

Along with the horseless and wire- less things we have now the merge- less merger.

There are only four states in the country which have more than a mil- lion voters each, New York, Pennsyl- vania and Illinois.

As a weapon for practical warfare the sword is obsolete. But it may do a great deal of damage when employ- ed for presentation purposes.

The Daily Press of Paris, France, has undertaken an active campaign against the custom of milk adultera- tion, which has reached enormous proportions, and the various reporters of the different journals have brought to light some very extraordinary facts, which have created great excitement.

The famous old monitor Mahopac has been sold at League Island Navy Yard to a Philadelphia iron merchant and will be broken up. It brought \$15,218, though appraised at only \$8- 516. The Manhattan, another monitor there, has also been sold, the govern- ment receiving the same amount for it, this being nearly twice the ap- praisal.

The consular report on the passen- ger traffic between Europe and the United States shows that notwith- standing there was during 1901 no at- traction on the other side of the At- lantic more potent than the Industrial Exhibition at Glasgow, the number of American visitors to Europe in 1901 exceeded that of 1900, when the Paris Exposition was the drawing card.

It is not long since the time when the possibility of the spread of the bubonic plague from India and China was sufficient to throw civilized coun- tries into a vertiginous panic. When it raged in the Orient there was plenty of prediction that it would sweep over Europe and America. It was identi- fied with the pestilence which ravaged London in the time of the Stuarts, and with the black death under which Eu- rope writhed in the middle ages. But it did not come to the Western nations despite the terror and the predictions. It is raging now in some parts of In- dia. It has lately been at work in Foo-chow, China, but has nowhere gained headway in any country of Eu- rope or the Americas.

The new Pacific cable will require for its construction about 3,000,000 pounds of gutta-percha which seems liable to "break the bank." As is well known the supply of this most re- quisite for submarine cables have been yearly growing less and less. Aside from the projected cultivation of the tree, hopes for an ample future supply are brighter by reason of the discov- ery that the supplies of gutta-percha, which for a number of years have come from Singapore, have been gathered chiefly in some of the southern islands of the Philippines. The signal corps of the War Department is in- vestigating this important matter, and if it is found that there are any consid- erable forests of these trees on the is- lands they will be brought under the supervision and protection of a forestry commission, so that they can be worked intelligently, and with some regard to the future. The present de- mand for gutta-percha, it is estimated, results in the destruction of 100,000 trees annually.

The literary encouragement of crim- inals is charged by the Milwaukee Sentinel against some of our modern writers of popular fiction, which is more highly regarded than the old- time "dime novel." It says: "The popularity of Mr. Sherlock Holmes has proved how great an interest the general public has in what may be called the underside of life. In order that his hero might find foemen worthy of pursuit, Dr. Doyle was forced to create a number of extremely clever law-breakers, whose finesse and rare art in the matter of carrying out their plots doubtless has encouraged the present vogue for the aristocratic thief in fiction. Raffles, introduced to the reading public by Mr. Hornung, proved to be a fellow of such deligh- tful charm of character, that all who became acquainted with him forgot to find fault with his erratic methods of making a living. In America it is generally recognized that there is a prevalence of what scientists call the contagion of thought. Since Raffles has begun to lead young America astray it is about time his influence should be counteracted by the appear- ance of more worthy heroes. Dr. Doyle and Mr. Hornung should be con- demned to write a series of Sunday school stories in which the heroes re- sist temptation to become multi-mil- lionaires and voluntarily choose plain living and high thinking."

## The Bells of Portknockie.

AN IDYLL OF THE NORTH SEA.

By DAVID LYALL.

"Ye may go down to the shore if ye like, Annie Doon; but one thing ye will not see, an' that's the Bonnie Ann weather the Beacon. For she'll never come into Portknockie again. Oh, my son, my bonnie man, that I had dandled on my knee!"

She was an old woman, upon whose face many sorrows had set their seal. Have you ever looked at the faces of seafaring folk who live close to the great deep, and whose lives depend on its mercy from the cradle to the grave? If you have, you do not need me to tell you of the pathos, the patient, hungry, waiting look, which speaks of hearts not stayed intrust, but rather prepared for the worst, even the greatest tragedy of all.

