Hard to Please.

While looking on the sea we sat,
I kissed her dear, she blushed a bit,
She frowned and said, "Oh, don't do that!
You mess my hair!"

I kissed her when at eve we met
With ardor true;
She cried: "Oh, don't! See, you have set
My hat askew."

I kissed her in her tennis suit
On lips and cheek;
"Please stop," she cried; "my bangs you've put
All out of place."

I kissed the maid when in the sea
She took her dips;
"Oh, Charlie, don't," she said to me,
"You hurt my lips."

I then resolved that she should be
No longer teased;
I stopped it, but she seems to me
No better pleased.

THE COLONEL'S SKULL.

BUSILY engaged one morning in my office in trying to solve some knotty problems that called for my earnest attention, I was suddenly disturbed by a knock at the door, and in answer to my "Come in!" one of my assistants entered, although I had given strict orders that I was not to be disturbed for two hours.

"Excuse me, sir," said my man, "but a gentleman wishes to see you, and will take no denial."

"I thought I told you not to disturb me under any circumstances," I replied, somewhat tartly.

"Yes, so you did. But the gentleman insists upon seeing you. He says his business is most urgent.

"Who is he?"

"Here is his card, sir."

I glanced at the card the assistant handed to me. It bore the name:

COL. MAURICE O'DELL,
The Star and Garter Club.

Col. Maurice Odell was an utter stranger to me. I never heard his name before; but I knew that the Star and Garter Club was a club of the higher rank, and that its members were men of position and eminence. I therefore considered it probable that the Colonel's business was likely, as he said, to be urgent, and I told my assistant to show him in.

A few minutes later the door opened, and there entered a tall, thin, wiry-looking man, with an unmistakable military bearing. He had the appearance of being a stern, determined, unyielding man. He was faultlessly dressed, from his patent leather boots to his canary-colored kid gloves. But the hard, stern features and the keen, deep-set gray eyes were sufficient to dispel any idea that he was a mere carpet soldier.

"Pardon me for intruding upon you, Mr. Donovan," he said, bowing stiffly and formally, "but I wish to consult you about a very important matter, and, as I leave for Egypt to-morrow, I have very little time at my disposal."

"I am at your service, Colonel," I replied, as I pointed to a seat, and began to feel a deep interest in the man, for there was an individuality about him that stamped him at once as a somewhat remarkable person. I felt at once that such a man was not likely to give himself much concern about trifles, and, therefore, the business he had come about must be of considerable importance.

So, pushing the papers I had been engaged upon to one side, I turned my revolving chair so that I might face him and have my back to the light, and telling him that I was prepared to listen to anything he had to say, I half closed my eyes, and began to make a study of him.

"I will be as brief as possible," he began, as he placed his highly polished hat and his umbrella on the table. "I am a military man, and have spent much of my time in India, but two years ago I returned home, and took up my residence at the Manor, Esher. Twice since I went to live there the place has been robbed in a somewhat mysterious manner. The first occasion was a little over a year ago, when a number of antique silver cups were stolen. The Scotland Yard authorities endeavored to trace the thieves, but failed."

"I think I remember hearing something about that robbery," I remarked, as I tried to recall the details. "But in what way was it a mysterious one?"

"Because it was impossible to determine how the thieves gained access to the house. The place had not been broken into."

"How about your servants?" I asked.

"Oh, I haven't a servant who isn't honesty itself!"

"Pray proceed. What about the second robbery?"

"That is what I have come to you about. It is a very serious business, indeed, and has been carried out in the mysterious way that characterized the first one."

"You mean it is serious as regards the value of the property stolen?"

"In one sense, yes; but it is something more than that. During my stay in India I rendered very considerable service, indeed, to the Rajah of Mooltan, a man of great wealth. Before I left India he presented me with a souvenir of a very extraordinary character. It was nothing more or less than the skull of one of his ancestors."

As it seemed to me a somewhat frivolous matter for the Colonel to take up my time because he had lost the moldy old skull of a dead and gone Rajah, I said: "Excuse me, Colonel, but you can hardly expect me to devote my energies to tracing this somewhat grewsome souvenir of yours, which probably the thief will hasten to bury as speedily as possible, unless he happens to be of a very morbid turn of mind."

"You are a little premature," said the Colonel, with a suspicion of sternness. "That skull has been valued at upward of £12,000."

"Twelve thousand pounds?" I echoed, as my interest in my visitor deepened.

"Yes, sir; £12,000. It is fashioned into a drinking goblet, bound with solid gold bands and incrusted with precious stones. In the bottom of the goblet, inside, is a diamond of the purest water, and which alone is said to be worth £2,000. Now, quite apart from the intrinsic value of this relic, it could not have squeezed through. Having noted these things, I hinted to the Colonel that the thief had probably gained access to the room by means of a duplicate key; but he hastened to assure me that the lock was of singular construction, having been especially made. There were only two keys to it. One he always carried about with him, the other he kept in a secret drawer in an old escritoire in his library, and he was convinced that nobody knew of its existence. He explained the working of the lock, and also showed me the key, which was the most remarkable key I ever saw; and, after examining the lock I came to the conclusion that it could not be opened by any means apart from the special key. Nevertheless, the thief had succeeded in getting into the room. How did he manage it? That was the problem I had to solve, and that done I felt that I should be able to get a clue to the robber. I told the Colonel that before leaving the house I should like to see every member of his household, and he said I should be able to see the major portion of them at luncheon, which he invited me to partake of.

