

FROM BLACK TO WHITE

A Very Strange Freak of Nature—

Curious Case at a Montreal Institution.

Can the leopard change his spots or the Ethiopian his skin? Nature loves the esoteric in all her processes. She is wider than the circumference of the Lick microscope. She is more minute than the microscope. She never burns to utter her secrets. The average man with a secret swells with importance. It oppresses him till the telling covers him with the cheap glory which is his first custodian. "Find me," nature says quietly. And that is her language to a Darwin or a Lyell, as it is to the Peter Simple who, pulling wild flowers in the woods, little dreams that if he knew their meaning he would know all the secret of the universe.

Nature evolves a rudimentary organ, and leaves it there for the puzzlement of the morphologist. Indifferent to criticism, she makes a long neck to accommodate the palate at the end of the neck which loves the high leaves of the tree.

Nature is always in earnest. She has a subtle sense of humor. Sometimes the humor is lambent; more often it is edged with a biting satire. But when the humor is merely playful, she makes the black man white. She is making Richard Symmonds white at her leisure. No hurry at all; the hands first, then the feet and legs, the breast, and, lastly, the face.

Symmonds is not surprised now. He is past that. But at first he was a frightened man. For Symmonds started out with being perfectly black—a color to which he had every natural right, his parents being full-blooded Africans.

But the white spots began to appear, and pushed the black skin away; and the white spread, and the black shrank back abashed. The white made traceries here and there, and broke up the black into islands and continents, until at last it overwhelmed the neck and chin, and lapped up (so to say), against the edge of the wide nostril. The nose was a prominence not easily conquered. It stands out as the strenuous sentinel of the upper face, guarding it from the dominance of the abnormal.

Symmonds thinks he will be a white man yet. He knows now that nature will not hurry about it. It took nature eight years to reach the nose. But he sees himself in ultimate vision a Caucasian. He is resigned to the metamorphosis.

"Doctaw," he says, "I done lost de pig-wha's 'is name—pigment out on de color, an' dat I am agwine to be all white."

Sixty years have whitened the hair of Richard Symmonds, but the kink is there still. It is thick, white and woolly, and it crowns a face which, white below and black above, made its owner a comfortable living till villainy entered in, when charity had to be appealed to.

Symmonds was born a slave away down in Louisville, Kentucky. When the war broke out he was eighteen.

"Oh, I member de war. I was er young fool den. Had good massa, but land sakes was silly den, and done run away. Jined General Sherman—you hear o' Sherman—an' tuck me fo' his servan'."

He blacked the boots of General Sherman, think of that; he rode, if not by his side, for five hundred mounted men came between them, at least behind him; he polished his sabre, and he saw the fighting for five years.

"Dunno names o' places, but saw de bullets fly all de time. See, dere is a woun' in my right hand."

He marched with Sherman to the sea; blacked his boots regularly, and he had many a word and smile from the great commander.

The slaves were freed, the war ended; Symmonds returned to his master's estate, content to be called slave again. The master was gone, the slaves had dispersed; where there had been prosperity, there was now desolation.

Symmonds married, became the father of three children; his wife died; the children grew up; then the circus man came along, and Symmonds became a public character.

He has been in New York, Chicago, Boston, and all the great centres, and the public flocked to see him. The integrity of human nature made him happy; he had every luxury that a black and white man could desire on \$25 a week. In an evil hour he came to Montreal, under the management of a wretch, who, finding the dimes rather hard to collect, left him on the street without a cent.

Symmonds was next seen on the street, wielding the shovel and pickaxe for the consideration of ninety cents a day. It was a painful descent. Familiarity soon took the edge off the phenomenon. The men who would have gazed upon him awestruck on the platform, called him the "Missing Link" with easy frankness, and exchanged salutations with him with the utmost nonchalance.

This is always the way. Compel the great to jostle with the ordinary, and there is no man to lift the hat of reverence. Let the abnormal be seen and felt at close quarters, and who is so verdant as to admit the miraculous?

