My Nell.

You are nobly born, I know,
Rich, and beautiful, and free,
And they tell me (is it so?)
That you waste a thought on me!
In your hazel eyes last night
There was tenderness and truth;
But there came a softer light
To the poet in his youth.
I can give you high esteem,
Gracious friend and lovely belle;
But I can not love you now
As I used to love my Nell.

We were paupers, she and I,
And the bread was hard to win;
But our garret near the sky
Let God's purest sunlight in.
She was meanly dressed you see,
In her faded cotton gown;
But her smile was heaven to me,
And I never saw her frown.
You are like a rose in June,
She was but a lily bell:
Yet I can not love you now
As I used to love my Nell.

We were young, and life was sweet,
And we loved each other more
When there scarce was food to eat,
And the wolf was at the door.
There was always hope, you know;
We could dream that skies were blue;
But my darling had to go
Just before the dream came true,
I am left alone with fame,
And the great world likes me well;
But I can not love again
As I used to love my Nell.

Then forgive me if the light
Of your presence leaves me cold;
You are young, and gay, and bright,
I am growing grave and old;
And the brow she used to kiss
Is more wrinkled than of yore.
But the treasure that I miss
Is not lost, but gone before.
Some have many loves, but I
Learnt to love but once, and well;
And I can not woo you now
As I used to woo my Nell.

MONICA:

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PHYLLIS," "MOLLY BAWN," AND OTHER POPULAR NOVELS.

CHAPTER I.

HOW A DOVE COT WAS FLUTTERED IN ROSSMOYNE.

The old-fashioned clock is ticking loudly, ponderously, as though determined to betray the flight of fickle time and impress upon the happy, careless ones that the end of all things is at hand. The roses knock their fragrant buds against the window panes, calling attention to their dainty sweetness. The pigeons coo amorously upon the sills outside, and even thrust their pretty heads into the breakfast-room, demanding plaintively their daily crumbs; but no one heeds.

A deadly silence has fallen upon this room at Moyne, albeit life is fully represented here, and two eyes, in which the light of youth is quenched, are looking anxiously into two other eyes that have also seen the best and sweetest of their days.

Hopelessly the golden roses scatter their petals. In vain the white and tawny birds entreat backsheesh. To no purpose does the elderly clock count out its numbers. The urn is hissing angrily, the two cups of tea so carefully prepared are growing cold. So are the crisp little hot cakes, so is the—

No, by-the-bye, it isn't! Honey can't. What a chance I was near giving the reviewers!

One bird, growing annoyed at the prolonged quiet, flies from the open window to the back of Miss Penelope's chair, and settles there with an indignant flutter and a suppressed but angry note. This small suggestion of a living world destroys the spell that for the last few minutes has been connecting the brain with a dead one.

Miss Penelope, raising her head, gives words to her thoughts.

"Poor, poor Katherine!" she says, gently smoothing out the letter that lies upon her knee. "How her happiness was wrecked! And what a sad ending there has been to everything! Her children coming home to us, fatherless—motherless! Dear child! What a life her's has been! It is quite twenty years ago, now, and yet it all seems to me as fresh as yesterday."

"She shouldn't have taken things so easily; she should have asserted herself at the *time*," says Miss Priscilla, whose voice is always a note sharper than her sister's.

"It requires a great deal of thought and—and a great deal of moral courage to assert one's self when a man has behaved abominably to one—has, in fact, *jilted* one!" says Miss Penelope, bringing out the awful word with a little shudder and a shake of her gentle head, that sets two pale lavender ribbons in her cap swaying mildly to and fro.

"Why was she so fatally silent about everything except the one bare fact of his refusal, at the last moment, to marry her, without assigning any cause for his base desertion? Why didn't she open her whole heart to me? I wasn't afraid of the man!" says Miss Priscilla, with such terrible energy and such a warlike front as might well have daunted "*the man*," or, indeed, any man, could he have seen her. "She should have unburdened her poor, bruised spirit to me, who—if my mother was not her's, and if I was many years her senior—had, at least, a sister's love for her."

"A true love," says Miss Penelope with another sigh.

"Instead of which," regretfully, "she hid all her sorrow in her own bosom, and, no doubt, wept and pined for the miscreant in secret."

"Poor soul!" says Miss Penelope, profoundly affected by this dismal picture. Tears born of tenderness spring to her eyes. "Do you remember, Priscilla, how she refused to show his letter, wishing, I suppose, even *then* to spare him?"

"I forget nothing!" with some acerbity. "Often, when saying my prayers, I have wished I could forget him, but I can't, so I have to go on being uncharitable and in sin—if, indeed, sin it be to harden one's heart against a bad man."

"Do you remember, too, my dear Priscilla, how she refused to go to church the Sunday after she received his cold-blooded missive telling her he wished his engagement at an end? I often wonder in what language he could have couched such a scandalous desire; but she tore the letter up. Dear! Dear! It might have happened to-day, it is all so clear to me."

"Too clear," says Miss Priscilla.

