

A CURIOUS COMPANION.

"Wanted, by a young married lady, a companion to reside with her during her husband's absence in India. A liberal salary will be given, with every home comfort, to any one suitable. Apply, personally, if possible, at No. 240 Upper Berkeley Street, W."

The foregoing advertisement was despatched by me after considerable cogitation, and I awaited the results of it with some anxiety.

My husband, Major Conyers, had been suddenly ordered to India; and having no sister or any available cousin whom I could invite to stay with me during his absence, I thought a companion was the best thing with which I could provide myself; accordingly, I indited my small paragraph, which I had the satisfaction of seeing placed in a very conspicuous part of the paper on the morning after I sent it. I lived in London, consequently, felt certain that the personal interview would be easily managed; but I had committed an error in not naming any particular hour, as, from eleven in the forenoon until quite late in the day the applications for a personal interview with my unfortunate self never ceased. The first arrival was a very handsomely dressed lady of about fifty, who came, evidently, quite prepared to enter upon her duties, at once, and quite overpowered me with a series of questions and statements, without giving me the faintest chance of making any inquiries myself. She had lived with Lady This and the Honourable Mrs. That, and one and all had treated her like a sister—she felt certain I should do the same—indeed, she quite knew me already. Home comforts were exactly what she cared for: as to salary, it was no object to her—a hundred a year was all she asked, though dear Lady Golding had said she was never to take less than two.

"I am afraid," I put in at this juncture, "that even one hundred is beyond what I intend to give, and I live so quietly."

"We won't quarrel about salary," interrupted my would-be companion; "and as to quietness it is just what I want."

A peal at the door-bell emboldened me to till greater determination, so I replied very resolutely for me: "I do not think we should suit; I am sorry you have had the trouble of coming."

"So am I," she rejoined dryly; "but one ought not to trust to advertisements."

Hardly noticing my "good-morning," she got up and flounced down-stairs, evidently in great wrath at her rejection.

"Another lady to see you, ma'am," announced my parlour-maid.

A very quiet, sweet-looking, little person came forward, and at the first glance I fancied I had found a suitable companion. But alas! her story was a sad one, and there were reasons which rendered it impossible for me to avail myself of her society. She was married. Her husband was a hopeless invalid, and they were very poor. She had not been educated highly enough to be a governess, and when she saw my advertisement, she fancied, if the salary was good, she might be my companion by day, and return at night to her own home, which was at no great distance from my house. She looked so thin and so ill, that I was almost tempted to make some arrangement with her, but as I intended leaving town occasionally, second thoughts showed me it was out of the question. Besides, I could not have borne to think that while she was with me, she would always be in an agony to be with her husband—which, had I engaged her, would most naturally have followed. I told her so as kindly as possible, and after making her take a glass of wine and some cake—which latter I saw her furtively convey to her pocket, for the sick husband, I supposed—she gave me her direction, and took her departure. I afterwards went to see her, and her tale was sadly verified. But to proceed.

My next visitor was a most pert damsel, without any pretensions to being a lady, who informed me that her pa was dead, and as there was so many of them at home, her ma wanted her to do for herself. I had not much difficulty in dismissing her. And of the legions that followed, I cannot attempt a detailed description. By the afternoon, I was thoroughly exhausted, and had made up my mind to see no more, when, just, as it was getting dusk, my servant came up to the drawing-room; and informed me that such a nice-looking young lady was in the dining-room; quite the nicest that had been yet.

"Ask her to come up stairs, then, Ellis; but do not admit any one else," I replied; and the next minute the drawing-room door was thrown open by Ellis, and "Miss Burke" announced.

She was dressed in mourning, and even in the dim light, was, I could see, a pale-faced, rather handsome girl of apparently about four-and-twenty. Her height was over the average, but seemed greater from her extreme thinness, which struck me as almost startling. "Good-evening," she said, in a low and rather pleasant voice. "I am afraid I am very late; it was so kind of you to see me."

"It is late," I assented, "but that does not matter."

"Thank you," responded my visitor. "I came about your advertisement—I saw you wanted a companion, and I am anxious to get a situation of the kind."

"I have had so many applications today," I answered for want of something better to say.

"Ah! I can quite fancy it," returned Miss Burke. "I fear I am too late?"

