DENTON JOURNAL.

Published Weekly, Every Saturday Morning, by

MELVIN BROS.

Saturday Morning, May 16, 1885.

A LONDON MYSTERY.

BY JOSEPH HATTON.

I.

I was strolling into the Zoological Gardens in a lazy mood on Friday afternoon to listen to a lecture on "Snakes."

"Congratulate me, old chap!" exclaimed an impulsive voice at the gate, and I turned to find Reggy Gardner at my elbow. "Can't stay now—just off to the lawyers," he said, as he hailed a passing hansom.

"What is it all about, Reggy?"

"I am going to be married. She's the loveliest woman in the world. Come and lunch with me at the club to-morrow and then go home to my mother's—you'll see her there."

As his hansom drove off I looked after my bright, cherry, lucky young friend, just entering life with a newly inherited fortune. Reggy Gardner was a typical young Englishman—broad-shouldered, sturdy, fair-haired, gray-eyed and beaming with health.

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I was about to seek the intellectual refuge of the lecture-room when the face of a woman arrested my attention.

It was a cold, cruel, beautiful countenance, classic in its severity, with blue eyes and lips that had no red in them. The nose came down in a straight line from the low forehead, and was chiseled at the nostrils. The mouth was rather a contradiction of the other part of the face. It was sensual, yet without a touch of the generosity that sometimes modifies the sensual so much that we only call it sensuous. They were fixed on the anaconda, which had just uncurled itself, and which was crawling toward a couple of fowls that were retreating before it. Suddenly, from an expression of intense expectation, the cold, cruel face was lighted up with anger. The next moment a fan was dashed against the glass to urge the birds into the jaws of the serpent. Madame was tired of waiting for the end. A thrill of ildignation ran through me.

"This is no place for ladies," I said aloud to the keeper, that she might hear me, but she continued an unrestrained and active ally of the serpent, intent upon forcing the tragic destiny of the imprisoned birds.

Then all of a sudden there was a hurried movement of the snake, a flutter of feathers and an expiring cry. The anaconda has bagun to feed.

Madame gave a little sigh of satisfaction, and casting a frightened glance at me, moved away. Then I found she was not alone. Her cavalier was a foreigner, who looked like a faded personage matriculating for Tussaud. My thoughts, however, were not of him but of her, and as I strolled home wondering at the combination of angel and demon which is sometimes found in female beauty, I called this lady "Adrastia," as the resemblance to an Italian picture of the goddess flashed upon me. A lovely fiend of strange beauty, the hair a cluster of writhing serpents, a face of lovely forbiddingness, with the agony of the serpent's tooth in it, and yet about the mouth the calm, cruel, death-like expression of a Nemesis. The two faces were like and unlike; and the living one took the place of the other in my mind, eclipsing the picture, yet recalling shadowy reminiscences of it. Adrastia never looked so glad when the victims she slew deserved the death it was her duty to provide as did this lady in the London snake house when the anaconda swooped down upon its living food. Clytemnestra might have worn a similar expression when she murdered Agamemnon; and yet I called the woman of the Zoo Adrastia. And I gave her in my imagination, a fitting head-dress of snakes and serpents.

II.

Pall Mall thronged with cabs and carriages. It was the height of the London season. We lunched coolly at the club. I forgot Adrastia under the influence of the Reform's dry champagne and Reggy's gush about Mrs. Trentham—for the lady who had won the young fellow's heart was a widow. I warned Reggy that a certain character in fiction had uttered a warning concerning widows, which had passed into a proverb. He simply said, with the blood rushing into his face, "Dickens is a vulgar snob" and then, as quickly, "I beg Dickens pardon, old boy, and yours;" and we drove off to Mayfair. Reggy was hard hit. I did not attempt to chaff him about his passion, so out of keeping with the present tone of society which never goes into raptures over anything.

"We met her at Hamburg, and afterward at Como," said Reggy's aristocratic yet amiable and pleasant mother; "she was traveling with her uncle, Count de Tourier."

"It is a rather short engagement," I replied, "but we live in a rapid age."

"I hope he will be happy," rejoined his mother, but I thought there was something of doubt in the way she gave expression to her hopes.

