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CANADIAN CHAMPION

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THE SIGN OF THE FOUR.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE.

"Well, there is no use my telling you, gentlemen, what came of the Indian mutiny. After Wilson took Delhi, and Sir Colin relieved Lucknow, the back of the business was broken. Fresh troops came pouring in, and Nana Sahib made himself scarce over the frontier. A flying column under Colonel Greathead came round to Agra and cleared the Pandies away from it. Peace seemed to be settling upon the country, and we four were beginning to hope that the time was at hand when we might safely go off with our shares of the plunder. In a moment, however, our hopes were shattered, by our being arrested as the murderers of Achmet.

"It came about this way. When the rajah put his jewels into the hands of Achmet, he did it because he knew that he was a trusty man. They are suspicious folk in the East, however; so what does this rajah do but take a second even more trusty servant, and set him to play the spy upon the first! This second man was ordered never to let Achmet out of his sight, and he followed him like his shadow. He went after him the night, and saw him pass through the doorway. Of course he thought he had taken refuge in the fort, and applied for admission there himself next day, but could find no trace of Achmet. This seemed to him so strange that he spoke about it to a sergeant of guide, who brought it to the ears of the commandant. A thorough search was accordingly made, and the body was discovered. Thus at the very moment that we thought that all was safe, we were all four seized and brought to trial on a charge of murder—three of us because we had held the gate that night, and the fourth because he was known to have been in the company of the murdered man. Not a word about the jewels came out at the trial, for the rajah had been deposed and driven out of India; so no one had any particular interest in them. The murder, however, was clearly made out, and it was certain that we must all have been condemned in it. The three Sikhs got penal servitude for life, and I was condemned to death, though my sentence was afterward commuted into the same as the others.

"It was rather a queer position that we found ourselve in then. There we were all four tied by the leg, and with precious little chance of ever getting out again, while we each held a secret which might have got each of us in a palace if we could only have made use of it. It was enough to make a man at his heart out to have to stand the kick and the cuff of every petty jackin office, to have rice to eat and water to drink, when that gorgeous fortune was ready for him outside, just waiting to be picked up. It might have driven me mad; but I was always a pretty stubborn one, so I just held on and holded my time.

"At last it seemed to me to have come. I was changed from Agra to Madras, and from there to Blair Island in the Andamans. There are very few white convicts in this settlement, and, as I had behaved well from the first, I soon found myself a privileged person. I was given a hut in Hope Town, which is a small place on the slopes of Mount Harriet, and I was left pretty much to myself. It is a dreary, fever-stricken place, and all beyond our little clearings was infested with wild cannibal natives, who were ready enough to blow a poisoned dart at us if they made friends with some one who could help me—I name no names, for I don't want to get anyone else in a hole—and I soon found that he still had the jewels. Then I tried to get at him in many ways; but he was pretty sly, and had always two prize-fighters, besides his sons and his khitmutgar, on guard over him.

"One day, however, I got word that he was dying. I hurried at once to the garden, mad that he should slip out of my clutches like that, and, looking through the window, I saw him lying in his bed, with his sons on each side of him. I'd have come through and taken my chance with the three of them, only, even as I looked at him, his jaw dropped, and I knew that he was gone. I got into his room that same night, though, and I searched his papers to see if there was any record of where he had hidden our jewels. There was not a line, however; so I came away bitter and savage as a man could be. Before I left I bethought me that if I ever met my Sikh friends again it would be a satisfaction to know that I had left some mark of our hatred; so I scrawled down the sign of the four of us, as it had been on the chart, and I pinned it on his bosom. It was too much that he should be taken to the grave without some token from the men whom he had robbed and befooled.

