THREE ETON BOYS.

BY W. E. NORRIS.

Presently Bracknell made his way to the carriage and mounted the box beside his son. He took no notice of us, but hoisted the boy upon his knee, and the two became absorbed in contemplation of the game, the elder making occasional explanations to the younger which were listened to with interest and respect. I suppose paternal fondness must have been hereditary in the Henley family, for Bracknell was not one whit less foolishly devoted to his boy than his father had been to him in days of yore, and, to all appearance, was bent upon reproducing a system of treatment which had not been conspicuously successful in his own case. The child had Bracknell's dark hair and gray eyes. I could discern no resemblance to his mother in him, nor, in truth, did that strain of blood seem likely to infuse any fresh qualities of a valuable nature into the race.

While I was watching the representatives of three generations, Lady Bracknell and Beauchamp strolled by. The lady was talking with a good deal of animation, and the gentleman wore the air of one who is at once fascinated and puzzled. Bewilderment at the proceedings of Lady Bracknell was not, apparently, confined to him, for Lord Staines, following the pair with his eyes, muttered quite audibly:

"I do wonder what infernal mischief that woman is up to now! Is it only spite, or is it a plot? And if it's a plot, what the deuce is the object of it, you know?"

Bracknell looked down from the box and laughed. "Well, Maynard," said he, "why are you looking so solemn? Taking notes, as usual? It seems to me that you have all the elements of a sensational romance ready to your hand here. There are bound to be some strong situations before long, I should say, and you had better try to be on the spot when they come off."

"And what is the denouement to be?" I made so bold as to inquire.

"Oh, don't ask me," he returned. "I don't know; and, between you and me, I doubt very much whether anybody else does either. All I can see is that there will be a row soon."

"What's that you say?" broke in Lord Staines querulously. "Why should there be a row? nonsense about a row! I wish to Heaven, Bracknell, that you could induce your wife to let me manage my own affairs in my own way."

"I wish I could," returned Bracknell, with a shrug of his shoulders. "I wish I could induce her to let me manage my affairs in my own way. But I can't, you see."

CHAPTER IX.

If Lady Bracknell's motives for luring Beauchamp away from her sister-in-law's side were obscure to Lord Staines, they did not to a reflective person appear quite unfathomable. When only one life intervenes between your husband and a large property it must, no doubt, seem deplorable that that life should be supplemented by others, and I can well believe that to see Beauchamp married would have gone to Hilda's heart, even though he should select as his wife a member of her husband's family. It is true that she can hardly have hoped to keep him permanently single, but she may have taken into consideration that existence is precarious, and that young men addicted to field sports run frequent risks of breaking their necks. Add to this she did not love Lord Staines, while she detested Lady Mildred with the intensity of an impositor who has been found out, and you have an explanation of her conduct which is at least plausible. I don't say that it is the true explanation, because I cannot pretend to be able to follow all the tortuous workings of such a mind as Hilda's; but that the course which events subsequently took was premeditated and contrived by her in cold blood seems to me too violent an hypothesis. In any case there could be no question as to the fact that she had marked Beauchamp down as her prey, nor did she fail to capture him.

He surrendered unconditionally at the first blow, and spent the remainder of the London season upon his knees, metaphorically speaking. I used to meet him and his enchantress pretty frequently at balls and crushes, and always watched them with interest. Other people watched them too, making such spiteful, ironical, or condemnatory comments upon the proceedings of the pair as were prompted by their several dispositions and by the nature of the case; but by the persons who have been introduced into this history, it so chanced that they were little remarked. Lady Mildred, who was in constant attendance upon her father, went very seldom into society; Bracknell had of late years ceased to frequent the circles which, as a bachelor, he had so conspicuously adorned; and those of Jim's friends who had not forgotten him during his long absence belonged for the most part to his own sex, and were not in the habit of giving balls. Thus Lady Bracknell was able to carry out her designs unmolested; and as Beauchamp continued to pay visits to Portman square with unfailing regularity, any anxiety that Lord Staines may have felt on the day of the cricket match was probably soon allayed.

