The Contrabandist; OR One Life's Secret!

A TRUE STORY OF THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

CHAPTER XI.

A stranger brought a note for Louis some hours after the disappearance of Rose. He said his name was Raimonde, and that he had been sent by a person who was a friend both to himself and to the missing girl.

The note required Louis to trust himself absolutely in the hands of the messenger. For a time he hesitated. Then his anxiety led him to obey. He even consented to be blindfolded, as the letter had enjoined.

Under circumstances of a less urgent and exciting nature, Louis might have paused to question the wisdom of his course in wholly and unreservedly entrusting himself to the hands of an utter stranger. Together they continued their route. Raimonde paused, saying:

"Will monsieur stand here an instant? I must move a step forward, and monsieur must be very careful not to remove the handkerchief just yet."

He releared his hand and left him. Louis, standing still, heard a hash, grating sound at a little distance before him, and a sound as of some person lifting a heavy body.

"Come, monsieur," said the voice of Raimonde; "take one step forward and here is my hand. I am below you now. You must stoop. Put your hand on my shoulder—thus. Now, you know that you stand on a rock, from which I have jumped. You must follow me—so; that is it. Here we are!"

The grating noise was heard again. Then Louis was conducted over what seemed to be a smooth and level path of stone. He had been admitted by Raimonde through the rear entrance of the cavern, and was passing now through the long subterranean gallery in the rock.

At length they paused again; a noise of bolts and bars withdrawn, and a door unclosed, through which Louis was led. Then the handkerchief was untied, the door closed behind him, and taking off the bandage from his eyes, Louis found himself in the cell of Jacques.

"Monsieur!" uttered Jacques, springing forward, "so you are disguised, eh? I did not know you at first."

"You here, my good friend?" uttered Louis, in astonishment, looking about him. "What place is this?"

"—sh! not too loud, monsieur, if you please. I told you I was a prisoner—did I not?"

"Yes; but such a prison as this! And Rose—tell me where she is."

"She is here also, monsieur—in a cell like this, and close by it."

"Jacques! so near me—and in danger? Let me go instantly and deliver her!"

He was at the door, but Jacques sprang to his side.

"For pity's sake, monsieur, be careful, or you will spoil all! Come here, I entreat you, and listen to me. Rose is safe at present, and if you are calm enough to hear what I wish to say, and to act with me, we may rescue her in ten minutes, whereas such impetuous haste as yours would ruin the scheme."

It was plain enough. The count suffered himself to be led to a seat at the opposite side of the cell, and listen to the explanation of his companion, while burning with eagerness to hasten to the rescue of Rose. Jacques made brief work of it. He began by relating the story of the abduction of Rose, and the plot that led to it. Louis was angered and indignant beyond measure, as he listened to the account of Gasparde's villainy.

"Who is he—what is he, this wretch, Gasparde?" he uttered, hotly.

"The chief of a horde of brigands and contrabandists, monsieur."

"Is it possible!—and yet, why not? One cannot be surprised at hearing it of one so base as he. And Rose is in his power?"

"Not exactly, monsieur. He brought her hither, as I have told you, to this place, which is a cavern in the center of the forest, and after placing her in the cell of which I have spoken, went away with the men upon an expedition, from which they will not probably return until midnight or to-morrow morning. When he comes back, he will either extort from her a promise to marry him, or keep her confined in that cell, until she pines to death; for he is just so merciless. He never has forgotten the treatment he once received at your hands, nor the threats and rebukes of Hugh Lamonte; and he has been watching ever since for an opportunity of revenge. It is ours to deprive him of that revenge."

"Your plan—your plan, Jacques!"

"The man who accompanied you hither is the guard left by Gasparde. He has procured for me an interview with you; but he never suspects that it is for the purpose of liberating Rose and myself; for were we to escape, he knows that the vengeance of the leader would fall on him. Now, we must either manage to gain his silence by force or by a bribe. If we bind him, and leave him here when we leave the place, why, Gasparde will shoot him when he comes back; but if a sum of money were offered him, I have an idea that he would not only suffer his prisoners to escape, but also take leave himself, since he has grown weary of the captain's tyranny."