I found that his family consisted of his wife—an Anglo-Indian lady—three charming daughters, his eldest son, Roland Odell, a young man about four-and-twenty, and a younger son, a youth of 12. The family were waited on at table by two parlor maids, the butler and a page boy. The butler was an elderly, sedate, gentlemanly looking man; the boy had an open, frank face, and the same remark applied to the two girls. As I studied them I saw nothing calculated to raise my suspicions in any way. Indeed, I felt instinctively that I could pledge myself for their honesty.

When the luncheon was over the Colonel produced cigars, and the ladies and the youngest boy having retired, the host, his son Ronald and I ensconced ourselves in comfortable chairs, and proceeded to smoke. Ronald Odell was a most extraordinary-looking young fellow. He had been born and brought up in India, and seemed to suffer from an unconquerable lassitude that gave him a lifeless, insipid appearance. He was very dark, with dreamy, languid eyes and an expressionless face of a peculiar sallowness. He was tall and thin, with hands that were most noticeable, owing to the length, flexibility and thinness of the fingers. He sat in the chair with his body huddled up, as it were; his long legs stretched straight out before him; his pointed chin resting on his chest, while he seemed to smoke his cigar as if unconscious of what he was doing.

It was natural that the robbery should form a topic of conversation as we smoked and sipped some excellent claret, and at last I turned to the Colonel, and said:

"It seems to me that there is a certain mystery about this robbery which is very puzzling. But, now, don't you think it's probable that somebody living under your roof holds the key to the mystery?"

"God bless my life, no!" answered the Colonel, with emphatic earnestness. "I haven't a servant in the house but that I would trust with my life!"

"Without raising his head, he answered in a lisping, drawling, dreamy way:

"It's a queer business and I don't think the governor will ever get his skull back."

"I hope you will prove incorrect in that," I said. "My impression is that, if the Colonel puts the matter into the hands of some clever detective, the mystery will be solved."

"No," drawled the young fellow, "there isn't a detective fellow in London capable of finding out how that skull was stolen, and where it was taken to. Not even Dick Donovan, who is said to have no rival in his line."

I think my face colored a little as he unwittingly paid me this compliment. Though my character for the novel was that of a clergyman, I did not enter into any argument with him; but merely remarked that I thought he was wrong. At any rate, I hoped so, for his father's sake.

Master Ronald made no further remark, but remained silent for some time, and seemingly so absorbed in his own reflections that he took no notice of the conversation carried on by me and his father; and presently, having finished his cigar, he rose, stretched his long, flexible body, and without a word left the room.

"You mustn't take any notice of my son," said the Colonel, apologetically. "He is very queer in his manners, for he is constitutionally weak and has peculiar ideas about things in general. He dislikes clergymen, for one thing, and that is the reason, no doubt, why he has been so boorish toward you. For, of course, he is deceived by your garb, as all in the house are excepting myself and wife. I felt it advisable to tell her who you are, in order to prevent her asking you awkward questions that you might not be prepared to answer."

I smiled as I told him I had made a study of the various characters I was called upon to assume in pursuit of my calling, and that I was generally able to talk the character as well as dress it.

A little later he conducted me downstairs, in order that I might see the rest of the servants, consisting of a most amiable cook, whose duties appeared to agree with her remarkably well, and three other women, including a scullery maid; while in connection with the stables were a coachman, a groom and a boy.

Having thus passed the household in review, as it were, I next requested that I might be allowed to spend a quarter of an hour or so alone in the room from whence the skull and other things had been stolen. While in the room with the colonel I had formed an opinion which I felt it desirable to keep to myself, and my object in asking to visit the room alone was to put this opinion to the test.

The floor was of dark old oak, polished and waxed, and there was not a single board that was movable. Having satisfied myself of that fact, I next proceeded to examine the wainscoting with the greatest care, and after going over every inch of it I came to a part that gave back a hollow sound to my raps. I experienced a strange sense of delight as I discovered this, for it, so far, confirmed me in my opinion that the room had been entered by a secret door. The antiquity of the house and the oak paneling had had something to do with this opinion, for I knew that in old houses of the kind secret doors were by no means uncommon.

Although I was convinced that the panel which gave back a hollow sound when rapped was a door, I could detect no means of opening it. Save that it sounded hollow, it was exactly like the other panels, and there was no appearance of any lock or spring, and as the time I had stipulated for had expired, I rejoined the Colonel, and remarked to him incidentally:

"I suppose there is no way of entering that room except by the doorway from the landing?"

