

THE VENTRILOQUIST.

Down at the famous Strand tavern, the Coalhole, in London, we were gathered together one evening, laughing over the amusing scenes of ventriloquism with which that clever comedian Toole had just been edifying us.

A journalist present complimented him somewhat ironically on what he called his "little society talents."

"These same 'little talents,'" said Toole in a grave tone, "have sometimes a great utility in life; do not despise them. An infinitely small talent may save a world of trouble; nothing is unproductive here below. Let me give you a simple illustration: 'Some years ago I was passing one evening through Drury lane on my way to the Gaiety theatre, where I was at that time playing a role."

"My attention was suddenly attracted by a pathetic voice imploring charity. I stopped and looked around me. The voice proceeded from a miserable being, apparently a cripple, crouched in the corner of an archway leading into one of those winding alleys so numerous in this quarter. His white hair and beard and his cracked voice indicated clearly that the beggar was an old man."

"A few pence for a poor old man, sir," said the tremulous voice. "I am cold and hungry—oh, so hungry! I have eaten nothing since yesterday."

"The sight of a young man, however miserable he might have been, would not have moved me. Old-fashioned boys like me are too well posted on all these borrowing schemes which flourish in our town, but this decrepit old age and horrible deformity filled me with compassion."

"What misery!" I exclaimed, gazing at the old man. "Is it possible that you are condemned to begging at your age? Have you no sons or daughters?"

"Alas, yes, gentlemen," replied the beggar in a smothered tone, as if ashamed to acknowledge the truth, "but they have abandoned me."

"It is infamous!" I fiddled. "And I drew from my purse a half-crown."

"As I handed it toward the beggar my customary suspicions seized me. Perhaps after all it was a made-up cripple. My fingers are not the only ones who know how to disguise themselves in London."

"I prefer to assist you more effectively," I remarked, after an instant's pause. "You have a refuge somewhere? A home? Where do you live?"

"I expected now to be enlightened as to the genuineness of my beggar; the slightest hesitation on his part would have put me on my guard at once."

"Not over a quarter of a mile from here," replied the cripple. "I will take you to my lodging, sir, if you like."

"The earnestness with which he responded occurred to me after the adventure was over; at the time I laid no stress upon it."

"Very well; go ahead; I will follow," I answered.

The beggar started off on his crutches, dragging after him two stumps of legs, and with a hundred protestations of gratitude made in a warm and fervent tone, he maneuvered rapidly along the muddy and slippery sidewalk of Drury lane.

"It was a dismal London winter evening. A thick mist lay heavily over the illuminated pavement. By the dull, yellow light of the street lamps the passers-by look on the aspect of phantoms."

"From the doorsteps and the windows of the miserable houses in the alleys and courts through which we passed, gaunt, pallid faces gazed out upon us, and out-thrust countenances with watchful eyes gazed out into the night."

"In spite of my familiarity with the dark sides of London life, I could not repress a thrill of inquietude, and I said to myself it would not be pleasant to cross this quarter of London in the dead of night."

Not that we must acknowledge our police force is admirably organized, for, considering the widespread misery and degradation in London, it is only astonishing that crimes are not twenty times as numerous as they are. But, despite this energy of the police, how many a black dog rests hidden, buried forever in the slums of our great town!

"During these reflections, little reasoning as they were, I gazed after my guide. He really it was a poor devil that I no longer doubted. I was on the point of stopping him and sending him on his way with a few shillings. I was almost ashamed of my suspicions. But with a skill undoubtedly acquired by long years of exercise the beggar advanced very rapidly, turning from time to time to make sure that I was following."

"At the third story the old beggar stopped. I heard him feeling about in the dark, then came the sound of a key turning in a lock."

"One moment, my good gentleman," said the trembling voice; "I will light a candle."

"Some seconds passed; then the dismal glimmer of a tallow candle lit up a room which struck me as tolerably spacious."

The beggar had slipped behind me, and now I heard the sharp click of the key in the lock."