Sunning, to be sure, very nearly let the cat out of the bag one afternoon when Jim and I called at his grandfather's house. We found him and the old gentleman with a tea table between them, busily engaged in eating hot buttered toast. Lady Mildred was pouring out the tea, and Beauchamp, reclining in an arm chair, looked very much as if he was wondering how soon he might venture to go away.

"I do not think it is very dangerous," Lady Mildred was saying as we entered; and after she had shaken hands with us she appealed for support to Jim. "Mr. Leigh, do you think it is safe for such a mite as Sunning to ride in the Row with nobody but a groom to look after him? And he always makes the groom ride a hundred yards behind."

"From what I have seen of the equestrian performances in the Row, I don't think it is an over and above safe place for anybody to ride in," answered Jim, laughing.

"But seriously," persisted Lady Mildred, "I don't like to think of that child in the thick of such a crowd. He has one of those wicked little Shetland ponies, too, which might overpower him at any moment."

Sunning, with his mouth full of buttered toast, was understood to say that he would like to see the pony that could overpower him.

Lord Staines chuckled. "He can take care of himself—trust him! All the same, I think Bracknell might go out with the boy."

Sunning, having swallowed his toast, informed us that his father never rode in London. "And I mustn't ride with mother when he's there," he added, pointing a greasy forefinger at Beauchamp.

"Eh!—what!—who?" ejaculated Lord Staines, pricking up his ears.

And Sunning did not mend matters by continuing, in his lisping, childish treble, "Before he came there was another gentleman, but I think he's gone away now. Mother says not to ride with her when there's a gentleman."

"Would he be so very much in your way?" asked Lady Mildred, turning to Beauchamp, with just the faintest touch of disdain in her voice.

"Not the least in the world," answered the young man. "I am very sorry if I have prevented Lady Bracknell from taking him out, and the next time—if there is a next time—I'll make a point of requesting the favor of his company. But really, I don't ride with Lady Bracknell very often."

"Every day," said the relentless Sunning emphatically.

This was a little embarrassing, but Beauchamp, though young, was a man of experience, and his serenity was not easily disturbed. "You don't mean to say so?" he exclaimed. "I'm very much ashamed of myself, and I'll apologize to Lady Bracknell the next time I see her. But that is just the sort of stupid thing that I'm always doing. She good naturedly asked me to ride with her one day, and I suppose I must have kept on going ever since from force of habit. I'll tie a knot in my pocket handkerchief at once, so that I may remember to forget to go to-morrow."

I don't know whether he was only anxious to stifle suspicion, or whether he still contemplated the possibility of an ultimate union with Lady Mildred; but he made great efforts to be agreeable to her during the next quarter of an hour, and when he took his leave Lord Staines, who had evidently been alarmed for a moment, seemed to be quite reassured.

Jim, after we had left the house together, informed me casually that he considered the manners and customs of savages very superior upon the whole to those of so called civilized Christians, but declined to enter more fully into the subject when invited to do so. "It doesn't matter; only that's my opinion," he said.

I am not acquainted with the customs of savages, except by hearsay; but our own, I freely admit, might be improved upon. One very tiresome custom, which, I fear, has become almost epidemic among us of late, is that of entertaining long suffering spectators with tableaux vivants. Beauchamp had the honor of figuring in the only tableau of the evening which his hostess proposed to grace personally; that, namely, in which her ladyship, as Andromeda, with her beautiful bare arms chained above her head and her bronze hair rippling down over her shoulders, was rescued from destruction by a very Saxon looking Perseus. I ventured to suggest that Bracknell might represent the monster, but this was considered to be a proposition of doubtful taste, and as no one else volunteered to undertake that ungrateful part, we had an appalling creature constructed out of inanimate materials for the occasion.

If only it had been permissible to make use of an inanimate Perseus into the bargain, I should have been spared much mental wear and tear and a grievous waste of time; for Beauchamp declared that he was physically incapable of standing on one leg for sixty consecutive seconds, and it was obvious that unless he stood upon one leg he would spoil the whole thing. I had to put him through a complete course of gymnastics, and even then it was only by the most diligent punching and kneading that I could force him into an attitude which was not positively grotesque. Whenever I left his side he, so to speak, tumbled to pieces instantly. However, in the long run we achieved as near an approach to success as could be expected, and when the representation came off this tableau was received with tremendous applause. I imagine that the majority of the spectators were lost in admiration of Andromeda's arms and shoulders and had no eyes for poor Perseus, who wabbled perceptibly.