"The bribe, then—the bribe, by all means!" said Louis, earnestly. "I happen to have a considerable sum with me; but we must be cautious."

"Yes—yes! we must be cautious, as you say; and in case he should refuse the money we must be prepared to spring upon him. A cord for his hands and feet and a gag—that will do the business. Now, then, for the work. I will call him in. Be prepared." And he called "Raimonde!"

The guard appeared. Jacques glanced towards the count, and then said:

"Comrade, you don't forget, I suppose, the conversation which we had at dinner?—the agreement which we made about bidding adieu to monsieur le capitaine?"

The glitter of gold caught Raimonde's eye, from a heavy purse which the count held carelessly in his hand. His avarice was aroused.

"I remember it very well, Jacques," he answered.

The count stepped forward.

"My friend, suppose you were to shut your eyes for the space of half an hour, and unclose them at the end of that time to find yourself richer by a thousand francs, or two or three times that sum, perhaps?"

"It would be a very pleasant thing, monsieur."

"I offer you that sum in return for a certain favor which I shall ask at your hands."

"Name the favor and it is yours, monsieur."

"I desire the use of the keys which unlock the doors of these cells, and you will show me those in which you have prisoners confined."

"It is a bargain. Follow me, monsieur. So this is your business, comrade?" and he smiled grimly at Jacques. "Well, it's all the same to me, since I shall myself escape from this place and be able to live like an honest man."

So saying, he led the way from the cell, advanced a short distance along the gallery, and pausing before an arched door in the wall, said, as he unlocked and threw it open:

"The only other prisoner we have is in here, monsieur."

And Louis, leaving the others outside, entered. This cell, like that of Jacques, was lighted by a brazen lamp, suspended from the ceiling. Directly beneath this lamp stood Rose, slightly bending forward, with her hands clasped, and an eager, inquiring expression of countenance, as she beheld some one entering, and heard the words of the guard. But she shrank back at first, with a low cry, as the disguised count met her view. She did not recognize him.

"Rose, do not fear; it is I!" he said.

"You, Louis?—ah, Louis! I know you now!" and weeping, amid her smiles, she sprang forward to the arms outstretched to receive her.

The young man trembled with emotion—with feelings that were unutterable, as he held the light form of Rose in his embrace.

"Rose, I have come to make you free!" he said, tenderly, supporting her to the door. "Come with me, dear child!"

"To set me free? Let us hasten, Louis. But where is he—that wicked Gasparde?"

"Gasparde is absent, Rose, and we must escape ere his return. I will tell you all when you are once in safety."

Jacques stood at the door, unable to suppress his delight on seeing Rose again, an durging them to hasten. Raimonde said, briefly:

"You had better use all the speed you can, you can scarcely get away from here too soon."

"Thanks, my friend; and here is your reward," returned Louis, at the same time placing in the man's hand a well-filled purse. "And now, Jacques, let us be gone."

They reached the front of the cave. Stretched on a heap of skins, by a glowing fire, lay the guard, smoking a short-stemmed pipe and meditating.

"Michel, come with me," said Raimonde, briefly.

The man rose, indolently, and obeyed.

The cool, damp wind blew across their faces as they gained the entrance. An involuntary exclamation of thanksgiving escaped from the lips of Rose and Louis.

"We are free—free!" uttered Rose, with sweet and thrilling solemnity; and pausing an instant, she bowed her head upon her clasped hands.

They parted, Jacques joining the count and Rose, to accompany them to the chateau. Louis pushed on, still supporting tenderly the young girl at his side. A few moments passed, and they were making good progress, when suddenly their attention was attracted by a sound of voices at some distance to the right and the faintly discerned forms of persons moving through the trees. Jacques paused and listened.

"Fly, monsieur—fly! the men are returning!" whispered he, suddenly.

"Rose!" murmured Louis, in alarm, "I must save you, at least!"