"Oh, no, certainly not. The window is too small, and the chimney is barred, as you know, for I saw you examining it."

My object in asking the question was to see if he suspected in any way the existence of a secret door; but it was now very obvious that he did nothing of the kind, and I did not deem it advisable to tell him of my suspicions.

"You say you are obliged to depart for Egypt to-morrow, Colonel?" I asked.

"Yes. I start to-morrow night."

"Then I must ask you to give me *carte blanche* in this matter."

"Oh, certainly."

"And in order to facilitate my plans it would be as well to make a confidante of Mrs. Odell. The rest you must leave to me."

"What do you think the chances are of discovering the thief?" he asked, with a dubious expression.

"I shall discover him," I answered emphatically. Whereupon the Colonel looked more than surprised, and proceeded to rattle off a string of questions with the object of learning why I spoke so decisively. But I was compelled to tell him that I could give no reason, for though I had worked out a theory which intuitively I believed to be right, I had not at that moment a shred of acceptable proof in support of my theory, and that, therefore, I could not commit myself to raising suspicions against any one until I was prepared to do something more than justify them.

He seemed rather disappointed, although he admitted the soundness of my argument.

"By the way, Colonel," I said, as I was about to take my departure, after having had a talk with his wife, "does it so happen that there is anything the matter with the roof of your house?"

"Not that I am aware of," he answered, opening his eyes wide with amazement at what no doubt seemed to him an absurd question. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I want to go on the roof without attracting the attention of any one."

"Let no go at once then," he said, eagerly.

"No, not now. But I see that the greater part of the roof is flat and leaded. Now, in the course of two or three days I shall present myself here in the guise of a plumber, and I shall be obliged by your giving orders that I am to be allowed to ascend to the roof without let or hindrance, as the lawyers say."

"Oh, certainly, I will; but it seems to me an extraordinary proceeding," he exclaimed.

I told him that many things necessarily seemed extraordinary when the reasons for them were not understood, and with that remark I took my departure, having promised the Colonel to do everything mortal man could do to recover the lost skull.

Three days later I went down to the Manor disguised as a working plumber, and was admitted without any difficulty, as the Colonel had left word that a man was coming down from London to examine the roof. As a servant was showing me upstairs to the top landing, where a trap-door in the ceiling gave access to the leads, I passed Ronald Odell on the stairs. He was attired in a long dressing gown, had Turkish slippers on his feet, a fez on his head, and a cigar in his mouth, from which he was puffing great volumes of smoke. His face was almost ghastly in its pallor, and his eyes had the same dreamy look which I had noticed on my first visit. His hands were thrust deep into his pockets, and his movements and manner were suggestive of a person walking in his sleep rather than a walking conscious man. This suggestion was heightened by the fact that before I could avoid him he ran full butt against me. That, however, seemed to partially arouse him from his lethargic condition, and turning around, with a fierceness of expression that I scarcely deemed him capable of he exclaimed:

"You stupid fool, why don't you look where you are going to?"

I muttered out an apology, and he strode down the stairs growling to himself.

"Who is that?" I asked of the servant.

"That's the master's eldest son."

"He's a queer-looking fellow."

"I should think he was," answered the girl, with a sniggering laugh. "I should say he has a slate off."

"Well, upon my word, I should be inclined to agree with you," I remarked.

"What does he do?"

"Nothing but smoke the greater part of the day."

"Does he follow no business or profession?"

"Not that I know of; though he generally goes out between six and seven in the evening, and does not come back till late."

"Where does he go to?"

"Oh, I don't know. He doesn't tell us servants about his affairs. But there's something very queer about him. I don't like his looks at all."

"Doesn't his father exercise any control over him?"

"Not a bit of it. Why, his father dotes on him, and would try and get the moon for him if he wanted it."

"And what about his mother?"

"Well, her favorite is young Master Tom. He's a nice lad, now, as different again to his brother. In fact, I think the missus is afraid of Mr. Ronald. He doesn't treat his mother at all well. And now that the Colonel has gone away we shall all have a pretty time of it. He's a perfect demon in the house when his father is not here."

As we had now reached the ladder that gave access to the trap door in the roof, I requested the maid to wait while I went outside.

My object in going to the roof was to see if there was any communication between there and the "treasure chamber." But the only thing I noticed was a trap door on a flat part of the roof between two chimney stalks. I tried to lift the door, but found it fastened. So, after a time I went back to where I had left the servant and inquired of her where the communication with the other trap door was, and she answered:

"Oh, I think that's in the lumber room; but nobody ever goes in there. They say it's haunted." I laughed, and she added with a toss of her head: "Well, I tell you I've heard some very queer noises in there myself. Me and Jane, the upper housemaid, sleep in a room adjoining it, and we've sometimes been frightened out of our wits."

I requested her to show me where the room was, as I was anxious to see if there was any leakage from the roof. This she did, and in order to reach the room we had to mount up a back staircase and traverse a long passage. At the end of the passage she pushed open a door, saying: "There you are, but I ain't a-going in."

