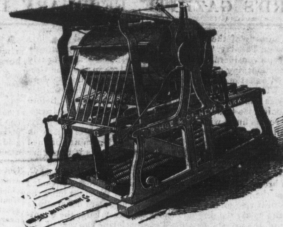
Royal Agricultural

Haszard's Gazette.



Farmers' Journal and Commercial Advertiser.

"MEASURES, NOT MEN."——"HE MUST SPEAK WHOSE WORD LEAPS FORTH AT ONCE TO ITS EFFECT, WHO CALLS FOR THINGS THAT ARE NOT, AND THEY COME."

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THE BABY-STEALER OF THE NUNDY-DROOG.

'I was a very lively girl of eighteen when, left an orphan, I gladly accepted the protection offered me by your father, then many years in the civil service of the East India Company, in the Madras presidency. He was, as you know, my step-brother, many years my senior; and my recollections of him were faint. But your dear mother, to whom he had not long been united, was the friend of my youth; and when, shortly before, she accompanied her parents to India, I little thought how soon we should be joined by even closer ties than those of friendship—that is to say, if any can be closer. I had no regrets at leaving home. I never had had a lover, was by no means of a sentimental or tender nature; nor, indeed, had any strong claims upon my affections, for I was left without the privileges of independence, and was preserved by your father from having to provide myself, as best I could, with a home—such a home as is found in return for service of mind or body. Welcome and kindness were what I encountered at Madras, and there I resided a year most happily. At the end of that time, my brother was appointed to a station "up country," where his duties were important, and involved frequent journeyings to and fro amongst the towns, villages, and hamlets of the district he was in charge of. Our head-quarters, however, were at Nundydroog—then, as now, a wild and mountainous place, where we had little society, and seldom wished for more than we found. We were all equally tired of the gaieties and pseudo-pleasures of Madras and St. Thomas's Mount, and our domestic and other tastes were more than usually congenial. Nundydroog has since acquired a bad repute in sanitary records; but though it certainly was not fever-proof, we were all blessed with health; and perhaps the energy with which we strove against that lounging, lazy langour so apt to attack and subdue the British in India, may have counteracted all tendencies to disease. At Nundydroog, when your sister Thea was three years old, *you* were born, and became a very acceptable interruption to my studies of the botany of the East, the Hindostanee language, and occasionally of a science that is generally proscribed to the fair sex—a proficiency in the use of a fowling-piece. Your father was a resolute "hunter of the woods," and seeing that my tastes were of a stamp somewhat adventurous, by no means discouraged me; indeed, he was pleased to have me for his companion on many occasions where female society is little courted; and our explorations of tracts very rarely visited by Europeans extended for many miles around. Sometimes we were joined by others; sometimes picnics were formed; but on those occasions we felt that our gratification was diminished, and I in particular was sensible of a *gene* which was almost insupportable. Your mother, less hardy—I will not say less "masculine," for a masculine woman is still worse than an effeminate man—joined not in our sporting recreations; but she enjoyed, above all things, our recitals of them; and then her botanical knowledge was superior to mine, whilst her music, her books, and drawings always rendered our hours at home delightful. You have seen my hortus siccus with your mother's drawings, my dear Cuthbert; and as you have a turn for botany yourself, and are about to be *lance* amongst those Indian jungles where you were born, but which you have not seen since you were six years old, you can guess that to me there could be few things more pleasant than such a life as we led'——

'And where was Uncle Allan at that time?' interrupted Thea.

'My dear, I have told you I had no lovers *then*. You may take my word for it, that before I married your uncle, I had a lover; and I never had but one. You shall hear of him in due season'——

'Aunt Rosa,' interrupted I, in my turn, 'is it really true that you once killed a tiger?'