"I recollect, too," says Miss Penelope, leaning her elbows on the table, pushing her untasted tea from her and warming to the dismal memory, "how she would not come down to dinner on that eventful evening, though we had the red currant tart she was so fond of, and how I took her up some myself and knocked at her door and entreated her to open to me and to eat some of it. There was whipped cream on it; she was very fond of cream, too."

"And she refused to open the door?" asks Miss Priscilla, with the satisfied air of one who has often heard the thrilling recital before, yet was never tired of it.

"Absolutely! So I laid the plate on a little table outside her door. Some hours afterwards, going up to bed, I saw the plate was gone and her door slightly ajar. Stealing into her room on tiptoe, I saw she was sleeping peacefully, and that she had eaten the red-currant tart. I felt so happy then. Poor, dear child! How fond she was of that tart!"

"She liked everything that had sugar in it," says Miss Priscilla, mournfully.

"It was only natural. 'Sweets to the sweet,'" says Miss Penelope, letting one little white jewelled hand fall slowly, sadly upon the other.

There is a lengthened pause.

Presently, stooping slightly towards her sister, Miss Penelope says, in a mysterious whisper:

"I wonder, my dear Priscilla, *why* she married James Beresford a month afterwards."

"Who can read the human heart? Perhaps it was pride drove her into that marriage—a desire to show George Desmond how lightly she treated his desertion of her. And James was a handsome young fellow, whereas George was——"

"Ugly," says Miss Penelope with quite an amazing amount of vicious satisfaction, for her.

"Strikingly so," says Miss Priscilla, acquiescing most agreeably. "But then the Desmond estates mean half the county; and we *used* to think he was the soul of honor."

"It was our father's expressed desire upon his deathbed that Katherine should marry him."

"Yes, yes; a desire to be held sacred. And Katherine gave her promise to our dying parent. Nothing," says Miss Priscilla, in a solemn tone, "should induce any one to break such an oath. I have often said so to the dear child. But she appeared not only willing, but anxious, to marry George Desmond. *His* was the traitorous mind."

"I dare say he has had his own punishment," says Miss Penelope, mildly.

"I hope so," says Miss Priscilla sternly. Then, with a return to sadness, "Twenty years ago it is, and now she has been a twelvemonth dead and in her quiet grave."

"Oh, *don't*, my dear Priscilla!" says Miss Penelope, in a broken voice, burying her face in her pocket-handkerchief.

"Ah! well, well, we had better look to the future; the past has no charms for us," says Miss Priscilla, with a ghastly attempt at cheerfulness. "Let me see," referring through a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles to the letter in her hand, "That the dear children have landed we know, and—h'm—yes, this very—yes, plainly, *very* respectable person, the captain, writes to say they will be with us to-morrow."

"*To-morrow!* and that was written yesterday," says Miss Penelope, putting down her handkerchief and starting once more into life. "Why, at that rate, my dear Priscilla, they will be here *to day!*"

"Bless me! You don't mean it!" exclaims Miss Priscilla, again applying her glasses to the letter. "Monday, and this is Tuesday; yes, sure enough, you are right. What a head you have, my dear Penelope!"

"Oh, not at all!" says Miss Penelope, flushing with pleasure at this tribute to her intellect.

"To-day—in a few hours! Now, what is to be done about the beds?"

"But surely they are aired?"

"Aired? Yes. They have been aired every day regularly for the past two months, ever since I first heard the children were likely to come to us. But still I am uncertain about them. I know they will want hot jars; and then the rooms, they will want flowers and many things—and——"

"Can't I help you?" demands Miss Penelope eagerly.

"My dear girl, not at all," says Miss Priscilla, with a calmly superior air, arising from the fact that she is quite eighteen months her senior. "You can assist me with your valuable counsel, but I would not have you disturb yourself for worlds. You must be cool and collected, and hold yourself in readiness to receive them when they come. They will be shy, no doubt, coming here all the way from Palestine, and it must be your part to make them feel quite at home."

This to Miss Penelope, who is afraid of strangers in any guise, appears such a fearful mission that she pales, and says, tremblingly:

"But you, too, will be present at our first meeting? I must, indeed, *beg* you to be present, my dear Priscilla."

"Of course, of course," says Miss Priscilla, encouragingly. Then, doubtfully, "I hope the boy won't take a dislike to us."

"I wonder how we shall get on with children," says Miss Penelope. She is evidently growing extremely nervous. "It seems so strange they should be coming here to the old house."

"Monica cannot be a child now. She must be at least eighteen," says Miss Priscilla thoughtfully. "It was in 1863 that—"

"1864, I think," interrupts Miss Penelope.

"1863," persists Miss Priscilla.

"You may be right, my dear," says Miss Penelope, mildly but firmly, "you often are—but I know it was in '64 that——"

"What?" asks Miss Priscilla sharply.

"That Desmond jilted our Katherine."

"You are wrong, Penelope, utterly wrong. It was in '63."

