New Waiter at Boathouse Inn

II.

Rumour had it that the lattest addition to the staff of the Boathouse Inn owed an old score, and was working it off in the capacity of waiter; and the general opinion among the customers was that he was a bad bargain even at that price. He had a very long body and very short legs; this physical peculiarity being further much emphasised by a coat which had once been blue, the long tails reaching half-way down his podgy-looking calves. He wore a frowsy mouse-coloured wig and a bleary owl-like expression of wisdom that evidently covered the most dense stupidity. He carried an ample supply of snuff in his capacious waistcoat pockets; and, extracting it sometimes from the right pocket, sometimes from the left, with his thumb and finger, sonorously inhaled a portion and flung away the remainder with a contemptuous flirt of his fingers that sent a tiny cloud floating over the pewters and glasses in a manner that was peculiarly distressful to poor topers with a squeamish stomach. He invariably met the incoming coaches and post-chaises, holding forth to the travellers with a very strong Welsh accent upon the superior accommodation of the "Boathouse," and seldom left the stranger until he had elicted a verbal reply, after which he at once turned his attention to some one else. He was the constant butt of the company in the "Boathouse' taproom; but he appeared quite ignorant of the fact notwithstanding the very personal nature of the sallies levelled at him.

"Now then you old Welsh tup, ram, you, sharpen your stumps,' quicken your pace, bawled a drover at the far-end of the room, the speaker himself being so thoroughly Welsh that he could with difficulty make himself understood.

The solemnity with which the waiter received the remark caused much hilarity; and as he reached the door a little bandy-legged ostler touched his shoulder, remarking in a serious undertone, but loud enough to be heard by the company, "Tell you what, ould master, if I'd a pair of legs like your'n I'd cut 'em off!"

A loud burst of laughter followed the waiter through the door; and ere it ended the French man and woman entered the room, the former smiling away like clockwork upon the company, many of whom were well known to him. They were closely followed by Whitehead, who, having been relieved at the watch-house, had come to thaw his inner man with a jorum of rum.

The Frenchman was greeted good-humouredly by several of the company most of whom, however, exhibited some reserve owing to the presence of the lady. This vanished immediately, however, and a fisherman, far gone in ale, rose unsteadily to his feet, and in a jocular strain attempted the lines, "Says Boney to Johnny," &c.

The foreigner, still smiling imperturably, ordered a bowl of punch "for his good friends to drink the health of his only daughter," whom he had brought over to see the country, and who at the remark bestowed a languid smile upon the company.

The arrival of the foreign lady and gentleman had an effect upon the new waiter. For a moment his slipshod manner seemed to drop from him, and he received the generous order almost with alacrity. He took snuff from both pockets in quick succession, and gave a quick nod of acquiescence; but dropped almost at once into his customary listless manner, and shuffled from the room even more limply than before.

After placing the bowl on the table before the Frenchman, the waiter sat down on a vacant seat at the opposite side of the table; but the toproom fraternity of the "Boathouse" were not wont to stand upon etiquette and the action attracted no attention.

The glasses were filled, and an elderly packetman rose to his feet and began to expatiate on the fact that, although he was a Frenchman by birth, Froggy after all was such a good fellow that some of his ancestors must certainly have gone over from England; when he suddenly stopped, and a thrill ran through the room, for a strange and powerful voice, and a voice, moreover, that thrilled with authority, was suddenly uplifted above the words of the toast.

Looking down, they saw that the new waiter's elbows rested on the table, and a pair of long-barrelled pistols were levelled from them directly at the heads of the foreigners. His face was completely transformed, as his keen glance rested on the cowering pair before him, and was so lighted up with animation that he was almost unrecognisable. His figure, too, seemed to dilate, as, without a trace of the Welsh accent, there rang out the words:

"I, William Shone, an officer of Bow Street, call upon all loyal subjects of King George here present to assist me to take into lawful custody the bodies of Jean Colat, who, it appears, is known here as Froggy, and his accomplice, Comte de Bordenave, who are wanted for high treason and for the cold-blooded murder of John Bradley, an officer of Bow Street, from whose custody they escaped two months agone."

