

OUR NOTE BOOK.

BY L. F. AUSTIN.

At the dinner of the Whitefriars Club to Mark Twain there was one aggrieved man. He is a well-known writer of fiction who entertains the public with the most blood-curdling inventions you ever heard of. As I look at him I wonder how such things come into his head, for they are quite foreign to his habits and views of life, though he likes to curdle the blood of the club waiters. I was finishing breakfast one morning about luncheon time at a table in the pleasantest window. He saw me from the doorway, and said to a waiter, "I want that table for some friends who are coming to lunch at once. Who's the man sitting there? I'll turn him out!" So he strode up to me with a fierce expression, followed by the protesting waiter, and said, "Look here, you've had this table quite long enough. Ain't you ashamed to be breakfasting at this hour?" The terrified servant evidently expected bloodshed. Perhaps he was a diligent reader of my friend's tales, and thought he was going to see one of them transacted in real life with the assistance of a corpse and serviettes all over gore.

Well, at the Mark Twain dinner, this professional curdler of the public blood sat in a state of great contentment, till suddenly I observed his face full of pain, as of a man in a crowd who finds that somebody has taken his watch. It was when Dean Hole was telling the anecdote of the American citizen who admired Niagara until he read Southey's poem about the way the water comes down at Lodore. He hastened to England, posted to Lodore, and looked around for this marvellous cataract. A rustic came by, and to him spake the pilgrim: "I've come from Niagara, a bit of a waterfall we have in America, to see your Lodore. Where is it?" "Why," said the rustic, "you're sitting on it!" Then he went back home, and told a bosom friend that Niagara was a mere paifful compared to Lodore, and the friend rushed over the Atlantic, found his way to Lodore, and the result was that the friendship of a lifetime came to an abrupt end. Why did the listening novelist frown at the Dean, and then settle back in his chair with an expression of weary resignation? Presently, Mr. Poulteney Bigelow rose and told the company how he had once introduced Mark Twain to a young German who said he had an excellent new story out of a German comic paper, which he related at great length, and was hurt because Mark Twain's appreciation seemed rather tepid. "I can't laugh at that story as I used to do," explained the American humorist. "The fact is that I invented it about thirty years ago!" As Mr. Bigelow told this anecdote, my friend gave vent to a deriding "Ha! ha!" just like an exclamation from the villain of one of his own romances. Clearly some personal animus was working in his mind, welling up bitterness.

"Seemed a little put out, did I?" he remarked to me next day. "Lost my evening-party air, eh? Now look at me, Sir. I am the original hero of Dean Hole's little joke! I read Southey's poem out in Canada, and I came over here to see Lodore, forgetting that Southey was a poet, and never thinking there might be a great sight more poetical license than water. I told this adventure to Conan Doyle, and he told it to Dean Hole, and between 'em they embellished it considerably, and sometimes the newspapers call it Conan Doyle's story, and sometimes they call it Dean Hole's story, and nobody knows that the real live pilgrim to Lodore was Robert Barr!" I shook him by the hand and said, "My friend, I will see you righted! I will tell the public the truth in my simple, unpretending way, and you shall weave one of your blood-curdling mysteries round Lodore, showing how a popular novelist hurled a man of piety and learning—say a Dean—down that awful cascade out of jealousy, and for the horrid delight of seeing an ecclesiastical figure whirling in the foam!" Such was the compact, and my part of it is done.

It was on this occasion that I first set eyes upon Sir Edward Chichester, of her Majesty's ship *Immortalité*, who gave such a friendly backing to Admiral Dewey at Manila. Enthusiastic Americans at the Hotel Cecil invited Sir Edward to mount a platform and speak a piece. Platforms come easily to a naval commander: they remind him of the quarter-deck; so Sir Edward Chichester was perfectly at home. In some professions, traditional manners and deportment have gone out. Statesmen do not look as they did in the days when they were painted with one hand feeling a beating patriotic heart, and the other grasping the scroll of the nation's destinies. You might pass a statesman in the Strand, and think of him as merely an ill-dressed person. If you saw a Bengali gentleman, how would you know that he was a Senior Wrangler? Sir Edward Chichester, however, even in a swallow-tail coat, was the British sailor to the life, with a face bronzed to a delicate mahogany tint, with a rolling voice and a chuckle at the end of it. Had he hitched his trousers and cried "Belay!" we should all have responded, "Avast there!" and broken into a hornpipe.

