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Select Poetry.

DISCONTENTED.

How many sick ones
Wish they were healthy;
How many beggar men
Wish they were wealthy;
How many ugly ones
Wish they were pretty;
How many stupid ones
Wish they were witty;
How many bachelors
Wish they were married;
How many Benedictines
Wish they had tarried;
Single or double,
Late's full of trouble;
Riches are stable,
Pleasure's a bubble.

Select Calc.

THE LOVER AND THE LOVED.

BY ALBERT IVIAN.

The Missouri river had nearly gained its utmost height in the great flood of 1844, but was still rapidly rising when I came to its banks in the beginning of June, at the pleasant little town of Lennox, in the western part of the State.

Lennox is situated on a high bluff on the east bank of the river, which there flows nearly south. At the foot of the bluff is barely room for a single street which runs parallel with the river, and on which a few warehouses, stores, and mills are built. The bluff is steep—in places, almost perpendicular—and a single street ran up from the river to the summit, where the principal part of the town was situated. The Missouri, at this point, is commonly about five hundred yards wide; and at the bend, a little above the town, where the river turned from an easterly to a southern course, the current was unusually rapid, even for that rapid river. The opposite shore was a low level tract of bottom land, several miles wide, elevated only a few feet above the water. Along the shores, and for a mile or two back, the country was covered with a dense growth of cotton-wood, but beyond this was an extensive prairie. A number of old water-courses ran through this bottom, into which the water of the river now found its way from above, forming large streams across it, and to a great extent, interrupting travel. Directly opposite Lennox, were a warehouse, hotel and one or two other buildings, all very near the shore. When I arrived in town it was nearly dark, and I was told that I could not cross till the next day, as the ferry-boat was propelled only by hand, and the great rapidity of the stream rendered crossing slow and laborious.

I went to the top of the bluff, from which the view of the river and country on the other side was very extensive. The buildings on the shore opposite seemed almost at my feet, they lay so far below me. The ferry-boat was fastened near the hotel, to the stump of a large tree, which stood just at the river's brink. While looking at the prospect before me, I saw a carriage drive up to the hotel on the other side of the river, and several persons, mostly ladies, descended from it, and went in a group of spectators standing near me on the bluff observed them, and their conversation attracted my attention.

"These are Stanton's people," said one of them. "They ought to come over to-night. The river is rising very fast, and no one knows what may happen before morning."

"Yes," replied another; "the bank there is washing away rapidly, and the river has nearly reached the slough on the other side of the warehouse. When it gets in there, those buildings will not stand long. They are certain to go in a day or two, unless the water falls. The families all left there yesterday."

I went back to my lodgings soon after, and thought nothing more of it till next morning at breakfast, when the landlord's son came in with the news, that the ferry-boat had gone down the river during the night—the stump to which it had been fastened was washed out by the river—and that all Stanton's family were unable to get away.

The boarders all hastened out to the bluff, to see for themselves. I went along. The change since the previous evening was remarkable. Directly beyond the buildings we could see a wide and rapid stream, which entirely cut off the inmates from the land, and formed an island containing, perhaps, half an acre of land, which was barely above the surface of the water.—The current of the river—if possible, more rapid than on the previous day—was rushing with terrible force against the upper end of the island, and fast wearing it away. It was soon learned that the river had risen several inches during the night, and was still rising.

Heavy clouds to the west and north showed that rain was still pouring down upon the tributaries of the Missouri that entered the river

just above, and cut off all hopes of a fall of the water.

Mr. Stanton soon joined the crowd that was fast collecting on the bluff. He was a tall, gentlemanly person, apparently fifty years of age. He was dressed with scrupulous care, and carried a gold-headed cane. I learned he was one of the most wealthy citizens of the town, a retired merchant, whose ample fortune was invested in banking houses and real estate. His family consisted of his wife somewhat younger than himself—and an only son just entering on manhood. The death of a brother-in-law, whose wife had died some time before, left him the natural protector of two nieces and a nephew. Mrs. Stanton and her son had gone to bring them home, and they were the persons now on the island, and in such desperate need of succor.

The current of the Missouri, always rapid, renders boating upon it laborious and unpleasant; and consequently, few boats propelled by oars are to be found upon its waters. A steamer was expected about noon, on her upward trip, and it was certain that the island would resist the action of the water till that time, it was resolved to await the arrival of the boat.