"I had expected to find a sordid, miserable hole, fitted out with a broken stool, and a bundle of straw in the corner for a bed; instead of which the room was furnished with a certain degree of luxury, and the floor was covered with a rich carpet."

"What does this mean?" I asked in stupor. "You have deceived me!"

"I turned toward the door. The old man had vanished; a man in the vigor of life, a white wig in his hand, his face covered with pencil wrinkles, looked up at me and laughed."

"You look surprised," he said, in a mocking tone. "There are miracles still in our days, you see. My good legs have come back to me, and my crutches—look there!"

"He pointed toward the corner near the door."

"Well, what do you want of me?" I asked resolutely enough.

"I want you to lend me your watch," he impudently asked the man. "Mine happens to be at the jeweler's just now, and yours looks like a tolerably good one. I'll warrant it keeps good time."

"After all it was but one man, and a struggle man to man demands but an ordinary courage."

"But my pseudo gray beard drew a revolver from his pocket."

"No, said he, holding the muzzle to my face, 'the watch and the purse first!'"

"I drew back. Indignation and anger at letting myself into such an absurd trap almost suffocated me; but what could I do against this man armed?"

"At all at once an idea occurred to me."

"Imp of Satan! I'll catch you yet!" called out a gruff voice from behind the beggar."

"Instinctively he turned around. I seized the opportunity to rush upon him and snatch the revolver from his hands."

"My turn now," said I, holding the revolver under his nose. "Open that door this instant or I will blow out your brains!"

"The robber looked at me with a stupid air. He was a resolute fellow without a doubt; but the revolver and the mysterious voice together were too much for him. Growing savagely, like a bull-dog, he opened the door and slammed it violently after me."

"Feeling my way along, I found the stair-case, and with some difficulty gained the street. I directed my steps at once toward the Strand. I arrived a half-hour late at my theater, where reigned the greatest iniquity at my non-appearance."

"I kept the revolver as a 'tribute of war.' 'And you see,' concluded Toole, 'how my 'little talent' of ventriloquism that night helped me out of an ugly scrape.'—London Mail.

The Last Ten Thousand.

On a wet gloomy afternoon in the April of 1877—Mr. James Heath sat in a house in Adam-street, Strand, and in the curiously-furnished apartments which he called his office. The very dirty window curtains of the room were of the richest silk. The costly Turkey carpet was covered with dust and littered with bundles of old law papers and newspapers, besides letters and other documents, which, having been torn up, had evidently lain on the floor untouched for weeks or months. On the walls of the room were hung a number of valuable oil paintings, water colors, and engravings. Madonnas and Holy Families of the early Spanish and Italian schools, pets of the ballet and the prize ring, Dutch bores, landscapes, portraits and racing scenes—mingled as they were without the least regard to style or subject, the general effect was altogether novel and surprising. About the chamber were a number of chairs and couches, mostly of antique patterns, but all of them made of the most costly materials, and covered, like the carpet, with dust. In the corners of the room were piles of well-bound volumes, and two massive sideboards—

one of oak, the other of ebony—were piled with miscellaneous heaps of books, glasses, and silver plate. Everything about the chamber, in short, was dirty, costly, and incongruous. Finally, muffled up in a thick overcoat, and with his back to the fireplace, in which there was no fire, sat Mr. Heath. He was a rather stout man of about sixty, with keen, gray eyes and white hair, and a very rubeic complexion. On the table before him stood among a number of paper a bottle of brandy and a tumbler, and he was engaged in reading a long letter, which was written in a rather sprawling, boyish hand.

"Dear Sir," the letter ran, "I must have £750 by Monday, and I want at least £500 besides. This, with what I owe you at present, will make £4,000. I propose, in consideration of that £1,000 which I now ask you to advance, to assign to you the whole of my life interest in the £15,000 3 per cent. consols, together with the whole interest under the policy of assurance for the £3,000. The premiums on the policy amounts to £200 per annum, so that the £450 odd which accrues from the consols will leave a balance of about 250 per cent. interest on the £4,000 until the policy falls in. In other words, for £4,000 you get an absolute reversion in £10,000, together with £250 a year until the reversion is realized. I am aware that I could do better than this, but I want the money at once and I am ready to submit to the sacrifice for immediate payment. I shall call on you to-morrow afternoon at 4 o'clock, when I hope you will let me have a check. Yours, faithfully, ROBERT OSWALD."

