

MIRANDA'S PINGPONG

By G. B. EURGIN

It is all over; finished; done with; exhausted! So am I! So is Miranda! But little Noe Hartley is as fresh as a rose and wonders why the Rev. Arthur Greator thinks so much of her. The Rev. Arthur also wonders—many things.

In crises like these Miranda and I have sometimes hinted desperately to one another of an eternal Separation, with a capital S. We have drawn pathetic pictures of how we would divide everything between us, and she would go and live with her mother, while I strode into life's highway, manfully putting the past behind me in order to become great, and instead of going to theaters, spend my evenings sitting by the fire, waiting for my footstep on the stair. Miranda would always get quite worked up by this pathetic picture until she remembered that it was useless taking half the things, because her mother had no intention of turning the house into a storage company for the furniture of others. So the trouble generally blew over. But this time it went as far as my making out a list of the things in my "den" before we were reconciled. Miranda saw then that she was on the brink of an awful precipice, and she made her choice. So it did me, because there's a beautiful bronze British lion (from Japan) in my "den" which she has set her heart upon having, and I know we should have squabbled over that. When she says, "Dickie, you're such a dear!" puts my brow and with the other hand takes the very thing I don't want her to have, the pathos of the situation degenerates into farce, and—oh, you know what young wives are like! The next time I marry I shall choose a solid, estimable lady of mature age, with a false front and without what little Noel calls "parlor tricks."

As soon as Miranda told the Rev. Arthur Greator about her projected pingpong tournament he smiled in a pleased way and said that he himself would be the first to take a two shilling ticket. He also threw out dark hints that Miss Jarvis would like to be asked. They're not really engaged, because the Rev. Arthur hasn't enough money to marry, but he calls Miss Jarvis "dear sister" and looks at her, if he thinks he is unobserved, in the same way that Sir Lancelot did at Guinevere when King Arthur was out. Of course Miranda knew all about this "gehlily passion," as she calls it, and that was why she told Miss Jarvis that the Rev. Arthur was going to play and then informed him that Miss Jarvis would also be there. So she had them "in the net," as it were, and the members of the blanket club almost cried when told they were too old to play. To please them, Miranda made a special rule that if they liked to take tickets they could get some one else to play for them, and, as the old men were fond of excitement, they pawned their remaining blankets and bought twelve tickets for the tournament. "It do my old heart good to get a little permissus sport like this 'ere," said Gaffer Hindley to Miranda, "and I've got four quarts on with Joe Burridge as little missie"—pointing to Noel—"I'll play for me and knock his ugly head off. I do fear as 'ow Mistress Jarvis' sewing stub be again to try to knock us out, and there's twelve on us wants little missie to do her best for us. It do warn our old hearts, it do, to do a bit of real sport like this newfangled game. Most as good as a day's rattin' it be, sure."

When Miranda asked her little niece Noel to stay with us, she said that Noel's blue eyes, golden hair, mournful face, with its "I do want to be loved before heaven claims me for its own" kind of expression, made her uneasy. It did me also. I knew the child, and I was also aware that heaven could get along very well without her—for a time at all events. She was a little demon at lawn tennis and could pick up any new game in ten minutes. Besides, as she told me, she had been working hard at pingpong in order to "lick Brother Tom." I had a little practice with her before the tournament came off, and she—But I antic-

Miss Jarvis, although she loved Miranda dearly, did not like the success of the blanket club. After all, we were only newcomers, and we ought, like Agnes, to have "walked delicately" for a few years before bursting into such meteoric fame. It occurred to Miss Jarvis when she saw the special rule that it would be a sporting kind of thing for the sewing club members to enter entrance. Though most of them were the wives of the blanket club men, she never seemed to realize that a house divided against itself cannot stand. So she bought a dozen tickets for the sewing club and, when Miranda remonstrated with her on this profligate expenditure, as good as hinted that it was no business of Miranda's. Newcomers in the place could not be expected to understand "the dear people" as well as she did. Of course when she got "masty" like that Miranda might pray that the blanket club players would snipe the feminine Amalekites of the sewing club hip and thigh.

