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Acton Free Press.

VOLUME IV. No. 39.—WHOLE No. 196. ACTON, ONT., MARCH 27, 1879. $1.00 PER ANNUM IN ADVANCE.

My Little Wife.

BY O. M.

Our table is spread for two to-night—
No guests our bounty share;
The damask cloth is snowy white,
The service elegant and bright,
Our china quaint and rare;
My little wife presides,—
And perfect love abides.

The bread is spongy, the butter cold,
The muffins nice and hot,
What though the winds without blow cold
The wa'ls a little world and fold,
And the storm is soon forgot
In the firelight's cheerful glow
Blooms a Paradise below.

A fairer picture who hath seen?
Soft lights and shadows blent;
The central figure of the scene,
She sits—my wife, my love, my queen—
Her head a little bent;
And in her eyes of blue
I read my bliss anew.

I watch her as she pours the tea,
With quiet, gentle grace;
With fingers deft and movements free,
She mixes in the cream for me,
A bright smile on her face;
And as she feeds it up,
I pledge her in my cup.

Was ever man before so blessed?
I secretly reflect.
The passing thought she must have guessed,
For now dear lips on mine are pressed,
An arm is round my neck:
Dear treasure of my life—
God bless her—little wife!

A French Detective's Story.

This is how I came to be mixed up with certain detectives of the Rue de Jerusaleme, the Scotland Yard of Paris.

A friend of mine, a solicitor, had among his clients a firm of East India brokers, into which had recently been admitted, as a partner, the son of the senior member of the house. This young man had by no means turned out well. He had not only been extravagant, but utterly reckless in money matters, and had lately capped his previous offenses by absconding to the continent, and taking with him £10,000 worth of foreign bonds or securities, that were not only the property of the firm, but formed the nest-egg on which the partners relied in case of a rainy day. Like most foreign securities, these bonds were payable to "bearer," and were therefore all the more easy to negotiate or dispose of. For several reasons the firm did not wish to make the thing public. In the first place, doing so would have been a severe, if not fatal, blow to their credit in the city; and, secondly, the other partners were naturally unwilling to publish the dishonesty of an individual whose father was the head of their establishment. Somehow or other it had been ascertained that the absconded partner had gone to Paris. The affair had been placed in the hands of my friend, who, as I have said, was their solicitor, and his plan was to try and recover the securities on payment of a certain sum. As a matter of course, it was to be expected, those persons in whose hands they were pledged would ask as much as possible for these documents; and that, if they knew that legally there was a doubt if they could be looked upon as stolen, their demands would rise in proportion.

To me was intrusted the task of getting back the bonds. It was agreed that I was to start the next day; that I was to pay as little as possible for the recovery; and that I was to keep the whole affair as much as possible in the dark.

Some of the peculiarities of the French detectives and their system struck me very forcibly, even before I landed at Boulogne. On board the same steamer with me there happened to be very few passengers; but among them was an elderly, very gentlemanly-looking Frenchman, who spoke English well, although with a very decided accent. I am what is called a good sailor, and always enjoy a run across the channel, even in the most stormy days. As I was smoking my cigar in the bow of the steamer, and watching an ironclad in the distance that was toiling up channel, the Frenchman of whom I speak made his way up to me, and begged the favour of a cigar-light, evidently with the intention of there and then commencing a conversation. He was a spare, middle-aged man, well set up, about 50 years of age, with iron-gray hair and moustache, no whiskers or beard, and and with the omnipresent red ribbon in his buttonhole. He was well-dressed, had good manners, and all the outward and visible signs of a retired officer of the French army. After talking for some time on indifferent matters, he asked me if I was not Monsieur So-and-so, mentioning my right name. Thinking he was some individual I had met in Paris or elsewhere on the continent, I replied in the affirmative.

"Ah," said he, "I never forget a face or a name. Let me introduce myself as Monsieur X., of the police correctionnelle secrete de Paris. I have been engaged in a petite affair in London. Your police wanted some one who could identify a certain individual, and I was sent over for that purpose. I happened to be in the bureau at Scotland Yard when Monsieur came there last Wednesday, and one of the inspectors pointed you out as a gentleman about to proceed to Paris to recover some securities which had been stolen. If I can be of any use to monsieur over yonder in the Rue de Jerusalem, I shall only be too happy."

