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A HELPER (True).

BY AMOS R. WELLS.

"Dear me!" wailed all the household—
A Monday morning chorus—
"How can we ever finish
The work that lies before us?"

But midway in the wailing
Our groans to laughter shifted,
For Babe was in the corner,
His hands devoutly lifted.

"Why, Babe! This isn't bedtime!"
We cry when we discover.
"I forgot I'd thay my prayers
And det just that much over."

The Housewife.

The Venus De' Medici's Marriage.

A Story of a Connoisseur's Craze.

BY GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

'If I am to be doomed to solitary confinement for life,' once cried an enthusiastic French art-critic—I forgot whether it was M. Louis Viardot or M. Theophile Gautier—'let the place of my imprisonment be the Tribune at Florence. With the Venus de' Medici for a companion I shall not complain.'

I agree with the French art-critic, not from the point of view of enthusiasm, but of that of predilection based on a calm reflection; and I even go beyond him, and would as lief be locked up with a picture as with a statue. I am not of the same mind with the querulous antiquary who complained that the Sphinx was in her dotage, and that her indistinct mumblings and mutterings, when questioned, led him to the conclusion that she had forgotten how old she was. The true captive of antiquity and bond-servant of beauty does not require the Sphinx, nor any painted nor sculptured nor graven thing, to say aught. Their looks are articulate. In their dumbness they are more eloquent than Demosthenes.

Do you want Guido's Beatrice to shatter in that dark palace room at Rome yonder? Is it necessary that the Drunken Faun should tell you that he has taken a glass too much? In the mere snapping of his plastic fingers there is a whole library of arguments for or against the Permissive Bill, as you, in your Lawsonianism, or otherwise, may choose to construe them. Have you not met with statues without arms which could gesticulate gracefully; statues without legs that could caper nimbly; statues without heads even that could talk as volubly as Mr. Gladstone talks—'like a book,' and a great deal better than the majority of books printed nowadays? In the courtyard of the museum of the Capitol I remember specially, among the scattered fragments of some colossal statue of the Imperial period of which Goths and Vandals ages ago made ducks and drakes, but which have been mounted here on several pedestals, a gigantic Toe. 'Tis a great toe, physically speaking, as big say as, and somewhat of the shape of, a 'Woolwich Infant' gun which has cracked in the casting; and with a toe-nail broad, smooth, and vast enough to be put on the tame elephant's back at the Zoological Gardens, for the children to ride astride upon on holiday time. Now, dear sir, were I to contemplate your toe—even until you grew angry, and burned to kick me with the boot in which it was encased—I don't think I could learn much from the inspection. Nor, dear madam, were I to pass hours in rapt consideration of *your* great toe—do you remember the waxen cast of Madame Vestris's foot? No, you are far too young; no matter; 'twas not so fair a foot as yours—what would the sight profit me save to engender a mad desire to kiss the adored phalanges, and to incur the risk of prosecution under the Aggravated Assaults Act? But with that huge marble toe in the cortile of the Campidoglio the case is vastly different. There, indeed, we can say *ex pede Herculem*. Art as well as paleontology should have its Professor Owens; and from a toe, a thumb, the lobe of an ear, the nipple of a breast, who that is in the vein, or has the skill to strike the vein with his fancy's lancet, may not build up strange histories of pride and passion, of love and hatred, of fierce beasts subdued, fair women won, and mighty multitudes overawed? This jagged block of disintegrating stone, this boulder from which the last traces of the sculptor's chisel are blunting away year after year under the attraction of ages—under the lashes of the whips of Time, which are wind and rain—was made in the image of the Mighty Man. What has become of the Mighty Man? 'The steps of his strength have been straitened, and his own counsel has cast him down'; 'yet the earth has not been forsaken, and the rocks have not been removed from their places.' It doesn't matter twopence-halfpenny now what has become of the Mighty Man. He was but John a' Nokes; and the world he grasped now belongs to John a' Styles. The Mighty Man perchance was Ozymandias.

'I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said, Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert; near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair."
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'

Pondering over the obscure but magnificent lines of Shelley which I have just quoted, I took up gentle John Flaxman's *Lectures*, and there I read that Praxiteles was unsurpassed in representing the highest graces of youth and beauty. He is said to have excelled, not only all other sculptors but himself, by his marble statues in the Ceramicus at Athens; but his Venus was preferable to all others in the world; and many sailed to Cnidos for the purpose of seeing it. 'This sculptor having made two statues of Venus, one with drapery, the other without, the Coons' (they were always a prudish race, these Coons) 'preferred the clothed figure, on account of its severe modesty; the same price being set upon each.' The citizens of Cnidos took the rejected statue, and afterwards refused to part with it to King Nicomedes, who would have forgiven them an immense debt in return; but they were resolved to suffer anything so long as this statue by Praxiteles ennobled Cnidos. The temple was entirely open in which it was placed; because every view of the master-work was equally admirable. The figure is known by the descriptions of Lycian and Cedreans; and it is represented on a medal of Caracalla and Plantilla. This Venus was still in Cnidos during the reign of the Emperor Arcadius, about A. D. 400; and it seems to have offered the first idea for the Venus de' Medici, which is likely to be a repetition of another Venus, also the work of this artist, mentioned Pliny.