Noel was so popular in the village that the landlord of the Spotted Dog, as she informed me after the tournament was over, "put his best shirt on her," a phrase which, I understand, in sporting parlance means that he risked all his spare cash on the event. I

wasted a good deal of time teaching Noel how to "serve" into the double edges of the big mahogany table which we borrowed from the vicar. It was just the right size (nine feet by five), but the double edges gave a sort of piquancy to the play which I thought would be lacking in a mere ordinary table from a professional place. Miranda was to look after the tea, and I was to lead off against the vicar, who, instead of practicing, went to the British museum to hunt up ancient authorities. He said that before undertaking so serious a task he wanted to see whether the Athenians had ever played the game under another name. But, in spite of his putting it in that way, he grew just as keen about pingpong as anybody else and actually made his wife practice with him one evening. They quarreled for the first time in their lives because she would serve into his waistcoat, and he said it was taking a mean advantage.

When the eventual evening came, we had the old sewing clubwomen on one side of the room and the blanket fund old men on the other—"Montagues and Capulets," the Rev. Arthur called them. Burridge and Hindleys would have been nearer the mark. Then the vicar opened the proceedings in his usual abstruse way, as if he were at a penny reading, and from mere force of habit announced that "Mr. Recitation would give a Smith." Before he could be prevented young Smith began on "It was at Flores, in the Hazores," and Noel was the only person present who had the pluck to stop him. He has hated her ever since. We started with myself and the vicar, and he didn't play badly for a beginner, although between "serves" he frequently stopped to explain that he had seen a picture of "Prehistoric Pingpong" in Punch and that if any one would give him Mr. Reed's address he would communicate with him on the subject, as even prehistoric animals had their feelings and could doubtless be influenced for good if treated with kindness. When he lost, he became a little testy; so we played it all over again, and I let him, as Noel said, "ramp home an easy winner." That dear child is learning the most extraordinary expressions from her bosom friend the landlord of the Spotted Dog.

After Miranda had won her game against the churchwarden no one else in the village professed to understand pingpong or to have the hardihood to play it in public, so about 9 o'clock we came to the Capulets and Montagues, the Burridges and the Hindleys, the blanket fund and the sewing club. Noel told me afterward, with a seraphic smile, that she and the landlord of the Spotted Dog had arranged with the villagers that they were not to interfere. The landlord had a dim sort of idea what Miss Jarvis was going to do, and he worshiped Noel to such an extent that the child believed that if he could "get at" the Rev. Arthur's best glass of table beer he (the landlord) would have "housed" the poor curate or "painted his bit," whatever that may mean.

When old Mrs. Burridge's name was called, she smiled at Miss Jarvis and said, "Do 'e tell the gentry, dearie, as his reverence is goin' to play for me, and God be good to us all." She went to sleep again, and old Hindley got up and said, "Little missie be a goin' to play for I, and I've got four quarts on her?" Then this seraphic child, with eyes of heavenly blue (she's only twelve), her golden hair flowing down her back (blue ribbon, white tennis things, blue sash round her dainty waist, white doekin shoes and another blue ribbon at her pretty throat, floated up to the table, produced a lucky penny with a hole in it from her pocket and held it out to the Rev. Arthur, with a smile so sweet, so pure, so holy, that old Mrs. Gammel burst into tears and said "the pretty creature is a most too good for this world, and it do seem savage-like for a girl big man to worrit her so."

"W-what's that for?" asked the Rev. Arthur, taken aback. "Toss for service, please," said Noel. "Your call." The Rev. Arthur called, "Head." "Tail, I think," said Noel politely. "Yes, tail it is. I serve." "Cer-certainly. By all means, Miss Noel," said the Rev. Arthur. "You go to the other end," said Noel, "and, mind you, keep within the lines of the table."

"I-I don't see any lines," protested the Rev. Arthur. Noel explained. "You—you won't think me unkind if I win?" asked the Rev. Arthur, who is the tenderest hearted man in the world. "Certainly not," replied Noel. "I wouldn't be sportsmanlike." "I think we are ready to begin," said the Rev. Arthur after a bewildered pause. "I have been ready for the last five minutes," Noel declared. "I am anticipating your service," said the Rev. Arthur.

Something happened. This small child "served." A streak of white flew over the net, touched the table in the left hand corner and disappeared through the doorway. "One—love," called the umpire. She served again. This time the ball caught on the edge of the table and went into the stove. "Two—love," called the umpire. Noel took another ball. It touched the table, smote the Rev. Arthur lightly on the nose and divagated into Mrs. Burridge's lap. "Three—love," called the umpire. Yet again. This time the ball lodged in the Rev. Arthur's lower chest. For, so swiftly it flew, the slight could not follow it in its flight. "Four—love," called the umpire. And once more. The Rev. Arthur, with flashing eyes (he was beginning

to get excited) returned the ball into the net.