I thanked my new acquaintance very much, and told him that though I had a letter of introduction from the French Embassy to the chief de police correctionnelle in Paris, I should be very glad indeed to avail myself of his services. We then had a little refreshment together, and agreed to travel in company with each other to Paris.

In the train, as well as in the steamer, my friend talked a good deal about our English police system, and more particularly about our English detectives. The latter he declared to be "des excellents gens," and "des braves hommes;" but was not a little astonished at their way of doing work, which, as he said, would never suit Paris or France. "Your secret police," he said, "are no more secret than the police in uniform. Everybody knows them, and they even dress so exactly alike that they might as well wear the blue tunic with the number on the collar. This is not the first or second time I have been in London, and it has always struck me that your rascals and vagabonds know far more what your detectives are doing than the detectives know about the rascals."

"We," he continued, divide our police into two great divisions—la police politique and a police correctionnelle. Of the former you have none at all. So much the better for you. The police correctionnelle we subdivide into two categories, those who wear uniform and those who don't. The former are for keeping order in the streets, at the doors of public buildings, and other places where there are crowds; also, they have to deal with ordinary thieves, house-breakers, and rogues of the lower orders. For instance, if I happened to be passing through the streets of Paris and saw a fight, a tumult or other disturbance, I would not dream of interfering. It would be the business of the sergents-de-ville to do so. This part of the London police duty is admirably performed. Your policemen do their work in the streets, and whenever there is a crowd or a crush, with a good temper and forbearance that is beyond all praise. But it must be admitted that this is very much owing to the English people themselves. With the exception of the lowest of the low, the English are a people who love order. And if a policeman is doing his duty, nine Englishmen out of ten would step forward and assist him if he were in difficulty or were outnumbered by what you call the roughs. Now, in France, it is quite different. With Frenchmen—or at least with the vast majority of my compatriots—the authorities, or the government, or the executive, call them what you will, are certain to be in the wrong. This is why France has never flourished unless governed by a hand of iron. I love my country, and I love my countrymen; but this does not prevent me from seeing the faults of the latter. And there can be no doubt that, in their heart of hearts, nineteen out of twenty Frenchmen think that they are fully capable of making their own laws, being their own executive, their own police, their own clergy and their own doctors. And this is why our sergents-de-villes have often to be assisted by the gensdarmes, and the gensdarmes have frequently to be supplemented by the military. Now in England it is quite different. Everyone believes that in society there are different grades and ranks; and so no one, except the most abject and vagabonds, would lift his hand against what is done for the general good. This is one reason why your visible police have an easier time than ours."

"But," said I, "do you not approve of our secret police, or detectives?"

"No," said the Frenchman, "I do not. I may be wrong, but they don't appear to me to know the very commencement of their work. For instance, as your London detectives go along the street the policemen on duty speak to him, or give him a nod of recognition, or, if he is a superior, salute him. You saw me a little while ago at Boulogne"—we were then in the train on our way to Paris—"pass a number of sergents de-ville when we disembarked. Did any one of them make me a sign of recognition?"

"No," said I, "they certainly did not. I was close behind you, and observed that not one of them appeared even to have seen you before."

"Bon," said the Frenchman; "and yet they all knew me as well as I know my superiors in Paris. But, in fact, even you, monsieur," he said, addressing me, "have only my word for it that I have anything whatever to do with the police. And if you were to take off my clothes, search all my pockets, and cut out all the linings, you would not find one scrap of paper which would show you that I have anything to do with Rue de Jerusalem."

"But," said I, "after a time people must get to know your appearance, and must mark you down as Monsieur So-and-so of the police force, in the same way that any banker, merchant or other private individual would be noted down by his neighbours."

"Ah, mon cher monsieur," he replied, "How little you English know of the working of our secret police, of what you call detectives! If my appearance and my vocation were known, even to my landlord and my concierge, I would be no more use to the secret police of Paris than a pair of boots without soles would be to an infantry soldier.

"You don't suppose that I always go about in the same costume! It is true that I leave my house every morning in the same dress; and if you were to ask my concierge, or any of my neighbours, who and what I am, you would be told that my name was so-and-so—*que je suis decore, et que je suis dans les affaires*—which is equivalent to what you English call 'something in the city.'"

"Do you ever, if I may ask the question, use disguises or dresses so as to make yourself pass for something else than what you really are?"

