CLAIR OR MAUD?

Now, which of these shall be my wife?
'Tis hard to choose between them—
So hard I sometimes really wish
That I had never seen them.

I met them first a year ago,
Upon the famed Rialto
Their voices charmed me—Clair's so sweet,
And Maud's a rich contralto.

The eyes of Clair are heavenly blue,
And Maud's are brown and tender;
The one's petite, with dimpled grace,
The other tall and slender.

Ah! here's a plan—I'm sure 'twill work,
I'll ask him who will decide it,
I'll wed the one whom first I meet,
And thus let Fate decide it.

* * * * * * * *

With thoughts like these the Prince of Dudes
Met Clair, petite and fair;
He whispered, "Thou art to be my bride"—
She answered brusquely, "Never."

His vanity a trifle piqued,
He left the lady's presence,
And drowned his thoughts as young men will
In shooting wild-wood pheasants.

But meeting Maud within a week,
He said, "Dear girl, let's marry."
"Why, that can't be," the maid replied,
"For I'm engaged to Harry."
—Detroit Free Press.

A BURGLAL TRAP.

BY R. J. CHAMBERS.

As a member of the "special staff" to whom is entrusted the duty of dealing with telegraph business at race meetings and other events of irregular and itinerary occurence, I have visited most towns of any importance in England, and have been a spectator of, and in some cases a participator in, some curious incidents, one of which I propose to relate here.

Many of the most successful meetings, from a racing man's point of view, are those held at places otherwise of very little size or importance. As an example, it will be sufficient to mention Epsom. It was a town in the Midlands ordinarily containing about 6,000 inhabitants, that I, with five colleagues, including a supervisor, was ordered in the autumn of 187—.

The event was a two-day race meeting. The first day was fine, with occasional showers; the racing was good; and as a large company was present, we had enough to do not only at the grand stand, but also later in the evening at the town office, whence we despatched a large quantity of press-work by means of a "Wheatstone," which had been sent for the purpose. It was 11 o'clock before we finished, and we then had a good half-hour's walk to our lodgings.

The second day was awful. Rain fell in torrents the whole afternoon. Of course the program was carried out; but, beyond official results and "received" messages, we had very little to do. It is the only day I can remember during which our boss did not stir out of the office. He generally contrived to have some business to transact outside about the time fixed for each race.

This day, however, the persistent downpour was too much for him. After the third race, he sent me to one of the reporters on some business. I found my man in the weighing room, a small temporary wooden shed at the back of Tattersall's ring.

When I entered, the jockeys were being weighed in, and there was apparently some difficulty or dispute, as the process was an unusually protracted one. I waited, leaning against the back wall of the shed, and as I did so, became conscious of voices whispering outside.

I caught the words, "A bloke with a big red nose and one ear," and my attention was arrested at once, for this was the description of our counter-clerk. I listened attentively and with increasing astonishment.

The voices were those of two men; and the gist of their conversation was, that a plot had been formed to rob our office of the cash-box on the previous day had failed, owing to the fact that Harper, our counter-clerk, had taken the box into town early in the afternoon, instead of, as was the practice, at the conclusion of the racing.

He had, however, been closely watched, and was seen to place the box in the local postmaster's safe at the town office. The safe was in the room in which we worked in the evening, and was an old-fashioned, almost obsolete contrivance.

All our movements must have been very diligently followed, as the men knew not only the exact position of the safe with respect to the doors and windows, but also at what hour we closed the office, and the whereabouts of our lodgings. They had also ascertained that no one remained during the night in or near the room where the safe was.

The upshot of the conversation, which occupied less time than it has taken me to relate it, was, that the town office was to be entered that night as soon after we had gone as would be considered safe. Entrance was to be effected from the backyard, through the window of a small room adjoining the larger one in which we worked.

Further details I failed to overhear, as the dispute at the weighing-chair, which had been gradually growing warmer, now waxed loud and furious. Taking advantage of the noise, I slipped out and hurried to the office.

Taking the boss on the side, I told him all. He was for informing the police at once, and having the place guarded and the thieves scared off; but after a lot of persuasion, I talked him over, convincing him how much more to his credit it would redound if he himself captured the robbers red-handed and unaided by the police.

