

NOT LONG AGO.

Not long ago she passed me by, A little girl, demure and shy, With ruffled hair and dancing eyes, Whose glances strayed like butterflies. But "very, very plain," quoth I. Again we met. How time will fly! I can't describe her though I try; It seemed she'd stepped from paradise Not long ago.

And now I cease to magnify Her sovereign grace, or glorify Her perfect taste. 'Tis hardly wise For me to try to criticize Her now. I married her—that's why— Not long ago.

—Sydney Herbert Pierson, in the Century.

A Roving Young Couple

In the merry month of May, in the year of grace 1881, I was stopping at the Fonda de Las Cuatro Naciones, the principal hotel in Barcelona, the Chicago of Spain. I had crossed the Pyrenees from Perpignan to Gerona in a bone-setting, spine-aching diligence, and the translation to the steam-cars at Gerona was as grateful as it was luxurious.

The hotel is situated upon the Rambla, a particularly wide street, extending for about a mile and a half from the general post-office to the tideless harbor in the Mediterranean. In the center of the Rambla is an alameda, or tree-shaded promenade, utilized every morning as a flower market, every evening by a military band, and at all waking hours, save during the summer siesta, thronged with pedestrians of both sexes, when the latest Parisian fashions symphonize with the intensely picturesque costumes of the Catalan peasantry.

Having secured a room "giving" upon the Rambla, and on the first floor, for which, by-the-by, I paid thirteen pesetas a day—a peseta being about twenty-five cents, I descended to the gloomy comedor, or dining-room, for a meal known as "almuerzo," in fact, an early-dinner-breakfast.

With the exception of the omelette, which was perfect, my first meal in sunny Spain proved a dismal disappointment. It consisted of the usual nauseating and pretentious repast which one meets with all over the continent of Europe; the ghostly soup, the dull-flavored and watery fish, the too-too-peppered entree of boiled beef, from which the soup has already extracted tyrannic tribute, and the roast mutton, about as tough as the hide of Sancho Panza's illustrious donkey Dapple.

Opposite to me were two vacant chairs, both tilted against the table to denote that they were engaged. It was during the tussle with the leathery mutton that these chairs became occupied.

"The other leg of that old sheep, Maude, I do declare!" were the first words I heard. The voice came from a lad of, say fourteen. A yellow-haired, pink-cheeked, blue-eyed, pearly-toothed boy, attired in a gray flannel shirt with a rolling collar and a home-spun tunic, known as a Norfolk jacket, all pleated, and a perfect labyrinth of pockets.

Beside this handsome and happy-looking lad sat a little maid, so exact a counterpart that the most near-sighted individual would make affidavit as to her being his sister without the aid of glasses. She, too, was in gray flannel, and her age might have been eleven years.

The young gentleman was perfectly at his ease, and, for the matter of that, so was the young lady. He called the waiter and proceeded to institute a searching investigation in school-boy French, into the nature of the dishes on the bill of fare.

"I shall order an omelette, Maude," he observed, in English. "A big one; and we'll pitch into that with bread. There's nothing else worth eating."

I must confess that I became interested in the movements of these youthful travelers, especially when my neighbor, a drummer from a Manchester cotton factory, briefly informed me that they were traveling alone.

"They're regular swells," said the drummer, "and act as independent as old travelers. To hear the boy talk, you'd think he was one of us—I travel for Brown and Williams, of Staleybridge—or a foreign office messenger. He knows Bradshaw off by 'art. Really," added the drummer, "if it ain't as funny as Box and Cox."