Mr. Heath read the letter very carefully through two or three times, after which he laid it on the table and leaned back in his chair, while he indulged in a soliloquy which he muttered half aloud.

"Yes," he said, "the terms are good enough. The young fool in consumption already, though he's barely twenty-three, and this season will kill him. Chapman says his right lung is nearly gone—lucky I got him to insure for the big sum at once. Wants the money, I suppose, to meet his losses on the City and Suburban. What's he going to do, I wonder, when he has parted with his interest in the £15,000? Fall back on his mother, I suppose. She's supposed to be wealthy, but her money is all in American stocks, they say, and if report is true she knows how to keep it. The widow of a Scotchman, who made a fortune in America, they came back to England about five years since to get into society and put young hopeful through Oxford. The father died three years ago, and the mother has been leading a rather retired life since, so they say. But, nonsense, what has all this to do with me? Young Mr. Oswald, who has got himself into consumption through dissipation, is practically worth £10,000 for a further advance of £1,000. Even if I had to wait a few years it's good enough. But he hasn't twelve months' life in him. Three months more, at the rate he is going at present, ought to finish him. And then?"

Mr. Heath continued almost aloud, and in an excited manner: "Then I have made the £100,000 which it has been the ambition of my life to be worth. This is the last ten thousand. With this I shall be worth almost exactly one hundred and two thousand pounds in hard cash, besides the good-will of this cursed business, and all the things, which I shall dispose of at once. Why, I ought to have nearly one hundred and ten thousand pounds; but never mind, once I have a hundred thousand pounds in hard cash, I shall give up. To that I have made up my mind. And then? Well, I shall go on the Continent for a time. I'd be pretty well forgotten in the course of two or three years, and my name is not in particularly good odor just now—hasn't been for years past. Never mind that—when a man has four or five thousand a year, people are not too particular about his antecedents. I may take a place a little way out of London—a sort of county magnate for a bit—and work my way into a decent club. Let them say what they like behind my back, they'd be bound to be civil to my face, and that's all that any one need care. Half the peers in England would go crazy if they only knew what their servants were saying about them. Fools, we're all more or less, tarred with the same brush, thinking vermin as we are, if this new theory of evolution or what ever it's called be true. No, if I once get foot into a good club, they could not get out of it again, if I only can afford to act respectably."

Let them whisper what they like behind my back, all that I have to deal with is what is said or done before my face, and the hounds would be silent, for they can prove nothing. If the brutes have to lick me, what do I care if they would like to bite. 'Heavens, what a contemptible thing is human nature!' the great Napoleon used to say when he was a young man starving in Paris. Contemptible is not the word. Worthless—infernal—unworthy of even contempt—poor wretched puppets. You band together, and club your wretched selfishness into what you call respectability. Respect? Why, you will have more real respect for me, who'll force my way, and walk alone among you, than you have for the sleekest creature of your back. Yes, 'Lions walk alone, jackals held together,' as Pitt used to say, and one can play the Pitt of the Napoleon in private, as well as in public life, if need be. Yes, I have only to wait now till Mr. Oswald smashes up the little that's left of his constitution. Not many months at the furthest. Strange that the last 10,000 should come altogether in this way; I might have been three or four years getting it together. Perhaps longer. Who can tell? We make more bad debts than people think, and like the snail crawling up the post, I might, now and then, have slipped down at night twice as far as I had crawled during the day."

"But here the whole thing is done. The last ten thousand made, as the saying is, by a stroke of my pen. And yet, it's curious how I have had a suspicion from the first moment I set eyes upon this brat that he'd be at once my making and my ruin. I don't insist on ceremony," said Heath, pushing a bottle and a glass toward his visitor as he spoke. "And how, beside offering you a chair and a little brandy, what else can I do for you?"