"No," I replied; "I have seen no one yet to suit me."

"If you would only try me, I should do my utmost to please you," she said almost pleadingly. "I have already been a companion, and I can give you references which may induce you to think of me;" and Miss Burke opened a small black velvet bag, which, until then, I had not perceived, and placed in my hands a monogrammed and coronetted epistle, addressed to herself, purporting to come from a Lady Montacute, whose companion she had been for two years, and who expressed herself in the warmest terms, assuring Miss Burke, whenever she returned from the continent, whether she was just then going, that it would give her the greatest pleasure to answer any inquiries in her favour; in the meantime, Lady Montacute authorised her to make what use she chose of the letter now sent, ending by saying she was certain, wherever she went, Miss Burke must be a favourite and an acquisition.

Then followed a letter from a Rev. Mr. White, from a remote rectory in Cumberland, stating that he had known Miss Emily Burke from her childhood, and could certify

that she was not only desirable in all respects, but a most amiable and talented young lady, whose family were both well known and highly respected. Nothing could be more satisfactory; and after reading the two missives carefully by the light of the fire, I raised my eyes towards my visitor, whom I found regarding me in the most eager manner imaginable.

"They are most kind letters," I said as far as references go, I am sure I could not do better. Your duties would be very light—it is really only for the sake of companionship that I require any one, as I do everything for myself, but I have been very lonely since my husband went away."

"I can imagine it," responded Miss Burke, sympathisingly. "I should do my utmost to cheer you."

"You are very kind to say so," I answered. "Should we agree as to terms, when could you come?"

"To-morrow, if you will permit me," replied Miss Burke. "I am in lodging, and the expense of them is so great, I should be too glad to give them up—I am very poor," she added in a low tone.

I was sorry for the poor girl; and feeling I had been as prudent as possible in perusing her references, and trusting a good deal to her air of quiet respectability, I proceeded to state my terms, which were eagerly accepted. After a little conversation, all was settled, and my companion promised to make her appearance before luncheon on the following day. For the rest of that evening I was unusually meditative; I was pleased, and yet not pleased. She was not altogether my bean-ideal of a companion. Although ladylike, and with undeniable references, there was a certain awkwardness in her manner.

Her room was to be on the same floor with my own; and on the following morning I went in, a short time before she arrived, to see that everything was ready for her. It was October, and the weather was chilly, so I desired that she should have a fire, as I fancied, coming from wretched lodgings, it might be a sort of welcome to her. At one o'clock she arrived, bringing a small box as her sole luggage, which Ellis and the housemaid, between them, carried directly to her room, whither she followed them almost immediately, to take off her things. I accompanied her, and remained for a few minutes, telling her to join me in the drawing-room as soon as she could, lunch being ready.

She presently appeared, very much altered by the removal of her bonnet. She wore her hair in a crop, a fashion I detested; and her figure without her cloak was only redeemed from awkwardness by the well-made black dress, which had evidently been the work of a first-rate *modiste*. She wore no ornaments, except a plain gold ring on the little finger of her left hand, which I noticed was particularly large. I ceased to criticise her after we had been together for a little. She was so pleasant, so chatty, and so quiet, that, ere evening came I had begun to congratulate myself on my own perspicacity in having engaged her, and was fully prepared to endorse Lady Montacute's opinion, that she was sure to be not only a favorite but an acquisition.

A fortnight slipped quietly away, and in my weekly budget to my husband I gave most charming accounts of my companion, which our everyday intercourse seemed fully to confirm. But about the third week, a something I could not explain made me take a dislike to her. I had not been very well, and her kindness had been unremitting; consequently, I felt almost angry with myself for indulging in a feeling which I could not help acknowledging was both unreasonable and childish.

But it gained ground in spite of myself; and one night as I was standing by the looking-glass in my bedroom, which was in the shadow, I caught sight of Miss Burke, who was leaning on the mantel-piece in the full light of the gas, which burned on either side of it, regarding me with a stealthy and searching glance, which I instantly observed, but had sufficient sense to take no notice of. The expression in her large black eyes haunted me for days, and caused me to say good-night to her on the landing, and, in addition, to lock my door, a precaution I had never before thought of taking.