I expounded to him a plan, the main idea of which had struck me at the first moment, to which he listened attentively, and occasionally smiled approvingly. When I ended, he said: "It would do very well but for one thing. It involves three of us remaining concealed in the office?"

I assented.

"You say they watched us leave last night," he went on, "six of us. What will they think if only three leave to-night?"

I was nonplussed.

"I rather like the idea," resumed the boss; "but I think we should have help. Suppose we get a couple of Schinken's men?"

Sergeant Schinken was a kind of semi-public, semi-private police officer with a staff of men, who were largely employed by race committees in the task of preserving order in the enclosures, and excluding bad and doubtful characters. They traveled about to meetings like ourselves, and in this way a sort of intimacy sprang up.

"Oh, they'd just be as bad as the locals," I said. "They'd want to boss the whole affair, and very likely spoil it. I'll tell you what; I'll ask three young fellows I know to come and have a game at cards at our diggings to-night. I'll tell them to call for us at the office half an hour or so before we close. At closing-time we can make some excuse, and send them off with our own three men, whilst you, Harper, and I remain."

He still hesitated. I could see he was again more than half inclined to let the police deal with the matter. Of course his responsibility was heavy; and should anything go wrong, he would certainly be severely censured. I had, however, the utmost confidence in my plan, and would or could see no possibility of failure; so that, eventually, I succeeded in gaining his consent.

This done, I was only anxious for the racing to conclude, that we might get down to the town and prepare our surprise party. At 5 o'clock the final race was run; and an hour later we were hard at it in the town, wiring full account of the day's doings.

Only the three of us already mentioned knew of the projected attempt and our counter-plan; and we, convinced that we would be overlooked, assumed to the best of our abilities an ordinary manner and bearing.

Harper produced as usual his cash-box and sheets, counted and balanced his account, telling the money, which amounted to about eighty pounds, out on the counter before him. Finally, he replaced it in the box, which he handed to the boss, who placed it in the safe, closing, but not locking, the door.

Meanwhile, I had, quietly and unobserved, procured a box very similar to Harper's, and after partly filling it with some odd pieces of metal, I fastened one end of a long wire to its brass handle. I prepared another similar piece of wire. Ostensibly for working purposes, I had gathered all the batteries at our command underneath the counter, and when the work was over, I quietly knelt down and joined them altogether in series.

At the same time I fastened one end of my spare wire to the negative pole of this monster battery; and then, standing up and leaning over the counter, succeeded, unnoticed, in attaching the other end of the wire to a narrow brass rail which ran along the top edge of the counter. I must explain, that in order to reach the safe from the pantry door, as we called it, it was necessary to pass almost the entire length of this counter, and of course to repass it in returning.

The hour for closing arrived: My three friends had been waiting some time. Everything being ready, the boss sent our colleagues home, saying we would follow shortly. The three guests went with them.

It was still raining, and they hurried off. The gas was immediately turned off; and I at once opened the safe and removed the cash-box, which Harper put in a place of safety, and substituted the one I had prepared with the length of wire. There was plenty of slack wire, which we brought round the back of the safe, over the other end of the counter, fastening the free end to the positive pole of the battery.

All was now ready. We hid behind the counter and waited. Harper, who was very bitter against the thieves, on account of their unflattering description of himself, took up his place close to the Wheatstone transmitter, a clock-work machine driven by heavy weights, and capable of attaining a very high speed.

An hour passed. It struck twelve. The rain was still beating against the windows. I was stiff and cold and weary, and was beginning to wish we we had called in the police, when I heard something a trifle louder than the rain at the pantry window.

There was a quick scratching sound like a nail drawn across a slate, and immediately after we heard the window-latch slipped back and the sash raised quietly. The men were certainly expert at their work.

Had we not been alert and expecting them, we should not have heard their operations. In a few moments the pantry door opened with a gentle creak, and the marauder was in the room. We held our breath.