This address appeared to be partly given from memory and partly extemporised; and long before it was finished, several of the company had rushed before the pair, and pinned them firmly by the arms, upsetting several glasses in the process.

The Frenchman showed his teeth like a wolf caught in a trap, and the Count turned ghastly pale, and looked as if fascinated at the officer as he spoke.

The latter rose to his feet, and laid his pistols on the table, adding solemnly as he displayed a sealed warrant to the company for a moment, and drew out a pair of handcuffs:

"Ay, poor John Bradley, as true a comrade as ever drew the breath of life. May God have mercy upon his soul!—murdered while doing his duty. Many a ride he and I had together, and many a time have our barkers spoke out together as the honest lads, highwaymen, stood at bay in the moonlight; but this is the first time we have been upon the track of a dirty foreigner. I hope it will be the last!"

"You pigs of Englishmen!" Froggy broke out as the darbies closed around his wrists with a snap. "Napoleon will eat you up soon."

"Not him, indeed!" growled Whitehead. "You talk like a ha'penny book with no leaves in it. We've got a little one-armed man as'll warm his onions for him if he tries any pig-killing over here."

"As for your Nelson," said the Count in broken English and with withering contempt—"pooh! bah!" He spat out bitterly as he spoke.

"Now, gentlemen," said the waiter cheerfully, "there's no profit in holding arguments with dead men, and these are no better," with a slight gesture of his thumb across the table. "I shall need three good stout Parkgate lads to help me with them to Chester, where I shall be granted a proper escort to London; but before I start you shall drink the King's health in the best bowl of punch that our good host Johnson can brew." He threw a couple of guineas on the table.

One of the fishermen opened the lattice window, and, taking up his glass without a word swilled its contents on to the beach.

The remainder followed suit; and the officer, picking up the bowl, stepped briskly across the room and flung the liquor after the rest.

"Now, Mr. Johnson," he added briskly the waiters and guests from the other apartments, thronged the entrance to the taproom, "wash this well out, and brew us a mixture that won't disgrace the King's health."

At this juncture there was a sudden commotion among the group and exclamations of horror, in the midst of which the gigantic figure of Uncle staggered into the room. His beard was matted with blood and sea-sand, and a dark blot surrounded a large slash in the breast of his blue shirt. His face was ghastly pale, and as he reeled into the room and rested heavily against a settle he gasped out, "A drink, mates; for the love of God, a drink! I'm dying!"

A glass of brandy was held to his lips, while a dozen voices asked who had been his asailants.

"Ask them varmints," he replied as the neat spirit darted new life through his veins. He pointed to the shrinking captives. "Boys," he continued, addressing the crowd, "there's a big French schooner loaded down with arms for the Irish put in under Tinker's Dale, and I suspect they were only waiting for this murderin' pair before they went on their dirty errand to Ireland agen our lawful King—God bless him!—for I seed madam theer a-bogin' at um with the lantern, though I did not think what it meant till she were beating it into my poor ould head! "Three flashes and a flash it were, sure enough, Billy Whitehead," he concluded, turning to that individual.

"'Three flashes and a flash' were the last words of poor Jack Bradley, ejaculated Shone. "That the words meant mischief of some kind we knew, but what kind of mischief it was we could not make out."

"Gentlemen," said Whitehead, rising and sternly buttoning up his coat as he spoke, "we are all friends here now—leastways all but two—and I can do no harm by stating that the secret order sent down here by Captain Monk was to keep a sharp lookout for 'three flashes and a flash.' No one seemed to know what it meant, and no doubt the same order has been sent to other ports. Uncle, here, and Jim Bushell were the only ones entrusted with the secret outside our own set, and they've been doing a sort of sentry-go up and down the river every night since. Now, just before I came in here Lieutenant Cottingham marched up to the "Red Lion' with over twenty redcoats bound for Dublin Castle with to-morrow morning's packet. What I have to propose is this, that we take these soldiers down the river in our boats at once, get around the schooner in the dark, and serve it like we served the two passengers.'

A hearty cheer broke from the company. The Frenchmen cursed; but in a few moments the crowd moved out, the prisoners closely guarded, and the officers walked in the rear. The bandy-legged ostler and host Johnson alone remained.