There; you will hear no more from me about the origin of the immortally beautiful marble creature who enchants the world in the gallery at Florence. That she is unapproachable and divine—so far as sublunary things can be—we all know. In the 'Greater Hippias' Socrates is made to say, that as a beautiful vase is inferior to a beautiful horse, and as a beautiful horse is not to be compared with a beautiful virgin, in the same manner a beautiful virgin is inferior in beauty to the immortal gods. 'For,' says he, 'there is a beauty incorruptible, ever the same.' And it is remarkable that immediately afterwards he observes: 'Phidias is skilful in beauty.' If Phidias was so skilled, the claim of Praxiteles must be as readily admitted. The syllogism is complete. Perfect beauty is divine; the Venus de' Medici is perfectly beautiful; therefore the Venus de' Medici is a divinity. Is anything more required? Not so, I avow, to convince *me;* but I am bound to own that the first time I ever went to Florence and gazed upon La Venus de' Medici, I was accompanied by a lady who, being very good-looking herself, I have always deemed a competent judge of female comeliness—in statues and pictures at least: for one can scarcely be jealous of marble or canvas. What do you think was my companion's opinion of the statue which enchants the world? She commenced by stigmatising as 'affected rubbish' the simple act of reverence I had performed in lifting my hat when I entered the Tribune and stood before the Queen of Love. Then she went on thus: 'A little, simpering, stunted, narrow-chested thing, with large hands, and a stoop, and who doesn't know how to stand properly; with a head too small and a waist too large; and, in short, with nothing in her: that *I* can see, at least,' my companion concluded, tossing her head, and dismissing the Venus de' Medici with a flout of her parasol, for ever. The criticism cut me to the heart. It was cruelter to me than even the strident remark of Mrs. Melanethon T. Commumpaw Hipkins of Vermont, U. S. A., to her husband, the well-known Colonel and Congressman, that 'a gal who'd shin around like that with narrer a hoop-skirt on her was fitter to be a mermaid than a statue in a Christian gallery;' adding that none of her gals should see such goings-on if she could help it. I met the three Miss Commumpaw Hipkinses the next day in the Uffizij; and I am sure, by their giggling, that they had seen the Venus.

In presence of the verdict of my companion (whose temper was apt to be violent), I thenceforth determined to be silent as to the æsthetic qualities of the statue which enchants the world. Life is so very short, that about the very worst use to which you can turn the brief span alotted to you is to employ any portion of it in quarrelling. Other subjects of interest rose to the surface; and for a length of time I ceased even to think of the Venus de' Medici. Judge of my astonishment and delight to hear one day that she was married.

Yes; married, *pour de bon*, as the French say, when they come back from the church and the mairie. For there are marriages and marriages in France, and many of the matrimonial alliances of our neighbors are not, I am afraid, *pour de bon*. There were two whole columns of marriages the other day in the *Times*; but it was not in that superabounding calendar that I discovered the announcement of my divinity's wedding. It was in a faded, dog's-eared odd number of an Italian periodical of the last century, called the *Giornale Enciclopedico*; and the interesting event was set down as having occurred at Florence during the reign of Cosmo—I forgot how many—Grand Duke of Tuscany. That magnanimous sovereign himself designed to be present at the Medicean nuptials, and it was to an illustrious British nobleman of immense wealth, the Right Honorable the Earl of G——, indeed, that the Venus was married. It need scarcely be added that the intelligence suffused my breast with a sober rapture. Had I read that all the stories about Nell Gwyn were fibs, and that Mistress Eleanor was the demurest of quakeresses and one of the original foundresses of Sunday schools, or that Ninon de l'Enclos used to teach deportment at the school of St. Cyr and assisted the virtuous Fenelon in the composition of *Telemaque*, I could not have been more gratified. To think of the Venus de Medici having been made an honest woman at last, and after so many centuries of disparagement among the *filles de marbre* of the *demi-monde*! It was too charming. It was the most poetical of poetical justice. What became of the scandal-mongers and the leasing-makers now? Where were the *mauvaises langues* that whispered those deplorable calumnies about poor dear Aphrodite in connection with her first husband—I admit a prior alliance—old Mr. Vulcan, plethorically rich iron-master of Merthyr Tydvil, and Lieutenant-Colonel Mars of the Olympian Guards? How about that disgraceful piece of gossip to the effect that young Cupidon of the Foreign Office was her son, *on ne savait de quel papa?* Who will venture to deny now that he was only her nephew, and that it was through pure charity—he being a destitute orphan—that she sent him to Eton, and made a man of him? The young rogue behaved very ungratefully in the end to his kind patroness, and ran away with a Miss Sikey. But all these malignant rumors, these tossings of a good name upon tongues, must fade into utter nothingness in the face of the fact vouched for by the *Giornale Encyclopedico* of 17—, that in the reign of Cosmo, Grand Duke of Tuscany, La Signora Aphrodite, Urania, Erycina, Calva, Etazia, Basilea, Myrtea—call her what you will—Venus in fine, became the Right Honorable the Countess of O——.

