

The Paris newspapers, with scarcely an exception, now profess ardent friendship for Italy, and are disposed to argue that the visit of the Italian fleet to Toulon, like the visit of the French fleet to Kronstadt, will have far-reaching political consequences. A Hungarian paper takes a similar view, and declares that the Triple Alliance will not be renewed in 1903, but that, on the contrary, Italy will become an ally of France and Russia. The presence of a Russian squadron at Toulon during the festivities in honor of the Italian visitors is thought to confirm the prediction. There is another and more probable theory, that Italy, while refraining from joining the Dual Alliance, will enter into a compact to maintain a strict neutrality in the event of a war between Germany and France.

The later theory rests on the authority such as it is, of the well-known correspondent of the London Times in Paris. M. de Blowitz says that he has seen a letter from "a personage of high rank in one of the small northern Powers," which letter contains an outline of an agreement alleged to be on the point of signature by Russia, France and Italy. According to this personage, the treaty is neither offensive nor defensive, but simply pledges Italy, as we have said, to remain a neutral. A moment's reflection will show that such neutrality would be of incomparably more benefit to France than to Germany. In the event of a war between the two last named Powers, France would no longer be compelled to keep a considerable part of her army on her southeastern frontier to withstand a possible invasion in that quarter and she would also be able to employ the whole of her Mediterranean fleet for aggressive operations in the North Sea and the Baltic. Germany, on the other hand could use only a part of her land forces against France, because Russia would be able, not only to occupy Austria, but to menace Germany's eastern frontier.

It is clear, then, that such an agreement would be regarded at Berlin as a hostile act, and, while Germany might not venture to punish Italy directly by an invasion, no longer be compelled to keep a conflict with Russia and France, she might have recourse to the weapon which in 1881-82 Bismarck found effective for the purpose of driving Italy into a league with Germany and Austria. That weapon was agitation in favor of an international guarantee of the independence of the Papacy, a guarantee which would have involved a revival of the Pope's sovereignty over at least a part of the former Papal dominions. Such a restoration, if brought about by exterior pressure, would deal a more deadly blow at Italian unity than would the sometimes mooted voluntary cession of the Leonine City, together with a strip of land running from it to the sea. The situation, however, would be materially different from that of twenty years ago, for, if Italy could count upon the support of France and Russia, she should be able to resist any pressure exercised by Germany and Austria.

In the internal condition of Italy at the present time there are indications that a change of foreign policy might meet with favor. The young King Victor Emmanuel III, is believed to be strongly prepossessed in favor of France, and he has already evinced a determination to be much less of a figurehead in the Government than was his father. It may be taken for granted that his Queen, who was a Montenegrin Princess, would do anything in her power to further the most cordial relations between Russia and her adopted country. Then, again, in the Chamber of Deputies, the centre of political gravity seems likely to be fixed permanently in the Left, and the Left is not only notoriously anti-Teutonic, in its sympathies, but includes the Irredentists, who deem the unity of Italy incomplete so long as Austria, is suffered to retain the Trentino and Trieste. Once more, in Lombardy, the feeling of dislike for Austria and of gratitude to France is more pervasive and emphatic than in any other part of the Italian peninsula, and it so happens that in the present Ministry, both the Premier and the Minister for Foreign Affairs are natives of Lombardy.

"Purple Violets."

I.
"Arrah, Masther Gerald, but it's a grate day for Ireland that sees ye home in the ould place agin!"

Colonel Desmond smiled at his old gardener's fervency.
"Thank you, Casey. By Jove!"—glancing round the quaint, straggling garden—"it is good to be home in old Ireland again. Seven years' roasting in India makes a man appreciate his own country with a vengeance."

"But look at that, now!" cried Casey admiringly. "And to think it's seven long years since ye put yer foot in this ould garden! And is it thue, Masther Gerald, you've been fightin' the blacks iver since? Micky Milligan, who reads the paper reg'lar, sez the Queen sent you a goold cross, she was that plazed at the way you knocked the devil out of the hay-thens!"

