

**LANG
ANDREW**

LOST LEADERS

Andrew Lang
Lost Leaders

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=25229740

Lost Leaders:

Содержание

SCOTCH RIVERS	5
SALMON-FISHING	11
WINTER SPORTS	17
HUMAN LEVITATION	22
A CHINAMAN'S MARRIAGE	28
SIEUR DE MONTAIGNE	33
THACKERAY'S DRAWINGS	38
GOLF	44
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	47

Andrew Lang

Lost Leaders

PREFACE

These articles are reprinted, by the permission of the Editor, from the *Daily News*. They were selected and arranged by Mr. Pett Ridge, who, with the Publishers, will perhaps kindly take a share in the responsibility of republishing them.

SCOTCH RIVERS

September is the season of the second and lovelier youth of the river-scenery of Scotland. Spring comes but slowly up that way; it is June before the woods have quite clothed themselves. In April the angler or the sketcher is chilled by the east wind, whirling showers of hail, and even when the riverbanks are sweet with primroses, the bluff tops of the border hills are often bleak with late snow. This state of things is less unpropitious to angling than might be expected. A hardy race of trout will sometimes rise freely to the artificial fly when the natural fly is destroyed, and the angler is almost blinded with dusty snowflakes. All through midsummer the Scotch rivers lose their chief attractions. The bracken has not yet changed its green for the fairy gold, the hue of its decay; the woods wear a uniform and sombre green; the waters are low and shrunken, and angling is almost impossible. But with September the pleasant season returns for people who love “to be quiet, and go a-fishing,” or a-sketching. The hills put on a wonderful harmony of colours, the woods rival the October splendours of English forests. The bends of the Tweed below Melrose and round Mertoun – a scene that, as Scott says, the river seems loth to leave – may challenge comparison with anything the Thames can show at Nuneham or Cliefden. The angler, too, is as fortunate as the lover of the picturesque. The trout that have hidden themselves all summer, or at best have cautiously nibbled

at the worm-bait, now rise freely to the fly. Wherever a yellow leaf drops from birch tree or elm the great trout are splashing, and they are too eager to distinguish very subtly between flies of nature's making and flies of fur and feather. It is a time when every one who can manage it should be by the water-side, and should take with him, if possible, the posthumous work of Sir Thomas Dick Lauder on the "Rivers of Scotland."

This book, as the author of "Rab and his Friends" tells us in the preface, is a re-publication of articles written in 1848, on the death-bed of the author, a man of many accomplishments and of a most lovable nature. He would lie and dictate or write in pencil these happy and wistful memories of days passed by the banks of Tweed and Tyne. He did not care to speak of the northern waters: of Tay, which the Roman invaders compared to Tiber; of Laxford, the river of salmon; or of the "thundering Spey." Nor has he anything to say of the west, and of Galloway, the country out of which young Lochinvar came, with its soft and broken hills, like the lower spurs of the Pyrenees, and its streams, now rushing down defiles of rock, now stealing with slow foot through the plains. He confines himself to the limits of the Scottish Arcadia; to the hills near Edinburgh, where Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd loved and sang in a rather affected way; and to the main stream and the tributaries of the Tweed. He tells, with a humour like that of Charles Lamb in his account of his youthful search for the mysterious fountain-head of the New River, how he sought among the Pentland Hills for the source of

the brook that flowed past his own garden. The wandering stream led him through many a scene renowned in Border history, up to the heights whence Marmion surveyed the Scottish forces encamped on Borough Moor before the fatal day of Flodden. These scenes are described with spirit and loving interest; but it is by Tweedside that the tourist will find his most pleasant guide in Lauder's book. Just as Cicero said of Athens, that in every stone you tread on a history, so on Tweedside by every nook and valley you find the place of a ballad, a story, or a legend. From Tweed's source, near the grave of the Wizard Merlin, down to Berwick and the sea, the Border "keeps" and towers are as frequent as castles on the Rhine. Each has its tradition, its memory of lawless times, which have become beautiful in the magic of poetry and the mist of the past. First comes Neidpath Castle, with its vaulted "hanging chamber" in the roof, and the rafter, with the iron ring to which prisoners were hanged, still remaining to testify to the lawless power of Border lords. Neidpath has a softer legend of the death of the lady of the house, when her lover failed to recognize the features that had wasted with sorrow for his absence. Lower down the river comes Clovenfords, with its memories of Christopher North, and Peebles, where King James sings that there was "dancing and derray" in his time; and still lower Ashiesteel, where Scott was young and happy, and Abbotsford, where his fame and his misfortunes found him out. It was on a bright afternoon in late September that he died there, and the mourners by his bed heard through the silence

the murmuring of Tweed How many other associations there are by the tributary rivers! what a breath of “pastoral melancholy”! There is Ettrick, where the cautious lover in the old song of Ettrick banks found “a canny place of meeting.” Oakwood Tower, where Michael Scott, the wizard, wove his spells, is a farm building – the haunted magician’s room is a granary, Earlstone, where Thomas the Rhymer dwelt, and whence the two white deer recalled him to Elfland and to the arms of the fairy queen, is noted “for its shawl manufactory.” Only Yarrow still keeps its ancient quiet, and the burn that was tinged by the blood of Douglas is unstained by more commonplace dyes.