One night shortly afterwards I awoke, fancying I heard a movement outside my door. My room was perfectly dark, and I was convinced some noise had suddenly awakened me. I listened intently, almost to my terror, until I heard most distinctly the handle of my door cautiously turned. An almost death-like horror seized me, and for an instant I was absolutely rigid with terror; but the spell was broken by another audible effort to open the door, and the hall clock striking three, which made me spring up in bed, seize the matches, and, with trembling fingers, attempt two or three times to strike a light. At last I was successful, and the welcome blaze of the gas which I lit gave me courage to call out boldly: "Who is there?" But no answer came. I pealed my bell vigorously, and in a few minutes I heard steps approaching, and Ellis's welcome voice asked if I was ill.

"No, Ellis, not ill," I said, "but terrified," as I unlocked the door and admitted her. "Some one tried my door not five minutes ago."

"Tried your door, ma'am? surely not!" ejaculated Ellis.

"Yes, Ellis; I am certain of it, and it has given me such a shock. I cannot be left alone again."

"What is the matter dearest Mrs. Conyers?" exclaimed Miss Burke, who appeared in my room just as I had made the last remark to Ellis.

"I have been frightened," I answered; "but do not disturb yourself, Miss Burke; it was probably nothing."

"It could not have been anything, or I must have heard it," she said, half to me and half to Ellis.

"Pray, do not trouble yourself," I responded; "I am only sorry you got up at all."

She stayed for a few minutes, but getting no encouragement to remain, returned to her own room, assuring me if she heard a sound she would be with me in a moment.

The instant she was safely gone, I turned to Ellis, desiring her in the first place to close and lock my door; and in the second, to prepare to remain with me until the morning; for I was so uningled by the circumstance, trifling though it was, that to be left by myself was out of the question.

Ellis had been with me ever since my marriage, now three years, and had been well known to my husband's family all her life, consequently, I felt I might trust her, so I said: "Ellis, I have my own suspicions; but we must do nothing until we are sure. Meanwhile, you must have a bed made up in this room, and we must watch."

"Miss Burke?" whispered Ellis.

"Yes," I replied; "it was she who tried my door."

"Well, ma'am," confided Ellis, "I have been downright afraid of her this some time back—civil-spoken though she is. But what could she want at your door?"

"That I do not know; but we may find out."

By dint of a blanket off my bed, and sundry shawls, Ellis was made comfortable for the rest of the night on the sofa, and I returned to bed, not to sleep, for I was thoroughly upset, but to lie and wonder how I was ever to get through the ten months that still remained of my husband's absence.

Tired and unweary, I met Miss Burke at breakfast, and we spent our morning in a very silent fashion. I wrote to my husband whilst she walked restlessly about the drawing-room, constantly asking me how I was, an inquiry for which I did not feel so grateful as I might have done under other circumstances. Lunch came, and afterwards Miss Burke, who was usually most unwilling to go out, asked me if I could spare her for the afternoon, as she wanted to go to see a sick friend.

"Certainly," I replied, glad to get rid of her. About four o'clock I lay down on the sofa in the inner drawing-room, and must have fallen asleep, for I heard no one come into the room, but I awoke with the consciousness that some one was leaning over me with their face in close proximity to my own. I felt rather than saw them; so close were they to me that their lips seemed almost touching my own, and as I sprang up I came into violent collision with—my companion.

"Miss Burke!" I exclaimed indignantly, but I could say nothing more, for, after all, the crime of leaning over me was not of a deadly nature, though coupling it, as I instantly did, with my previous suspicions, I felt not only extremely angry, but considerably alarmed.

"I was afraid you were ill, dear Mrs. Conyers. I do hope I have not displeased you," she proceeded in a deprecating tone. "I did not mean to offend you."

"It is of no consequence," I answered, rising from the sofa; "but please no not to do so again. I am nervous and easily startled."

The circumstance was then tacitly dismissed, and we got through the evening pretty fairly. I rather looked forward to a safe night, for I knew Ellis's bed was in readiness for her. I said good-night a little earlier than usual to Miss Burke, but did not inform her that I had indited an epistle to her friend the Rev. Mr. White, to ask for further particulars as to her antecedents.