Seeing that I was regarding his movements with curiosity, the young gentleman bowed most courteously, and asked if I was not a recent arrival. Having informed him that I had struck Spain from France, via the Pyrenees,—

"Just what we did!" he said. "We left Perpignan at ten in the morning. We hired a carriage, so as to be able to take in the scenery at our ease. We had a tip-top luncheon. A generous old chap that keeps the Tete Noir Hotel made up for us a present. Did you put up at the Tete Noir? Oh, here comes our omelette! Arnt I hungry? My sister and I have been to the top of Men Juich this morning. Don't you do it, sir. It isn't worth the trouble. Now, Maude," and he helped his little sister to about a pound weight of the savory omelette, peppering it and salting it for her with a careful and loving attention that completely won my heart.

I turned to my drummer for further information concerning this interesting pair, but the worthy Briton had left the table, so I contented myself with the idea of lying in ambush for the youthful travelers behind the fragrant orange trees that lined the hall.

How I missed the intelligent and sympathetic hotel clerk of my own dear land, who, in less than two minutes, would have thoroughly posted me with regard to these young people! Here, the clerk was a very fallow personage, with Edgar-of-Ravenwood locks and a shirt-collar open to the middle of his chest.

In about half an hour the lad and his sister appeared, having, children-like, remained with the dessert to the very last moment. The little maid was leaning on her brother, and both came skipping down the corridor merrily humming a bright little song. The girl seemed somewhat abashed when I stepped from out my ambush, and quitting her brother's arm, dashed up the stone stairs three at a time.

"I hope I have not scared your sister," I said.

"Oh, dear, no, thanks!" he replied. "She's gone to put on her hat. We are going to do a bit of the old city. Those outlandish old streets are just delightful, you know."

"I would recommend you to be careful of where you go, for—"

"Thanks, sir!" he burst in. "We're not a bit afraid. We are not worth robbing. I have no money but a few coins over my circular note, and this old watch," tugging at a silver turnip attached to a steel chain, "wouldn't fetch a sovereign. Anyhow," he added, "Maude and I have been over France, Italy, Switzerland, Scotland and Ireland without anything happening, and"—

"Alone?"

"Just as you see us, sir! It's very odd and funny how much attention we attract. I suppose that's all right. I seem to have to account to everybody I meet. Here is my story:

"My father is the best old pater that ever lived, but he has his own notions about everything, and the more he is opposed, the more set he is. His pet idea is education, and he believes that a boy or girl learns more in a trip to a foreign country than a million books could teach 'em. So he sends Maude and me off every summer to do some foreign country. He gives us lots of money, and all he asks is that we keep alarmingly minute diaries, which we must post to him every Saturday."

"But does he consider it wise for you to travel without?"

"That's part of his system," burst in the lad, "he is very determined on the subject of self-reliance. He picked it up while he was traveling in the United States—Here's what he says:

"I send you out alone to make a man of you. I send your sister with you to make you doubly a man, as you will have to protect her. He"—

At this moment a sweet-child voice exclaimed, "Now, Geoffry, I'm ready."

There stood the little maid, guide-book in hand, a coquettish little round face, gray hat perched far down on her eyebrows, to protect her from the sun and glare.

"I've just been telling this gentleman our story, Maude—Au revoir, sir," and the children—for what else were they?—swept out into the glowing summer day shine."

Fain would I have accompanied them, but, under the very peculiar circumstances of the case, this was simply impossible. I resolved, however, upon following the pair, but in such a manner as to preclude the idea of their being shadowed, and to this end hoisted my white umbrella, and sallied forth.

As I delayed on the hotel steps, to allow the youngsters to get a little ahead, a man brushed hastily past me. I had noticed him in the hall on my arrival. He was thickest and of powerful build—a man to fell one of the bulls whose portraits stared at me from the walls of the open house opposite, luckless brutes destined for the sword of the matador on the following Sunday, in the Plaza de Toros.

The person was attired in a suit of light tweed, and wore greenish spectacles. Casting a hasty glance up and down the Rambla, his spectacled eyes rested on the retreating figure of the boy and girl. Then he crossed the street and regulated his pace to theirs.

These manœuvres disquieted me. It was pretty evident that this man was dogging the children. For what purpose?