All these changes make the “Rivers of Scotland” rather melancholy reading. Thirty years have not passed since Lauder died, and how much he would miss if he could revisit his beloved water! Spearing salmon by torchlight is a forbidden thing. The rocks are no longer lit up with the red glow; they resound no longer with the shouts and splashing of the yeomen. You might almost as readily find a hart on Harthope, or a wild cat at Catslack, or a wolf at Wolf-Cleugh, as catch three stone-weight of trout in Meggat-water.¹ The days of guileless fish and fabulous draughts of trout are over. No sportsman need take three large baskets to the Gala now, as Lauder did, and actually filled them with thirty-six dozen of trout. The modern angler must not allow his expectations to be raised too highly by these stories. Sport has become much more difficult in these times of rapidly growing

¹ Except with worm in a summer flood.

population. It is a pleasant sight to see the weavers spending their afternoons beside the Tweed; it is such a sight as could not be witnessed by the closely preserved rivers of England. But the weavers have taught the trout caution, and the dyes and various pollutions of trade have thinned their numbers. Mr. Ruskin sees no hope in this state of things; he preaches, in the spirit of old Hesiod, that there is no piety in a race which defiles the "holy waters." But surely civilization, even if it spoil sport and degrade scenery, is better than a state of things in which the laird would hang up his foes to an iron ring in the roof. The hill of Cowden Knowes may be a less eligible place for lovers' meetings than it was of old. But in those times the lord of Cowden Knowes is said by tradition to have had a way of putting his prisoners in barrels studded with iron nails, and rolling them down a brae. This is the side of the good old times which should not be overlooked. It may not be pleasant to find blue dye and wool yarn in Teviot, but it is more endurable than to have to encounter the bandit Barnskill, who hewed his bed of flint, Scott says, in Minto Crag. Still, the reading of the "Rivers of Scotland" leaves rather a sad impression on the reader, and makes him ask once more if there is no way of reconciling the beauty of rude ages with the comforts and culture of civilization. This is a question that really demands an answer, though it is often put in a mistaken way. The teachings of Mr. Ruskin and of his followers would bring us back to a time when printing was not, and an engineer would have been burned for a

wizard.² But there is a point at which civilization and production must begin to respect the limits of the beautiful, on which they so constantly encroach. Who is to settle the limit, and escape the charge of being either a *dilettante* and a sentimentalist on the one hand, or a Philistine on the other?

² Perhaps an Editor put this moral in?

SALMON-FISHING

Salmon-fishing for this season is over, and, in spite of the fresh and open weather, most anglers will feel that the time has come to close the fly-book, to wind up the reel, and to consign the rod to its winter quarters. Salmon-fishing ceases to be very enjoyable when the *snaw broo*, or melted snow from the hilltops, begins to mix with the brown waters of Tweed or Tay; when the fallen leaves hamper the hook; and when the fish are becoming sluggish, black, and the reverse of comely. Now the season of retrospect commences, the time of the pleasures of memory, and the delights of talking shop dear to anglers. Most sporting talk is dull to every one but the votaries of the particular amusement. Few things can be drearier to the outsider than the conversation of cricketers, unless it be the recondite lore which whist-players bring forth from the depths of their extraordinary memories. But angling talk has a variety, recounts an amount of incident and adventure, and wakens a feeling of free air in a way with which the records of no other sport, except perhaps deer-stalking, can compete. The salmon is, beyond all rivalry, the strongest and most beautiful, and most cautious and artful, of fresh-water fishes. To capture him is not a task for slack muscles or an uncertain eye. There is even a slight amount of personal risk in the sport. The fisher must often wade till the water reaches above the waist in cold and rushing streams, where his feet are

apt to slip on the smooth stones or trip on the rough rocks beneath him. When the salmon takes the fly, there is no time for picking steps. The line rushes out so swiftly as to cut the fingers if it touches them, and then is the moment when the angler must follow the fish at the top of his speed. To stand still, or to go cautiously in pursuit, is to allow the salmon to run out with an enormous length of line; the line is submerged – technically speaking, *drowned*– in the water, the strain of the supple rod is removed from the fish, who finds the hook loose in his mouth, and rubs it off against the bottom of the river. Thus speed of foot, in water or over rocks, is a necessary quality in the angler; at least in the northern angler. By the banks of the Usk a contemplative man who likes to take things easily may find pretty sure footing on grassy slopes, or on a gravelly bottom. But it is a different thing to hook a large salmon where the Tweed foams under the bridge of Yair down to the narrows and linns below. If the angler hesitates there, he is lost. Does he stand still and give the fish line? The astute creature cuts it against the sharp rocks below the bridge, and the rod, relieved of the weight, leaps straight in the fisher's hand, and in his heart there is a sense of emptiness and sudden desolation. Does he try to follow, the chances are that his feet slip; after one or two wild struggles he is on his back in the water, and nearly strangled with his fishing-basket. In either case the fish goes on his way rejoicing, and, after the manner of his kind, leaps out of the water once or twice – a maddening sight.

Adventures like this are among the bitter memories of

the angler. The fish that break away are monstrous animals; imagination increases their bulk, and fond desire paints them clean-run and bright as silver. There are other chances of the angler's life scarcely less sad than this. When a hook breaks just as the salmon was losing strength, was ceasing to struggle, and beginning to sway with the mere force of the stream, and to show his shining sides – when a hook breaks at such a moment, it is very hard to bear. The oath of Ernulphus seems all too weak to express the feelings of the sportsman and his wrath against the wretched tackle-maker. Again, when the fish is actually conquered; when he is being towed gently into some little harbour among the tall slim water-grasses, or into a pebbly cove, or up to a green bank; when the bitterness of struggle is past, and he seems resigned and almost happy; when at this crisis the clumsy gilly with the gaff scratches him, rouses him to a last exertion, and entangles the line, so that the salmon breaks free – that is an experience to which language cannot do justice. The ancient painter drew his veil over the face of Agamemnon present at his daughter's sacrifice. Silence and sympathy are all one can offer to the angler who has toiled all day, and in this wise caught nothing. There is yet another very bitter sorrow. It is a hard thing for a man to leave town and hurry to a river in the west, a river that perhaps he has known since he fished for minnows with a bent pin in happy childhood. The west is not a dry land; effeminate tourists complain that the rain it raineth every day. But the heavy soft rain is the very life of an angler. It keeps

the stream of that clear brown hue, between porter and amber, which he loves; and it encourages the salmon to keep rushing from the estuary and the sea right up to the mountain loch, where they rest. But suppose there is a dry summer – and such things have been even in Argyleshire. The heart of the tourist is glad within him, but as the river shrinks and shrinks, a silver thread among slimy green mosses in the streams, a sheet of clear water in the pools, the angler repines. Day after sultry day goes by, and there is no hope. There is a cloud on the distant hill; it is only the smoke from some moor that has caught fire. The river grows so transparent that it is easy to watch the lazy fish sulking at the bottom. Then comes a terrible temptation. Men, men calling themselves sportsmen, have been known to fish in the innocent dewy morning, with worm, with black lob worm. Worse remains behind. Persons of ungoverned passions, maddened by the sight of the fish, are believed to have poached with rake-hooks, a cruel apparatus made of three hooks fastened back to back and loaded with lead. These are thrown over the fish, and then struck into him with a jerk. But the mind willingly turns away from the contemplation of such actions.