"Not a gold one," laughed his master. "It's one made of gunmetal, but not all the coin in the realm could buy it, Casey. And now tell me all the news. I see"—glancing around—"you've looked after the old place thoroughly during my absence."

"Thank ye, Masther Gerald," said Casey, beaming with pleasure. "Me an' the ould woman's done our best be Coolager since the day ye shut it up and went abroad to fight. As for the news, the devil a scrap of change there's been hereabouts, save and except the killin' of the one-eyed fox in Kelly's wood the saison afther you left, and the death of Owen Molloy, the schoolmaster, six months ago."

"And the rectory people—how are they?" queried Colonel Desmond, with the faintest flush of colour on his forehead.

"Musha, they're all thrivin'," replied Casey, with a covert glance at his master. "Of coorse, the rector himself gets an odd twinge of gout, but that's natural enough in a man of his age. As for Miss Cynthia, she's the swatest lady in all Ireland! You'll be afther seein' hur yerself, Masther Gerald, in a few minits. She comes over to me ivery mornin' for a posy of —"

"Miss Cynthia!" interrupted the colonel, with a start. "Why—why, I thought she was to have married Mr. Harvey!"

"Lord bless you, no, sir! Miss Cynthia will never marry—leastways," he added confidentially, "not unless she gets the man she's been atin' her heart out about this many a year!"

"And who may that lucky individual be, Casey?" asked Colonel Desmond, with the faintest touch of bitterness in his voice.

Casey shuffled uncomfortably. "Arrah! sure it's not for the likes of me to be discussin' the ginty," he began insinuatingly; "but they do say in the village that he went off, to the wars sivin—Bogorra, Masther Gerald, he went somewhere about the same time as you went yerself!"

"They talk awful rot in the village," was Colonel Desmond's emphatic comment, as he turned away impatiently, and walked down a side alley.

From the farther end of the alley he could see a wide sweep of meadowland, with a house or two peeping from out some distant woods.

"So she never married Harvey, afther all!" he muttered. "I wonder—I wonder why? Confound it!"—he broke off angrily—"am I never to get rid of that confounded episode? Seven years, and I haven't forgotten. Seven years since she—since she sent me about my business," he concluded bitterly, "and I haven't had the decency to forget!"

For some moments he stared straight across the soft sweep of meadow-land.

Memory pulled back the hands of the clock seven years, and in his dream he looked on life with eyes that never would, in reality, look the same again. Life was such a good thing in those dear old far-off days—so good, that not all the bitter disappointment and reckless danger of seven years had rubbed one hour from off the slate of his memory.

But what a fool he had been! She had fooled him—led him on, played with him as a cat plays with a mouse, and then— It is the way of women to sacrifice men's hearts to their vanity. But she might have spared him, because—well, because, after all, he had loved her ever since she had been a long-legged kiddie in short frocks. That was years before Harvey had appeared upon the scene, with his pushing insistence, and knack of dangling around her wherever she went.

He had always believed in Cynthia, in whose cause he had first learnt the art of battle. It was like losing his faith in God when he lost faith in Cynthia.

He remembered the anguish of jealousy that had prompted him to write that last letter—the letter whose answer was to finally settle his hopes and fears. Every phrase of that fateful missive had burnt itself into his brain for ever. His reproaches, his burning love and passionate jealousy, all passed before him now, like the ghosts of a play. And then there blazed out before him, in letters of flame, the closing words—the

words that demanded her final decision.

"I am sending this note by Casey," they ran, "who will also give you a bunch of violets. Should you wear the latter at dinner to-night, I will know at once, and for all time, that you love me; if not, I will never bother you again!"

That was all—an ill-written note and a bunch of violets; but they were the last chapter in a man's tragedy.

II.

He had ordered Casey to gather a bunch of white violets—white violets were her favourite flower—and deliver them with the letter to Miss Cynthia without delay.

That was in the afternoon. In the evening his fate was decided. At dinner she wore a bunch of purple violets.

