. The flour found tasted like chalk, but the beef in her hold was perhaps better than the day it was put on board.

The dangerous position in which the derelict had stranded forbade any extensive examination by Captain Jansen. After a day or so the weather became bad, and she was again swept out to sea. Much speculation was indulged in on board the Silicon regarding the abandoned ship.

Captain Jansen said there is no doubt that the ill fated vessel had been frozen in by the ice and abandoned. He recalls that a story is current among the Newfoundland whalers who ventured into Davis strait of a great iceberg having been seen with a curious object imbedded within it, 50 feet above the surface of the water. It is supposed that the berg contained a whale, but the captain of the Silicon is positive that the object mentioned was the hull of the Russian brig.

A Unique Character.

The Philadelphia Record says: "When old Jacob Willoughby died a couple of weeks ago, Kensington lost one of her unique characters. Previous to the Centennial exposition of 1870 Mr. Willoughby was seized with a fear that the millions of visitors who were expected in the city would deplete the food markets of Philadelphia and that a famine would ensue. So firmly did he become convinced of the truth of his prediction that he immediately laid in an enormous stock of edibles, mostly canned goods. The cellar of his house was piled high with preserves, potted meats, canned vegetables and nearly every other article of nonperishable food.

"Of course the expected famine did not materialize, and Mr. Willoughby was left with his stores on his hands. He might have disposed of them, but that would have meant admitting his mistake, and so he kept them. For 23 years, according to well authenticated reports, he has fed his family and his guests on the aftermath of his Centennial stock, and when company came there was great rejoicing in the family, for then the stuff went faster. At the time of the old gentleman's death there was still a portion of it left."

Clayton Relented.

They are telling this story in Washington about Congressman Clayton of Alabama, who used to be district attorney in his state: It became his duty at one time to prosecute an old man for making illicit whisky. It was not a very serious infraction of the law, but the old backwoodsman had been reckless in his open violation, and it was necessary to make an example of him. He was brought into court, and after the government had stated its case the old man, who had no lawyer, asked to be allowed to go upon the stand. He was told that this would render him liable to answer any questions, but he insisted.

"Well, Uncle John," said Clayton, "did you really make any whisky in your still?"

"Henry," replied the old man with pathetic tone, "I knowed your pa. I voted for your pa every time he ran for judge, Anl. Henry, your pa would never have axed me no question like that."

The jurors laughed, the court smiled, and Clayton relented. The old man drove home that night.—New York Tribune.

Rough Doing.

There are some words in the language of northern Maine that have not yet found their way into any dictionary. For instance, a Maine exchange this week reports:

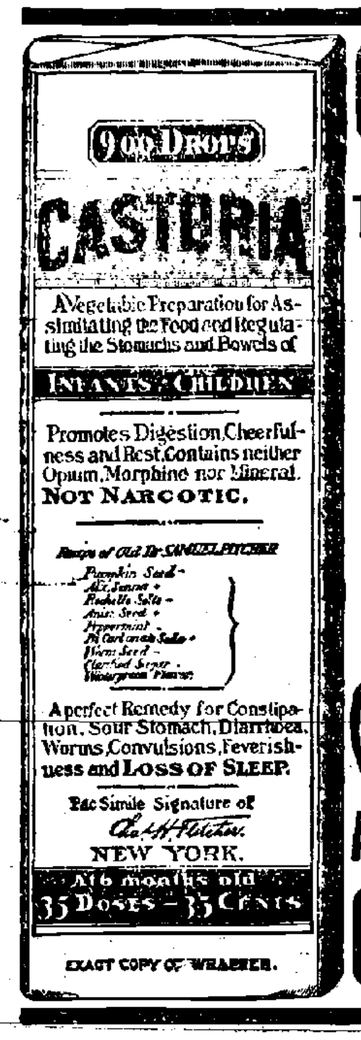
"Rough doing is the main topic of conversation in this section."

Now, it might puzzle some people who know only English to tell what the people up there are talking about, but "doing" in the lexicon of the Moosehead region means the conditions of the roads.—Lewiston Journal.

Chassis Snooze.

Dinguss—We are to have no more Wagner sleeping cars.

Bingues—No, but the snores in the berths will continue to render Wagner selections just the same.—Baltimore American.



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