As the room was in total darkness I requested her to procure me a candle, which she at once got, and then she left me to explore the room alone. It was filled up with a miscellaneous collection of lumber, boxes and packing cases predominating. There was a small window, but it was closely shuttered, and a flight of wooden steps led to the trap door I had noticed on the roof. I examined these steps very carefully, and found that they were thickly incrusted with dirt and dust, and had not been trodden upon for a very long time. The door was fastened down by means of a chain that was padlocked to a staple in the wall; and chain and padlock were very rusty. The walls of the room were wainscoted, and the wainscot in places was decayed and wormeaten. Going down on my knees, I minutely examined the floor through a magnifying glass and detected footmarks made with slippered feet, and I found they led to one particular corner of the room where a sort of gangway had been formed by the boxes and other lumber being moved on one side. This was very suggestive, and rapping on the wainscot I found that it was hollow. For some time I searched for a means of opening it, but without result, until with almost startling suddenness, as I passed my hand up and down the side of the woodwork, the door swung back. I had unconsciously touched the spring, and peering into the black void thus disclosed by the opening of the door, I was enabled to discern, by the flickering light of the candle, the head of a flight of stone steps that were obviously built in the thickness of the wall.

At this discovery I almost exclaimed "Eureka!" for now I felt that I had the key to the mystery. As I did not wish the servant to know what I was doing, I went to the passage to satisfy myself that she was not observing my movements; but a dread of the ghost-haunted lumber room had caused her to take herself off altogether.

Closing the door of the room, I returned to the aperture in the wainscot, and minutely examined the head of the steps, where I saw unmistakeable traces of the slippered feet which were so noticeable in the dust that covered the floor of the room. Descending the steps, which were very narrow, I reached the bottom and found further progress barred by a door that was without handle or lock, but, after some time, I discovered a small wooden knob sunk in the woodwork at the side, and, pressing this, the door, with almost absolute noiselessness, slid back, and I lost the "Treasure Chamber" was revealed. In the face of this discovery I no longer entertained a doubt that the thief had entered the room by means of this secret passage. And there was no one in the whole household upon whom my suspicions fixed with the exception of Ronald Odell. If my assumption that he was the thief was correct, the mystery was so far explained; and my next step was to discover why he had robbed his father and what he had done with the property. He was so strange and peculiar that somehow I could not imagine that he had stolen the things merely for the sake in vulgar gain, my impression being that of carrying off the jeweled skull he was actuated by some extraordinary motive quite apart from the mere question of theft, and this determined me to shadow him for a time in the hope that I should succeed in soon obtaining distinct evidence that my theory was correct.

Before leaving the house I sought an interview with Mrs. Odell, who was anxious to know what the result was of my investigation; but I considered it advisable, in the then state of matters, to withhold from her the discovery I had made. But, as her curiosity to learn what I had been doing on the roof was very great, I informed her that my theory was at first that there was some connection between the roof and the "Treasure Chamber," but, though I had not proved that to be correct, I never had a doubt but that the purloiner of the articles resided in the house. Whereupon she very naturally asked me if I suspected any particular person. I answered her candidly that I did, but that, in the chances of anything like proof, I should not be justified in naming any one. I assured her, however, that I would use the most strenuous efforts to obtain the proof I wanted. Before leaving her, I remarked in a casual sort of way:

"I suppose Mr. Ronald is at the head of affairs during his father's absence?"

"Well," she began, with evident reluctance to say anything against her son, "Ronald is of a very peculiar disposition. He seems to live quite within himself, as it were, and takes no interest in anything. As a matter of fact, I see very little of him, for he usually spends his evenings from home, and does not return until late. The greater part of the day he keeps to his rooms. I am sure I am quite concerned about him at times."

The confidential way in which she told me this, and the anxious expression of the face, sufficiently indicated that Ronald was a source of great trouble to her. But I refrained from motives of delicacy, from pursuing the subject, and was about to take my departure when she said, with great emphasis:

"I do hope, Mr. Donovan, that you will be successful in recovering the goblet; for, quite apart from its intrinsic value, my husband sets great store upon it, and his distress when he found it had been stolen was really pitiable."

I assured her that it would not be my fault if I failed, and I said that, unless the goblet had been destroyed for the sake of the jewels and the gold, I thought it was very probable that it would be recovered.

I spoke thus confidently, because I was convinced that I had got the key to the puzzle, and that it would be relatively easy to fit in the rest of the pieces, particularly if I could find out where Ronald Odell spent his evenings; for to me there was something singularly suggestive in his going away from home at nights. That fact was clearly a source of grief to his mother, and she had made it evident to me that she did not know where he went to, nor why he went. But it fell to my lot to solve this mystery a week later. I shadowed him to a house situated in a cul de sac in the very heart of the city of London. The houses in this place were tall, imposing looking buildings, and had once been the homes of gentry and people of position. Their day of glory, however, had passed, and they were now for the most part utilized as offices, and were occupied by solicitors, agents, etc. It was a quiet, gloomy sort of region, although it led out of one of the busiest thoroughfares of the great metropolis; but at the bottom of the cul was a wall, and beyond that again an ancient burial place, where the dust of many generations of men reposed. The wall was overtopped by the branches of a few stunted trees that were rooted in the graveyard, and these trees looked mournful and melancholy, with their blackened branches and soot-darkened leaves.