"Mais, comment?" replied the policeman, "that is one of our special duties. A member of the special police who could not pass himself off for what he is not would not be worth twenty francs a month in the way of salary. I have at different times disguised myself as a priest, as a dragoon, as an infantry officer, as a carpenter, as a printer, as a cocher de fiacre. I have waited at a table in a restaurant as a garcon of the establishment; I have wheeled a truck with luggage on it from the Chemin de Fer du Nord to the Grand hotel; I have smuggled cigars, passed myself off as a commissaire, and assisted in taking tickets at the station. In fact there are few situations and fewer trades to which I have not for a time belonged, and to which I hope I have done a certain amount of honour."

"But," said I, "surely in a large city like Paris there must be some body, and I should say not a few people, who knew you, and who cannot be deceived by your different costumes."

"Look here," replied my companion, "this is Thursday; we shall arrive in Paris about 7 o'clock this morning. If monsieur will make me a bet of a dinner for four persons at any restaurant the loser pleases, I will wager that before Sunday night I will speak on three separate occasions to monsieur, that he will not on either occasion recognize who I am until I disclose myself, and that at each time I will speak to him for at least five minutes."

Thinking it impossible that any one person could by change of dress, or what not, deceive me as to his identity three times in four days, I at once agreed to make the bet. In due time we arrived at the station of the Chemin de Fer du Nord; I betaking myself to my hotel and my companion to his own home.

After breakfast I set off to present my credentials at the Rue de Jerusaleme; which, as most people know, is the headquarters of the Paris police. Upon sending up my letter and card, I was shown to the room of the "sous-chief de police correctionelle;" which, as I have mentioned before, is a totally distinct department from that of the political police. The gentleman into whose presence I was shown had very little the appearance which in England we perceive in our police inspectors. He was a well-dressed, clean-shaven man of about 50 years of age, and looked more like the manager or head of a banking establishment than as if he had anything to do with the detective police. He was seated at a large writing-table, upon which were a multitude of letters and other papers duly docketed. Within reach he had three or four handles of electric-bells, and half a dozen elastic speaking tubes, by which he could communicate in an instant with any part of the building. On one side of the room was a large glass door, beyond which I could perceive quite plainly some three or four sergents-de-ville were sitting, so that they could see all that passed in their chief's room, and be ready to come in at a moment's notice, although they could not hear what was said.

The sous-chief received me not only well, but courteously. He heard my story, and, without expressing an opinion as to whether I could carry out the views of my employers, and recover the bonds, said he thought he knew the man who would suit me—*qui fera votre affaire*. He then touched one of the bell-handles, and immediately spoke through one of the tubes to some person or persons in another part of the house. Having received a reply to his queries, he told me that the man he wanted would be with us in a minute, and then began talking on indifferent subjects. In a very short time some one knocked at the door, and, upon being told to come in, there entered quite a young man, almost as well-dressed as his superior, and who, if I had been asked the question, I should have put down as one of the ordinary flaneurs on the boulevards. The sous-chief introduced me to him, saying he was an individual well up in all the rascality—*escroquerie* was the word he used—of commercial Paris; and that if I would go with him and tell him my whole story he could, no doubt, help me, and, if it were possible to do so, recover the bonds. He then took me by the hand, wished me "bonne chance," said he would be glad to see me again, and hoped that I would be able to give a good account of the Paris police on my return to London. I then went forth with my new guide, thinking how utterly unlike both he and his chief were to anything I had seen in the way of police detectives in London.

My experience of Frenchmen, extending over a period of many years, has taught me that, if you really want one of them to help you, the first thing to do is to ask him to breakfast—to that meal which is eaten at 11 or 12 o'clock, and which bears a strong likeness to an elaborate English luncheon. I accordingly asked the individual under whose care I had been put, to come with me to breakfast at a certain restaurant in Place du Havre, where, having a weakness for sole *a la Normande*, one of the specialities of the house, I usually eat my midday meal when staying in the pleasantest of European capitals. My companion promptly accepted the proffered civility, and, as we jogged thither in a fiacre, I explained to him the nature of my business in Paris, and how anxious I was to recover the lost bonds for my friends without letting the public know that the latter had been robbed.