The construction of a raft was proposed, but it was thought doubtful whether one could be propelled across the river. Others proposed sending to a neighboring town for a small skiff which was known to be there. But as that would occupy several hours, it was said that the steamer would be at the landing before the skiff could be brought. About ten o'clock, a heavy shower drove the spectators to shelter. The rain continued till afternoon, when it suddenly ceased, and the sun shone out brightly. Though the streets were dry, and the ground wet and unpleasant, the tops of the bluff and the space about the landing were soon crowded with people. About one-third of the island had disappeared within three hours previous, and the water was now rushing furiously along within a few feet of the veranda, which extended along the east side of the hotel.

A part of the foundation of the warehouse, which stood a little above the hotel, and very near it, had been washed away, and the huge building was slowly sinking into the river.—Mrs. Stanton and her son were standing at one end of the veranda, and her nieces and nephew in a group by themselves, a little apart. By the aid of my glass, I could see them quite distinctly. The girls were apparently of the ages of eighteen and fifteen, and the boy much younger, probably not more than eight years of age.

They all looked earnestly at the crowds of people who filled the hill tops and lined the streets about the landing. Mrs. Stanton seemed more agitated than the others, and I could see from the frequent movement of her handkerchief that she was weeping. The young man was restless, and moved about nervously, glancing from the crumbling island to the landing opposite, and then looking up and down the river, as if for the appearance of a steamer. The young ladies remained motionless, standing side by side, with their brother leaning upon the railing before them.

A terrible fear that the steamer might be detained, and not arrive that day, now began to come upon the spectators. Mr. Stanton was thoroughly alarmed, and dispatched a wagon to bring up the skiff that was at a landing some distance below the town. It would require some time to bring it up in that manner than it would to row it up against the current on the river. The driver and attendant were urged to hasten to the utmost of their speed, but it was nearly two o'clock when they started. Serious fears began to be felt for the safety of the imprisoned family, and the arrival of the steamer still anxiously looked for; but hour after hour passed, and nothing save the broad, rushing waste of water could be seen. Hour after hour passed by, and the people looked, and wondered, and sympathized in vain.

The waters rose steadily, and the little island was fast yielding to their constant rushing, and wearing away before our eyes, while the imprisoned travelers watched and waited some sign of coming deliverance, but watched and waited in vain. The clouds again hid the sun and a fearful looking storm began to rise in the north-east.

It was almost sunset when the skiff arrived. The hundreds of people who had been watching till then from the hill-tops, now hastened down to the landing, anxious to see the skiff afloat, and to meet the rescued family when they should come to land.

I went down the hill with the crowd. A stranger, whom I had not seen before, came along by my side. He was probably twenty-five years of age, of medium size, very plainly dressed, but with the unmistakable air and manners of a gentleman. I observed that his eyes and hair were both brown, and that he had a careworn and wearied expression. We walked on in silence for a moment, and then he spoke:

"This has been a long, weary day for these people."

I made some common-place reply, and he continued:

"How many spend their whole lives in a similar manner—in fear, and doubt, and agony—watching, and waiting and praying for the deliverance that will never come!"

I looked at him in surprise. He noticed it, and added:

"Physical dangers and sufferings are often terrible; but they have this alleviation—they secure to the sufferer the sympathy of those around him; but mental anguish is not visible, and must be borne alone. Many men and women, too, will risk their lives to rescue a human being from danger and distress like this," (and he pointed towards the island) "who will walk carelessly by, and neither think nor care to think, how easily they might relieve a far greater distress."

We were by this time in a dense crowd, and were separated. When I reached the landing the skiff was lying in the water, and Mr. Stanton was standing near it, with tears in his eyes expostulating with a negro boatman who stood by. A dense mass of human beings surrounded them in a semi-circle. By crowding along at the edge of the water, I succeeded, with difficulty in getting inside of the circle. I noticed that the skiff was quite small and could carry but a few persons.

The people on the island were still standing on the veranda, which the water had now reached, and was undermining. Mrs. Stanton was waving her handkerchief incessantly, but the young ladies stood apart, clasped in each other's arms silent and motionless, looking with an earnest steadfast gaze, at the river and the landing opposite.

"Will no one go?" cried Mr. Stanton, in agony. "I have neither the strength nor the skill to row the boat across. I'll give any man a thousand dollars who will do it! A thousand dollars!" he repeated wildly; "or any amount one will ask!"