It was an October night on the shores of the North Sea. The sun had gone down in red wrath, leaving a long yellow glare on the horizon, which the inky blackness of the storm speedily swept into the sea. It was hard to say which month of the year gave the stormiest record; but perhaps if you had asked the weather-wise, they would have said that the gale to be dreaded above all others on that treacherous coast was the gale of the Equinox in the late autumn. It was a wild, magnificent, awful coast, with many beautiful but few kindly spots. The cliffs rose sheer from the stony beaches, and were torn by great gullies and wonderful caves, which people came from distant parts to see when the weather was fine and there was nothing to frighten or frown at them.

Here and there in the clefts of the rocks a handful of red roofs or a little spire proclaimed the habitations of those who go down to the sea in ships. Here, too, there would be a strip of shingly beach, and a natural harbor, affording even at the best of times a precarious shelter. And here they lived and moved and had their being, wept and loved and suffered, those who strove to wrest a scanty living from the great deep.

On that wild night two women stood by an open cottage door, with shawls tied about their heads, their strained eyes peering out into the blackness of the night. The noise of the mighty rushing wind and the boom of the sea against the rocks where the salt spray dashed into the air made it difficult for them to hear one another's voices, which were shrill and high and striking the note of pain.

"Dinna say that, auntie," said the girl, and shivered as another great billow broke in thunder on the shore. "Go back into the house, and I will run to the harbor and hear if there's any news."

She put her arm about the elder woman's figure, and gently pushed her back into the house. She did not de- mur. She was old, and the wind buffeted her; she was no longer able to face and fight it. So she crept back to the desolate hearth, and sat down by the red embers to watch and pray. The girl closed the door, wrapped her shawl more closely about her, and turned to face the blast. It was only a few steps to the harbor mouth, but more than once she wavered, feeling as if the next gust must sweep her into the sea.

A group of women, a few old men, and a handful of children crouching at their mothers' skirts were huddled under the frail shelter of the harbor wall. There is untold pathos always about the watchers when there is peril on the sea; the women and children and the old men, who wait at home for the safe return of the bread-winners. The harbor lights gleamed fitfully upon anxious faces and appealing eyes turned, ever turned, to the angry sea. Scarce a word was spoken, and when Annie Doon joined them she became a part of the silence. They fell apart a little to let her into the circle, and one of the women laid a kindly hand on her shoulder. For they knew that she feared for the man she loved, the stalwart skipper of the Bonnie Ann.

"There's little use to stand here, nee- bors," said one of the old men at length. "Until the wind fa's the open sea's their safest bit."

"But auntie saw the Bonnie Ann off the Beacon, Davie Duffus," said the girl feverishly; "just on the back o' six o'clock."

"She dreamed it, lassie. Francie Scott had never come near the Beacon in a nor-easter like this, that is, unless he took leave o' his soevin senses, which is not likely."

"But I think I saw her myself, Davie, when the moon arose afore the rain came on. And whaur can she be now?"

"On the Beacon," he answered grimly. "Unless he made for Portknockie harbor. Wheesh! What's that?"

Through the boom of the storm came the distant clangor of a bell.

"It's the bell of Portknockie! She's on the Beacon," said the girl, in a low, anguished voice, and her fingers worked convulsively with the fringes of her shawl.

"Then there may be a chance. The coast-guard's out afore the bell rings. Lord help them a'!" said the old man, and the crowd began to separate, as if their suspense and watching had come to an end.

It had only, however, entered on a new phrase, and those who were able began to climb the steep brae face to the summit of the cliff, whence could be seen the cove at Portknockie, and the light on the dreaded Beacon Rocks. The Beacon was a sharp, sheer ledge of rock, which ran far out into the sea, and was always submerged, though at

low water its black, cruel outline could be defined by the troubled passage of the waves above it. Upon this treacherous reef many a barque had foundered, many a life destroyed. It had in- deed been the grave of many a fair and goodly hope.

Annie Doon paused outside the door of her aunter's cottage, the home that had sheltered her since she had been cast orphaned on the sea of life. Through the unshuttered window she could see the dropping figure in its hopeless attitude by the fire; she could even catch the expression on her face. It indicated prayer.

"I winna go in," she said to herself, with a sob. "She canna hear the bell, and it may be that they'll be saved yet."

Then she sped up the brae with foot so fleet that she overtook them long before they reached the summit. Even from that point of vantage there was little to be seen.