Looking backward now, Colonel Desmond knew that of all the battles he had been through in his time, the one he had fought with himself that ill-starred night was the hardest, and the victory the most creditable he had ever won. He had taken his leave like a gentleman, and a week later sailed for India on active service.

That was seven years ago now; and the years blunt our sorrows wonderfully; but he had never forgotten the white violets, nor Cynthia.

Presently the colonel retraced his footsteps. "Casey," he said, "is the bed of white violets by the south wall still in existence?"

The gardener scratched his head. "Lord, no, Masther Gerald!" he said. "A blight seemed to come over them soon afther you left, and the devil a stem in the bed but died!"

"Ah! Like dreams, Casey," said the colonel. "Violets die quickly."

"Shure, sir," agreed Casey vaguely; "but the other wans—you remember the bed of double purple wans by the ould greenhouse—"

Desmond nodded.

"Well, though it's meself that says it," continued Casey proudly, "they're as bright and bloomin' as the day you told me to pull a bunch and take them across with the letter to Miss Cynthia! Will ye come and have a look at them, Masther Gerald?"

"I am afraid, Casey," said Colonel Desmond, smiling, as he followed the old gardener, "your memory is playing you a trick. They were white violets I told you to take to Miss Cynthia that day. I have every reason for remembering."

"Bless your soul, no, Masther Gerald!" replied Casey confidently, as they stopped opposite a bed of rich purple violets. "They waur the double purples. These is the very wans at out feet. I remember it as well as if it waur only yesterday. Ye called me up to the verandy. 'Casey,' sez you, 'take this letter, along wid a bunch of violets, across to Miss Cynthia at wunce. And, Casey,' sez you, 'it's to be a big bunch—remember, a big bunch.' Yez may have sed white, but the devil a bit of me heard, so I tuk her a darlin' bunch of the double purples, and," continued Casey, too interested in his narrative to notice his master's white face—and I'm goin' to tell ye a saycret, sir. The devil a flower Miss Cynthia has ever worn from that day to this but purple violets!"

But Casey's information appeared to pass unnoticed. The colonel never spoke, only stared across the sunny meadows to where a spiral wreath of blue smoke crept upward through the distant woods. So that was the explanation of Cynthia's purple violets. Poor Cynthia! She had loved him, after all. And he—what had he done to her? He turned on Casey. A savage desire to choke the life out of this soft-hearted idiot, who had well-nigh ruined two lives, swept through him. Then the man in him triumphed. He fought down the passion bravely. What was done, was done, without hope of redemption. "For all the world as if he'd seen a ghost," Casey told a crony long afterwards.

"She kem over here wan day afther ye'd gone abroad, sir," resumed the loquacious Casey, at length, "and axed me if I'd let her have a bunch of the double purples every mornin' while they waur in saison, which was quare, seein' they have the best flowers on the countryside in the rectory garden. I reminded her av that," continued Casey, "but she only smiled a bit sorrowful like, and sed she'd rather have the wans that grew here. She called them a quare name—sed they waur her romance, or somethin' like that—but the devil a name I've iver heard them called meself but purple violets!"

"And you always let her have them?" asked the colonel slowly. His face was very white.

"Av coorse, Masther Gerald!" assented Casey insinuatingly. "I knew if ye waur at home yerself ye'd let Miss Cynthia have the sowl out of yer own body if she axed it. So ivery mornin' she comes over about this time, and—Bogorra! here she is herself!" broke off Casey suddenly. "And if ye don't mind, Masther Gerald, I'll go and look at the roses."

She came along the wide, gravelled path, with all her old grace and dignity; and Colonel Desmond, as he watched her, thanked God he had loved and waited even seven years.

Her eyes were fixed on the ground, as if she were lost in thought, and she had drawn quite near before she looked up. Then he went towards her.

"Cynthia!" he said.

A flush of color suddenly swept through her face, and as suddenly receded again, leaving her deadly pale.