"I'll dog you, my gentleman," I muttered, as I stepped into the blazing sunlight.

The old portion of the city of Barcelona is so old that it calmly retains its narrow streets, its bizarre houses with their quaint carvings, its shrines, its churches, and its foul smells, feeling perfectly secure, and in nowise dismayed at the so-called "progress of the nineteenth century."

Many of the streets retain the names given them when the Moors were rulers in the gilded halls of the Alhambra—Goldsmith street, Bread street, Fish street and so on. All the stores in one very narrow alley are exclusively devoted to the sale of images of the Madonna of Monserrat, who is held in high veneration by the Catalans, the celebrated shrine being but one short day's journey from Barcelona.

It was into this narrow alley that I followed the youthful travelers, and their very suspicious shadow, the bull-necked man in the light tweed suit; for he kept them steadily in view, and had closed up when the streets became narrow and tortuous.

For three mortal hours did this adventurous young couple perambulate the most foul-smelling streets and alleys of the old town, stopping at every toy-shop, to gaze in at the tempting wares, for toys in London, Paris or New York; staring into jewelers' stores, and riveted in front of a cloak-making establishment.

They entered two candy-shops, and came forth with heightened color and distended cheeks.

While they were in these stores, the burly man remained outside, apparently gazing at the contents of the window, but actually engaged in watching their movements.

Wasn't I relieved when my charges, for I was a self-elected guardian, emerged once more into the Rambla, and turned into the hotel?

I gladly repaired to my own room, or-

dered a granazao, a delicious orangeade, and had scarcely taken the first sip when a knock came to my door.

"Come in!"

The door opened, and in stepped the burly-looking man in the tweed suit.

"I beg pardon for intruding," he said, "but I want to say a word to you about these here youngsters that you was a-follerin' all the afternoon."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, eyeing him very closely, and in a tone that was the very reverse of friendly.

"Yes, sir."

"And what explanation have you to give, sir, for following these children. Come, sir," I sternly cried.

"I am paid for it."

"Paid for it?"

"Yes, sir; I'm Inspector Lillie, late of the London detective force. Their gunner, Sir Jenkins Claythorpe (for obvious reasons I suppress the real name), is a eccentric man as wishes his children to see the world on their own 'ook, sir, and let's 'em think as 'ow they're a doing of it alone, but he pays me and another feller to keep 'em in sight—never to let 'em get their little 'eads into trouble, sir, and they comes 'ome to Claythorpe 'all twice as big as when they started out, sir. Me and my mate uses all sorts of disguises, for if master or miss found us out, we'd lose the best job either of us ever dropped on. So, seeing as you was a respectable gent, as was interested in the children—we 'ad another gent as done the same thing in Venice, sir—I thought it best to tell you."

Six weeks later I came across Master and Miss Claythorpe at the railway station at San Sebastian.

"We've done Spain," exclaimed the lad, who was now bronzed the color of the Farnese Hercules; "you may put us in your book if you're writing one. Maude's asleep," he added, jerking his head back into the compartment, "but she's as right as ninepence. We'll do the States next year and we'll look you up. I've got your card."

In the next compartment sat a venerable man of snowy beard, who winked at me as the train moved away. The patriarch was Inspector Lillie.

Of course, I am well aware that it would not do to allow any boy of fourteen, and girl of eleven to travel alone and do as they please, even with an Inspector Lillie to see that they did not come to harm; but these children had evidently been exceptionally educated by their eccentric father, and certainly in their cases, it was an exceptional means that was accomplishing satisfactory results.—Youth's Companion.

The World of a Thousand Years Ago.

