SOLVING A GEOGRAPHY PROBLEM.

Uncle. "Now, Tommy, suppose you were living in South Africa, and you wanted to get to England, what would you do first?"

Tommy. "Pack up!"

REFORM.

There was when there were few more vile than I,
Few (though I speak) that deeper plunged in crime,
Few that have had so lamentably high
A time.

It were a fruitless labour to relate
The shocking details of my grim career,
My tastes were Awful, and my moral state,—
Oh dear!

To virtuous appeal my heart was shut;
Blithely I swaggered on the downward track;
I must have been the hardest sort of nut
To crack.

But now—oh Love, oh sovereign power of Love!—
Delia has raised my thoughts to nobler aims;
I have reformed; I have a soul above
Those games.

I hardly ever stay out late at night;
Cards are a thing I very rarely touch;
I seldom smoke—that is to say, not quite
So much.

My temper, though notoriously short,
Has lost its tendency to run amok;
I am as one with whom a child could sport
(With luck).

Also I have acquired the Art of Song
That never dreamed I had a turn that way;

Tenor, I'll trouble you! And rather strong
On A. . .

Sometimes I sing and sing for hours on end
Songs all of Love—and I should sing much more
But for the person (whom I once called friend)
Next door.

Ah, 'tis a goodly change! Three moons agone,
Ere I had cravings for a higher bliss,
Who would have thought that I should carry on
Like this?

And you, O Delia, pearl of maidenhood,
For whom, through whom, th' Awakening began,
See my amendment! Am I not a good
Young man?

It was for you, O Delia, that I turned
This new leaf over; 'tis to you I bring
This offering; for you that I have learned
To sing.

I hope I have not spent my time in vain;
And when you see how greatly I've improved,
Delia, I trust that you will not remain
Unmoved.

That, when in honeyed accents I confess
My seemly passion, you, with answering glow,
Will, for the sake of decency, say, Yes,
Not No! DUM-DUM.
JAM.

Scorn not its title's unassuming length
That slips so easily from off the tongue;
Large virtues and a concentrated strength
On little pegs like this have often hung:
There is the Kirk called Wex,
There is the Jap, and Goo, and M.A.P.
Cow is a word identical in size,
And so is Pou; yet their united fat
(Or what appeared as such to native eyes)
Smear'd on a rifle cartridge—simply that,
Just that and nothing more,
Started the Mutiny at Barrackpore!

So much for puddings; now we reach the point,
Which is, that I would swear at any bar
That neither British beer nor beefy joint
Has made you, gentle reader, what you are,
Nor me the thing I am,
But our development is due to JAM.
Right antidote—with tea and buttered roll—
Against the poisonous itch for worldly pelf,
It seems to permeate the very soul,
And I am only then my truest self
At moments when I gulp
Some preparation made from fruity pulp.

It is the labourer's joy: with this inside
Unto his sweetened task he sallies out,
Sustained by marmalade and manly pride;
Nor all the bitters (blunt, or not, with stout)
Which are his daily drink
Can quite undo the work of good Sir Pix.

It is the loafer's solace; it allays
That tremulous feeling when a job of work
Forces itself on his revolting gaze
With an obtrusiveness too bold to burke;
His nerves no longer wince
If fortified by guava or by quince.
And who is he that lets the acid drop
Into the general public's jar of bliss?
Who caused the shortage in the sugar crop?
Who is responsible, I ask, for this?
How will he meet the clamours
Uplifted by our horrified Free-Jammers?

What though he claims that it was he who slew
The dragon Bounty in a Free Trade fight,
And argues how his famous Brussels coup
Could scarce be bettered by a Cobdenite?
Judged by the price of Jam
His plea's not worth a continental d.—n.

For he has hurt his country's tenderest spot—
Her private stomach; let but this expand,
And what is Empire by com? or what
The links of Colony and Motherland?
Let such ambitions sleep,
But leave us still our Jam, and fairly cheap.
In any case, we'll mock at Josern's dream,
His visionary Preferential wraith,
Since past results belie his promised scheme
And man must live on works and not on faith;
Blossoms are lightly blown,
But by its fruits (preserved) a tree is known.
O. S.

QUEEN SYLVIA.

Chapter IV.
The Queen's Father.

There are to be no mysteries in this story; and, indeed, in this particular matter I am quite sure it is useless to attempt to make any. Everybody who read the last chapter must have guessed that the bearded, broad-shouldered man who appeared in the crowd before the Palace and showed such a surprising ignorance of all that had happened, was Sylvia's father. If I led you to believe in the first chapter that he had been drowned at sea it was only because at that time I believed, in common with everybody else, that it was so. Now that he has turned up, of course I know better, and I shall not try to deceive you.

The fact is, then, that Sylvia's father had not been drowned at all. I am entitled to assume that he was rescued or swam to land, and I am inclined to believe that he afterwards spent some time on a comparatively desert island, where he established himself as the undisputed monarch of a population consisting chiefly of tortoises, which are not bad to eat, and penguins, which are just tolerable if you know how to cook them. He himself was always very decentralized about this part of his life, but it really doesn't matter in the very least, for the important fact was that, though nobody in Hinterland knew it, he was not only alive, but had arrived in the capital at the very moment when he ought himself to have been proclaimed Sovereign of the country instead of his little daughter. Nay more, he had actually seen her saluted as Queen by the people and, like a brave man, he hadn't breathed to anyone a word of the secret which, I am bound to add, no single soul would have believed at that moment, even if he had sworn to it by everything that a sailor or a King holds most sacred. When the crowd had dispersed, he had dispersed with it, in order that he might think out quietly for himself a situation which, the more he thought of it, the more he found it to be both peculiar and difficult.