"Well, confound it! you know what I have come about. You have had my letter. What's the use of asking such a question?" was the impatient rejoinder.

"Yes, I have had your letter, but I don't like the business. I tell you frankly, I don't like to see a young man ruining himself as you are doing."

"Oh, curse it all! I have not come here to be lectured," interrupted Oswald, angrily. "Will you do the thing or not? This is Thursday. I must have the money by Saturday night."

"I would have to give notice to the Trustees of this fresh charge, and there is barely time to get the thing through. I would rather you took the matter somewhere else," replied Heath, dubiously.

"But that is impossible, and I must meet my engagements on Monday."

The result of some further conversation was that Mr. Heath, with a great show of reluctance, suffered himself to be persuaded to have everything ready to make this further and final advance on Saturday.

"You will have twenty pounds in gold, eight ten-pound notes, and the remaining nine hundred pounds 'short,'" said Oswald as he was leaving the room.

"Yes, I hope you will take care of it," replied Heath.

"I shall give you twenty thousand over the Guineas. Good evening," was the answer, and Mr. Oswald took his departure.

On Saturday Oswald duly received the £1,000 after he had executed a deed, by which he assigned the policy of assurance and his life interest in the £15,000 consols to Mr. Heath. According to the will of the late Mr. Oswald, the £15,000 was, if Robert Oswald died without issue, to be paid to a distant relative who lived in America.

Mrs. Oswald, I may add, derived her income from certain investments in American railway stocks. She was supposed to be very well off, but it was a curious thing that, though she went a good deal into society, nobody seemed to know much about either her or her late husband. They had come from America about five years before and taken a house in Porchester Terrace, Bayswater.

The late Mr. Oswald brought very satisfactory references from Chicago, kept a very good balance at his bank, and entertained, as did Mrs. Oswald, in a very hospitable manner. This, however, was really all that was known about them. As to their son, Robert, he had unluckily taken to betting, and got into the clutches of Mr. Heath, with what result, so far, we have seen above.

It is not necessary to say more than that Robert Oswald lost his money, and brought himself to his death-bed during the next two months. As

Mr. Heath knew, he was in consumption when he sold his annuity, and the effect of his losses and constant dissipation precipitated the collapse of his system. "When sorrows come, they come not single spies but in battalions." On the morning after the race for the "Two Thousand Guineas," when Robert was left utterly penniless, and in debt to a number of bookmakers, Mrs. Oswald received a letter from her stock broker, saying that he would like to see her at her earliest convenience. Accordingly she went at once to the City, where she learned that the two American railways in which nearly all her money was invested had ceased to pay dividends. That, in short, the shares were almost unsalable, as it was highly probable that the concerns would be sold under foreclosure of mortgages. Mrs. Oswald did all she could under the circumstances. She gave up her house in Porchester Terrace and took lodgings in St. Paul's road, Camden Town, where she devoted herself to the task of nursing her son, who was now fast sinking in consumption.

PART II.

In the second week of the following June Mr. Heath, who had a small house in Notting Hill, was sitting in his parlor at a little after 8 o'clock in the evening, when a servant came in to say that a Mr. Bailey wished to see him.

"Show him in at once," said Heath, who rose from his seat and went to the door to meet him.

"Well," said Heath, in his usual gruff way, when he had closed the door, which he did very carefully as if he were afraid that some one might be listening outside.

"Mr. Oswald's dead, Sir. Died at 5 o'clock this evening. I only heard of it within the last hour, and I came to tell you."

"For a moment there was silence, during which the little man stood twirling his hat in his hands."

"At last Heath said, 'Are you quite certain of this?'"

"Quite certain, Sir," was the answer. "I have it from the servant in the house. I had been expecting the news all day, and directly Mrs. Wilmot told me I thought I'd make assurance doubly sure by seeing the servant myself. As I told you, I knew her before she went to live in St. Paul's road. I told you how I heard from Mrs. Wilmot everything that went on in the house."

"Well, well, that will do. Here is a sovereign for your trouble in coming here. Look into my office next week and I shall pay you what we have arranged, when I have the formal proofs of his death. Good-night."