Nevertheless, there were found persons to notice and remark upon Perseus too, if not exactly to admire him; and it chanced that, on the fall of the curtain, I was standing within ear shot of one of these. She was an elderly lady, blessed with three marriageable daughters, and in that capacity naturally opposed to the goings on of unscrupulous young matrons, such as Lady Bracknell.

"It really is a little too bad," she said to her neighbor, "and I wonder that Lord Bracknell allows it. Of course we know that he is not over particular, and, as far as that goes, I dare say his own manner of life doesn't give him the right to be so, but I should have thought that even he would have seen how outrageous this kind of thing is, considering that Mr. Beauchamp is as good as engaged to his sister. Under the circumstances it's almost indecent."

I was having a little inward laugh at the "almost" in the above outburst of virtuous indignation when I became aware that some one besides myself had overheard it. Leaning against the wall behind me was Bracknell, who had not thought it necessary to be at home in time to receive his wife's guests, but had now come in, probably from his club. From the scowl upon his brow I concluded that he had been losing money; from the brightness of his eyes I feared that he had been drinking; and from the murderous glance which he shot at the dowager whose speech I have quoted I gathered that her unvarnished strictures were not agreeable to him. He muttered a word or two under his breath and turned away, leaving me in some doubt as to whether he was incensed against his wife or against her critic. But very shortly afterward all uncertainty as to that point was removed from my mind.

I had been invited to remain for a quiet supper after the departure of the general company. Beauchamp and a few others, who had been similarly favored, had already gone down to the dining room, and I was lingering on the deserted stage with the fair Andromeda, when Bracknell suddenly entered and strode toward us. He either did not notice my presence or was indifferent to it.

"Hilda," he said, "you'll oblige me by dropping this; it has gone far enough. You think yourself very clever, no doubt; but it strikes me that you are in danger of being a little too clever, for once."

She turned slowly and surveyed him with calm contempt. "Had you better not go to bed?" she asked. "Perhaps you may be in a state to explain yourself in the morning."

Bracknell had the family temper, and I thought for a moment that he was going to treat us to a display of it; but possibly he may have learned by experience that storming at his wife was a thankless task.

"I am sober enough now," he returned quietly, "to tell you that I don't choose to have Mildred's marriage put a stop to for your gratification. How long, do you flatter yourself, that that young fool is going to trot about after you like a lap dog? Till this time next year? And what do you suppose will happen when you begin to bore him? You do begin to bore people after a certain time, I can assure you."

"I dare say that is quite true," replied Hilda, meekly; "you ought to know. Of course, I will obey you to the best of my ability; but I am afraid I can no more force Mr. Beauchamp to marry your sister than I can prevent you from insulting me before a third person."

At this juncture the third person executed a strategic movement in the direction of the door. But Bracknell intercepted me.

"You needn't withdraw, Maynard," said he, with a short laugh. "I've nothing more to say, and now we may as well go down and have some supper. I don't often interfere with her ladyship's little games, but I believe she knows that when I do she must give them up."

I observed, however, a slight smile upon her ladyship's lips, which convinced me that in this instance she had no intention at all of giving up her little game.

CHAPTER X.

For some little time after the evening of the tableaux I did not happen to meet the Bracknells, so that I could not judge from personal observation how far Hilda had obeyed her husband's commands and dropped Beauchamp, but divers rumors which reached me pointed to the conclusion that she had not dropped that foolish youth at all; nor indeed had I supposed for one moment that she intended doing so. Jim, who had returned to London after a flying visit to Elmhurst, amused me by an account of a remonstrance which he had felt it his duty to address to Lady Bracknell and of the manner in which his intervention had been received.

"Lord Staines doesn't see it," he said confidentially, "but between ourselves, it's as certain as anything can be that she is doing her best to prevent Beauchamp from proposing to Lady Mildred."