"A thousand dollars, and your freedom, Jack!" he exclaimed, addressing the negro boatman, "if you will but take the boat to town!"

But the negro shook his head slowly, as he answered:

"I can't, Massa Stanton—it's no use, the boat can't go back, and I would be left there to drown."

"I'll give five thousand dollars to whoever will go!—five thousand dollars!" he cried, looking wildly around.

I asked what all this meant; and was answered that the skiff would only hold four persons with safety; consequently, the persons on the island—five in number, of whom two were children—would fill it to the utmost capacity. The young man Stanton was a good oarsman and, if he had the skill, could easily bring off the whole party; but whoever should take them the boat, must, perforce, take their place and remain in the island till the boat could return for his deliverance. But it was now almost night, and a heavy storm was fast approaching, and it would be quite impossible for the skiff to go back to the island before the storm; and the darkness would render the attempt hopeless.

This was the cause of Mr. Stanton's excitement. No one was willing to undertake the enterprise; it was too dangerous. It was evident that the island would wholly disappear before morning; and it was also evident that the skiff could not return that night. The skiff could not possibly carry more than five persons on the island; and either one of them, or the person taking it to them, must remain, with an almost absolute certainty of perishing.

What shall we do? What can be done? were the questions that passed through the crowd; but no one could answer them. It seemed like going to certain death—and who was ready to die!

A profound silence fell upon the crowd, and all stood motionless and irresolute, as a feeling of dread crept over them. The silence was oppressive, and not a sound broke the stillness, except the rushing of the water along the edge of the levee. The silence seemed of longer duration than it really was—it had lasted perhaps a full minute, when the stranger who had walked down from the town with me, stepped quietly out from the throng, and said, in a low, calm voice:

"I will go." And without waiting for any explanation, or any thanks from Mr. Stanton, who attempted to express his gratitude, and repeated his offer of reward, he stepped into the skiff and took up the oars.

"Take the rope and draw the skiff up to the point yonder, where that large log lies out into the river," said he, in a commanding tone.

Several men sprang forward and seized the rope. The object of this was, to take the boat up the river a considerable distance above the point where he intended to land on the other side. The spectators followed the boat rapidly, and there was an evident feeling of relief in the prospect of the family being at last delivered.

During the passage up to the point indicated the stranger did not speak—scarcely once looked around, but kept his attention fixed upon the boat, which he carefully guided with the oars, keeping it out in the stream sufficiently to avoid striking the shore. When the men who were drawing it reached the spot, they all let go the rope but two, and these walked out carefully on the log to its extremity.

"That will do," said the stranger. "Throw the rope into the boat."

They obeyed; and exerting all his strength upon the oars, the skiff shot out rapidly into the stream.

There was much wondering in the crowd, and many questions asked the stranger; but no one could answer them—no one knew about him.

At the point where he started out into the river, the current was not very strong near the shore, but when about a third of the way across the skiff entered the main channel of the stream and he was swept rapidly down. He still kept the prow of the boat pointed towards the opposite shore, but his utmost exertion could propel it but slightly forward, while the current bore him along downward with great rapidity. The spectators, following the motion of the boat, hastily retraced their steps to the landing in front of the warehouses, but before we reached the spot, the skiff had passed through the most rapid part of the river, and entered the eddy formed just below the island. In a few moments more the stranger had brought the skiff up to the house, and we saw the young man seize the rope and make it fast to the railing of the veranda. The stranger stepped from the boat upon the floor, and I observed that he bowed to the ladies and motioned them to the

boat. The young man was the first to enter; it was necessary that he should keep it steady while the others were taking their places.—Mrs. Stanton next stepped in, and then her little nephew. As the young ladies were approaching, I saw the stranger take something from a side pocket and place it in the hands of the eldest; she passed, as if in conversation with him, and it was not till the others were all seated that she moved forward and entered the boat; and even then she moved slowly, as if with reluctance.

The stranger loosened the rope that secured the skiff, and bowing again to the ladies, remained standing on the veranda.

