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The Task.

Life's school has many tasks we all must learn,
Lessons of faith and patience, hope and love;
Knowledge of bitter taste, and wisdom stern,
Of fires, the temper of our steel to prove;
Much of forbearance gathering years must teach,
And charity, with her angelic face,
Gentling the judgment, softening the speech,
Gives time its sweet aid, and grief its grace.

Hardest of all the masters we must bear,
Experience, with cold eyes and measured voice,
Bids us, who hold young lives supremely dear,
Beware, see moulding them to suit our choice;
Warning: "The sky smiles blue, smooth shows the path,
Promise no sunshine, guide no wavering foot;
The loveliest valley hides the seeds of death,
The poison lurks deep in the fairest fruit."

Leave the young hearts to Nature and to God;
Leave the young tendrils where they will to twine;
Where violets blossom, and white snowdrops nod,
Fall April dews, where April's sunlight shine;
Gather the ripened corn, if yet some ears
Are left for faltering hand and patient care;
But for the darlings of decaying years,
Leave them alone, in all sure love and prayer.

LAL.

I.

We colonists are apt to say that there is no twilight in New Zealand, when waxing sentimental over the memories of the land of our birth, and recalling many a pleasant half-hour "between the lights."

But although we have no lingering dusk, sunset with us seems to have a peculiar beauty, and a tender power to steal into one's heart. Many a time have I, rough colonial as I am, stood, on my way home, to watch the fantastic clouds and colours of the sky as night drew on.

Such a sunset-glory lit up the whole sky and the scarcely heaving sea beneath, one autumn evening many years ago, as I was riding home on a tired horse after a hard day's pounding after the outlying sheep.

At that time I was about 30 years old, and had a snug billet as manager on one of Lalworth and Clint's great runs near Nelson. Five hundred a year, with unlimited grub, and a sufficiently weather-tight house on the station, was no bad thing for a penniless man with no interest; and I often plumed myself on my own good luck when I came across other fellows with twice my brains, and a little money, who could hardly pay for their bread and cheese.

"A beautiful sky, Sprightly," I said, patting my old chestnut as he carefully picked his way down the face of a steep hill covered with manuka scrub and yellowing ferns; "but wind to-morrow, and rain before to-morrow night."

Sprightly shook his head till the bridle rang, and stepped out at my voice. Winding down we went, till the interminable hill ended abruptly in a level reach of sand, along which we could canter for a couple of miles.

The sunset colours were fading from the high peaks we had left, but enough light lingered on the flat to give brilliant hues to the rocks which towered above our heads or lay like fallen giants in our path, while far out to sea, beyond the shadow of the shore, stretched a long streak of amber.

I rode that way twice a week, as a rule, sometimes oftener, but never do I remember to have met a living creature to exchange good-night with till this particular evening, when no sooner had Sprightly started at a weary canter over the flat than I pulled him up short in sheer amazement, for there in front was a fellow dressed like a picture, riding at a foot pace just in the direction we were going in too.

"Who the deuce can it be?" was my first mental observation. "Ten to one it's some new chum come to spy out the land; though I'll answer that chap don't know a sheep when he sees it."

As I neared my unconscious friend I took in the fact that he rode his horse like a gentleman; that his saddle, bridle and saddle-bags were new and glossy; that, in fact, from his jaunty wideawake to his English-made boots, he was a new chum. Riding up alongside I observed a white collar and a pair of dog-skin gloves, which removed any lingering doubts as to the fact.

"Good-evening, mate," I called out, when I got up to the stranger; "going far to-night?"

"Not much farther, I hope," he answered, turning a face of almost girlish beauty upon me, and slightly raising his hat. "But that is a question I should be glad to ask you; that is if you know this part of the country well."

"Lived here these six years, and know every corner a sheep can hide in," I answered rather grimly, contrasting his high-bred accents with my own colonial-isms.

"Ah! then you can tell me where is this Wyke station?"

"This Wyke station," I replied, in my craftiest manner, "is where I hope to be eating my supper in half an hour's time. And pray, sir, what may be your business there?"

The new comer turned to look more closely at me.

"Why, you must be—of course you must be—Ralph Westcott, the very man I am going to see."

"I am Ralph Westcott," I rejoined, seeing that he paused, as if expecting me to say something.

"I thought so. Well, I am Fairfax Clint. How do ye do? I am awfully glad to meet you on this dreary and interminable mud-flat." So saying he extended his hand with such a cordial gesture that I felt ashamed of my bearish manners, and gave him a hearty grip.

"Didn't the governor write and tell you I was coming out?" he asked, as we resumed our journey.