"Hasten—hasten on!" urged Jacques; "there is a hollow tree just beyond here where Mademoiselle Rose can conceal herself."

They pressed forward silently, but they were perceived.

"Yonder—yonder! the third tree on the right!" whispered Jacques, frantically; "hide her, or she is lost!"

There were shouts behind; the brigands, eight or ten of them, sent back by Gasparde, were approaching; they discerned the fugitives dimly in the gathering darkness, and their suspicions were roused. They commenced a pursuit. But they pursued only the count and Jacques; for Louis had gently placed the form of the half-fainting girl within the hollow tree, and instantly took an opposite direction to lead their pursuers away from the spot. The ruse succeeded; the brigands passed the tree.

With an irrepressible cry of victorious joy, Louis hastened on, with Jacques; their evident desire to escape increased the suspicions of the approaching party, who now pressed close upon them. Oh—oh, still, they went; further and further, nearer to the edge of the forest. But the brigands gained on them. Shots were fired, too, but they missed their aim.

"Monsieur Louis, we shall be taken!" uttered Jacques, as he made a last effort for life.

And answering not a word, the count, turning, fired at one of the men, who had almost laid his hand on the shoulder of Jacques. The brigand fell. A shout of vengeance was raised by the pursuers, and they rushed forward with mad haste.

"My good fellow, flight is no longer of use. We must yield. But she is safe!" said Louis.

He turned to deliver himself up; he heard a cry of savage joy, felt a heavy blow, and then lost all consciousness.

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When the young count recovered his faculties he found himself lying on the stone floor of one of the cavern cells, which was fully lighted by the brazen lamp swinging from the roof. How long he had been here he was unable to guess; but the scenes through which he had passed relative to the rescue of Rose flashed so instantly and vividly upon his recollection as to persuade him that no very great portion of time had elapsed since their occurrence. The flight, the concealment of Rose, the moment of capture—all these were before him. He wondered only that the brigands, enraged as they were at the injury to their comrade, had not torn him limb from limb.

His captors had taken care to secure him beyond the possibility of escape; for they had fettered him, hand and foot, and to these fetters was attached a heavy chain, the other end of which was fastened to a huge ring in the wall. He was in captivity, but that captivity was sweet, since he had, as he hoped, ensured the safety of Rose. Yet he thought of her with the deepest anxiety, still. He calculated the chances of her finding the way from the forest, or, perhaps, she had fainted in that narrow place of refuge, and remained insensible amid the noxious damps of night, and with slimp reptiles and poisonous insects all about her! But what would not be preferable to the prison from which she had escaped?.

To Jacques his thoughts turned. As a matter of course he also must have been brought back, and he, too must be in a cell, chained also. When would a chance of escape come to either of them? It was a matter of ignorance to him, whether Gasparde had returned with the men who had captured him. He was in the power of murderers now, and there was no reason for them to be more lenient to him than to any other who might excite in them a thirst for vengeance. Yet, with the probability of the escape of Rose, he suffered no apprehensions to disquiet him.

CHAPTER XII.

With rare booty, the spoils of that night's work, the brigand chief, Gasparde, returned, a little after midnight, to the cave. He was in an excellent humor with his multiplied success in effecting the capture of Rose and gaining far more than he had anticipated by the robbery committed that night.

What, then, was his rage and disappointment to learn from the men whom he had sent back three or four hours earlier that Rose had made her escape! He raved like a maniac; he vowed the direst vengeance on the faithless guard, who had disappeared, and on the spur of the moment, would instantly have gone to assassinate their new prisoners, had not some quarrel arising among the men diverted his attention for a time. During this interval he had an opportunity to become cool, and afterwards repaired to the cells to ascertain whom it could be that the man had taken in company with Jacques, and who wore the disguise of a brigand. His mingled astonishment, rage and exultation may be easily imagined on discovering it to be the Count d'Artois.

"Oho, my fine fellow! so you are there, are you?" he cried, savagely. "Well—well, not a bad exchange of prisoners! Won't I make you dance presently, monsieur! Just wait till daylight!"