The frost came and made iron of the soft streets, and Symmonds was glad to wend his way to the House of Refuge, where he may be seen, in the midst of a large company, making, in those bundles of kindling wood which the housekeeper buys from the grocer at the rate of one cent a bundle.

"Arrah, sor, don't believe him," says Symmond's right hand neighbor, "Shure it's schamin' he is. He's painted that's what's the matter wid him."

Symmonds turned a look of silent rebuke from those chocolate eyes, upon the man with the full flavored accent.

"Oh, no," says Mr. McMillen, the superintendent, "there is no deception here. Show us your arm Symmonds."

The white shows tender and soft as the skin of a little child. The islands are mere specks; the continent on the forearm is being silted, silted away. The black first becomes brown; the brown is not certain of its status; it shrinks and recedes before the conquering white. And so with the feet and hands and breast. The Caucasian is dominating the Ethiopian.

The men now stop their work to hear Symmonds talking. The eyes show a whitish gleam when he recalls the "wah." Dates and places have gone, but he saw the bullets flying, and he laughs to think what a time he had then when, young and well fed, he had no more serious care than the shizing of General Sherman's boots.

FACTS IN FEW WORDS.

India has 131,000 lepers.

A French surgeon has devised an artificial larynx.

Very full cheeks indicate great digestive powers.

The black diamond is so hard that it can not be polished.

Learning the Hawaiian language is a social fad in Washington.

A woman of Spring Hill, Mo., has baked a loaf of bread from yeast thirty years old.

In Norway persons who have not been vaccinated are not allowed to vote at any election.

In the far west a girl who works in a railroad restaurant is known as a "biscuit shooter."

Several Shanghai children with fifteen toes are the boast of George H. Ball, of Perrydale, On.

A hen on a farm at Cromwell, Conn., has, her owner claims, laid five eggs inside of two days.

Gambling debts are recoverable by law in France, Spain, Venezuela, and sometimes in Germany.

Paris has an insurance company that refuses to issue policies on the lives of any who use hair dyes.

Electric ambulances are to be used in St. Louis. They will run when possible, on the line of the street railways.

A novel insurance company has been started in France, with the object of supplying girls with dowries when they marry.

The remains of a race of Lilliputians, believed to be the ancestors of the Mexican Aztecs, were unearthed in east Tennessee.

The diamond, though hard, is one of the most brittle stones. A fall on a wooden floor will sometimes crack and ruin a fine specimen.

A powerful telescope may reveal as many as 43,000,000 stars, of a number of which the light takes 2,700 years to traverse the intervening space.

Formerly the Lord Mayor rode in his State procession from the Guildhall on horseback. The practice was discontinued in the reign of Queen Anne.

Sewing machines driven by electric motors have been fitted up in a large costume establishments in Paris. The current is obtained from the street mains.

The island where Robinson Crusoe was monarch of all he surveyed is now inhabited by about sixty people, who attend the herds of cattle that graze there.

An Amsterdam lapidary has a machine which can pierce a hole as small as one one-thousandth of an inch in diameter. The holes are made in diamonds, sapphires, and rubies.

Cats are being extensively used in New Zealand for the destruction of rabbits. The owners of one estate are so pleased with the efficacy of the new "cure," that they have just given an order for 500 cats.

It is a very great mistake to mend gloves with silk, as the silk will cut the kid much sooner than cotton of equal fineness. Kid gloves are always sewn at the manufactory with cotton thread.

For preserving wire ropes carried under the earth's surface, a mixture of thirty-five parts of slaked lime and from fifty to sixty parts of tar is recommended. The compound is boiled and applied to the article hot.

Some of the native women of Australia have a queer idea of beauty. They cut themselves with shells, keep the wounds open for a long time, and when they heal huge scars are the result. These scars are deemed highly ornamental.

Show an average cockney some phonetically rendered cockneyisms on paper, and he will tell you that no one speaks like that, but the exact form of disclaimer will probably be: "Nowbody down't speak lak that."