It is pleasanter to think of not unsuccessful days by lowland or highland streams, when the sun was veiled, the sky pearly grey, the water, as the people say, in grand order. There is the artistic excitement of choosing the hook, gaudy for a heavy water, neat and modest for a clearer stream. There is the feverish moment of adjusting rod and line, while you mark a fish “rising to himself.”

You begin to cast well above him, and come gradually down, till the fly lights on the place where he is lying. Then there is a slow pull, a break in the water, a sudden strain at the line, which flies through the rings of the rod. It is not well to give too much line; best to follow his course, as he makes off as if for Berwick and the sea. Once or twice he leaps clean into the air, a flying bar of silver. Then he sulks at the bottom, a mere dead weight, attempting devices only to be conjectured. A common plan now is to tighten the line, and tap the butt end of the rod. This humane expedient produces effects not unlike neuralgia, it may be supposed, for the fish is off in a new fury. But rush after rush grows tamer, till he is drawn within reach of the gaff, and so on to the grassy bed, where a tap on the head ends his sorrows, and the colours on his shining side undulate in delicate and beautiful radiance. It may be dreadfully cruel, as cruel as nature and human life; but those who eat salmon or butcher's meat cannot justly protest, for they, desiring the end, have willed the means. As the angler walks home, and watches the purple Eildon grow grey in the twilight, or sees the hills of Mull delicately outlined between the faint gold of sky and sea, it is not probable that his conscience reproaches him very fiercely. He has spent a day among the most shy and hidden beauties of nature, surprising her here and there in places where, unless he had gone a-fishing, he might never have penetrated. He has set his skill against the strength and skill of the monarch of rivers, and has mastered him among the haunts of fairies and beneath

the ruined towers of feudalism. These are some of the delights that to-day end for a season.³

³ The author once caught a salmon. It did not behave in any way like the ferocious fish in this article.

WINTER SPORTS

People to whom cold means misery, who hate to be braced, and shudder at the word “seasonable,” can have little difficulty in accounting for the origin of the sports of winter. They need only adapt to the circumstances that old Lydian tradition which says that games of chance were invented during a great famine. Men permitted themselves to eat only every second day, and tried to forget their hunger in playing at draughts and dice. That is clearly the invention of a southern people, which never had occasion to wish it could become oblivious of the weather, as too many of us would like to be in England. Such shivering and indolent folks may be inclined to say that skating and curling and wildfowl-shooting, and the other diversions which seduce the able-bodied from the warm precincts of the cheerful fire, were only contrived to enable us to forget the state of the thermometer. Whether or not that was the purpose of the first northerner who fixed sheep-bones beneath his feet, to course more smoothly over the frozen sound, there can be no doubt that winter sports answer their presumed purpose. They keep up that glow which only exercise in the open air can give, and promote the health which shows itself in the complexion. It is the young lady who interprets literally the Scotch invitation “come into the fire,” and who spoils the backs of library novels by holding them too near the comfortable hearth, she it is who suffers from

the ignoble and unbecoming liberties that winter takes with the human countenance. Happier and wiser is she who studies the always living and popular Dutch roll rather than the Grecian bend, and who blooms with continual health and good temper. Our changeful climate affords so few opportunities of learning to skate, that it is really extraordinary to find so much skill, and to see feats so difficult and graceful. In Canada, where frost is a certainty, and where the covered "rinks" make skating an indoor sport, it is not odd that great perfection should be attained. But as fast as Canadians bring over a new figure or a new trick it is picked up, and critics may dispute as to whether the bold and dashing style of the English school of skaters is not preferable to the careful and smooth, but somewhat pretty and niggling manner of the colonists. Our skating stands to the Canadian fashion somewhat as French does to English etching. We have the dash and the *chic* with skates which Frenchmen show with the etching-needle, and the Canadian, on the other hand, is apt to decline into the mere prettiness which is the fault of English etchers.

Skating has been, within the last few years, a very progressive art. There was a time when mere speed, and the grace of speed, satisfied most amateurs. The ideal spot for skating in those days must have been the lakes where Wordsworth used to listen to the echoes replying from the cold and moonlit hills, or such a frozen river as that on which the American skater was pursued by wolves. No doubt such scenes have still their rare charm, and

few expeditions are more attractive than a moonlight exploration of a winding river. But it is seldom that our frosts make such tours practicable, whereas almost every winter it is possible to skate with safety, at least on shallow ponds, or on places like the ice-bound floods at Oxford. Thus figure-skating, which needs but a surface of a few yards to each performer, has come into fashion, and it is hard to imagine any exercise more elegant, or one that requires more nerve. The novice is theoretically aware that if he throws his body into certain unfamiliar postures, which are explained to him, the laws of gravitation and of the higher curves will cause him to complete a certain figure. But how much courage and faith it requires to yield to these laws and let the frame swing round subject to the immutable rules of matter! The temptation to stop half-way is almost irresistible, and then there occurs a complicated fall, which makes the petrified spectator ask where may be the skater's body – "which are legs, and which are arms?" Of all sports, skating has the best claim to adopt Danton's motto, *Toujours de l'audace*— the audacity meant being that of giving one's self up to the laws of motion, and not the vulgar quality which carries its owner on to dangerous ice. Something may now be learned of figure-skating on dry land, and the adventure may be renewed of the mythical children who went sliding all on a summer day. In this respect, skating has a great advantage over its rival, the "roaring game" of curling. It would be poor fun to curl on asphalte, with stones fixed on wheels, though the amusement is possible, and we recommend the idea,

which is not copyright, to enthusiastic curlers; and curlers are almost always enthusiastic. It is pleasant to think how the hills must be ringing with their shouts, round many a lonely tarn, where the men of one parish meet those of the next in friendly conflict north of the Tweed. The exhilarating yell of “soop her up,” whereby the curler who wields a broom is abjured to sweep away the snow in front of the advancing stone, will many a time be heard this winter. There is something peculiarly healthy about this sport – in the ring with which the heavy stones clash against each other; in the voices of the burly plaided men, shepherd, and farmer, and laird; in the rough banquet of beef and greens and the copious toddy which close the day’s exertions.