Sir Edward Chichester told us how the British at Manila ran short of "fresh chow," and how Admiral Dewey served

out a ration of a pound of it a day for every man. On a basis of "fresh chow" the Anglo-American understanding was mightily refreshed. When the *Immortalité* went to Hong-Kong, one of the British officers was telling of their privations at Manila. "You don't seem much the worse," remarked his audience. "You look as if you had eaten chow as usual." The British officer tapped a comfortable paunch and said, "Dewey did it!" Never upon the stage have I seen a touch of broad comedy given with a richer zest than Sir Edward Chichester gave to this little impersonation. And he smiled a smile that set the sea and sun dancing in his complexion. "Dewey did it!" he repeated. "Blood's thicker than water!" I have read that familiar phrase many a time in leading articles without any particular emotion; but uttered by the commander of the *Immortalité* with that breezy chuckle, it carried a new and original conviction.

A beauty show in Paris has provoked some disparaging comment in a London journal. It is noted with satisfaction that no Englishwomen competed. If they had, it is hinted, their charms would have failed to captivate a patriotic French jury. I am not so sure of that. Many Frenchmen who have never ceased to declaim against the perfidies of Albion have made soft eyes at the English *mees*. They may criticise the figure of the creamy English girl, but they are enslaved by her eyes and her complexion. Sometimes there is a desperate struggle in the French mind between patriotic prejudice and the beauty of the enemy's daughters. You will find a diverting instance of this in one of Maupassant's stories. The supposed narrator has married an English wife, and he deplores this misadventure to a friend. His hostility to her race was disarmed by her sweetness, and, above all, by the simplicity of her broken French. It was a fatal delight to listen to her accent, and to correct the pearly, but imperfect idioms which fell from her lips. So he married her; but alas! she learned to speak French admirably, and then the spell was broken. He found himself wedded to a dogged line of Puritan ancestors, to say nothing of the victors of Trafalgar and Waterloo. Quaint are the vagaries of patriotism. A Kentucky politician told Max O'Rell that he would never allow his children to visit England for fear they should "catch the English pronunciation." It was the English pronunciation of the French tongue which made Maupassant's complaining countryman a victim of the *mees*.

Beauty shows, remarks the London critic, are confined among the fastidious English people to barmaids. I can imagine a Parisian reading this with some amusement. "What of those types of English beauty," he may ask, "that one admires in your shop-windows—ladies out of Debrett, who permit the photographer to publish their charms, which are thus exposed to the critical inspection of every connoisseur on the pavement? What of the beauty show in the Mall on Drawing-Room day, when the originals of these photographs are tastefully displayed under glass for the diversion of spectators who, if they like, may award the prize of loveliness by show of hands?" Not quite the same thing, you may answer, as the direct appeal of candidates to a tribunal of experts. Really the difference is not great enough to justify that superior snuff with which we dwell upon the gaieties of French manners. The truth is that beauty is a perpetual show in all countries except those Eastern climes where it is hidden by the selfish proprietorship of man behind a yashmak, though I am informed by travellers that even the yashmak is a potent weapon of feminine coquetry. You cannot sit in a fashionable restaurant without noticing that all the beauty is decked and apparelled for competition. Let half-a-dozen of the reigning charmers assemble at Prince's with their trains of devotees, and you will see the whole restaurant turned into a hall of judgment. The manager might as well go round with a voting urn. I commend this idea to the genial author of "Dinners and Diners" for another of those entertaining papers on the London restaurants, their delicacies and their prices, which he decorates with a background of romance.

After beauty, let us have an intellectual show. I want to see those wonderful ratepayers of Portsmouth who have warned the local School Board against the teaching of the theory that our planet is round. They say it is flat, and that any educational authority who pretends the contrary exposes himself to penalties under the "Impostors Act." The shade of John Hampden ought to rejoice—I don't mean the Hampden who protested against the arbitrary policy of King Charles I, but the Hampden who preached the flatness of the earth, and even wagered five hundred pounds on the issue. He lost his money, and went protesting to the grave. His memory is now vindicated at Portsmouth, and the "Impostors Act" is threatening the Duke of Devonshire and Sir John Gorst. The country needs to be roused on this subject, and the professors of the new science ought to distribute their photographs widely, and exhibit themselves in the principal cities. I think they would find it a useful advertisement to visit Prince's, and allow the manager to put a notice in the hall of the table where the savants from Portsmouth are sitting. The author of "Dinners and Diners" would be deeply interested, I am sure, in the kind of meal ordered by a man who says the earth is flat.

A LOOK ROUND.