Queen Christina of Spain rises every morning at half-past five and goes out for a walk. The German Emperor gets up at six, Francis Joseph of Austria before five and the Czar—who probably sleeps badly—generally as early as three a.m.

Enthusiastic Russians are to give the Parisians a "Bell of Peace" in acknowledgment of the welcome accorded their seamen. It is to be a monster, but there is no tower in Paris strong enough to support a bell of the weight proposed.

Neuralgic pains may often be relieved instantly by the following simple method. Heat a fat-iron, put a double fold of flannel on the painful part, then move the iron to and fro on the flannel. The pain will cease almost immediately.

Granite is the lowest rock in the earth's crust; it is the bed rock of the world. It shows no evidence of animal or vegetable life. It is from two to ten times as thick as the united thickness of all other rocks. It is the parent rock from which all other rocks have been directly or indirectly derived.

A dog's tailor flourishes in Paris. The tailor is a woman, and in her reception rooms Prince Bow-wow has rugs, water bowls, and biscuit jars to refresh him during the trying-on process. Here are the faintest water-color pattern books to choose from, and anything from sealskin to chamouis is provided.

The occupations of the female prisoners in Strangeways Gaol include oakum-picking and making surplises for prison chaplains. Male prisoners are put on the treadmill to grind flour for making the prison bread. It is to be hoped they enjoy the truth of the old adage that bread that is earned is sweeter than beef that is stolen.

The cheetah, or hunting leopard, 3½ feet high, is in India considered invaluable in the chase. Hooded as hawks were of old, it is taken out to deer hunts. When a deer or other animal is in sight, the hood is removed, and attention is directed to the victim. The cheetah dodges through the jungle, springs upon his quarry, and throttles him to death.

Of 1,000 men married in 1891 in England and Wales (according to the report of the Registrar-General), 886 were bachelors and 114 were widowers; while of 1,000 women who married, 919 were spinsters and 81 were widows. The proportions of bachelors and spinsters were the high recorded. The proportions of widowers and widows have been declining for many years.

FACTS IN FEW WORDS.

With the cockneyest such a word as "much" becomes "metch"—"Ow metch is it?" Here is a sentence noted at the time in a crush of people coming away from a snow where the sports had been signaled by gun firing. Mother: "Wozy yer frahtened wen 'e fahd the gen?" Child: "Now, ah lakked it."

The Orientals have a simple method of cooling water. They fill a porous earthenware jar, and by the continual evaporation on the surface the water is soon cooled. Sometimes a heavy cloth is wrapped round the jar and kept continually wet. On the hottest day water may be cooled in this way in a few hours' time without the use of ice.

One of the sights of China is the antique bridge of Suen-tchen-fow, 2,500 feet long, and 20 feet wide. It has on each side 52 piers, upon which huge stones are laid, some of them 20 feet long. Many thousand tons of stone must have been used in the erection of this wonderful bridge, which is regarded by engineers who have seen it as indicating constructive talent as wonderful as that which raised the Egyptian Pyramids.

A novel means of collecting subscriptions for charities has been introduced in Melbourne. During the performance of The Mountebanks at the Princess's Theatre, a topical verse was introduced into the song, "Put a Penny in the Slot," asking the audience for pence towards the funds of the Woman's Hospital. The appeal met with a most satisfactory response, the audience showering coins on the stage, and altogether £27 13s. 6d. was collected by this means during the week's run of The Mountebanks.

To hear cockney we must go to the streets or mix with the careless pleasure-takers on a bank holiday. And we must listen heedfully, for peculiarities in people with whom one is more or less constantly in contact are apt to remain unnoticed. When "Erry Jowans" talks of his unmarried sister as Jimima Wren one may be forgiven if it dawn but slowly that the lady's name is Jimima Jones and that Wren stands for Ann. A country cousin will return from a ramble in London streets full of astonishment and babbling over with choice specimens of cockney vernacular, wherefrom he derives innocent and lasting amusement.