I heard her come up to her room, and when her door closed, a feeling of compassion came over me, for I fancied I had not only unjustly suspected her, but been very cold in my manner, which she had evidently felt. Ellis came after I was in bed, and in a short time I had oral evidence that she was slumbering. It made me feel secure, at all events, though I was certainly should dream of all kinds of unearthly things if the snoring went on all night. Nothing happened to alarm us, and, next morning, in a subdued and anxious voice, Miss Burke hoped I had not been disturbed, and that Ellis had kept me from feeling nervous—this last remark very reproachfully.

About twelve o'clock, when we were sitting in the drawing-room, Ellis came up and told me that a gentleman wanted to see me on business, but would not give his name. "Probably about some subscription," I observed; "perhaps I had better see what he wants."

Without a suspicion of what awaited me, I went down-stairs, and on entering the dining-room encountered a short and rather red-faced man, who, bowing profoundly, asked if I was Mrs. Conyers. On my replying in the affirmative, he continued: "May I ask what establishment you have?"

I must have looked astonished, as he explained: "I am a detective police officer, madam, and my business here will, I am afraid, be an unpleasant one."

"Indeed!" I ejaculated; "in what way?"

"From information I have received," I believe you have a person under your roof who is wanted on a very serious charge. I must ask your permission to summon every one in the house into this room. I have taken precautions to prevent any one leaving it, and if you will kindly accede to my request, I shall get over a painful duty as quickly as possible."

If my lips had been capable of utterance, the words they would have framed would have been "Miss Burke," but I said nothing. I merely rang the bell, which Ellis answered so promptly, I felt certain she must have been behind the door, ready to protect me, in case of an emergency.

"Summon the servants, Ellis," I said; "and, and—ask Miss Burke to come down-stairs." It was almost like a dream to me, seeing my four domestics walk in; and then—suspecting nothing—came Miss Burke.

"Got you at last, sir!" cried the detective, making an agile dart towards my companion.

"Not without some trouble," coolly responded his prisoner, whose courage was apparently quite equal to the occasion. In my wildest moments I had never dreamed of so desperate a denouement, and the discovery perfectly paralysed me with horror. It was too dreadful to realise that I had harboured a wretch of a man in woman's clothing not only in my house, but in the capacity of my companion! In less time than I can describe it in, the detective and his prisoner had departed; it was quietly and quickly managed; and though a detailed account of it did appear in the papers, my name was, happily for me, not allowed to transpire publicly.

The pseudo Miss Burke turned out to be a notorious young man, or I may say lad, of the name of Browning, who, having embezzled large sums, as well as stolen a quantity of magnificent jewellery, had been unable, owing to the precautions taken to prevent his doing so, to leave London, or to dispose of his stolen property. Through the agency of a female friend, he had adopted his disguise, and my unlucky advertisement had suggested to him the idea of insuring his own safety, should I be credulous enough to take him upon the recommendations, which, I need hardly say, had emanated from his own pen. Not only had he thought of his personal security, but that of the stolen goods, which, in the shape of diamonds and banknotes, were found securely stowed away in the little black box, which I had thought contained the worldly possessions of my poverty-stricken companion. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to penal servitude for fourteen years.

My husband's return was hastened by the illness which the dreadful affair caused me

Since then, he and I have never been separated. However, should I ever be unavoidably left alone again, my past experience has decided me on one point—never to advertise, or to trust to written references, or the result may be—A Curious Companion.

The Cholera.

Reports from the smitten districts go to show that the present epidemic of cholera in Spain is not attended with the fatal results that usually follow the grim disease. The officials declare that 75 per cent. of those attacked recover. But notwithstanding the mild character of the disease, which has led the London *Lancet* to pronounce the outbreak as "local cholera" rather than the true Asiatic plague, the nations contiguous have taken steps to prevent as far as possible the spread of the contagion. The French government has instituted a strict quarantine, stationing soldiers along the frontier and requiring custom officers to disinfect all goods coming from Spain by submitting them to heat in iron chambers provided for the purpose. Likewise England is taking every precaution possible to keep out the unwelcome visitor. Feeling that we are not perfectly secure on this side the Atlantic the Minister of Agriculture for the Dominion has issued instructions for the observance of the strictest quarantine regulations to be observed at all our ports. But while the government is doing its part to protect us from the plague we need to remind ourselves that epidemic plagues have a peculiar way of evading quarantine regulations and over-leaping human-imposed restrictions. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that we prepare ourselves for the worst by attending to that cleanliness which is next to godliness, and to that temperance which constitutes so large a part of a heaven-approved life. Fortified from within by bodies free from humors brought on by excess, and guarded from without by the removal of all disease-breeding refuse and filth, we can afford to largely dismiss our fears. Such conditions furnish unfavorable soil for the operations of the dread foe.