"I am nearly always wrong," says Miss Penelope meekly, yet with a latent sense of suppressed power. "But I cannot forget that in the year George Desmond behaved so shamefully to our sweet Katherine, Madam O'Connor's cow had two calves, and *that*," triumphantly, "was in '64."

"You are right—quite right," says Miss Priscilla, vanquished but not cast down. "So it was. What a memory you have, my dear Penelope."

"Nothing when compared with *yours*," says Miss Penelope smiling.

At this moment the door opens and an old man enters the room. He is clad in the garb of a servant, though such wonderful habiliments as those in which he has arrayed himself would be difficult of purchase now-a-days; whether there are more wrinkles in his forehead or in his trousers is a nice question that could not readily be decided at a moment's notice.

He is quite ten years older than either of his mistresses, and, indeed, both he and his garments plainly belong to a by-gone generation. His knees are bent, so is his back; his face is like a Ribston pippin, his coat is a marvel both in cut and in texture, but his linen is irreproachable, and what hair nature has still left him is most carefully brushed. There is, too, in his small, gray, Irish eyes a mischievous twinkle, and a fund of honest good humor that goes far to defy the ravages of time. In spite of his seventy years and his quaint attire, he still at times can hold his own with many a younger man.

"Well, Timothy," says Miss Priscilla, looking up as he approaches the table, "we have had news of Miss Katherine's—I mean Mrs. Beresford's—children."

"Rest her sowl!" says Timothy in a reverential tone, alluding to that part of the late Mrs. Beresford.

"It seems they have landed and will be with us to-day."

"The day, miss?" growing brisk at this unexpected announcement.

"Yes, they have reached England in safety and are now in Dublin. What a long, long journey it has been for them," with another dreamy glance at the letter, "all the way from Palestine!"

"An' so it has, miss, poor little crathurs!" says Timothy, who knows as much about the whereabouts of Palestine as he does about the man in the moon.

"You mustn't think they are very young, Timothy," says Miss Penelope hastily. "Miss Priscilla and I have been talking it over, and we believe Miss Beresford must be now seventeen, Master Terence sixteen and Miss Kate fourteen."

"And so of course they must be, miss. Thrue for ye, ma'am. Dear, dear, though only to think now; it seems only the other day the dear young lady was married to Mister Beresford. But you aren't eating a bit, miss," anxiously; "you haven't tasted a morsel, ma'am. What can I get ye now?"

"Nothing, Timothy. The fact is——"

"There's an iligant ham downstairs, ma'am," says the old man, now really concerned for the mistresses, who still always appear to him as "the young ladies;" "let me bring it up to you."

"No, thank you, Timothy; we are just a little upset by this sudden news. We cannot help wondering how the old house will be with children in it, after all these years of calm and quiet."

"Sure an' a grand change it will be for us all, miss; 'twill indeed, ma'am," says Timothy, cheerfully, though his mind misgives him. "There's nothing like children, when all's told; sure, there's music in the very sound of their footsteps."

"I hope they will be good," says Miss Penelope with a doubtful sigh.

"Faix, what else would they be, miss?" says the old man with assumed reproach. "'Tis well I mind of Miss Katherine herself—the soft tongue she had in her head, an' never a cross word out of her, save to Nelly Doolin—an' she was the divil himself, savin' your presence, miss, and enough to provoke all the saints—glory be——"

"I trust they will be happy here," goes on Miss Penelope still wistfully.

"An' why not, miss? Sure the counthry is the finest place at all for the young; and where's a finer counthry than ould Ireland?"

"Much can't be said for it of late, Timothy," says Miss Priscilla sadly, "all it can boast of now is rebellion, sedition and bloodshed."

"Sure, every one must have a kick up sometimes, Miss," says Timothy with youthful lightness, "an', afther all, isn't the ould place only doin' what she can for herself, more power to her?"

"Ryan," says Miss Priscilla, sternly, addressing her butler by his surname—a thing that is never done except in dire cases—and fixing upon him an icy glance beneath which he quails, "I regret you should so far forget yourself as to utter such treasonable sentiments in our presence. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"So I am, miss. I humbly ask yer pardon, ma'am," says Mr. Ryan, promptly. "But all the different opinions one hears adrift in the brain. 'Twas only last night the Murphys had a meeting, and they do say, miss," lowering his voice confidentially, "that the Squire down there," pointing apparently through the breakfast-room wall, "is in a bad way with the League boys."

"The Desmond?"

"Yes, miss. He's been evictin' again, ma'am, an' there's queer talk about him. But," with a relapse into former thought, "if he's a bad landlord, what can he expect?"

"No, no, Timothy! He is not a bad landlord," says Miss Priscilla, hastily, though this allowance of grace to her enemy causes her a bitter pang. "He has been most patient for years. That I *know*."

"Well, maybe so, Miss," says Ryan, deferentially, but with a reservation in his manner that speaks volumes. "It isn't for the likes of me, ma'am, to contradict the likes of you. But did you hear, miss, that Mister Desmond's nephew has come to stay with him?"

"At Coole?"