Our conversation, necessarily brief, was interrupted by the arrival of Reggy's betrothed—Mrs. Trentham. There was a movement of curiosity among the people. Mrs. Gardner rose from the tea-table to receive the latest caller with especial honor. Reggy looked at me triumphantly as he said, "Come and be introduced."

I advanced as one in a dream; I was under a spell. I pulled myself together as well as I could.

"This is my oldest and best friend, Marie," said Reggie; "he hopes, though your newest, to be also your best friend."

She looked me straight in the face and held out her hand. It seemed to me as if her manner was a challenge—as if she said: "We are deadly enemies, but you must pay homage to me." What she really did say was: "I hope so, Reggy."

Mrs. Trentham was Adrastia! The knot of golden hair which fell in a cluster from her bonnet and rested upon her neck was to my mind a tanglement of snakes. The eloquence of the serpent was on her tongue, and she held my friend in her fascinations as completely as the serpent holds the bird that eventually drops from the tree into the expectant jaws. Reggy Gardner was to marry the woman of the snake house.

III.

Two years had passed. The honeymoon had long since been forgotten, or remembered only to be thought of as too many waned moons recalled with wonder.

Yet they were happy, as the world goes. They had their little tiffs, and Reggy had more than once been jealous, but not of the Count de Tourier, her "uncle," of course. The idea of such an absurdity had never entered the honest soul of Reggy Gardner. Mrs. Trentham brought him no money. Her first husband had squandered it in gaming and speculation. Reggy had plenty, and he felt proud to settle a handsome sum on his wife and to allow her for pin-money the income of a Duchess. The will which he made in her favor was worthy of his most generous impulses.

"If we do have a little misunderstanding now and then," he said to me while we took a noon-day rest in the stubbles at his princely palace down in Berkshire, "that's the common lot, and it gives zest to the fun of making up."

He wouldn't for the world have acknowledged that he was unhappy, and she had a peculiar power over him which could charm him into any mood she desired. If her occasional bursts of ill-temper or indiscretion of manner toward other men were thunder-clouds in his domestic life, her smiles were summer, her acted affection was sunshine. She knew that I saw through it all. I visited them rarely and only at all for Reggy's sake. They lived in a curious way, constantly traveling, coming to town only for a month in the season, and going to Berkshire for the 1st of September. Reggy's mother kept her own state in town.

Two mothers-in-law, she would say, could not be expected to get on well together, and Reggy's wife preferred to have her own mother with her, and so between the dear old lady of Mayfair and her son had grown up an estrangement which Mrs. Gardner, Jr., promoted with an insidious persistence. Count Tourier had latterly been a rare visitor at Reggy's, owing to misunderstandings with the head of the house; but he often wrote to his "dear niece," and made a special journey now and then to see her.

"No, I don't know where the Count lives or how," said Reggy one evening at the end of our week's shooting, when we were smoking after dinner. "He is, as you say, rather a mystery. Marie's mother is an Italian, you know, on her father's side, and the Count belongs to that branch of the family. At Milan he is an authority, I believe, on chemical science."

"You don't like him, I fear."

"Like him? I hate him!"

Mrs. Gardner entered the room on the word.

"My dear, I thought you had gone to bed," said Reggy.

She has been listening to our conversation.

"I have come to smoke a cigarette with you, if you don't mind," was the answer.

Her suspicions had been confirmed—for our conversation had been a long one—that her strange influence over her husband was weakening; that his confidence in her was on the wane; that her hideous secret, whatever it was, might be oozing out.

"By all means, delighted," said Reggy, and she sat down by his side, a superb-looking woman. If you did not examine her face critically for indications of feminine gentleness.

During my acquaintance with her neither she nor I had ever alluded to the incident at the Zoo, though she knew it was constantly in my mind. She had great penetrating powers, and she was like a woman constantly on the watch. Reggy only saw her great blue eyes, her faultless classical features, her wealth of hair, her tall, grace ful figure, lithe and sinuous as a serpent's. From the first he had been enamored of her beauty, and he was not in the habit of looking behind the mask of what are called perfect features, nor did he understand that a face, to be truly beautiful, must in some measure reflect a pure soul. One part of the conversation which she overheard (not that Reggy ever suspected her of listening) referred to his will, about which I had made an inquiry, since he had only lately told me I was one of his trustees. It is possible that she had misinterpreted something he had said about altering it. I think of these and other things now, which, under other circumstances, I might have forgotten.