"Good-night, Sir, thank you," said Bailey, as he left the room.

Bailey was a nondescript character who was occasionally employed by Heath, sometimes as a broker, sometimes as a private detective. In the present instance, by virtue of his having some relatives living in St. Paul's road, he had been engaged to bring Mr. Heath the earliest intelligence of Robert Oswald's death. When he had gone Heath walked up and down the room for some minutes in silence. At length he muttered to himself:

"One hundred and two thousand pounds in hard cash, made at last! I shall sell everything I own within a fortnight's time—furniture, bills, pictures, all. They will fetch another six thousand, but whatever they bring they shall be sold at once. I am determined to enjoy my wealth while I have time, and to do that I must cut the life I have been leading at once. Yes, my 'pile' is made. I have at last what years ago I said I would make, and I shall be out of England this day fortnight. What may I not do yet, with over a hundred thousand pounds and the brains and knowledge which I possess! Good heavens, how suddenly the last ten thousand has come! What a lucky chance it was that threw the young fool into my clutches. I managed him properly, there's no doubt. But yet it was a lucky chance that brought him to me. Still it's strange the presentiment I have always had about him. Oh, bother such nonsense! what have I to do with presentiments? I shall be believing in ghosts and hobgoblins next! Yet I seem to be sorry instead of glad, and there is that fear of some impending evil which I seemed to have every time I saw him. What on earth can this be?"

The last question was caused by a sharp knock and ring at the hall door. In a few seconds the servant came in with a telegram. Mr. Heath looked at the envelope nervously before he opened it. At last he took out the telegram, which he read two or three times over, as if he doubted the evidence of his eyesight. Then he put the telegram in his pocket, whispering to himself in a trembling voice as he did so:

"What can it be? What can it be?"

The telegram which evidently caused him so much uneasiness was as follows:

"Mrs. Oswald, To James Heath, Esq., St. Paul's Road, Stanhope Terrace, Camden Town, Notting Hill.

"It is of great importance that I should see you to-night. Robert Oswald died at five o'clock this evening. Please come here at once on receiving this telegram."

"Could it be some conspiracy to get me into the house and murder me?" thought Mr. Heath, as he walked about the room, with the telegram in his pocket. "Oh, nonsense! I need not be afraid of that. They are very respectable people in the house. No, depend upon it, it is either that the mother wants to beg or borrow from me; or that there is some screw loose about the policy of assurance. Curse it! Like my usual luck. But I had better be off there at once. What a curious authoritative way she telegraphs in, though."

He left the house, and, halting the first hansom he met, was driven rapidly to St. Paul's road. A servant opened the hall door before he could knock, and having asked if he was Mr. Heath, conducted him up stairs to the drawing room. Though it was just 9:30 o'clock, and getting rather dark, no lamp or candle was lighted in the room, and as Mr. Heath entered he could just discern through the deep twilight the figure of a tall woman who was sitting by one of the windows dressed in black. She rose as he entered and asked him to take the chair which was a few

yards from where she was sitting. From the position in which she sat, and the darkness of the room, Mr. Heath could not discern her features very clearly, and to tell the truth he felt exceedingly uncomfortable. He was pretty well case-hardened of course; few men had more curious experiences, and some of the scenes he had witnessed in the pursuit of his vocation were not a little appalling. But just as to every medical student is that he must disregard the pain which he has to inflict on his patients, so, from the very outset of his career, Mr. Heath had trained himself to be perfectly callous about the feelings and interests of the people with whom he was brought in contact. Still, all the teaching in the world cannot make a surgeon insensible to pain, which is inflicted on himself, and it was just because he was apprehensive that some calamity was about to fall upon him that Mr. Heath left on the present occasion a sense of fear which almost amounted to terror.

"You have been prompt in responding to my telegram," said the lady in a hard, defiant voice. "My son, as I told you, is dead. You have stripped him of his little property. He died a pauper. You make £10,000 by his death. I have lately lost nearly all that I was worth. I have spent pretty nearly the rest in nursing him through his last illness. I want twenty pounds in ready money to pay his funeral expenses. You are the proper person to give it to me. Do you refuse?"