"You may do with me what you will," answered Louis, calmly, "since she has escaped. I can suffer any torture now."

"You talk bravely, monsieur! But I mean to get her back again—do you hear that? I will watch, day and night, till the time comes, as I have watched since the time when I vowed revenge for all that happened to me at your hands. So you helped her to escape, did you?"

"Yes; and be assured that she will be kept now so far beyond your reach that no scheme of yours will ever draw her hither again."

"We will see to that, monsieur—we will see to that! Now mark me! I will get the girl back, and you shall starve before her eyes, day by day, hour by hour, till you die in your chains!"

He went out, and left his prisoner in the deep silence of his lonely cell to think of those cruel words.

(To be continued.)

BADGERS FIND RICH GEMS.

Deposit of Precious Stones Unearthed by the Busy Animals.

The discovery of the ledge of precious stones on Yogo creek, Fergus County, Montana, was made by the finding of true blue sapphires in the earth thrown out by the badgers in digging their holes. The ledge was traced across the country for a distance of several miles by means of these badger holes. These animals were numerous in that section of the country, and, as the limestone came very near the surface of the ground, the only place where the badgers could dig holes deep enough for their dens was in the soft yellow clay which filled the lead at the surface. The gems are pronounced by experts to be equal to the true blue oriental sapphires, and command as good if not better prices from the leading jewelers of London, Paris and New York. The stones are found at the surface of the ledge in soft, yellow clay. When depth is attained on the vein it is found to be hard clay or shale, the result of volcanic eruption and identical in appearance with the diamond deposits of Kimberley, in South Africa.

True blue sapphires are found in India in the glacial gravels, but never before have they been found in the original matrix in which they were placed by the volcano which created them.

The new gem fields are located about 100 miles northeast of Helena, on a tributary of the Judith River, in Fergus County. The geological survey took note of the deposits in its late report. The first shipment of these stones was a cigar box full, which was shipper to a New York jeweler, who bought them for $3,750. He pronounced them equal in every respect to the true oriental sapphires. Jewelry concerns in London have asked for all that can be obtained, offering prices ranging from $6 to as high as $100 per carat.

There are two companies mining sapphires. One, a London concern, has all of its stones cut in London, while the American company has a plant in Helena, where the stones are cut. The American cut stones, with the characteristic skill of American workmen, command a better price, because of the superior fire and lustre due to the more skillful cutting. The American company has in addition to its claims in Fergus County acquired a large amount of ground on Rock Creek, in Missoula County, from which there are washed every month several thousand carats of sapphires of all colors and tints, ranging from greenish blue, pinks, straw colors and whites.

The Rock creek field also produces among the sapphires a number of rubies, some of them of the true pigeon-blood tint, which exceed many times over the value of the finest diamonds. These stones in Missoula County are found in the gravel and not in the matrix like the ones in Fergus County. They have evidently been washed by glacial action from some vein, the locality of which has never been discovered. These off-colored sapphires are found in nearly all of the placer mines in Montana, but until the Yogo fields were discovered in 1895 very few of the true blue sapphires were found. Many of these off-colored stones, as they are called, are of great beauty, the pinks and straw colors being exceptionally beautiful, and, while they have not the stamp of fashion the finer ones are purchased at high prices by the lovers of fine gems. Both of these companies are preparing to mine these stones on a large scale.—Chicago Chronicle.

Short of Water.

Utah proposes to avert pending calamity to her agricultural section by supplying the Great Salt Lake basin with needed water. Irrigation has cut off the supply and the lake itself is in imminent danger of drying up. The usual supply of water is being withheld and evaporation is rapidly lowering the level of the lake. Centuries ago the shores of the great inland salt sea were high on the mountains, where the line of the ancient brook is visible to-day and the lake, which has sunk to its present dimensions, promises to disappear far more rapidly than in the ages past.

EDITORIALS

OPINIONS OF GREAT PAPERS ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS

Old Books for New Readers.

As the love for old books—that is, for the works of the standard authors of the past—should not be confined to old readers, it is gratifying to note that publishers both here and in England are making a feature of the reprints of former favorites.