The night was of inky blackness, and the light of the Beacon only served to show the whereabouts of the treacherous rocks, but sent no beam afar. Quite suddenly, however, the clouds were swept aside as by an unseen hand, and a fitful moon shone out very clear and bright, revealing the boat in distress and also the res- cuers on the harbor at Portknockie.

The lifeboat was launched with a ringing cheer, and ploughed its way through the terrible sea tumult to the distressed men on the wreck. It was an hour of terrible suspense, but at last the survivors, three men and a boy, were taken off, and the boat leaped in the trough of the sea again as they tried to steer it back.

All this time there was no certainty among the watchers on the cliff regarding the boat or its crew; but somehow they accepted the fact that it was the Bonnie Ann, with John Ardbuckle, the skipper, on board, and Frank Scott, whom Annie Doon loved. Now Ardbuckle was Annie's cousin, and loved her as his own soul. He was a big, slow, dour man, of few words and forbidding aspect; but the young, slim girl who had grown up as a sister at his side, had become a part of his life and being, and he had sworn, time and again, that none but he should have her to wife. But Annie had married a brother, which was what he was to her. Then there had grown up in his soul a fierce, slow, terrible jealousy of Scott, who was part owner with him of the Bonnie Ann, and had been his constant companion all his life. And when some one outside, at Portknockie, had told him Annie and Scott were to be married at the New Year if the "drave" was good, he had, saying nothing, vowed to himself that it should not be.

Under cover of the darkness Annie Doon slid down the face of the brae to Portknockie nimbly as a young deer, and came upon the harbor mouth as the lifeboat grated against the steps. Then she stood, with the shawl dropping from her shoulders, and the wet wind in her hair, until they came up, one by one. Ardbuckle saw her first. "Ye are there, Annie," he said, with a kind of gruff gentleness. "Ye had better be at home."

"Where's Frank, John? Where's my lad? Have ye left him behind?" she asked, in a voice shrill with pain. "We had to, lassie. A wave washed him clean into the sea before our very e'en. An' what could man do for him then, pur chield? Come awa' hame."

"But she would not let him touch her. 'Let me a' be!' she said, and turning from him disappeared in the darkness. And none saw which way she turned. They talked in low, regretful mur- murs of their comrade whom the sea had claimed. He was one beloved of all far his high courage, his sunny heart, and generous disposition, and all were woe for sweet Annie Doon, widowed before she was a bride. Ardbuckle had little to say, at which, how- ever, none wondered, knowing him to be a still, silent man, who refrained from all verbal expression even when he felt most.

As there was nothing to be done until the dawn, when it would be their melancholy task to seek their comrade's body among the drift cast by the storm, they began to disperse slowly to their homes. It was close on midnight, and that had been an anxious, weary day. Ardbuckle, still keeping himself apart from his fellows, strode home to his mother's cottage on the lee shore, under the shadow of the cliff.

No light burned there. The solitary figure crouching in despair by the fire had forgotten the flight of time. She sat so motionless, she might have been asleep or dead. The step on the shingle outside aroused her; it was the step she loved, and had scarcely hoped to hear again on earth. She sprang up with a low, shrill cry, and met her son at the opening of the door.

"Eh, my laddie, are ye safe afore a'?" she cried, beginning to weep now that the strain was loosed and relief had come; "where's Annie an' Frank Scott and wee Willie an' the rest?"

"We are a' safe but Francie, mother. A wave swept him into the sea. It was like a mighty churn, an' he dis- appeared in a moment."

Although her joy at her son's re- turn was overwhelming, her face clouded again.

"An' where's Annie? Does she ken? Have ye no' seen her?"

"She ken. I thocht I should find her here."

"Her heart will be broken, John;

it's set on him. She's but a frail thing, and she'll be wild. Maybe she has thrown herself into the sea after him."

"She walked away frae the sea. But I'll seek her now if ye like."

"But ye are soakin' to the skin, laddie, an' jist saved frae the sea. Come to the fire. Annie will be here soon. She'll come to nae harm."

But Ardbuckle could not rest. He turned on his heel out into the night again, and just at the head of the sloping shingle met the girl walking with slow, disconsolate step. He took her by the arm, and his touch was tenderness itself.

"Come, my dear, it will do nae good to be wanderin' here in the night. Ye are wet an' cold, Annie. Come hame."