In the first place he was undoubtedly King—King Hinterland the Third—and he had every right to live in several Palaces, to see his side-face pictured on all the coins of the realm, and to revel in the enjoyment of untold wealth. He was also, like all sailors of middle age, a very domestic man. During his long absence on the desert island he had never ceased to think of his wife and his little girl, and many a time he had in imagination enjoyed his meeting with them and his quiet but meritorious life in their society after all the labours and anxieties and harassing solitudes of his adventurous career should be over and done with. He was fondly devoted to his little girl, though he hadn't seen her for ten years, and he had dreamed away many hours, in the society of the penguins and tortoises, in constructing a brilliant future for her after he should have come back and given himself up, as he intended, to her education and advancement. Often he had said to himself, "Whatever she wants she shall have: she shall never be disappointed—least of all by her father"—and now suddenly he found himself in a position of unnatural rivalry with her. If he declared himself and eventually proved his title, as he knew he could, he would drag her down from the position of Queen, and disappoint not only her but all the people of Hinterland, who, as he judged from the talk he had heard, were looking forward to her reign with the liveliest satisfaction. On the other hand, if he failed to claim his rights he was cut off from ever from the society of his wife and daughter, and from all that domesticity, the dream of which had supported him for years. 'Tis existence in a hut constructed by himself, without even a parrot to cheer his somewhat protracted leisure. He
A DOUBTFUL DEVOTEE.

Mr. Punch, Hellenic Sage (to Cambridge). "COME ALONG, MY DEAR. MUSTN'T LET YOUR SISTER OUTDO YOU IN LOYALTY TO THE OLD FAITH."

[Oxford has decided to retain Greek as a compulsory subject. Cambridge is still considering the question.]
could not reveal himself privately, either to SYLVIA or to her mother. SYLVIA had an unspoilt nature, and the Princess HILDEBRAND, her mother, was so much the soul of honour that she had consistently refused to deceive a single customs officer on the rare occasions when she had travelled abroad. Either of them would give him away at once, and insist on his assumption of the regal dignities. Besides, he was a very patriotic man, and he felt honestly doubtful whether he was really qualified to succeed in the business of kingship, for which he confessed he had had a most inadequate preparation. On the whole you will see that he was, perhaps, in as difficult a situation as any King was ever placed in—and all because, as I ought perhaps to have mentioned before, his ship had been delayed by fog for twenty-four hours. How these difficulties were got over you shall learn later. In the meantime we will leave the unfortunate Prince HILDEBRAND pondering over them, and thinking sadly of his vanishing chances of ever meeting his wife and daughter again on a proper footing of authorised recognition.

We can now skip a period of three weeks—thus bringing ourselves to a day in the beginning of December—and return to SYLVIA, who had by this time ceased to be alarmed when she woke up in a gigantic canopied bed with gilded posts, and a satin coverlet embroidered in gold with the royal arms and the Queen's initial S. in light blue. The faithful SARAH had, by an exercise of power which had at first struck some sticklers as savouring too much of despotism, been appointed Lady of the Bedchamber. All murmurs, however, had been stilled when it was known that the Duchess who had hitherto filled the office by prescriptive right had been promoted to the Ladyship-in-Chief of the Bedchamber, an honorary rank designed after the model of the Colonels-in-Chief which existed in the Royal Army. The Prime Minister, the Chamberlain—in fact, all the great officers of State—had been maintained in their places, and everything in Hinterland was going on as smoothly and pleasantly as though SYLVIA had been Queen for years. Some remark had been occasioned, no doubt, by the Queen's tendency to romp with the First Lord of the Admiralty, a gallant old sea-dog who had a large family of his own, and thought it the most natural thing in the world to play ball for a few minutes with the Queen. It had also been noticed that the Queen sometimes put the most discomposing questions to the members of her Council, and the Lord Privy Seal had not yet recovered from the shock of being asked to nurse a fluffy black kitten while the Queen added her signature to a packet of State documents.

On this day, to which, as I said, we have skipped, the Queen was in the Audience Chamber awaiting an official visit from the Poet Laureate, who was coming to lay his homage at her feet. She had never spoken to a real poet before, and was looking forward with great interest to the interview. I must reserve it for another chapter.
LIFE'S LITTLE DIFFICULTIES.
VI.—"White Pinings."

I.
Miss Vesta Swan to the Thalia and Erato Press, Ltd.

Dear Sirs,—I am sending you by registered post the MS. of a volume of poems, entitled White Pinings, in the hope that you will like them sufficiently to undertake their publication. The poems are entirely original, and have never before (with one exception) been printed. It was once my intention to print them from time to time in the better class weekly papers, but after a while that idea was abandoned. The exception is the rondeau called "Coral Toes," which appeared in the Baby's Friend, but there would be no difficulty about copyright, I am sure.

Yours truly, Vesta Swan.

II.
The Thalia and Erato Press to Miss Vesta Swan.

Dear Madam,—Our Reader reports that he has read White Pinings with much interest, and that in his opinion the book is in every way worthy of publication. Poetry is, however, as you perhaps are not unaware, not read as it used to be. This apathy is the result, some think, of the interest in the war, but according to others is due to the fashion of Bridge. Be it as it may, no great sale can be expected for such a book, and our Reader therefore suggests that you should combine with us in this enterprise. Of course if the book is successful your outlay would come back to you multiplied many times. We calculate that a first edition of White Pinings would cost £100, and we suggest that each of us contributes £50.

Awaiting your reply, we are, Dear Madam,
Yours faithfully,
The Thalia and Erato Press.

III.
Miss Vesta Swan to the Thalia and Erato Press.

Dear Sirs,—I am glad to know that your Reader thinks so highly of my book. Would it be indiscreet to ask his name?—there are two or three points concerning the poems which I should like to put to him.

I am aware that the ordinary run of poetry is not profitable, but there are shining examples of success. I have just been reading the Life of the late Lord Trevis, who seems to have been quite wealthy, although he wrote comparatively little; and I gather that the Brownings also were well-to-do. One of my friends considers my style not unlike a blend of both Rossetti and E. B., although (being a woman) naturally more like the latter. I understand also that both Mr. Swinburne and Sir Lewis Morris are quite comfortably off. So that there are exceptions.