The detective said he did not think there would be any difficulty about the matter. He hoped, and, indeed, he believed that if the bonds had been pawned or pledged in Paris, he could find without much difficulty where they were, that no respectable firm would take in pledged bonds from an individual they did not know; that those firms who did business of this sort would advance a very small portion of the actual value, and that if I was prepared to pay a little more than had been advanced the bonds would no doubt be recovered. Thus talking we arrived at the Place du Havre, and both did full justice to the excellent breakfast placed before us. After coffee, cigars and cheese, we separated, my comrade walking down with me as far as the Grand hotel, where he took leave, promising to see me about 5 o'clock on the afternoon of the next day, at the hotel where I was lodging, the Bedford, in the Rue de l'Arcade. During our walk between the Place du Havre and the Grand hotel I was anxious to see whether my companion was recognized by several sergents-de-ville that we met on the road; but nothing of the kind took place. No one, whether of the police or not, appeared to have the slightest idea that this individual was anything more than one of the well-dressed loiterers who may be counted by the thousands in Paris. He was well-dressed, but not in any way dandified; and from the crown of his hat to the sole of his boot there was nothing whatever about him that spoke of his profession. If I had been asked to guess who he was, I should have said he was a clerk in some merchant's office or a bank, and that although not wealthy, he was tolerably prosperous and well-to-do man. His manners were good and free, without being presuming; he spoke to me as being quite my equal, and yet with nothing but what savoured of true French politeness. His willingness to help me was expressed more as if he was anxious to show kindness and civility to a foreigner than as if he expected to be in any way rewarded for what he did. He never in any way so much as hinted at money or money's worth being needed to carry out his work, and when I spoke to him of his expenses he would incur in making this inquiry, and of my willingness to place funds in his hands for that purpose, his answer was, "Those are matters which you will arrange by-and-by with the chief. I am only acting under his orders."

After leaving the detective's officer whose services were thus placed at my disposal, I walked back by the boulevards to the Madeleine, on my way to the rue de l'Arcade. Happening to pass a linendraper's shop, and noticing some socks which took my fancy, I went in to look at them. Not being certain about the size and whether or not they would fit me, the women of the shop very civilly offered to send round some pairs of different sizes from which I could select. I gave her my address at the hotel, which was but a short distance off, and I had hardly arrived at the Bedford before one of the waiters tapped at my door and announced that a man had brought me some socks to look at from a shop on the boulevards.

I desired that the man should be shown up. He brought his parcel in with him and stood facing me as he undid it, talking about the weather, of the few strangers that were in Paris and the usual gossip of a would-be-civil Paris shopman. I did not look at him very fixedly, but noticed that he was a man of about 30 years of age, with full black beard and moustache, black and somewhat long hair and respectably, although not fashionably, dressed. He showed me several pairs of socks, which I measured with some of my own from my portmanteau. I selected a dozen pairs, but demurred at the price he asked me, which was more than double what I should have had to pay in the most fashionable west end shop in London. We argued the point amicably together, and, when I produced a 100 franc note wherewith to pay him he said he had no change, but would go down to the bureau of the hotel and ask for what he needed. I state these particulars to show that the man was some time in my room, and that we had a considerable amount of conversation together. As he was turning to go out of the door, he at once pulled off his wig, his beard and whiskers, and stood revealed to me as my travelling companion from Dover to Paris. He grinned with delight as having scored one of the three points he had to make to win his bet. For my own part I was so astonished I could hardly speak. The disguise had been perfect, and the manner in which he had followed me from the shop—into which a short half hour before I had no idea of entering—was by astounding that I told him at the time he deserved to win the game from what he had already done. But this would not satisfy him. A Frenchman, no matter what his occupation may be, invariably takes pride in his work; and this detective was as proud of having outwitted me as a general would be of having gained a great victory. He resumed his wig and beard so as not to excite surprise in the people of the hotel, and going with him to the bureau I procured change for my note and paid him for the socks. The latter, it appeared, belonged bona fide to the shop where I had been. But how Monsieur X. had got possion of them, or why the woman of the shop had allowed him to bring them to my hotel, are mysteries I have never yet been able to solve.

