

## New Waiter at Boathouse Inn

The night of November 5, 1797, was so replete with incidents for the dwellers at Parkgate, on the Cheshire shore of the Dee estuary, that for some time to come all local events of importance were described as having taken place so long before or so long after that eventful evening.

There had been a light fall of snow—the first snow that winter; but the busy traffic of foot-passengers over the Parade, and of wheeled vehicles over the roadway, had almost obliterated it. As often happens, the higher Welsh coast opposite had first caught the skirts of the snow-clouds as they trailed heavily up from the sea, and the outlines of the whitened hills of Clwyd, which under ordinary circumstances would have been invisible on a moonless night, now faintly showed their undulating summits, in the bright starlight, with Moel Famman—"The Mother of the Hills," keeping a shadowy watch and ward over them. Clusters of tiny gems marked the whereabouts of Flint Castle and town, and of the Holywell and other centres; but in the intervening spaces the lights were few and far between. Non-consistent was the buzz of the Holyhead trains which now intermittently steals across the four and a half miles of estuary, and only the weird cries of the gulls and the shrill whistle of the curlews broke the sombre silence which brooded beyond the quays.

The desolate outlook but served to accentuate the bustle of the thriving little port. Parkgate was at this time, and for long afterwards, the principal northern gateway to Ireland, and tidions ebbed and flowed with the tides or—to the delight of mine host—abode in one or other of the snug hostleries so thickly dotted along the Parade, until the wind blew fair for the Emerald Isle. Every few yards there was an inn, fourteen have vanished within living memory; so that an almost continuous stream of light was shed from the windows, and, where the snow was yet untrampled, stained it with ruddy patches.

The tumult which nightly attended the arrival of the London coach had subsided, and a quaintly rigged Dublin packet, which had just discharged its cargo, rocked lightly at anchor a few yards from the shore; while, by the side of one of the red sandstone wharves, another packet was being rapidly filled with merchandise, preparatory to sailing with the morning tide. Several post-chaises, bearing wealthy passengers, who preferred not to wait for the early morning coach, had set off, with much cracking of the postillions' whips, for West Chester, as the ancient cathedral-town a dozen miles up the river was generally termed. The curtains of the large room of the Mostyn Hotel, now a flourishing school, were only partly drawn, and within could be seen a gay group of travellers. The smartly-cut coats and knee-breeches of the gentlemen, their spotless linen, powdered wigs, and profusely ornamented court swords, coupled with their gallant bearing, marked them as persons of distinction; while the ladies of the party had their attractions set off by the rich dresses, high-heeled shoes with gleaming buckles, powder, patches and other frivolities of the time.

Several passers-by loitered to gaze at the fascinating picture thus presented to their view; and on the roadway a straggling band of urchins were attempting to march in military order under the command of a slim boy of some ten years, who, by a broken-pointed cutlass, was gallantly leading them on to "fight the French." Notwithstanding their valour, and the snatches of patriotic songs, which dissolved at brief intervals into shrill cheers, they did not court the shadows and never wandered far from the lighted portion of the Parade; for at that time the name of the arch-enemy of mankind had given place to "Bonaparte" as a terror to small boys, and angry parents had threatened them with a sudden visitation of the latter so often that their youthful minds invariably associated him with the powers of darkness. To and fro the band of miniature warriors marched until at the limit of one of their perambulations near the Neston turning they came face to face with an advancing couple—a man and a woman.

The man was rather over the medium height, and powerfully built, with high sloping shoulders and long arms. He wore a claret-coloured coat with numerous brass buttons on either side, and a pair of baggy breeches of the same material buttoned over his coarse blue hose. His heavy shoes were fastened with massive brass buckles, and a bright red silk handkerchief was loosely knotted around his brawny neck over a coarse but clean white linen shirt. His round swarthy face was clean shaven and heavily marked with smallpox. Tiny gold earrings adorned the lobes of his ears, and his small dark eyes were apparently perpetually twinkling with good humour. He walked with the lumbering tread of a ploughman, and the most casual observer would at once set him down as a French peasant. He was accompanied by a tall and very erect lady, much younger than himself with well-moulded features of a somewhat aquiline and melancholy cast, and expressive dark eyes. She was well but plainly dressed. Her rather large feet were neatly shod, and several rings adorned the shapely hand which was employed in holding closely around her a large circular cloak of blue cloth. Unlike her companion, she walked with a firm, quick step, with which he kept pace with evident difficulty.

The man was at once recognized by the army, and was hailed by them as "Froggy," while one of them varied this epithet by calling out, "Boney, Boney-party!" A dozen current witticisms at the expense of Frenchmen

generally, and alluding to their supposed inferiority to Englishmen, were hurled at him; while the leader pretended to dispute his passage with the broken weapon.