"At the Castle. Yes, miss. Faix 'twas meself was surprised to hear it. But there he is, safe enough, an' another gentleman with him; an' they do say that the ould masther is as proud as Punch of him. But his blood's bad, I'll no doubt."

"No doubt," says Miss Priscilla, severely, Miss Penelope sighs.

CHAPTER II.

HOW TWO OLD MAIDS ARE MADE ACQUAINTED WITH A VERY YOUNG ONE.

Already we have reached the afternoon. In these warm June days, when all the earth is languorous and glad with its own beauty, time slips from us unannounced, and the minutes from morn to eventide and from the gloaming to nightfall, melt into one another, until all seem but one sweet, lengthened hour.

Just now the hot sun is pouring down upon garden and gravelled walks at Moyne; except the hum of the industrious bees not a sound can be heard; even the streamlet at the end of the long lawn is running sleepily, making sweet music as it goes, indeed, but so drowsily, so heavily, that it hardly reaches the ear; and so, too, with the lap-lapping of the waves upon the shore below, as the tide comes and goes.

Certain stray little sunbeams, half wild with glee, rushing hither and thither through the roses, discover Miss Penelope Blake sitting in the drawing-room at Moyne. She is dressed in her very best lavender silk, that would stand alone, and be glad to do it if it was let, but, unabashed by her splendor, Apollo's saucy babies dance down upon her, and, seizing on her knitting-needles, play hide-and-seek among them, until the poor lady's eyes are fairly dazzled.

Fortunately, at this instant Miss Priscilla, entering the room, draws down the blind and restores order; after which she seats herself almost directly opposite her sister.

The Misses Blake are not pretty old ladies at all. I don't want to deceive you in this matter. They are, in fact, quite ugly old ladies.

There is a pensive air about Miss Penelope that might suggest to the casual observer an early and disastrous love affair. But all such imaginings on his part would be vain. No winged Cupid ever hid in Miss Penelope's ear, or played bo-peep in her virgin bosom, or nestled in her sandy locks; she is free from all taint of such wild frivolisms.

"All is ready, now," says Miss Priscilla, who is the Martha at Moyne, while we may regard Miss Penelope as the Mary. "The rooms are prepared, nothing is wanting and the flowers smell so sweet. I have sent the carriage to meet them, though I know the train cannot be here for quite an hour yet; but I think it wise always to be in time."

"There is nothing like it," says Miss Penelope placidly.

"Now I shall rest here with you a little while," goes on the elder maiden complacently, "and think of all that is likely to happen."

"Really," says Miss Penelope, lowering her work and glancing restlessly at her sister, "I feel more nervous than I can say, when I think of their coming. What on earth should we do, my dear Priscilla, if they took a dislike to us?"

"I have thought of that myself," says Miss Priscilla in an awe-struck tone. "We are not attractive, Penelope, beyond a few—a *very* few—insignificant touches," with an inward glance at her fine hair, "we are absolutely outside the pale of beauty. I wonder if Monica will be like her mother, or if——"

Here something happens that puts a final stop to all conversation. The door is opened quickly, impetuously, there is a sound as of many footsteps on the threshold without.

The old ladies start in their seats and sit upright, trembling excessively. What can have happened? Has the sedate Ryan come to loggerheads with Mrs. Reilly, the cook (a state of things often threatened), and are they now standing on the mat outside meditating further bloodshed?

A moment surcharged with thrilling suspense goes by, and then, not Ryan or the cook, but a much more perplexing vision comes slowly into the room.

It is a very radiant vision, though it is clothed in mourning garments, full of grace and beauty. Very shy, with parted lips and brilliant, frightened eyes, but perfect as an opening flower.

Is it a child or a woman, is the first question that strikes Miss Penelope. As for Miss Priscilla, she is too surprised for thought of any kind, too lost in admiration of the little, gracious, uncertain figure, with its deep-blue eyes glancing up at her with a half-terrified yet trusting expression, to give way to speech of any kind.

She is slight and slim as a hazel wand. Her hair is nut-brown, with a red-gold tinge running through it. Her nose is adorable, if slightly tilted; her mouth is a red, red rose, sad but sweet, and full of purpose. Her eyes are large and expressive, but touched, like her lips, with a suspicion of melancholy that renders them only a degree more sweet and earnest.

There is a spirituality about her, a calm, a peace that shines out of these dark Irish eyes and rests upon her perfect lips, as it were a lingering breath of the heaven from whence she came.

She stands now, hesitating a little, with her hands loosely clasped—brown little hands, but beautifully shaped. Indeed, all her skin owes more of its coloring to Phœbus Apollo than nature intended. She draws her breath somewhat quickly, and then, as though anxious to get through the troublous task assigned her, says nervously, in a low, sweet voice:

"I am Monica."

As she says this, she glances entreatingly from one lady to the other, with some trouble in her great eyes, and some tears. Then all at once her lips tremble to a smile and a soft light breaks upon her face.

