

THE CHARITY GIRL

By EFFIE A. ROWLANDS

CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

Next day, about lunch time, the countess, her children and attendants, arrived with much clatter and importance. Sheila—by accident, of course—was just coming down the stairs as Lady Daleswater was ascending them.

There was a mutual start, and then a cordial greeting. Sheila was looking wonderfully pretty in her long seal-skin mantle, her ruddy, golden hair making a bit of bright color beneath her neat hat to match. Lady Daleswater was pleased to approve of her probable future sister-in-law.

"You here, Miss Fraser?" she exclaimed. "This is quite a delightful surprise. I pictured you in Mountberry, enjoying yourself."

"I was compelled to come to London on business matters, and," Sheila added, with a tiny sigh that did not escape Lady Daleswater's keen ears, "Mountberry is not particularly lively just now."

"Can you give me any news of my brother—is he really so dangerously hurt? Mamma is such an alarmist, you know."

Sheila assumed a sad, anxious look, although in reality she was not aware exactly how Jack was at that particular moment, and had never been very much frightened even at the verdict of the London doctors.

"I am afraid he is very ill," she said in a low voice.

Lady Daleswater did not seem much impressed.

"I hope you are not returning home immediately? No? Oh, that is delightful, and still more delightful that you should be staying here. You must come in and dine with me to-night. Mrs. Fraser is with you?"

Sheila explained that her chaperone was her cousin, Mrs. Watson.

"We shall remain in London for a little while," she said, "and I hope to see a great deal of you. Perhaps I may be able to prevail on you to come down to Daleswater House when I go back there. It will be very dull, my dear Sheila; but—"

But "my dear Sheila" would have gladly welcomed months of dullness to get such an invitation as this. Her spirits rose brilliantly, and she laid herself out to please Lady Daleswater.

Three days later the Earl of Daleswater arrived in London, and immediately, at his wife's instigation, went down to Mountberry to see how matters were, and the very same afternoon, as Sheila sat yawning over a novel by the fire, the door opened and Beverly Rochfort was announced. She started up eagerly to greet him.

"Where have you been? I thought you were never coming back," she declared.

"I have been busy," he said. "I have not been wasting time, I assure you. You wonder what took me out of London? Well, I will tell you. I went down to soothe the last moments of Roderick Anstruther. Yes, it sounds curious, doesn't it? But fate for some strange reason brought this man to our rescue just when we needed him."

"How can he help us?" asked Sheila, incredulously, although her face was flushing with excitement. "More especially if, as I understand you to infer, he is now dead?"

"You shall see, Miss Fraser. Anstruther met me out in Africa; he then went under another name. I always liked the man, there was something grim yet wonderful about him. When he found I was coming to England he gave me a packet of papers to bring to his lawyers; before delivering them I took the precaution of sounding these lawyers first, and as easily as possible I soon discovered my companion's real name. Needless to say, I did not deliver the papers, more especially when I found that Anstruther was in England, and supposed to be dying—he had evidently found his end coming, and rushed over to see Mrs. Fraser before he died. I at once traveled off to seek him, and, of course, had to tell a few dozen lies or so to explain why I had done so. Fortunately, the man was too ill to protest or question much; all he asked, all he wanted, was to see Constance Fraser, and confess the truth of his treachery toward her and his brother."

"And you call this helping us, Mr. Rochfort?"

"As Roderick is dead, and did not confess to Mrs. Fraser, I certainly do. To please him I drew up a sort of written statement, to which he managed to scrawl his name just at the very last. Here is the document. Shall I tell you what it contains, Miss Fraser?"

Sheila nodded her head.

"This is the last dying confession of Roderick Anstruther, in which he owns to having separated his brother from his wife for sheer malice, in which he also confesses that his brother's child did really die, and that the girl now living is the offspring of a secret marriage between himself and some country woman."

"And she is that really?" Sheila asked.

"No, certainly not. Audrey, according to her uncle's dying confession, is the child of Frank and Constance Anstruther. You forget, I am reading what I wrote, not what Roderick Anstruther told me to write."

"Well?" the girl said after this, as her brow cleared.

"This document then goes on to will the whole of the dead man's fortune and possessions to this aforesaid child of his on one condition, viz., that she become my wife before six months elapse; if she refuses, she is to be placed once more in the Female Orphan Asylum till some definite and equally disagreeable abode is found for her. You will see that I have been very careful and very explicit, Miss Fraser. I have left nothing undone that can possibly help us."