"We earned a living at this time by my exhibiting poor Tonga at fairs and other such places as the black cannibal. He would eat raw meat and dance his war dance; so we always had a handful of pennies after a day's work. I still heard all the news from Pondicherry Lodge, and for some years there was no news to hear, except that they were hunting for the treasure. At last, however, came what we had waited for so long. The treasure had been found. It was up at the top of the house, in Mr. Bartholomew Sholto's chemical laboratory. I came at once and had a look at the place but I could not see how with my wooden leg. I was to make my way up to it. I learned, however, about a trap-door in the roof, and also about Mr. Sholto's supper hour. It seemed to me that I could manage the thing easily through Tonga. I brought him out with me with a long rope wound round his waist. He could climb like a cat, and he soon made his way through the roof, but, as ill-luck would have it, Bartholomew Sholto was still in the room, to his cost. Tonga thought he had done something very clever in killing him, for when I came up the room I found him strutting about as proud as a peacock. Very much surprised was he when I made at him with the rope's end and cursed him for a little blood-thirsty imp. I took the treasure-box and let it down, and then slid down myself, having first left the sign of the four upon the table, so that the jewels had come back at last to those who had most right to them. Tonga then pulled up the rope, closed the window, and made off the way that he had come.

"I don't know that I have anything else to tell you. I had heard a Japanese man speak of the speed of Smith's launch, the Aurora, so I thought she would be a handy craft for our escape. I engaged with old Smith, and was to give him a big sum if he got us safe to our ship. He knew, no doubt, that there was some screw loose, but he was not in our secrets. All this is the truth, and if I tell it to you, gentlemen, it is not to amuse you—for you have not done me a very good turn—but it is because I believe the best defence I can make is just to hold back nothing, but let all the world know how badly I have myself been served by Major Sholto, and how innocent I am of the death of his son."

"A very remarkable account," said Sherlock Holmes. "A fitting wind-up to an extremely interesting case. There is nothing at all new to me in the latter part of your narrative, except that you brought your own rope. That I did not know. By the way, I had hoped that Tonga had lost all his darts; yet he managed to shoot one at us in the boat."

"He had lost them all, sir, except the one which was in the blow-pipe at the time."

"Ah, of course," said Holmes, "I had not thought of that."

"Is there any other point which you would like to ask about?" asked the convict affably.

"I think not, thank you," my companion answered.

"Well, Holmes," said Athelney Jones, "you are a man to be humored, and we all know that you are a connoisseur of crime, but duty is duty, and I have gone rather far in doing what you and your friend asked me. I shall feel more at ease when we have our story-teller here safe under lock and key. The cab still waits, and there are two inspectors downstairs. I am much obliged to you both for your assistance. Of course you will be wanted at the trial. Good night to you."

"Good night, gentlemen both," said Jonathan Small.

"You first, Small," remarked the wary Jones as they left the room. "I'll take particular care that you don't club me with your wooden leg, whatever you may have done to the gentleman at the Andaman Isles."

"Well, and there is the end of our little drama," I remarked, after we had sat some time smoking in silence. "I fear that it may be the last investigation in which I shall have the chance of studying your methods. Miss Morstan has done me the honor to accept me as a husband in prospective."

He gave a most dismal groan. "I feared as much," said he. "I really can not congratulate you."

"I was a little hurt. "Have you any reason to be dissatisfied with my choice?" I asked.

"Not at all. I think she is one of the most charming young ladies I ever met, and might have been most useful in such work as we have been doing. She had a decided genius that way, witness the way in which she preserved the Agra plan from all the other papers of her father. But love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things. I should never marry myself, lest I bias my judgment."

"I trust," said I, laughing, "that my judgment may survive the ordeal. But you look weary."

"Yes, the reaction is already upon me. I shall be as limp as a rag for a week."

"Strange," said I, "how terms of what in another man I should call laziness alternate with fits of splendid energy and vigor."