"Five—love," called the umpire. Noel bowed. "Your service, Mr. Greator," and turned back her cuffs. "If the ladies will pardon me, I will divest myself of my coat," said the Rev. Arthur.

"Strip, by all means, if you like," said Noel. And he stripped. But it was no good. The game went on until it became twenty—two. He made two.

"John Livesey and Mrs. Clummel," called the umpire. "Our turn again, I think," said Noel to the Rev. Arthur. "I'm playing for John. Your service, Mrs. Clummel. John won."

"Martha Raggetts and—eh—Chumpy Poe," called the umpire. "I play for Joe," said Noel. "I suppose you are Martha Raggetts?" "I am," said the Rev. Arthur, and he looked like another Martha who was "cumbered with many cares."

They played that game until the Rev. Arthur began to improve. Besides, the blood of his ancestors boiled in his veins. But it boiled to no purpose. Noel won easily. "Elithu Sands and Jane Lovejoy," called the umpire. "My service, Jane," said Noel to the Rev. Arthur.

The Rev. Arthur did not like it, but he played and lost. "Thyrza Thistlethwayte and Tom Gerridge," called the umpire. Thyrza did a little better, for weight began to tell.

"Sarah Thorne and Martin Clarke," called the umpire. "Better make the game ten points, Sarah, instead of twenty," suggested Noel encouragingly, for she was beginning to tire.

"Certainly, if the umpire allows us," said the Rev. Arthur.

Sarah joined Thyrza with a slightly damaged nose. "Anna Jones and Old Coulston," called the umpire. "Go it, missie," said Old Coulston. "I see myself a-drinkin' that beer, I do."

Missie "went it," but, in spite of all she could do, the Rev. Arthur made the game seven—ten. "Time to sponge off, I think," suggested Noel to Anna Jones.

"Eh—I beg your pardon?" said Anna Jones. "Refreshments," explained Noel kindly. "I'm going to have a bun and ginger beer."

The Rev. Arthur inwardly hoped they would disagree with her. He, too, adored Noel, but he carried the money of the sewing club and was prepared, if necessary, to die on the field of honor. He tossed down a lemon squash prepared by the fair fingers of Miss Jarvis. "I wear your glove upon my helm," he whispered.

"Mind that child doesn't knock it off," said Miss Jarvis sternly. "If you lose—a mere chit of a thing like that!—I'll never forgive you."

The landlord of the Spotted Dog gave Noel a cake of buttered Scotch "top off" with, and, a pretty color in her cheeks, she danced back to the table. "Suppose," she said politely, "we lump all the other games and stand or fall by this one. I think you will then be"—she looked at the list—"Elizabeth Halsey, Keturah Banks, Alice Mauns, Jenima Ward and Mad Kitty."

"I-I think so," said the Rev. Arthur. "Oh, what a duck he is!" said Mad Kitty, beaming rapturously upon the poor curate. "Isn't he a duck?"

Miss Jarvis hastily pulled the crazy girl back into her seat and told her to be good. "I will," said Mad Kitty; "but isn't he a duck?"

Noel poised her racket reflectively. "The Keeper Jones, Silas Poorbody, Scrammy Eyed Bill, Sawyer Hurd and Gerge the Shepherd, and I must be very careful, because they have twenty quarts of beer on me between them."

"Twenty what?" gasped the Rev. Arthur. "Quarts," said Noel gently, "and they have asked me to supper at the Spotted Dog if I win."

Even Miranda gasped at this revelation. Fortunately she was cutting cake and did not realize its full significance. The Rev. Arthur bowed gallantly. "I wish the ladies had so good a champion also," he said kindly. He glanced at Miss Jarvis, and his line features clouded over, for she frowned. "A slip of a child," she whispered contemptuously to her neighbor.

Her disdain stung the Rev. Arthur, who was generally pretty good at field sports, and he began to serve as hard as he could, after previously stipulating that this final game should be twenty points. Amid tremendous excitement they crept up to eighteen all. There was agony in the Rev. Arthur's eye, for Miss Jarvis, coldly contemptuous, applauded Noel vigorously. Noel, seeing his distress, purposely served into the net, then blushed scarlet. She "carried the beer of the blanket club," yet had betrayed her trust because she loved the Rev. Arthur. Her pretty lips trembled.