"You forget, she may always refuse," Sheila said, gloomily. "This is not what I had expected."

"I am not so nervous of failure," Beverly returned. "Audrey will be a rich woman if she becomes my wife, and her lot will not be an enviable one if she refuses."

"There is Mrs. Fraser to be faced."

"Mrs. Fraser will cease to have any guardianship over the girl when this document is read."

"Who will be her guardian?" asked Sheila.

"I am left the one sole and entire guardian of Miss Audrey Anstruther. To deceive him was easy, to explain to the lawyers a trifle more difficult; but it was soon done. When you peruse this paper carefully you will see that the reason Roderick Anstruther reposes such trust in me is because a few years ago I saved his life at the risk of my own, and because we were firm and never parted friends out in Africa together. I give myself great credit for those two lies, Miss Fraser; they come in so neatly, and they carry the day, you see."

Sheila looked at him quietly. She was much impressed, yet not quite satisfied.

"As you invented so quickly and easily, why did you not put in some clause about her being forbidden to marry any one but you?" she asked.

"The time was so brief; at any moment the lawyers might have come down. Considering all things, I have worked wonders. Remember, I am her sole and entire guardian, and I, for my part, do not fear success."

They were suddenly interrupted by a sharp knock at the door, the handle was turned, and Lady Daleswater swept in.

Her face was very white, her lips compressed and pale; in her hand was crumpled a telegram. Sheila ran to meet her quickly.

"Dear Lady Daleswater, what is the matter?" she cried.

"This is from my husband. My brother John has disgraced himself and his family. Instead of lying at the point of death, he has married your stepmother's supposed daughter. He has tied himself and his honorable name for life to a wretched charity girl!"

CHAPTER XIII.

If she lived to be a hundred years, Audrey would never forget that scene. Her mother had come back from Craiglands deeply moved and agitated; and the girl's great, sorrowful eyes had asked the question her frozen lips could not frame.

Constance Fraser had drawn the slender form to her arms without a word at first. Words, indeed, were not easy. It was a strange thing that had happened; her brain reeled every now and then as it all came back to her. Constance Fraser kissed the sweet, quivering lips.

"Jack wants you; he wants you to stay with him always. Do you understand me, my darling?"

"He wants me to nurse him?" Audrey said simply, her every limb quivering with eagerness to be gone.

"To nurse, comfort and love him. The mother's hand stroked back the soft locks. 'Audrey, he has asked me to give you to him, as his wife.'"

A flood of color burned on each pale cheek, and then the girl paled ashen white again.

"As his wife?" she repeated, slowly; and then, more quickly, "Does he want me now?"

"As soon as every arrangement can be made, my own dearest. Does this frighten you, Audrey?"

"No," she said, almost inaudibly. "If he wishes it, that is right. I am glad!" Then, catching suddenly at the two slender hands held out to her, "Mother, can I see him soon?"

"You shall go to him to-morrow, my darling. It will not do to excite him too much. The marriage ceremony will take place to-morrow, we hope. You, too, must rest and take care of yourself, my lily flower, my darling."

Audrey sat down as in a stupor. She did not half realize what was going to happen; she only knew that in a few short hours she would see him again, her hero, her beloved; that was joy enough to daze her; she could not grasp the fullness of it all at once.

It was his hand that clasped hers, and yet how changed. Audrey could not see the pale, weak, clear face for the mist of tears that rose before her eyes. The girl suffered a great shock at sight of him she loved lying prostrate on his pillow, barely able to speak or to smile. The duchess had kissed Audrey tenderly.

"She is lovely! Perfectly beautiful!" she had said to Constance Fraser. "No wonder my poor boy loves her so deeply."

Mr. Thorngate read the service, and Mrs. Thorngate stood with the others round the bed.

Dr. Sentence was close at hand; he watched his patient narrowly. Certainly it almost looked as if the small flicker of life must suddenly go out. The pulse was very weak, the heart's action uneven, yet the doctor knew that if human will would carry a much-desired point, Lord John Glendurwood would, with the latest breath, speak the words that made Audrey his wife.

In whispers, weak in voice, strong in purpose, John Glendurwood spoke his marriage vows.

Audrey repeated the words she was bid to utter in a dim, mechanical fashion. She woke for an instant as her lover's feeble hand tried to push the ring over the little finger, but after that she was conscious of nothing save that the face before her grew paler and paler, his hands weaker in their hold. As the rector pronounced the benediction, the duchess gave a cry.