She suffered him to lead her; but she spoke never a word. Once or twice her eyes turned to the angry sea, which had wrought such woe in her heart and life. They came together to the house, and old Jean Ardbuckle, whom the sea had robbed of three sons and their father, took the girl to her motherly heart. If there had been any bitterness there because she had seen an- other preferred to her own, it melted away at sight of that woe-begon face. There was no sleep for them that night; it was spent by the glowing driftwood fire, and at the grey dawn- ing some peace came to the troubled sea, mayhap to their hearts. Annie Doon crept to her bed in the attic room and sobbed herself to sleep. Next day, in spite of what they would say, she was with the searchers on the drift- strewn beach; but not on that day nor on any other was the body of Frank Scott recovered. Nor would be until the sea gave up its dead.

Life has to flow in its appointed channels, even though hearts are at the breaking. The daily duty then be- comes the merciful healer. The gaps closed up in Portknockie year by year; a few white hairs, a line about the mouth, a quietness and stillness of speech—these perhaps were accentuated by the increasing sorrow. But the boats put to sea as usual, and the same hours of anxiety and heart sickness were endured by women on the shore. Out of it there grows a quiet courage, a dumb patience, a still, unrumored waiting on the will of God.

Annie Doon did not weep where she could be seen, nor did she give up a single item of her daily task. The only mother she had ever known was growing frailer day by day. The whole care of the house devolved on her; and there was work to be done, too, for the fishers and the nets.

But out of the girl's heart the sing- ing bird had gone. In the Spring of the next year, when the wonderful tenderness of an April sky was mirrored on a sea which always smiled, Jean Ardbuckle laid her down to die. She was never sad nor glad to go. She would die as she had lived, acquiescing in the will of God.

"Annie," she said one day, as the girl, who had been twice a daughter to her, bent over her bed. "he has lo'ed ye lang, my John. When I am gone, unless ye tak' him, what will ye do? If I could see ye man an' wife afore I die I would shut my e'en in peace."

"I can never be wife to any man, auntie; my heart is dead," the girl an- swered, simply.

"But it wad come to life again, Annie. Listen. When I was young I thocht as you do; but I married a man that had loved me true for years, and when I was his wife and his bairn lay upon my knee I knew he was the man God meant for me. John has lo'ed ye a' his life."

The girl's face flushed a little, and her eyes were troubled. In the soft calm of the spring night she went out upon the brae to commune with her own heart, and to ponder on what had passed between her aunt and herself. She thought of all the years she had been sheltered in that humble home, of John's tender if unromantic care, and a strange humbleness and yearning towards him came over her. And somehow it was no surprise to her when she turned and met him on the brae face, guessing he had followed her from the house.

"Isabel Broom is beside auntie," she said quietly, to explain her absence.

"I ken," he answered. "I've come frae the house."

They held upwards side by side until they came to a place where the brae was cleft into a sheltered hollow, where the pink sea daisies blew. And there they stood still, she leaning against a boulder, with her eyes to sea. She was very frail and slight, and her face was one of uncommon sweetness, with that touch of sadness which set her apart. He was stalwart and strong, and the salt sea had tanned his cheek, and his eye was as blue as the wave where the sun had kissed it. But his face was sad also, and there was silence between them.

"Auntie's fallin', John," said Annie. "She will not live long now."

"I see that. An' you an' I will be left, Annie. We hae that to think on."

"Aunt Jean has been speakin' to me, John," said Annie, and there was a faraway note in her voice. "If it will mak' her happier, as she says it will, I am willin', an' I'll dae my best to be a good wife to you for a' your goodness to me."

There was a look of high resolve, rather than of tenderness, in her face, and he knew in his heart that if she had loved him as he loved her the words could not have fallen so gibbly from her tongue. His ruddy color paled, and the strong hand which had fought the waters since his boyhood trembled as it touched the stone where her slender fingers lay.

"Annie! Annie!" he said hoarsely. "I canna. I am no' worthy, though God abune leens that I loe ye."

She turned to him with a smile of inexpressible sweetness. "Ye needna say that to me, John. Have I no' kent ye a' my deyst?"

"Ay, out—" He took two steps away from her, and the struggle in his soul was terrible. For his nature was deep and slow, and he loved this woman with the passions of a life. When he came back his face had cleared of its agitation, and there was a look of settled sadness about it.