"Well," ejaculated the former, "I always thought as them Bow Street runners were runners; but blow me if that old gentleman could run for toffee!"

"Thomas," sagely rejoined mine host, "Master Weasel isn't much of a runner like to speak on; but he dines off Master Hare oftener than thee or me."

The whole population of Parkgate, including the strangers within their gates, remained on the quays during the night. In the early hours of morning the sounds of distant musketry, sometimes in the form of an irregular rattle, and occasionally in a solid volley, could be heard by the listeners grouped about the blazing fires. By-and-by it ceased, and a young sailor declared that he heard three faint cheers.

A few hours later, as the "Royal Prince," coach climbed the steep summit of the Boathouse Hill, en route for Liverpool, the driver suddenly reined in his steeds and listened intently; then the "outsides" turned an attentive ear westward, and transformed their left hands into the ear-trumpets used by primitive man. Five "insides"—three ladies and two gentlemen—stepped quickly upon the road and rapidly followed their example. Hearty cheers were continuously rolling from end to end of the Parkgate Parade; and in the brief intervals which intervened what seemed like a faint echo floated in from the westward.

The dawn began to break beyond the distant marshes, and in the faint light appeared a large schooner in tow of fully a score of small boats, rowed by dark figures with a sprinkling of red uniforms with white facings. Some half-dozen red-coats were drawn up on the deck of the schooner, with their lieutenant, who later on came out of Waterloo with a musket-ball in his foot and a captaincy; and several manacled figures lay on the deck near them. One or two more figures there were, who lay even more still, yet were not pinioned.

As the schooner drew near the quays the shouts of the conquerors and of those who awaited them seemed to blend in one mighty cheer.

The driver's whip-lash described an hieroglyphic over his head, and darted out with a sharp snap at the leaders. "Well," he exclaimed aloud, "they have managed that all right; and the Parkgate lads will have more prize-money than they can spend for a bit!"

. . . . . .

There has always been an Uncle Mealor at Parkgate, and, to all appearances, there always will be. The present Uncle, who related the above as I sat in the stern of his boat, watching his thirty-foot mussel-rake rising and falling in the vasty deep at Dawpool, assured me that when his grandfather "coached it up to London" Mr. William Shone informed him that he had brought him up to town not so much to give evidence in the treason case as to witness an execution at Tyburn in which the central figures were one Jean Colat and a certain French aristocrat known as Comte de Bordenave.

WHAT HE SAW ON THE COFFIN.

An Expressman's Story About Carrying a Corpse on the Front Platform.

"I do not believe in ghosts, nor am I particularly nervous," remarked the express messenger, "but I once was so positive that I saw a spectre that I was troubled with insomnia for many nights and I thought I never would be able to quiet my nerves again.

"It was back in the 80s when I was running. We made a small station one evening about dusk and found on the platform, as I had been advised, the grewsome pine box, telling its story of some unfortunate who had gone to the mountains in a vain search for health. It so happened that my car was full and plan as I might I could find no place for the box. The train conductor came up to find out what was the cause of the delay. I told him of my predicament. He was equal to the emergency in an instant.

"'Put it on the front platform,' he said. The suggestion was a good one and in another moment our dead passenger was aboard and we were rolling over the prairie.

"It so happened that I had a car with a door at the end. About 10 o'clock snow began falling and I tell you it came down thick. It was midnight when I thought of the corpse. It would never do to lose it and the jolt of the train might jar it off the platform. The night was clear. I opened the door. As it swung on its hinges I looked out. Then I slammed the door with a bang and jumped back in the car. I was perspiring from every pore and tremoling like a leaf.

"What had I seen? Why, sitting bolt upright on the coffin, with his hands clasping his knees was the whitest ghost any man ever saw. I stood in the centre of the car, irresolute. I looked at my Winchester, then I realized it would be of no use against a spook.

"Suddenly the door opened and there stood my ghost. It was a tramp covered with snow from head to foot. He stood there blinking at the light for a moment and then said:

"Say, Willie, you've ketched me, anyhow, can't you let me get warm afore you turn me offf" Did I let him ride? Well, I guess. If I'd been going to New York he could have gone with me I'm the last man in the world not to show appreciation and gratitude."

