

## THE FISH POND

It was a couple of months or so before the beginning of an exceedingly dull season that Mr. Julius B. Kornor made his first appearance in London, and he speedily became both an interesting and a popular member of society. He was universally supposed to be possessed of fabulous wealth, a fact all the better established because Mr. Kornor never directly alluded to it. He lived in a small but perfectly appointed house in Mayfair, gave admirable dinners, drove first rate horses, and did all that could be reasonably expected of an unostentatious millionaire. Mr. Kornor was a widower, with two very attractive daughters, Stella and Sophie, and it was commonly reported that these ladies would receive very handsome marriage portions from their father.

It was not, perhaps, surprising that so attractive a family should be much sought after, and within a very few weeks of their arrival the Kornors found themselves overwhelmed with invitations.

Among the most intimate of their friends was a certain Lady Rubicon, a bustling, lively matron with a somewhat impetuous husband and a large family. Lord and Lady Rubicon were in the habit of making frequent trips to America, where his lordship owned a cattle-ranch and several drinking saloons; and it was on the return voyage from one of these excursions that they had made the acquaintance of the Kornors.

On board an Atlantic steamer, friendship ripens quickly, and it was in a great measure owing to Lady Rubicon's good offices that the American family had been so well received in London. The Kornors were grateful, and Lady Rubicon was fully disposed to take advantage of her position. She had almost given up the idea of securing Kornor himself for her eldest daughter, but she was determined that her scapegrace son should marry one of the girls. As the Hon. Humphrey Pique was on the point of leaving the Guards, owing to hopeless impetuosity, there was not much time to be lost, so she danced attendance upon Miss Stella with unremitting diligence, while his mother lost no chance in aiding his suit. One day Lady Rubicon came around to the house in Mayfair, and, with an air of great importance, asked to see Mr. Kornor alone.

"You shall know all about it pretty soon, my dear," she remarked to the girls, "but your father and I must have a talk first."

Mr. Kornor knew that Lady Rubicon had a favorite weakness for making mysteries out of nothing, so he arose and courteously led the way to the library.

"My dear Mr. Kornor," said the matron, "we have such a delightful scheme on hand, and you must help in it!"

"I shall only be too pleased," answered the imperturbable Kornor. But may I ask what is the scheme, and who are we?"

"Oh, 'we' are everybody—everybody, that is who is anybody; and we are going to have a fancy fair for the benefit of the Hospital for Diseases of the Eyebrows."

Mr. Kornor looked a little mystified. "A fancy fair?" he repeated.

"Oh, I forgot you had been so short a time in England! There will be stalls, you know, and people dressed in fancy costumes will sell things, and we are going to have an old English street and a Turkish bazaar, and all sorts of things including the Mahdi's camp. I am sure you would look delightful as the Mahdi, with a black beard and a blanket."

Mr. Kornor passed his hand meditatively across his chin. "If I ever dressed myself for a show I am afraid I should have to choose something a little less attractive," he said.

"By no means. You shall choose your own costume; but you must really help us, you and the girls. You will, won't you?"

"I can deny you nothing," said Mr. Kornor, with an air of old-fashioned courtesy he was rather fond of assuming. "And I have no doubt that my daughters will be charmed."

Lady Rubicon expressed her thanks in very fervent terms, and so the matter was settled. Stella and Sophie were delighted with the idea, and the Kornor family were duly enrolled upon the aristocratic staff of assistants at the fancy fair for the benefit of the hospital for diseases of the eyebrow. Mr. Kornor himself consented to become a member of the managing committee.

The Albert hall was, of course, engaged for the occasion; the patronage of royalty was asked for and graciously accorded; the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, and other distinguished personages promised to attend, and the Hon. Humphrey Pique, with great good nature, volunteered to become honorary secretary and look after the funds. The committee devoted long and anxious thought to the allotment

of the various duties of the assistants, male and female. There were all sorts of prejudices to soothe and jealousies to mollify. All the best looking women had to be selected to serve as refreshment stall-keepers and vendors of button-holes and cigars and the choice was the cause of terrible bickerings and heart-burnings. The Duchess of Colpos, a fine woman but somewhat overburdened with superfluous flesh, insisted upon being allowed to perambulate the hall arrayed as a flower girl, while Lady Victoria Vespa threatened to withdraw her name unless she were permitted to devote her undeniably fine teeth to the congenial task of biting off the ends of cigars. But Lady Rubicon and her colleagues triumphantly overcame every difficulty and the fair promised to be a huge success. Of course, the Kornors were consulted at an early period as to the precise part they wished to take in the proceedings.

Mr. Kornor said he was profoundly indifferent; he left all these things in the hands of his daughters; Stella was a clever girl and was certain to suggest something. She soon decided. For the next time Lady Rubicon called she announced that they were going to keep a fish pond.