"He is gone! He is dead! My Jack! My boy!"

The brisk, kind-hearted little doctor read the conditions in a moment.

"We must not have you fainting, too, Lady John," he said, sharply. "Come, hold the bottle to your husband's nose, and pass your hand slowly across his brow. I expect you to help me, you know. A great deal depends on you now. It is passing. Complete and utter exhaustion. Now, Lady John, I want you to kneel down, so that your husband can see you the first thing he opens his eyes."

Audrey obeyed him instantly. The

faintest flicker of life was visible in the drawn, white face.

"Bend down and kiss him," commanded Dr. Sentence.

A flush spread over the girl's beautiful face. She did not hesitate; stooping, she pressed her fresh, sweet lips to those dry, parched ones. A low cry escaped the sick man.

"Audrey, it is you—no dream—my own darling!"

Dr. Sentence nodded his head again, and then he lifted Audrey from her knees.

"Now, Lady John," he said, authoritatively, "your duty is not nearly ended; you are to sit here and watch your husband. Don't let him speak, only now and then moisten his lips with a little of this liquid. Let him see you and know you are here. You will be the best doctor for him, after all."

So saying, Dr. Sentence moved out of the room, and beckoned Mrs. Thorngate to follow him.

"Well?" she asked, breathlessly, once outside.

"I do not say for certain, but my belief is he will live," was the doctor's reply.

CHAPTER XIV.

All through the night and late into the following day, Audrey sat like a statue beside her husband's bed. Toward evening he had sunk into a deep, silent sleep.

"It will be his salvation," declared Dr. Sentence to the duchess and Constance Fraser, as they sat together in poor Lord Iverne's room. "Nothing could be better."

"Oh, Dr. Sentence! Then there is really some hope?" cried the poor mother, her haggard face lighting up into something like its former self.

Two days later the Earl of Daleswater came down to Mountberry unexpectedly. He was a plain, weak, inordinately conceited man, who was ruled entirely by his wife, and he held forth on the impropriety of this terrible marriage in a manner worthy of his wife herself.

"Now that you are quite finished, George," said the duchess coldly. "I think the best thing you can do is to return to London and Gladys as soon as possible."

"Am I to understand that you turn me out?" he asked furiously. "Do you forget who I am?"

"I think it is I who should ask that question, Lord Daleswater," the duchess replied, rearing her head with dignity. "You have addressed me in a manner which I would never tolerate from my nearest and dearest. You have been pleased to pass censure on my actions, and vilify a young and lovely young girl who is my son's wife, and against whom neither you nor any one else can launch a single objection save that she has had an unhappy childhood, and that she is poor. My daughter Gladys should congratulate herself on the result of her schooling; you are an apt pupil, my lord."

"Your grace will please to understand that from to-day all intercourse between yourself and my wife is at an end," the little man went on, getting quite insolent in his anger.

"The duchess made no sign while her son-in-law ran on in his infuriated and insolent manner, but as the door opened and he came to an abrupt end, she turned on him.

"The carriage is ready, Lord Daleswater; you have really no time to lose."

Lord Daleswater's brows turned purple with suppressed fury; rage, insults rushed to his lips; but somehow the sight of the tall, commanding woman, regal in bearing and dignity, and the quick sense that she had conquered him, carried the moment without a word or sign; he turned and strode out of the room.

(To be continued.)

Hard Hats.

"Have you any felt gloves?" asked the customer in the big store.

"Felt gloves?" replied the polite clerk—reaching for a green box; "certainly, sir. Here they are."

"Why, those are boxing gloves. Haven't you made a mistake?"

"Not at all, sir. Boxing gloves are felt more than any other kind."

No Delay.

Old Rameses had just completed the great canal between the Nile and the Red Sea.

"Wonderful achievement," exclaimed the visitors; "what is the secret of your success?"

"Why," laughed old Rameses, "I lauded the man with the spade and beheaded the man with the muck rake."

Sudden Lift.

"How did you get up here?" asked St. Peter. "I didn't send for you."

The much battered man rubbed the dust from his eyes.

"I stepped in front of a racing automobile and it sent me sky high," he said simply.

"Admitted!" said St. Peter, sympathetically, as he turned the key.

Willing Victim.

Mayme—I made an election bet with Jack, and I won.

Edyth—Did he pay up?

Mayme—Yes, indeed. He paid double.

Edyth—Foolish boy!

Mayme—Oh, I don't know. We bet kisses.