The Behring Sea Dispute.

It is stated that the United States, president and secretary of state have received positive assurances from the government of Russia that the latter stands prepared to make good the representations given at the time of the Alaskan purchase that Behring's sea is a closed body of water, and that if the United States desires the co-operation of Russia in enforcing that doctrine she can have it. This fact together with the circumstance that Russia is not noted for making unusual concessions or submitting to great slights for the sake of peace, leads the *Chicago Times*, which charges British sealers with keeping up their "piracy" on Behring sea, to remark that "when England learns that the czar is only waiting to have a chip knocked off his shoulder and is anxious to take a hand in this international question John Bull may decide that it is cheaper to buy sealskins than to steal them. When it was poor little Portugal that needed subsidizing there was a great array of English war-ships sent out, but it is probable that diplomacy may be considered more expedient than powder in settling the Behring sea dispute." When the *Times* succeeds in demonstrating that English sealers have been engaged in stealing, it will find England prepared to make honorable amends for any wrong she may have committed. But this is just the aspect of the question American journals refuse to discuss, finding it easier to beg the chief and pivotal point in the dispute.

Don't Like the Change.

The opinion of 2,500 people could not be expected to count for much in an international transaction involving such important issues as the recent Anglo-German agreement, by which it is proposed to cede the island of Heligoland to Germany. Had the views of the islanders been consulted it is not likely that the transfer would have been made. By all accounts these sons of the wave-washed land do not like being handed over to the tender mercies of Germany; and rather than float the German flag many of them would prefer leaving the island altogether. Cable reports state that strong representations are being made to the imperial authorities to pay the expenses of those of the islanders who desire to settle on this side of the Atlantic. The Minister of Agriculture at Ottawa has wired Sir Charles Tupper asking him, if these reports are true, to suggest Canada as a desirable field for settlement. No doubt we should profit by the coming of a class of immigrants so well reported as these descendants of the ancient Frisians. Nor could there be any valid objection against them on the ground of intensifying the mongrel character of our population, whose complexity would not be perceptibly influenced by the addition of a little new blood. They will find an open door and welcome should they decide to come.

London's New Chief.

The resignation of Chief Commissioner Monro, and the appointment to the office of Edward Bradford, together with the introduction of several new regulations affecting the force, has created great discontent among the members of the London police, who have for some days been dangerously near the point of striking. That they have not done so before this, is probably owing to their innate aversion to "striking." The danger of such an event has, however, been greatly reduced by the prudence displayed by Mr. Bradford, the new Commissioner. While firmly insisting that the members of the force shall not hold public meetings to discuss their grievances he has couched his order in extremely friendly terms, and has assured his subordinates that they may rely upon his assistance to the end of securing to them the benefits they desire. This judiciousness and temperance on the part of the new officer has created considerable surprise, seeing that when in India he was regarded as a perfect martinet and ruled his subordinates like a little despot. That such a man should suddenly take to reasoning with those over whom he is appointed may well excite surprise. His case would furnish an interesting study for the mental philosopher.

Stones and sticks are thrown only at fruit-bearing trees.

Satire is the right hand of burlesque.

Joy's recollection is no longer joy; but sorrow's memory is sorrow still.

THE SEAL FISHERS.

Reports Showing That Preparations Have Been Made to Fight.

BOSTON, July 19.—The *Journal's* Victoria, P. C., special says: The news telegraphed from Fort Townsend that a special messenger had arrived from Washington with instructions for the commanders of the United States cutters to proceed to Behring sea and seize all vessels found with any evidence of having been engaged in the seal fishery, causes great indignation. At the same time comes the story that the British squadron has been ordered to rendezvous at Esquimaut. The latter story brings peace to the minds of some, but the majority of British Columbians believe, no matter what act of piracy may be committed by the Yankees, the British warships will not interfere. It is known the crews of all vessels proceeding to the sealing grounds are fully armed with a view of resisting seizure, but to-day a story leaked out that two clipper schooners are being secretly fitted out in Maple bay specially to meet the Yankees. It is said these vessels will each carry heavy swivel besides two smaller guns, and disguised as sealers will tempt seizure so as to bring on an encounter. Regarding the story, Capt. Scott, a veteran sealer, says the report no doubt was true, but the matter had been kept secret. The skippers of two vessels in which he was interested had armed their crews and swore to go to the bottom rather than submit to seizure.