"Charming!" cried Lady Rubicon. "I know what you mean. You put a lot of parcels in a sort of enclosed place and people have little fishing poles with hooks. I am sure that will be delightful!"

"Yes; that is exactly what I mean," replied Stella. "I think it really ought to be great fun."

"I am sure that it will and what are you going to put inside the parcels, dear?"

"Oh sweets, or toys, or scents, or something. But you must not be too inquisitive, Lady Rubicon; papa is going to take the fish-pond in hand, and he is sure to contrive something interesting and original." At that moment the millionaire himself entered the room.

"We were talking of the fish pond Mr. Kornor," said Lady Rubicon. I hear that you are going to invent some wonderful novelty for it." "Scarcely that, Lady Rubicon," answered Mr. Kornor, with his usual quiet smile and a deprecatory wave of the hand. "But I dare say I shall be able to find out something to amuse those who fish. I have hardly thought of it, however, myself yet."

"I am certain that is a wonderfully clever man," mused Lady Rubicon, as she drove homewards. "He will make a great noise in the world some day. So handsome and distinguished, too. His daughters are a different style of beauty. I suppose they take after their mother."

About a week before the opening of the fair, Mr. Kornor ran over to Paris. It was noticed he had been very busy and pre-occupied of late; he had been seen but little in the park, and seemed to spend most of his time in a sort of studio at the back of his house. His daughters explained that he had a good deal of business on hand just then, and that he was, moreover, deeply absorbed in scheming some really surprising novelties for the fish pond.

"It is so good of your father to take so much trouble when he has other matters to attend to!" said Lady Rubicon to Stella.

"Papa likes being busy," answered that young lady. He left for Paris last night where he has gone about the things for the pond."

"Really! and when do you expect him back?"

"To-morrow or the day after. I think he will bring them with him."

"Do you know, dear, I am perfectly dying of curiosity about that fish pond. Don't you think you could tell me what is going to be put in it?"

"My dear Lady Rubicon," laughed Stella, "to tell you the truth, I don't even know myself."

"What a mysterious man your father must be," sighed her ladyship.

Mr. Kornor returned to London in a couple of days later and lost no time in acquainting her ladyship with the fact. He told her that he had been eminently successful in his mission, that, after much anxious cogitation, he had arranged something altogether marvelous and sensational to the fish pond; and that, with the aid of an astute shopman of the Palais Royal, he had carried out his idea in a very perfect manner indeed. In fact he authorized her to add a couple of lines to the latest edition of posters and circulars, announcing that the fish pond would be the greatest attraction of the entire fair, and guaranteeing that no one who spent ten shillings for the temporary use of a rod would ever regret his or her labor or money.

Of course, Lady Rubicon would not confess that she knew as little about Mr. Kornor's real intentions as the rest of the world. She informed all her acquaintances that she and the Hon. Humphrey had been initiated into the mystery under inviolable vows of secrecy and hinted that Mr. Kornor had carried out his designs in accordance

with a suggestion of her own. One condition, Mr. Kornor insisted upon which Lady Rubicon and the committee considered on reflection to be extremely reasonable and proper, and that was that each person who secured one of the mysterious parcels should solemnly promise not to open and examine his or her prize before reaching home.

"You will at once see, Lady Rubicon," said Mr. Kornor, smiling "that this is absolutely necessary. If people are allowed to open the parcel in the hall there will be an end at once to all the mystery."

Her ladyship of course saw the necessity, and was more than ever impressed with the astuteness of the millionaire. The evening before the fair was opened Mr. Kornor himself drove down to the Albert Hall, and was shortly followed by a very large van which contained the parcels for the miraculous fish pond.

Lady Rubicon, and he had fixed an hour when everyone except a few workmen had left the building, and the operation of arranging the packages in their "pond" was performed in the absence of all responsible individuals except her ladyship and the Hon. Humphrey. Mr. Kornor was very careful about his parcels. He explained that many of them contained glass and required cautious handling, and he superintended the entire operations in person.

"You and the girls will be here early to-morrow morning, won't you?" she said as she bade good night to the American.

"Certainly; we are always punctual." And he left her charmed with his courtesy.

The next morning was bright and fine. Lady Rubicon was early astir, and eagerly opened her letters to see if any of her friends were going to disappoint her at the fair. Much to her disgust she read the following:

MY DEAR LADY RUBICON: I am truly sorry to be obliged to be absent from the fair to-morrow. Important business demands my presence in Paris, and I am starting by the night boat. Wishing you every success, to which I trust the fish pond will contribute, with profound regret believe me yours very sincerely,  
J. B. KORNER.

"How very annoying!" ejaculated Lady Rubicon; but the girls will be there, I really must make Humphrey come to the point with Stella.