A thousand years ago, and for a long time after, the world was not at all the geologized, botanized, zoologized, and mapped-out earthly ball it is now. There it lay, according to the imagination of the men and women of those days (or rather, according to the ideas of the monks; for the men, and far less the women, of those distant times troubled themselves very little about matters of this kind, but left it to the churchmen to meddle with such dangerous book-learning) a flat plain, full of things mysterious and unknown; and out of the four corners, through the gaps of four mountain ranges, which were placed there to keep it steady, blew the four winds of heaven! Of course, the center of it all was the little town, and county, parish, manor, barony or kingdom where they dwelt; but outside of that was no man's land. It was looked upon by our remote forefathers in much the same light as it is by the Chinese, who, while making maps of the flowery land on a scale so large as to show the ground plan of every town and village, mark all the countries outside of that magic boundary of theirs, as inhabited by barbarians. "It was the land of the infidel," the people said, as they piously crossed themselves at the thought. All was mysterious to the travelers of that age. The unknown lands were full of dragons and giants, rocs, ores, witchwhales, griffins, chimæras, enchanters, Paynims, Saracens, emirs, and sultans, kaisers of Constantinople, of Ind and Cathay and Cipango. What a choice was there then for a young traveler, a good knight, and a proper man withal! If he had a mind he could steer his way to Lapland, where (as all the world knew) dwarfs forged chain-armor of magic links, and where witch-whales and ice-mountains roamed about the chilly sea; or go south and join the Varangian guard in Constantinople, or beard the Turk in Palestine; or into Egypt and win the prince's daughter by killing a great dragon, as did St. George; or down to Cordova, where there were dire magicians; or into the forests of Brittany, where beautiful fairies sported—kindly immortals who loved to be wedded to mortality—who emptied his water-jars at night and filled them with good Rhine wine ere dawn of day. He might even marry one, as did Sir Thomas, and pass a few years in Fairyland.—Countries of the World.

Misshapen Feet.

A distinguished sculptor declares that there is not one foot in ten thousand among the fashionable people of the present day fit for an artist to copy or model. While beauty of face and delicacy of extremities have increased in the course of civilization, the shapeliness of the human foot has decreased. This deformity is all the result of a vicious fashion of foot covering which cramp and distort the member out of its natural proportions.

They Grove Him In.

The owner of a place on Sibley street appeared in front of the house yesterday morning with a step-ladder and a saw and began the work of trimming up his shade trees. While he was at the first limb a pedestrian halted and queried: "Going to trim your trees, eh?" "Yes."

"Um, I see. First-rate time to trim trees. Um. Exactly."

He hadn't got two blocks away before number two came along and called out. "Going to trim your trees, eh?" "Yes."

"Ah! I see. Ought to have waited a month later."

The limb was off when number three halted, stood for a minute with his hands in his pocket and then asked: "Going to trim your trees, eh?" "Yes."

"Ought to have done that last month."

No. 4 said that April was the proper month. No. 5 wouldn't trim a tree except in May. No. 6 thought November the best time of year, and so it went until every month in the year had been named and there were five or six individuals to spare. Before the first tree was finished the seventeenth pedestrian halted, threw away the stub of his cigar and loudly demanded:

"Going to trim your trees, eh?" "Yes."

"Ought to have done that last month."

No. 4 said that April was the proper month. No. 5 wouldn't trim a tree except in May. No. 6 thought November the best time of year, and so it went until every month in the year had been named and there were five or six individuals to spare. Before the first tree was finished the seventeenth pedestrian halted, threw away the stub of his cigar and loudly demanded:

"Going to trim your trees, eh?" "Yes."

The man hung his saw on a limb, got down off the ladder, and walked close up to the enquirer and said:

There are over 11,000,000 people in the United States, men, women and children, who are dependent upon labor at mines and manufactories.

HUMOROUS SKETCHES.

Farmer Nick's Scarecrow. Out in the corn field, grouped together, A flock of crows discussed the weather.

Observing them, thrifty farmer Nick Declared that the crows were "gettin' too thick."

"I must have a scarecrow—that is true; Now, would not that old umbrella do?"

So into the house the farmer went, And away to the field the umbrella sent.