'Yes, my dear, and there was a man in his mouth. But I have no time to tell of that just at present. I mean to confine myself to a short account of an adventure that befell you when you were newly weaned, and which I shall term a contribution to your cradle-history. If it involve a few pencillings of the woods and wilds in which it occurred, it is because you like to hear of such things; and sometimes a slight acquaintance with the flora of the East may turn to practical benefit. I know an officer who served during the *old* Burmese war, at a time when the army were actually growing diseased through the want of vegetable diet—rice being the only substitute for garden produce—whose botanical knowledge taught him the use of perfectly wholesome and nutritious plants employed by the poor natives as food, but utterly ignored by the British stranger. His brother-officers, who began by contemning what they called "his weeds," ended by gladly sharing in the feast of wild-greens, beans of the woods, and roots of the field, he and his sagacious Madras domestic served up to them with their salt-beef, tough buffalo, or sickening old pork messes; and the result was beneficial to health.

'But to return. Nundydroog is a strong hill-fort in the dominions of the Mysore rajah. The mountain on which it is built is some 1700 feet high, inaccessible on all sides but one. A havaldar's guard constituted all the force of the upper fort; but at the foot were barracks, now occupied by one regiment of native infantry; the bungalows of the officers and our own mansion being scattered about amidst gardens and groves by no means devoid of a certain wild silvan beauty. The country on our side of the *drogg*, or hill, was fertile and cultivated, though every field and hut were neighboured by partial jungle; whilst behind the mountain, extended rocky dingles, deep woods, and vast prairies—though that is not an Eastern word—where occasional flocks of the hairy sheep of Hindostan were tended by their keepers; or here and there a patch of arable-land employed a lonely ryot and his family during a portion of the year. Two several rivers have their rise in those mountains, and on the banks of one of them rose our comfortable bungalow. Now we had a fancy, during the cool season, to make an excursion behind the hill-fort in search of the source of this river, the Pennar, which was said to issue from the heights of Chinraycondah—an extension, on a lower scale, of the Nundydroog range; and as we knew there was good shooting in that quarter, and a hamlet where milk and eggs could be purchased, we anticipated a few days of pleasure, more particularly as we had never penetrated so far, and resolved to confine our picnic entirely to ourselves. The distance of the hamlet fixed upon as our resting-place was only twelve miles; and though the only road was of the roughest and narrowest, we knew there would be no difficulty in getting tents, and a few necessaries in the upholstery line, &c., conveyed there. Your mother was delicate, and therefore a palanquin should be at her and your disposal, whilst your father and I formed the cavalry escort. Suffice it, we found the journey somewhat more difficult than we had imagined; and darkness was beginning to give the woods a night-covering ere we reached our little encampment at Narsingpell; but as everything had been forwarded several hours before we started, all was ready, all comfortable; and though silvan explorations were interdicted for that day, we had quite a little *festa* of enjoyment in the idea of having achieved so important a feat—penetrating into unknown regions, and fearless, as well we might be, of night-attacks from tiger, Thug, or other enemy human or animal. The hamlet contained not more than twenty huts; and if our presence caused some wonder, it was no doubt quickly dispelled when the peaceful and gentle inhabitants were told that it was only upon a hunting-frolic, and not upon duty, the Collector Sahib had come with his *butch-kutch* (family).

'Next morning, then, before any other was stirring, I stole forth just as the first colourings of light came fluttering in, bird-like, amongst the trees near which we were pitched. A green and gentle declivity sloped down to the river, here a narrow and shallow stream, through which I meant to make my way before the day was many minutes older. There was a foreground across it, so clear from either brush or cultivation, that it had the appearance of a gentleman's park in a lovely English county; and taking off my slippers, I soon forded the knee-deep water, already glittering beneath the increasing dawn. As I gazed at the contrast between the light stream and the dark distant background of jungle, I could have fancied that golden arrows tipped with lightning were being launched by some invisible hand into the mysterious obscurity. Birds were up and merry as I reached the tempting glade where I had determined to collect a perfect *bostan*, or flower-bed, wherewithal to gift my friends on my return. There was no lack of flowers, of all imaginable colours; and scattered round were some beautiful trees, a few of which I will briefly describe. First, there was a clump of mangoes; one tree was a complete flush of bloom, making a superb picture; the young leaves, which are of a purplish green—as though an emerald and amethyst had been interfused into each other—contrasted finely with the foliage of the last season, which was of a sombre red, not unlike the colour that enriches the floating dulse-weed of our sea-coast. The blossoms, yellow as topaz, diffused a rich and almost too powerful aroma, evidently attractive to the insect-race, for they hummed about them in myriads. Second in beauty were many trees of the *Butea frondosa*, that drop their dark-green leaves when the season of flowering draws near; and now the black branches were one scarlet blaze of glorious blossom. The petals are of a deep orange-red, immersed in calyxes soft and shining as jet-black velvet; and the show they made amongst the other trees was pre-eminently lovely. There were also clumps of tamarind, and of *Strychnos potatorum* in berry; and those whity-yellow berries are useful in refining and clearing the muddiest water.