The next morning, while I was still discussing an early breakfast, a visiting card, on which was inscribed the name "Archille Dubras," was handed to me, with the intimation that the gentleman of that name wished to see me. Anxious as I was to obtain news of the lost property, and thinking that "Archille Dubras" might be the name I had not caught when introduced to the detective at the Rue de Jerusaleme, I was not a little disappointed when my visitor was ushered into the room. He was an elderly man, with short-cut, crisp hair, white, drooping mustache and a very pale face, and began a long, rambling statement about being assistant or clerk in a certain financial firm, to which firm, upon a day he named, some foreign bonds payable "to bearer," and worth 250,000 francs (£10,000), had been pledged as security for a loan of one twenty-fifth of their value. The principal facts of the man's statement were easy enough to understand, but what between his rambling voice and his evident desire to conceal certain details I could not exactly make out his story, and ended by asking him whether he would accompany me to Rue de Jerusaleme and state there what he had told me.

"Avec le plus grand plaisir," replied he, in a familiar and altogether changed voice, and there, pulling off his wig and adjusting his moustache, sat revealed once more my travelling companion, Monsieur X. I had certainly been taken in, if possible more completely than the first time, and I again offered to pay my bet as fairly lost. This, however, my friend would not hear of, and said he must either win a third time or pay for the dinner he had lost. In the meantime he must tell me that he had really been sent by the chief de bureau in the Rue de Jerusaleme to announce to me that a part, if not the whole, of the bonds had been discovered, and that they were in the hands of a very disreputable firm in Rue Notre Dame de Nazareth. "And now, mon ami," said the Frenchman, "all you have to do is to remain quiet for the present, and not to move in the affair. In two or three days we hope to carry through your wishes. And as to our little bet, gardez vous, monsieur!" With this he gave my hand a shake and disappeared, chuckling to himself behind the thick white mustache before going down stairs.

During the next two days, which I, nothing loath, employed in looking up my friends, visiting the theatre, and otherwise killing time, I regarded with suspicion, every Frenchman who approached me, thinking to discover, in every strange face, the bright, twinkling eyes and triumphant smile of my clever enemy. On the evening of the second day I went to see a friend off from the Mazas station, and, strange to say, that, although I had only at the eleventh hour made up my mind to accompany him, it was here I lost my third and last point in my bet with Monsieur X. As our fiacre drove up, one of the regular-ticketed porters came forward to take my companion's trunk. In lifting it from the roof of the carriage he let it fall. Upon this I spoke to him somewhat angrily. Frenchman-like, he returned my abuse, and, for at least five minutes, we stood face to face, slanging each other in the choicest of French language. My friend, who was an Englishman, stood by, anxious to put in a word to help me, but not knowing exactly how to do so. All of a sudden the porter put down the trunk, and asked me to speak to him in the street. Taking me under the gaslight, and looking cautiously around, he pulled off his cap and a curious sort of skin-mask which covered the forehead, nose, and upper part of the face, fitting closely like a glove, and there stood Monsieur X.

I at once declared that I had fairly lost the bet and invited him and any other two friends he liked to bring to dine with me, the next day at my favourite restaurant in the Place du Havre. We then returned to the most central part of Paris, my companion having in the meantime changed his clothes at the house of a friend in the neighbourhood.

The history of the finding of the bonds is soon told. In three or four days after my arrival in Paris the police had the whole affair at my finger's ends. It was just as they suspected. The securities had been pledged to a very low money-lending firm for something under five hundred pounds, they being worth twenty times the amount. A little—or I should say not a little—pressure were put upon these Shylocks, who, for a premium of two thousand francs (£80) were made to disgorge what may truly be called their plunder. They managed these things, if not better, at any rate more promptly in France than in England. The Paris police gave the holders of the bonds the chance of restoring the bonds to me, or of appearing before the juge d'instruction. Both individually and collectively, this firm could not be said to have had a clean bill of health. It was not the first, nor yet the second, nor third time, that they had been mixed up with money affairs which, to say the least of it, were excessively shady. They consented at once to give up what they were told was stolen property. The result was that within ten days of my leaving London, I returned there, having fulfilled my mission my expenses being all paid, and a check for a hundred guineas handed to me as a remuneration for my trouble.

The Lornes Learn Tobogganing.