But her costume, I hear it urged—her costume; or rather her want of any costume at all. That, I can only say, is no business of mine. Did not the female correspondent of the *Spectator* remind Mr. Addison, somewhat tartly, that petticoats were no affair of his? I daresay that when King Cophetua married the beggar's daughter, the *trousseau* of the bride was not very extensive; and I have heard that the Maids all Forlorn who married the Man all Tattered and Torn, quite horrified the officiating clergyman (who was shaven and shorn for the occasion) by the scantiness of her attire. To cut the ground from under the feet of all objectors, I should like to know whether the bridal dress of Eve was composed of a white *glace* silk, with seventeen flounces of Garryowen lace, and a Chantilly veil and a wreath of orange-blossoms, or whether, like Hans Breitmann's heroine, she had 'nodings on' at all?

There is, so far as I know, only one peninsula in Europe, bordered on one side by the Mediterrean and on the other by the Adriatic Sea, and the shape of which is like unto a human leg, fringed round the thigh with a fimbriation, termed by geographers the Alps. There is but one country in Europe of which the capital is the Eternal city of Rome. To him, nevertheless, who loves this country very dearly, and has striven to learn it by heart—its history, its language, its superstitions and idolatries, its arts and laws, and its wonderful people—there are a great many Italies even of modern date, and quite omitting any reference to the Alban Fathers, the Tarquins and Cæsars, the Goths and Vandals, the Lombards and the Normans. Take at random the Italy of Montaigne, full of duels, intrigues, poisonings, secret stabbings, gay festivals, sumptuous embassies, priestly luxuriousness and profligacy, and the *calzoni della Signora Livia*. Quite apart from this is the Italy of Jaques Callot and Howel, our inimitable letter-writer.

PART II.

My Italy—the Italy I treat of in this place at least, the Italy of the Earl of O——, differs in its social aspect *toto cœlo* from those at which I have glanced. His lordship (he was a friend of Lord Chesterfield and Lord March and Horatio Walpole, Esq., and in his youth had known Mr. Pope and Dr. Young and the Trappist Duke of Wharton very well) arrived at Leghorn, bent on spending six months in the peninsula, early in the spring of 17—. His lordship's own yacht, a trim-built schooner, which in war time had done very good service as a privateer, and had gobbled up many French and Spanish merchantmen, conveyed him to the Italian seaport I have named. The South Sea was the fanciful name of the Earl's yacht. He had embarked largely in the South-Sea Bubble, but being one of the luckiest men in his time, had contrived to clear a hundred thousand pounds before the crises of the mania; and then prudently repudiated the delusion altogether. It was with equanimous curiosity that he watched the bad ship Hubble go down with all hands on board. He subsequently joined with much energy in the prosecution of the directors: and 'twas but an act of common gratitude in him to christen his pleasure-boat after the swindle from which he had been fortunate enough to emerge with the cleanest of hands. The South Sea brought no less than three carriages to the Leghorn for his lordship's private use: his great family coach plastered all over with carving, gilding, and allegorical paintings, and lined with amber-colored velvet, built for him by Moses, Noah, Shem, Japhet, and Son of Great Mahogany street, Lincoln's-inn-fields; a heavy traveling carriage, especially adapted for rough roads, and with ample accommodation for baggage on the roof and a *batterie de cuisine* in the rumble; and a light landau for town use. Puggchops, his lordship's sergeant footman—a giant in stature who had been in the Horse Guards, and had beaten Mr. Figg the gladiator in a bout at singlestick and backsword—accompanied by Waffles and Shuffles, attendant lacqueys, were all passengers by the South Sea, and had been fearfully seasick ever since the yacht cleared out of Falmouth 'Bura my best body,' Mr. Puggchops—he was a gentleman, and swore like one—would exclaim ruefully every time the vessel lurched, 'why did I refuse 'is 'Ighness's hoffer to go a philandering in furrin parts; let alone they're being papishers?' It was a fact that his Royal highness the Duke of Cumberland, of Culloden fame, and sometimes known as the 'Butcher,' struck by the unusual proportions of Mr. Puggchops, as he towered above his brethern of the shoulder-knot in the lobby of Drury-lane playhouse, had caused overtures of a tempting nature to be made to the Grand Man, and on his respectfully declining them, had cursed him for a d—d impudent dog, and ordered his own sergeant footman Glappin to cane the scoundrel the next time there was a fight among footmen at Ranelagh. But Glappin, wise in his generation, shrank from trying quarrel conclustons with a footman of Mr. Puggchops' inches, and so gave him a wide birth whenever he met him in those polite circles in which they mutually moved.