One rainy day the farmer went out To view the corn fields lying about;

He neared the umbrella; looked inside; And what he saw, made him laugh till he cried!

For in there, out of the rainy weather, A dozen crows were huddled together!

So the farmer, laughing as farmers should, Said: "I fear my scarecrow did little good." —Nora E. Crosby, in St. Nicholas.

An Important Item.

Bride—"How easily it is to be economical. I saved sixty-five cents last week by making bread myself instead of buying it of the baker."

Young husband—"Indeed!"

"Yes, I counted all the little items carefully."

"Queer, how figures differ. I thought we came out three dollars behind."

"Dear me, I must have left something out. What was it?"

"The dyspepsia medicine."—Philadelphia Call.

A Slow Young Man.

"I am afraid that young Featherly, who calls on you so often, is rather a fast young man," said a father to his daughter.

"Oh, no, he isn't father," replied the little brother who was present.

"What do you know about Mr. Featherly?" demanded the old man.

"I only know," he replied, "that I heard him ask sister for a kiss last night, and she told him he could have one if he would be quick about it. But it was the slowest kiss I ever saw."

A Fallen Monarch.

Commodore Stewart used to narrate an instance which occurred on board the frigate Constitution when under his command in the Mediterranean. It was before the deposition of any of the Bourbon sovereigns, and a large party of them had congregated at Naples to attend a royal marriage there. Commodore Stewart invited them on board the Constitution, and they made a brilliant display, attended by their suites in richly embroidered court dresses and uniforms. While they were being shown over the frigate, a boatswain came up to the commodore, and touching his hat said:

"Please, sir, one of them 'ere kings has tumbled down the main hatchway."

It turned out that the king was a subordinate court official, but his embroidered coat had elevated him in Jack's eye to regal rank, and he felt it his duty to announce his mishap.

The Fatted Calf.

The danger of going too much into detail in talking about subjects with which one is not very familiar, is exemplified in the story of an English town-bred curate, who had consented to do duty on Sunday for his friend, the rector of a country parish in the Midlands.

The subject of the morning sermon was the parable of the prodigal son; and in the hope of impressing upon his hearers the joy which the patriarch felt on the return of his son, as instanced by his ordering the fatted calf to be killed, the young curate felt a pardonable pride in dwelling upon a subject which could not fail to be comprehensible to the dull-est cowboy in the congregation.

"Remember," he said, "this was no ordinary calf which was to be killed; it was no common calf or beast suffering from murrain, half-starved calf slowly awaiting death. No; it was not merely a fatted calf, but" (becoming more impressive) "it was the fatted calf which had been prized and loved by the family for many years."

A sea of wide eyes and gaping mouths arrested for a moment the eloquence of the fledgling parson, and in the next moment there was such a chuckling and grins and fluttering of old heads below as had not been witnessed, even in the memory of the sexton, for more than "many years."

Died of Laughter.

Chalcas, the sooth-sayer, died of laughter at the thought of his having outlived the time predicted for his death. A fellow in rags had told him that he would never drink the wine of the grapes growing in his vineyard; and added: "If these words do not come true, you may claim me for your slave." When the wine was made, Chalcas held a feast, and sent for the fellow to see how his predictions had failed. When he appeared the sooth-sayer laughed so immoderately at the would-be prophet that it killed him. Crassus died from laughter on seeing an ass entistles. Margutte, the giant, in the Morgante Maggiore, died of laughter on seeing a monkey pulling on his boots. Zenxis, the Grecian painter, died at sight of a hag he had just depicted. A peculiar death was that of Placut, who dropped dead in the act of paying a bill. There are many men to-day, however, who would probably die of surprise, if they found themselves doing the same thing.—Troy Times.

In 1880 there were of colored persons in the United States 4,001,207 ten years old and upward, of whom 3,220,878, or seventy persons of every hundred, could not write. Now there are 3,660,000 colored persons in the United States over ten years of age who can not write.