I expressed much surprise and congratulated Jim upon his insight into the crafty ways of feminine diplomacy; to which he replied modestly that he believed he was about as wide awake as most men nowadays. "One can't mix long in London society without having one's eyes opened," he explained; "and, as you know, I have good cause to distrust Hilda."

He paused, sighed, and then resumed: "I don't want other people to suffer through her as I have suffered. I thought she might perhaps be disposed to admit that she owed me some trifling favor, by way of reparation for the past; so I called upon her the other day and appealed to her to leave Beauchamp alone. It seemed to me that one admirer more or less could make very little difference to her, and I couldn't suppose that she had any deliberate intention of making Lady Mildred unhappy. At least that's what I said to her."

"Are you so sure," I inquired, "that the loss of Beauchamp will make Lady Mildred unhappy?"

"Oh, yes, I'm afraid so—that is, I believe so," he answered. "From different things that she has said to me I feel pretty sure that she would accept him if he proposed to her; and after all why shouldn't she? I don't myself think him particularly attractive, but he is a good natured fellow, and he isn't bad looking, and—well, I suppose there would be nothing very extraordinary in any girl's falling in love with him. So, as I tell you, I made my appeal to Hilda; and I wish I hadn't, for it didn't succeed. She began by denying that she had led Beauchamp on, giving me to understand that he was infatuated about her and that she really couldn't help it. Then, when I persisted that she could put a stop to his infatuation very easily if she chose, she got angry and said that I, at any rate, ought not to object if Beauchamp proved faithless. I asked her what she meant—because really I didn't know—whereupon she calmly accused me in so many words of being in love with Lady Mildred myself!"

"How impudent!" I exclaimed. "And how palpably untrue and absurd!"

"Well, yes," Jim agreed, "I think it was rather insolent, and of course it was untrue. I don't know about the absurdity of it; but what does seem to me absurd is that friendship between a man and a woman should be considered impossible. Like a fool as I am, I said so to Lady Bracknell; and she immediately turned round upon me and asked why she wasn't to be allowed to make a friend of Beauchamp. That rather shut me up. All I could say was that I didn't believe she cared two straws about Beauchamp's friendship; whereupon she retorted that she didn't believe in my disinterested friendship for Lady Mildred. So the dispute ended in a draw."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

HOW TO WRITE A NOVEL.

An Example of How a Thrilling Romance Can Be Turned Out.

If we had time we would write novels—lots of novels. They might not be very novel novels, and they might not go bumping down the front doorsteps of time, but they would be a great relief to us. The truth is, there are whole swarms of novels buzzing around in our inner consciousness, poking their noses into the interstices and gnawing at the edges in their eagerness to get out. But there is no use thinking about it; we haven't time. It occurs to us, however, that we may make ourselves useful to somebody else.

There seems to be plenty of ambitious young persons who have all the time there is and who would like to write novels, they tell us, if they only knew how to start out. Now, possibly we can help where they are weakest. Almost every day we see something that would furnish a first class start for an amateur novel. Only yesterday we were coming down Thirteenth street and——

Well, a novel might start out like this, for instance:

The rich, full moon had mounted high and higher in the vaulted dome of blue that canopied the silent valley of the Nile. The hoopoe birds had fled in flocks to take their wonted places in the branches of the sycamore and fig. All nature slept. A sea of golden sand rolled off beyond the westward Ken. The mountains of the east lay slumbering upon their couch of burnished gold. The rippling river flung the sheening moonbeams back, so prodigal they fell upon its bosom.

The Widow Dizhragh lay upon her rug beside the open window of her chamber, looking out upon the rich and dazzling scenery of the night. All nature slept, save Widow Dizhragh.

"I will do it," she said at last; "I will do it."

The round, red sun peeped slyly from behind the rugged mountains of the east. The silver of the night was gone, and in its place rich gold was strewn. The sunbeams kissed the dangling figs and woke the hoopoe birds; then romped away to ride upon the laughing waters of the valley god, and glint and gleam in wantonness of brilliancy.

The Widow Dizhragh called her charming daughter.

"Muzhera," said she, "I have decided."