BRITAIN MOURNED.

In January, 1842, a British army of 4,500, with about 12,000 camp followers, was completely destroyed by the Afghans upon the retreat from Cabul. But one Englishman, Dr. Brydon, reached the British garrison at Jelalabad to tell the tale of the awful disaster. Nevertheless, before the end of September in the same year, an avenging British army had captured Cabul and inflicted severe punishment upon the Afghans.

During the Indian Mutiny in 1857 the British garrison at Cawnpore, numbering 400, was massacred, with over 200 women and children. In the first day's assault of the British on Delhi in that year they lost sixty-six officers and 1,100 men. This was nearly a third of the attacking force, while the assault had only resulted in the capture of one-sixth of the city. Yet another attempt to take the city a few days later was successful.

In the Crimean War a blunder of someone caused the fruitless charge of the Light Brigade upon the Russian guns, from which only 198 out of 607 cavalrymen returned. The British also twice failed in attempts to take the Redan in front of Sebastopol. Nevertheless, Sebastopol was taken.

On July 27, 1880, 730 British soldiers and three native Indian regiments, a total of 2,500, were routed at Kushk-i-Nak-hub, Afghanistan, with a loss of 1,100 and two guns, but ample revenge was shortly secured by Lord Roberts.

TROUBLE SOF A WESTERN PAPER.

"Wx hopx," recently said a leading article in an American paper, apologetically, "that our rxadxrs will pardon thx appxarancx of this wxxk's 'Intxlligxncxr,' and thx sxxmingly mystyxrious absxncx of a cxrtain lxttxr. Shooting Sam Bibbxr yxstxrday camx into our officx and announcxd that as hx was going shooting, and had no ammunition, hx would likx to borrow somx of our typz for shot. Bxforx wx could prxvxnt it hx had grabbxd all thx lxttxrs out of thx most important box and disappxarxd. Our subscribxrs can hxlp in rxplxnishing our stock, if all thosx who wxrx shot by Sam will savx thx chargx whxn it is pickxd out of thxm and rxturn it to us. Nxvxr mind if it is battxrxd a littlx."

The Home

CARE OF THE BABY.

Are Infantile Maladies Compulsory Ills?—No, certainly not. There is no law of nature that compels a baby to have thrush, or take convulsions whilst teething, and after that to run the gamut of complaints from measles to scarlet fever. I say emphatically that disease can be avoided, but it rests wholly and solely with the mother. If she looks upon her offspring as nuisances or necessary evils, good-bye health, and welcome to doctors and disease; but if she is a sensible, womanly woman, and loves and respects her babies, the medico need be an unknown quantity, and illness will be conspicuous by its absence. Teething, with ordinary care, need not be a time of anguish and tribulation of spirit; there is not the slightest need for your child to suffer from convulsions, or to sleep badly.

How to Avoid Them—The way to avoid illness in your home is by practising Care, Caution, and Cleanliness. These are the important necessary factors for successful life. Recollect there are two words that must be unknown to us, and they are Trouble and Fatigue. We must hound them out from our vocabulary, for they are impossible words in a well-regulated household. Of course the mother must not lie in bed of a morning; she must be up and about, quick, active and alert.

Three Things That a Mother Must See to Herself.—No matter how good and careful a nurse you may be blessed with, there are three things that it behooves every mother to see to herself. She must bathe her baby every day; she must see that his bowels are regular; and, above all, be scrupulously particular in seeing that all the articles used for the preparation of his food are spotlessly clean. Dirty bottles and unclean saucepans are largely the cause of the great infant mortality which is such a disgrace to us as a nation. I have known in several cases, the most painful and dire results ensuing from a careless nurse feeding babies from dirty bottles. It is carelessness in this respect that so frequently causes "thrush." Faulty as the nurse may be, how much more to blame is the mother; for it ought to be her proudest privilege to see herself after these matters. A careful mistress makes careful servants, and vice versa. It is impossible to expect strangers to be particular if an example of neglect and thoughtlessness is set them.