"Listen, Annie, and I will lay down the burden that has been on my soul since the Bonnie Ann was wrecked. I saw the wave comin' that washed poor Frank away, and had I been quick enough I might have saved him, though maybe at the expense o' my ain life. But that wadna hae mattered, for ye aye liket him best."

Her face paled, and the smile grew woe about the mouth.

"It was the will of God that Frank should be drowned, John. It was his weird—his time had come."

"But there was as guid as murder in my heart, Annie. I hated him because you liked him best. Am I no' a murderer in God's sight?"

"I dinna believe what you say, John—you that never wad hurt the mee- estest beast or bird. It's the horror o' that night upon ye yet," she said, and there was no reproach in her voice. "Frank aye said we should never be man an' wife because the sea would tak' him first. An' if—an' if it be true that there was sic a thocht in your heart, God is merciful. He ken an' sees the heart."

John Ardbuckle turned away, and his bosom heaved, while a stinging moist- ure, saltier than the sea, was in his eyes.

"Annie," he said humbly, "surely God has bidden you speak to me. This is the first peace I hae had since that awful night. An' if it be that ye can join your life to mine I pray that I be worthy o' ye afore I die."

"Oh, wheesh, I am but a poor lassie that ken naething, and a' Portknockie ken what you are," she said, as she laid her hand with the woman's courage and tenderness upon his arm. "Come, let us go back to Auntie Jean."

—British Weekly.

### QUAINT AND CURIOUS.

A widower of Wellington, Kan., the other day was remarried just two weeks after his first wife's death, and when the boys came to charivari him he went out and told them that they ought to be ashamed of themselves for making such an uproar around a house where a funeral had been held so recently.

Tokio has been destroying rats wholesale as a preventive measure against the plague. This disturbed the religious scruples of Umataro Ne- gal of Akasaka-ken and he began to see rats at night. To get rid of the dreams he has spent \$1000 in building a stone pillar twelve feet high and six feet thick, in honor of the spirits of the killed rats.

An ingenious method of obtaining a reputation for patriotism cheaply has been invented by certain Berlin publicans. On their shop fronts they hang legions to this effect: "So long as the war in South Africa lasts I forbid any Englishman to enter my premises." The use of this placard is, it is said, entirely confined to houses of a class that never entertained an Englishman in the course of their ex- istence.

The most curious opossum is one of the most curious animals living in the United States. It is the only one that carries its young in a pouch like the kangaroo. It is the only animal that can feign death perfectly. It is re- markable for hanging by its tail like a monkey. It has hands resembling those of a human being. Its snout is like a hog's, while its mouth is liberally furnished with teeth. Its eyes are like a rat's, and it hisses like a snake.

A. G. Webster reported to the Amer- ican Physical society in New York City recently the results of experi- ments on a singular difference in the audibility of sound when passing over water and over grass. Under similar conditions of quietness it was found that a given sound could be heard al- most exactly four times as far over water as over grass. The assumption that water is a perfect reflector and grass a complete absorber of sound- waves is not, Mr. Webster says, suffi- cient to explain the phenomenon. The practical importance of knowing this peculiarity, where sound may have to be sent across a grassy plain, is evident.

Sarah Fisher, a character of the coun- try-side, of Hampshire, Eng., has just died at the age of 90 years. She lived in a cottage by herself, and spent nearly all her time in the open air. Every day, no matter what the weather was, she tramped about the coun- try, wandering miles away from her home. Twice a week she called at Sir Robert Wright's house at Headley Park, where she received a basin of soup and plenty of "victuals" to take away with her. She called at a neigh- bor's house the evening before she died to get a loaf which the baker had brought, and left to go home across the fields. Missing her way she fell into a ditch, and there her body was found the next morning.

His Punishment. Captain—Sergeant, note down Priv- ate Grasmug—three days on bread and water for slovenly turnout on parade.

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"Imperium cui nullius Solis occasus."

In the right-hand corner of the flag will be placed the particular device representative of the empire beyond the sea. For instance, the flag to be used in India will contain the Star of India in the right-hand top corner. The flag as used in Australia will contain instead the device of the new commonwealth, while the Canadian and other colonial governments will add to the design their own badge, for use on all "empire flags" in that particular part of the world. This design has been warmly commended by several persons high in authority to whom it has been exhibited. It now remains for his majesty to place the final seal of approval. Should it be approved by his majesty, the new de- sign will become "official" without delay.

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