The house to which I traced Ronald Odell was the last one in the cul on the left-hand side, and consequently it abutted on the graveyard. It was the one house not utilized as offices, and I ascertained that it was in the occupation of a club consisting of Anglo-Indians. But what they did, or why they met, no one seemed to be able to tell. The premises were in charge of a Hindoo and his wife, and the members of the club met on an average five nights a week. All this was so much more mystery, but it was precisely in accord with the theory I had been working out in my own mind.

The next afternoon I went to the house, and the door was opened to my knock by the Hindoo woman, who was a mild-eyed, sad-looking little creature; I asked her if she could give me any particulars of the club that was held there, and she informed me that it was known as the "The Indian Dreamers' Club." But beyond that scrap of information she did not seem disposed to go.

"You had better come when my husband is here," she said, thereby giving me to understand that her husband was absent. But as I deemed it probable that she might prove more susceptible to my persuasive influence than her husband, I asked her if she would allow me to see over the premises. She declined to do this until I displayed before her greedy eyes certain gold coin of the realm, which proved too much for her cupidity, and she consented to let me go inside. The entrance hall was carpeted with a thick, massive carpet, that deadened every footfall, and the walls were hung with black velvet. A broad flight of stairs led up from the end of the passage, but they were masked by heavy curtains. The gloom and sombreness of the place were most depressing, and a strange, sickening odor pervaded the air. Led by the dusky woman I passed through a curtained doorway, and found myself in a most extensive apartment, that ran the whole depth of the building. From this apartment all daylight was excluded, the light being obtained from a large lamp of blood-colored glass, and which depended from the centre of the ceiling. There was also a niche at each end of the room, where a lamp of the old Roman pattern burned. The walls of the room were hung with purple velvet curtains, and the ceiling was also draped with the same material, while the floor was covered with a rich Indian carpet into which the feet sank. In the centre of the room was a table, also covered with velvet, and all round the room were most luxurious couches, with velvet cushions and costly Indian rugs. The same sickly odor that I had already noticed pervaded this remarkable chamber, which was like a tomb in its silence, for no sound reached one from the busy world without.

Although all the lamps were lighted, it took me some time to accustom my eyes to the gloom and to observe all the details of the extraordinary apartment. Then I noted that on the velvet on one side of the room was inscribed in letters of gold, that were strikingly conspicuous against the sombre background, this sentence:

"TO DREAM IS TO LIVE! TO DREAM ON, FOR TO AWAKEN IS TO DIE!"

The dim light and the sombre upholstering of the room gave it a most weird and uncanny appearance, and I could not help associating it with the Indian Dreamers' Club, rites and ceremonies that were far from orthodox, while the sentence on the velvet, and which I took to be the club's motto, was like the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast. It was pregnant with a terrible meaning.

While I was still engaged in examining the room a bell rang, and instantly the Hindoo woman became greatly excited, for she said it was her husband and that he would be so fiercely angry if he found me there that she would not be responsible for the consequences. She therefore thrust me into a recess where a statute had formerly stood, but the statue had been removed, and a velvet curtain hung before the recess. Nothing could have happened more in accord with my desire than this. For I was resolved, whatever the consequences were, to remain in my place of concealment until I had solved the mystery of the club. There was an outer and an inner door, both of them being thickly padded with felt and covered with velvet. When the woman had retired and closed these doors the silence was absolute. Not a sound came to my ears. The atmosphere was heavy, and I experienced a sense of languor that was altogether unusual.

I ventured from my place of concealment to still further explore the apartment. I found that the lounges were all of the most delightful and seductive softness, and the tapestries, the cushions and the carpets were of the richest possible description. It certainly was a place to lie and dream in, shut off from the noise and fret of the busy world. At one end of the room was a large chest of some sort of carved Indian wood. It was bound round with iron bands and fastened with a huge brass padlock. While I was wondering to myself what this chest contained, the door opened and the Indian woman glided in. Seizing me by the arm she whispered:

"Come while there is yet a chance. My husband has gone upstairs, but he will return in a few minutes."

"When do the members of the club meet?" I asked.

"At seven o'clock."

"Then I shall remain in my place of concealment until they meet!" I answered firmly.

She wrung her hands in distress, and turned her dark eyes on me imploringly. But I gave her to understand that nothing would turn me from my resolve; and if she chose to aid me in carrying out my purpose she might look for ample reward. Recognizing that argument would be of no avail, and evidently in great dread of her husband, she muttered:

"The peril then be on your own head!" and without another word she left the room.

The peril she hinted at did not concern me. In fact, I did not even trouble myself to think what the peril might be. I was too much interested for that, feeling as I did that I was about to witness a revolution.