IV.

I had left Berkshire for London and my servant was packing my traps for Norway, Reggy and his wife having, as I understood, started for the Mediterrean, when I received a telegram from Reggy's mother; "Please come at once; I fear my poor boy is dying." It was from Berkshire; so she was there. I had only been in London three days. I hurried down by the next train. Mrs. Gardner had been sent for only that morning. She thought I was there. The Count had come, and a local physician was in attendence. A London doctor of great eminence arrived with me.

We were both too late. Reggy Gardner was dead.

He had been taken ill the day I came away and had gradually grown worse. The end had been intensely painful. His wife was with him to the last. She had attended him night and day. He had died in her arms. Now she was inconsolable, they said, and would not see anyone. The doctors called the fatal malady which carried him off "inflammation of the heart." They did not dream what grim satire there was in the verdict.

At my request the London physician examined the remains of the medicine which had been administered to Reggy, and made other inquiries, but everything, he told me confidentially, tended to confirm the correctness of the certificate of death which the other medical attendant had signed. He diagnosed the case for me, making the story of Reggy's death appear perfectly regular and natural, and a week afterward they carried the boy who had accosted me that Friday outside the Zoo to the family vault in the little Berkshire church. A codicil had been made to the will on the second day of the poor lad's illness, excluding my trusteeship, and appointing the widow sole executrix.

"And now, good-by," said Adrastia, when all was over and we were alone, face to face; "we never liked each other, and there is now no further cause to dissemble our hatred."

"Mrs. Gardner," I answered, "I thank you for this frankness. Let me follow your example. I charge you with the murder of the boy we have just buried!"

She stepped a pace backward; but her face neither changed in color nor expression.

"The day may come when I shall reiterate that declaration before an earthly judge."

She swept across the room in a long train of rustling crape. She was dressed in deep mourning. Looking defiantly as she laid her hand on the bell-pull, she rang a quick, firm peal. It was answered by a sleek Italian servant. She pointed toward me as she addressed him.

"This gentleman is leaving us; order the carriage round for the railway station at once."

The door being closed again, she said: "Your malice outruns your discretion, and your enmity overrides your manners, I despise and defy you!"

All the same, she killed that unhappy boy, and watched over his last agonies with the same cruel satisfaction that chilled the blood in the serpent-house. I am sure of it. Have I proved it? No, not yet. At present Reggy Gardner's death is one of the mysteries of London.

India's Resources and Rulers.

The resources of India under British direction far overmatch anything in Asia, except the Chinese Empire. The largest cities of Asia, hardly omitting those of China, are found in India. That country is divided by the English into fifty-three divisions, and Madras alone has 30,000,000 people, or half the population of the United States. Bombay has 13,000,000. Those provinces which the British control have a total population of at least 140,000,000. The whole British-born population of that country, however, exclusive of the army, is under 100,000 persons. There are forty-four towns in British India with over 50,000 people. Calcutta has something like 800,000, Bombay some 700,000, Madras at least 400,000. India takes from England $125,000,000 worth of goods every year, and sends back $150,000,000 worth. The railroad system of India may be said to be the only railroad system in Asia. That fertile country, with its curious redundancy of people and differing sects, has the skeleton of a modern nation, with apparently no opportunity whatever of modern life. So deeply have theological superstitions separated the people from each other that no political harmony can be made out of the land, and a few armed foreigners, hardly 100,000 in number, dominate the whole of India.

AN ANGEL OF SORROW.

Weeping Over Old Age and Rejoicing at the Death of the One Whose Soul Was Unstained.

A child found an Angel grieving, and being asked the cause of her woes the Angel replied:

"The funeral bell calls me to the bed side of a youth. Vice had already found lodgement in his heart, and I weep because I cannot purify his soul before it enters the presence of its maker."

Again the child found the Angel sorrowing, and again she made inquiry:

"Death beckons me to the bedside of a man in his prime," replied the Angel, "and I fear for his salvation. He has a heart of stone and his deeds of kindness were never heard of in heaven."

The child walked forth once more, and again the Angel sat in tearful meditation.

"And will you never smile?" softly asked the child as she came nearer.

"This time I am called to the dying bed of an old man. He has lived his three score years and ten, and the wickedness of the world may have often tempted him."