Frost brings with it an enforced close-season for most of furred and feathered kind. The fox is safe enough, and, if sportsmen are right, must be rather wearying for open weather, and for the return of his favourite exercise with hounds. But even when the snow hangs out her white flag of truce and goodwill between man and beast, the British sportsman is still the British sportsman, and is not averse to going out and killing something. To such a one, wild-fowl shooting is a possibility, though, as good Colonel Hawker says, some people complain forsooth that it interferes with ease and comfort. We should rather incline to think it does. A black frost with no moon is not precisely the kind of weather that a degenerate sportsman would choose for lying in the frozen mud behind a bush, or pushing a small punt set on large skates across the ice to get at birds. Few attitudes can be

more cramping than that of the gunner who skulks on one knee behind his canoe, pushing it with one hand, and dragging himself along by the aid of the other. Then, it is disagreeable to have to use a gun so heavy that the stock is fitted with a horsehair pillow, or even with a small bolster. The whistle of widgeon and the shrill-sounding pinions of wild geese may be attractive noises, and no doubt all shooting is exciting; and a form of shooting which stakes all on one shot must offer some thrilling moments of expectation. The quarry has to be measured by number, not by size, and fifty widgeon at one discharge, or a brace of wild swans may almost serve to set against a stag of ten.⁴ The lover of nature has glimpses in wild-fowl shooting such as she gives no other man – the glittering expanse of waters, the birds “all in a charm,” all uttering their cry together, the musical moan of the tide, and the “long glories of the winter moon.” But success is too difficult, equipment too costly, and rheumatism too certain for wild-fowl shooting to be reckoned among popular winter sports.

⁴ Mr. Wordsworth, in his poem of “The Recluse,” expresses a horror of this diversion.

HUMAN LEVITATION

Why is it that living fish add nothing to the “weight of the bucket of water in which they swim?” Charles II. is said to have asked the Royal Society. A still more extraordinary question has been propounded in the grave pages of the *Quarterly Journal of Science*, edited by Mr. Crookes, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and the discoverer of the useful metal thallium. The problem set in this learned review does not, like that of the Merry Monarch, beg the question of facts. “What is the scientific inference from the various accounts, modern and traditional, of human levitation?” is the difficulty before the world at this present moment. Now, there may be people who never heard of levitation, nor even of “thaums,” a term that frequently occurs in the article we refer to. A slight acquaintance with the dead languages, whose shadows reappear in this queer fashion, enables the inquirer to decide that “levitation” means the power of becoming lighter than the surrounding atmosphere, and setting at nought the laws of gravitation.

Thaums, again, are wonders, and there is no very obvious reason why they should not be called wonders. But to return to levitation. Most of us have heard how Mr. Home and other gifted people possess the faculty of being raised from the ground, and of floating about the room, or even out of the window. There are clouds of witnesses who have observed these phenomena,

which generally occur in the dark. In fact, they are part of that vague subject called spiritualism, about which opinion is so much divided, and views are so vague. It has been said that the human race, in regard to this high argument, is divided into five classes. There are people who believe; people who investigate; people who think the matter really ought to be looked into; people who dislike the topic, but who would believe in the phenomena if they were proved; and people of common sense, who would not believe in them if they were proved. Now, the article in the *Journal of Science* only deals with one of the phenomena we hear so much of – that of the sudden suspension of the laws of gravitation, in the case of individual men. The author has collected a vast variety of traditions bearing on this subject, and his conclusion apparently is, that events of this kind, though rather rare, are natural, are peculiar to people of certain temperament and organization, and, above all, bring no proof as to the truth of the doctrines asserted by the persons who exhibit the phenomena. Now, men of science, as a rule, and the world at large, look on stories of this sort as myths, romances, false interpretations of subjective feelings, pious frauds, and absurd nonsense. Before expressing an opinion, it may be well to look over the facts, as they are called, which are brought under our notice.

What accounts, then, are there of levitation among the civilized people of the Old World? First, there is Abaris, the Scythian, “in the time of Pythagoras,” says our author. Well,

as a matter of evidence, Abaris may have been levitated in the eighth century before Christ, or it may have been two hundred and fifty years later. Perhaps he was a Druid of the Hebrides. Toland thought so, and Toland had as good a chance of knowing as any one else. Our earliest authority, Herodotus, says he took no earthly food, and “went with his arrow all round the world without once eating.” It seems that he rode on this arrow, which, Mr. Rawlinson thinks, may possibly have been an early tradition of the magnet. All our detailed information about him is of later date than the Christian era. The fact remains that tradition says he was able to fly in the air. Pythagoras is said to have had the same power, or rather the same faculty came upon him. He was lifted up, with no will or conscious exertion of his own. Now, our evidence as to the power of Pythagoras to be “like a bird, in two places at once,” is exactly as valuable as that about Abaris. It rests on the tradition repeated by superstitious philosophers who lived eight hundred years after his death. “To Pythagoras, therefore,” as Herodotus has it, “we now say farewell,” with no further knowledge than that vague tradition says he was “levitated.” The writer now leaves classical antiquity behind him – he does not repeat a saying of Plotinus, the mystic of Alexandria, who lived in the third century of our era. The best known anecdote of him is that his disciples asked him if he were not sometimes levitated, and he laughed, and said, “No; but he was no fool who persuaded you of this.” Instead of Plotinus, we are referred to a mass of Jewish and anti-Christian apocryphal traditions, which