Nor did Lord O——'s suite come to an end with his lacqueys. Two French gentlemen, the politest, the adroitest, the most lantern-jawed, the most proficient in lying and thieving of their sprightly nation, were in his train. These were, first, Monsieur Fessemathieu, his valet, hairdresser, and private secretary. His lordship had formerly kept a young fellow from the University, a poet or play-wright, or something low of that kind, to do his scrivening for him; but the rascal, waxing fat and kicking upon meat every day, grew insolent and insubordinate, because, forsooth, he was expected to include in his secretarial duties the composition of letters in the French language to Mademoiselle Bobbichon, a a dancer of the King's Theatre. So the poet was turned out of doors after the delivery of a message from his lordship, conveyed to him through the intermediary of a bamboo walking-stick, of which the upper end was held in Mr. Puggchops' potent fist, and his place was adequately filled by his lordship's barber and body-servant. 'It's cursed hard,' the lively peer would remark, 'if the rascal who shaves you can't write your letters into the bargain.' It is true that Monsieur Fessemathieu was unable to spell with correctness in any language; but the infirmity was one he shared with his noble patron; and for the rest, who *could* spell in the eighteenth century? The monarch who sat on the throne, and the foolish fat scullion who scrubbed the saucepans in the kitchen, were often about on a par as regards orthography; and mention of the culinary regions reminds me that M. Fessemathieu had yet another office as secretary, one which was to draw up the daily bills of fare for Monsieur Rognon, his compatriot and fellow voyager, who, although one of the most accomplished concoctors of *bisques* and *salmis* extant, was unable either to read or write.

All these fine folks, with mountains of luggage and innumerable dozens of wine, and a monkey, a macaw, and a couple of Dutch pugs, and last, not least, the Right Hon., the Earl of O——himself, were all bound to Florence, and to the court of the Grand Duke Cosmo, there to be received with great honor, ceremony, and hospitality. For Charles John James, Earl of O——, a peer of the United Kingdom, was a great prince in his own land, and had an unencumbered rent-roll of thirty thousand a year, and carried a couple of uncut boroughs in his diamond-mounted snuff-box. He was so rich that, years before, Sir Robert Walpole had been fain to give up in despair the truth of the Walpolian doctrine that 'every man has his price.' The Earl of O—— had his; but it was a terribly long one, and not within the Walopian power to grant. Do you know that exquisitely pretty story which Rascal Casanova tells about Lord Stair and the mistress he loved so passionately? They were walking in a garden at Paris one very balmy starlit night; and the young woman, as women will do when they feel sentimental—the fit does not last long; they speedily become as hard as nails, and begin to prate about the butcher's bill—was pointing out one particular star to her lover, and expatiating, in charming chat, on its soft brilliancy. 'How cruel, how wickedly cruel you are!' quoth my lord with a sigh. 'Why fancy that star? *You know I cannot give it to you.*' Lord O——'s desire was nearly as untransferable by earthly donor as 'high Aldeboran' or 'shiny Cassiopeia's chair.' Mundane stars and garters, gold sticks and silver sticks, he could have them all for the asking; but not *that*. That Sir Robert couldn't; that the Queen couldn't; Lady Suffolk, King George himself, D. G. R. B., couldn't. Nobody on earth but the Grand Duke Cosmo of Tuscany could; and the Grand Duke Cosmo wouldn't. Lord O——longed to be the possessor of the Venus de' Medici. She was his Star, she was his price, but a pearl, alas, beyond it.