"Several mails back he wrote that you might possibly be sent out, but I never heard anything certain."

"Oh! well, you see, Westcott, the governor is getting old, and closer and more suspicious every day. Lately he won't even allow a fellow an opinion of his own. So one fine morning I got marching, or rather sailing, orders, and here I am."

All this was said in the same quiet, rather bored manner which had set my back up before; still I could not help softening to the boy when I looked at his face and saw how unfit he would prove for station life.

"And what do you intend to do, Mr. Clint, now that you are here?" I asked, after a pause.

"Do? Oh, nothing that I know of. I suppose I shall stay with you till I get orders to start again. I'll go about with you, unless you don't want any company; and I suppose I must write a 'report' for the governor's benefit, every month, in which I hope you'll help me."

He laughed as if there was a joke somewhere, but for my part I felt rather put out. Here was a great baby sent out for me to take in tow, and yet all the time he was my "boss," and had to report on my management. I was a bit of an autocrat on my station, and resented this.

Fairfax Clint seemed to guess what I was thinking. "Look here, Wescott," he said, touching my horse's neck with his whip, and speaking in a more manly and earnest tone, which I liked better, "my father's all wrong in this business. What's the use of his sending me out to overlook his runs, when I know less than a child about such things; but that's no business of mine, and still less of yours. Let us be friends while we are together. Forget that my name is Clint at all! Call me Fairfax, and fancy me a new hand you've just picked up to clean your boots and saddle your horse. I can do both, I assure you."

All the while he had been speaking we had slowly climbed a steep hill, clothed with white flowering manuka, and fern. As he ceased we reached the summit, and began to descend on the other side, so my only answer was to point out the stock yard in the valley at our feet, flanked by a single-storied wooden house.

"There's Wyke station. I've lived here for six years, and am glad to welcome a son of the firm to it."

"That's kindly said," he answered gravely, falling back in the narrow path. "I'll follow you, and only trust this brute is sure-footed."

We reached the stock-yard, and tied up our horses, the dogs rushing out to welcome us, and Tom, the cook, opening the house door and showing a warm glow of firelight.

"Come in, Mr. Clint," I said, "and be prepared to rough it. This is the kitchen; here's the parlour, which is the drawing-room, smoking-room, and the feeding-room in one; you see there is no lack of dry wood here, so we have good fires; here's my bedroom, and yonder room shall be got ready for you by the time supper's over. Meantime, make yourself at home, and use mine," and having, as I thought, done the honours handsomely, I kicked the smouldering logs into a crackling blaze, and left him in possession of my sanctum. When I came in from seeing to our horses I found Clint in the kitchen, already at home, chattering to Tom, as that old rascal fried mutton-chop and potatoes.

"By jove, I never thought of my horse," he exclaimed in consternation, as he caught sight of me coming in from the yard with his and my saddle; "why on earth didn't you tell me, Wescott?"

"Did you think we kept a groom here," I retorted. "Never mind, young 'un; you shall do both horses to-morrow, I promise you. Show a light, Tom, while I wash my hands, and then for supper, for I'm starving."

II.

Before a week was over Fairfax Clint was familiar with every corner of the run, and made himself popular with all hands.

Never did I know a human being with such a gift of fascination, or such an inexhaustible flow of spirits and quaint humour.

Yet he was not very noisy, very seldom laughed, and about his face and voice seemed to hang a melancholy shadow. I thought, afterward, a foreshadow of what was coming.

But, as I say, never was there a man so popular; even our rugged old Scotch shepherd found a smile for Clint's cheerful, "Well, old Thistles," while as for Tom, our cook and man of all work, I verily believe the happiest moments of my life were when Fairfax took it into his head to assist in the kitchen, making Tom fetch the ingredients and wait on him, while he elaborated uneatable dishes for our evening meal.

Though at first I had hated the idea of any one always following me about, and had perhaps found Clint's ignorance rather boring after the first amusement wore off, still I got quite to miss the lad whenever he went off to Nelson for a day or two, and to feel lonely and off my feed when I sat down without his face at the other end of our table.

Among other of his fancies, when first he came, was one for a garden. "Waste of time," I growled; "the weeds will out run the flowers." But he laughed at me, and set to work all the same, and really he worked well; for though digging blistered his hands, and the sun scorched his face brick-colour, he persevered until he had a plot of ground fenced in and planted to his mind.

"Flowers are great humanizers," he would say; "only look at these children, my dear Ralph."

"The children" were a dirty, ragged, barefooted quartet from our second shepherd's hut; who hovered about wherever Clint was, and worshipped him as a wonderful being from a world afar.