The Frenchman caressed their boyish heads with parental fondness as he pushed by with the words, "Gud boys! gud boys! Now let ze lazea pass." Cries of "He has to run! he has to run!" pursued him as he hurried along the Parade. His trading excursions, not to mention certain shady smuggling transactions, had brought him through Parkgate for many years, and he was well known to a large circle there.

Soon the watch-house—standing, as it still does, half-way out upon the road, as if it had elbowed its way forward the better to look out upon the broad estuary—loomed up in the semi-darkness before the couple. A portion of it was roofed and glazed, to protect the watchers from the strong westerly gales, while the broad stone steps and the landing to which they led was open to the weather.

On the topmost stair one of the local revenue officers—a short, broad man, with bronzed face, peaked gray beard, and keen, bluish-gray eyes, and with the general aspect of an old veteran—was poised a large telescope in a sling on the outer edge of the wall, and closely scrutinising the black veil which intruded itself between the quay and Hilbre Island. The shoulders of his semi-military coat were powdered over with snow, and a heavy cutlass was tightly girt about his waist.

The Frenchman made out the figure while yet some distance away, and he and his companion came to a full stop, and stood for a little time whispering together and closely scrutinising the actions of the officer before approaching the watch-house. Fully fifty yards away the Frenchman called out in facetious tones, "I say, monsieur, John Bull Whitehead, what you look out there for? Ha, ha, you tink you see Napoleon coming along—eh?"

"Hullo, Froggy, hullo!" responded the watcher, closing his glass with a snap, "are you back again? Nay, Boney knows better nor come in this quarter. I was watching the Gunpowder Plot fire at Mostyn," and he pointed over the estuary considerably to the left of where he had actually been looking. "If you squint across you can see it with your naked eye—beggin' the lady's pardon."

Froggy followed the direction of the officer's finger, and with difficulty made out a small leaping tongue of flame distinguishable by its reddish tinge from the pale fixed lights on the Flintshire shore.

"I wish I ave your eyes, the Frenchman exclaimed as he moved on.

"If you could see what I was doing from where you stood, my old un, they didn't make you a bad pair," the revenue man muttered to himself as he laid down the glass and began vigorously to clap his numbed arms together; adding, "Id naythur tell you nor no other frog what I was looking for." Then, as if refreshing his memory: "Three flashes and a flash; that's the word they sent down. See a light I sartinly did; but see 'three flashes and a flash' I sartinly did not."

The Boathouse Inn marked, as its crumbling site still marks, the extreme end of the Parade; and, beyond the fields and the shores stretched away to the distant sea-coast. The Mostyn Hotel was patronized by the notables; the Boathouse Inn was frequented by numerous sailors, fishermen, ostlers, post-chaise drivers, anchor-smiths, etc., in addition to shoals of individuals of every known occupation, who were continually setting through Parkgate. The large room overlooking the beach sang with song and mirth. A popular song with a swinging chorus was in full progress, and at the end of each verse the pewters rained applause upon the long oak table with a din akin to that of the shipwrights' mallets in a graving-dock, while the old lattice-window rattled in unison in its ancient frame as the Frenchman and his companion passed beneath it, and crept stealthily into the darkness in the rear of the group of buildings, making their way to the opposite side of an unused lime-kiln some fifty yards farther on, but the alias of "Ould Uncle" had been.

After carefully scrutinizing the victim from her cloak, and, turning towards Hilbre Island, turned the slide of the lantern four times, allowing a lengthy pause between the third and fourth flash. Out of the darkness, some five miles away, came like an echo four answering sparks of light, divided by similar intervals, and almost on the instant the bow of a small boat grated on the beach, and the solitary occupant, a fisherman, sprang lightly ashore.

The new-comer might have sat for the portrait of a Viking. He was his sixty years lightly, and his tawny beard was unfecked with gray, while his tall figure was erect, and he stepped out across the sands with the suppleness of a youth. "John" was the name given to him by his sponsors, but the alias of "Ould Uncle" had been welded to him in his early boyhood, and had stuck to him as only a Parkgate nickname can.

Dark as it was, he and the Frenchman recognized each other, and the latter held out his hand with an uneasy laugh. "Uncle," however, he called by, exclaiming breathlessly, "Out of the road, Froggy; out of the road. There's trouble down at Tinker's Dale, and if some of your dirty countrymen don't get lodgings at Chester Castle

to-morrow, my name's not Uncle Meador."

Before the last word had left his lips the Frenchman had him by the throat.

"Why, what the hangment!" he began; and then, realizing that his opponent was in serious earnest, he locked him in an iron grip, and a deadly struggle began. To and fro and round and round they swung in a grim silence, unbroken save by their panting breath and the crunching sound of their feet on the gravel of the beach.

The struggle was short. In a few moments it was the Frenchman's throat that was being compressed, and he threw up his hands as he felt himself being borne irresistibly to the ground.