"Yes," he answered, "there are in me the makings of a very fine loafer and also of a pretty spry sort of fellow. I saw a chance. There was digging and ditching, and yam-planting, and a dozen other things to be done, so we were busy enough all day; though in the evening we had a little time to ourselves. Among other things I learned to dispense drugs for the surgeon, and picked up a smattering of his knowledge. All the time I was on the lookout for a chance of escape; but it is hundreds of miles from any other land, and there is little or no wind in those seas; so it was a terribly difficult job to get away.

"The surgeon, Dr. Somerton, was a fast, sporting young chap, and the other young officers would meet in his rooms of an evening and play cards. The surgery, where I used to make up my drugs, was next to his sitting-room, with a small window, between us. Often, if I felt lonesome, I used to turn out the lamp in the surgery, and then, standing there, I could hear their talk, and watch their play, and it was almost as good as having one to watch the others. There was Major Sholto, Captain Morstan and Lieutenant Bromley Brown, who were in command of the native troops, and there was the surgeon himself, and two or three prison officials, crafty old hands who played a nice, sly, safe game. A very snug little party they used to make.

"Well, there was one thing which very soon struck me, and that was that soldiers used always to lose and the civilians to win. Mind, I don't say that there was anything unfair, but so it was. These prison-chaps had done little else than play cards ever since they had been at the Andamans, and they knew each other's game to a point, while the others just played to pass the time and threw their cards down anyhow. Night after night the soldiers got up poorer men, and the poorer they got the more keen they were to play. Major Sholto was the hardest hit. He used to pay in notes and gold at first, but soon it came to notes of hand and for big sums. He sometimes would win for a few deals, just to give him heart, and then the luck would set in against him worse than ever. All day he would wander about as black as thunder, and he took to drinking a deal more than was good for him.

"One night he lost even more heavily than usual. I was sitting in my hut when he and Captain Morstan came stumbling along on the way to their quarters. They were bosom friends, those two, and never far apart. The major was raving about his losses. The

"'It's all up, Morstan,' he was saying, as they passed my hut. 'I shall have to send in my papers. I am a ruined man.'

"'Nonsense, old chap,' said the other, slapping him upon the shoulder. 'I've had a nasty facer myself; but—' That was all I could hear, but it was enough to set me thinking.

"A couple of days later Major Sholto was strolling on the beach; so I took the chance of speaking to him.

"'I wish to have your advice, major,' said I.

"'Well, Small, what is it?' he said, taking his cheroot from his lips.

"'I wanted to ask you, sir,' said I, 'who is the proper person to whom hidden treasure should be handed over. I know where half a million worth lies; and, as I cannot use it myself, I thought perhaps the best thing that I could do would be to hand it over to the proper authorities, and then, perhaps, they would get my sentence shortened for me.'

"'Half a million, Small?' he gasped, looking hard at me to see if I was in earnest.

"'Quite that, sir—in jewels and pearls. It lies there ready for anyone. And the queer thing about it is that the real owner is outlawed and can not hold property, so that it belongs to the first comer.'

"'To Government, Small,' he stammered; 'to Government.' But he said it in a halting fashion, and I knew in my heart that I had got him.

"'You think, then, sir, that I should give the information to the Governor-General?' said I, quietly.

"'Well, well, you must not do anything rash, or that you might repent. Let me hear all about it, Small. Give me the facts.'

"I told him the whole story, with small changes so that he could not identify the places. When I had finished he stood stock-still and full of thought. I could see by the twitch of his lip that there was a struggle going on within him.

"'This is a very important matter, Small,' he said at last. 'You must not say a word to any one about it, and I shall see you again soon.'

"Two nights later he and his friend Captain Morstan came to my hut in the dead of night with a lantern.

"'I want you just to let Captain Morstan hear that story from your own lips, Small,' said he.

"I repeated it as I had told it before.

"'It rings true, eh?' said he. 'It's good enough to act upon.'

"Captain Morstan nodded.