"*You* are Aunt Priscilla," she says, turning to Miss Blake, "I know you by your dark eyes and by your *pretty* hair!"

At the sound of her voice the two old ladies wake from their abstraction.

"Yes, yes, it is your Aunt Priscilla," says Miss Penelope eagerly, with a sudden pleased smile. Had the compliment been made to herself she could not possibly have appeared more delighted and certainly would not have betrayed her satisfaction so openly. "Her hair," she says, "was always beautiful."

As for Miss Priscilla, she is smiling too, but in a shamefaced fashion, and is blushing a warm, pretty crimson, such as a girl of seventeen might be guilty of, listening to a first word of love.

She takes Monica's right hand in hers and pats it softly and Miss Penelope takes the left, and then the two old ladies stoop forward, and, one after the other, kiss the pale, girlish cheek, and with the kiss take her at once and forever into their very hearts.

"But, surely, dear child, you did not come alone?" says Miss Priscilla presently, calling to remembrance the fact that there ought to be two other Beresfords somewhere.

"No; Terence and Katherine are with me."

"But where, my dear?"

"Well, I *think* they are standing on the mat just outside the door," blushing and laughing, and then she says, rather louder, "Terry and Kit, you may come in now. It is all right."

As to what was evidently supposed not to be "all right" up to this, the Misses Blake have no time to decide upon before a fresh nephew and niece present themselves to their view. They came in quite gaily—reassured, no doubt, by Monica's tone; Terence, a tall slim lad of about sixteen, and a little girl somewhat like Monica, but more restless in features and even a degree more pallid.

"My dear children, why didn't you come in before?" says Miss Priscilla, aghast at the inhospitable thought that they had been shivering with needless nervousness in the hall for the last five minutes.

"They said they wouldn't come in until I paved the way for them," says Monica, with a slight shrug of her shoulders that is a trick of hers. "They always put everything upon my shoulders; a little shabby of them *I* call it."

"I am afraid you must have pictured us as ogres," says Miss Priscilla, which idea strikes the old ladies as such a delicious flight of fancy that they laugh outright and look at each other with intense enjoyment of their little joke.

"Well, of course we couldn't tell what you would be like," says Monica gravely. "You might have been people likely to impress one with awe; but, as *it is*——. This is Terry," laying her hand upon her brother's arm, "and this is Kit. She is really Katherine, you know, but no one ever calls her by so long a name. She isn't worth it."

At this the three Beresfords laugh among themselves, as children will at time-worn fun, knowing no fatigue; after which Katherine and Terence are embraced and made much of by their new-found relatives and freely commented upon.

But, ever and anon, the eyes of both old ladies wander thoughtfully, admiringly to where the lissome Monica stands, like a pale, pensive lily.

* * * * * * * *

"But how have you managed to be here so soon?" asks Miss Priscilla, when the impromptu luncheon, improvised by the startled Timothy, has come to an end. The children were all hungry and have eaten a great deal and have talked more. Indeed, though Miss Priscilla has been dying to ask this question for a long time, it has been impossible for her to do so, as there has not been so much as a comma in the conversation for the last hour.

The Beresfords are like so many clocks wound up, and bound to go for a certain time whether they like it or not; and, apparently, they do like it. Now they have run down a little, Terence being exhausted after his last laughing attack, and Kit wrapped in contemplation of an old-fashioned hair brooch that is fastening an equally old-fashioned piece of priceless lace that adorns Miss Penelope's throat.

"Well, I can't think how they do it!" she says, lost in admiration of a little slim hair lady bending over a miniature hair urn in the most lachrymose attitude conceivable. "But they have put her eye in wrongly; she looks as if she is dying with laughter."

Here Miss Priscilla edges in her question as to how they have contrived to be at Moyne at so early an hour.

"We came by the wrong train," says Terry. "We generally do. Ever since we left the South of France—where we were staying with the Bohuns, you know, on our way here—we have been missing our trains right and left and turning up at all sorts of unexpected places. Haven't we, Kit?"

"*You* have," says Kit, with suspicious emphasis. "You have such a pretty trick of rushing into the first train you see, without ever asking any one where it is going. No wonder we always turned up at the wrong end!"

"*You've* a pretty trick of putting everything down on other people's shoulders," says Terence with open disgust. "Whose fault was it we were always so late at the stations that we hadn't time to make inquiries, I'd like to know? Could you," with fine irony, "tell us?"

"Certainly; it was nurse," replies Kit with dignity.

"Dear me! And where is your nurse now?" asks Miss Priscilla anxiously.

"When last *I* saw her," says Terence, "she was sitting on the top of our biggest box, with everything else strewn around her and her feet resting on two brown paper parcels. I wonder," says Mr. Beresford addressing Monica, "what on earth she had in those brown paper parcels. She has been hugging them night and day ever since she left Jerusalem."

"Dynamite," suggests Monica lightly, whereupon the two Misses Blake turn pale.

"At that rate, Aunt Priscilla, we needn't trouble about her," says Terence pleasantly, "as she *must* be blown up by this. None of those clock-work affairs could be arranged to go on much longer. Poor thing! When in the flesh she wasn't half bad. I forgive her everything—even her undying hatred to myself."