"You?" she cried, recovering herself, with a brave effort. "I—never heard you had come home."

know I am in Ireland. I never meant to have come home again," he went on; "but Fate seems to have forced my footsteps back to your side again. Oh, Cynthia, Cynthia," he cried, "forgive me! I made an awful mistake that night seven years ago!"

Then, with one hand tightly clasped in his, he explained Casey's mistake—the mistake that had swallowed up seven years of their happiness, and well-nigh wrecked their lives.

"I could stake my life that I told him the violets were to be white," he concluded; "and when you came into dinner wearing purple, I— Well, afther that, nothing mattered much." He broke off thickly.

Her eyes suddenly filled with tears. "It nearly broke my heart," she said softly.

"Oh, Cynthia, Cynthia," he cried, his clasp on her hand tightening, "what a heartless brute you must have thought me! Try to think of what I did a little gently. And—and will you let me try to atone for the wrong I did you in the past? Let me try to win back a little of the old love—only a little."

She suddenly stooped down, and pulled some of the violets growing at their feet. As she pinned them in his coat, her eyes met his.

"For seven years," she said, "I've never worn any flowers but these!"

LAND OF THE HUMMING BIRD.

The Surprising Phenomenon That Follows Digging in Trinidad's Asphalt Lake.

Few people who travel over the asphalted streets of our large cities are aware of the origin of the black, pitchy mass that goes to make up the basis of the smooth roadway under their feet. Eighteen hundred miles almost due south from New York lies the little tropical island of Trinidad—a British possession off the coast of northern South America. At the south-western extremity of this colony the famous Pitch Lake is located on the summit of a small hill, less than two hundred feet above the level of the sea. In appearance there is nothing phenomenal about this wonder of the tropics but a visit to the lake as it is familiarly called, reveals one of the most unaccountable oddities of nature in the annals of travel.

The tourist may take passage to the "land of the humming-bird"—as Trinidad people like their country to be called—and after securing accommodation at the only decent hotel in the colony, proceed to the lake by one of the small Government steamers plying coastwise three times weekly, disembark at the Brighton pier, and proceed to the scene of "digging." Of all the crude, rough, and ready means of extracting wealth from mother earth, the Trinidad Lake asphalt operations are the most striking. The visitor arrives on a fairly level plateau, spotted here and there with tiny pools of water, beneath which the soft shiny substance known as asphalt glitters in the reflection of a fierce tropical sun. Scattered over the surface of the lake dozens of swarthy negroes are plying pick and hoe, extracting the tar-coaly looking stuff from the earth. One may sit in the shade of a nearby shrub, or under the protecting shelter of an umbrella, and watch the negroes pile heap after heap of the asphalt into the endless chain of tubs that hurry along to the pier, from which one has but recently landed, until a yawning excavation of twenty or more feet suggests to the supervising dandy that the time has come to move a bit further on. In the course of a few hours the excavation resulting from the morning's diggings begins to look less deep, and by eventide the spot from which more than five or ten tons have been dug is again level with the surrounding earth and ready to be dug over by the gang of noisy blacks. From the point of digging to the pier is but a mile or less of endless-chain descent; moored to the pier are big sailing vessels, and sometimes steamers, into whose capacious holds the tubs discharge the pitch at the rate of two or three hundred tons per day.

A GOOD INVESTMENT.

Many stories are told of good luck following old purchases made by the enterprising mercantile men known as "ship-breakers," who buy up wrecks and the hulks of stranded vessels, etc. But the latest received comes from Newport, England, where one lucky ship-breaker made a bid for one of the vessels stranded on the Welsh Hook, between the English and Welsh sands, at the time when the steamship Brunswick grounded and was wrecked. Apparently so hopeless was the condition of the vessel that he had the lot for £82. However, he succeeded in raising her, and having towed her to Newport thus became possessed of the vessel, a cargo of 990 tons of coal, and the whole of the ship's stores.

LITERAL INSTRUCTIONS.

Mr. Younghusband, recovering from influenza:—This beef-tea seems very weak, my dear.

Mrs. Y.—I'm sure it ought to be good; I made it according to the doctor's instructions.