Confident in his knowledge, the man had no light save what came from the windows. He approached the safe, and could not altogether express an exclamation of surprise and delight at finding it open. He was destined for more surprise and less delight shortly.

Peeping carefully over the counter, I could just discern him in the dim light, with the box in his hand, turning to retrace his steps. As I had anticipated, and indeed reckoned on, he stretched out his empty left hand to guide himself along the counter, and—seized the brass rail. As he did so, the full force of the battery struck him: "Blasse!" he shouted, or rather yelled out.

He tried to let go the rail, but in vain. Then he attempted to drop the cash-box, but that stuck to him too. He began to hop about and stamp and groan and swear and pray continually and all at once. We could hear the cash-box thump and rattle against the floor or the counter as the current jerked his arm spasmodically to and fro.

At this point Harper quietly turned on the transmitter and pushed the lever over to top-speed. Any one who has heard an instrument of this description set in motion at its maximum speed knows what a sensation coming disaster is given by the rapidly increasing revolutions of a score of wheels, which gather speed and force and noise until it seems as if the whole machine will burst up by excess of velocity.

Imagine the effect this had on the nerves of the man already in the grip of some mysterious, unfightable agony. Of course he jumped to the conclusion that the noise indicated some fresh increase of his torments.

He began to scream for mercy. "Oh-h-h! Help me. Murder! Oh gentleman, stop it! Don't kill me. Help! Help!" He writhed and struggled, fell on his knees, and by an enormous effort, tore the rail from its place; but the battery wire still held on.

For a time his cries and struggles redoubled; but at last he lay exhausted on the floor. I then turned off the current, and we turned on the gas. There lay our man, his face gray and distorted, as though he had a fit. He was quite young. After he had somewhat recovered, he begged hard to be let go, gasping out: "You've done it hard enough on me."

After some hesitation, the boss decided to let him go. I fancy he was not quite at his ease as to how his action would be regarded by the department. Another reason was that the second man had got clean away. He had been waiting outside; but on hearing the disturbance and his pal's cries, had fled and left him.

The man was grateful for his release, and walked slowly and heavily away. He was evidently severely shaken, and I should scarcely think would ever try to rob a telegraph office again.—Saturday Evening Post.

The Story of the Kilt.

The Feile-breacan, or belted plaid, which was the plaid and kilt in one piece, is the recognized upper garment of the ordinary ancient Highlander, but it may be news to some that the Fielebeag (philabeg) or little plaid—the kilt, in short, as it is known at present—owes its existence to the ingenuity of an English regimental tailor, and it is not over two hundred years old.

Soon after the year 1715, attracted by the profusion of fuel in Glengarry, an English company established an iron foundry in the midst of the extensive birch woods near the Bridge of Garry, and a small canal was cut from Loch Oich to Loch Lochy to facilitate the conveyance of the metal to the sea. The manager of the works was an Englishman named Rawlinson, and as his residence was a convenient stroll between General Wade's garrisons at Maryborough and Inverness, he was frequently visited by officers and men passing between the two posts. One of these was a soldier and regimental tailor named Parkinson, to whom, having recently come to the country, the novelty of the dress was an object of curiosity. While he sat by the fire, observing a Highlander who entered remaining in his wet belted plaid, he inquired why he did not put off his "cloak." His disapprobation on hearing it was the only upper garment under the cota-gorrid was increased on being told that it was plaited under the belt every time that it was put on; and, prompted by his trade, he suggested the improvement of sewing the folds in the required disposition, and separating them from the rest of the plaid, by which the mantle part might be laid aside any time. The expedient being repeated to Rawlinson, who himself wore the Highland dress, he detained the tailor to execute his design; and two days after the manager appeared in the little kilt. The new garment immediately attracted the notice of Ian Mac Alasdair Mhic Raonuiel of Glengarry who caused a second to be made for himself.

Excavating for History in Tunis.