'Presently came lowing cattle to their morning meal from the hamlet, so that life was not wanting to the picture. Wanting, in truth, it was not from the first, since water is the life of landscape; and the animation imparted by its vitality of motion and sound filled me with delight, as I turned from the bubbling waters to the hills of Nundydroog in the distance, above which now rose the sun, seeming to send down the jutting crags, as by a ladder, a brilliant army of rays, that soon reminded me of the wisdom of retracing my steps.

'A dark little urchin, with bright eyes, gazed wonderingly at me as, slippers in hand, I prepared to recross the stream. "Dekho!" cried he, pointing over to the spot I had just left—"Dekho!" (behold); and suddenly there was a rush and a shrill screech behind me; and looking back, I beheld a large hideous ape chattering and *rampauging*, as we say in Scotland, on the bank, ready, as it seemed, to pursue me with hostile intent. I took heart, however, when the little cow-herd, beginning to laugh, pelted the creature away. "Poorana dewul se bandar aiahie"—(It is a monkey from the old pagoda); and on inquiry, he told me that some few miles distant, near the Gooty road, there was a very ancient pagoda, which, though long abandoned by human worshippers, was frequented by a colony of large apes, held very sacred by the Hindoo *Boottpurists* (idolaters of stones), as my small Mohammedan informant called them.

'I need not tell you of the admiration my nosegay received, or of the laughter my monkey-adventure excited; but I was pleased to find that the old pagoda was known by report to my brother, who deemed it worthy of a visit. Neither need I tell you how happily we spent a few days where we were, but proceed at once to that portion of my recital which more especially pertains to you. The monkey-dewul was a few miles out of our return route, but that mattered not, as it was nearer to Nundydroog. Here, then, we found ourselves one day, pitched at some distance from the ruin, to avoid monkey-intrusion. As there was no hamlet here, we had brought all that was necessary to make us comfortable for a day or two; and our train of camp-followers was increased by an aspirant for pagehood in little Hyder Khan, the cow-boy, who had professed a strong attachment for myself. It was a delicious cool afternoon on which we repaired with our sketching materials to take separate views of the pagoda, which we found to be one of those edifices that betray a mixture of Hindoo and Moorish architecture so common in certain districts of India; or, perhaps, they are buildings whose origin is guessed at from Jewish and Egyptian traditions. It was, in its state of robust dilapidation (so to speak), worthy of abler artists; and the creeping-plants with which some of its prominent buttresses were clothed, whilst other portions gaped hungrily in stony gloominess, bare and bold, made it quite a feature amidst the grassy hillocks that surrounded it. Your father had stolen off with his gun; your mother was seated in front of the temple, already busy; while the ayah, with her little charge—yourself, Cuthbert—accompanied me to the rear, where a magnificent banyan-tree, now covered with red *mosaic* figs, called for pictorial illustration at my hands. Hyder was ostensibly our guardian; but as hitherto few monkeys had shown themselves, we began to suppose they had gone, like ourselves, on a picnic; so he wandered about, collecting berries in the skirts of the jungle, which here extended close to the pagoda. How time passes when one is thoroughly absorbed in a favourite pursuit, you may some day know. I forgot everything; and though a sort of consciousness of great silence around struck me, I did not think of looking to inquire why ayah and baby were so quiet.