The Importance of Cleanliness.—The greatest factor to health is absolute cleanliness. It is impossible for a baby to be healthy and sweet tempered unless he is thoroughly clean. He should be bathed every day of his life from head to foot, and allowed to splash and kick in the water to his heart's content.

SQUASH GRIDDLE CAKES.

It is hardly worth while to cook squash purposely for griddle cakes, but often a portion will be left over, not enough for another dinner, but it may be utilized in many ways, and reappear at the breakfast or luncheon table.

For one cup of dry, mealy squash add one cup of scalded milk and mix thoroughly. Stir in while still hot one rounded tablespoonful of butter, one rounded tablespoonful of sugar and one-half teaspoon of salt. While it cools mix two level teaspoonfuls of baking powder with one cup of flour, and beat one egg yolk and white separately. Add the yolk to the squash mixture, stir in the flour and beat well, then add the white. As the squash will vary, it may be necessary to add more milk or more flour to make the usual griddle cake batter. Drop by spoonfuls on a well-greased hot griddle and turn when brown.

SQUASH MUFFINS.

Mix one cup of sifted squash, two tablespoons of melted butter, one-half teaspoonful of salt, one-half teaspoon of cinnamon and two rounded tablespoons of sugar. Stir in one-half cup of scalded milk, and when cooled add one well-beaten egg and one cup of flour mixed with two level teaspoons of baking powder. Mix well and add more milk if needed to make a thick drop batter. Fill buttered muffin pans, half full and bake in a quick oven.

BEEFSTEAK AND ONIONS.

Broil the steak, which should for this dish be at least one and one-half inches thick; butter and season it and place it in a hot covered dish. Over the steak you will place the onions, prepared as follows: Slice very thin a half dozen onions and fry slowly in pork fat half an hour; then add half a cupful of boiling water; cover tightly and simmer for half an hour longer. While cooling season with salt and pepper. Allow the steak covered with the onions to stand in the dish tightly covered for five miutes before serving.

DON'T WASTE COLD FISH.

1. Fish Fritters.—The remains of any boiled fish can be made into tasty cakes or fritters, as follows: Remove all bones from the fish, and put it in a pan, beat it up with a fork, and mix with it a small quantity of grated bread-crumbs, a little very finely-chopped onion and parsley, pepper, salt and a couple of well-beaten eggs. Put some lard into a frying-pan, and, when quite boiling, drop the mixture into it in small cakes; fry them a light brown on both sides. They can be eaten hot or cold. Tinned salmon, treated in the same way, make delicious fritters; of course, the liquor in the tin must be drained off before using the salmon. As half the contents of the tin will make a good dish of fritters, the other half can be utilized by pouring spiced vinegar over it, when it will keep good for some days.

2. Cold Fish Cutlets.—Melt one ounce of butter, add one ounce of flour and a quarter of a pint of milk—let it boil and thicken. Then stir in the flouring—lemon juice or vinegar, salt, cayenne, a little anchovy sauce. Last of all add about a breakfast-cupful of cold cooked fish, cut small. When cold, shape into balls, egg and bread-crumb them, and fry in lard.

BAKED MUSHROOMS.

Select fresh ones—the size should be nearly uniform—cut off nearly all the stalks and arrange the mushrooms, neatly, gills up, in a pie plate. Sprinkle with pepper and salt and lay a bit of butter on each. Bake about half an hour, basting often with butter and water so they will not dry up. Serve in the dish in which they are baked with maitre d'hotel sauce.

TO PRESERVE A BROOM'S USEFULNESS.

Every housewife knows that the broom is damaged as much by sitting in the corner and behind the door on the brush end as by use. And yet a string in the end of the handle is always breaking, and to set it with the brush end up means that it will tumble over inside the next five minutes. I saw a device the other day that was quite ingenious. A couple of large spools were fastened to the wall just far enough apart so that their flange would not allow the handle of the broom to drop out from between them, yet would readily allow it to pass between them. They were placed just high enough from the floor to allow the bottom to hang, inverted, of course, upon them and not touch the floor. The broom is quickly and easily inserted and removed. The idea can be carried to the stable for the accommodation of pitchforks, and to the toolhouse for shovels, spades, axes, sledges, etc. No tool will be lost or in the way if given this kind of a rest. The spools are fixed to the wall by means of large spikes whose heads will hold the spools in place, yet not so large but the spools will act as a pulley upon them.