"'Look here, Small,' said the major. 'We have been talking it over, my friend and I, and we have come to the conclusion that this secret of yours is hardly a Government matter after all, but is a private concern of your own, which, of course, you have the power of disposing of as you think best. Now, the question is, what price would you ask for it? We might be inclined to take it up, and at least look into it, if we could agree as to terms.' He tried to speak in a cool, careless way, but his eyes were shining with excitement and greed.

"'Why, as to that, gentlemen,' I answered, trying also to be cool, but feeling as excited as he did, 'there is only one bargain which a man in my position can make. I shall want you to help me to my freedom, and to help my three companions to theirs. We shall then take you into partnership, and give you a fifth share to divide between you.'

"'Hum,' said he. 'A fifth share! That is not very tempting.'

"'It would come to fifty thousand apiece,' said I.

"'But how can we gain your freedom? You know very well that you ask an impossibility.'

"'Nothing of the sort,' I answered. 'I have thought it out to the last detail. The only bar to our escape is that we can get no boat fit for the voyage, and no provisions to last us for so long a time. There are plenty of little yachts and yawls at Calcutta or Madras which would serve our turn well. Do you bring one over. We shall engage to get aboard her by night, and if you will drop us on any part of the Indian coast you will have done your part of the bargain.'

"'If there were only one,' he said.

"'None or all,' I answered. 'We have sworn it. The four of us must always act together.'

"'You see, Morstan,' said he, 'Small is a man of his word. He does not flinch from his friends. I think we may very well trust him.

"'It's a dirty business,' the other answered. 'Yet, as you say, the money would save our commissions handsomely.'

"'Well, Small,' said the major, 'we must, I suppose, try and meet you. We must first, of course, test the truth of your story. Tell me where the box is hid, and I shall get leave of absence and go back to India in the monthly relief boat to inquire into the affair.'

"'Not so fast,' said I, growing colder as he got hot. 'I must have the consent of my three comrades. I tell you that it is four or none with us.'

"'Nonsense!' he broke in. 'What have three black fellows to do with our agreement?'

"'Black or blue,' said I, 'they are in with me, and we all go together.'

"Well, the matter ended by a second meeting, at which Mahomet Singh, Abdullah Khan, and Dost Akbar were all present. We talked the matter over again, and at last we came to an arrangement. We were to provide both the officers with charts of the part of the Agra fort, and mark the place in the wall where the treasure was hid. Major Sholto was to go to India to test our story. If he found the box he was to leave it there, to send out a small yacht provisioned for a voyage, which was to lie off Rutland Island, and to which we were to make our way, and finally to return to his duties. Captain Morstan was then to apply for leave of absence, to meet us at Agra, and there we were to have a final division of the treasure, he taking the major's share as well as his own. All this we sealed by the most solemn oaths that the mind could think or the lips utter. I sat up all night with paper and ink, and in the morning I had the two charts all ready, signed with the sign of four—that is, of Abdullah, Akbar, Mahomet and myself.

"Well, gentlemen, I weary you with my long story, and I know that my friend, Mr. Jones, is impatient to get me safely stowed in chokey. I'll make it as short as I can. The villain Sholto went off to India, but he never came back again. Captain Morstan showed me his name among a list of passengers in one of the mail boats very shortly afterward. His uncle had died, leaving him a fortune and he had left the army, yet he could stoop to treat five men as he had treated us. Morstan went over to Agra shortly afterward, and found, as we expected, that the treasure was indeed gone. The scoundrel had stolen it all, without carrying out one of the conditions on which we had sold him the secret. From that day I lived only for vengeance. I thought of it by day, and I nursed it by night. It became an overpowering, absorbing passion with me. I cared nothing for the law—nothing for the gallows. To escape, to track down Sholto, to have my hand upon his throat—that was my one thought. Even the Agra treasure had come to be a smaller thing in my mind than the slaying of Sholto.