Poor little wretches! At one time I had made some efforts to improve them; and, thinking it best to strike at the root of the matter, began by urging their miserable, reprobate mother to introduce something like order and neatness into their hut. But I never made the attempt twice, being met by a torrent of half-pay abuse, and threatened with the loss of her husband—an invaluable station-hand, and one I should really have been unwilling to lose.

The only step I could take to mitigate the nuisance was to remove the family to an old hut a mile further from the station, where Mrs. Mahaffy's peculiarities were less obtrusive. It would have seemed a wretched place, perhaps, to many an English cottager, perched on a hill side, roughly built of planks half an inch apart, and thatched with tow-grass. But, such as it was, I've known people to live happily there, and make it look neat and pleasant too. Pretty it could not fail to be in such a situation; and it always seemed to me a sin to poison such a view with cabbage-stalks, and potato-parings, and heaps of stinking mussel-shells.

Did the miserable, shock-headed imps who sprawled among the fern, hatless and shoeless, never see the yellow sands below their hill-side, and the restless, never changing sea? Did they never look up and learn anything from the peaks overhead, which, clothed with dark shrubs and leafage, towered above till they set a sharp gleam of snow against the blue of the sky?

These are some of the questions I used to ask myself when I first went to Wyke; but, you see, I had other things to think about, and, like most reformers, after I had removed the blot a little further from my own door, I forgot all about the needs, material and spiritual, of the young Mahaffys.

In fact, I felt half amused at the concern and disgust Clint expressed the first time his wanderings brought him in contact with this interesting family.

"Ah, my boy, at first I felt just as you do; but I found it was waste of time, as you will."

However, whether Clint was more persevering, or whether he found out a better way to go to work, I can't say; but to my amazement, on Sunday afternoon, when the Rev. Mr. Hooper, a right good parson, rode over as usual to preach to us, and the station hands were mustering in our veranda, up came a little procession, with very clean and shy faces, and new pinafores, which for the life of me I could not identify. The truth only dawned on me when I saw Clint, with that indescribable grace of his, rise from his rug in the corner and take Lal, the eldest girl, by the hand to show her a seat.

Through all the service, Lal kept her eyes fixed in humble adoration on Clint's face, rising or kneeling as he did; and, after that, every Sunday, whatever the lapses in the week might be, she never failed to appear, scrubbed and tidy, at the service hour.

"How on earth have you done it, Fairfax?" I asked the same night while we were having our last smoke before turning in. He laughed. "My dear fellow, don't ask me. I never felt more astonished in my life, or more humbled, if you can understand. I did give Lal a talking to about a week ago, and a few shillings to rig out the kids afresh; but I had no notion that what I had said would have produced such a stupendous effect. And, to tell you the truth, Ralph, I felt ashamed to think how little one really tries to do, when I saw that poor girl coming up so bravely just for a few words of mine! If you won't laugh, old fellow, I am going to have Lal and her brothers up twice a week till they know how to read."

"Laugh! I honour you for it, only won't you find it awfully grind?"

"Why, yes, I'm afraid I shall," answered Fairfax, knocking the ashes out of his pipe and staring at the fire; "and yet I can't look at a poor wretch like Lal without feeling uncomfortable. I suppose it's what parsons call conscience; and my conscience won't let me rest till I've taught these young savages, at any rate, what little I know myself."

So Clint's evening school began—began at the kitchen table after supper was over—the pupils being Alice Mahaffy, popularly known as "Lal," and her brothers, Bill and Ted; and the schoolmaster being that ineffable swell, Fairfax Clint.

Ted and Bill, having grown up like young goats on the open hill-side, were sharp enough to all out-door signs and sounds, but hopelessly dense when they came to the alphabet. But Lal proved a wonder to herself, and a source of pride to her teacher. Never was a girl so determined to learn what at first seemed perfectly incomprehensible and bewildering. Many a time have I gone to the kitchen to look on, and have seen Lal, with knit brows and flushed face, bending over her books, and muttering fiercely between her teeth: "I'll see it sometime, Master Clint; let me try again! but I'm such a fool to-night."

One night, long after the little class had been dismissed, I found Lal crouching against the outer door in a wild fit of weeping.

"Halloo, Lal, what's up?" I asked, pulling her into the moonlight; "has that precious mother been hammering you again?"

But no answer could I extract except not a very polite request to leave her alone, and, wrenching herself out of my grasp, she ran and hid herself among the manuka.