Here is an extract of a letter from Canada, published in the London *Truth*, which gives an account of tobogganing: "The Governor-General tried his hand at it, and a bit of his coat loose somehow under the toboggan, which is always fatal. Over he went in the steepest part of the second plunge, but luckily the snow was too soft to hurt. Then he took it into his head to try going down a shorter hill with a jump right on to the skating-rink. We tried hard to dissuade him, for if persons are shot off with such an impetus on the ice is a very different landing to the soft snow, and we knew what would happen if the Princess caught sight of him. However, off he went; the toboggan rose straight in the snow as a horse does to a fence, shot on the ice and right across the rink all safe. Then several gentlemen followed him. By this time up came the Princess, who, we had hoped, was safe at the bottom of the big slide, and too busy hauling up her toboggan to notice us. Of course nothing would suit her but that she must try it at that instant herself, so all that could be done was to level the snow-bank a little, so as to make the toboggan jump a little less violently, and put some to catch her on the other side, and put some to catch her on the other side, and off she went. Luckily she kept the toboggan quite straight and sat like a rock, so so she spun across right to the curling rink, where the long-stop, as he was christened, caught and broke her shock, which might otherwise damaged the toboggan. She is wonderfully plucky, but His Excellency would not let her try it any more. You have no notion how popular the Princess is. She and His Excellency and her ladies go out on a snow tramp on Sunday afternoons, and she has invented such a pretty walking costume. It is a dark blanket coat, with hood lined and piped with red, red sash round her waist and petticoat to match; and the gentlemen wear a dress something like it, only without the petticoat."

Whelmed by the Floods.

The Appalling Calamity that has Befallen a Hungarian City.

A calamity to which Hungary has long been considered peculiarly liable has overtaken Szegedin, the second commercial town of that country.

The River Theiss overflowed its banks, despite the precautions that had been taken from the moment the danger of such an occurrence was observed, and within three hours the town was inundated.

The scenes that ensued defy description, for, to add to the situation, the tremendous current undermined the foundations of the buildings in which the inhabitants lived or had sought shelter, and amid shrieks, cries, and frantic appeals for aid that it was impossible to render, the structures went crashing into the flood, carrying with them the inmates. Even the synagogue, to which many people had flown for refuge, was not spared by the waters, and fell in, burying hundreds in its ruins. The practical obliteration of the gas works suggested a new distress to the minds of the survivors, and this proved only too real. When daylight faded they were left at the mercy of the torrent, unable to perceive what fresh danger threatened them, and in a state of prostration from which death would have been a relief.

Some years ago the Government received proposals from an English engineer to furnish a remedy for the inundation which the Theiss has threatened each spring, but the expense of the construction of the series of canals which he deemed essential to his scheme, was considered too great, and his proposition was dismissed on that account. Had it been accepted, the terrible disaster now reported might never have occurred. The Theiss—Tisza in Hungarian—has so many tributaries that it is invariably swollen at the time of year ice begins to melt, and it has long been looked upon as liable to cause great destruction to property, that which has submerged an entire city could scarcely have been contemplated at the moment the English engineer's scheme was discarded as entailing too heavy an expense. This rich river—it is a saying with the Hungarians that the Theiss has more fish than water—rises in the county of Marmaros, in the northeast, flows westward to Tokay, then southward to Szolnok, when it turns south, and enter the Danube south of Titel, near the junction of Hungary. It is navigable throughout most of its entire length of 600 miles, and is bordered by marshes, moors, soda-lakes and swamps. For nearly 300 miles its lower course is parallel with the Danube, and from about the beginning of the present century it has been connected with that river by the Francis Canal, which shortens the route down its waters and up those of the larger river 106 miles. Its principal tributaries are the Boitog, Hernad, Sajo, and Zagyva, on the right, and the Szamos, Koros, and Maros on the left. Besides Szegedin, it flows through such large towns as Csongrad, Ziota, and old Becse-Szegedin—called Szeged by the Hungarians—is situated on the right bank of the Theiss, and opposite the mouth of the Maros, ninety-six miles southeast of Pesth, and fifty-five miles west of Arad. Its population was between seventy and eighty thousand, and consisted chiefly of Magyars and Slavs. The city stood in a marshy plain, and was divided into a central town, or Palanka, in which the residences of the merchants were grouped around an old fortress built by the Turks in the sixteenth century, and containing extensive barracks, a house of correction, and a church of its own; an upper and a lower town, and new Szegedin, situated on the east bank of the Theiss, and reached by a bridge of boats. Besides the synagogue—the inhabitants comprised many Jews—there were six Roman Catholic churches, a Catholic gymnasium, a beautiful Greek church, and one or two convents. The market place was very large, and among the places of amusement was a Magyar theatre.