POVERTY-STRICKEN PORTUGAL.

A Little Country With Extensive Colonial Possessions and an Enormous Burden of Debt.

At the end of the nineteenth century Portugal finds itself a bankrupt nation, terribly in debt and becoming more so every year. This little strip of a country lying on the western coast of the Spanish peninsula, has exercised a great influence in the history of the world. Her explorers were among the first to make their way along American shores, both on the northern and southern continents. Her people were hardy and rugged, lovers of the sea, who in their ventures explored far and wide both in the east and in the wide west. Her ships were everywhere and had much of the carrying trade of the world. But this time has long gone by and the Portuguese, though still fond of the sea, have lost their hold as the sailors of the world.

As a matter of course, a country so active in the era of discovery must have become possessed of much territory, but it is a strange fact that Portugal has acquired most of her present colonial possession in the present century. Twenty years ago she had an area of 697,335 square miles in Africa, and 7,160 square miles in Asia, with populations in these continents, respectively, 2,484,034 and 849,553. This year she has in Africa the following colonies: The Cape Verde Islands, with an area of 1,480 square miles and a population of 114,130; Guinea, population, 820,000, and area 4,440 square miles; Princes' and St. Thomas islands, area 360 square miles, and population 24,660; Angola, area 484,800 and population 4,119,000, Portuguese East Africa, area 301,000 square miles and population 3,120,000; total African possessions, area 792,080 square miles, and population 8,187,790. In Asia her colonies are: Goa, in India, area 1,360 square miles, population 494,836; Danao Diu, area 168 square miles, population 77,454; Timor, in the Indian archipelago, 7,458 square miles, population 300,000; Macao, in China, four square miles, population 78,627; total Asiatic possessions, area 9,020, population, 950,917. This gives her for a grand total of colonial possessions 801,000 square miles and a colonial population of 9,148,707. In twenty years she has gained dominion over 96,605 square miles of territory and 5,015,124 souls.

When it is considered that Portugal's home area is but 36,038 square miles and her population but five millions, it can be seen that by far the largest part of her territory is in her colonies. In fact her colonial possessions are twenty-two times the area of her little home country. The colonies are ruled much as the Spanish colonies, by governor-general appointed by the crown, who are really almost absolute rulers. Despite the immense amount of territory in her colonies, the cost of maintaining them more than eats up the revenue which she derives from them. The same is the case at home and the consequence is that the state is burdened with an overwhelming debt. Taxes ran high, so much so that the men have noticeably emigrated from the country to escape the heavy drain.

A HAPPY-GO-LUCKY LOT.

The Portuguese are a happy people, however, perhaps the jolliest, merriest people of Europe, taking their time about everything, little worried, enjoying life as they go. In their travel that this is due to the fact that the men have so largely railways is looked upon as a frightful rate of speed, and one little to be desired. They would rather go more slowly, taking in all the beauties of the landscape.

Portugal is said to be the most illiterate nation of Europe, notwithstanding the fact that she has good schools and good school laws. More than 80 per cent. of the population are said to be illiterates. Yet the Portuguese are hard workers at times. They can be seen on the streets carrying tremendous burdens on their heads. Especially is this the case among the women, who also do most of the work on the farms. It has been suggested that this is due to the fact that the men have so largely emigrated. The army of 30,000 men is raised by conscription. This force can be raised in war times to an effective fighting strength of 100,000 men. The navy consists of 1 ironclad corvette, 6 corvettes, 14 gunboats, 5 monitors, 10 sloop gunboats, 2 armored transports and 4 torpedo boats.

ALWAYS HARD UP.