This little incident would not have remained probably in my mind, but for the chance remark of our parson one Sunday shortly afterward. I had been riding part way home with him after service, and as we went up the hill by the Mahaffys' hut, we came on Lal, lying fast asleep full length under a wild cherry tree, with her hands behind her head for a pillow, and an open spelling-book beside her. She seemed to have cried herself to sleep, for the long lashes resting on her cheek were wet, and matted into little points, and she sobbed as we passed by.

"That poor child! I am afraid her mother ill treats her," said Parson Hubbard; "and what a pretty girl she is growing!"

Pretty! I was too struck with this new view of Lal to dispute it, and my companion passed on to other subjects, but as soon as I parted from him I rode back quickly to the spot where we passed the sleeping girl. But she was gone, and I had to ride home without deciding the question whether parson's eyes or mine had been mistaken. At the veranda door, however, I saw Lal with her milk-can waiting till Tom chose to find time to fill it for her, leaning cross-legged against the door-post, and looking moodily out to sea.

I walked up and took a critical survey. A long-limbed girl, with a very short and ragged stuff frock; bare feet, brown as berries; arms and hands to match; a good deal of brown hair, which lately she had taken to brushing and lying back with a scrap of faded ribbon; a thin face, with a flush of bright colour in the cheeks; and a pair of brown eyes, which were always watchful and suspicious to me, but soft and wistful to Clint. My eyes, sharpened by the parson's careless remark, took note of all these points; and I summoned Lal sharply to me.

"Well, Mr. Westcott," coming unwillingly, and scowling at me with her straight, black brow.

"How old are you, Lal?"

"I'se turned 15 last summer; but it ain't no business of yourn, is it, Mr. Westcott?"

"Not much, perhaps; but you are growing a big girl, and ought to go to service somewhere. Wouldn't you like to go away from this dull place?"

"Go away from the station!" echoed Lal, all the colour fading out of her face as she raised her startled eyes to mine; "I could not do it. Besides, who'd like to have me for a servant?" she added, with a scornful little laugh.

"But if you'd like to try, Lal, I could try for you," I went on, but she interrupted me fiercely:

"Look here, Mr. Westcott; I know I ain't a good girl, but I don't know as ever I did you any harm that you should try and drive me away; and I can't go, I can't, I can't! I should die if I couldn't never see his face nor hear him speak."

In the frenzy of passion and excitement which possessed her, Lal had fallen on her knees, and clutched my coat with both her hands, looking up with an agony of supplication, as if I could decide her fate. Here was a pretty situation for Ralph Westcott, manager, to stand in!

"Lal, my dear, don't be a fool," I uttered disjointedly. "What nonsense is this! You shan't go away unless you like, but for Heaven's sake get up and behave yourself! There, that's better," I said, as she dragged herself up on to her feet, and stretched out her hand mechanically for her milk can, which had rolled off the verandah. "Now, Lal, be a good girl, and go home, and make up your mind never to talk such nonsense again. You know Mr. Clint is a gentleman, and will be a very rich one when his father dies, and how could you for one moment suppose——"

Lal put up her hand with a pathetic gesture to stop me.

"Lord," she cried, with her bitter little laugh, which always made me angry; "it's you as is talking nonsense now! Don't you think I know he's set above us like the stars; and, as if he could never look at the likes of I! But that don't make no difference to me that I know of," she added, dropping all at once into a low tone of indescribable despair, and turning away. At this moment we both saw Clint returning with the dogs from a bath in the river. He stopped a moment to pick a peach as he passed through old Rueben the Maori's garden, but we heard his clear voice singing: "Then tell me how to woo thee, love, then tell me how to woo thee," as if in unconscious mockery at Lal's misery and pain. For once I felt really out of patience with Clint's beaming good humour.

"Go home, child," I cried, sharply, and Lal vanished without another word. I walked over to the fence to meet Fairfax.

"Ralph, my boy, you look very glum! How delicious these peaches are," he added, feasting on another.

Should I tell Lal's secret, and beg him to show the wretched girl less kindness for the future?

Whether wisely or not, I spoke.

"Fairfax, I have been talking to that poor girl, Lal. She is nearly grown up now, and I want her to go out to service."

"Whew! my prize pupil!" cried Clint, making a long face. "Well, my dear patriarch, and what will Miss Mahaffy say to your kind proposal?"

"Well, really, Clint, it's too absurd. And yet it's a pity for the poor little soul, too. The fact is she has such a profound adoration for you that nothing will induce her to consent to it."

Clint looked amazed and then annoyed.