have the same common point – the assertion of the existence of the phenomenon of levitation. Apollonius of Tyana is also said to have been a highly accomplished medium. We are next presented with a list of forty “levitated” persons, canonized or beatified by the Church of Rome. Their dates range from the ninth to the seventeenth century, and their histories go to prove that levitation runs in families. Perhaps the best known of the collection is St. Theresa (1515-1582), and it is only fair to say that the stories about St. Theresa are very like those repeated about our lady mediums. One of these, Mrs. Guppy, as every one knows, can scatter flowers all over a room, “flowers of Paradise,” unknown to botanists. Fauna, rather than flora, was St. Theresa’s province, and she kept a charming pet, a little white animal of no recognized species. Still, about her, and about her friend St John of the Cross, the legend runs that they used to be raised off the ground, chairs and all, and float about in the most soothing way. Poor Peter of Alcantara was levitated in a less pleasant manner; “he uttered a frightful cry, and shot through the air as if he had been fired from a gun.” Peter had a new form of epilepsy – the rising, not the falling, sickness. Joseph Copertino, again, floated about to such good effect, that in 1650 Prince John of Brunswick foreswore the Protestant faith. The logical process which converted this prince is not a very obvious one.

Why do we quote all these old monkish and neoplatonic legends? For some the evidence is obviously nil; to other anecdotes many witnesses bear testimony; but then, we know that

an infectious *schwärmerei* can persuade people that the lion now removed from Northumberland House wagged his tail. The fact is that there is really matter for science in all these anecdotes, and the question to be asked is this – How does it happen that in ages and societies so distant and so various identical stories are current? What is the pressure that makes neoplatonic gossips of the fourth century circulate the same marvels as spiritualist gossips of the nineteenth? How does it happen that the mediæval saint, the Indian medicine-man, the Siberian shaman (a suggestive term), have nearly identical wonders attributed to them? If people wanted merely to tell “a good square lie,” as the American slang has it, invention does not seem to have such pitifully narrow boundaries. It appears to follow that there are contagious nervous illusions, about which science has not said the last word. We believe that the life of children, with its innocent mixture of dreams and waking, facts and fancies, could supply odd parallels to the stories we have been treated to. And as we are on the subject, we should like, as the late President Lincoln said, to tell a little story. It occurred to a learned divine to meet a pupil, who ought by rights to have been in the University of Oxford, walking in Regent Street. The youth glided past like a ghost, and was lost in the crowd; next day his puzzled preceptor received a note, dated on the previous day from Oxford, telling how the pupil had met the teacher by the Isis, and on inquiry had heard he was in London. Here is a case of levitation – of double levitation, and we leave it to be explained by the followers of

Abaris and of Mr. Home.

A CHINAMAN'S MARRIAGE

The Court of Assizes at Paris has lately been occupied with the case of a Chinese gentleman, whose personal charms and literary powers make him worthy to be the compatriot of Ah-Sin, that astute Celestial. Tin-tun-ling is the name – we wish we could say, with Thackeray's F. B., “the highly respectable name” – of the Chinese who has just been acquitted on a charge of bigamy. In China, it is said that the more distinguished a man is the shorter is his title, and the name of a very victorious general is a mere click or gasp. On this principle, the trisyllabic Tin-tun-ling must have been without much honour in his own country. In Paris, however, he has learned Parisian aplomb, and when confronted with his judges and his accusers, his air, we learn, “was very calm.” “His smile it was pensive and bland,” like the Heathen Chineese's, and his calm confidence was justified by events. It remains to tell the short, though not very simple, tale of Tin-tun-ling. Mr. Ling was born in 1831, in the province of Chan-li. At the interesting age of eighteen, an age at which the intellect awakens and old prejudices lose their grasp, he ceased to burn gilt paper on the tombs of his ancestors; he ceased to revere their august spirits; he gave up the use of the planchette, rejected the teachings of Confucius, and, in short, became a convert to Christianity. This might be considered either as a gratifying testimony to the persuasive powers of Catholic missionaries, or as an example of the wiles of

Jesuitism, if we did not know the inner history of Mr. Ling's soul, the abysmal depths of his personality. He has not, like many other modern converts, written a little book, such as "How I ceased to chinchin Joss; or, from Confucius to Christianity," but he has told Madame Judith Mendès all about it. Madame Mendès has made a name in literature, and English readers may have wondered how the daughter of the poet Théophile Gautier came to acquire the knowledge of Chinese which she has shown in her translations from that language. It now appears that she was the pupil of Tin-tun-ling, who, in a moment of expansion, confided to her that he adopted the Catholic faith that he might eat a morsel of bread. He was starving, it seems; he had eaten nothing for eight days, when he threw himself on the charity of the missionaries, and received baptism. Since Winckelmann turned renegade, and became a Roman Catholic merely that the expenses of his tour to Rome and his maintenance there might be paid, there have surely been few more mercenary converts. Tin-tun-ling was not satisfied with being christened into the Church, he was also married in Catholic rites, and here his misfortunes fairly began, and he entered on the path which has led him into difficulty and discredit.

The French, as a nation, are not remarkable for their accuracy in the use of foreign proper names, and we have a difficulty in believing that the name of Mr. Ling's first wife was really Quzia-Tom-Alacer. There is a touch of M. Hugo's famous Tom Jim Jack, the British tar, about this designation. Nevertheless, the facts are that Tin-tun-ling was wedded to Quzia, and had

four children by her. After years of domestic life, on which he is said to look back but rarely and with reluctance, he got a position as secretary and shoeblack and tutor in Chinese to a M. Callery, and left the province of Chin-li for Paris. For three months this devoted man sent Quzia-Tom-Alacer small sums of money, and after that his kindness became, as Douglas Jerrold said, unremitting. Quzia heard of her lord no more till she learned that he had forgotten his marriage vow, and was, in fact, Another's. As to how Tin-tun-ling contracted a matrimonial alliance in France, the evidence is a little confusing. It seems certain that after the death of his first employer, Callery, he was in destitution; that M. Théophile Gautier, with his well-known kindness and love of curiosities, took him up, and got him lessons in Chinese, and it seems equally certain that in February, 1872, he married a certain Caroline Julie Liégeois. In the act of marriage, Tin-tun-ling described himself as a baron, which we know that he was not, for in his country he did not rejoice in buttons and other insignia of Chinese nobility. As Caroline Julie Ling (*née* Liégeois) denounced her lord for bigamy in 1873, and succeeded, as has been seen, in proving that he was husband of Quzia-Tom-Alacer, it may seem likely that she found out the spurious honours of the pretended title. But whatever may be thought of the deceitful conduct of Ling, there is little doubt apparently that Caroline is really his. He stated in court that by Chinese law a husband who has not heard of his wife for three years may consider that his marriage has legally ceased to be