"Which way, ma?"

"We will take a roomer."

"Which room, ma?"

"The one back of the lumber in the attic, dear. So, come; let us arrange."

The shortening of the shadow of the tamarisk foretold the coming of the noontide. The scaraberi toiled and rolled his ball adown the slope and then anon a-up the slant. The corn bird sought the shade. It was hotter than tunket.

"Furnished Rooms."

That was all the placard said.

"Why, ma," queried Muzhera, "why do you drag the piano from its wonted corner?"

"I would place it by the window, child, that he who wayfares may note its presence. Do you catch on?"

"I get your drift, ma, and I approve your ingenuity."

"Hush, child; I have but just begun. Fetch me you chair. No, no; not that one with the broken back, nor yet the cheap one with the battered bottom. This one, my child; this one of brocade velvet. See, it looks well, though its remaining three uneven legs are not the legs of use and practice."

Thus was the furniture bestowed. Then all the blinds were drawn to shut away the summer sun. It was not the golden sunshine Widow Dishragh would invite. Nay, not all the sun was shut away.

"That will do, dear. You may leave that blind and let the golden rays fall full upon the chair and the piano, that he who passes by may be beguiled within by the richness of our belongings."

Here is a good place to end the first chapter. By this time the reader's interest is aroused. He wonders who will take the room. He sees a chance for all sorts of dramatic situations when the roomer comes, and as for "local coloring," that is in a fair way to make a novel worthy of a nine days' run if he who takes it up where we have laid it down but follows out the gait set forth for him.—Washington Post.

Seeing for Himself.

Mrs. Prim—Good morning, Tommy. Did your mother send you in?

Tommy (aged 8)—No'm. I thought I would like to make a call.

Mrs. Prim—That is very nice, I am sure. But you mustn't be bashful on your first call. Can't you raise your eyes from the carpet?

Tommy—Oh, I'm not bashful, but mother says your carpet is so ugly it makes her sick to look at it, and I thought I would come in and try it myself.—Commercial Bulletin.

Cause and Effect.

A countryman was ordering a tombstone for his brother.

"And what sized letters do you want us to use for the inscription?" asked the man of marble.

"Oh, the biggest you've got. He was awful nearsighted."—Judge.

Bods and Bugs.

"Look at that beautiful young rosebud with a lot of old bugs swarming around her," remarked Brown, as several old boys were flirting with a young lady at a ball.

"Yes, but those are gold bugs, so the rosebud don't mind it," said Jones.—Texas Siftings.

A Conceited Flower.

"The sunflower is the most conceited flower of the vegetable kingdom," remarked the judge.

"How is that?" asked the major.

"It has the big head."—Pittsburg Chronicle Telegraph.

A Difficult Job.

A negro minister once observed to his hearers at the close of his sermon as follows: "My very obstinacious brethren, I find it's no more use to preach to you than it is for a grasshopper to wear knee buckles."—Celestial City.

Established His Point.

"Father," said Willie, who had just been corrected, "that strap is hereditary, isn't it?"

"I don't know that it is."

"But it descends from father to son, doesn't it?"—Washington Capital.

AN AZTEC SACRIFICE.

One Horrible Scene of Many in Mexico in the Days of the Montezumas.

Fifty-two years constituted the Aztec cycle. To this cycle was added a complement of thirteen days, intended to make the solar and civil years agree. It was believed that the world would come to an end on the last night of a cycle, and that the gods, if merciful, would light their fires on the distant mountains. If the world did not come to an end the Aztecs congratulated themselves that it would survive another cycle, and the thirteen complimentary days were passed with feasts, sacrifices and bacchanals.

In the temple of Huitzilipochtli there was to be a gladiatorial combat, which was nothing less than a sacrifice. The six ministers of the ceremony were at hand. Toplitzin, the chief among them, clad in a crimson vestment, with a crown of varicolored feathers, was performing the duties that preceded a sacrifice to the god, and the others, with white robes bordered with black, their faces hideous with somber pigment and mouths painted white, assisted him. A crowd filled the stone walls of the temple to witness the spectacle, surging with impatience about the temalcatl (or round, stone platform, eight feet high) where the combat was to take place.