Mr. Y., inquiringly.—The doctor's? Mrs. Y.—Yes, he said half the people didn't stew the beef enough to get all the goodness out of it. I'm sure I did, for the sauce-pan boiled dry twice, and I had to fill it up with water.

FROM THE UNITED STATES

PERSONAL AND POLITICAL NOTES ABOUT THE BUSY YANKEE.

Neighbourly Interest in His Doings—Matters of Moment and Mirth Gathered From His Records.

A branch of the Y.M.C.A., specially for coloured men, has been organized in New York.

The American Bible Society has appropriated \$5,000 for colporteur work among the negroes of the South.

Senator Foraker will spend the fall in Porto Rico, and make a thorough study of all its industries, classes of population and its various social, educational and religious institutions.

President James K. Patterson, of Kentucky State College, Lexington, Ky., has announced that in his will he has set aside \$50,000 for a college library as a memorial to his deceased son.

David L. Richards has been elected to the position of Town Clerk of North Dana, Mass., for the forty-first consecutive time. He also served as treasurer of the town for twenty-one years.

Fire Chief Swenie, of Chicago, is said to be writing a book, partly autobiographical and partly a history of the fire department of his city. It is to be entitled "Fifty Years a Fireman."

Mrs. Ida A. Hull, a Methodist missionary to the Chinese in San Francisco, has changed her name to Chan Hon Tan. According to competent testimony it is the name of a worthy minister and a scholar.

The Governor of Utah has had the good sense to veto the bill passed by the Legislature for the toleration of plural marriages solemnized before Utah became a State. An attempt to pass the bill over his veto failed.

Baron R. Lehman, Consul-General of Greece to the Netherlands, is making a tour of America and announces his intention to write a book about the United States. He says that he could not say anything unkind about it.

The sum of \$300,000 has been given by four philanthropists of New York to the Y.M.C.A. of that city to relieve the branches of the debt on their buildings. Three of the four donors are J. Pierpont Morgan, John D. Rockefeller and William E. Dodge. The fourth wishes his gift to be anonymous.

Favourable arrangements are being made with the railroads for the conveyance of Epworth Leaguers from all points in the United States and Canada to San Francisco for the next National Convention which, according to present arrangements, will be held July 18-21.

An example to other cities has been set in Pittsfield, Mass., by ministers of all denominations. They have agreed to refuse to perform a marriage ceremony when one or both parties to the marriage have been divorced, excepting the case of the innocent party to the divorce suit who has obtained a divorce on Scriptural grounds.

By the will of the late Franklin H. Bishop of Russell, Mass., the State of Massachusetts is made his residuary legatee. The will reads: "As I have no relatives on whom I care to bestow my goods and estates, after the payment of my just debts and funeral expenses, I give all the residue of my estate to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to its sole use and behoof forever." The executor says that when the estate is settled the commonwealth will receive about \$7,000. Mr. Bishop was a prominent citizen of Russell and an ardent admirer of his State.

ZEALOUS GUESSING.

Few of the struggles of life are more agonising than those of the schoolboy who has no idea of what is expected of him, but determines to do his best. His frantic efforts to meet the teacher's suggestions halfway are simply heroic.

A few days ago, the master of one of the elementary schools in Newbury was teaching his boys the composition of sentences, and said to them:

"If I ask you, 'What have I in my hand?' you must not answer 'Chalk,' but make a full sentence, and say, 'You have chalk in your hand.' Now we will go on. 'What have I on my feet?'"

Boots, came the immediate reply. "Wrong, you haven't listened to my directions."

Stockings, ventured another heedless one.

Wrong again; worse than ever! wrathfully replied the master. Well! he continued interrogatively to a lad near him.

Please, sir— then he paused. Perhaps he thought that his answer might seem funny, but convinced that he was right, he recklessly gasped out: Corns!

REALISM.

Ethel—Yes, we played husband and wife. I kissed him and said he was the handsomest man in the world, and he said, Here's forty dollars, go and buy some gloves.