It is announced from Tunis that excavations are now being made in the famous two-headed hill mentioned by Virgil, which hill is situated about eight miles from Tunis. Many interesting remains have already been unearthed, and it is confidently hoped that better will follow. A temple of Baal Saturn, which has been almost entirely laid bare, is attracting particularly the attention of the French archaeologists because of its peculiarly interesting statues and bas reliefs. The building is situated at an elevation of over 1,600 feet; and this is another proof that the Carthaginians practiced their religious ceremonies on hills. On all the statues of the gods to which the temple is dedicated the names Baal and Saturn are found together, which would seem to indicate that to flatter their Roman conquerors the Carthaginians had added to the name of their chief god that of the highest Roman deity.—Chambers' Journal.

What a Pity!

The American Hebrew says that a minister, while visiting a farmer in the neighborhood of Glasgow, was invited to partake of some fine fruit.

The good man not only declined the proffered dainties, but announced the remarkable fact that he had never tasted an apple or any other kind of "green fruit."

The company looked much surprised, and an old Scotchman remarked in a dry tone:

"It's a peety, but had ye been in Paradise there might na hae been ony fa'."

BATTLE BETWEEN BIRDS.

Blackbird Kills and Devours a Tormenting Sparrow.

A remarkable occurrence, the killing and devouring of a sparrow by a blackbird, was witnessed recently by a large crowd of business men and street pedestrians. The blackbird was first noticed standing on a limb of a tree near its nest. A few feet below, on another limb, was perched the sparrow, which every moment or so would fly toward the blackbird's nest, as if to invade it.

The blackbird, with a fluttering of wings and a few shrill notes, would rush to the defense of its nest, when the sparrow would retreat. The sparrow, however, was not to be scared away, and, with the impudence characteristic of its kind, it was no sooner settled down safely on the limb than it was again threatening an attack on the blackbird's nest.

This continued for probably 10 minutes, when the blackbird, greatly excited, and unable to longer control its anger, flew down toward the sparrow as the latter ascended, catching the back of its neck in its bill and bearing it to the pavement. Reaching the pavement, the blackbird released its hold and dealt the sparrow a blow on the side of the head, turning it over on its back. It then placed its foot on the sparrow's breast and began tearing it to pieces, devouring the flesh with great avidity and evident relish. Once the bird was driven away from its work by the approach of a dog.

Flying back to its original position in the tree, it remained until the dog had disappeared, when it again flew to the ground and began afresh tearing the then almost lifeless sparrow to pieces. It did not leave this time until it had reduced the sparrow to a pile of feathers and broken bones. This is a remarkable case, and has excited considerable comment.—Philadelphia Press.

An Illustrator's Requirements.

An illustrator must have ingenuity and invention, with a good knowledge of composition. Once Mr. Vedder was asked to turn out an illustration in a short time—a week or a fortnight. The artist was astounded, and said, "What do you fellows take our brains for—machines?"

"Yes," replied the art editor, "that's just about it; an illustrator's brain must be like a machine, waiting only to be wound up with a commission to set it and the hand going."

Here is the difference between a painter and an illustrator. The former can spend months over a composition where the latter has only days, therefore his brain must be particularly fertile, and he must have complete mastery over his pencil and be able to draw.

A famous artist was not long ago visited by a young lady who said she wanted to learn to draw, and asked how to begin. "You want to learn to draw, do you?" said the artist. "All right; fire ahead and draw."—The Art Amateur.

The Show All Over.

The task of singing before Royalty is one that upsets the composure of the most self-possessed performers. The Queen is a kindly and attentive auditor, but she often interrupts the entertainment by requesting information concerning methods that seem bizarre and inartistic to her old-fashioned notions. During a performance at Windsor of one of Sir Arthur Sullivan's operas, she summoned Mr. D'Oyly Carte to her side, and ask him sharply:—

"Why does this young person shake at the end?" referring to the reiteration of two notes, an embellishment frequently used by certain singers.

"By your leave, your Majesty, was the reply, "she is not shaking at the end alone, but all over."—London Tit Bits.

Burns's Best Poem.

It is said that a boy was once asked, in the poet's presence, which of Burns's works he liked the best. After taking thought with himself for a little he declared that he liked the "Cotter's Saturday Night" by far the best, "although," he added, "it made me greet (cry) when my father bade me read it to my mither."