Beginning of the Trouble.

Mrs. Newed—Did you really mean it when you said my pies were just like those your mother used to make.

Newed—Yes, dear. And you know I ran away from home when I was a boy.

Easy for Him.

"What bushy eyelashes Mr. Swags has!"

"Um! That's the reason he gives such sweeping glances."

The Crying Need.

"Those people keep twelve servants."

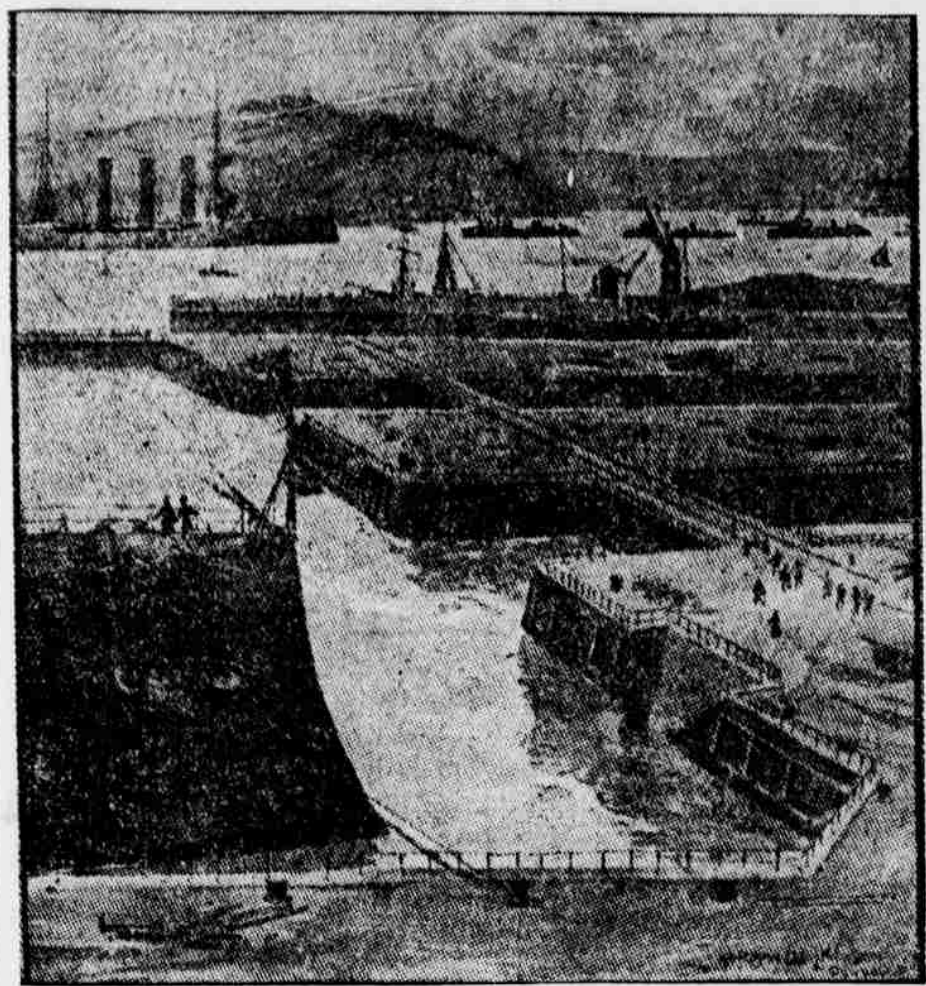
"Gracious! I wish they'd tell me how I could keep one."—Houston Post.

Machine Made.

"What do political machines manufacture, pa?"

"Bolts, Bobby."—Kansas City Times.

ENGLAND'S NEW \$20,000,000 HOSPITAL FOR DAMAGED WARSHIPS.



ENTRANCE LOCK TO NEW NAVAL DOCKS AT DEVONPORT.

England's new naval works here shown have made Devonport the best equipped and largest war port in the world. They include a fine tidal basin, with an entrance direct from the Hamoaze, and a closed basin, which has been provided with an entrance from the Hamoaze, which can be used for dry docking men of war. Devonport has now three new docks, which can take even the biggest men of war, apart from the entrance lock. It need hardly be pointed out that the final issue of naval warfare depends to a considerable extent on the rapidity with which the opposing nations can refit and replace on the active list battle ships and other war vessels damaged by the enemy. Thus the north extension of the dockyard at Devonport, which was opened by the Prince of Wales recently, must be reckoned among England's most valuable naval assets. The closed basin has an area of thirty-five acres; the extension covers nearly 120 acres. The total cost of the new work was about £4,500,000.