The victim, a prisoner of war, is brought in. Armed with only a short spear and shield, he is placed upon the temalcatl, tied by one foot and confronted by an Aztec warrior fully armed. The flat nostrils of the victim are distended, his black eyes burn with desperation; his coarse, black hair straggled about his face, and his thick, purple lips quiver as he views the well armed soldier before him.

At a word they fall to the fray. The spears clash and they fight like demons—the victim with the desperation of certain death, the soldier to uphold his valor among his comrades.

Suddenly, realizing how unequal the contest, and that his fate is sealed whatever the outcome of that battle, the prisoner throws away his shield and spear and presents his breast to the soldier's weapon. A pause, a blow, and the victim falls heavily to the stone.

In a trice the priests, with frenzied shouts and hair streaming about their demoniacal faces are upon the temalcatl, and have borne the dying man to a block of green jasper, on whose convex surface they throw him. This is the sacrificial stone, and Toplitzin, who now takes the name of the god to whom he sacrifices, opens the breast of his victim, tears out his heart and offers it, still palpitating, to the sun.

Then the bleeding trophy is placed in the hollow mouth of the idol Huitzilipochtli, and the lips of the statue daubed with blood. The dead man is decapitated and his head deposited in the Tzompatli, an ossuary where the skulls of sacrificed prisoners of war are set into the walls. The soldier claims the body for his own, and bears it away for the delectation of himself and his anthropophagical comrades.

The Aztec annals that come down to us are glutted with scenes like this.—Detroit Free Press.

Reaching for the High Notes.

If nature has endowed a singer with the power of producing high notes they will be sung spontaneously. Otherwise they will neither be agreeable in quality or tone. All singers are not alike. Their voices are pitched in different registers. Some are pitched high, others low, and a great many medium. If a singer, not naturally endowed with a high register, attempts to sing beyond his or her capacity by forcing the voice he or she is in danger of injuring the voice. Any one possessed of a good voice may by study and culture produce higher notes than they otherwise could hope to do, but no professor of music, no matter how eminent, ever created a voice where it did not previously exist.

Great singers are born, not made. Many singers have temporarily strained their voices by trying to do too much. If the voice is naturally high no matter what the pitch may be the singing will be pleasant and agreeable to the ear. If, however, a singer tries to do too much the effect will be similar to a man who endeavors to walk up two steps at a time when he is only able to make one. It will prove ruinous. Do not strain your voice, or you may lose it.—Signor Campanini in Ladies' Home Journal.

Greeting by Smelling.

The respectful greeting of Fiji is to take and smell the hand of the superior without rubbing it. In the Gambia when the men salute the women they put the woman's hand up to their noses and smell twice at the back of it. In the Friendly islands noses are joined, adding the ceremony of taking the hand of the person to whom civilities are paid and rubbing it with a degree of force upon the saluter's own nose and mouth. The Mariana islanders formerly smelled at the hands of those to whom they wished to tender homage.

Capt. Beechy tells of the Sandwich islanders: "The lips are drawn inward between the teeth, the nostrils are distended and the lungs are widely inflated; the face is then pushed forward, the noses brought into contact, and the ceremony concludes with a hearty rub."—Garrick Mallery in Popular Science Monthly.

Improvements for Sleeping Cars.

We notice that an attempt is to be made to ventilate sleeping cars. The meth[illegible] outlined is simple and promises success, but the most encouraging feature of th[illegible] scheme is that it should have occurr[illegible] the sleeping car companies that coaches are not already perfect in ge[illegible]tion and management. Perhaps [illegible] now penetrate their minds that t[illegible] covering is not equally pleasant [illegible] unfortunate patrons in the tropic[illegible] of midsummer and in the arctic [illegible] midwinter. At present the "sleep[illegible]" provided only with clammy linen sh[illegible] and heavy double blankets.

It would seem that in the [illegible] fashion of woolen clothing t[illegible] might think of furnishing [illegible] loosely woven blankets, [illegible] which could be used as occ[illegible] Such a change, with a little [illegible] make a night in a sleepi[illegible]rible experience than [illegible] Times.