Misfortune never comes singly, as Lady Rubicon discovered, for when she got up to the hall a couple of hours later she found a telegram from Miss Kornor saying that she and her sister had been summoned to Devonshire to the bedside of a dying aunt.

"Was there anything quite so annoying?" exclaimed Lady Rubicon. I never even knew they had an aunt in Devonshire. It is really most provoking."

However, there was no help for it, and as soon as the Hon. Humphrey made his appearance his mother explained to him that he must act as showman of the fish pond, described its manifold attractions to the crowd, and descend eloquently upon the treasures which the generous millionaire had scattered broadcast among the paper parcels.

"You must talk as if you knew all about it you know, Humphrey. Everybody thinks we are in the secret, so that it will not do to confess our ignorance," dashed his mother, judiciously.

Like a dutiful son Mr. Pique consented and was soon busily engaged in his arduous duties. Among his earliest customers happened to be Lady Harcourt herself. She angled successfully and landed a small but substantial parcel. "You mustn't open it here you know," said the Hon. Humphrey, laughing.

"Dear me what a pity!" said her ladyship. "Well I will take it home and show it to Sir William; he likes mysteries." Her ladyship's example was followed by hundreds of others: in fact, as had been expected, the fish pond was the great attraction.

Four o'clock came and the fair was in full swing; the stalls were doing a roaring trade; the Duchess was sold innumerable button holes; Lady Victoria's teeth positively ached from biting cigars all the prettiest women in London were perambulating the hall, dressed in more or less outrageous costumes, and flirting impartially with peers and shop boys in the sacred cause of charity. The Hon. Humphrey, gorgeously arrayed in green plush and silk stockings, had shouted himself hoarse at the fish pond, half sovereigns were pouring in upon him, and a regular queue of people were waiting for their turn to angle for one of the millionaire's wonderful presents. Just when the fun was at its height a couple of footmen in livery elbowed their way unceremoniously through the crowd and seized the Hon. Humphrey by each arm.

"What's the matter ejaculated that young gentleman, dropping his eyes and staring in astonishment at his assailants.

One man leaned forward and whispered a word in the Hon. Humphrey's ear. The effect upon the scion of nobility was electrical. His face turned ghastly pale, his jaw fell, he cast a terrible glance toward the fish pond, and then made a violent plunge forward.

Gently, sir, gently," said the man sternly.

"Let me get out! Good heavens, let me get out!" screamed the Hon. Humphrey.

"Not just yet," replied his tormentor. "Tell 'em the hall must be cleared at once," he added to his companion in a low voice, and then came to pass a most remarkable phenomenon. Policemen seemed to spring up in every direction. In two minutes a line was formed around the fish pond, and the crowd were politely but firmly told that they must at once disperse. At first there was a certain amount of angry remonstrance, and even of forcible opposition; but somehow or another a mysterious word began to be whispered about which had a miraculous effect in disarming all resistance. With one consent everybody turned tail and fled. Flower girls, peasants, Watteau shepherdesses, Spanish gypsies, eighteenth century courtiers, actors and actresses, singers, musicians performers of every description joined with the struggling mob of ordinary humanity in a mad rush for the doors. Even safe outside no one thought of stopping. Entirely regardless of their eccentric costumes, they bolted wildly in every direction, and several stout old ladies and gouty gentlemen ran at least half a mile without pausing to recover their breath or to ask for particulars.

In Kensington Gore those persons who were not senseless from terror heard leather lunged newsboy bellowing "Speshul eddeshum!" "Orrible attempt to assassinate the 'Ome secretary?" "Discovery of infernal machines!" and on buying a paper read the following startling announcement: This morning Lady Harcourt, attended the Fancy Fair at the Albert Hall, and on returning home she brought with her a small sealed parcel, which it seems she had purchased there. It was opened in the presence of Sir William Harcourt, had turned out to be an infernal machine constructed with diabolical ingenuity, which had only failed to explode by a miracle. Four private detectives, who are always in attendance on the Home Secretary disguised as footmen at once proceeded to the Albert Hall to investigate the occurrence while the infernal machine, which is said to resemble a travelling clock, was dispatched to Scotland Yard. On inquiry at Sir William's residence we learn that he is as well as can be expected. The authorship of this fiendish outrage is at present shrouded in mystery.