The Earl of O—— was fifty years of age, *bel homme*, well versed in letters, not unversed in arts, a man of taste, wit, and—when his rage of Aphrodite was not in the way—of judgment. He was unmarried, and a gallant without being a prodigate. His manner of life was sumptuous; he was lavish with his money, and gave it away to the poor, or paid it to painters and sculptors, or lost it at play with equal affability. He was quite the rage at the court of the Grand Duke Cosmo; and when he came abroad on the Lung' Arno in the grand family coach and six horses, with Mr. Puggchops and Waffles and Shuffles in their state liveries hanging on behind, the Florentines would fling up their hands, and cry: '*Ecco il Nobil Uomo. Ecco il Principe Britannico. Ecco il Gran Milordo Inglese.*' Carlo Maratti painted his portrait. Toperani carved his bust. There was a rage for *dilettante* academies in Italy just then; and Lord O—— was elected an honorary member of the *Abandonati Confusi* of Bologna; the *Indomiti* and *Vergertini* of Genoa; and the *Agitati*, the *Alterati*, the *Unidi*, the *Sonnolinti*, the *Furfurati*, the *Infocati*, and the great *Della Crusca* itself of Florence. I will spare you the enumeration of the rest, for there were a hundred and fifty academies in all in the Italy of that time; and I think the 'Gran Milordo Inglese' must have beeen affiliated to above three-fourths of the entire number. A monstrously queer Italy it was. Real art was dying. Real poetry was dead. Prose babbled of green-baize gaming-tables. Skulking truth had fled to her old cavern, mountains of casuistry heaped o'er her head. Philosophy had shrunk to her Second Cause. Morality had unawares expired. Liberty was choking in the throes of acute bronchitis, and the occurrence of the catastrophe foreshadowed in the *Dunciad* seemed imminent. Yet it was the same Italy which had produced Dante and Petrarch, and Raffaele and Michael Angelo. Beccaria was alive; Alfieri was alive; and Volta and Galvani and Canova were on the eve of being born. Nay, in a certain island, hard by Sardinia, there was speedily to see the light a man-child of old Italian stock—the child of Carlo Buonaparte and Letitia Ramolini, and to be named Napoleone. Meanwhile, ere the curtain drew up for the Grand Historic Melodrama, the fiddlers and the mimes and the mummers—the man who beat gong and the wench in spangled trousers who stood on her head—were having it all their own way. From Calabria to Piedmont all seemed one great masquerade. Rouge, plaster, wigs, masks, false noses, penny trumpets, and the squeak of Punch were everywhere. The Pope played at cards with the Dean of the Sacred College, and didn't mind cheating a little; and his Holiness read the *Sopha* of Crebillon *fils* instead of his breviary. Half the Senators of Venice were pawnbrokers, and other half were panders. The Reverend Laurence Sterne was at Radicofani making scurril joke, and leering, a satyr in a cauliflower wig and black-silk small clothes, at the waiting-maids and the *contadine*; and the Young Pretender, grown old and fat, was getting drunk and beating his wife. Amidst all this *tohu bohu* of corruption, debauchery, lying, swindling, dancing, and going to the play and the dence, in this land of Uz there was seemingly one Just Man, and that was the Grand Duke Cosmo of Tuscany, who obstinately refused to sell the Venus de' Medici to the crazy connoisseur who longed for her.

Lord O——was on the most intimate terms with his Serene Highness, and was aware that the grand-ducal finances were in anything but a flourishing condition. Still the embarrassed possessor of so many art-treasures could not be persuaded to part with his Venus. When I say that Lord O——offered one hundred thousand pounds for the statue, the price, viewed in relation to the sums which are cheerfully given nowadays by English, Russian, and especially by American amateurs for works of art, may not appear a very extravagant one. Still, a hundred thousand pounds, especially when translated into Tuscan scudi, did seem a prodigious 'lot' of money. And Lord O—— was ready to pay the amount down on the nail. She grand-ducal treasurer was sorely distressed at the inflexibility of his master. One might do, he pointed out, so many useful things with a hundred thousand pounds. The Pitti was tumbling to pieces for lack of repairs; the Boboli gardens were degenerating into a wilderness; and Count Beccaria, the John Howard of Tuscany, was clamoring for assistance wherewith to build a new jail on improved principles. (I wonder if there be any truth in the wicked story that while this illustrious humanitarian was engaged in the composition of his work against capital punishment, he prosecuted with the most merciless severity a servant who had stolen his watch, and did his utmost to get the poor devil hanged. Why not? Anti-population Malthus was, they say, passionately fond of children.) But the Grand Duke bade the treasurer mind his own business, and the treasurer immediately began to mind it by putting more taxes on the exports of salad oil and straw bonnets. By a luckless little farmer or straw-plaiter's children went hunger-bitten that winter because his serene highness declined to sell the Venus de' Medici. As for the grand-ducal favorite, a snub-nosed little Austrian grisette, who had been turned out of Vienna by the immaculate Mara Theresa with a hundred florins and a sound preliminary whipping at the Spinn Haus to speed her on her journey, she was furious at what she called her illustrious protector's stupid sentimentality. She wanted more diamonds, more point lace, more horses, more black boys to bring her chocolate; and I fancy even that the Contessa van Bienschlagt—she had been a milliner's girl in the Graben—was in the pay of Lord O——, and secretly advocating his cause. I know that Monsieur Fessemathieu and La Ciccarina, the Contessa's maid, were on extremely friendly terms, and that La Ciccarina made her appearance one *festa* day in a brand-new flame-colored taffety sack, and a necklace and earrings of garnets *en suite*; while Lord O——'s pet monkey, one of his Dutch pugs, and I am afraid several rouleaux of gold ducats, had somehow found their way to the Contessa von Beinschlagt's apartments in the Villa Fagotina. The Contessa had no patience with his Serene Highness for refusing the money. She told him plainly, and to his wig, that he was an ass. 'Have you no Italian astuteness?' she inquired bitterly. 'Did your Machiavelli write for nothing? Are there no *bravi* left in Tuscany? What is easier than to sell the statue to this lord of beef and brandy, and then have him quietly stabbed as he journeys towards Leghorn with his purchase? Of course you will have a clause inserted in the contract, that in case of my lord's death the statue reverts to you.' Capital advice; and this is the way in which we are generally served when we bribe people to 'advocate our interests.' The Grand Duke, however, was an honorable potentate, and would have stooped to no such black business as that suggested by the unscrupulous little Beinschlagt. She went to England subsequently, and ruined Sir Samson Aminadab, the great Hebrew stock-jobber.