"Alas! alack! is this to be the end of my philanthropic efforts?" he cried at last. "You don't really mean, Ralph, that she won't go because—because—. Upon my word, it's too preposterous. Well, Ralph," he went on, pettishly, after a pause, during which I lit my pipe and tried to look more comfortable than I felt, "what's a fellow to do now? Poor Lal! she has tried so awfully hard to learn and get on. Perhaps you misunderstood her."

I shook my head.

"I don't pretend to understand these things, Clint, but it is a very real thing with her. How would it be for you to go on that visit to the Vernons you are always intending to pay? Stay a week or two, and I'll undertake to talk to Lal, and make her take a place at Doral's farm, at Tere-went. I know they want a dairy hand."

So Clint agreed, and, as the boat was going across next day for stores, we had no time to discuss and unsettle the matter. Lal, of course, saw the boat start, for she and her brothers were always moving before anyone else on the run; and Clint waved his hand to her, and called out in his cherry way, "Good-by, young 'uns! Stick to your books, and I'll bring over some jolly new ones when I come back." Ted hallooed out, "Good-by!" and no one but I noticed that Lal said nothing, but gazed with straining eyes after the boat till it had disappeared round the point, and the level rays of sunrise turned the gray sea to gold.

For my own part, I turned in to breakfast with a weight off my mind, for Lal certainly was a pretty girl, and, though I believed Clint to be an honest young fellow enough, still, there is something pleasant in being worshipped by the only girl about the station. So, altogether, I was glad to get Fairfax safely off on a visit to a neighbouring station, where I new the dashing Miss Vernons would soon give his thoughts a new direction.

Some weeks went by, very busy weeks, and I had begun to get used to being alone again, when I received a letter from Clint that the next time the whale-boat went over to Nelson he would return by her, as a letter from his father had recalled him to England sooner than he had expected.

All the time of his absence I had seen little of Lal. She had given up coming to the station, always sending Ted instead; and I had really almost forgotten our scene in the verandah.

The day after I got Clint's message, however, I chanced to meet her as I rode home over the mud-flat. It had been a dull, foggy day, but as evening closed in the wind began to rise fitfully, make a little sudden stir and moan and then die away into an ominous silence. As I hurried Sprightly along I overtook Lal, walking home slowly under a load of pipis she had been collecting for supper off the rocks. At first she seemed inclined to let me pass without recognition, but when I drew up, meaning to warn her of the coming storm, she ran to my side, and laid her hand on my bridle.

"Isn't he never coming here no more, Mr. Westcott?" she asked, in such a despairing tone that I could not find it in my heart to scold her.

"Why, Lal," I cried, "how ill you look! What have you done to your cheeks and eyes!"

She shook her head impatiently, and repeated her question: "Is he never coming home?"

"Well—yes, child. He's coming to-morrow; but only to say good-bye. He will be off to England, and to all his friends there soon."

She scarcely seemed to hear the end of my speech.

"To-morrow!" she said, crouching down in a heap upon the seaweed-strewed sands, and rocking herself to and fro. "Shall I see him to-morrow?"

"Lal!" I cried impatiently. She sprang to her feet.

"O, Mr. Westcott, don't scold me. Look here," and she pulled up her ragged sleeve to show me her arm, wasted and shrunken. "I'm dying, I think," she went on hoarsely. "I can't eat nor sleep, nor do half of the work I use to. I'm starving for a sight of his face; and what harm can it do him for me to be happy just one day?"

Poor Lal! I was not a particularly soft-hearted chap, but the sight of her distress gave me a queer feeling in the throat, and I rode on without speaking.

The night set in as I expected, with sharp storms of wind and rain, and by the time I had got home and done supper there was a high sea running.

"The boat 'll never start to-morrow, Tom," I remarked as, for company's sake, I turned into the kitchen for a smoke.

Tom looked doubtful. "I'd feel more sure o' that, sir, if old Peter had gone with her. He's a safe hand and a' most over careful; but young Peter is rash and won't wait for weather."

"Don't croak, Tom," I retorted; "besides, the weather may mend before midnight, when they'd be starting, and then Mr. Clint will be there, and he's sure to wait if there's any danger." But as Tom still shook his head and persisted in calling to mind all the shipwrecks he had ever been in, I gave up the argument and went to bed, telling him to call me at 6 o'clock if I wasn't stirring before.

It seemed to me that I had only just dropped asleep, when his voice at my side awoke me next morning. "Mr. Westcott, sir, it's 6 o'clock, and an awful nasty sea on. And I've been down twice to the beach, and can't see nothing of the boat."

"Get out, you old fool!" I roared. "You don't for one moment suppose they are anywhere but safe in Nelson harbour!"