The child fell ill and walked forth no more. Fever-burned and pain-racked, she tossed on her bed for many days, but one evening as the summer sun was sinking away in the great blue ocean the fever went away and the pains came no more. Then the child heard the rustle of wings, and the Angel stood beside her—not weeping and lamenting as before, but smiling and radiant.

"Why are you here?" asked the child.

"Because death will soon claim you."

"But you wept for the youth, the man in his prime and the old man."

"Aye! but a soul without sin will be carried in my arms to heaven's gates this night, and the echoes of the rejoicing will be heard on earth."—*Detroit Free Press.*

Mohammedans.

It is estimated that there are 200,000,000 Mohammedans in the world, of whom 6,000,000 are in Southeastern Europe, and 20,000,000 in Asiatic Turkey, 7,500,000 in Persia, 25,000,000 in Arabia and Central Asia, and 60,000,000 in Hindostan. Considerable more than half of them are in Asia, and the remainder in Africa, except the 6,000,000 in European Turkey.

Why Is It?

A preacher asks very pertinently, "Why do young men not attend church?" He might ask the same question regarding thousands of young women. It is unquestionable that the present generation is not largely given to church going. The fact is not a pleasant one to contemplate, but possibly the shepherds have something to answer for in the matter.

THE LAY OF THE TRAVELER.

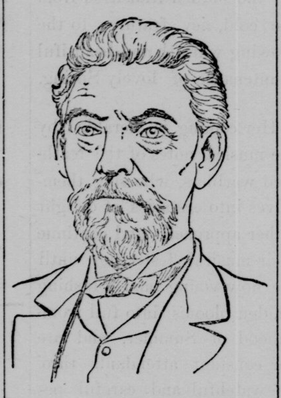
Those old Vermonters who have experienced the vicissitudes of getting through Essex Junction, about six miles from Burlington, will read with delight the following from the pen of the Hon. E. J. Phelps, the newly appointed minister to Great Britain:

With saddened face and battered hat,
And eyes that told of blank despair,
On wooden bench a traveler sat
Cussing the fate that brought him there.
"Nine hours," he cried, "we've lingered here,
With thoughts intent on distant homes,
Waiting for that delusive train
That, always coming, never comes,
Till weary and worn, sad and forlorn,
And paralyzed in every function—
I hope in h——
Their souls may dwell
Who first invented Essex Junction.

I've traveled north, I've traveled south,
Over mountain, forest, prairie, river,
In ocean's storm, in desert's drought,
Through railroad smash and steamboat shiver,
Until I reached this dismal spot,
Of man accursed, of God forsaken,
Where strange new forms of misery
Assail new lives without compunction,
And I hope in h——
Their souls may dwell
Who first invented Essex Junction.

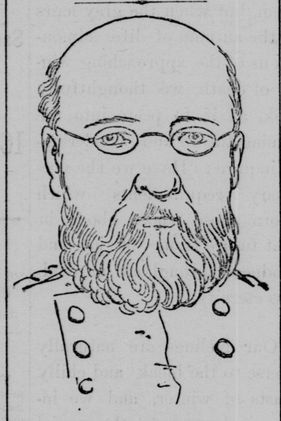
Here Boston waits for Ogdensburg
And Ogdensburg for Montreal,
And late New York long tarrieth,
And Saratoga hindereth all;
From far Atlantic wave-swept bays
To Mississippi's turgid tide
All accidents, mistakes, delays,
Are gathered here and multiplied.
O fellow man, avoid this place
As you would plague, or Peter Funk shun,
And I hope in h——
Their souls may dwell
Who first invented Essex Junction.

And long and late conductors tell
Of trains remote, shipwrecked and slow,
Till even the engine's dismal bell
Takes up the cry—no go!—no go!
"Oh, let me from this hole depart
By any route, so 'tis a long one!"
He cried, and with a sudden start
He jumped on board a train (the wrong one),
And as he vanished in the smoke
He shouted with redoubled unction:
"I hope in h——
Their souls may dwell
Who first invented Essex Junction."