Without reflecting upon the authors of current literature, it can truthfully be said that time is the great winnower of literary chaff. That which survives the generation in which it appears is usually worthy of being read by succeeding generations, and not infrequently better worth universal perusal than the bulk of the books from which the worthless and purely ephemeral have not yet been eliminated. Plutarch never grows old with students of biography; Cervantes and Shakspeare are as delightful after three hundred years as when their immortal works were first published, and every generation has furnished authors worthy of being read by all generations.

Each successful author is unique. Take past writers of American literature as examples. Irving, Cooper and Hawthorne have had no successors in their own special fields. Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot and Charles Reade among the English novelists of the past century have not been excelled or even duplicated in the present. The children of those who derived pleasure and instruction from these writers while living will find equal profit and delight in their perusal now that they are dead. "King's Treasures" is what Ruskin has fitly named collections of books that have survived Time's winnowing process; and these books cannot be made too cheap, plentiful or accessible.—Philadelphia Bulletin.

Wealth and National Stamina.

EXPENSIVE houses, rich furnishings, costly sports, extravagant entertainments, criminally expensive hotels and the like, everybody sees and knows about; and there are Americans who have a scale of living that would put the rich men of most other countries to shame. But the real question is not whether the amount of unnecessary or even vulgar expenditure be large, but whether such expenditure vitiates taste, induces to idleness, and encourages vice. The only fair answer is that there is as large a proportion of idle and vicious among the poor or the well-to-do as among the rich. Most American men have occupations, and most of them have engrossing occupations.

But there is probably a larger proportion of American women who suffer from idleness than there was a generation ago, and the chief social danger from great wealth is the danger to women. Yet there comes up from the humbler social levels into the ranks of well-to-do life so many robust and well balanced young women of every generation that those who are spoiled by fortune are, in comparison, inconsiderable.

Our democracy reinforces itself with a safe and vigorous womanhood, even more surely than with energetic manhood. If all the women in the United States between the ages of 18 and 40 could be appraised by the best standard of womanhood, they would show such an advance over their mothers as could perhaps not be shown by any preceding generation of men or women since civilization began. They owe much of it not to excessive wealth, but to the well-diffused prosperity that they have enjoyed. And excessive wealth and all its evils are, after all, only unfortunate incidents of this diffused prosperity.—The World's Work.

Parental Responsibility For Spoiled Children.

ONE of the saddest of sights is a spoiled child. Seeing such a child one almost revolts against the system that leaves the young in the care of their parents, however unfit those parents may be for their important responsibilities.

There are incompetent parents in all stations of society, but it would seem, from casual observation, that the poor are really wiser and firmer parents than the rich. Poor people perforce must discipline their children and keep them well in hand. The children of the poor must be taught to help themselves, to work about the house, to practice thrift. Fortunately the majority of poor parents in this country appreciate the value of education, and they send their young to the neighboring public or private school even though doing so cost them much pinching and labor. Between being disciplined at home and knocked about a good deal by their playmates, the children of the poorer families grow up pretty well broken, having a proper self-respect, but not unbearably conceited or selfish or vain.

Rich parents are prone to indulge their children. What with nurses, governesses, fine clothes, ponies and every toy he cries for, the little son of the millionaire is very likely to grow up in the notion that the world was made for his special use and pleasure, and that the business of all other people is to stand about awaiting and obeying orders from him. There are, of course, plenty of wealthy families in which the children are not spoiled, but the conditions make the parental duty really more difficult and perilous in an environment of wealth than in poor surroundings.—San Francisco Bulletin.

To Fight Forest Fires.

FEW realize what an immense loss the United States suffers each year through the destruction of timber by fires. In Oregon and Washington last year $20,000,000 of timber was destroyed by fire in two weeks. From Maine to Puget Sound every timber region in the United States suffers annually from forest fires, and the yearly loss averages between $20,000,000 and $50,000,000. The forest fires which swept over New England in the early part of this summer will make the loss this year large—perhaps bring it up to the maximum.