Tom vanished, and I got up thoroughly uncomfortable all the same and hurried down to the beach without waiting for breakfast.

The sea looked nasty, truly. A line of white breakers thundered over the rocks, and threw their spray high into the air; a thick fog hung over Nelson and hid the outlines of the coast, but here and there a white swirl of waters showed a dangerous spot to beware of. After a look round I was returning, when I spied a little figure, sitting perched half-way up the face of the cliff, in a little shelter formed by a projecting ledge.

"Lal, you silly girl, come down! There's not footing for a bird there; and what good can you do? They've never started, I'm sure, come and have some breakfast with Tom."

But I might as well have shouted at the sea-gulls, for she never moved.

When I came down again she was still there, deaf to everything except the thunder and the roar of the sea. The storm seemed to increase as the morning wore away, and even Tom had come around to my opinion that young Peter never could have put out in such a sea, when we were startled by a message from Lal. She had sent to say she saw something—drifting wood it might be—still it was something.

Never, as long as I live, shall I forget the horror which clutched at our hearts and blanched our faces as, for a moment, Tom and I stared at one another while Ted breathlessly delivered the message.

Of course we followed him at once and stood again peering out into the fog and spray.

"I see nothing, Lal," I shouted. "Whereabouts is it now?"

Lal for answer thrust out her long, bony arm. "There 'tis!" she cried; "and 'tis—Lord have mercy! 'tis our boat!"

Not one word more did anyone say. Some half-dozen men, we stood there helpless, watching the little spot grow and grow till we could make it out as Lal did, to be our boat. Now she is down in the trough of the wave, now she rides on top, now she's near enough for us to make out the six dark figures in her! They are all there, thank God for that! Now we lose sight of her again, and I shout hoarsely to Lal. "All right!" she pants; "they are safe past Split rock, and they are going to beach the boat."

I clamber up on a fallen mass of rock and can see Lal is right. They are coming in on the breakers, and will let the boat drive ashore. She will go to pieces, but it is their only chance.

We watch breathless, and no one speaks, although old Peter stands beside me, and he has two sons in peril. One tremendous wave dashes them almost within our reach—not quite—they are swept back and the boat goes under. A moment later, and she reappears bottom upward among the boiling waters, and with an awful shriek Lal springs from her watching place into the water beneath.

"Mad fool!" I cry, breaking into womanish sobs, and rushing forward with an idea of doing something—anything. But old Peter lays a shaking hand on my shoulder.

"Don't 'ee throw your life away, sir. She's got him by the hair, and if anyone can live in such a sea, I'll back Lal."

"But your boys, Peter!" I gasp, completely knocked out of all self-command.

"I be watching," said the old man, giving me a little shake in his suppressed excitement. "Nobody hain't come up yet but Master Clint, and Lal have got he tight."

There isn't much more to tell. Out of all the six, only Fairfax was saved; though the bodies were washed ashore next day.

Lal, whose love gave her superhuman strength, had kept Clint's head away from the rock which crushed the life out of the other poor lads, almost the next wave rolled both to our feet.

It took us a long time to unclasp Lal's hands, and I don't believe she ever knew that she really had saved the man she died for.

She was buried, when Parson Hooper came over the next Sunday, in Clint's little garden, with Peter's two sons and the other poor fellows; but it was many months before Clint could crawl out so far, or hear how his life was saved.

English Royal Trips to France.

Queen Victoria left London on the 25th of March for Paris. The distance between the two capitals is not very great. It has been done in much less than nine hours, and can be done readily in ten; and yet it is now a quarter of a century since Queen Victoria crossed the channel and landed in France. It was not until she had been seventeen years on the throne that, accompanied by the Prince Consort and her eldest son and daughter, she returned in Paris the visit that Napoleon III. had paid to her Majesty at Windsor Castle. Many Kings of England or heirs to the crown thereof have made the journey between London and Paris, by all kinds of more or less circuitous routes, since the days of Agincourt. The child Henry VI. was crowned King of France in Notre Dame, but was soon ignominiously expelled from the realm which his father's valour had won. Charles I., when Prince of Wales, passed through Paris on his romantic trip to Spain. Charles II. was an unwilling visitor to Paris during the Protectorate. He had no money; his mother, Henrietta Maria, was well-nigh starving at the Louvre, and the French Government to please Cromwell lost few opportunities of letting the exiled Stuart know that his room was much to be preferred to his company. Yet another royal Stuart, his brother, both as Duke of York and James II., the discrowned King of England, went from London to Paris, in ways the most roundabout. Two titular Kings of Great Britain, France, and Ireland James III. and Charles III., called respectively the Old and the Young Pretender, were destined for a season to make Paris their abode, when they would much rather have been at St. James' or at Windsor. At St. Germains the old Chevalier de St. George held for a while his phantom court; and then, as Charles Edward, he quitted Paris with high hope, only to return, after many adventures and misfortunes, ragged, forlorn, and penniless. By and by the French Government made peace with England, and the English Ministers pressingly demanded the expulsion of the "Pretended Prince of Wales" from the dominions of the King of France, which the Chevalier obstinately refused to quit. So a short way was found for him. Alighting from his carriage one night at the door of the Opera, he was seized by a body of armed police, bound hand and foot, flung into a dungeon at Vincennes, and a few days afterward hurried to the frontier. No English King or Prince of Wales has been in Paris since these times until the reign of the present family. The three Georges never set eyes on the towers of Notre Dame; George IV. pasted through Calais on his way to his Hanoverian dominions, but did not visit King Louis XIV. at the Tuileries, and there is nothing to show that William IV. ever saw Paris.