I should say also that W. P. is not, as you think, my first book. I published in 1896, through a firm at Winchester, a little collection called Heart Beats, a copy of which was sent to her late Majesty Queen Victoria.

None the less, as I believe in my work and wish others to have the opportunity of being cheered by it, I will pay the £50. Please put the book in hand at once, as I want it to come out with the April bud.

Yours truly, Vesta Swan.

IV.
The Thalia and Erato Press to Miss Vesta Swan.

(Extract.)

We enclose a contract form, which please sign and return to us with cheque. Any letter intended for our Reader will be at once forwarded to him.

Miss Vesta Swan to the Reader of her MS.

Dear Sir,—I should very much like to have your opinion of the "Lines written at midnight after hearing Miss Clara Butt sing 'The Lost Chord.'" Do you think the faulty grammar in line 4 of stanza 2—"loud," the adjective, for "loudly," the adverb—is permissible? I have already spent some time in polishing this poem, but I have so high an opinion of your judgment that I am ready to begin again if you say I should. And do you think the title should be merely White Pinings or that it should have the sub-heading—"Sighs of a Priestess of Modernity?" One of my friends, a young journalist, favours the latter very warmly.

I might add that I have a very kind letter from the secretary of Sir Thomas Lethrav, who read the poems in MS., praising them in no measured terms. Do you think it would do the book good if we were to print this letter in facsimile at the beginning? I am,

Yours truly, Vesta Swan.

[Several letters omitted.]

XVI.
Miss Vesta Swan to the Thalia and Erato Press.

(Telegram.)

Stop printing. Serious misprint page 41. "Heave on coal" should be "Heaven our goal."

XVII.
The Thalia and Erato Press to Miss Vesta Swan.

(Telegram.)

Too late. Error unimportant.

[Several letters omitted.]

XXIII.
Miss Vesta Swan to the Thalia and Erato Press.

(Extract.)

... And will you please be sure to send a copy with the author's compliments to Mr. Andrew Lang, as I hear he is so much interested in new poets?

[From a vast correspondence the following six letters have been selected.]

XXXI.
Miss Vesta Swan to the Thalia and Erato Press. (Extract.)

... My friends tell me that they have great difficulty in buying White Pinings. A letter this morning says that there is not a book-shop in Birmingham that has heard of it.

XXXIV.
Miss Vesta Swan to the Thalia and Erato Press.

(Extract.)

... Several persons have told me lately that they have looked in vain in the literary papers, ever since White Pinings was published, for any advertisement of it, and they have found none. Many of the books of the day are, I notice, advertised very freely, with, I have no doubt, good results—Mr. Hall Caine's last novel, for example. Curiously enough, one of my poems ("An Evening Reverie," page 76), contains very much the same moral as his book. Could you not intimate that fact to the public in some way? Please send me twelve more copies.

Yours truly, Vesta Swan.

XLIV. Miss Vesta Swan to the Thalia and Erato Press.

Dear Sirs,—In the report in the papers this morning of the Bishop of London's address on the reconciliation of the Letter and the Spirit, there is a most curious anticipation of a statement of mine in the poem, "Let us ponder awhile," on page 132 of White Pinings. I think that the enclosed paragraph mentioning the coincidence might be sent to the Athenaeum. I am told that all the other papers would then copy it.

Yours truly, Vesta Swan.

XLV. Miss Vesta Swan to the Thalia and Erato Press.

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I should say also that W. P. is not, as you think, my first book. I published in 1896, through a firm at Winchester, a little collection called Heart Beats, a copy of which was sent to her late Majesty Queen Victoria.

None the less, as I believe in my work and wish others to have the opportunity of being cheered by it, I will pay the £50. Please put the book in hand at once, as I want it to come out with the April buds.

Yours truly, Vesta Swan.
A MATTER OF DIFFICULTY.

Humane but short-sighted Old Lady. “You cruel boys! I should like to treat you just exactly as you’ve treated that poor dog!”

LXVIII.

Miss Vesta Swan to the Thalia and Erato Press.

I am told that a few years ago a volume of poems was advertised by sandwichmen in the London streets. Could not White Pinings be made known in this way?

The Thalia and Erato Press to Miss Vesta Swan.

Dear Madam,—We have much pleasure in enclosing the first review of your poems that has reached us. Doubtless now that a start has been made many more will follow.

Yours faithfully,

The Thalia and Erato Press.

From the Scots Reader.

One of the most amusing misprints that we can recollect occurs in White Pinings (Thalia and Erato Press), by Vesta Swan, which otherwise is unimportant. The poetess undoubtedly wrote:

"Watch the progress of the soul
Struggling aye to heaven our goal;
but the waggish printer has made her say:

Struggling aye to leave on coal.

A TUCK-IN AT CHRISTMAS.

Who is “Father Tuck”? Of Friar Tuck everybody knows something, even if it be only the name. But “Father Tuck”? Well, he is so intimately associated with Christmastide that, like the other annually paternal old gentleman, Father Christmas himself, he comes only once a year, at the season of the three P’s: Pies, Puddings and Presents.

And this Father Tuck is by no means a Friar of Orders Grey, but a Family Father styling himself Tuck and Sons, of Orders punctually attended to. Like Mrs. Micawber, ever true to her senior partner, the sons of Tuck père will never desert their parent, but join him annually in putting before the public, for whom they cater, charming New Year Cards, Christmas Post Cards, children’s toy books, and a clever novelty styled “The Rag Time” Calendar, from which name it must not be inferred that it contains any hints as to the rough and ready pastime of “ragging.” The entire collection the Raphael-Tuckites include under one title, “L’Entente Cordiale,” at which Cordial the public will probably be ready and willing to take a good pull. The Tuckites say in effect, “Forward us a draught and we’ll send you an Entente Cordiale.”