Reliance had been placed upon several large dykes which protected the back of the town, but these gradually succumbed to the force of the water, and the inhabitants perceived that their only safety lay in strengthening the embankment of the Alfold Railway. Desperate efforts were made throughout Tuesday night, but early yesterday morning a gale arose, and aided by this, the water broke through, carrying away part of the embankment and the rolling stock of the railway, and rushing in broad streams toward the town. This was at 3 o'clock. Many persons had remained up throughout the night, anticipating some such danger, and these fled at once. Others, aroused by the roar of the great body of water, sprang from their beds and, hurrying on some clothing, sought refuge on the housetops. At daybreak the town was many feet deep in water, and the inhabitants had begun to realize the extent of their calamity. Here and there a house, less substantial than its neighbours, tottered and fell with a crash, and it frequently happened that at the moment a boat was nearing a window from which half distracted people were appealing for aid, the whole edifice would succumb to the torrent, amid the piteous shrieks of the inmates. Such of the inhabitants as were so fortunate as to be able to do so fled to new Szegedin and more elevated parts of the town, hurriedly crossing the bridge of boats which separates the new city from the old. As the day wore on whole rows of houses fell, and the flood gained such headway that it submerged fully two-thirds of the town, including the citadel and the post and telegraph offices. Besides the synagogue, the orphanage succumbed, burying its inmates in the ruins, and two manufactories were discovered to be in flames. No excesses were observable, however, on the part of the inhabitants, precautionary measures having been taken for the protection of property. During the afternoon the dams were cut in several places to allow the water to run off; the flood was still rushing with an awful roar over the city, and the practical destruction of the town was complete. Happily, however, while there was much excitement there was no disorder, and such of the inhabitants as could be removed were conveyed to a place of safety by men who seemed to retain their presence of mind to a greater degree than might have been expected.

At Pesth active measures were taken to send assistance to the afflicted city; the municipal authorities directed that relief trains be prepared without delay, and accommodations for fugitives were provided in the barracks and public buildings of the capital.

The Government has sent 40,000 florins for the relief of the inhabitants. This generosity does not save it, however, from being violently attacked by the Radicals in the Diet for having neglected to take precautions against the calamity. Every hour brings intelligence of fresh disaster. It appears that 100 square miles in the vicinity of Szegedin are flooded and the crops in that district totally ruined.

At latest accounts the water had risen five feet more, and the situation was becoming more and more critical.

Sixty thousand persons were without a roof to cover them. The upper floors of all high houses were crammed with spectators in momentary fear of death.

To the North Pole in a Balloon.

(From the New York Tribune.)

Commander Cheyne, of the British Royal Navy, is making efforts to get up an expedition to reach the North Pole by means of balloons. He is an experienced Arctic navigator, having served under Sir James Ross, and has secured the services of Capt. Templar, a well-known aeronaut. Commander Cheyne believes that the Gulf Stream sweeps round the polar basin, and returns by the North and east of Greenland as a great body of cold water. He proposes to utilize this current in the following manner: The ship would proceed up Davis' Strait and Baffin's Bay: then, turning to the west, would steam up Lancaster Sound and Queen's Channel to the furthest explored point. She would next take a north north-westerly direction until the set of the current was felt, when her course would be altered to due north. In any case, she would pass on through every available opening in the ice until her advance was definitely arrested by the advent of winter. In addition to the usual equipment of sledges, etc., the vessel would carry several balloons, each one capable of lifting about a ton weight in addition to the men. When the ship became beset in the pack three balloons would be inflated and joined together by means of three light spars sixty feet long. Thus a triangle would be formed, with a balloon at each angle, the whole together representing a lifting power of about three tons. This power would be employed in carrying the boat-cars, sledges, provisions, tents, ballast, etc. Commander Cheyne proposes during the winter to establish two observatories about thirty miles apart, with the ship as a centre, so that by the end of May the balloons may start upon a curve already ascertained with tolerable accuracy. By this means, the distance of the vessel from the Pole and the course to be followed be known, the travellers would be enabled to drop within ten or twenty miles of their destination. Wire trail-ropes would be used for preserving an equal altitude above the ice. When it was necessary to descend, the gas would be preserved by recompressing it, by mechanical means, into the receivers, there to be held in readiness for future use. If the journey should have been successful and the wind favourable, the return trip would at once be made, the balloon being arrested on the parallel of latitude upon which the ship was left ice-blocked. The commanding officer in charge would send out sledge parties daily to meet the balloons and give whatever assistance might be required. On the breaking up of the ice the ship would leave her winter quarters and push round the northern extremity of Greenland. A second winter would here be passed, the time being spent in making a survey of the coast and other scientific observations. During the following summer, aided by the natural drift of the ice, the vessel would steam through every opening, and return home between the continent of Greenland and Spitzbergen. Should no favourable wind arise, however, to carry him back from the Pole to his ship, Commander Cheyne intends continuing his aerial journey, and trusts to good fortune to drop in Russia wherever inhabitants are to be seen.