Strange to relate, while the Grand Duke Cosmo was thus stubbornly refusing to lend his car to the charmers, charmed they never so wisely, he was himself the victim of an art-craze in degree as violent as that from which Lord O—— was suffering. That nobleman was accustomed to wear an onyx-cameo ring, a *pietra dura* most exquisitely incised with a figure of Cupid; and this ring the sovereign of Tuscany coveted almost as violently as the English nobleman longed for the Venus de' Medici. One morning the Duke, Lord O——, and the Marchese Malespina, high chamberlain of the court, were in the gallery of the Pitti together; and the conversation, as usual, ran on the Venus and Milordo's unacceptable offer for it. Suddenly Lord O—— seemed, by the expression of his countenance, to have arrived at some decisive resolution. He folded his arms, drew back a step, made a deep reverence to the Grand Duke, and said:

'Highness, I see your determination is unshakable. I am vanquished. I abandon the game; but I will not retire from the field without honor. I pledge you my word that I will never again pledge my mercenary proposals on you if your highness will grant me one favor.'

'It is granted before it is asked, my lord. You have but to mention it to obtain it.'

'I do not,' Lord O—— pursued with deliberation, 'wish to rob your Highness of your *chef-d'œuvre*; nay, as I leave Florence to-morrow morning it, is probable that I shall never see her again. That which I solicit is the permission to marry the Venus de' Medici.

'Marry her!' the Grand Duke repeated, with a look of blank astonishment.

'Marry her!' ejaculated the Marchese Malespina, thinking that the Milordo Inglese was going mad.

'Ay, marry her,' reiterated the Earl of O——.

'Well,' returned the Grand Duke, laughing, 'you can if she will let you; but unless there is any truth in the fable of Pygmalion, I don't see how matrimony with a marble statue, under the circumstances, is practicable.'

'I can assure your highness', went on Lord O——, 'that the act is perfectly feasible, if you will allow me to perform it in the manner customary to my own country.'

'Assuredly,' the Grand Duke replied, quite convinced by this time that the Gran Milordo had taken leave of his senses.

The Earl of O—— looked fixedly at the prince, stepped forward, drew from his finger the famous onyx ring with the cameo of Cupid, and bending low before the statue, cried in a voice trembling with affection:

'With this body I thee worship, with this ring I thee wed;' and as he pronounced the last word he placed the ring on the third finger of the goddess's left hand. Then, with a look of boundless love for the statue, and another profound inclination towards the Grand Duke Cosmo, he quitted the presence.

The Venus de' Medici was married.

The *Giornale Encyclopedico* goes on to say, that it is well known that one of the fingers on the left hand of the Venus de' Medici has been supplied by a modern artist, and accounts for this circumstance by the statement, that after the departure of the Earl of O—— (he left Florence on the day following his marriage, and never returned, the ring was so firmly jammed on Aphrodite's finger that it was impossible to remove it. The *Giornale* farther asserts that the ringed finger remained intact until the eve of the removal of the Venus de' Medici to Paris, by order of Napoleon, after the revolutionary wars: when some enthusiastic Florentine managed to slip in to the Tribune jealously guarded as it was by French troops, and to break off the gemmed digit: thus it was in an unmarried condition, so far as outward symbolism went, that the Venus arrived at the Louvre. A new finger was found for her; but what became of the one carved by Praxiteles was never known. As regards the ring, a gem answering to its description, and appended to a tiny gold chain, is still to be seen in the Gabinetto di Cristallo in the Pitti; but none of these accounts tally, first, with the ascertained fact that *both hands* of the Venus are modern, or at least of a date long posterior to the time of Praxiteles.

The street railways of Paris are under the Government control and the rules for their guidance are very strict. Only four passengers are allowed to stand on the back platform, and they must pay the same fare as the first-class passengers inside, viz., six cents, while those on the roof of the car ride at half rates.

The period of "a generation" has been lengthened; it used to be thirty years, and later increased to thirty four, now a scientist says, the average term of human life has increased in the last fifty years to forty-two years.

JULY DAYS.

Flowery Summer, golden Summer, Summer
of our Northern clime,
Spring may be a joyous season, but you beat
it every time.

Season of delightful evenings, charming
mornings, sultry noons,
Purple dawnings, crimson sunsets, placid
starlight, tender moons.

Flowery Summer, golden Summer, Summer
of our Northern clime,
Life is sweet and worth the living when we
see you in your prime.