More Infant Preciosity.—“Child to adopt married couple; premium.”

Advt. in the Scotsman.
CHARIVARIA.

The St. Petersburg correspondent of the Matin reports that, in well-informed circles, it is predicted that the War will be finished about July. Even the Japanese themselves have not dared to be so optimistic as this.

We consider that the Admiralty has been unjustly blamed in the matter of the Caroline. We agree with the Admiralty:—How was it possible to ascertain her destination until she got there?

The War Office having stated that a Crimean veteran who served for twenty-one years is ineligible for the special campaign pension, as he was never wounded, it is anticipated that a new feature in our future battles will be provided by a number of the more thoughtful of our fighting men requesting the enemy to oblige them with a few slight cuts.

By a decision of the Attorney-General of the United States, all guessing contests have been placed in the category of lotteries and made illegal. If every American who says "I guess" is convicted on his own admission, there should be some overcrowding in the prisons.

Mystery still surrounds the identity of the assailants of Colonel Stockall, and some surprise is being expressed that the special artists, whose drawings of the outrage in our illustrated papers prove them to have been present, have volunteered no information.

Lord Rosebery has been calling Mr. Baldwin "The Man in the punt." Curiously enough, Mr. Baldwin's latest adherent might be described as an out-rigger.

The duel between the two orators MM. Jaques and Discrétè was proved to be a more humane affair than some had feared, the weapons being pistols and not speeches.

In laying the foundation stone of a Free Library, Lady Jersey said she hoped that novels would not be the first consideration of those who chose the books, "for the best of these could be bought for sixpence." The author of The Prodigal Son is said to have expressed some surprise at Lady Jersey's ignorance of the price of that volume.

Messrs. Macmillan have just published "Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones: by G. B.-J.," and Literary London is striving to guess what name is hidden behind the initials "B.-J."

"It is difficult to understand," said the Graphic the other day, "why, when everything else has become cheaper, the cost of amusement has doubled." But what about the reduction in the price of the Daily News?

A discussion is proceeding in the columns of a contemporary as to which is the oldest newspaper. Some of the correspondents seem to be confusing this question with another, namely, which paper publishes the oldest news.

The problem of what to do with the Unemployed continues to engage the attention of public bodies. The National Liberal Club has decided to give dinners to Sir Hector Campbell-Bannerman, Earl Spencer, Lord Rosebery, Mr. Asquith and Mr. John Morley.

OBSEQUES OF MR. PINERO'S DOLL.—Chief mourner, A Wife without a Smile, who will walk alone, attended by the Orchestra of Wyndham's Theatre playing "The Funeral March of a Marionette," as they proceed along the Via Del-corso to the Waste-phalure Cemetery. The Shaksperean epitaph, taken from 2 Hen. IV. ii., on the tomb will be, "Peace, good Doll! Farewell, Doll!"

The railways in America caused 12,155 deaths last year. No wonder railway directors laugh at the idea that motor-cars can ever be serious competitors of theirs.

Mrs. Brown-Potter has produced a new version of Pagliacci. Is this perhaps, the cheap opera of which we have heard so much lately?

The Foreign Office, it is stated, has demanded of the Swiss Government the dismissal of the station-master at Lugano, for an assault on an officer of the British High Court. If we may believe the report (quoted in these pages) of the severe weather recently experienced in Switzerland by some American warships, we may trust to our Navy to support the penultimate of the Foreign Office by a demonstration in these accessible parts.

Mrs. Ophelia Kent-White, leader of the Holy Cakewalk Dancers at Camberwell, declares that the English people eat too much. It remains to be seen, however, whether they will be able to swallow Mrs. Kent-White's Cakewalk Doctrines.

After forty years of faithful service in the employ of the Zoological Gardens as a letter-box, the rhinoceros James passed away last week. Little boys will hear with envy that, even after death, he is to be stuffed.
THE BUSINESS METHODS OF MR. BULL.

"Always glad to see you, of course!" said Mr. John Bull, as Mr. Punch entered his office. "Still, afraid I can only spare you a very few minutes. Such a lot of things to think about just now!"

"It must be an anxious time for you," said Mr. Punch sympathetically, "as long as this war in the Far East goes on."

"Oh, I don't worry myself about that," replied Mr. Bull. "We've managed to keep out of it so far, and I fancy we're not very likely to be dragged into it now."

"And yet, only a few weeks ago," said Mr. Punch, "I seem to remember you talking about an 'intolerable affront,' and an 'ultimatum to Russia,' and so forth."

"Did I say all that? I suppose I was quoting the leading articles in my favourite paper," said Mr. Bull. "I didn't know all the facts in the case then. Of course, as soon as I found out that the Baltic Fleet thought they were being attacked by torpedo-boats, I calmed down. I'd almost forgotten the incident. You see, there are so many other matters requiring my attention just now—this Fiscal Discussion, and Redistribution, and the Education Question, and the Unemployed—and I don't know what else."

"But it's just possible, isn't it, that an Anglo-Russian crisis may occur again?" asked Mr. Punch. "What should you do, for instance, if Russia were to try to force the passage of the Dardanelles, as her official journals are announcing she means to do?"

"I should tell her I wasn't going to stand anything of the kind," said Mr. Bull, with his usual determination. "That would be quite enough, Sir. Russia would back out. Mere bluff, you know!"

"So you said about the late Mr. Kruger, and so, oddly enough, Russia believed of Japan," replied Mr. Punch. "Mayn't you be mistaken in thinking that Russia would be so very reluctant to try a change of enemy?"

"Let her!" said Mr. Bull, defiantly. "What chance would a Navy like hers have against ours, I should like to know!?"

"The Navy's all right," agreed Mr. Punch. "Only I don't quite see what good it can be in defending your Indian frontier."