"If she is in fragments so are our things," says Kit. "I think she *needn't* have elected to sit on them at the supreme moment."

"You don't really think," says Miss Penelope, in a somewhat troubled tone, remembering how an innocent baker in Rossmoyne had had some of the explosive matter in question thrown into his kitchen the night before last, "you don't really think that these parcels you speak of contain infernal machines? Yes, that is what they call them, my dear Priscilla," turning to her sister as though anxious to apologize for having used a word calculated to lead the mind to the lower regions.

By this time both Kit and Terence are convulsed with delight at the sensation they have created, and would probably have gone on to declare the innocent Mrs. Mitchell an advanced Nihilist of the most dangerous type, but for Monica's coming to the rescue and explaining matters satisfactorily.

"Still, I cannot understand how you got up here so quickly," says Miss Penelope. "You know Moyne—*home* I hope you will call it for the future, my dears"—with a little fond pat on Monica's hand, "is quite three miles from the station."

"We should have thought nothing of that," says Terence, "but for Kit, she has had a fever, you know," pointing to the child's closely-cropped, dark little head, "so we said we would just stroll on a little and see what the country was like."

"And lovely it is," puts in Kit enthusiastically. "We got up on a high hill and saw the sea lying like a great, quiet lake beneath us. There was scarcely a ripple on it, and only a soft sound like a sob." Her eyes, that are almost too big for her small face, glow brilliantly.

"And then there came by a man with a cart filled with hay, and he nodded to us and said, 'Good morrow, sir,' and so I nodded back and said 'How d'ye do?' to him and asked him was it far to Moyne House. 'A good step,' he said, 'three miles at the very least.'"

"He didn't; he said *taste*," says Kit, who is plainly in a litigious mood.

(To be continued.)

LIFE IN CHINA

Different Dialects in Shanghai—Great Uncleanliness of the People.

The conservatism of the Chinese character and the extremest point of provincialism are instanced in the story told of the residents within the walls of the native city of Shanghai, writes the Shanghai correspondent of the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*. The city has three gates—the north, south and west ones—and many of the people living at the south gate have never been as far as the north gate, and could not understand the dialect of the inhabitants there if they did go. One nation could not differ more from another than the Chinese from the Japanese if they lived 20,000 miles apart instead of only 200 miles, and one is all wrong if he thinks that having seen Japanese cities he can know what a Chinese one will be like. While the Japanese are the cleanest people on the face of the earth, and far ahead of the English for eternally bathing and scrubbing themselves, the Chinese are the very dirtiest. The trim, exquisite little toy houses of the Japanese along wide streets are the greatest contrast to the filthy abodes of the Chinese, with their dirt floors, mud and bamboo-woven walls, and streets often less than five feet wide from wall to wall. Overhead is a forest of gilt letters, gorgeously colored signs and banners that fairly hide the sky. The narrow streets, with shop fronts all open above a low counter, seem like passages in some fantastic exhibition hall with booths or "spaces" close together. Mere crevices in the walls correspond to alleys, and looking up them or down the tunnel of a street before one it is easy to realize what is meant by "swarms of people" or "masses of human beings." All through old Shanghai the people are packed as if at a mass meeting, and one has to dodge into shops or flatten himself against a wall at the constant cries of the coolies carrying loads by poles or yokes on their shoulders. Buckets of water and garbage, bundles of dried fish, bodies of dressed hogs, coffins of the dead and sedan chairs of the living crowded us into the wall and rubbed against us during a progress through the handsomest and most important four-feet-wide street of the city. The people were all too busy and too stolidly indifferent to gather and stare at us, or follow us in a train, as is the happy Japanese fashion of treating a strange foreigner, and we really felt twinges of wounded vanity at this neglect. No more did the natives throw eggs and refuse at us and twit us with being foreign devils, or call us names, as had been so freely prophesied in the foreign settlement. And then, having conjured up such an awful vision of filth and horrors, I was fairly disappointed at finding the city so clean.

Freaks of Watches.

Watches are queer things, says a writer in the *Jewellers' Circular*. They possess some unaccountable peculiarities. For instance, some time about the beginning of last summer, where there had been a succession of fine displays of the aurora borealis, it was estimated that in a single night in the city of New York the mainsprings of not less than 3,000 watches broke. This estimate is based on actual inquiries. Fine, sensitive watches are particularly liable to be affected by electrical atmospheric disturbances. During the month of June, July and August, when these phenomena are most frequent, there are more mainsprings broken than during all remaining months of the year. They break in a variety of ways, sometimes snapping into as many as twenty-seven pieces. It is a fact that since the introduction of the electric light has become so general a large number of watches, some of them very fine ones, have become magnetized. While in this condition they are useless as time-keepers. This defect used to be incurable, and because of it thousands of watches have been thrown away after much money had been spent on them in vain attempts to persuade them to keep good time. Among the methods resorted to were washing the parts in garlic juice, refinishing, and passing them through the fire. But all these devices were entirely failures or only in part effective. I know of a man who had a fine and valuable movement which kept excellent time. He transferred it from a silver case to a second-hand gold one. Immediately it lost all its characteristics of steadiness and reliability, and in fact did not keep time at all. When replaced in the silver case it kept good time again. The owner, a jeweller, puzzled himself and experimented in vain to discover the cause of this strange partiality on the part of his watch for silver. At length he sent it to an expert. He discovered that the lifting spring of the gold case had been magnetized. On substituting another for it, the watch kept as good time in the gold case as in the silver case.