A Prescription for Longevity.

One of my prescriptions for longevity may startle you somewhat. It is this: *Become the subject of a mortal disease.* Let half a dozen doctors thump you, and knead you, and test you in every possible way, and render their verdict that you have an internal complaint; they don't know exactly what it is, but it will certainly kill you by and by. Then bid farewell to the world and shut yourself up for an invalid. If you are three-score years old when you begin this mode of life you may very probably last twenty years, and there you are—an octogenarian. In the meantime your friends outside have been dropping off, one after another, until you find yourself almost alone, nursing your mortal complaint as if it were your baby, hugging it and kept alive by it—if it exists to live. Who has not seen cases like this, a man or a woman shutting himself or herself up, visited by a doctor or a succession of doctors (I remember that once, in my earlier experience, I was the twenty-seventh physician who had been consulted), always taking medicine, until everybody was reminded of that impatient speech of a relative of one of these invalid vampires who live on the blood of tired-out attendants, "I do wish she would get well—or something?" Persons who "shut up" in that way, confined to their chambers, sometimes to their beds, have a very small amount of their living substance. They are like lamps with half their wicks picked down, and will continue to burn when other lamps have used up all their oil. An insurance office might make money by taking no risks except on lives of persons suffering from mortal disease.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

Emperor by the Grace of God.

The political world at Berlin is full of ominous reports and serious apprehensions regarding the dangers threatening the constitution of the young emperor. His conviction that he has been called to the throne by the "grace of God," who has elected his family to rule over Prussia and restore the ancient glory of the German empire, is as strong and as firmly rooted in the deepest recesses of his soul as it was in that of his grandfather William I. All the wisdom required by a ruler for guiding his subjects to that destiny which the Lord has prepared for them from the beginning of the world is given to a ruler of the house of Hohenzollern by inheritance, and he, Emperor William II., has inherited a measure of that wisdom divinely bestowed full to overflowing. It follows that his subjects are only here to obey his commands. The semi-official *Cologne Gazette* has already advised a restriction of the right of universal suffrage for the reichstag, and Windthorst, during the debate on the new military law in the committee, said he was not at all afraid of a dissolution of the reichstag, but of that which would follow after the dissolution, meaning to say that the liberties of the people would probably be curtailed by an arbitrary decree of the emperor. The emperor is determined to carry his scheme for the increase of the army through by any means, peaceably if he can, but at all events he will carry it.

Clean Up.

Scientific men the world over are agreed that an exceptionally mild winter is apt to be followed by a summer marked by heavy mortality resulting from zymotic diseases. This summer promises to prove no exception, as the early appearance of cholera in Europe and of yellow fever on this continent indicates. Canada is not apt to be visited by cholera, and is almost absolutely safe from yellow fever, but it is none the less necessary that every precaution should be taken to prevent the spread of less fatal but still very dangerous epidemic diseases. The condition of yards and back places have been the subject of much criticism, and that criticism is very well founded. It would be very well to postpone work in other directions until every district has had a thorough house and yard cleaning, for if this is not done it is more than probable that typhoid and malarial fevers will claim more than their normal share of victims before the season is over.

The Sense of Smell.

Smell is the most acute by far of the five human senses. Take an ounce of musk—most powerful of scents—and leave it where the atmosphere is still, open on a table, for a year. At the end of that time, having for full 12 months rendered odorous the whole air in its neighborhood, the most delicate scales cannot detect that it has lost a particle in weight. Yet the smell has been infinitely distributed, microscopic portions of the musk floating off and exciting impressions upon the nerve papillae under the delicate lining of the nasal passages; for this is what smell means. The sense has grown almost rudimentary in human beings, through want of necessity for its use under civilized conditions; but it is highly probable that the cave man had it quite as well developed as the sharpest-nosed beasts.