The hours passed slowly by, and at 7 I drew on I concealed myself once more in the recess, and by slightly moving the curtain back on the edge I was enabled to command a full view of the room. Punctually the door opened, and the husband of the woman came in. He was a tall, powerful, fierce-looking man, wearing a large turban and dressed in Indian costume. He placed three or four small lamps, cheaply lighted, and contained in ruby glass, on the table; and also a number of quaint Indian drinking cups made of silver, which I recognized from the description as those that had been stolen from the manor a year or so previously, together with twelve magnificent hookahs. These preparations completed, he retired, and a quarter of an hour later he returned and wound up a large musical box which I had not noticed, owing to its being concealed behind a curtain. The box began to play muffled and plaintive music. The sounds were so softened, the music was so dreamy and sweet, and seemed so far off, that the effect was unlike anything I had ever before heard. A few minutes later and the Indian once more appeared. This time he wore a sort of dressing gown of some rich material braided with gold. He walked backward, and following him in single file were twelve men, the first being Ronald Odell. Five of them were men of color; three of the others were half-castes, the rest were whites. But they all had the languid, dreamy appearance which characterized Odell, who, as I was to subsequently learn, was their leader and president.

They ranged themselves round the table silently as ghosts; and, without a word, Ronald Odell handed a key to the Indian, who proceeded to unlock the chest I have referred to, and he took therefrom the skull goblet which had been carried off from Col. O'Dell's "treasure chamber" by—could there any longer be a doubt?—his own son. The skull, which was provided with two gold handles, and rested on gold claws, was placed on the table before the president, who poured into it the contents of two small bottles which were given to him by the attendant, who took them from the chest. He then stirred the decoction up with a long-handled silver spoon of very rich design and workmanship, and which I recognized, from the description that had been given me, as one that had been taken from the colonel's collection. As this strange mixture was stirred, the sickening, overpowering odor that I had noticed on first entering the place became so strong as to almost overcome me, and I felt as if I should suffocate. But I struggled against the feeling as well as I could. The president next poured a small portion of the liquor into each of the twelve cups that had been provided, and as he raised his own to his lips he said:

"Brother dreamers, success to our club! May your dreams be sweet and long!"

The others bowed, but made no response, and each man drained the draught, which I guessed to be some potent herbal decoction for producing sleep. Then each man rose and went to a couch, and the attendant handed him a hookah, applied a light to the bowl, and from the smoke that arose it was evident the pipes were charged with opium. As these drugged opium smokers leaned back in the luxurious couches, the concealed musical box continued to play its plaintive melodies. A drowsy langour pervaded the room, and affected me to such an extent that I felt that the remarkable scene before my eyes was a dream vision that would speedily fade away.

One by one the pipes fell from the nerveless grasp of the smokers, and were removed by the attendant. And when the last man had sunk into insensibility, the Indian filled a small cup with some of the liquor from the skull goblet, and drained it off. Then he charged a pipe with opium, and, coiling himself up on an ottoman, he began to smoke, until he, like the others, yielded to the soporific influence of the drug and the opium and went to sleep.

My hour of triumph had come. I stepped from my place of concealment, feeling faint and strange, and all but overcome by an irresistible desire to sleep. The potent fumes that filled the air begot a sensation in me that was not unlike drunkenness. But I managed to stagger to the table, seize the goblet and the spoon, and make my way to the door. As I gained the passage the Hindoo woman confronted me, for she was about to enter the room.

"What is the meaning of this?" she cried, as she endeavored to bar my passage.

"Stand back!" I said, sternly. "I am a detective officer. These things have been stolen, and I am about to restore them to their rightful owner."

She manifested supreme distress, but recognized her powerlessness. She dared not raise an alarm, and she might as well have tried to awaken the dead in the adjoining churchyard as those heavily drugged sleepers. And so I gained the street; and the intense sense of relief I experienced as I sucked in draughts of the cold, fresh air cannot be described. Getting to the thoroughfare I hailed a cab, and drove home with my prizes, and the following morning I telegraphed to Egypt to an address the Colonel had given me, informing him that I had recovered the goblet.

The same day I went down to the Manor at Esker, and had an interview with Mrs. Odell. I felt, in the interest of her son, that it was my duty to tell her all I had learnt the previous night. She was terribly distressed, but stated that she had suspected for some time that her son was given to opium smoking, though she had no idea he carried the habit to such a remarkable extreme. She requested me to retain possession of the goblet and spoon until her husband's return, and, in the meantime, she promised to take her weak and misguided son to task, and to have the secret passage in the wall effectually stopped up.

I should mention that I had managed to save a small quantity of the liquor that was in the goblet when I removed it from the club table; and I sent this to a celebrated analytical chemist for analysis, who pronounced it to be a very powerful and peculiar narcotic, made from a combination of Indian herbs with which he was not familiar.