The Rev. Arthur saw and understood. With fine chivalry he also served into the net, mentally vowing to refund their losses to the members of the sewing club. He would not be outdone in magnanimity by a slip of a child. "Nineteen all," cried the umpire. "We'll make the next final stroke. Your service, Miss Noel."

Noel was so unmoved that she sent over an easy ball. The Rev. Arthur, with a hypocritical pretense of activity, drove it into the net, bowed and announced himself conquered.

Noel threw down her racket, flung her arms round his neck as he stooped to her and kissed him. Then they went off hand in hand to Miss Jarvis, who began dimly to understand that there are finer things in the world than winning a pingpong tournament.

"Noel has beaten me," said the cu-

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rate gayly, "and I'm proud of being beaten so quickly." Noel made them both a pretty comfessy. "I am twice beaten," she said. "Will you and Miss Jarvis come and have your evening oats with us at the Spotted Dog?" We all went. "Took his grueling like a man and a gentleman," said the landlord of the Spotted Dog. "I'm goin' to church next Sunday!"—Queen.

Nelson's Odd Appearance.

When Lord Nelson was commanding the Mediterranean squadron and lying off the bay of Biscay, the captains of two Spanish frigates lately arrived from America sent to entreat the honor of an audience with the admiral, merely to give themselves the gratification of seeing a person whom they considered to be the greatest man in the world. Captain Hardy took their request to Lord Nelson and urged compliance with it, notwithstanding the admiral's querulous reply of, "What is there to see in an old, withered fellow like myself?"

Nelson always wore short breeches and silk stockings, and at this moment his legs were bound at the knee and ankle with pieces of brown paper soaked in vinegar and tied with red tape. The application was to allay the irritation of some mosquito bites. Quite forgetting this and the extraordinary appearance it presented, he went on deck to the Spanish captains and conducted the interview with such perfect good breeding and courtesy that his odd appearance was quite forgotten in the charm of his manners, and the Spaniards went away with every high opinion confirmed which they had previously formed of Lord Nelson.

BOER GENERALS IN ENGLAND

Botha, Dewet and Delarey Visit King Edward on Royal Yacht.

London, Aug. 18.—The Boer generals, Botha, Dewet and Delarey, who reached here Saturday from South Africa, left London at half past 9 o'clock yesterday morning for Cowes, Isle of Wight, to see King Edward on board the royal yacht Victoria and Albert.

The hour of the general's departure from London was kept secret, consequently the streets were deserted when the three generals, accompanied by their secretaries, but by none of the ladies of their party, started for Cowes. They were stylishly attired in frock coats and silk hats.

Upon arriving at Southampton the Boer generals were welcomed on board the commander-in-chief's yacht Wildfire by Earl Roberts and General Lord Kitchener. They immediately visited King Edward on board the Victoria and Albert and were then taken for a trip around the fleet in the Wildfire. They returned to London last evening, accompanied by Earl Roberts and General Lord Kitchener, who took leave of the Boers at Waterloo station.

The reception by his majesty lasted a quarter of an hour. The king spoke of "the gallant and brave manner" in which the generals had fought through the long and arduous campaign, and of "the consideration and kindness" with which the generals had treated British wounded. His majesty expressed his warm wishes for their futures. It was at the king's suggestion that the Boers took the trip around the fleet on board the Wildfire.

It is said that General Botha is greatly annoyed that his home at Vryheid has been annexed to Natal. The premier of Natal is reported to have offered General Botha a place in the Natal ministry, which the general has declined.

SCHWAB TO RETIRE

Head of Steel Trust Will Give Up Business Life Indefinitely.

Pittsburg, Pa., Aug. 19.—A Loretto, Pa., special to the Pittsburg Dispatch says: President Charles M. Schwab, of the United States Steel Corporation has accepted the advice of physicians and decided to retire indefinitely from an active business life. He will leave America to seek some quiet nook in a foreign clime, where not an echo of the strenuous life he has led can reach him. This information is authentic.

Dr. Golden never leaves the Schwab home and the exact nature of his patient's illness cannot be learned through him. Mr. Schwab is not confined to his bed, but spends much of his time on the wide veranda which affords fresh air and a sweeping view of the mountain slope. The strange part of Mr. Schwab's illness is that he is always within view of those who call at his house, yet he will not allow any person to approach him. Herefore the visitor to the Schwab home was greet-

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ed with a hearty welcome and a vigorous handshake. Now the visitor is met at the entrance and told that Mr. Schwab cannot be seen. Intimates of the family receive the same message and none has been able to converse with President Schwab since he came back to his home. Inquiry among the people of the town who have conversed with the Schwabs fully corroborated the stories that he intends to retire from active business life. His friends, however, deny that if he leaves the United States Steel Corporation it will be at the dictation of any person other than himself. It is said Mr. Schwab will sail for Europe tomorrow or Thursday to remain several months.