HON NORMAN J. COLMAN.

the new commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, is a New Yorker by birth and Missourian by adoption, having been born at Richfield Springs in the former State in 1827. From the age of sixteen up to twenty-eight he was a school teacher in New York State, in Owensboro, Brandenburg and Louisville, Ky. In the latter place he studied law and took the degree of B. L. In 1855 he removed to St. Louis and bought out the Valley Farmer, which he changed into Colman's Rural World, a name it still bears, and prospers under him as its sole owner and editor. He is the suggester and originator of the Missouri Horticultural Society, the State Board of Agriculture. For several years he has been President of the State Press Association. He was a member of the Legislature during 1865-'66, and was a leader of his party. In 1874 he was nominated for Lieutenant-Governor and elected. During the war he was a Union man and Lieutenant-Colonel of the Fifteenth Regiment of enrolled Missouri militia.



GENERAL KOMAROFF,

fifteen years ago, was the military critic of the St Petersburg News. Those who knew him then, says the New York Times, could hardly have forseen that the quiet little man who seemed to have got "army recognization" upon the brain, would ever become famous throughout the whole civilized world. The name Komaroff means, son of a mosquito, and is ominously suggestive of very great mischief done by very small means. His is another case of sudden fame.

MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.

Hans Von Bulow, it is said, will visit this country next year.

Lines from Gilbert and Sullivan's new opera:

"Three little maids from school are we,
Pert as school-girls well can be;
Three little maids, who, all unwary,
Come from a ladies' seminary.

Racz Pali, the gypsy violinist, who recently died at Pesth, was the husband of four wives and the father of thirty-four children, and his funeral was attended by more than ten thousand people; but it is not mentioned whether this popular outpouring was a tribute to his superiority as a fiddler or as a father.

"The Handel Society of London gave "Saul" recently, the sons and daughters of Mr. Gladstone being in the chorus. The Prince and Princess entered in the middle of the overture, and the conductor at once swung his orchestra from Handel's music to "God Save the Queen," a barbarism that should condemn him to the Tower.

Musicians will have their joke. At a recent Philharmonic concert in Brooklyn, when Mr. Thomas' first violinist made his appearance, he found his desk ornamented with floral wreaths. While he was admiring the decorations his confreres gathered around, and with much apparent effusiveness congratulated him upon his hale and hearty appearance for a man so advanced in years. His name is Bach.

"I went to see a French opera while I was in New Orleans," said an old fellow who had just returned from the Exposition. "Very fine, very fine indeed. I tried to catch one of the tunes, but as I don't understand French I couldn't get hold of it. Oh, yes, opera is very good, but I can stagger along very well without it. If I ain't particular about seein' a show, I'd just as soon go to an opera as a funeral, but when I want to lay right down and enjoy myself, I go to a circus. Ah, there's nothing like a brass horn and a hoss."

The King of Siam will send a complete native orchestra to the London Exhibition in May, to play Siamese music upon Siamese national instruments. The famous Viennese band of Strauss will also fulfill a lengthy engagement. As to the loan exhibition, it will include some very valuable and unique instruments, while a succession of choral and brass band competitions for heavy prizes will keep the musical critics in town till the Birmingham, Festival begins in August. During the exhibition the authorities confidently expect between three and four millions of visitors.

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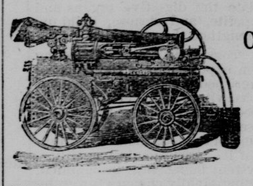

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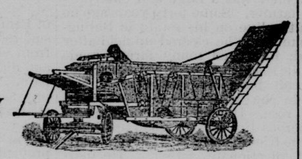

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6 25	2 15	Oxford,	12 08	10 00
6 34	2 23	Trappe,	12 00	9 52
6 50	2 38	Easton,	11 45	9 37
7 00	2 49	Chapel,	11 33	9 24
7 08	2 55	Cordova,	11 27	9 17
7 18	3 05	Queen Anne,	11 18	9 08
7 29	3 16	Ridgely,	11 06	8 58
7 39	3 26	Greensboro,	10 56	8 48
7 48	3 36	Goldsboro,	10 46	8 38
8 55	3 43	Henderson,	10 40	8 32
7 02	3 50	Marydel,	10 34	8 26
8 11	3 58	Slaughters,	10 26	8 18
8 14	4 00	Hartley,	10 24	8 16
8 24	4 09	Kenton,	10 14	8 06
8 34	4 18	Clayton,	10 05	7 57
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