The Beverage of Berlin.

(From the Pall Mall Gazette.)

Two typical institutions of the German capital are its weiss bier and weip stuben, both usually to be met with in the quieter streets, and frequented by regular rather than by chance customers. The Berliner of the old type is usually a weiss-bier drinker, who regards the beverage as peculiar to the city, and is fond of expatiating upon its merits to strangers. You no sooner become acquainted with a man of this class than he will ask your opinion of the "weiss." I remember being sorely puzzled by an inquiry of the kind, and on replying, hesitatingly, "The weiss! What is the weiss?" my friend said, in a reproachful tone, "What! you have been among us a whole week and not tasted the weiss yet?" and then hurried me along until we reached a building with "Weissbier Ausschank" painted in huge black letters on the façade. Here we found ourselves in front of a small counter, behind which three individuals were engaged in uncorking stone bottles and carefully pouring their contents into huge glasses, each holding more than half a gallon; while a fourth was removing kippered lampreys from a barrel. Right and left lay the weiss bier stuben, decorated, like all the beer saloons of Berlin, with plaster busts of the Emperor, the Crown Prince, and Furst von Bismarck. All the little tables crowding both apartments were occupied by guests whose rosy faces and rotund forms attested a familiarity with the good things of this life. Before every one stood a gigantic tumbler, containing a liquid, pale and clear as Rhine wine, and surmounted by a huge crown of froth. This was the famous "weiss." The liquor being ordered and duly brought, we observed that the quart bottle filled not more than one-third of the large glass, the voluminous head of froth not only occupying the remaining space, but foaming over the sides. Hence the necessity for such capacious tumblers, which a novice is only able to raise to his lips by the aid of both hands. No so, however, the experienced weiss bier drinker, who, by long practice, has acquired the knack of balancing, as it were, the bottom of the glass on his outstretched little finger, while he grasps the side with the remaining fingers and thumb of the same hand. A preliminary nip of kummel (anise-seed) is considered *de rigueur*, and, this disposed of, the Berliner will drink his four quarts of kuhle blonde—as weiss bier is poetically termed by its admirers—as readily as his native sand sucks in a Summer shower, exciting his thirst perhaps once in the course of the operation by some salted delicacy such as a lamprey. Berlin is the city where the kuhle blonde is obtained in the greatest perfection. It should be drunk when it is of a certain age, be largely impregnated with carbonic acid gas, and should have acquired a peculiar sharp, dry, and by no means disagreeable flavour. To the ordinary unstrung Berliner a moderate quantity of the weiss is as soda and brandy to the "seedy" Englishman. After an evening of excess his steps invariable tend to the weiss bier stube, there to quench his thirst with a draught of kuhle blonde, and stimulate his palled appetite with knoblanchwurst, a delicacy of the favourite sausage type fried with garlic.

NOTHING can reach out further than a cough at church. It may come from the remotest corner in the rear, but its echo tickles the throat of those in front, and then creeps down the aisle, and touches the ushers, and floats from the choir to the minister, and never releases its hold until it has wrung a sympathetic explosion from every victim. Perhaps you've noticed it.

No one ever succeeded in extracting honey from a spelling bee. Didn't, hey? A young man who attended a spelling bee in this town three years ago took therefrom a young lady whom he recently married, and he calls her "honey" for short, and thinks she is ten times sweeter than that saccharin product of the bee. What he will call her a few years hence is a question we will hand over to our puzzle solvers.

THE British Wesleyan Thanksgiving Fund has reached already £70,000. The general committee invested with the duty of superintending appeals for contributions have resolved to appropriate £10,000 for the establishment of an orphanage. A gentleman of the name of Jevons offers to give £9,000 for this purpose. The sum of £8,000 will be set apart as a permanent fund, of which the interest will be appropriated to the relief of necessitous local preachers. Aid will also be given to Methodism in Scot