How to Warm the Room.

The rule is that a person tries to force heated air into a room already full of cold air without affording the latter an escape. Into a room full of cold air warm air cannot be poured. During the cold snap last Saturday and Sunday a family in a warm house, with a model furnace was nearly frozen, and the most active operation of the furnace could not raise the mercury above 58°. A little fire was started in a grate that had been closed, and in 30 minutes the mercury stood at 75°. The fire in the grate created a draught, which drew the cold air from the floor up the chimney, and gave a chance for the warm air from the furnace to take its place. With a little knowledge of the laws which govern the air, any person may be able, not only to effect a great saving in the use of fuel, but may very greatly add to his or her own comfort at the same time.—*Chicago News.*

The Small Boy at School.

School-Teacher (sighing)—I regret that I am compelled to complain of your son, sir, but he causes me a great deal of trouble.

Father—Well, miss, I think he would behave better if you would only try to make your school more interesting.

School-Teacher (indignantly)—Interesting, indeed! Why, that is just the reason I find fault with your boy. He makes it entirely too interesting—for the other scholars.—*New York Journal.*

A milkman slipped and fell in New London the other day in such a way that he went head foremost into a can from which he had removed the cover, and, as it was a tight fit, a tinsmith's services were required to extricate him.

A farmer in New Hampshire has been fined for cruelty in not providing shelter for his cattle during the late cold weather. He was the richest man in the neighborhood.

ICELAND'S HOSPITALITY.

A Primitive Manner of Going to Bed Which Shocks a Traveller.

(Special correspondence of the Press.)

A Lang, Iceland, via Scotland, letter says: All members of an Iceland family sleep in one room, and this, indeed, often serves all purposes save that of kitchen. Very narrow, and from six to twenty feet long, according to the size of the family, with a row of low bunks on either side, leaving a space three or four feet wide down the centre, these rooms are lighted by one small window at the end, ventilated by the door or the trap through which they are entered from below and warmed by the heat of the bodies collected in them. The steeply pitched roof, constructed of rafters and overlapping boards and covered on the outside with a thick layer of growing turf, rests on low walls, and makes it impossible to stand upright, except under the ridge. The priests' houses and a few others have guest chambers, with sometimes a stove, which is used only on extraordinary occasions, owing to the difficulty of transporting fuel from the seaports. Parties of tourists stop where there is a church and shiver out the night on the eight-inch wide benches, the vestment chests or the floor, but if there be only one or two of you and no guest room or that is already filled, you share, for experience's sake, in the somewhat promiscuous nightly packing of the family—for experience's sake, mind you, and you always get it, as well as the only good idea of the home life of the people. Upon this evening I found myself in a room smokily and dimly lighted by seal oil, burned with a wick of cottongrass in a lamp of brass, much like the ancient lamps of the Greeks, but furnished with an overhanging arm and a swivel and boathook arrangement, which permits of its being stuck or hung wherever the user wishes. Two bunks on one side and one on the other were literally full. In one a man and two boys, in another two women and children, and in the third three men, all sleeping like sardines in a box, the head of one on the same pillow as the feet of his next bed-fellows, and the space that was not occupied by human beings probably was by beings inhuman. After shaking up the many boxes and bundles under the rude mattress, and giving an extra poke or two to the feather or down bed, which is the only form of covering known in Iceland, one of the girls motioned us to the bed where we were to sleep (an Iceland gentleman was to share my bed), and then, as if it were an every day occurrence to shock the senses of a modest traveller, while we were still undressing, she, with two others, proceeded to disrobe and take possession of the bunk opposite ours, until "the last in bed put out the light." My companion somewhat surprised me by a warning to secrete any valuables I might have, but as he was an Icelander I thought it better to follow his advice than to trust to the proverbial honesty of his countrymen, and after an application from a box of rough on rats—no, well never mind—I was soon unconscious, breathing carbonic acid gas by the cubic yard, but in sweet oblivion until awakening during the general turn-out next morning. The daylight revealed nothing new, except, perhaps, the many little articles stuffed into every nook and crevice. Furniture is scarce, and a chest of drawers a luxury in an Icelandic habitation, and odds and ends are hung on nails in the roof, stuffed into the cracks or in boxes hidden away under mattresses in the bunks. Horn spoons, knives and forks, bits of cloth, needles, books and fishhooks were tucked promiscuously away, and old clothes and fish hung over lines stretched lengthwise of the ridgepole. It was interesting to see the men, after slipping into the few clothes they had removed upon retiring, sit on the beds chatting and sipping the coffee brought by the women. Several times I was aroused from my musings by the rustling of the disarranged covering in a bed which I had supposed empty, and presently a half-naked child would start from the depth and stare in open-eyed wonder at the stranger, who returned the gaze with a sense of the ludicrous rising within him. From beds where I had counted three the night before four had already risen, and how many more were to follow? At the further end of the aisle a mattress spread upon the floor had served as the resting place of three more girls, whose accustomed bunk myself and companion probably occupied.