Conquest of the Great American Desert

The great Roosevelt dam in Arizona is nearing completion. Within a few months this colossal bar of masonry will choke the gap between the mountains, and the city bearing the President's name, 284 feet below its crest, will gradually be engulfed by the rush of waters which will, when the huge reservoir is filled, form the largest artificial lake in the world. More than 200,000 acres of fertile farm land will spread out below the lake to replace what is now a desolate desert; thousands of families will prosper in the midst of plenty, on soil which hitherto supported no living thing but sagebrush and lizards, and generations of happy Americans will bless the reclamation act which enabled the engineers to work such wonders in the "land that God forgot."

While the government is doing the work the homesteader will, in time, pay back to the government every cent that has been expended for him, but the payments will be extended over a period of years and he will be charged no interest. As soon as the irrigation works are completed and the precious water is available for the use of the farmers the land benefited must begin to make returns, and it is expected that ten annual installments from each water user will settle the bill.

The irrigation funds given into the hands of the reclamation service by Congress come first from the sale of public lands in the arid states, but after the various projects become operative the annual repayment installments will continue the maintenance and the construction of new water plants.

There are twenty-five great irrigation projects now under construction, and when these are developed to their full extent it is estimated that no less than 3,198,000 acres of desert will be reclaimed. Add to these thirteen other projects which are now being held in abeyance pending the completion of some of the first twenty-five, which will reclaim 3,270,000 acres more, and we have a grand total of 6,468,000 acres of waste changed as if by magic to a garden for gods and men.

The twenty-five engineering projects now under construction will cost \$80,000,000 when completed, and will reclaim an area of land equal to the crop acreage of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Florida, but incomparably more fertile than those states. All told, it is estimated, the newly created farm area will add \$232,000,000 to the taxable value of the States, and will furnish homes for 80,000 families on farms and in villages and towns. The work of the reclamation service has been in progress only five years, and early in 1908 the greatest project of the list, the Roosevelt dam, will be completed.

About all that is known of the Roosevelt dam in the east is that it is a barrier thrown across the Salt River Canyon in Arizona. Some have heard that the town of Roosevelt, in the valley that is to become the bed of the great artificial lake, was built there only to be destroyed when its usefulness ended, and that where now are schools and stores and homes in a few months will be found nothing but the element in which fishes dwell and which the desert needs so much. This is literally true. As soon as the dam is finished the residents of the town will move their belongings, even to the houses in which they live, to other parts and the powerful gates of steel will let the waters in. Within a few weeks there will be more than 200 feet depth of water above the dam and the newest form of blue upon the map of the United States, the latest lake, will stretch its length of twenty-five miles up-stream and its breadth of two miles between the giant notch that separates the hills.

Upper Half Only Is Read.

"Did you ever think," said an old printer, "that we really notice only the upper halves of the letters. The lower halves are in many cases only the stems, the remainders of ornamental flourishes which have been gradually reduced in size and length and are now meaningless."

"Take, for instance, the heading of a paper. Cover up with a blank sheet the lower half of the letters and even if you did not know what they were you would have no difficulty in reading the words. Now reverse the process and cover the upper half and if you did not know the words it would be impossible to make out the letters. This fact is even more plainly seen in the case of the Roman letters used for headlines. An L might be mistaken for an I, but nearly all the other letters are so plainly indicated by the shape of the upper half that the lines may be read without difficulty."

"In their zeal for reform and economy the advocates of the new spelling might make this idea useful and instead of abolishing a few letters in a few words they might cut off the lower quarter or half of every letter and so save 25 per cent."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Agricultural Axioms.

There's such a thing as planting too deep—specially when you're planting the seeds of dissension among your neighbors.

God may temper the wind to the shorn lamb all right, but that ain't a-going to put the feller who lost the fleece in any better temper.

The country looks mighty pretty in the spring to city folks, but it looks pretty tough sometimes to the man who is just starting to put in a crop on credit on rented land with a colicky mule.

Some farmers get up so early in the morning that they burn out more oil than the extra time's worth.

It's all right to soak your seed sometimes, but it doesn't pay to soak your plow animal for supplies at the store.

The Childish Voice Too Much.