"Our Indian Army will look after that, Sir. I've every confidence in Lord Kitchener." "So have I," said Mr. Punch. "But, as I needn't tell you, battles are won by artillery nowadays."

"And what's wrong with ours?"

"Ah, I was caught napping there," admitted Mr. Bull; "but do you know what I said afterwards? I said: 'Never again—never again!' Ah, and I meant it, too, Sir!"

"I daresay you did," said Mr. Punch, "though, as a matter of fact, you've still got the same obsolete old guns you had then, and even third-rate Powers have a more efficient and up-to-date artillery than yours. Which doesn't seem altogether satisfactory."

"Now that just shows how you writing fellows exaggerate things!" said Mr. Bull, with some irritability. "Trying to upset me with your confounded Alarmist scares! I've made inquiries—and what do you think I've found? There's nothing in it! Our new 18-pounder and 13-pounder guns are..."

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING.

Wife (to struggling husband, half-way up stairs). "Make haste, Archie. Don't dawdle. We shall be frightfully late!"}

"Ever seen our Royal Horse Artillery at the Military Tournament? You have, eh? Well, do you suppose any other country in the world can show smarter, better driven teams than those, Sir?"

"Nothing wrong with the teams or the drivers—it's the guns behind 'em," said Mr. Punch.

Mr. Bull pished impatiently. "I've heard all that till I'm sick of the subject!" he said. "One or two of the evening papers have been dinning it into my ears for ever so long. And you had a picture about it only a little while ago. Very amusing and all that—but far-fetched. It isn't as if there was anything new in it either. It's a very old story!"

"It is," said Mr. Punch; "as old as the Boer War."

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The Taking Ways of Genius.

"I shall be delighted to play one of my latest nocturnes, dear Miss Ethelberta. But may I beg an especial favour—that you will reserve your judgment? I am so sensitive, and am always overwhelmed by great praise."

admitted to be the very best weapons yet invented! Now what do you say?"

"I believe that is so," said Mr. Punch. "But have you got 'em yet?"

"Well—as good as got 'em. That is, I'm promised twenty batteries for India some time next year."

"And you'll want about two hundred and fifty batteries for the Indian and Home Armies together, won't you? When do you expect to get them?"

"How do I know!" said Mr. Bull, getting distinctly peevish. "Some day or other—all in good time. There's no particular hurry that I can see!"

"You might, if you should happen to be at war with Russia and perhaps another great Power, and were handicapped with your present antiquated weapon, which has to be loaded in five movements instead of one, and only fires two rounds a minute to their twelve."

"I don't pretend to understand all these technical matters myself," said Mr. Bull, "I've no time. I pay some clever fellows big salaries to look after such things. What more can I do?"

"You could see they did it. Why, you might have been provided with the whole of the fifteen hundred new guns by this time, if you had only insisted on it."

"But—but, bless my soul!" John Bull almost screamed, "do you know what that would have cost me, Sir? Over five million pounds! Do you want me to ruin myself?"

"Only two years ago you cheerfully gave up eight million a year to provide about two hundred thousand for a few sugar-planters and refiners," said Mr. Punch, "and you don't seem to have missed it."

"That was a very different matter, Sir," said Mr. Bull with dignity. "I was protecting a British industry which was in danger of decaying. I can't afford to increase my expenses at present. I always have left my preparations to the last moment—I suppose I always shall— the system hasn't answered so very badly up to now. I don't see why I should bother my head about it if my professional advisers tell me I needn't."

"Well," said Mr. Punch, preparing to go, "I suppose it's no use saying any more just now. So we can only hope that the new guns will come before the next crisis!"

For he saw it was quite useless. Nothing would ever change sturdy stout-hearted, stout-headed old John Bull. He would always go on in the same good old ways—cherishing a secret belief that keeping up his insurance policy was his one unjustifiable piece of extravagance, despising warnings and lessons till the danger was upon him, and forgetting all about them when it was past, and cheerily trusting that his proverbial good luck would enable him to pull through everything.

As no doubt he always will—so long as the luck doesn't change. F.A.

The Standard, describing the condition of the Channel on the date of the departure of the Queen of Portugal, stated that "the sea was slightly sloppy." This characteristic moisture of the Channel has always been a difficulty, even with uncrowned heads.

No Half Measures.

"Wanted, by a respectable Person, a good all-round Wash."—Advt. in the Manchester Guardian.
THE RETURN OF THE SPECIALIST.

Dr. Ch-me-bl-s. "AND HOW IS OUR POOR SUFFERER? DEBILITY NICELY MAINTAINED?"
Dr. Ch-pl-n. "ON THE CONTRARY, I'M AFRAID YOU'LL FIND HIM IN A DEPLORABLY ROBUST CONDITION."

(The November Trade Returns show large increases both in imports and exports.)
MR. BALFOUR'S GARDEN.
(With acknowledgments to the "Gardener's Chronicle").

It is not generally known that, notwithstanding his strenuous life as a statesman and philosopher, the Right Hon. Arthur J. Balfour has devoted much time and interest to the pursuit of gardening at his beautiful country seat of Whittingehame. Owing to the disastrous condition of the glass trade it is true that the greenhouses have fallen somewhat into disrepair, and the failure of the beet-crop has shorn the kitchen garden of one of its most picturesque features. Still, with all reservations, the gardens and pleasure-grounds of Whittingehame compare favourably with those of most of the stately homes of England, besides possessing certain peculiar and attractive characteristics reflecting the idiosyncrasies of their distinguished owner.