The denouement has yet to be recorded. A few days later Ronald Odell, after drugging himself as usual, was found dead on one of the couches at the club. This terminated an inquest, and the verdict was that he had died from a narcotic, but whether taken with the intention of destroying life or merely to produce sleep there was no evidence to show. Although I had no evidence to offer, I was firmly convinced in my own mind that the poor weak fellow had committed suicide, from a sense of shame at the discovery I had made.

Of course, after this tragic affair, and the exposure it entailed, the Indian Dreamers' Club was broken up, and all the luxurious appointments were sold by auction, and its members dispersed. It appeared that one of the rules was that the members of the club should never exceed twelve in number. What became of the remaining eleven I never knew; but it was hardly likely they would abandon the pernicious habits they had acquired.

In the course of six months Col. Odell returned from Egypt, and, though he was much cut up by the death of his son, he was exceedingly grateful at the recovery of the peculiar goblet, which the misguided youth had no doubt purloined under the impression that it was useless in his father's treasure room, but that it would more fittingly adorn the table of the Dreamers' Club, of which he was the president. I could not help thinking that part of the motto of the club was singularly appropriate in his case: "Dream on, for to awaken is to die." He had awakened from his dream and passed into that state where dreams perplex not.

Spider Thread for Telescopes.

The ingenious astronomer captures a common garden spider and places him on the end of a twig. Then he startles the spider, who immediately drops toward the ground, throwing out a thread as he goes. The astronomer, when the spider has got a little way down, produces a double wire, on which he begins to twist the thread. The spider continues spinning, and the astronomer goes on twisting the thread, and, when he requires it, unwinds it from the wire as he would cotton twist. British astronomers, it may be added, envy their confreres in Australia, for there is a spider which spins a thread of three cords; the British spider's thread contains five cords and is appreciably thicker.

Thirty of the most eminent men in history, science and art began their careers as shoemakers. But they made good shoes and pegged away until they struck—something better.

She—Last night I dreamt we were at Saratoga, and stopping at one of the finest hotels. He—Don't talk that way. Money is so scarce nowadays that we can't afford even to dream of going to Saratoga.

Daughter—Mr. Silleriy asked me last night to marry him, mamma. Would you advise me to accept him? Mamma—Certainly, my child; the season is too nearly over to be squeamish.

"Papa, do Germans become Frenchmen when they die?" asked Jacky. "Of course not, my son. Why?" "Well, you said, when a man died he was translated, and I didn't know but what Germans might be translated into French."

Jellyfish are delightfully interesting little creatures until you go in bathing with them. The world is full of people who are equally charming until they settle down next door to you.

Russia contains the finest wood floors. One in the Czar's summer palace is of small squares of ebony inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

In China the tallow tree is used to make candles.

A GLENGARRY MIRACLE.

Mr. James Sands' Wonderful Restoration to Health.

After Three Years of Paralysis, Incontinence, and Uselessness, He Tells the Tale of His Recovery and Renewed Work in the World—His Story as Told to a Free Press Reporter.

(Ottawa Free Press.

The town of Alexandria, some 55 miles south of the city of Ottawa, on the Canada Atlantic Railway, has been completely astonished recently at the marvellous experience of a young man, who, after having been bed-ridden for nearly twelve months, and his case pronounced incurable by Montreal and Alexandria doctors, is now restored to complete health and strength.

Mr. James Sands is a young teamster, well known and extremely popular throughout the country side, and his illness and wonderful recovery have been—indeed still are—the chief topics in the town and neighborhood. The story of his miraculous cure having reached Ottawa, a member of The Free Press staff journeyed to Alexandria and sought out Mr. Sands for the purpose of ascertaining the truth of the statements made regarding his recovery. Mr. Sands is a slimly built, but wiry-looking young man of about 32 years of age, and when met by the newspaper man the bloom of health was on his cheek and his whole frame showed signs of unimpaired vigor and vitality.