This statement seemed to impress Burns, for presently he said to the lad. "Weel, my callant (boy), it made me greet, too, more than once when I was writing it by my father's fires de."

An Appeal to Vanity.

No man enjoys being detected in an absurd position. A temperance society in England is employing photography to convert the intemperate. The object is to waylay the unhappy man on his way from the club in the early morning, and with a small hand camera make a few studies of him embracing a friendly lamp post or reclining peacefully in the gutter. These are shown to the unfortunate victim in his more sober moments, with the intention of thus inducing him to see the error of his ways.

Sight.

According to an optician, the sight of men is stronger than that of women. He says that men can seldom see without spectacles after they are forty-five, or women after forty; and that women very often require them at thirty. He also says that spectacles with convex lenses to counteract longsightedness, or old sight, are usually required by men at about forty-seven and by women at about forty-five. On the other hand, color-blindness is much rarer among women than among men.

It is stated that the bearded woman who excited so much attention at the Chicago Fair, has since died, leaving a disconsolate wife and six small children.

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

Comments and Criticisms Based Upon the Happenings of the Day—Historical and News Notes.

A MAN can talk himself out of a job easier than he can talk himself into one.

ARBITRATION is a good remedy for strikes but it is better to use it as a preventive.

THE blossom has left the buttonhole these influenza days and settled on the nose.

PEACOCK & Co., of Chicago, have lost a tray of diamonds. They will have to buy a new pack.

THE United States Fisheries are the most extensive and profitable of any in the world. Last year they yielded $50,000,000.

MANTELL'S business troubles, like his marital differences, serve to keep his name in the papers and Actor Mantell is shrewd enough to insure publicity for them to their minutest details.

THE Santa Fe made a gallant fight against bankruptcy, but the road fell a victim to the sort of competition which does not benefit the public by any material reduction of rates, but which has ruined a score of roads by the division of traffic.

Seven hundred men of Minneapolis have put in a full day hunting wolves without taking a single scalp. Here is St. Paul's opportunity to get even with a hated rival. Let the saintly city send out her sons and see that they come back laden with the spoils of the chase, though every fur store in the Northwest is placed under contribution.

IT takes a lawyer to deprive slang of all its poetry. In a case on trial at Reading, Pa., the judge asked what was meant by the expression in a letter put in evidence, "He pulled his leg." A learned member of the bar explained that "pulling a leg" meant "getting money from another without giving an equivalent," with which lucid exposition the court professed itself satisfied.

A MAN has been exhibited to the medical experts of Berlin, Germany, whose larynx was extirpated seven years ago for cancerous disease, and who being without the vocal cords and voice box, yet speaks. The wise men are not quite sure how he does it, but evidently nature has found the way to remedy the vocal deficit occasioned by the very radical operation of many years ago.

DR. W. H. WILEY of the Department of Agriculture, finds canned vegetables of "low food value," the digestable matter costing at the rate of $6.50 per pound. He figures that ten cents spent in flour will buy as much nutriment as $3 in canned goods. May be he is correct, but vegetables thus preserved are at least a luxury, a satisfaction to the appetite, affording agreeable variety, and probably contain essential ingredients for a complete diet not to be found in flour or meal.

THE entire product of the diamond mines at New Jagersfontein, South Africa, was taken during the first half of this year by a syndicate whose contract expired at midnight June 30. Just before sundown on the last day of the contract the largest white diamond in the world was found. It is three inches long, from 1½ to 2½ inches thick and weighs 971¼ carats, or 7¼ ounces avoirdupois. It is perfect in color, except for a black spot in the middle, which will probably make it advisable to cut it in two.

THE news that the citizens of Fernandina, Fla., organized for the purpose of persuading Charles Mitchell, the pugilist, to train at that place for his coming fight, and provided his agent with special trains, an escort, unlimited champagne and other ingratiating attentions shows American society in a new light. We may have an American aristocracy yet founded on cross-counters and uppercuts. Already more people make pilgrimages to the training quarters of Corbett than in the palmy days of American literature went to worship at the shrine of the Concord philosophers.