This loss of timber by forest fires is an actual loss—wealth goes up in smoke and is vanished forever. New trees grow to take the place of the old ones burned, but the value of those destroyed is blotted out from the nation's wealth. Taking the average annual loss in the last twenty years to be $30,000,000, it means that the country has been the loser of $600,000,000 in that time. Though this loss has been going on year after year ever since the settlement of the country—in fact, was going on before its settlement—no systematic attempt to prevent it has been made except in the States of New York, Pennsylvania and Minnesota.

The danger arising from the deforesting of the great watersheds by the axe of the woodman has received a considerable share of popular attention, and the checking of it is one of the tasks set before the Bureau of Forestry. Investigation and study have been actively at work in that direction, but the matter of preventing fires has been entirely neglected heretofore by the general governmnt, which now proposes to take the matter up from the beginning and study it thoroughly. It is true that in the national forest reserves there has been for some time a patrol system, charged, among other duties, with reporting and fighting fires, but no general principles have been laid down and no valuable data gathered from which to work.—New York Press.

Vacation Advice.

MORE attention should be given to relaxation and rest, especially in the home circle. Nothing has ever been found better for exhausted nature than sleep. Vacationists should not overlook this important fact. The stay-at-homes, who enjoy short trips and return to their own comfortable beds at night, can congratulate themselves on securing needed rest. Wise tourists plan to get all the sleep they require. This class believe in the advice of the famous writer, Dr. J. G. Holland, who once said on this topic:

"Sleep is a thing that bells have no more business to interfere with than with prayers and sermons. God is recreating us. We are as unconscious as we were before we were born; and while He holds us there, feeding anew the springs of life and infusing fresh fire into our brains and preparing us for the work of another day, the pillow is as sacred as a sanctuary.

"If any fanatic has made you believe that it is good for you to be violently wakened from your sleep at an early hour, and to go out into the damp, raw air, morning after morning, with your fast unbroken and your body unfortified by the stimulus of food, forget him and his counsels and take the full measure of your rest. When you get your breakfast take your exercise if you have time, or wait until a later hour in the day. Just as much labor can be accomplished in ten hours as in fourteen, with more efficiency and less fatigue, when rest and bodily exercise are properly taken."—Boston Globe.

VALUE OF THE EGG CROP.

Year In, Year Out, It Beats Production of Precious Metals.

Russia is the largest seller of aggs in the world. She sells to foreign countries 150,000,000 dozen eggs nearly every year. In 1896 she sent abroad 1,475,000,000 eggs; in 1897, 1,737,000,000, and in 1898 1,831,000,000. Her sales are all the time increasing.

China is supposed to be the largest producer of eggs in the world. There is no such thing as statistics of poultry products in China, but there are over 400,000,000 persons in that empire who are very fond of eggs; it takes a good many eggs to supply them. The humblest farm hut has hens in plenty, and they do their best to supply the demand. There is little doubt that China takes the cake as an egg producer. Her entire supply is usually consumed at home, though she sometimes manages to spare a few for Japanese consumers.

Great Britain is the largest buyer of foreign eggs in the world. Of course, no English breakfast table is complete without eggs as a complement to its toast and marmalade. Great Britain buys every year an average of 1,500,000,000 eggs from about twenty countries, and this is only 40 per cent of the consumption. British hens manage to produce three-fifths of the eggs that the home market demands. In 1901 Russia sold to England 539,053,000 eggs, and the next largest sellers were Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Egypt and Morocco. Great Britain spent $26,745,194 in the purchase of eggs in 1901.

Our entire export of eggs in 1902 was only 2,717,990 dozen, valued at $528,679, which cuts a small figure in comparison with Russia's total. But our hens are very industrious, and it is only the enormous home demand that keeps our exports at such a low figure.

In 1899 there were 233,598,005 chickens in this country, and they produced 1,293,818,144 dozen eggs; and the fact that we consumed 90 per cent of them shows that we are a nation of egg eaters. It is enough to make any hen dizzy to think that a train of ordinary refrigerator cars containing our entire egg crop of that year would have extended from Chicago to Washington, with several miles of cars to stretch along the track toward Baltimore.