The newspaper man told Mr. Sands the object of their visit, and the latter expressed his perfect willingness to give all the facts connected with his case. "I was," said Mr. Sands, "a complete wreck, given up by the doctors, but now I am well again, and gaining strength every day. I was born in Lancaster in 1860, and up to three years ago I was always healthy and strong, living in the open air and being well-known throughout the whole county of Glengarry. It was in the winter of 1888-89 that I first felt signs of incipient paralysis. I was then teamster for the sash and door factory here, and had been exposed to all kinds of weather. I then experienced violent twistings cramps in my right hand. I was in Cornwall that winter when the first stroke fell, and I remained there for three days before I knew anybody at all. A medical man was called in, but could do nothing for me. After that I came home and appeared to get all right for a time, but after a few days the old trouble began again, my hand continuing the twitching and cramping that had preceded the stroke. Up to twelve months ago these twitching fits were the only symptoms I suffered from. Then in August, 1891, when I was in Huntingdon village I sustained a second stroke, and remained unconscious for about seven hours. A doctor attended me, and I recovered sufficiently to be brought home. After my return home the paralysis steadily gained on me, and I lost the use of my right arm and leg entirely; my right eye was distorted and my tongue partially paralyzed. I was prescribed for by an Alexandria physician, whose treatment I carefully followed, but it had no effect. I still got steadily worse, and about a month before Christmas last I went to the English Hospital at Montreal. Prof. Stuart and all the doctors came round me, as mine was a curious case, and the professor treated me. All the doctors could give me no satisfaction, and did not appear to understand my case. I questioned some of them, but they told me it was a hopeless case. I remained in the hospital a month, without the least improvement, and was then brought home and remained in my bed till May day. I had constant medical advice, but continued to grow worse and worse. My right arm withered and I grew so weak and useless that I could not turn myself in bed. Meantime I had tried all sorts of patent medicines without the least effect. In May I saw an advertisement of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills in the papers, and said I would try them as a last resort. I had heard of the wonderful cures worked by Pink Pills, and told my folks to get me some. I had not taken them long when I found myself improving, and this determined me to continue their use. My strength gradually returned, the muscles of my arm and leg became invigorated and stronger, and I was able to sit up. I still continued taking the Pills and gaining strength, until at last I was able to go about, and finally to return to my old place in the sash and door factory. I now feel as well as ever, though perhaps not quite so strong as formerly. You can see my right arm, which was withered, is now all right," and Mr. Sands stretched out a muscular limb, which would have done credit to a blacksmith. In reply to the reporter Mr. Sands said he thought his trouble had been brought on through exposure to the weather. "I am completely satisfied," said he, "that it is entirely to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills that I owe my wonderful restoration. Besides the medical treatment I had tried electricity and patent medicines, both internal and external, but without the slightest avail. After beginning Pink Pills I began to mend, and they have made a new man of me."

The newspaper man then called on Messrs. Ostrom Bros. & Co., widely known druggists, and interviewed their representative, Mr. Smith, as to his knowledge of the case. Mr. Smith was fully conversant with the facts, and vouched for the story told by Mr. Sands, and further said that his hopeless case and remarkable recovery are known throughout Glengarry County. In reply to the query if many of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are sold, Mr. Smith replied that the sale was remarkable and that in his experience he had never handled a remedy that sold so well, or gave such general satisfaction to those using them, as everywhere glowing reports are heard of the excellent results following their use. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are not a patent medicine in the sense that word is understood. They are the result of years of experience and careful investigation. They are not a purgative medicine, but act directly upon the blood and nerves, supplying those constituents required to enrich the former and stimulate and restore the latter.

For all diseases depending upon a vitiated condition of the blood, or shattered nerves, they are an unfailing remedy. Such diseases as these speedily yield to their treatment. Locomotor ataxia, partial paralysis, St. Vitus' dance, neuralgia, rheumatism, sciatica, nervous prostration, nervous headache, dyspepsia, chronic erysipelas, scrofula, etc. They are a specific for the troubles peculiar to females, correcting irregularities, and restoring the functions, and in the case of men effect a radical cure in all cases arising from overwork, mental worry or excesses of any nature. In fact it may be said of them "They come as a boon and a blessing to men, Restoring to health, life and vigor again."

These Pills are manufactured by the Dr. Williams' Medicine Company, Brockville, Ont., and Schenectady, N. Y., and are sold in boxes (never in loose form by the dozen or hundred and the public are cautioned against numerous imitations sold in this shape) at 50 cents a box, or six boxes for $2.50, and may be had of all druggists or direct by mail from Dr. Williams' Medicine Company, from either address. The price at which these pills are sold make a course of treatment comparatively inexpensive as compared with other remedies or medical treatment.

Hint To Invalids.

"You are looking very bad," remarked Mr. Murray Hill to his friend, Peck Slip. "What's the matter?"

"The doctor says that my lungs are affected and that I must not take more than three drinks a day."

"I would try some other doctor."

"I did, and he told the same thing."

"Well, then, if each of them told you could take three drinks a day, that makes six drinks."

"I never thought of that before. I'll use the rest of the doctors in New York, and if they all say I can have three drinks a day, that will make about as many drinks a day as an invalid ought to take."

Wooden—Will you marry me? (No reply.) Wooden—Mildred, I offer you my heart, my hand, my love, my devotion, my whole life. (No reply.) Wooden—I lay my greatest ambitions, my brightest hopes at your feet; will you not speak, Mildred? Mildred—Who owns the grocery at the corner—you or your brother? "I do." "Well, why didn't you say that first?"

When the husband of a big, ugly, raw boned, square toed, coarse voiced creature gets up in the world his wife becomes known as "a lady of pronounced individuality."

Mrs. Trustee—The Littletown *Banner* says the grass is growing in the streets at Jamesville. Uncle Trustee—I don't doubt it; they was running a spinning race the last time I was there.

TEXAS BALSAM

FOREST, GALLS, SORE SHOULDERS, SCRATCHES, or any WOUNDS on HORSES or CATTLE Quickly Healed. Speedy Cure GUARANTEED if you use TEXAS BALSAM. Sent by Mail on receipt of Price 25 C