THERE are about 130,000 epileptics in the United States—over 12,000 in New York State—of whom nearly 10 per cent. are of the insane order, but most are employed in some useful work in spite of their infirmity. The victims of this disease get along fairly well if they recognize their limitations, and adopt as their watchword, moderation—in all things. Let them go slow, but go. Doing nothing is not favorable. They should exercise, rest, work and play, all regularly and moderately. Among celebrated epileptics of the past have been Mahomet and St. Paul, Cæsar and Napoleon, Petrarch, Moliere, Handel, and Swedenborg.

THERE is such a thing as being overzealous—not to say premature—in the defense of one's domicile and household effects. The prevalence of a burglaristic epidemic justifies caution on the part of the citizen, but it does not warrant indiscriminate shooting. The case of Thomas Matthew and Daniel Ambrose of Chicago, is one in point. Mr. Ambrose, under the influence of wassail, wandered into the backyard of Mr. Matthews and carpled joyously. Mr. Matthews, disregarding the fact that housebreakers do not, as a rule, announce their presence with shout and song, jumped at the conclusion that Mr. Ambrose was a burglar and riddled his anatomy with bullets, causing wounds from which he will be laid up long. This is all wrong. Bandits do not travel with brass bands, nor do burglars sing "After the Ball" while operating on back doors. Caution is necessary, therefore, in order to avoid making mistakes.

IF the college football teams begin to quarrel over money matters it will not be long before the game will be reduced to the level of the prize ring. Some people think it will not have to drop very far, either. The brutality of football has been tolerated thus far because the players were gentlemen—that is, they played for the love of the game—singular infatuation—rather than for the gate receipts. The money question has begun to bob up, however. The managers of opposition college teams have begun to make faces and formulate charges. If this continues and increases, as such things usually do, the downfall of football as a "gentleman's game" is not far off. It will not be long before the slugging, kicking, hammering biting of the football field will prove more attractive than the twenty-four foot ring to the sporting fraternity. When that day comes, when the worshippers of Corbett and Mitchell begin to patronize football, the collegians will have to find another method of working off their superfluous muscular energy. Probably they will then tackle one another with axes or settle their claims to superiority with Maxim guns. They have tasted blood, and baseball and boat races have become feeble and insipid.

THE sudden insanity of a juror in a murder trial in New York has led to very curious and perplexing complications. The case is that of Dr. Meyer, accused of poisoning, and has awakened interest in New York scarcely equalled since the celebrated trial of another physician accused of poisoning, one Carlyle Harris, who married Helen Potts and expiated his crime in the electric chair. The wide discussion of the Meyer case, coupled with the unintelligent legal practice of rejecting talesmen who had ever read anything about the crime, made it necessary to examine over 400 would-be jurymen before a jury could be obtained. In the midst of the trial one of the jurors was suddenly seized with violent insanity, and his physicians now testify that he will be unable to resume his place in the box. A new jury must now be chosen, and it will readily be understood that the additional publicity given the case will make the discovery of jurymen of the requisite degree of ignorance doubly hard. The New York Herald declares that qualifications of jurymen on the original trial were that "they must be unbiased, must have formed no opinions about the matter which testimony could not remove, must know none of the lawyers on either side, must not be insured in any of the four companies which Meyer tried to defraud, nor must they know anyone connected with these institutions; they must have no prejudices against circumstantial evidence, and they must believe in capital punishment." The right to trial by a jury is one of the guarantees of modern civilization. The method by which the right is construed and enforced is an affront to intelligence.

England and America.

When Lucan spoke of a more than civil war, he must surely have alluded to such a war as would be waged between Great Britain and North America. The parent devastating the fair inheritance of the child, kindred hands employed in rooting up that prosperity, the increase of which has overflowed in a tide of riches into this island, are subjects too painful for contemplation, and from which the mind of every Englishman turns aside with unconquerable disgust.

Let us have war, if need be, with any other nation, but not with those colonies—the proudest historic monument we possess, the most enduring memorial of Anglo-Saxon greatness.—Robert Lowe.

PROF. TYNDALL, who has just died, once said that he would like to meet Satan and have a talk with him.