FUN.

Sitting Bear—The small boy after his swim.—*Burlington Free Press.*

The rain which comes in sheets is not much of a comfort.—*Terre Haute Express.*

"You advertised for a nurse, madam!"

"I did. What experience have you had with dogs."—*Puck.*

Auctioneer—How much for this racket?

Judge Guffy (absent mindedly)—Ten dollars or ten days.—*Puck.*

A widow who owns a stock range in Colorado is no longer called a "cattle queen." She is a "grass widow."—*San Francisco Alta.*

It is industry more than birth that lifts a boy up in the world. A bootblack may shine in society if he will stoop to conquer.—*New Orleans Picayune.*

"Wives should never conceal anything from their husbands," says a writer. If this advice was carried out it would create a revolution in feminine pockets.—*Burlington Free Press.*

Visitor—I don't see Signor Samson, the modern Hercules, here to-day.

Attendant—No, he tried to carry up a scuttle of coal for his wife last night and overexerted himself. Doctor says he'll be out in a week, though.—*Time.*

There was a death in the house. A neighboring undertaker calling to offer his services was told that another had already been engaged. "Pardons," said the disappointed man, bowing himself out, "I hope I shall be happier another time."—*French Fun.*

Prince Charming drove up with his milk-white steeds the other day, to take Miss Goldilocks out driving.

"Ready?" said he.

That's all.

Prince Charming now says that Miss Goldilocks has too fiery a disposition, anyhow.—*Puck.*

Prudent Lover—I have a vital secret to confide in you which you must promise to forever hold sacred.

Kind Parent—What is your secret?

Prudent Lover—I want your daughter's hand in marriage.

Kind Parent—I shall never give it away.—*Omaha World.*

He Had Not Fixed the Exact Year.—Husband of Popular Actress—My wife has decided to retire from the stage. Friend—Indeed! At once? Husband—N-no, not exactly at once. We have not yet decided upon the exact year, but she will begin her first farewell tour next season.—*Boston Courier.*

Stranger—You are not booming your state very much at the present time, are you?

Kansas Citizen—No; we are not advertising at all now; but wait till the cyclone period arrives and you'll see the name of our glorious commonwealth in every paper you pick up.—*Omaha World.*

"So you're interested in bugology, eh?"

"Yes, I have made it a study for years."

"Who has the largest and most varied assortment of specimens in this country?"

"I would not like to say. There are many hotels in the country that I have never visited."—*Judge.*

"What's the matter?" asked a travelling man of the landlord one Sunday; "the saloons are all open."

"Yes; that's quite usual."

"But I thought there was a law closing them on Sundays."

"So there was."

"What's become of it?"

"Well, it's got broken."—*Merchant Traveler.*

Caller (to friend)—It is such a pleasure to be out again. I don't know when I have enjoyed a day more. I've been so busy this spring.

Friend—You have engaged an extra girl, then, and are enjoying your leisure?"

Caller—Why, no, not exactly. The girl we had went home to her mother today, and I am enjoying her absence—*Judge.*

"George, dear, I am making a bid for immortality. I have written a one-act play for three hours' duration."

"Excuse me, Virgie, but I fear it will never become popular."

"Oh, yes, it will, too, for I am going to have a theatre built to suit it. The backs of the seats are to be excrescent with refreshment boxes, and you drop a nickel in the slot and get a clove or anything else you want."

"Mamma," said the little boy, thoughtfully, "will people eat beans in heaven?"

"It is not likely, Ticklowell," responded the mother, "that we shall know less of the laws that govern our intellectual growth in the great hereafter than we know here in Boston. Leguminous foods will be used to a large extent undoubtedly, my son."

Alas! how little we know of the causes that make or mar the future of mankind. That boy went forth from the presence of his mother an avowed Buddhist.—*Chicago Tribune.*

Too Little Sun.

The shade trees about our dwellings have done much to make our wives and daughters pale, feeble and neuralgic. Trees ought never to stand near enough to our dwellings to cast a shade upon them; and if the blinds were removed, and nothing but a curtain within left to lessen on the hottest days the intensity of the heat, it would add greatly to the tone of our nerves and our general vigor. The piazzas which project over the lower story always make that less healthy than the upper story, especially for sleeping purposes.

The laundries in Rutland, Vt., are now run by electric power.

How the Piano Grew.