The undulating character of the grounds, approaching at times to the character of a switchback railway, is exceedingly engaging, and has given the landscape gardener free scope for the employment of all manner of effective devices. The additions that have recently been made of Bamboos (Bambocellus subtilis) and other rare plants have lent a peculiarly imposing character to the formal garden, the chief feature in which is an elaborately planned Maze, surpassing the Cretan labyrinth in its mystifying ramifications. Indeed it is said that the Duke of Devonshire, during a visit to Whittingehame in the summer of 1903, completely lost his bearings in an abortive attempt to penetrate to the centre, and was found stretched in an exhausted and semi-comatose condition on a bed of poppies by a search party organised by Professor Hewins and Mr. Chaplin.

Starting from the house and proceeding to the west we are at once confronted by a charming Nursery of Monkey Puzzles, known as the Child's Garden, where Mr. Balfour is in the habit of spending many hours in Imperial cogitations. A winding walk leads thence, along the banks of a lake profusely stocked with rainbow-trout, to the miniature 9-hole links; Mr. Balfour, as is well known, being a most ardent devotee of the Royal and Ancient pastime. By a pretty conceit all the holes and most of the hazards have characteristic names, "Balfour's Maiden" recalling by a humorous touch an episode in the Premier's tenure of the Chief Secretaryship of Ireland, while Morant's Point gracefully immortalizes the services of the Secretary to the Education Department during the passage through the House of a much discussed measure.

But undoubtedly the most attractive feature of the grounds is the beautiful Colonial Garden which adjoins the links, and was laid out only about two years ago. There are four entrances to this garden, each covered with an arch overgrown with Jasminium (Jasminum Collingii), and in the centre there is a sundial surrounded with low-growing evergreen shrubs such as Cactaceae elongatum, Pensa senilis, and a remarkably fine Cactus presented by Dr. Rutherford Harris.

The garden, which is of extensive size, has in one corner a three-acre paddock railed off where a charming little Kerry cow of the Dexter breed may be seen disporting herself. Here, too, is a delightful little dairy with a thatched roof overgrown with straight-cut Virginia creeper and Wisteria Tziafuka. Another attractive feature in the Colonial garden is the Hortus inclusus, an elegant little compound decorated with dwarf pagodas, Joss-houses, and large beds containing massed Cape Gooseberries, with steps leading down to an underground rockery wreathed with the pallid tendrils of the Cauda porcina.

We must conclude our necessarily imperfect sketch of this Lowland Paradise with a detailed description of a fine and very distinguished species which has recently been acclimatised at Whittingehame—the Arthurium Pendulifolium. The blade, which is of willowy appearance, is about six feet one inch long, varying from eight to sixteen inches broad, elongate oblong lanceolate, and narrows to a drooping apex furnished with slight greyish capillary appendages on the upper labrum, and drab spathes on both pedicels.

BENE FACTUM.—Last week Mr. Ainslie Bean exhibited some of his water-colour drawings to the Queen at Sandringham, who purchased one of them. This is Royal encouragement to English art, as what was to Her Majesty's taste was not a French Bean.

From the Egyptian Gazette:—
Young German seeks lodgings of lady very severe. Under "Birch," Ponte Restante, Cairo.
"ON, MARYANN, WY MARYATANO!"

"CREAT CORPORATIONS ARE NECESSARY, AND ONLY MEN OF GREAT AND SINGULAR MENTAL POWER CAN MANAGE SUCH CORPORATIONS SUCCESSFULLY." — PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S MESSAGE

"MAY THEY LIVE LONG AND BROSBER!"

Rip Van Winkle.

"IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT MR. PUNCH IS ABLE TO STATE, ON THE BEST AUTHORITY, THAT, FOR THE REPORT, TO WHICH THE PICTURE BY "E. T. R." IN PUNCH, NOV. 30, REFERRED, THERE WAS NO FOUNDATION IN FACT. ON THE SAME UNIMPEACHABLE AUTHORITY MR. PUNCH IS ABLE TO INFORM HIS READERS THAT "THE BERLIN POLICE, THOUGH THEY HAD THEIR ATTENTION DRAWN—HERE WOULD HAVE BEEN ANOTHER CHANCE FOR OUR ARTIST—" TO THE CARICATURE BY A PRIVATE PERSON—EVIDENTLY A MISCHIEVOUS BUSY-BODY—"DID NOT TAKE EXCEPTION TO IT, NOR DID THEY PREVENT THE SALE OF THAT PARTICULAR NUMBER." AND, ADDS THE SAME AUTHORITY, "AS A MATTER OF FACT, PUNCH HAS NOT A SINGLE TIME BEEN CONFISCATED IN PRUSSIA SINCE 1882."

THIS IS GOOD HEARING. SO IN A LARGE GLASS OF GENEROUS HOCH! HOCH! MR. PUNCH DRINKS TO OUR FRIENDLY RELATIONS, OR COUSINS GERMAN. PROST!

"THE NEW GAME OF DUMB-THUMBO."—LADIES AND GENTLEMEN PRESS THEIR THUMBS ON AN INKED BLOTTING-PAD AND THEN ON A WHITE PAGE ON WHICH THEY WILL LEAVE A GOOD OR BAD IMPRESSION OF CHARACTER. SMALL BOYS DO IT WITHOUT ASSISTANCE FROM THE PAD. THE GAME IS TO IDENTIFY THE OWNER BY THE THUMB. RATHER FOOLISH, BUT, AS A YOUNG LISPERS OBSERVED, "I THUMB-THING TO DO."

FROM THE HEALTH RULES ISSUED BY THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT, OLD CALABAR, SOUTH NIGERIA, WE EXTRACT THE FOLLOWING:—

"WEAR A THIN WARM MERINO BODY VEST DAY AND NIGHT. IF IT IRRITATES THE SKIN WEAR IT OUTSIDE THE VEST."

"THIS INSTRUCTION AS TO SHIFTING THE EPIDERMIS SEEMS TO POINT TO GREATER FACILITIES FOR THE WEST AFRICAN THAN THOSE ENJOYED BY THE ETHIOPIAN."
L'ART NOUVEAU.