"I dare say that Mr. Heath would gladly have paid twenty pounds, or more, for the relief he experienced when he heard this speech. So it was only a begging appeal after all. 'Thank heavens!' he muttered to himself, and for the first time since he heard of Robert Oswald's death he felt really easy in his mind."

"My good madam," he said, in his usual tone of gruff determination, "your son sought me voluntarily. He had ample value for what he sold me. I have nothing more to say on the matter, and I must wish you good night."

"But I have something more to say to you," said the lady, who rose from her chair at the same time that he did. "Had you given me the twenty pounds I would have been content to let you go in peace. As it is you must hear why you are the proper person to pay for the funeral of my son. Come here; I have something to tell you which you will remember to the last day of your life. See—"

She threw open the folding doors that separated the drawing room from a bedroom which was brilliantly lighted with candles. On a bed lay the body of Robert Oswald. His mother went round and stood at the far side of the bed, facing Heath, who advanced a little way into the inner room as if he were drawn by a spell.

"Now, Sir," she exclaimed, "do you recognize me?"

"I can't say I do, madam," said Heath, whose eyes were fixed on the face of the corpse, and who hardly looked at her.

"Twenty-two years make a difference, no doubt," she said as she removed a scarf which was tied around her head, and let her long auburn hair fall about her shoulders. "Now Philip Arnott, look at me again and see if you recognize the face of the wife whom you forced to leave you. Look on that bed and see if you recognize your own features in the face of your dead son."

"My son!" exclaimed Heath—or Arnott, as he really was.

"Yes," said his wife, "it is not many days since, by an accident, I found out that you, whom I knew to have ruined him and from whom I tried to save him, were also his father. When you forced me to fly from you twenty-two years ago I found a protector for myself and child. We lived for years in America, where we were very happy and well off. In an evil hour we came back to England. God or fate brought your son and you together—the little darling child whom you used to nurse on your lap—the little child whom you used to pull your whiskers and throw his arms around your neck. You loved him, though you did not love me; but, oh, see—there is the result!"

For a moment Arnott, who was deadly pale, looked in her face, and uttered one word, "Alice." Then he looked at the corpse again, and said mechanically, as his eyes were riveted on it, "Bob!"

"Yes, Bob and Alice," cried his wife, "you recognize us now; but what is the matter?"

Phillip Arnott was swaying from side to side. Suddenly he fell senseless on the floor. It was many hours before he returned to consciousness, but when he did so he was in a state of idleness, in which condition he remained until he died, about three months afterward. As he had made no will his property was divided under the Statute of Distributions. I have only to add that Alice Arnott succeeded, as his widow, to her share of the property, and returned to America shortly after his death.—Belgravia.

He Lost His Coffin.

Down at Albuquerque there was one special consumptive who, being that, felt that somehow or other consumptive should be permitted in the place. He was a character noted for going on frequent "benders" until he came very near to having the jin-jams and then sobering up. He had a kind of privilege in the town and became jealous of it. One day another consumptive put in an appearance, much to the prior resident's disgust. They met. The old resident eyed the new comer all over. Then he said:

"Say, you've come here to die, I s'pose. Well, there ain't much life between us. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go across the way and shake the dice with you for a coffin."

"Goes!" said the other.

The old resident lost the shake, and he went off at once on a terrific jamboree and died. The new comer was so mad he went racing about the place.

"He did it to get out of paying for that coffin. That's the meanest trick I ever had done to me."—San Francisco Chronicle.

Before the Era of Matches.

Probably there are few children of the present day who have seen or who have ever heard of the old-fashioned tinder box and matches. Yet fifty years ago the friction match, now so universally used, had but just been invented, and did not come into general use for many years. Before the year 1836, or thereabouts, housekeepers were obliged to use matches of domestic manufacture. These were pieces of small white pine wood, perhaps twice the size of our match, the ends of which had been dipped in brimstone. A small iron skillet in which to melt the brimstone was a common kitchen utensil in many families in New England, if not elsewhere.