binding. Madame Mendès proved from the volume Ta-Tsilg-Leu-Lee, the penal code of China, that Ling's law was correct. It also came out in court that Quzia-Tom-Alacer had large feet. The jury, on hearing this evidence, very naturally acquitted Tin-tun-ling, whom Madame Mendès embraced, it is said, with the natural fervour of a preserver of innocence. Whether Tin-tun-ling is now a bachelor, or whether he is irrevocably bound to Caroline Julie, is a question that seems to have occurred to no one.

The most mysterious point in this dark business is the question, How did Tin-tun-ling, who always spoke of his first marriage with terror, happen to involve himself in the difficulties of a second? Something more than the common weakness of human nature must have been at work here. Madame Mendès says, like a traitor to her sex, that Tin espoused Caroline Julie from feelings of compassion. He yielded, according to Madame Mendès, "to the entreaties of this woman." The story of M. Gustave Lafargue confirms this ungallant tale. According to M. Lafargue, Tin's bride was a governess, and an English governess, or at least one who taught English. She proposed to marry Tin, who first resisted, and then hesitated. In a matter of this kind, the man who hesitates is lost. The English governess flattered Tin's literary as well as his personal vanity. She proposed to translate the novels which Tin composes in his native tongue, and which he might expect to prove as popular in France as some other fictions of his fatherland have done in times past. So they were married.

Tim, though on pleasure bent, had a frugal mind, and after a wedding-breakfast, which lasted all day, he went to a theatre to ask for two free passes. When he came back his bride was gone. He sought her with all the ardour of the bridegroom in the ballad of “The Mistletoe Bough,” and with more success. Madame Ling was reading a novel at home. Mr. Carlyle has quoted Tobias Smollett as to the undesirability of giving the historical muse that latitude which is not uncommon in France, and we prefer to leave the tale of Ling’s where Mr. Carlyle left that of Brynhild’s wedding.⁵

⁵ It is a melancholy fact that the Author has quite forgotten what *did* happen! Thus a narrative, probably diverting, is for ever lost, thanks to the modesty of our free Press.

SIEUR DE MONTAIGNE

The French National Library has recently, as it is said, made an acquisition of great value and interest. The books, and better still the notes, of Montaigne, the essayist, have been bought up at the not very exorbitant price of thirty-six thousand francs. The volumes are the beautiful editions of the sixteenth century – the age of great scholars and of printers, like the Estiennes, who were at once men of learning and of taste. It is almost certain that they must be enriched with marginal notes of Montaigne's, and the marginal notes of a great man add even more to the value of a book than the scribbles of circulating library readers detract from its beauty. There is always something characteristic in a man's treatment of his books. Coleridge's marginalia on borrowed works, according to Lamb, were an ornament of value to his friends, if they were lucky enough to get the books back again. Poe's marginalia were of exquisite neatness, though in their printed form they were not very interesting. Thackeray's seem mostly to have taken the shape of slight sketches in illustration of the matter. Scaliger's notes converted a classic into a new and precious edition of one example. Casaubon's, on the other hand, were mere scratches and mnemonic lines and blurs, with which he marked his passage through a book, as roughly as the American woodsman "blazes" his way through a forest. "None could read the comment save himself," and the text was

disfigured. We may be sure that Montaigne's marginalia are of a very different value. As he walked up and down in his orchard, or in his library, beneath the rafters engraved with epicurean maxims, he jotted his thoughts hastily on the volume in his hand – on the Pliny, or Suetonius, or Livy. His library was probably not a large one, for he had but a few favourite authors, the Latin historians, moralists, and anecdotists, and for mere amusement Terence and Catullus, Boccaccio and Rabelais. His thoughts fell asleep, he says, if he was not walking about, and his utter want of memory made notes and note-books necessary to him. He who could not remember the names of the most ordinary tools used in agriculture, nor the difference between oats and barley, could never keep in his head his enormous stock of classical anecdotes and modern instances. His thoughts got innocently confused with his recollections, and his note-books will probably show whence he drew many of his stories, and the quotations that remain untraced. They will add also to our knowledge of the man and of his character, though it might seem difficult to give additional traits in the portrait of himself which he has painted with so many minute touches.

With the exception of Dr. Johnson, there is scarcely any great man of letters whom we are enabled to know so intimately as the *Sieur de Montaigne*. He has told us all about himself; all about his age, as far as it came under his eager and observant eyes; all about the whole world, as far as it made part of his experience. Rousseau is not more frank, and not half so worthy of credit,

for Rousseau, like Topsy in the novel, had a taste for “fessing” offences that he had never committed rather than not “fess” at all. Montaigne strikes no such attitudes; he does not pose, he does not so much confess as blab. His life stands before the reader “as in a picture.” We learn that his childhood was a happier one than usually fell to the lot of children in that age when there was but little honey smeared on the cup of learning. We know that his father taught him Greek in a kind of sport or game, that the same parent’s relations with the fair sex were remarkable, and that he had extraordinary strength in his thumb. For his own part, Montaigne was so fresh and full of life that Simon Thomas, a great physician, said it would make a decrepit old man healthy again to live in his company. One thinks of him as a youth like the irrepressible Swiss who amused the *ennui* of Gray.