As they floated rapidly away, it was evident that they must descend the river a considerable distance while making the passage, and that they would land at what was called the lower landing, about a half a mile below where we were standing. We all walked down in that direction. The rain began to fall, accompanied with a heavy wind—the light faded rapidly away, as the storm increased, and it was almost as dark as night when the skiff came to land. The passengers were welcomed with loud cheers, and assisted into a carriage which had long been waiting them. They were thoroughly drenched, and seemed nearly exhausted with fatigue, anxiety and fasting; they had eaten nothing for thirty-six hours. The rain beat furiously and pitilessly upon us as we hastened back to our lodgings. At supper the subject was discussed, and there was much wondering and inquiring about the stranger.

As I was describing his personal appearance, the landlord remarked:

"He must be the stranger who stopped here last night."

I replied that I did not see him at the table either in the morning or at noon.

"No," said he, "he did not come down till late this morning, and did not come to dinner at all."

It was concluded on all hands that he was a doomed man—the utter impossibility of his surviving the night was evident.

The storm continued with terrible fury—the rain fell in torrents, and the wind blew almost a hurricane, attended with incessant flashes of lightning; and mingled with the loud roaring of the wind was a continuous roar of thunder. It was the most terrible storm of that stormy year. It was long past midnight when it ceased; and the tumult of the storm, and the agitation occasioned by the interest felt in the fate of the unknown traveler, prevented sleep for many hours.

The next morning was calm and bright.—Long before sunrise the crowds who, the previous day, had thronged the bluffs, were hurrying along the streets and sidewalks to learn the fate of the stranger. It was soon learned. The river was higher than on the previous day, and every vestige of the island had disappeared. Nothing but a broad expanse of dark, wild, rushing waters was visible, hurrying on in a fierce, relentless tide.

A thrill of inexpressible horror, mingled with a strange feeling of admiration, filled every heart, as the eye first rested on the spot where the brave young stranger had yielded up his life alone in the storm and darkness, and gone down to his unknown and noteless grave.—"Why should he do it?" was the question on every tongue and in every mind. "What was his motive? Why should he go down to certain death for the sacrifice of strangers, when their own friends shrank from the sacrifice?"

While I was standing alone, looking out upon the river, after the spectators had withdrawn, a carriage came up. It contained Mr. Stanton and his family. They looked earnestly upon the river for some time in silence.

"Was it possible for him to escape, uncle?" asked the eldest of the two ladies.

Mr. Stanton had descended from the carriage and was standing at the door, which was open. He shook his head sadly, as he replied:

"I think not, Della—I think not."

Della was very pale, and leaned her head against the side of the carriage, as if faint and weak. She was really beautiful—a blonde, with rich auburn hair and clear brown eyes.—Her forehead was high and broad, and all her features were regular and delicate. The whole party remained silent for several minutes. She was the first to speak.

"I am glad to have you all saved," she said; "but I do not feel that I have any right to life on such terms. Why should any one die for me?"

"He told you to open the letter he gave you this morning, if he was not found," said Mr. Stanton.

Miss Della immediately produced a letter, which she opened. After looking at it a moment, her eyes filled with tears, she handed it to Mr. Stanton. He read it aloud.

I was standing near enough to hear distinctly, and they seemed willing that I should hear. The note was brief:

"If I do not return, give the reward—if I succeed—to your niece, Miss Della Greene."

That was all.

Mr. Stanton turned the bit of paper over and over, as if there must be something more. But there was nothing.

"Did you know him, Della?" asked Mr. Stanton.

She bowed her head slightly, but did not speak. Mr. Stanton looked vexed; and all the other members of the family uttered many exclamations of surprise.

"And you never told us! Who was he? Where did you see him?" and many like questions.

She made no reply, but continued leaning against the side of the carriage, weeping, and paler than before.

"This is unaccountable, Della," said Mr. Stanton, sternly. "Was he a friend of yours?"

She did not reply immediately, but in a moment she said quite clearly and calmly:

"I met him once—he was my friend. I cannot tell you anything more about him."

Her tone and manner were quiet and firm, and no one ventured to ask her any more questions. Her distress was so evident and so deep, that it checked them all and kept them silent. After a little, the carriage drove away, and I went back to my hotel.

The stranger had left little baggage, a few books, and some manuscripts. Mr. Stanton's family made diligent inquiry of all Della's former friends and acquaintances, but none of them could tell aught about the stranger. No one of all her friends could recall anything that ever seemed remotely to connect her with the stranger. Finding that he could learn nothing more, and feeling bound by the promise he had made, Mr. Stanton placed the five thousand dollars reward at Miss Della's disposal, and it was by her placed at interest; and the income thus derived served for her support. And the secret which caused so much anxiety and inquiry she kept locked in her own heart, and no human power could tempt her from her fidelity.