The financial condition of the country is deplorable. So often and so largely has Portugal been compelled to borrow money that her debt is over her head like the sword of Damocles. For not only has she no way of raising money to pay off what debt she has, but she is constantly getting further and further into debt. Time after time has the cabinet been dissolved because it has been unable to cope with the financial difficulties of the nation. In 1898, the revenue amounted to 55,105,878 milreis, one milrei is equal to $1.10. The expenditures for the same year were 55,634,844, a good record for her, and yet that is a pretty close margin, when it is understood that her public debt is what it is. In 1894 the public debt amounted to 638,205,469 milreis, exclusive of the floating debt of 21,796,000 milreis. Of the debt, 254,639,230 is represented in securities held in foreign countries, chiefly Germany and England. This, then is in reality a great big mortgage on Portugal, which the country is bravely struggling to keep from being the millstone that will put her out of business.

A WAY OUT OF TROUBLE.

One way in which she could pay off some of her debt, perhaps most of it, is to let her colonies go. By granting rights to Germany and Great Britain, she could raise a sufficient amount of money to at least tide her over the biggest part of her trouble. Delagoa bay is of immense strategic importance to all of eastern and southern Africa, and there is no doubt that Great Britain would be willing to pay a big sum for its possession. Germany would likewise be glad to have some of the other African possessions or some of those in Asia, although it is doubtful if the latter would satisfy German desire. For several years rumors, nay reports, have been spread abroad every so often of the cession of Portuguese colonies to other countries. Semi-official denials have, of course, been made, but it is also true that there would be good reason, to prevent an enraged populace and revolutions, for Portugal's endeavoring to keep the deal as dark as possible until it suited her pleasure to let it become known. It seems to be the only way out of her present difficulties, other than to shut up shop.

LYDDITE AND MELINITE.

The Gases of Lyddite and the High Explosives to Which It is Related Have the Poisonous Effects Which Some Suppose.

It is very frequently stated that the lyddite shell contains a certain compressed poisonous gas, which, when exploding, means death to any living creature within a radius of 100 yards (some even say 400). This is an additional life-devouring agent to the ordinary destructive powers of the shell. This statement is no doubt an exaggeration, as the use of such shells would be in violation of the rules of civilized warfare. The composition of lyddite is held secret, and it is therefore impossible to give any details regarding it. Competent authorities, however, have no doubt that it is only a modification of melinite, the authorized explosive used in the French and German armies. This much is known, that lyddite stands between that explosive and thorite, a newly invented compound. They are all compounds of picric acid or trinitro-phenol, a pale, yellow, crystalline powder, with an intensely bitter taste, and possessing marked toxic qualities. Picric acid is an old compound, having been discovered in 1788 by the German chemist Hausman, who obtained it by acting on indigo with dilute nitric acid. At present it is largely manufactured by treating carbolic acid with strong nitric acid. Since the early fifties chemists have experimented with this substance in the hope of producing an deal explosive. Boilinette's famous powder, compounded of the ammonium salt and potassic chromate, was made in 1869, but found to be too sensitive. Fontain's mixture, in 1869, caused a lamentable explosion, which led to its being discarded as a military explosive. Designolle was more successful, producing a mixture which was favorably received, and is still in use in the French army, though largely supplanted by melinite. This last famous explosive was invented by M. Eugene Turpin, and consists of a mixture of fused picric acid and nitrocellulose dissolved in ether and alcohol. M. Turpin has produced many patent modifications of this mixture, of which lyddite is one. The alleged fabulous properties of the English explosive are probably only imaginary. When melinite was first put forward, equally astonishing powers were claimed for it by General Boulanger, but these have not been justified. Luddite has not been effectually tried in warfare, and authorities declare it to be little different from melinite, with which the Boers are well supplied. By the decomposition of the picric compounds by explosion carbonic acid gas, not per se a poisonous gas, is evolved. In a small and inclosed space this gas will probably suffocate animals, but it is difficult to see how it can have any death-dealing properties in the open veldt. Owing to the terrific explosive force of the compound the shells will have a wide range, certainly a radius of 100 yards.

MUTUAL DISADVANTAGES.

ENEMIES OF BOTH THE BRITISH AND THE BOER.

Lions, Snakes, Hyenas—Extremes of Heat and Cold, and Even Flies Are Some of the Dangers of South Africa.