The Sultan of Turkey is the most extravagant housekeeper in the world. According to a recent estimate his domestic budget runs thus:—Repairs, new furniture, mats, beds, etc., £500,000; toilet requisites, including rouge and enamel for the ladies of the harem, and jewelry, £2,000,000; extra extravagances, £2,600,000; clothes and furniture for the Sultan personally, £400,000; douceurs and wages, £800,000; gold and silver plate, £500,000; maintenance of five carriages and horses, £100,000—a total of £7,000,000.

Good shorthand writers are scarce in France. The post of shorthand writer in the Chamber of Deputies is vacant. The work is exceedingly laborious, and within the past few years four stenographers have become insane, two have lost their eyesight and many were knocked up through overwork or "writer's cramp." Some of the speakers in the Chamber are so rapid in their utterances as to be the despair of the shorthand writers. A dozen stenographers succeed one another every two minutes at the foot of the orators' tribune.

NORWAY AND SWEDEN.

Their Differences Approaching a Crisis.

King Oscar's Dilemma.

A London special says:—The Times today contains one of its series of articles on the situation in Sweden and Norway, the last of which appeared on Nov. 14. It says that if the coming elections in Norway result in a large and militant Radical majority, the Conservative ministry will be bound to retire. The king will find himself faced to face with the necessity of accepting the Radical interpretation of the Act of Union, thereby surrendering the unity of foreign policy, upon which the alliance of the two kingdoms consists, or of enforcing the Swedish reading of the act, against the manifest determination of the Norwegian people.

Sweden, it appears, is prepared to use force. The Swedes, who were at first apathetic, have been roused to such a pitch of exasperation that it will take little to goad them to action. The king is confident of the support of the Swedes, and he will not surrender the Norwegian crown nor sacrifice the union, which he believes to be indispensable to the safety of both Sweden and Norway. The first shot fired by Sweden will rally the Norwegian Radicals and Conservatives shoulder to shoulder in defence of their common nationality. Despite the superiority of her military resources, Sweden would find it a hard task to reduce Norway to subjection, and harder still to keep her in subjection.

If the sentiment of the Swedes compels the king to unsheathe the sword, the European powers, who are the sponsors of the union, ought to intervene, armed with a European mandate, as in 1814. Sweden might act within limits, leading to an arrangement for the avoidance of a war crisis. Opinion in Norway is, in the meantime, raised on only two issues—union and monarchy or separation and a republic. But among the contingencies acute observers detect a third course—the creation of a throne in Norway, with Prince Waldemar, youngest son of the King of Denmark, as king.

Somehow sitting up close to people you don't like very well never makes you any warmer.

The German and Austrian Alpine Society has erected 419 taverns on the mountains, where students can board at reduced rates.

A loaf made from 2 lb. of flour will weigh 2 lb. 8½ oz. when taken from the oven. A little alum or salt or rice meal be added to the flour the loaf will weigh a couple of ounces or so more.

Since November 1, 1,746 carloads of exhibits have been shipped from the Fair. It is estimated that 800 carloads have been hauled from the grounds in wagons to Englewood and adjacent points for shipment. Originally, 7,897 carloads were received, leaving a balance of 5,351 carloads. The average is 50 carloads a day, and three months more will be required to clear the buildings of all the exhibits. The shipment figures show that 10 per cent. of the foreign exhibits have been taken away.

LORD NORTH.

Lord North, who was premier of England at the time of the American revolution, was a man of unflinching good-humor and a droll turn of expression. In "piping times of peace," says one, in writing of him, "he would have made an ideal minister, but in such a crisis as the American War he had not the courage to withstand the wrong-headedness of George III." When attacked, he was usually a model of calmness; but if he did regret good humor. One day a member of Parliament spoke of him as "that thing called a minister."

"Well, to be sure," said Lord North afterward, patting his ample sides, "I am an unwieldy thing, and therefore the honorable member, in calling me 'a thing,' said what was true, and I cannot be angry with him. But when he added 'that thing called a minister,' he referred to the thing which he himself most wished to be, and therefore I took the remark as a compliment."

So amiable was the premier in private life that one servant, a drunken, stupid groom, was always distinguished by the children, as "the man that put papa in a passion." He was apparently the only person who had succeeded in doing so.