A good story is told of Signor Foll, the famous basso. Once upon a time he was singing "The Raft" when a childish voice from somewhere in the stalls suddenly piped in and attempted to organize an impromptu duet. Unfortunately the next line of the song was: "Hark! What sound is that which breaks upon mine ear?" This so tickled the fancy of the great vocalist that he burst into a hearty fit of laughter and left the platform, followed by the pianist. Twice they came back and attempted the song, and finally they had to give it up in despair, much to the amusement of the audience.

The Camel's Foot.

The camel's foot is a soft cushion peculiarly well adapted to the stones and gravel over which it is constantly walking. During a single journey through the Sahara horses have worn out three sets of shoes, while the camel's feet are not even sore.

The yoke of parental authority never rests very heavy on the child which is "reasoned with" a great deal.

RAM'S HORN BLASTS.

Warning Notes Calling the Wicked to Repentance.

Alcohol is the blood of murdered fruit and grain. Black against other black is different, but not impressive. Take care of your wheat and you will not be worried by weeds.

To back an unpopular opinion is the finest hardihood in the world.

The man who worships himself always thinks there is no God.

It takes more grace to do the little things than to do the great ones.

The people must be taught to be brave. A trimmer cannot teach that.

Conduct, of necessity, is a matter of balances, and judgment the finest science in the world.

The only way to save men is to set them thinking. Salvation without sense and work is a myth.

Right wins. God's verbs have only the present tense, however we inflict them into other forms.

To see the right of a thing is prophecy. To get on the right side is faith. To stay there is victory.

A pastor ought to be good company for the weakest of his flock and his habits safe to be patterned after.

The moderate reformers are our own pickets, far out near the enemy's lines. Let us not shoot at them.

Light is the gentlest thing in the world. It forces no entrance, but it makes no compromises, and it gets there.

Set your heart on the high thing and all the lesser will be served. The effort will be full of pleasure and the pursuit will make you strong.

The liquor traffic is an industrial and political trinity. It gears to the social system at the saloon, but gets its life at the stillhouse and its hope of perpetuity, at the still church.

WITTY PARSONS.

The old first church of Quincy, Mass., had in its history many homely details not without interest. Mrs. Dolores Bacon, in "Old New England Churches," says that at first this church building rested on two rows of dressed stone. At that time the town decided that this dressed stone under three walls of the church was all that appearance demanded. This left the east side in a rough condition, and that was the side which looked toward Thomas Baxter's house. The Rev. Mr. Wibird, pastor of the church, boarded at Baxter's, and the rough, unfinished side was continually in his sight. When he learned of the town's decision to let it stand thus, he exclaimed, "Why should not my side be dressed stone, too? It must be; I will pay for it myself."

There are many lovely generous things told of this same preacher. As he looked over the tax lists from which his salary was drawn, he now and again would erase a name with the remark, "This man has been unfortunate," or "Such an one needs the money more than I do," and would strike out the name, and thereby reduce his income greatly.

Another colonial church, the pastor of which is described as a "forceful" man, was the Lexington, Mass., church. It is related that when John Mahu was somewhat advanced in years some of the parish wished to have elders appointed to assist him with his duties. After listening attentively to the opinions of two of the deacons, he said: "I suppose you will be willing to accept the office yourselves?" They assented.

"Do you know what elders are required to do?" asked the parson. The deacons answered that they did not, but would be glad to learn.

"Well, they must groom, saddle and bridle the minister's horse when he wishes to ride; bring it to the door and hold the stirrup for him to mount; and when he goes to other towns on ministerial duties, accompany him and pay expenses." The deacons withdrew the motion.

Teeming Millions of India.

According to figures printed in the British blue book and based on the latest census British India has a population of 294,000,000. This is 41,000,000 more than it was twenty years ago and the increase is greater than was to have been expected in view of the high death rate, which was partly due to repeated famines. One hundred and ninety-two millions of people support themselves by agriculture and live chiefly on rice. There are less than 3,000,000 Christians in India, of whom 2,600,000 are natives. More than two-thirds of the whole population can neither read nor write. In ten years the taxes have increased from 6 cents per capita to 45 cents.

Sure to Be Careful.

Lady (meeting servant whom she had recommended for a situation)—I am glad to hear that you are getting on so well in your new place. Your employer is a nice lady and you cannot do too much for her.

Servant (innocently)—I don't mean to, ma'am.—London Punch.

Morse Telegraph Antedated.

The theory of telegraphing by wire was practically illustrated in 1773 by Arthur Young, long before Professor Morse was born.