Damp but undaunted Correspondent of a Sporting Paper (to elderly party, who has also been "put down"). "COULD YOU KEEP STILL BUT ONE MOMENT, SIR, WHILE I MAKE MY SKETCH?"
SCIENCE NOTES.
By Professor Job Lott.

Our Dear Nerves!

Accross to the Lady's Pictorial, we are driving ourselves and our friends mad by the colour of our dining-room wall-paper, which is "simply ragging our own nerves" and those of any guests we may entertain within our walls. This accounts for a remarkable increase of lunacy of late, for the decay of domesticity, the spread of cheap popular restaurants, the Camberwell Dancing Craze, and goodness knows what not. The offending colour appears to be red. What our forefathers thought to be a nice, homely, warming, and generally Christmas-like hue turns out to be merely an irritant to their more susceptible descendants, if not an invitation to battle, murder, and sudden death. If twentieth century nerves are going to be thus terribly harassed, every other diner out will be "seeing red" in the French sense, or running his head up against a brick wall.

There will be verdicts of "Suicide during a Temporary Attack of Wall-paper," and scare-heads about the "Dastardly Conduct of a Dado." From the rags of which paper is supposed to be made it is an easy transition to the ragging feared by our contemporary Dado in fact, a modern Rag's Progress. It comes to this, that we ought to be wrapped up in cotton-wool and not allowed out at all. There are red pillar-boxes at street corners, robin redbreasts in the parks, red-coated Tommies at large, and many other "red rags" to the hypersensitive eye.

The Pulseless Pippin.

In future "there ain't going to be no core to the apple," as the little boy said to a rival claimant. A coreless and seedless apple has been invented (so we are told in the December Nineteenth Century) as the produce of a blossomless and grubless tree, of which there are to be two-and-a-half million specimens in 1906. This will knock the stuffing out of the "seedy," or ordinary variety. It is called "the world's greatest discovery in horticulture," but may be regarded as the pioneer of more glorious things to come. In the toothless future we hope to see no-stone plums, sans-wasp gooseberries, mulberries without stomach-ache, onions minus the scent, unslugged strawberries, and an ex-maggotted and disdiburbed orchard in general.

LOST!

[Mr. Punch imagines that he owes the receipt of the following letter to his recent sympathetic reference to the alleged Society craze for taking pet animals (such as, according to another observer, "cockatoos, mice, snakes, and lizards") to places of entertainment. However that may be, he is always pleased to come to the aid of beauty in distress, and if any of his readers can earn the larger of the two rewards he will be glad on all accounts.]

301, Eden Gardens.

DEAREST MR. PUNCH,—I am inconsolably up the music-stand he saw it and collapsed on the heartstrings, shrieking that he would never touch another drop.

We were going to A Wife without a Smile that night, so I thought I would take Squeezums to cheer it up, as the poor thing had been disappointed of its music. There was a cat of a woman sitting next me with a cockatoo and two white mice in her lap, and she wanted to send for the Manager when I went in, but I said I would let Squeezums loose if she stirred a foot. He was very happy and quiet, though I felt him thrill once when the cockatoo happened to screech; but whilst we were all laughing at that doll, something made me look round, and there was the cockatoo sitting back on its tail with a glassy eye like a stuffed canary, and Squeezums wagging his head in front of it. I made a grab at his neck, but he struck before I could stop him, and the next second the disgust- ing bird was half way down my poor pet's throat.

The woman gave a scream and let the white mice fall at my feet, and in springing upon my chair I dropped Squeezums, who glided off under the seats.

There was so much laughing going on that few people noticed, and I didn't make a fuss, but I tried him as well as I could through an old lady fainting three rows in front, and a Dean at the side of the box. The woman gave a gasp, and let the white mice fall at my feet, and in springing upon my chair I dropped Squeezums, who glided off under the seats.

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TALKING SHOP.

[In the Chicago public schools the girls are being instructed in the art of shopping. We may shortly expect to see similar courses of instruction introduced in this country.]

Suspecting the character of their visit, I ventured to follow them into the shop. The school-girl advanced to the counter and looked timorously into the assistant's face. Then she hesitated. But her companion was impatient.

"Come, come, begin," she said.

The school-girl looked round, caught my expression of sympathy, and—"I—I would like some blue ribbon, please," she said.

"Wrong!" interrupted the other, who was obviously the teacher. "You mustn't say 'please' to a person of this kind? Now watch me." The school-girl, who had shrunk into herself with fear, ventured to look up again while the teacher turned to the assistant.

"I want some narrow blue ribbon!" There was no mistaking the command in the voice.

"Yes, madam," said the patient young man, and he turned to reach down a box while the teacher continued her instructions.

"Don't let me hear you say 'please' again. And now mind you make him understand that you are never to take it short of twice before making a selection; and then, if you like best what you saw first, you can select it when you see it for the second time. But you must thoroughly understand that you are never to take it at once, however much you like it."

The child nodded in a bewildered way. "Because I might find something better, do you mean, Miss Iceland?"

"No, that is not the reason. Because—because—you'll understand when you're a woman. I—I can't quite explain. Proceed with the lesson!

"Other boxes were now lying on the counter, and the time began to slip by. The young man, the perspiration running down his forehead, had already had to requisition the step-ladder to reach distant heights. But uncomplainingly he went on answering inquiries in the same even tone;

"No, certainly not. You have not yet performed what is in some respects the most important duty of all. You haven't yet reported the assistant for inattention and incivility. Go! there is the shop walker!"

A GREAT RELIEF.

The Squire was decidedly unwell. He was compelled to stay indoors. The Doctor arrived, and was shown into the Squire's sanctum.

"Soon put you all right," said the Doctor cheerily.

"Hope so," returned the Squire, "but I shan't be well till I've got something off my mind."

"May I inquire what is the trouble?" asked the medical man sympathetically.