"Well, I have set my mind on many things in this life, and never one which I did not carry out. But it was weary years before my time came. I have told you that I had picked up something of medicine. One day when Dr. Somerton was down with a fever a little Andaman Islander was picked up by a convict gang in the woods. He was sick to death, and had gone to a lonely place to die. I took him in hand, though he was as venomous as a young snake, and after a couple of months I got him all right and able to walk. He took a kind of fancy to me then, and would hardly go back to his woods, but was always hanging about my hut. I learned a little of his lingo from him, and this made him all the fonder of me.

"Tonga for that was his name—was a fine boatman, and owned a big roomy canoe of his own. When I found that he was devoted to me and would do anything to serve me, I saw my chance to escape. I talked it over with him. He was to bring his boat round on a certain night to an old wharf which was never guarded, and there he was to pick me up. I gave him directions to have several gourds of water and a lot of yams, cocoanuts and sweet potatoes.

"He was staunch and true, was little Tonga. No man ever had a more faithful mate. At the night named he had his boat at the wharf. As it chanced, however, there was one of the convict guard down there, a vile Pathan who had never missed a chance of insulting and injuring me. I had always vowed vengeance, and now I had my chance. It was as if fate had placed him in my way that I might pay my debt before I left the island. He stood on the bank with his back to me, and his carbine on his shoulder. I looked about for a stone to beat out his brains with, but none could I see. Then a queer thought came into my head and showed me where I could lay my hand on a weapon. I sat down in the darkness and unstrapped my wooden leg. With three long hops I was on him. He put his carbine to his shoulder, but I struck him fall, and knocked the whole front of his skull in. You can see the split in the wood now where I hit him. We both went down together, for I could not keep my balance, but when I got up I found him still lying quiet enough. I made for the boat and in an hour we were well out at sea. Tonga had brought all his earthly possessions with him, his arms and his goats. Among other things, he had a long bamboo spear, and some Andaman cocoanut matting, with which I made a sort of a sail. For ten days we were beating about, trusting to luck, and on the eleventh we were picked up by a trader which was going from Singapore to Jiddah with a cargo of Malay pilgrims. They were a rum crowd, and Tonga and I soon managed to settle down among them. They had one very good quality; they let you alone and asked no questions.

"Well, if I were to tell you all the adventures that my little chum and I went through, you would not think me, for I would have you here until the sun was shining. Here and there we drifted about the world, something always turning up to keep us from London. All the time, however, I never lost sight of my purpose. I would dream of Sholto at night. A hundred times I have killed him in my sleep. At last, however, some three or four years ago, we found ourselves in England. I had no great difficulty in finding where Sholto lived, and I set to work to discover whether he had realized the treasure, or if he still had it. I

often think of those lines of old Goethe:

Schade dass die Natur nur einen Mensch aus dir schuf,
Denn zum Wunderlichen Mann war und zum Schelmen der Stoff.

By the way, apropos of this Norwood business, you see that they had, as I surmised, a confederate in the house, who could be none other than Lal Rao, the butler; so Jones has the undivided honor of having caught one fish in his great haul.

"The division scene rather unfair," I remarked. "You have done all the work in this business. I get a wife out of it, Jones gets the credit, pray what remains for you?"

"For me," said Sherlock Holmes, "there still remains there cocaine bottle." And he stretched his long waste hand up for it.

THE END.

NATURE'S CYCLE PATH.

The Sandy Shore of Lake Erie Is Admirably Fitted For Wheeling.

Most of us at one time or another have basked for awhile upon some sandy beach of ocean or lake. We have bathed in the surf, gathered shells upon the shore, and thus whiled away many idle hours, but it was reserved for the bicycle to make us really acquainted with those stretches of beach and shore which seem to have been purposely prepared by kind Mother Nature as a glorious bicycle path. Whether or not she actually intended it for wheels, she certainly spends a great deal of her time in keeping the path in repair, and those active servants of hers, wind and wave, rain and sun, are kept very busy at work upon it all the time.