A Living Human Ruin.

(From Heine's Pictures of Travel.)

I was well nigh terrified when all at once the variegated, tangled life of Italy came leaping towards me; real, warm, and humming. As I crossed the market-place, the fruit-woman greeted me right amiably and confidently, as though we were old friends. "It is all one," thought I, "how we make an acquaintance, provided that it be but made." So the woman and I looked at one another in as friendly a wise as though we had mutually handed over tip-top letters, "introducing, etc.," from our best friends. And the fruit-woman was by means bad to look at. She was, it is true, already in that age when time stamps a fatal certificate on our brow of the active service we have done in youth. Moreover, her face still bore the traces of great beauty, and there was plainly written on it, as on old-fashioned vases: To be loved, and as loving live, is the best joy that earth can give.

But her most exquisite charm was the style in which her hair was dressed—the carefully curled locks thickly stiffened with pomatum, and idyllically entwined with white bell flowers. I gazed this woman with the same rapt attention with which an antiquary would pore over a newly-discovered torso. I could see on her traces of all the civilization of Italy—the Etruscan, the Roman, the Lombard, down to our own powdered modern age, and right interesting was the civilized manner of this old woman in contrast to her business and to her passionate habits; nor was I less interested by her stock-in-trade—the great baskets full of fresh oranges and lemons and—delightful sight—in one of the baskets lay a child, holding a little bell its hand, and as the great bell of the cathedral began to sound, between every stroke the boy rang his little bell, and smiled so forgetful of all worldly things up into the blue heaven, that the drollest fancies came into my head, and like a child, I placed myself, and began to eat and gossip with the fruit woman.

A Mad Elephant at Large.

Seven Men Crushed to Death by a Ponderous Brute—A Night in Hindoostan.

"I hate an elephant," energetically exclaimed Major Springle, an old Indian traveller. "I think they are not at all the good-natured, harmless beasts that showmen and grandmothers' story books are so fond of representing them to be. I quite agree with Charles Reade, when he says, in his 'Jack of all Trades,' that they are murderous, treacherous brutes, full of vice and cunning.

"I know very little about the African elephant, but one of the failings of the Asiatic kind is that in very hot weather, and under a severe physical strain, he is very likely to go mad—and I can tell you, a mad elephant is a creature that the most curious student of the animal's habits had better contemplate from a distance.

"Much of my Indian life was passed in the station of Jubbulpore. The enterprising people there resolved to have an exhibition. Goods poured in rapidly in bullock waggons, on camels' backs, and various other ways, and rajahs and other Indian dignitaries, with suites of attendants, journeyed from great distances.

"So far as I can remember, what I am speaking of happened in the latter part of 1866, or early in 1867. A young photographer, with whom I was acquainted, invited me to share his tent with him for a week on the Exhibition grounds, where he intended to take views, and I gladly accepted the invitation.

"Two nights before the Exhibition opened we went upon the grounds, and found them covered with tents and crowded with natives, who, for the most part, were attending on elephants, bullocks, camels, and horses. It was a bright moonlight night, and we sat smoking before the opening of our tent, watching the curious scene before us until nearly midnight. Then, the noise having gradually died away, we retired to our beds.

