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TALE THAT BEATS THE FILMS

QUIET COURAGE OF A SERVANT GIRL

Story of Victor Hugo Matched in an English Kitchen

THE SIMPLE ANNALS OF THE POOR

By Our Country Girl

Heroism in little things done in cold blood is often harder than in great deeds done in the exaltation of the moment.

That is why one of the most pathetic and heroic scenes in fiction is supposed to be in Victor Hugo's great but terrible novel *Les Misérables*, in which a beautiful but penniless young mother sells her perfect teeth to get money to feed her child; she goes out pretty, and returns toothless.

The other day I met a real Fantine. She is a little servant girl who has gone out into the world at the age when better-off girls are playing hockey, and just thinking of wearing a pigtail instead of a big bow on the top of their heads.

Fantine Sets Out

Fantine had many brothers and sisters, and the playtime of the poor is short. She screwed up her golden hair in a bun, put on an apron far too long for her, a faded dress far too short for her, and an old pair of boots which had been her mother's. Very proudly and willingly she set out to earn her living.

The time came when Fantine II was driven to the dentist by toothache. The dentist said a terrible thing: every tooth in her head must come out.

Do you realise why it was terrible? Fantine II was not afraid of the pain, but she knew that false teeth were expensive, and her father was overburdened as it was. However, he and the mother decided that they must go short of everything and buy the child a set.

They had reckoned without Fantine. She would not have them till she could pay for them out of her wages.

True Heroines and Sham Heroines

Fantine was one of the handsomest people I have ever seen. Now she became quite grotesque. She was terribly shy, so you can imagine how the chaff and nicknames of her fellow-servants hurt her, how she hated answering the bell. She lived on soft food for a year, and never spent a penny on the frills so dear to a girl's heart. She would not let her father pay a penny toward her deliverance, for that would have meant less in the porridge pot.

I think this was heroic. I think if we look about us we shall probably find heroism in unexpected places. I even incline to the belief that most mothers deserve the title of "heroine" far more than the actresses who ride bronchos and fire blank cartridges on the cinematograph screen.

A Long Jump at Eton



Eton College now has weekly fire-drill practices, and a great feature of the operations is the long jump from the windows into the sheet held below. As shown in this picture, the boys wear their top hats at the drill. See second picture on page 12

BRITONS GROWING MORE HEALTHY

It has been counted as a certainty in the past that war would be followed by pestilence, and that as many, or more, people would perish from disease after war as perished by violence in war.

That rule has prevailed in some countries after the Great War, but not in Britain.

Not only have attacks by diseases been fewer during the last two years, but the diseases have been less fatal. They seem to have lost some of their power. And the reason appears to be that knowledge of the effects of cleanliness, in person, homes, and surroundings, has been more widespread.

Here are a few facts about the danger of some diseases in the past compared with the present.

Typhoid fever forty years ago killed eleven times as many people as it kills today. Eight years ago nearly four times as many people caught typhoid fever as catch it today. Forty years ago scarlet fever killed 24 times as many children as it kills today. The total number of British children who died

during the first year after their birth was 60 per cent. higher fifteen years ago than it is today.

Consumption, which some thought would be increased by the war, is not so deadly now as in the past; and many believe that a cure for this most deadly of diseases has been found. At any rate, all the leading countries are beginning to test the inoculation cure introduced by a Swiss doctor.

The three aspirations of the past, to be healthy, wealthy, and wise, are not all fulfilled. The people of England are not more wealthy; it may be doubted whether they are very much wiser; but the wish to be healthy is certainly realised oftener than ever before.

When we compare the state of things today with the condition in Britain in years gone by we realise the wonderful progress that has been made by humanity. The terrible Black Death, for instance, carried off half the population, and men had practically no way of fighting these pestilences. They simply had to let them take their course.

LONDON ALLIGATOR BREAKS LOOSE

EXCITING ESCAPE THROUGH A WINDOW

Queer Adventures in Looking-Glass Land

PUT TO BED AFTER A WARM BATH

At the London Zoo recently an alligator took an unwarranted midnight stroll in the grounds.

By means unexplained the reptile, which is five feet and a half in length, escaped from its temporary home in the Tortoise House and scrambled up on to a window-sill. As Alice climbed through the mirror to enter the world through the looking-glass, so Master Alligator entered the world through the window.

A blow from his tail sent the glass crashing, and out into freedom went the fugitive.

But an alligator, though a cold-blooded reptile, is a native of a torrid climate; the chill night air of London froze this one's ardour. He waddled less than 50 yards, then lay down, content to die of cold.

Crippled by the Cold

In the chilly morning keepers found him rigid, helpless, almost dead, huddled up in a doorway. They carried him to a rousing hot bath, and in that he revived, and was content to be conducted back to ignoble safety and put to bed in his old home in the Reptile House.

This was, we believe, the first escape of an alligator at the Zoo, but nearly every order in the scheme of classification is represented in the volume of flights from authority. Sandy, the mighty orang, has been out. He broke through the roof, and when his keeper scaled a ladder in pursuit Sandy slipped behind him down the ladder, and shook it so violently with his hands that the keeper was nearly thrown to the ground. Jacob, his huge comrade, hurled a flower-pot through a window, got out, climbed a tree, built a nest, and stayed in it all night.

Big Chase in a London Park

That settled the long-disputed point as to whether oranges do make "nests"; and the Zoo authorities, when they got Jacob home again, had the structure photographed, and wired in as a lasting memorial of a unique occurrence.

George, a bear brought home by King Edward years ago, bolted one midnight from the cage whose bars he had snapped, and was chased through Regent's Park. He rushed, roaring, with open, foaming jaws, at his pursuers.

Whack! whack! A stout cudgel descended on George. In an instant his fighting spirit vanished, and he became as meek as a mouse. He patiently submitted to the fastening of a rope about his neck, and then, at the word of command, he shuffled back home, docile as a sheep. He had had his hour!