"You may," replied the Squire, "and I will tell you." For a second he relapsed into moodiness. Then, arousing himself, he said, "May I ask you a question?"

"Certainly," said the Doctor laconically. "Put it."

Whereupon the Squire, suddenly brightening up a little, commenced, "You have come here to put me all right?" The Doctor bowed assent.

"Then," continued the Squire, "why are you like my dog Ponto that always accompanies me out shooting?"

The Doctor considered. Not being prepared with a reply, he asked, somewhat timidly, "Is this a conundrum?"

"Right first time," quoted the Squire, evidently already on the high road to recovery. "And—do you give it up?"

"I do," was the Doctor's very decided answer.

"Then I will tell you, my boy," cried the Squire cheerily, becoming quite his own old hearty self again, "You are like my old dog Ponto when out shooting with me because you've 'come to heal.' See?"

And in another minute the Doctor had left the house, driving quickly in the direction of the New County Lunatic Asylum, where there was a colleague of his whom he considered it wise to consult. And the Squire, gun in hand, closely followed by Ponto, went out, feeling as fit as ever he had been in the whole course of his healthy life.
OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

The mills of Lady Rivel's fancy and imagination grind slowly, but they grind with exceeding effect. It is some four years since The Story of Aline revealed to my Baronite a new novelist of fine mark. Since then we have had nothing from her pen. Now comes A Daughter of Joel (Longmans), a work worth pondering over by the author, worth waiting for by the public. It is not what would be called a cheery, genial sort of story. It is, rather, one of those strong, almost morbid, things which lovely woman, stooping to literature, occasionally — as in the case of Charlotte Brontë and Jane Eyre, of Lucas Malet and Sir Richard Calmady — delights to produce. The plot is novel, except wherein it may have been suggested, as the title indicates, by the story of Sisera. It is worked out in the simple, direct fashion which is the highest art. A contributory episode to the story is the sin of a couple who awesomely do not love each other, the woman going astray pour s'amuser, the man wrecking his own wife's happiness out of pity for the assumed unhappiness of another woman. This is a pretty complex problem, and it is high tribute to Lady Rivel's power and skill that, almost, she makes it probable. Some of the characters are a little sketchy. But through the crowd, a real living being, strides the strange heroine, who for love of her brother murders her grandfather, and for love of her husband takes to her arms his paramour, and endeavours to win her back to life.

The Baron's Critical and Ready Rhymester writes as follows:—"If any body desires a tale which tells him how a boat to sail; to live upon a desert island (although in reach of home the while); to build a hut; to make a gun; to have the finest out-door fun; —why Bevis (Duckworth) is the book on which that boy at once should look —by Richard Jefferies long since written to give delight to Younger Britain."

The Darrow Enigma is a good sensational detective story by Melvin L. Severy (Grant Richards), who occasionally writes queer English, as, for instance, "I felt of his heart; he was dead." Perhaps this slip may be attributable to the printer, as may another, namely, "Hallo! that sounds like the doctor's rig!" —where "rig" is evidently an error for "ring." However, the style, if not polished, is in the main good for directly interesting. This Enigma would have been decidedly better for simplification, as it really consists of two enigmas, and the second is started before the first has been explained. Admiring admirers of Sherlock-Holmesian methods will soon find themselves absorbed in the mystery.

Thackeray's prohibition of the writing of his biography is well known. So also are the chapters with which his daughter, Mrs. Ritchie, prefaces successive volumes of the fine edition of her father's work published two years ago by the familiar house in Waterloo Place. Smith, Elder issue fresh contribution to knowledge of the life and personality of the novelist in two portly volumes entitled Thackeray in the United States. It is a stupendous work, comprehending not far short of 800 pages. The chief novelties presented by these books has come to hand from Messrs. W. and R. Chambers. First, I note (he says) three books by L. T. Meade:—Mrs. Pitchard's School, A Modern Tambour, and Petronella. All three are good wholesome reading for girls. The following books,—Viva Christina, by Edith E. Cowper, Glyn Severn's School Days, by George Manville Fenn, Brought to Heel, by Kent Carre, and Hazard and Heroism, by G. A. Henty and others, my Assistant Reader warmly recommends to boys.

The Baron, kindly disposed towards nonsense at Christmas-time, observes that, in Mr. Louis Wain's idea, Santa Claus is a kind of patron saint of cats! He has got a scratch company (feline) together, and represents them, in his Claws and Paws, as engaged in all sorts of brightly coloured transactions. Then he gives us paws after the tales of cats. But this comic cat and dog business must surely be on the Wain.

Fairy Tales from Hans Andersen, humorously illustrated in colour by J. Stuart Hardy (Ernest Nister), is hereby heartily recommended by the Baron as a dainty little present to interest and amuse little people.

The Land of Bondage, by John Bloundelle Burton (F. V. White & Co.), is a delightful work that the Baron can strongly recommend to all who have not seen what is not a full of stirring incident, it is never over laid by superfluity of picturesque description, and it is alive with sensational effects and startling surprises, all admirably contrived. There may be a better story somewhere about, but up to the present moment it has not been the Baron's good fortune to come across it, and he is perfectly content, pro tem., with this.

NOTICE.—TO SOMEBODY.—Somebody has sent by post to Mr. Punch's Office a book entitled Boston Public Library (dedicated to the building), containing, amongst other patchy matter, extracts from the "Diary of Parliament" by Shirley Brooks, whose signature appears inside the cover. On the addressed wrapper is written, "Letter also." This letter has been unfortunately mislaid or destroyed, and as name and address of sender are not given, the book must remain at our office until further information be received and stamps sent for return.

FROM the business card of a Limehouse "Wireworker":—
"Manufacturer of Sieves. Nursery Guards, Fire Guards, fancy lower Baskets and all kinds of Plain and fancy work. All kinds of Repairs and Soldering."

This last word throws a lurid light on the expression, "Nursery Guards."