In 1901 the receipts and consumption of eggs in New York City were 2,872,000 crates of thirty dozen each. Chicago has even a larger per capita consumption, or an average of 1,551,545 crates a year. Truly the egg industry is a great business; and when we consider it in connection with the broilers, spring chickens, tough and tender, and roosters we consume, the poultry interests assume prodigious proportions.

The total value of the poultry and eggs we produced in the last census year was $281,178,247. The industry was worth more than all the cattle and hogs we slaughtered. It was worth more than the wheat crop of twenty-eight States and territories; and the value of our eggs alone was higher than that of the combined gold and silver product of the United States in any year since 1850, except in 1890, when the precious metals exceeded the eggs by $9,418,125.

"The Weaker Sex."

The women who are attempting to run a big hotel for women in New York are solving some interesting problems. The hotel is called the Martha Washington, and the intention of the management was to run it entirely with women, as well as for women.

Little by little the male sex has been encroaching, not because men were especially anxious to work there, but because the women could not do without them.

First of all, the girl "bell boys" had to go, because the women could not "make them mind." Boys were installed. They obey orders, but do not stay long, because, they say, "the women are nutty."

The head woman waiter could not enforce discipline among the women waiters. And so a man had to undertake the job. It was also found that carrying the soiled dishes from dining room to kitchen was too heavy for women. Men were put in to do this. Finally the rest of the girls struck and their places were filled with men.

How is it that women won't "mind" women? Would a regiment of amazons have to be officered by men?—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Scotland's Great Canal.

Plans for the construction of a ship canal between the Firth of Forth, on the east side of Scotland, across to the River Clyde, on the west, have been definitely arranged, says the New York Times. The canal will cost $50,000,000, but powerful support is expected from the British government. One of the great engineering features of the scheme will be the carrying of the canal through the high ground near the Loch Lomond end. Frequent passing places will be made.

An indication of the saving in distance that would be effected by the canal will be gained from the following figures: From the Clyde to ports on the east coast of Scotland, northeast of England and northwest of Europe, the distance saved would be from 529 miles to 238 miles. From the Firth of Forth to ports on the west coast of Scotland, northwest of England, Ireland, America and the Mediterranean the distance saved would be from 487 to 141 miles. From Tyne ports to the St. Lawrence river the distance saved would be 150 miles. From the west of Britain and northeast of Ireland to middle western ports of the continent the distance saved would be from 377 to 98 miles.

A Common Weakness.

Dr. Joseph Le Conte was an authority, recognized by the world at large, on the science of vision. One day, says the New York Tribune, he was showing a class how to detect the blind spot in the human eye. He took two coins and held them, one in each hand, before him on the table.

"Look at both of these steadily," said he, "and gradually move them in opposite directions. Presently they will pass beyond the range of vision. That is due to the blind spot. Continue the movement, and the coins will again emerge to view."

Then the philosopher and naturalist had his little joke. "You can experiment for yourself at home," said he. "But if you are unsuccessful, try some other object instead of a coin. Some people have no blind spot for money."

Oil Consumption.

For many months the oil consumption of the world has exceeded the production, for which reason financiers and merchants have feared a possible exhaustion of the oil fields. Reports published in the Manual of Statistics, however, show an extensive decrease in the stock of crude petroleum in the greatest of all American fields, Pennsylvania, within the last two years and figures of equal authority indicate that for months the consumption of oil from Pennsylvania and West Virginia wells has been very largely in excess of production. The stock of crude Pennsylvania petroleum above ground in December, 1900, was 13,174,717 barrels, while in December, 1902, the amount thus stored was only 5,699,127 barrels.

Call for Sympathy.

First Bachelor—I wish I could write a decent letter of condolence.

Second Bachelor—Some one you know dead?

"No. Engaged."—Detroit Free Press.

When we visit in the country, we like the hostess' disappearance to be followed immediately by the sound of chickens squawking in the back yard.