At this point the female, who had been darting hither and thither about the combatants, seeking an opportunity to deliver an effective blow, brought the heavy lantern down on Uncle's head with terrific force, and rapidly repeated the blow again and again, at the same time hissing in French to her exhausted countryman, "The knife, fool—the knife."

The next moment Uncle staggered back, and crying out faintly to the merry-makers, "O Lord! mates, help; I'm murdered!" fell like a log.

The female stood, listening intently, to ascertain if the disturbance had been noticed at the "Boathouse," and the Frenchman vainly tried to stifle the sound of his labored breathing as he too strained his ears; but there was no lull in the carousal, and a score of lusty voices could be heard uproariously lifted together in a rhyme which had become immensely popular at Parkgate:

"Says Boney to Johnny, 'I'm comin' to Dover;  
And when I come over I'll be come,  
I'll be come.'  
Says Johnny to Boney, 'You're coming to Dover;  
And when you come over you'll be overcome.'"

The last line was repeated several times with great gusto.

On the very brink of the tide, and even nearer to the guilty party than the "Boathouse" itself, stood the Long Row, facetiously so called; its water sobriquet of William and Mary's Row afterwards attaching itself to it owing to the fact that a William and Mary occupied each of the four humble tenements.

The slight disturbance, however, had been unnoticed. The dim lights continued to burn steadily in the windows; and so still was the night that, between the bursts of song, the air was filled with the moaning voice of the surf, as it battled with the Cambrian rocks fully a score of miles away.

A hurried consultation took place. By proceeding along the shore they would almost certainly fall into the hands of one or other of the coast-guard patrols. By taking possession of one of the small boats, and attempting to steer their own course down the river, they would almost as certainly stick fast on one of the numerous sandbanks, with which the fishermen were so familiar. Finally, they decided to obtain the services of a fisherman and boat, and with this object they dragged the body of Uncle into the deep shadow of the kiln, and retraced their steps to the "Boathouse."

To Be Continued.

### CHINESE WAY OF DOING THINGS.

Lord Charles Eberesford narrated to the Institution of Mechanical Engineers some amusing incidents of his experiences in the land of the mandarins. In the arsenal at Shanghai, where he noticed a Krupp gun cleverly fitted with an Armstrong breech-piece, it was explained to him that the operations had been rendered necessary by an accident, the blowing off of the original breech-piece by the Chinese gunners. Later on, visiting a fort in charge of a very clever mandarin, he discovered how the accident had occurred. They were using a perfectly unsuitable powder for the 67-ton gun, and he remarked to the mandarin that it would blow the breech-piece off. The mandarin nodded, smiled, and answered, "Yes, it does." The last time the gun was fired it killed fourteen men, so they loaded and fired another, which killed twenty-four. These guns must have cost in mounting and breeching at least £50,000.

In another place, being asked where the front of a battery of 60-ton muzzle-loading guns was, the mandarin pointed in one direction and the guns in another. When this was pointed out to him, he said, "Yes, I think there has been a mistake." The guns were arranged in echelon, so that the men working the foremost gun must inevitably have been killed by the discharge of the one behind, and so on through the battery. Lord Charles' demonstration of this self-evident fact left the mandarin perfectly unconcerned, and he only replied, "Yes, some men would no doubt be killed, but the shot would reach the enemy." In yet another place he found that the gun was actually loaded in the magazine, and he pointed out in remonstrance that if there were any carelessness in sponging the gun after firing, the magazine would infallibly be blown up. The mandarin in charge gave me a slap on the back and said, "You are one of the leverest men I ever met. The year before last we did fire these guns, and we blew up the magazine, just as you have said. I will show you where it was." The mandarin added that he could not remember how many men were killed, but he believed that it was fifty. In a powder mill he pointed out the danger of having the windows open lest dust should get into the grinding wheel, and so produce an explosion—the very thing, he was told, that had happened to the previous building which the present one replaced.

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### NEW MINING INDUSTRY.

#### CORUNDUM DEPOSITS IN EASTERN ONTARIO.

Demand for Metal Abroad—Great Prospects for Its Development as Commercial Product.

A valuable accession to the list of the mineral productions of Ontario is likely to result from recent official explorations of the extensive corundum deposits existing in the eastern section of the Province. Though it has been known for some time that this metal was yielded by the rocks at different points in that district, its presence in Lanark County having been discovered some fifty-one years ago by the late Dr. Henry Hunt, and subsequent finds having been made from time to time, the first thorough and systematic exploration of the corundum district, with a view to practical results was that undertaken by Prof. W. G. Miller of the Kingston School of Mines, who was engaged for the work by the Provincial Governments during the seasons of 1897 and 1898. His special report appears in the second part of the Bureau of Mines report for 1899, together with other papers treating of corundum and embodying some important facts as to the deposits of the metal in Ontario, the demand for it abroad, and the prospects for its successful development as a commercial product.