FAILURE OF MCKINLEY MEMORIAL

Hope of Raising More Than \$400,000 For Project Abandoned.

Cleveland, O., Aug. 15.—The promoters of the McKinley memorial have abandoned hope of raising the amount originally fixed as the cost of the monument to be erected to the memory of the dead president. At first it was thought \$1,250,000 could be easily obtained in popular subscriptions. The money came slowly, however, and then the amount to be raised was fixed at \$1,000,000. That was cut down to \$650,000, and it is not probable that the estimates will have to be cut down to \$400,000. The subscriptions to date do not exceed \$350,000.

ATLANTIC CITY'S TIDAL WAVE

Caused Big Scare Among the Colored Residents.

Atlantic City, Aug. 19.—A great scare occurred in the colored resident district of the town about noon yesterday. Some one started the rumor that a long black line, supposed to be the tidal wave, could be seen approaching the city far out at sea and extending down the ocean. In an instant there was something doing. The older residents, who still recall plantation days, and who have never been weaned from the superstition of the southern colored race, fell on their knees and prayers and revival hymns were sent heavenward as only scared colored men can pray and sing.

There were lots of people who went to the shore yesterday either to see a real tidal wave or to show that they were not afraid of one. According to the figures announced the number of excursionists that went to the shore yesterday was 1,667. This is only 48 less than the record for the same day last year. So far 4,200 more people have been carried shoreward this season than last.

Clung to Buoy All Night.

Buffalo, N. Y., Aug. 19.—Patrick Bodkin, Michael Downing and William Dray, were rescued yesterday after clinging to a gas buoy in Lake Erie all Sunday night. They were fishing and their boat was capsized. They were thrown into the water but managed to reach the buoy. As soon as dawn broke Bodkin swam to the buoy which was nearby. It was dragged partially on to the buoy and emptied. Bodkin got into it and started to drift to Buffalo without oars and sails. The others hung on to the buoy until rescued by a passing boat. Meanwhile Bodkin reached shore safely.

Building Association Suspends.

Passaic, N. Y., Aug. 19.—After a secret meeting yesterday of its board of directors, the Mutual Building and Loan Association of this city suspended business. Its books were closed and turned over to State Examiner Johnson, pending future action. William Malcolm, the former secretary, through whose alleged errors the association's funds were \$100,000 short, was not in Passaic yesterday.

Czar's Life Threatened.

Vienna, Aug. 19.—A newspaper of Cracow, Galicia, publishes a report that the Czar of Russia recently found on his desk a missive from a revolutionary committee threatening him with death unless he conceded constitutional government to Russia. The Czar, according to the Cracow newspaper, was greatly alarmed.

A Common Snake.

The common snake, which bears the scientific name of Tropicodonatrix, is one species of a genus (tropicodonatus) which extends over Europe and North America and from northern Asia to north Australia, there being seventeen or eighteen Indian species alone. Our common snake may serve as an example of the largest family into which serpents are divided—the family colubridae—of which there are upward of 165 species in India alone. The family contains most of the harmless snakes, and it is also illustrated by a small snake, Coronella austracis, which some years ago was discovered to be an inhabitant of Dorsetshire and Hampshire. The coronella feeds exclusively on lizards, slow worms and small snakes. Though harmless, it will bite.

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No Foreign Foolishness.

Stranger (in far western restaurant)—Is it necessary to tip the waiters here in order to secure proper attention? Native—Not if yeh got a gun.—N. Y. Weekly.

Far from It.

Girl with the Gibson Girl Neck—Fau Billwink has begun to show her age, hasn't she? Girl with the Julia Marlowe Dimple—I should say not. She's begun to try to hide it.—Chicago Tribune.

A Real Fall Into Love.

"Was it love at first sight?" "Better than that! He heard some one at the club say: 'Miss Jones is the richest girl in Somerville,' and he realized at once that he had fallen in love."—Town Topics.

A Mean Insultation.

Flora—Yes, I sing in church where they have an awfully small congregation. Dora—Then why don't you stop singing?—Philadelphia Bulletin.

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