A California Lizard's Queer Trick.

"There are some curious cases among the geckos," said a Los Angeles country naturalist. "Here is one dead, that is called the leaf-tail gecko. You see the tail bulges out soon after leaving the body, and assumes a leaf or arrow shape; hence the name of the animal. Now, when the little creature is chased you will see it dodge around a limb and hold up the curious leaf-like tail. That is all that you can see, and so naturally would think it a part of the tree itself. But the lizard has a more remarkable method of escape yet. We will imagine that you have tried to pluck the leaf. The animal drops clumsily to the ground and darts away among the rocks, where it attracts the attention of some of the hawks that are forever prowling around. Immediately a chase ensues; the bird gains, and is finally about to pounce upon its prey, when all at once two lizards appear, one making off while the other dances up and down into the air and along the ground in a mysterious way, so that the astonished bird stops and looks. In the meantime the original lizard escapes; the other, that is really the tail, soon becomes quiescent. You see the gecko has the faculty of throwing off its tail when hard pressed, and while the pursuer's attention is drawn to the squirming member the animal itself escapes."

"But it loses its tail," suggested the reporter.

"Only for a time. They can reproduce this organ, and, curiously enough, sometimes two tails are produced instead of one."—*San Francisco Call.*

Aztec Simplicity.

"The Aztec Indians down in Mexico, of whose antiquity and traditions we hear so much, are a very peculiar people," said General Eastern Agent Keller, of the Mexican Central Road, to a New York correspondent. "They are something like the Chinese in their inventive genius and their habit of keeping to themselves, but they are very childish and simple-minded. We had a curious and lamentable illustration of this when our first locomotive began running through their territory. The Aztecs regarded our engine as a species of their horses or mustangs, and believed they could jump and romp around just as those animals do. Three of them were by the track one day when a locomotive was coming, and thought they would like to see if it could jump higher in the air than either of their mustangs could. So they placed several logs of wood on the track and made a hurdle of them for the locomotive to vault. Of course there was a wreck. One of the train hands thought the train was surrounded by Indians, and shot one of the Aztec. The other two were captured and brought to trial, but it was so evident that their action was entirely free from malice and prompted solely by curiosity that they were allowed to go free."

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Male weakness and loss of power promptly cured. Book, 10 cents in stamps. World's Dispensary Medical Association, 663 Main Street, Buffalo, N. Y.

The annual report of the fifty-four Maine savings banks shows that less than 1 per cent. of their $37,000,000 of combined resources was put into securities that depreciated, a loss which was made good by increase in value elsewhere.

TEA IN STRANGE COMPANY.

A Quiet Meeting of Rogues, Thieves and Vagabonds.

"Admit Bearer to a Free Tea for Rogues, Thieves and Vagabonds, on Friday evening, January 8th, at 7 o'clock, in the Lillie-road Mission Hall, West Brompton. After the feed, an address will be given by your sincere friend, Ned Wright." The dubious compliment conveyed in the above invitation, says the London *News*, might naturally have been imagined to induce a feeling of diffidence on the part of its recipient, but apparently delicacy is not a marked characteristic of the "dangerous classes." Not only did those to whom tickets were addressed present themselves in full force, nearly filling the mission hall, but there were a number of applicants outside who, though not specially invited, were willing and anxious to prove that they possessed the necessary qualification for admission. It afforded food for reflection that so many who came under the designation we have quoted above should have appeared in such a remote locality, especially, moreover, as quarter sessions are now on and the attendance of this class of the community is generally largely required to take their part therein in the administration of the law. Nevertheless some 150 guests, chiefly young men, many of them mere lads, assembled under the Mission Hall roof to enjoy the meal provided for them, and afterward to listen to the exhortations of Ned Wright. The proceedings were tolerably orderly, but there were one or two turbulent spirits present whom nothing apparently would satisfy. A complaint was made by a discontented gentleman at the back of the room that he had been asked to tea and had had none. "Don't take any notice of him; he is telling a confounded lie, for I saw him eating and drinking just now," was the retort of Wright, and the malcontent was accordingly put down, though not without the protest, "If you can prove what you've said I'll give in." Ned Wright then gave out the hymn, "Hold the Fort," which was sung to the accompaniment of a violin and harmonium. The hymn was, on the whole, rendered with due feeling and respect, but it was not difficult to detect some stray discordant sounds mingling with the well-meant efforts of the majority.