Fine June weather has afforded many opportunities for enjoying to the full the delight of a trip to one or other of the lovely reaches of the Upper Thames. Few of those fond of seeking their pleasure in this direction could have missed last Sunday. Always fashionable, the river on the Sunday after Ascot proved more so than ever: perhaps because that most favourite spot, Boulter's Lock, will by another season have changed its character and may not again present quite the same brilliant picture. A supreme attraction was the knowledge that the Prince of Wales would accompany his host and hostess, Lord and Lady Alington, on board the electric launch *Eta*. The Australian cricketers, with the halo around them of victory over England, were also there on board the launch *Beatrice*. Both above and below the famous lock the Thames will, from now to beyond the end of the London Season, present many similar gay spectacles. Beloved Henley will extend over the fifth, sixth, and seventh days of July; and, by reason of its international character, promises to be more than usually attractive.

To return to the almost invincible cricket team from Australia: a powerful eleven, enjoying the advantage of constant practice together, they obtained an easy victory, and no wonder, in the second "test" match, which drew enormous crowds to Lord's on the last three days of the past week. C. B. Fry, Ranjitsinhji, and other well-known English batsmen had to submit to the destructive bowling of Jones. Only A. C. McLaren (88 not out), F. S. Jackson (73 and 37), Hayward (77), and G. L. Jessop (51) made anything like a stand for England. For Australia, C. Hill scored 135 and Trumper 135, not out, in a splendid first innings of 421; and by admirable cricket generally—fielding vying in excellence with bowling and batting—our visitors won the match by ten wickets. Australia is "advancing," indeed, by leaps and bounds—quite à kangaroo, in fine.

With "Norma" (and what an impressive Druidical priestess Madame Lilli Lehmann made!) and "Don Giovanni" in the bill, it would have seemed as if old times were being revived at the Opera were it not for the incontrovertible fact that Covent Garden is fullest when Wagner holds the boards. The remarkable popularity of the great German composer may be in a measure due to the supreme personal attractiveness of that ideal Wagnerian hero, M. Jean de Reszke, who delights Belgravia and Brixton alike by the chivalric grace of his bearing no less than by his dulcet tenor voice. If the house "rose at him" when he repeated his unrivalled performance of *Lohengrin* last Saturday night in the goodly company of M. Edouard de Reszke, Mr. Bispham, Madame Nordica, and Madame Lehmann—what of the reception awaiting M. Jean de Reszke on his last appearance (alas!) this season, as *Tristan*? With grateful recollections of the pleasure given by this incomparable artist in the famous love-duet in "*Tristan und Isolde*," and in many other operas, we can but wish him a "good time" during his holidays, and a sure return to us next summer, in the full enjoyment of his rare natural gifts.

Nat Goodwin and Maxine Elliott are experienced American artists, who have proved their excellence everywhere on the great continent of America. They first appeared in London at the Duke of York's Theatre in an American cowboy drama by Clyde Fitch. The majority present vastly enjoyed the play. Another piece was produced last Monday by the same company in the same playhouse, written by a charming lady dramatist, Madeleine Lucette Ryley, and called "An American Citizen." It is a pretty, homely, Dickens-like work, not really so good as the ranch drama, and it has succeeded as well as the play by Clyde Fitch. The actors and actresses are the same, and they now prove how good they were at the outset. Nat Goodwin is a calm, self-contained, self-reliant, American comedian, with no tricks or affectation about him. Maxine Elliott is a lovely woman who can act. So is her pretty sister Gertrude. Most lovely women on the stage are amateurs. And a good word should be said for Ysobel Haskins, a handsome, intelligent, experienced actress, who should make a great mark in this country. All this is another proof of the value of a "stock company" accustomed to play together.

"DR." RHODES.

[*Mr. Rhodes went down to Oxford on Wednesday to have the degree of D.C.L. conferred upon him.*]

He blundered badly when he paid
Amazing sums of money down
To organise the luckless Raid
That never reached the "golden" town.
He owns his error, so we see
Him penitent, and, if you please,
How can such retrogression be
More natural than by degrees?

After Ascot comes a calm in racing matters. The attention of sportsmen has this week been centred chiefly upon the North Country. There is a wonderful difference in the Northumberland Plate Day now and the condition of things prevailing some twenty to thirty years ago. The race is now contested over the course in the lovely grounds of Gosforth Park, a few miles from Newcastle-on-Tyne. A portion of this park is situated above the wonderful underground galleries of the coalmine in which George Stephenson worked as a boy. Some years ago, the Northumberland Plate was run upon the Newcastle Town Moor, and the scene upon each anniversary was one not readily forgotten by anyone who witnessed it. When the races were removed from the Old Town Moor and Gosforth Park meeting was established as a private venture, the "Pitman's Derby," as the Plate was called, lost its old glory. For a long time the colliers refused to go and pay their shilling admission, but they are getting used to it now, and assemble in large crowds once again.