Nutmegs

Nutmegs comes from the Moluccas, from the Philippines, the West Indies, India and South America. They are the fruit of the myristica fragrans, which grows to the height of thirty to forty feet. Its leaves are smooth and prominently veined, and the flowers are small yellowish diacions, with the stamens united into a fleshy column, and the superior ovary ripening into a pear shaped, tough, one seeded berry. When outer covering is split upon one side, the fruit is gathered by means of a hook fastened to a long stick. This covering or pericarp, is removed with great care and dried. This forms a mace of commerce. The kernels are still in a shell, and are subjected to a moderate heat for two months, about 140° F., being frequently turned. When they rattle in the shell they are fit for market. The European and American dealers, however, only purchase the kernel after this outer shell has been removed. This is accomplished by cracking it with a wooden mallet, and then the kernels are carefully selected and packed in casks. For many years the Dutch, jealous lest other traders should import these kernels and grow their trees from the seed, they at that time having a monopoly of the known growing trees, dipped these kernels in thick milk of lime, thinking thus to destroy the germs and limit their culture to their own possessions. The practice is still kept up, although the special object was never attained, the process having quite innocuous. And all nutmegs of Dutch importation are called lined nutmegs. All of these kernels are an inch or less in height and of oval shape. They yield upon pressure oil and fat. About 800,000 pounds are annually consumed in the United States.

Alexander Dumas, the Elder.

Dumas was a great school-boy, who hid under his good humor and boisterous gaiety more common sense and true wisdom than fell to the lot of ninety-nine out of every hundred. He was the type of a free lance, who proved the rules of conventionality to be stupid; of a pleasure seeker who might serve as a model to all industrious workers; of a knight errant ever in quest of the adventures of gallantry, politics and war, who had studied, for his share alone, more than three convents of Benedictines. He was the image of a prodigal who, having squandered thousands in reckless liberality, left behind him, unconsciously, the heritage of a King. His was the radiant face of an egotist who devoted his whole life to his mother, his children, his friends, his country; of a compliant and easy tempered father, who threw the reins on his son's neck, and who, nevertheless, had the exceptional good fortune to see himself reproduced while living by one of the best and most illustrious men whom France has never applauded. His book will be read after his comedies and dramas shall have been withdrawn from the stage. For an age and longer his entrancing stories, wherein the action never languishes, the style is limpid and brilliant as the crystal of a spring well and the dialogue crackles like green wood on a fire, will continue to be the joy of the young, the distraction of the old, a refreshment for the wearied, a consolation for the ailing, a delight for all. I have known mature men passably occupied—myself, for instance—forget themselves an entire night in the company of the "Chevalier de Maison Rouge" or the "Mohicans de Paris." I still hear my children quarreling in friendly guise because one has not yet finished the second volume of "Monte Cristo" when the other, who is awaiting his turn, has arrived at the end of the first. From this I conclude that Dumas has lost nothing of his freshness since the days—alas! far in the by-gone now—when he nearly caused the death of one of my school companions. He was a little Spaniard, an *interne* at the Pension Massin; he was sleepless; had lost his appetite, and was gradually wasting away as if stricken with home-sickness.

Sarcey, who was in the same class and had conceived a friendship for him, asked him one day: "Is it your mother you wish to see?" "No," answered the child, "she is dead." "Your father, then?" "He used to beat me." "Your brothers and sisters?" "I have none." "Why then are you so anxious to get back to Spain?" "To finish a book I began reading in the vacation." "What is the name of it?" "Los Tres Mosqueteros." The poor child had the nostalgia of the "Trois Mousquetaires."—*Tinsley Magazine*.

A Man who eats Mice and Flies.

J. A. Miller, for some years a resident of Forest Hill, Cal., and a somewhat notorious character in that locality, swallowed a large dose of strychnine with suicidal intent. It was nearly an hour after the deadly drug had been taken before the doctor reached him, but by a vigorous application of the stomach pump his life was saved. Reliable men of Forest Hill say that he possesses what might be termed a galvanized, elastic stomach. He could eat anything without nauseating him, and as for quantity it was never known exactly how much his stomach would hold. On one occasion, it is said, he ate eight small cans of oysters, several cans of peaches, besides crackers, cheese and bologna sausage in proportion and washed it down with eight or ten glasses of beer, and then afterwards when asked to sing a song he wanted to know whether they expected him to sing on an empty stomach. It is said that he would sometimes catch flies and eat them down by the handful just to show what he could do. At one time he ate a mouse, head, ears and hair, on a wager of \$1.50.

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Why Bottles Should be Labeled.

The findings of coroner's juries are luckily of more value, as a general rule, than their recommendations. Recently one of them "sat upon" the body of a child who had met with its death from drinking carbolic acid. It seems that the unfortunate infant, whose age was something over two years, was in the habit of finishing off the dregs in the ginger beer bottles opened for its mother's customers. This in itself one would have thought a sufficient cause of death; but the little child appears to have one day got hold of a bottle containing not ginger beer, but carbolic acid. The jury naturally brought in a verdict of accidental death, but added a rider to the effect that the bottles ought to have been properly labeled. Our school boards have done a good deal, but we fear it will be some time before they get as far as teaching two-year olds to read.

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