Even in his old age, Montaigne was a gay, cheerful, untiring traveller, always eager to be going on, delighted with every place he visited, and yet anxious for constant change of scene and for new experience. To be amusingly and simply selfish is ever part of the charm of Montaigne. He adds to his reader’s pleasure in life by the keenness with which he relished his own existence, and savoured every little incident as a man relishes the bouquet of wine. Without selfishness, how can this be managed? and without perfect simplicity and the good faith on which he prided himself, how could Montaigne, how could Pepys, have enriched the world as they have done? His essays are among the few works that really and literally make life more opulent with accumulated

experience, criticism, reflection, humour. He gives of his rich nature, his lavish exuberance of character, out of that fresh and puissant century to this rather weary one, just as his society in youth might have been given to the sick old man.

Besides what he has to give in this manner, Montaigne seems to express French character, to explain the French genius and the French way of looking at life, more clearly and completely than any other writer. He has at bottom the intense melancholy, the looking forward to the end of all, which is the ground-note of the poetry of Villon, and of Ronsard, as of the prose of Chateaubriand. The panelled library in Montaigne's chateau was carved with mottoes, which were to be charms against too great fear of death. "For my part," he says, "if a man could by any means avoid death, were it by hanging a calf-skin on his limbs, I am one that would not be ashamed of the shift." Happy it is, he thinks, that we do not, as a rule, meet death on a sudden, any more than we encounter the death of youth in one day. But this is only the dark background of the enjoyment of life, to which Montaigne clings, as he says, "even too eagerly." Merely to live, merely to muse over this spectacle of the world, simply to feel, even if the thing felt be agony, and to reflect on the pain, and on how it may best be borne – this is enough for Montaigne. This is his philosophy, reconciling in a way the maxims of the schools that divided the older worlds, the theories of the Stoic and wiser Epicurean. To make each moment yield all that it has of experience, and of reflection on that experience, is his

system of existence. Acting on this idea, all contrasts of great and petty, mean and divine, in human nature do not sadden, but delight him. It was part of the play to see the division between the King of Navarre (Henri IV.) and the Duke of Guise. He told Thuanus that he knew the most secret thoughts of both these princes, and that he was persuaded that neither of them was of the religion he professed. This scandal gave him no concern, compared with his fear that his own castle would suffer in wars of the League. As to the Reformation, he held it for a hasty, conceited movement on the part of persons who did not know what they were meddling with, and, being a perfect sceptic, he was a perfectly good Churchman. Full of tolerance, good-humour, and content, cheerful in every circumstance, simple and charming, yet melancholy in his hour, Montaigne is a thorough representative of the French spirit in literature. His English translator in 1776 declares that "he meets with a much more favourable entertainment in England than in his native country, a servile nation that has lost all sense of liberty." Like many other notions current in 1776, this theory of Montaigne's popularity at home and abroad has lost its truth. Perhaps it would be more true to say that Montaigne is one of the last authors whom modern taste learns to appreciate. He is a man's author, not a woman's; a tired man's, not a fresh man's. We all come to him, late indeed, but at last, and rest in his panelled library.

THACKERAY'S DRAWINGS

The advertisements of publishers make a very pleasant sort of reading. They offer, as it were, a distant prospect of the great works of the future, looming in a golden haze of expectation. A gentleman or lady may acquire a reputation for wide research by merely making a careful study of the short paragraphs in the literary papers.

There are three classes of people who take an interest in letters. There are the persons who read books; the much larger class which reads reviews; and, again, they who merely skim over the advertisements of new works. The last set live in a constant enjoyment of the pleasure of expectation; they pretend to themselves that some day they will find time to peruse the volumes in the birth of which they are interested, but, in fact, they live in the future. They are a month ahead of their friends who read reviews, and six months of the students who actually devour books themselves. Not only these eager lovers of literary "shop," but all friends of English humour, must be glad to see that a collection of Mr. Thackeray's sketches and drawings has been prepared for publication.

When the news spread over England of Mr. Thackeray's sudden death, it was felt that a personal loss had been sustained by every one who cared for books and for style. Other men might write themselves out, their invention might become weary; and,

indeed, Mr. Thackeray himself felt this fatigue. He wished he could get some one to do "the business" of his stories he told the world in a "Roundabout Paper." The love-making parts of "the business" annoyed him, and made him blush, in the privacy of his study, "as if he were going into an apoplexy." Some signs of this distaste for the work of the novelist were obvious, perhaps, in "Philip," though they did not mar the exquisite tenderness and charm of "Denis Duval." However that might be, his inimitable style was as fresh as ever, with its passages of melancholy, its ease, its flexible strength, and unlooked-for cadences. It was the talk about life, and the tone of that talk, which fell silent when Thackeray died, that we all felt as an irremediable loss. There is an old story that Pindar had never in his lifetime written an ode in praise of Persephone, the goddess of death and the dead, and that after he had departed from among living men, his shade communicated to the priests a new hymn on the Queen of Hades. The works of great writers published after their decease have somewhat of the charm of this fabled hymn; they are voices, familiar and unlocked for, out of the silence. They are even stranger, when they have such a slight and homelike interest as the trifles that fell unheeded from the pen or pencil of one who has done great things in poetry or art. Mr. Thackeray's sketches in the "Orphan of Pimlico" are of this quality – caricatures thrown off to amuse children who are now grown men and women. They have the mark of the old unmistakable style, humorous and sad, and, as last remains, they are to be welcomed and treasured.

Mr. Thackeray's skill with the pencil bore very curious relations to his mastery of the other art, in which lay his strength, but to which perhaps he never gave his love. Everyone has heard how, when a young man, he was anxious to illustrate "Pickwick," which found more fitting artists in Seymour and H. K. Browne. Mr. Thackeray seems to have been well aware of the limitations of his own power as a draughtsman. In one of his "Roundabout Papers" he described the method – the secret so to say – of Rubens; and then goes on to lament the impotence of his own hand, the "pitiful niggling," that cannot reproduce the bold sweep of Ruben's brush.