#### WHERE IT IS FOUND.

The principal corundum-bearing belt runs from northeast to south-west through the counties of Renfrew, Hastings and Haliburton, and there are also extensive areas in Peterboro and Frontenac. The total area of the main band where the metal is found is about 300 square miles. The formation of much of the rock being known as nepheline syenite. This also yields considerable quantities of aluminum, a metal greatly in demand in the United States. Whether the aluminum present in the corundum-bearing rock can be profitably extracted depends entirely upon whether some further reduction in the cost of the process can be effected.

#### ITS VALUE IN MANUFACTURING.

Corundum is mainly of value as an abrasive in connection with steel and iron manufactures—being especially well adapted for saw sharpening, roll grinding, spindle grinding, and surface work on hardened steel. Large quantities of abrasives are used in the factories of the United States, the principal sources of the corundum supply, outside of the domestic product being India and Russia. It is difficult to get accurate statistics as to the yield of the American mines, as the producers are averse to giving such information. Much of the American corundum is produced in North Carolina, but the supply is small, and though prospecting is being actively carried on in that State, there has not been much success in the discovery of new deposits. English manufacturers have some difficulty in obtaining adequate supplies of corundum of good quality.

#### QUALITY OF ONTARIO CORUNDUM.

The Ontario rock, from all the facts which are procurable, appears to be fully equal in the percentage of yield to any with which it will have to compete. The yield of the Indian rocks is very low, being but 8.5 per cent.

A United States report gives 15 per cent. as the average from one vein, and the material of a larger deposit is vaguely said to average probably 10 to 15 per cent. of corundum. The quality of the Ontario article is said to be superior to that of the Indian corundum, and a series of experimental tests between the Hastings County metal and American corundum and carborundum made by the Hart Emery Wheel Co. of Hamilton, fully sustained the high expectations formed as to the Ontario product. Samples have been

sent to different manufacturers, both in the United States and Europe, and very satisfactory replies as to its suitability for industrial purposes received. A number of wheels, together with bricks, rounds and triangles made of Ontario corundum by different manufacturers have been sent to Paris, where they will be shown at the Exposition of 1900.

#### A BEGINNING TRADE.

The corundum belt, which lies in the Free Grant District, has been withdrawn from settlement and mining rights can only be secured on lease. The Canadian Corundum Co., who have agreed to lease considerable areas, are under contract to expend \$160,000 in developing the mines before July 1, 1902, and will make a series of test experiments to discover whether materials of commercial value, especially aluminum, can profitably be produced from corundum-bearing rock. Should such a process be discovered the industry will be established on an assured foundation and the remunerativeness of corundum mining greatly increased.

#### SOME DEADLY POISONS.

A Few of Those Which Are Considered the Most Fatal.

The discoverer of prussic acid was instantly killed by inhaling one whiff of his own handiwork.

Pure prussic acid is never sold or handled. The smell of it is always fatal. It kills not in three minutes or half an hour, but the instant it enters the lungs as a gas. The mixture ordinarily sold as prussic acid is 98 parts water to 2 parts of the drug. Even in this form it is very deadly. A 20 per cent. mixture of the acid would kill nearly as quickly as if pure.

Atropine, though it has no harmful odor, is so deadly that as much of it as would adhere to the end of a moistened forefinger would instantly cause death.

Cyanide of potassium has a pleasant smell, which is not injurious, but a small quantity swallowed kills at once.

Pure ammonia, if inhaled, would cause death almost as quickly as prussic acid.

When a carboy of nitric acid is broken some one has to suffer. It will burn wood, eat through iron plates, and destroy whatever it touches. Such an accident once happened in an acid factory. Every one ran away, leaving the acid to amuse itself by setting fire to things. Soon it was seen that the building would be destroyed and hundreds of people thrown out of work and four men volunteered to put out the fire in the acid room. They succeeded and came out feeling all right. Five hours later all were dead.

#### THE GOOD SHIP BANANA.

Named by Her Rich Owner Who Got His Start Peddling Bananas in Liverpool.

A British steamer now at Lambert's Point is named Banana. Her owner is Mr. Alfred L. Jones of Liverpool. He began years ago to import bananas in a very small way and peddled them from a wheel-barrow along Castle street in Liverpool. The business grew and Mr. Jones became rich. The seas are now spotted with his ships.

The story is told that when asked what name should be given to a new ship he said: "Call her Banana; that's a pretty good name."

#### UNSETTLED.

Can you tell me what sort of weather we may expect next month? wrote a subscriber to the editor of a paper, and the editor replies as follows: It is my belief that the weather next month will be very much like your subscription. The inquirer wondered for an hour what the editor was driving at, when he happened to think of the word "unsettled." He sent it the required amount next day.