Della never married. Within a year after the events described above, she went from her native country, as a missionary, to a remote station in the Old World.

"I shall never return," she said to me, on the eve of her departure. "You may keep these papers for your perusal, when I am gone; and when you hear of my death, make what use of them you please."

After fifteen years of successful labor, as teacher, in one of the mission schools in the East—successful labor, of which even a Christian might feel a grateful pride—she, too, yielded up her life for the good of others; not suddenly, and by violence, but the effect of long-continued toil and anxious application wrought its slow but certain work; and at the beginning of the year just closed, her life and labor terminated, and I can now reveal the history of the unknown stranger by whom her life was once saved.

His name was Leonard Elwood, once a clerk in New Orleans. Pride and poverty, some years before I saw him, had impelled him to commit a crime—forgery, embezzlement, or some kindred act—and his commission enriched him.

During a trip up the Missouri, about a year before the commencement of my narrative, he met with Miss Della Greene, who was traveling alone at the time, although their acquaintance was necessarily brief, they loved each other before the time of parting came. When they parted, they were virtually engaged, and a constant correspondence was promised till they might meet again. She went to her home in Western Missouri, and he to do his business in the South. But during his absence a clue to his crime—which had laid the foundation of his magnificent fortune—had fallen into the hands of an enemy—one who had long envied Elwood's wealth, and suffered from his competition in trade. His ruin was sudden and complete.—With true courage, he wrote a full account of his crime and its exposure to Della—it was the first letter he had written—renouncing all claim to her hand, and bidding her to forget him. He managed to escape punishment; but all his property was lost; and, without friends or money, he wandered away, hoping to find employment in some obscure portion of the country, where he might remain unknown. But wherever he went for employment—and his education and business habits would, under ordinary circumstances, have secured him a situation—the story of his crime went also; and thus, driven from place to place, he at last became hopeless and despairing. Finding no opportunity of living honestly, and firmly resolved not to live in any other manner, he came to the banks of the Missouri on the same day that Miss Della reached them on the opposite side. It was one of those strange coincidences that sometimes occur. Poverty, distress and remorse had in one year, so changed him, that when they met she did not recognize him. He placed in her hand the sealed note which he had hastily written before he undertook the perilous enterprise, and a portrait taken during the days of his prosperity. She remembered him; when he spoke. "My life is worthless," he said; "if I can save you, it will be some atonement for the past. Do not regret my fate. It is the happiest that could befall me. Farewell."

They parted. He lies beneath the turbid waters of the Missouri; she, in a quiet grave on the shores of the *Agriana*.

Political.

THE REPUBLICANS AND CORRUPTION.

The Republicans are making a great fuss just now over their one-sided investigation and report on the subject of corruption, but they appear to forget, or at least wish the people to forget, their position, complicity and active participation in that very business. The infamous course of the last Republican Legislature in this State will not soon pass from the remembrance of the people, and among the darkest pages in the history of Pennsylvania will be those which record the notoriously corrupt and disgraceful acts of the majority of the members. Special legislation to advance the interests of a dishonest lobby, and a neglect of the leading concerns of this great Commonwealth, distinguished the Republican members beyond all precedent, a mercenary purpose being at the bottom of all.

In New York, where the Republicans, too, were in power, rank rascality and unscrupulous corruption stalked forth hand in hand. The *New York Tribune*, in remarking upon the acts of the Republican Legislature of that State, denominated the majority "an atrocious confederacy of public robbers," who "were debauched by wholesale bribery." That journal thanked God when they adjourned, consoling itself with the belief that "it is not possible another body so reckless not merely of right but of decency

not merely corrupt but shameless—will be assembled in our halls of legislation within the next ten years."

The *New York Times*, in speaking of the appliances used to pass the passenger railway schemes of "the shameless and prostituted intriguers for monopolies," said:

"What public interest could lead members from the interior obstinately to resist every amendment, and force the bills through in their most obnoxious shape? What public motive could prompt honorable members from Utica, from Oswego, from Rochester or Buffalo, to persist—against every dictate of justice, and in spite of the most earnest remonstrances—in fixing upon the people of New York the most oppressive monopolies ever fastened upon any city? Why should county members insist, with such uncompromising pertinacity, on giving away grants for which responsible men were willing to pay a million dollars?"