Thackeray was like Théophile Gautier, who began life as a painter, and who has left to posterity a wonderful etching of his own portrait, pale, romantic, with long sweeping moustache, and hair falling over his shoulders. Both writers found their knowledge of the technique of painting useful in making their appreciation of art and nature more keen and versatile. But Mr. Thackeray's powers had another field – he really did succeed in illustrating some of his own writings. Accomplished his style never was. There was a trace of the old school of caricature in the large noses and thin legs which he gave his figures. Nor was his drawing very correct; the thin legs of the heroes of "The Virginians" are often strangely contorted. He has even placed a thumb on the wrong side of a hand! For all that, he gave to many of his own characters a visible embodiment, which another artist would have missed. Mr. Frederick Walker, for instance, drew

Philip Firmin admirably – a large, rough man, with a serious and rather worn face, and a huge blonde beard. Mr. Walker's Philip has probably become the Philip of many readers, but he was not Mr. Thackeray's. It is delightful to be sure, on the other hand, that we have the author's own Captain Costigan before us, in his habit as he lived – the unshaven chin, the battered hat, the high stock, the blue cloak, the whiskeyfied stare, and the swagger. Mr. Thackeray did not do his young men well. Arthur Pendennis is only himself as he sits with Warrington over a morning paper; in his white hat and black band at the Derby, he has not the air of a gentleman. Harry Foker is either a coarse exaggeration, or the modern types of Fokers have improved in demeanour on the great prototype. But Costigan is always perfect; and the nose and wig of Major Pendennis are ideally correct. In his drawings of women, Mr. Thackeray very much confined himself to two types. There was the dark-eyed, brown-haired, bright-complexioned girl who was his favourite – Laura, Betsinda, Amelia; and the blonde, ringletted, clever, and false girl – Becky, Blanche, Angelica, who was the favourite of the reader. He did not always succeed in making them pretty, though there is a beautiful head of Amelia, in a court dance at Pumpernickel; but he always made the dark young lady look honest, and the fair young minx look a thing all soul and enthusiasm.

It was a note of Mr. Thackeray's art, and probably one among other proofs that the higher fields of art were closed to him, that his success by no means corresponded to the amount of

pains he took with his work. His drawings which appeared as steel engravings, were not unfrequently weak, while his sketches on the wood and his lithographs were much more free and masterly. There is, indeed, a sketch on the steel of poor Pen tossing feverishly in his mother's comforting arms, which is full of passion and life and sentiment. But it was rare that success attended his ambition, and, indeed, another drawing of Pen and his mother admiring a sunset might have come out of a book of fashions of that remote period. It was in his initial letters and slight designs that Thackeray showed his best powers. There is much wistful tenderness in the little Marquise's face as she trips down a rope-ladder in an initial letter of *Vanity Fair*. The bewigged shepherds and powdered shepherdesses of his favourite period are always reproduced with grace, and the children of his drawings are almost invariably charming. In the darker moods, when "man delighted him not, nor woman either," children did not fail to please him, and he sketched them in a hundred pathetic attitudes. There are the little brother and sister of the doomed House of Gaunt, sitting under the ancestral sword that seems ready to fall. There is little Rawdon Crawley, manly and stout, in his great coat, watching the thin little cousin Pitt, whom he was "too big a dog to play with." There is the printer's devil, asleep at Pen's door; and the small boy in "Dr. Birch," singing in his nightgown to the big boy in bed. There is Betsinda dancing with her plum-bun in "The Rose and the Ring." The burlesque drawings of that delightful child's book are not its least attraction.

Not arriving at the prettiness of Mr. Tenniel, and the elegance of Mr. Du Maurier, and falling far short of their ingenious fantasy, they are yet manly delineations of great adventures. The count kicking the two black men into space is a powerful design, full of action; and it would be hard to beat the picture of the fate of Gruffanuf's husband. These and the rest are old friends, and there are hosts of quaint scribblings, signed with the mark of a pair of spectacles, scattered through the pages of *Punch*.

GOLF

While pheasant-shooters are enjoying the first day of the season, the votaries of a sport not less noble, though less noisy, are holding the great festival of their year. The autumn meeting of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews is in full swing, and the words will suggest pleasant memories to many a golfer. Golf is not one of the more brilliant and famous pastimes of the day, though it yields to none in antiquity and in unassuming merit. The names of the winners of the gold medal and of the silver cross are not telegraphed all over the world as widely as Mr. Tennyson's hero wished the news that Maud had accepted him to be. The red man may possibly "dance beneath his red cedar tree" at the tidings of the event of one of our great horse-races, or great university matches. At all events, even if the red man preserves his usual stoicism of demeanour, his neighbours, the pale-faces, like to know all about the result of many English sports the moment they are decided. Golf, as we have said, excites less general enthusiasm; but in people who love it at all, the love is burning, consuming; they will talk golf-shop in season and out of season. Few persons, perhaps, will call golf the very first and queen of games. Cricket exercises more faculties of body, and even of mind, for does not the artful bowler "bowl with his head?" Football demands an extraordinary personal courage, and implies the existence of a fierce delight in battle with one's

peers. Tennis, with all its merits, is a game for the few, so rare are tennis-courts and so expensive the pastime. But cricketers, football-players, tennis-players, would all give golf the second place after their favourite exercise; and just as Themistocles was held to be the best Greek general, because each of his fellows placed him second, so golf may assert a right to be thought the first of games. One great advantage it certainly has – it is a game for “men” of all ages, from eight, or even younger, to eighty. The links of St. Andrews are probably cleared just now of the little lads and the veterans, they make room for the heroes, the medalists, the great players – Mr. Mackay, Mr. Lamb, Mr. Leslie Balfour, and the rest. But at ordinary times there are always dozens of tiny boys in knickerbockers and scarlet stockings, who “drive out” the first hole in some twenty strokes of their little clubs, and who pass much of their time in fishing for their lost balls in the muddy burn. As for the veterans “on the threshold of old age,” it is pleasant to watch their boyish eagerness, the swaying of their bodies as they watch the short flight of their longest hits; their delight when they do manage to hit further than the sand-pit, or “bunker,” which is named after the nose of a long-dead principal of the university; their caution, nay, their almost tedious delay in the process of putting, that is, of hitting the ball over the “green” into the neighbouring hole. They can still do their round, or their two rounds, five or ten miles’ walking a day, and who can speak otherwise than well of a game which is not too strenuous for healthy age or tender childhood, and yet

allows an athlete of twenty-three to put out all his strength?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.