This long and varied path stretches in its entirety hundreds of miles along our ocean shores and around the borders of our great lakes, but the particular bit with which we became familiar during happy summer weeks, and to share in whose delights I would tempt others, is a comparatively small portion on the southern shore of Lake Erie. It begins with the extreme end of Cedar point, Ohio, with its long arm holds in a portion of Sandusky bay, and extends eastward 15 miles or more up the shore. This sandy shore continues all the way to Cleveland and beyond, but because of some intervening piles of rock one cannot ride the whole 50 or 60 miles. The shorter distance is, however, enough for a summer day's ride, especially if one takes it comfortably and leisurely and appropriates to himself the count less joys spread before him.—Grace Wickham Curran in St. Nicholas.

Zoological Gardens.

The following figures show the annual cost for maintenance of some of the principal foreign zoological gardens: Berlin, $137,500; Antwerp, $136,800; Amsterdam, $105,000; London, $100,000; Cologne, $75,800; Rotterdam, $65,000; Hanover, $42,000; Paris, $20,000. Thus far the cost of maintaining the zoological parks in Washington and Philadelphia has been $50,000 each per year.

Not Bird Built.

"There was a strange man here to see you today, papa," said little Ethel, who met her father in the hall as he came home on Wednesday night.

"Did he have a bill?"

"No, papa. He had just a plain nose."—Philadelphia Times.

CHARITY AT HOME.

Aminta, charming and aristocratic, in the vastly becoming dress of an order.

Marcia, ditto, ditto, in the vastly becoming dress of another order.

Scene—A coffee palace in the east end.

Aminta.—"You here! The very last person I should have thought of seeing. What in the world brings you in these parts? And what a sweet little love of a bonnet and cloak!"

Marcia.—"You—Aminta! You can't think how deliciously refreshing it is to see somebody you used to know before you had an object in life! I wish I had known before I made up this costume for myself that there was an order with such a perfect dream of a dress as yours. I don't think it interferes with one's moral influence, and—er—power over the masses to be properly gotten up, do you? Come and have some tea—a penny cup—and tell me where you are staying, and what you are doing—and everything."

Aminta.—"Two lumps? I gave up sugar last month, on principle. You know. I haven't an idea what principle—and now quite dislike it, which is a perfect blessing, because the self-denial goes on all the same, you see, and the unpleasantness doesn't. Oh, I'm living in Henrietta street, and I'm elevating the people. I must have been doing it almost three weeks, I think; and papa said fathers are so unsympathetic, that it was quite only a freak, and wouldn't last. It is so horribly clean and respectable that I assure you for the first week I was perfectly miserable."

Marcia.—"Yes, I know that feeling myself, where I am—in Powers' court. A court made beautifully immoral, I don't think. But I assure you there hasn't been a single brawl, or even a drunken Irishman, since I have been there; while some of the children actually have a clean pinafore once a week, and a bath every fortnight. How do you elevate your masses?"

Aminta.—"Well, I don't know exactly. A man from Oxford, such an exquisite, intellectual face, only rather spoilt by the most frightful boots, gives the sweetest little classes on Swinburne and Rossetti, and—at sort of thing. I go to keep the messes in order, quite fortunately for me, except one mass, who was a costermonger, who came in because of the music, he said, and went to sleep all the time. And then there are teas for Feathers and Fringes, and you have to try and drop in a few refining words with the sugar. And what is your order for, Marcia?"

Marcia.—"Oh, it's called 'The society for the amelioration of the condition of the poor in their own homes,' and it means that you call on them, and tell them not to hang out their washing to dry in the sitting-room. They haven't anywhere else to hang it, you know, but that's not your fault. And how to bring up fourteen children on ten shillings a week, and that kind of thing, which would be bad enough only it is so dreadfully discouraging when you find out, as you do, sooner or later, that the poor really seem to know more about their own business than you do. What are you made you go in for elevating, Aminta?"

Aminta.—"With confusion and a slight blush. 'Cos I'm in for it?"