"I had been asleep, perhaps, about an hour, when I was awakened by the beating of tom-toms and the shouting of the natives outside. I jumped out of bed and ran to the door of the tent, where my friend was already standing. An elephant, with its trunk upraised, and trumpeting fiercely, was rushing among the tents, occasionally striking a rope with his foot and snapping it like a packthread. In front of our tent was an open space, and about thirty yards away was a large tree. Beside this tree a man was standing. The elephant, if it had not swerved from its course, would have passed about twenty yards from him; but when the brute was nearly opposite him I saw the man stoop and pick up a large stone. I could hardly credit that he was going to throw it, but in a second there was no room for doubt that such was his intention. I called to him, in Hindoostanee, to drop the stone and run into the tent, but he paid no attention to me. Then, as the elephant was passing, he hurled the stone, and struck it on the side. The brute turned quickly, saw its assailant, and rushed at him. Even then, I think, there was time for him to escape if he had run for the tent, as I again shouted to him to do, for though the brute would probably have brought the canvas down, we should, probably, have all escaped in the confusion. But turning quickly toward me, he placed his hand upon his forehead and bowed his head, after the manner of the Hindoo who desires to express his gratitude by means of the all-serviceable salaam, and the stood upright, apparently calm and collected, beside the tree.

"When the elephant was within four feet of him, the man sprang quickly to the other side of the trunk. He had evidently calculated upon escaping his enemy by keeping the tree between them, but he had altogether undervalued the brute's cunning. Quick as lightning the great animal altered its course, moved around the opposite side of the trunk, and in a second the elephant and the man stood face to face. There was no human possibility of his escape now, and the Hindoo knew that the last few sands of his life were rapidly running out. Like all his race, he was a fatalist, and even the terrible death that overshadowed him brought to him no terrors. Calmly he crossed his hands over his bosom, and bowed his head to the inevitable.

"It was all over in five seconds. The elephant raised his trunk higher than before and struck a hurried awkward blow, hitting his victim not with the lower end of the trunk, which is very tender, but as far as I could see, with his cheek or mouth. The man went down as though he had been felled with a cannon ball, but immediately he raised himself upon his elbow and looked upward. For one second the brute stood over him, and then dropped heavily forward, one massive knee going down upon the man's breast.

"The elephant rushed away, trumpeting as before, and took refuge in some low hills in the neighbourhood. We learned the next morning that he belonged to a rajah, who, in his anxiety to get early to the exhibition, had caused him to be overdriven with a heavy load until he was driven mad.

"What we saw was only a small part of the damage he did. He killed seven men that night, including his driver, who was his first victim. My friend and I went in the morning to see the seven crushed bodies, which all lay under a single canvas sheet. For some time the natives standing around tried to persuade us not to uncover them, but a native constable concluded the argument by seizing a corner of the cloth and pulling it to one side. The faces were all calm and life-like, for a Hindoo, even under the most appalling conditions, rarely suffers himself to pass into the other life without composing his limbs and features.

"The moment the natives standing round saw the uncovered bodies, a frenzy seemed to possess them. The men rushed to their tents, and presently returned with rusty old swords, flint-locked pistols, and bell-mouthed guns. All these weapons they began to polish vigorously, with the intention of making immediate war upon the elephant. But Col. Spencer, the Commissioner of the station, had already sent a party of Bengal Lancers after him, and in the afternoon he was brought back with a bullet in one of his knees, and loaded with chains so arranged that he could be pulled to the ground at a moment's notice if he showed any signs of rebellion.

"The rajah who owned him attempted to make light of the matter, but a fine of something like 20,000 rupees, levied by the Government, induced him to take a more serious view of his brute's achievement.

"Do, for gracious sake, waiter, take these nut-crackers over to that man," exclaimed a nervous old lady sitting opposite a party who was cracking hickory nuts with his teeth. "No, I thank you," he said, politely returning them, "mine are not false teeth."

POPE LEO XIII. has granted the title of Count to Mr. Arthur Moore, of the British House of Commons, in recognition of his services to Roman Catholicism. The honourable gentleman already enjoyed rank in the Famiglia Pontificio as Commendatore di Spada e Cappa, a title bestowed upon him by Pius IX.

THERE is a German colony of 425 persons on the Pozuzo on the eastern slope of the Andes. The colonists cultivate coffee, cocoa, tobacco, cotton, rice, Indian corn, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, and tropical fruits. They keep cows and pigs. Ants and cockroaches are the only insect plagues. The colony is prosperous, but its development is prevented by the want of roads.

VICTOR HUGO makes it a rule not to return visits or accept invitations. He only consented to know the Emperor of Brazil on condition of not being asked to relax this rule. On his 78th birthday, however, some friends in the habit of assembling round his hospitable table induced him to be present at a dinner in celebration of that anniversary, which took place recently at the Cafe Riche, in Paris. M. Victor Hugo came with his grandchildren.