The piano, as we see it to-day, is the growth of centuries of invention. In its infancy it was a harp with two or three strings. From time to time more strings were added, and after awhile the cithra was born. The cithara was in the shape of the letter P, and had ten strings. It took many centuries for musicians to get the idea of stretching the strings across an open box, but somewhere about the year 1200 this was thought of and the dulcimer made its appearance, the strings being struck with hammers. For another hundred years these hammers were held in the hands of the players, and then a genius invented a key-board, which, being struck by the fingers moved the hammers. This instrument was called a clavicytherium, or keyed cithara. This underwent some modifications and improvements from time to time. In Queen Elizabeth's time it was called a virginal. Then it was called a spine, because the hammers were covered with spines of quills, which struck or caught the strings of wires and produced the sound. From 1700 to 1800 it was much enlarged and improved, and called a harpsichord, and this was the instrument Lady Washington, Mrs. Hamilton, and the fine ladies of our revolutionary times played on. In 1710 Bartolomeo Cristofoli, an Italian, invented a key or keyboard, such as we have now substantially, which caused hammers to strike the wires from above, and thus developed the piano. In the past 150 years there is no musical instrument which has so completely absorbed the inventive faculty of man as the piano. At the present day the upright piano has the field almost entirely to itself, and has reached such a high grade of perfection in shape, tone and appearance that there would appear to be no possibility of farther improvement.

A Rich Child's Room.

Here is a description of the suite of rooms occupied by a girl of nine. Her name I will not give, for it would be unkind to pillory a child for the sins of her very foolish parents. She has a beautiful little sitting-room in white and gold. The walls are hung in rose tinted silks, and special pieces of furniture, diminutive in size, and including a small secretary in ormolu with Sevres plaque that she may carry on her little correspondence. Here are her toys, the elegant gifts she receives, and here she entertains her friends. Adjoining this room is her bedroom in satinwood, her brass bed hung with blue silk curtains. A dressing-room attaches, and in this is the culmination of luxury. The dressing-room is quite large. The marble bath is set against the wall. The low marble basin is supplied with perfume soaps. Sponges of all sorts and sizes hang in racks. Perfumed waters in cut-glass bottles, cold creams, delicate lotions all find a place. On her bureau are laid out expensive brushes and combs in repousse silver, and exquisite toilet bottles and manicure cases in pearl. In one corner is placed a long cheval glass that she may contemplate her skirts and dainty footgear. The impropriety of calling the child's attention so specifically to the care of her body is already manifest, and one can only wonder what there can be in reserve for her when she is grown.

How Etchings Are Made.

An etching is a species of engraving from a copper plate on which the artist has sketched or drawn his design. The process of etching is different essentially from engraving, where the picture is cut into the copper plate by the tool of the engraver. In etching, the plate, which may be either copper or zinc, is first covered with a coating of wax and some other ingredients, and the picture is drawn by the artist on this coat with an etching needle. Each line drawn with the needle uncovers the waxy coating. When the drawing is finished the plate is immersed in aquafortis, and this acid eats into the lines of the plate where it is not protected by the coating of wax, and then the engraving of the plate is accomplished. Often the artist desires to make some lines stronger than others. He covers the lines intended to be faint after the first immersion, and immerses the plate a second time in order to allow the acid to eat out deeply these lines. When the plate is inked the black parts of the etching correspond to the lines bitten in the plate and the white places to the space protected from the acid by the waxy coat.

An Irish Gentleman.

The seats were full, but one was occupied by a rough-looking Irishman. At one of the stations a couple of well-bred and intelligent looking young ladies came in to procure seats, but seeing no vacant ones were about to go into a back car, when Patrick rose and offered them his seat with evident pleasure. "But you'll have no seat for yourself," said one of the ladies, with a smile and with truest politeness hesitating to accept it. "Never ye moind that," said the Hibernian, "yer welcome to it. I'd ride upon the cow-ketcher any time from here till New York for a smile from such gintlemanly ladies," and retreated into the next car amid the applause of those who witnessed the incident.

A Hat of Human Hair.

A hat composed of the wearer's own hair has been produced by a Viennese artiste. A very thick head of hair, of course, is required for the purpose.

The *modus operandi* is as follows: The hair as it lies naturally is fastened on the crown of the head with a band, then a slight wire frame is fitted on the part of the crown included by the band, and the hanging hair is parted in the middle. One half is combed over the frame so as to cover it completly and form the brim, and is fastened into the band: the other half forms the trimming, being separated again in two parts, one in braids and coils on the outside, with flowers, feathers, or ribbons to finish the coiffure, and the other inside the brim forms a roll next the face.

—Electrical smelting is announced.

The effort of to-day should be to reconcile the faith of yesterday with the truth of to-morrow.

NEWS IN BRIEF.

—Marmoreine hardens plaster.

—Electricity is to revolutionize mining.

—The Gulf of Mexico has risen over a foot since 1852.

—A fish with two tails is the chief curiosity at Madison, Penn.

—Compressed coal-dust is coming into extensive use in France.

—Brass bands are not allowed to play in the streets of Nashville, Tenn.

—Ten days per annum is the average amount of sickness in human life.

—There are about fourteen hundred places of worship in London, England.

—An electrician predicts that electrical fireworks will soon supersede those now used.

—Many of the big paper-mills have turned out paper belts said to be superior to leather.

—A wool of good quality is said to have been made from the fibre of the fir by the aid of electricity.

—The maximum safe velocity of cast