The only way to light one of these brimstone matches was to bring it in contact with a spark of fire. For this purpose there used to be kept in every house a small tin box filled with burnt rags and this was called a tinder box. In order to obtain a light a common gun flint was struck with considerable force against a piece of steel made of convenient size, which produced a few sparks; these, lodging upon the burnt rags, made sufficient fire to enable one to readily light the match.

These smoldering rags—for the sparks thus obtained did not produce a blaze—were afterwards extinguished by a round tin covered with a dumper. To thus create fire required some experience, especially in damp weather, or with cold fingers on a winter morning. We have known people to make a "bad piece of work" with the flint and steel, and to succeed only with great patience in "striking a light." If one happened to be cross or nervous the chances were that he could not succeed at all; nor was it an infrequent sight to see the good wife of the house running across the street with a shovel to borrow a shovelful of "live coals" from a neighbor, the chimney smoke of whose dwelling proclaimed that she had a fire. The change to the match of commerce was one of the first of what we now consider modern conveniences.

In many families it was one of the "children's chores" to prepare wood for matches and to dip the ends in melted brimstone. These matches were sometimes to be bought in shops, but New England economy more frequently led each family to prepare its own. Still it was not uncommon for poor children to make a trifle of money by selling matches to their more fortunate neighbors. In sparsely settled neighborhoods great care was exercised at night by the head of the house to "keep the fire." He took precaution that there should be a good bed of "live coals" at the hour of retiring; these he covered with many shovelfuls of ashes to prevent them from burning out. The next morning the coals were usually found to be "live" on raking open the ashes and served to start the day's fire. It was not an impossible feat to thus preserve the family fire through the year, without recourse to tinder box and matches.

The modern friction match was welcomed by most housekeepers, although here and there some old people objected to it, considering it a dangerous article, as no doubt it is when carelessly used or left lying about. The first friction match invented required to be drawn across a piece of fine sandpaper in order to produce a light. This was called a "heifer," and was much safer, although not so convenient, as the present match. Then came the present patent friction matches, which used to be called "loco-focos." There were no fancy match boxes in "old times," and the tinder box was not considered an ornamental article, but was kept out of sight in the cupboard or on the kitchen mantelpiece.

We find in a Salem newspaper of June 20, 1836, the following: "Notwithstanding the convenience of these dangerous little articles, friction matches, which are in almost everybody's hands, but which with all charms bid fair to prove a heavy curse to the community, we learn that there is one man in Salem, a respectable tradesman who keeps a store, where we should generally expect to find such things, but who has never sold them nor allowed them to be used on his premises. At his house and shop he sticks to the old-fashioned flint, steel and tinder. He shows his wisdom by so doing. How many more can say as much?"

Encounter With an Alligator.

From the Gainesville (Fla.) Advocate.

L. W. Jackson lost some cattle and started out to hunt them, accompanied by his dog. In hunting around they came across an immense alligator, but as his "gatorship" was engaged in watching some calves, he did notice Mr. Jackson and his party (behaving benighted by two friends.) Mr. Jackson's dog not being very well up in the "gator business," commenced the attack at once. As soon as his "gatorship" could change his mind from calves to dog he made a sweep with his tail that brought the canine around to his business end, and before the dog had time to think of his past, made a snap that would have ended his career then and there, but the "gator miscalculated his distance, and instead of taking the whole dog, tail and all, he got his tail only. The dog being thus freed, started on a home-run; but the "gator wanted dog if he could not get calf, and therefore started after him, rolling over and over. This method of locomotion was so unusual that the dog became disgusted, and made such good time that the "gator gave it up, and turned his attention to his human enemies. They in their turn armed themselves with fence rails, and then the fight was fast and furious. The "gator would take the rails between his teeth and crunch them as if he enjoyed them as a diet. To vary the exercise he would snatch a rail and sweep it round over that section of the country, making his assailants give him plenty of room. Finally, after a terrible struggle, he was forced to go where all "gators go"—and hunt calves and dogs no more.