Trooper Fenton, of the British South Africa Police, is reported dead from wounds received from the claws and teeth of a lioness. This happened near Tuli, just across the Limpopo River from the Transvaal. Lions are getting scarce further south, but there are many other creatures as—or even more—dangerous to our men.

To lie helpless and bleeding on the dusty hillside, waiting through endless hours till the stretcher-bearers find and bring him in, is the terrible ordeal which must sometimes befall our wounded. But fancy, if you can, the horror of struggling feebly and vainly with shattered leg to crawl from the deadly vengeance of a poisonous snake whose haunt the soldier's fall has disturbed.

According to a letter from a war correspondent, this is what has actually happened in Natal to more than one of the fallen, both Briton and Boer. All through South Africa—especially amongst the great boulders that strew the kopjes—snakes abound. "The scourge of Natal," one writer calls them. Of these, three sorts are common enough. They are the puff-adder, the cobra, and the rock-python. The latter, unless of the largest size—it grows to 15ft.—is not dangerous; the other two are. The puff-adder—only 2ft. long, thick, flat, repulsive—matches the ground exactly. But when trodden on it strikes like a flash, and

ITS BITE IS DEATH

in twenty minutes.

Another danger, too, threatens the poor-wounded who may be left lying untended all night—the cowardly yet cruel hyena creeps from his lair and slouches across the battlefield. The brute—rare now in Natal but common enough further north—is the scavenger of Africa. He pitches on what is helpless, and his long teeth, set in jaws so powerful that they can crack the leg-bone of an ox as easily as you a filbert, make short work.

Everyone has read of the terrible rain and hail storms which, during the last two months, have been of almost daily occurrence in Natal. We at home think of the discomfort of soaked clothes and chilled bones, but those of us who have never experienced a South African thunderstorm certainly do not realise the danger of such sudden tempests. Most of the kopjes—upon which, of course, troops are often camped or posted—are ironstone, which attracts the flashes and in many cases their tops are bare and seared with the constant flashes.

These same storms raise the rivers—in winter mere seams of fluid through deserts of sun-caked clay—roaring torrents, and that so quickly that many cases are on record of teams being caught fording and

SWEPT CLEAN AWAY

before being able to reach the bank.

Some of these rivers, too, are the haunt of the hook-toothed, iron-jawed crocodrie, and woe betide the bather who ventures into such a stream.

On the highlands of Natal—and all the country inland from Maritzburg lies 2,000 ft. above the sea—the range of temperature between day and night is enormous; 90 deg. in the shade, and 140 deg. in the sun, is common during the day. The bare legs of the Highlanders who lay out in it contracted so that they could not stand. But at night the mercury will run down to 40, and the thickest rugs are necessary to keep warmth in the bones. The results to health are naturally serious.

Horse-sickness is a thing we are bound to hear much of before this war is over. The Western forces will feel it most. Much of the veldt is sour—i.e., has poisonous grasses growing on it. Animals—both oxen and horses—that graze on this surely sicken and die.

All messages through from the beleaguered towns agree that flies are far worse than Boer bullets and shells. Just common, ordinary house-flies and bluebottles, but in such numbers that they literally blacken walls and ceilings, render sleep after dawn impossible, and make eating or cooking a misery.

RULES OF ETIQUETTE.

Parties wishing to enter the printing office at this season should be governed by the following rules: Advance to the inner door and give three distinct raps or kick the door down. The "devil" will attend to the alarm. You will give him your name, post-office address and the number of years you are owing for the paper. He will admit you. You will advance to the centre of the room and address the editor with following countersign: Extend the right hand about two feet from the body, with the thumb and fingers extended, the thumb and index finger clasping a $10 bill, which drops into the extended hand of the editor, at the same time saying: "Were you looking for me?" The editor will grasp your hand and the bill and pressing it will say: "You bet!" After giving him the news concerning your locality you will be permitted to retire with a receipt for an obligation properly discharged.

NEW USE FOR SMOKE SHELLS.

The great loss of life incurred by the English troops is mainly attributable to the charges they have had to make across open spaces in order to dislodge the enemy from the sheltering kopje. In order to minimize the death roll it has been suggested that just before a charge takes place smoke shells should be fired, which would temporarily hide the English soldiers