While the Revolution was in progress Lord North, at a city banquet, referred to a recent victory over "the rebels" whereupon Fox and Barre, who were present, took him to task for applying such language to "our fellow-subjects in America."

"Well, then, to please you," said North, with his inimitable air of railleury, "I will call them 'the gentlemen in opposition on the other side of the water.'"

At one time, when Lord North was speaking in the House, he was interrupted by the barking of a dog, which had crept in unobserved.

"Mr. Speaker," said he, archly, "I am interrupted by a new member!"

Again, when he was treating a matter of public anxiety with his usual indifference and jollity, the Duke of Newcastle expressed some astonishment at his calmness.

"Faith, my lord duke," was the answer, "if fretting would make me thin, I would be as sorry as your grace; but since it will not have that effect, I bear it as well as I can."

The premier often indulged in real or seeming slumber, and one day an opponent stopped in the midst of an invective to exclaim, "Even now, in the midst of these perils, the noble lord is asleep!"

"I wish I were!" rejoined the sleeper, fervently.

At another time he said to a friend at the beginning of a speech on the British navy: "Barre will give us our naval history from the beginning, not forgetting Sir Francis Drake and the Armada. Let me sleep on, and wake me when we come to our own time."

At length the friend roused him, and North exclaimed:

"Where are we now?"

"At the battle of La Hogue, my lord."

"Oh, my dear friend, you have waked me a century too soon!"

That he was not always cool, however, is indicated by his manner of receiving the intelligence of the capitulation at Yorktown.

"He took the news as he would have taken a cannon ball in his breast," said the Secretary of State. "He opened his arms, exclaiming wildly as he paced up and down the room, 'O God, it is all over! The words he repeated many times in the greatest agitation and distress.'"

Evenly Matched.

Two clergymen totally different in character were yet firm friends. One was prim and precise, especially careful of his linen, quiet in speech and manner; the other careless as to dress, and a regular John Bull in ways and words. The latter had formed the habit of taking snuff, much to the disgust of his friend, who abhorred all such practices. One day, at a ministers' meeting, Mr. Blank pulled out his snuff-box, tapped it in the orthodox fashion, and took a hearty pinch. Mr. Arnold, thinking to rebuke him, said, in his mildest tones: "Mr. Blank, how much do you think it costs you a year for snuff?"

"Don't know," was the reply; "perhaps about as much as it does you for starch."

He'd Had Enough of Them.

An illiterate young man once got a friend to write a letter for him to his sweetheart. The letter was rather prosaic for a love-letter, and he felt that an apology was due to his sweetheart for its lack of tender nothings. It was as follows:—

"Please excuse the rudeness of this here letter, as the chap wos's 'ritin' it is a married man, and he says he can't 'bide any soft soapings; it italus gives him the spazzums."

Wellington and the Inventor.

The invention of a bullet-proof uniform by a Westphalian tailor recalls an anecdote of the great Duke of Wellington.

A stranger gained admittance to the War Office one busy morning and urged the Duke to introduce into the army a bullet-proof jacket which he had invented. He produced a specimen.

"Bullet-proof?" said the Duke. Very good. Put it on, will you?"

The man did so. The Duke rang the bell: an officer appeared.

"Tell Captain So-and-So to send two of his men here; and let them load with ball-cartridge."

When the Duke looked up from his writing presently, the inventor had disappeared.

A Dying Request.

Physician (to dying editor): "My poor friend, I cannot conceal the truth from you any longer. You have only half-an-hour to live."

Editor (feebly): "Doctor, will you please tell the foreman, when I am gone, to place my obituary on the front page, top of column, next to pure reading matter? I wonder if I am extravagant in indulging myself in that luxury for once in my life!"

In Spain, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, and Switzerland a girl is considered of marriageable age as soon as she has celebrated her twelfth birthday.

In two years 1891-93 the paper used in the public departments of the Government amounted to 758,680 reams, with a gross weight of 7,870 tons.