Marcia.—"Putting down her cup and looking up with interest.—"Yes."

Aminta.—"O, I don't know exactly. Lots of things. The world always seems rather hollow at the end of the season, don't you think? And we were going to be buried alive for the rest of the year in Hampshire, where mamma said poor mamma is so effete, you know, I should find lots of duties awaiting me, which was enough to discourage any girl. And I looked over somebody's article—I forget whose—in a magazine, I forget which, all about woman's work; woman with a capital, you know, which is so stimulating to the feelings, and—

Marcia with a sigh.—"How old? It was just the same with me."

Aminta (sympathetically).—"With you?"

Marcia.—"Almost exactly. I'd tried everything, you know. I'd been in for good and bad dancing, and literature, and rational dress, and new womanhood, and nursing, and cooking, and novel-writing, and bicycling, and everything, in fact, almost—

Aminta.—"Intimately."—Brand and Saw.

Marcia.—"I wasn't a bit hasty. I assure you. So when I found out that in the society for the amelioration, etc., you know, you could do—I mean, your own dress, and only have to talk with the rest of the population, I had the sweetest school girl caps and bonnets and decided finishes."

Aminta (with tender admiration).—"How brave of you."

Marcia.—"Well, it was rather. My people pressed it on me dreadfully. And people would say, when people remarked Tom would be so—, 'Why don't you go home to him. How sweet of your sister.' O, he's been crossed in love, I suppose. They all do it."

Aminta, with a start and a blush.—"Tom? And that's just what Charlie—you used to know Charlie, when you were in the world, didn't you?"—says about me."

Marcia, with a blush.—"Charlie."

There is a long pause.

Aminta.—"Was it Charlie, Marcia?"

Marcia.—"Was it Tom, Aminta?"

There is the longest pause of all.

Aminta.—"Because—if it should have been Charlie, it was in that he did not care for you, for that until poor Julian died thoughtfully shot last week he hadn't enough money to say he cared for you."

Marcia.—"Was it that? And if it should have been Tom, Aminta, until he got his commission, you know, a sense of honor—so it is an honorable thing, isn't it?—prevented him from telling you his real feelings."

(A pause.)

Marcia.—"Can you come to tea with me to-morrow? Five, Powers court, you know. Tom might be there, too."

Aminta.—"I shall be delighted, if you don't mind my bringing Charlie, who is coming to see me in Henrietta street."

Marcia (as they part.—"Shall you much mind coming down from your elevation, Aminta?"

Aminta.—"Shall you dreadfully miss your society for ameliorating, Marcia?"

He Did.

Poet—Did you feel the force and directness of that pointed article I left for you this morning?

Editor (furiously.—So it was you who put that bent pin in my chair, was it, you scoundrel?

Wedding rings were first used by Christians about the year 860, but the ancient Egyptians and Romans used them. The fashion of the plain gold wedding ring is Saxon.

EASY, ALL!

"Easy, all!" rings out the order,
And the muscles cease to strain,
And the swing of oars in rowlocks
Stops its rhythmical refrain,
And the sinking heart beats freely,
And the spent breath comes again.

"Easy, all!" Oh, joyous mandate
To the strugglers on life's flood,
Be it but a passing respite
For the brain and strength and blood,
Though far distant be the guerdon—
Fame or wealth or livelihood!

When the summer sunshine brightens
Grimy street and sullen wall,
From the strips of azure heaven
Seems to come the kindly call:
"Rest awhile, ye weary toilers!
Drop your oars and easy, all!"

—Pall Mall Gazette

THE TONE OF THE BELL

Not Improved by the Use of Gold or Silver In the Bell Metal.