"There is only one answer to these inquiries: They were bribed to do so. Their votes were bought and paid for. If the Grand Jury of Albany county would do its duty—if respectable men, cognizant of the facts, would give justice the benefit of their knowledge—we believe a score of members, at the lowest estimate, would be indicted, tried, convicted and sent to the penitentiary for the crime of selling the public interests to put money in their own pockets."

The *New York Express* (American) in alluding to the denunciations of the Republican press in this regard, made use of the annexed language, which is worthy of being placed along side of the trades of the Republicans touching "official corruptions." We quote:

"The Republican party in its State policy professed to be the peculiar friends of economy, retrenchment and reform. We have seen how shamefully those professions have been falsified. The indignation of such journals as the *Tribune* and *Post* is all moonshine. It is not worth anything. The object of it is to create an impression that 'Republicanism and profligate legislation are not Siamese twins, and in so far to prepare the way to asking the people to give the same party another trial in the Capital next year. But, poverty, as the people are in some things, we apprehend they are not so verdant as the wire-pullers imagine. Nor can anybody be humbugged, either, by the show of public virtue on the part of the Governor, in vetoing that monstrous scheme of public plunder, the Gridiron Railway bills. There was a perfect understanding that most of the vetoed bills should pass. The people will merely look upon the Governor as having given a sly wink to the Legislature, and whispered, 'You know you are strong enough to pass these bills, but it is better I should vote them, so as to save appearances with the public, and not cast the whole odium upon the Republican party.'"

"Another circumstance going to show that the 'virtuous indignation' of the Republican press is all a sham, is the profound silence they maintain upon the very generally credited rumor that the 'Albany Regency' gets a million of dollars from the Gridiron, to be used as an electioneering fund to carry this State for the nominees of the Sectional Convention at Chicago." It is hardly necessary to multiply proofs of the notorious greed of the Republican party when in power, but, with a view of calling to mind some striking reminiscences touching the leading spirits of the Chicago Convention, we extract from the *Uniontown* (Pa.) *Genius of Liberty*, the following apposite paragraph:

"It was singularly proper that George Ashmun should preside over the body that nominated Abraham Lincoln for the Presidency. He is the man who introduced the resolutions into Congress, for which Lincoln voted, declaring the Mexican war unjust, unconstitutional, and wrong. Their course on that question drove both Ashmun and Lincoln from public life, from which they did not emerge until Lincoln was, in 1855, put up against Judge Douglas for the Senate, and Ashmun appeared on the boards at Chicago, as President of the Republican Convention. In 1857, Ashmun figured prominently for a short time as a lobby member of Congress, engaged in procuring the passage of the 'free wool' tariff adopted in that year. He acted as the agent of Lawrence, Stone & Co., who expended \$70,000 in procuring the passage of that act, of which sum Ashmun got some \$1,000. *Thurlow Weed* some \$4,000, and *James Watson Webb* got a furnished house at Washington, well stocked with provisions and liquors, to which members could be invited and feasted, while being impressed with the importance of this unjust measure to the American wool grower. Ashmun is the very man to play the part he did at Chicago, and to denounce the Administration as he did in his speech. A scamp and a knave himself, it was natural for him to seek to bring others down to his level. Imagine such a man as Lincoln President, and such jobs as George Ashmun about, and it is not difficult to determine what sort of morality we would have in Congress and the White House. The people will take care, however, that no such calamity falls upon the country, by repudiating the Chicago Convention and all its doings."

Now, is it not amusing to find shameless, mercenary and unscrupulous vagabonds, like the Republicans, shouting at the full vent of their lungs, 'corruptions and frauds?' A crowd with hands full of public plunder, dirty with the bribes of rascally lobbyists and their pockets lined with the fruits of their legislative shame. The people understand the dishonest device of those who cry 'stop thief!' to escape the punishment they merit, and next November, the Republicans will discover the fact.—*Pennsylvania*.

THE FOLLOWING occurred in a school near London:

Teacher—"What part of speech is egg?"

Boy—"Noun, sir!"

Teacher—"What's its gender?"

Boy—"Can't tell, sir."

Teacher—"Is it masculine, or feminine?"

Boy—"Can't say, sir, till it's hatched."