There is a general belief that the introduction of silver or gold in the casting of a bell assures for it a superior tone, but an expert in founding bells says that such a belief is erroneous. He says that the best tone effect in bell metal is confined within very narrow limits, for any so called bell metal having more than 80 parts copper to 20 parts tin is too soft to produce the best quality of tone, while that having more tin than 23 parts in the 100 is much too brittle. There are bells in Europe whose clear tones were for many years credited to gold and silver that were supposed to have been added to the bell metal. An analysis was made not long ago of the metal in one of these bells, and it failed to show any trace of gold or silver. The old German bell founders used to make their bells of 80 parts copper to 20 parts tin. In the opinion of this expert the strongest, and best toned bell is obtained from 79 parts copper and 21 parts tin.

"After the bell is 'drawn,'" says the expert, "two sweeps are made and adjusted to an upright spindle in the center of an iron case or flask, the flask having perforations all over it. Over the surface of the flask is coated, wet, a layer of loam of equal and suitable thickness and baked. Then another layer is coated on and baked, and so on, layer after layer, until the proper shape, etc., are secured. There are two such iron molding cases, one fitting over the other. The under one has the loam coating on its outer side, which has the inner shape of the proposed bell. The upper iron molding case or flask has the loam on its inner surface, forming the outside shape of the bell. This is let down over the under mold and carefully adjusted equally all around, leaving a space inside between the two molds. The under flask is called the cope. The upper or outer one is called the case. The space is filled up by the molten bell metal, which, when cooled, is the bell.

"When the bell is taken out of the molds it is polished, and then the hangings, tongue (or clapper), etc., fitted to the bell, and it receives a series ringing test, partly to ascertain its tone and resonant quality and to observe its mechanical excellence and adjustment. Then, if it appears to be good in all points, it is shipped to the purchaser. The making and shipping of a bell usually require from 10 to 15 days in the smaller sizes. The larger sizes—from 1,500 pounds and heavier—require more time. A peal of three or more bells requires from 40 to 90 days' time, while a chime of nine or more bells requires from three to six months.

"Any foundry can, of course, readily make and select nine or ten bells in tune for a chime, but tune is one thing, tone is another."—Church Economist.

The Piano of the Future.

No more hammers in pianos. The old fashioned method of pounding music out of wires by the aid of a wonderfully complicated system of levers and keys, which all the world thought to be the ultimate perfection for the production of that sort of tone, has been branded as a back number.

Dr. Richard Eisemann of Berlin, for years a pupil of Professor Von Helmholtz, has patented a system which does away with the levers entirely. He calls this new appliance the electrophone piano, its distinctive principle consisting in the fact that the vibrations of the chords are not produced by hammers, but by an electric current and by means of microphones acting as interrupters of currents.

All the delicate and complex mechanism of the old piano is done away with. The little electric devices are arranged on the crosspiece extending over the strings. Upon this electric magnets are placed so as to be only a hair's breadth from the strings.

Pressing down the key sends the electric current into the corresponding electromagnet. This attracts the metallic string below, but the microphone interrupts the current and therewith the attraction. The string returns to its former place, and this continued attraction and interruption of the current are carried on, the number of vibrations being regulated by the pitch of the string.

The high sounds produced by this method have a decided harp tone, and the lower and middle registers suggest the 'cello or the organ. In reality, the installation of this new system creates a new instrument, so different are the qualities of sound produced by the new method and the old.—New York Journal.

The Rod In School.

We once knew an old man who had much experience with boys, who declared, "You never hit a boy a lick amiss unless you miss him when you hit at him." There is a good deal of nonsense in the sentimental rot about "I'll allow so man to whip my boy." If your boy needs it, you'd better thank his teacher for licking him.—Augusta Chronicle.

Warwick and the midlands boast a very innocent beverage. It is a concoction of ginger, buttercup seed, cayenne and beet juice and is calculated to scorch the lining from a traction engine. Taken raw, it is probably the hottest drink in the country, but it does no harm, and, if well watered, is pleasant enough.

Keats fell in love with Fanny Brawne, a dull and unattractive young woman. In one of his letters to her he says, "I feel an awful warmth about the heart, like a load of immortality."