'The quiet, if natural, was broken by a scream so unnaturally fierce and shrill, that for a minute I was too terrified to look whence it came. When I did look, I beheld the ayah, still shrieking, in pursuit of what at first I believed to be a human being. Where is the child? I could not see it; and in another moment flashed the terrible conviction on me of the whole truth. I rushed frantically after the ayah, and as she fell lifeless across my path, I neither stayed to pity nor to help her, for there before me, but a few long paces, was a hideous ape—you in its arms—and I was convinced it was the identical ape of the river. The creature, in seeming enjoyment, kept at a certain pace from me, still making into the jungle; and the faster I followed, the more speedily it trotted on; whilst at last broke out your piteous little voice, almost maddening me. On and on I went—still through woods that began to thicken, so that twilight was around me. Every device I could hit on to arrest the steps of the malignant creature, failed to have any other effect than to elicit a discordant chatter; and when at last, completely fatigued, almost fainting, I lost sight of it in a dense thicket which I had not strength to penetrate, I fairly gave way, and lying on the ground, cried bitterly; oh, more bitterly than I have ever done since.

'But I gave not way to the nervous hysteria that threatened me. I felt that in this matter there was nothing more that *I* could do, and as I prayed for that higher Help which I knew could do all, my spirit became calmer, and I arose, determined as best I could to extricate myself from the jungle. I knew not what course to take—all were alike to me—but none were so dense as that which led into the copse, amidst which the ape had disappeared, from which, indeed, no sounds now proceeded save the monotonous and plaintive coo of the wood-pigeon. I took then what seemed the least intricate track, where path was none, and ere many minutes came upon opener glades, with more grass than trees, and to my joy beheld that the sun was not yet below the horizon. This gave me courage, and I hastened on and on, till at length the red and golden trail of the set of sun was all that remained of day. Then I quivered at the idea of being benighted there, and stopped for a moment to reflect. A sound struck on my ears—a faint cry—not the coo of the dove, nor the guttural call of the quail, nor the bark of the jackal. Again! Surely it is a child's voice; or is the echo of my little nephew's murmurs still in my ears? No! for then follows the cackling chatter of the monkey, and a thrill of hope made my blood circulate. I resolved to conceal myself, to watch an opportunity, and, ere the creature detected me, snatch the infant from its grasp, at all risks. I crept behind a thick bush, and, presently, still carrying you, almost as expertly as your ayah might have done, the monkey appeared. In advance of the line it took was a grassy hollow, some paces from the shrubs that screened me. To this it betook itself, and laying its burden on the ground, went through a series of grotesque antics, which, under other circumstances, might have diverted me, but now terrified me as to their issue. Your complete silence heightened my fears; had the animal strangled you, or was it about to destroy you? Presently, still keeping so close to you that I hesitated about rushing out upon it until affairs went more favourably, it began to pluck up the grass, as if in search of roots. At that moment, I became aware that another actor had entered on the scene.

'In a direct line from me, and beyond the hollow, perhaps some dozen of paces, stood a thick low tree, its trunk visible, but its root clothed in foliage. It was the *goorur*, or wild-fig, and in the twilight its branches showed crimson with its studs of vermilion fruit, dead ripe. A movement amongst the lower umbrage arrested my gaze, and I could preceive the crouching shape of some living creature, some dangerous animal perhaps, or was it another monkey? A rustle of leaves interrupted the labours of the child-stealer, and, skipping about, he ran towards the fig-tree, as if to examine it. Beholding nothing, I suppose, but the fruit, he instantly applied himself to satisfy his hunger, apparently forgetting his former occupation. Now, I thought, was the time for an exertion to be made; but, as I moved, a rotten stick on which I trod made a noise, which instantly attracted the vigilant creature's notice, and turning his back to the tree, he stood listening, as he gazed towards the spot where I watched. At that juncture, to my inexpressible astonishment, two tiny paws—were they hands?—were protruded from the fig-tree, and ere the most startling heart could beat once, out sprang around the monkey's neck a noose of cord. And lo! screaming and struggling with hideous contortions, with vain efforts to free himself, the creature dashed about in agony. With a spring I reached you where you lay, indeed senseless, but not dead, and held you to my heart.

'Who is it who stands beside me, pointing to the ape, bound firmly by the strangling cord to the trunk of the tree? Ah! my little page Hyder! bravely have you done! and, but for this dear babe upon my breast, I could have taken him in my arms and thanked him with many kisses. Amazed he was to find me there; but when by degrees you began to recover, and I found you still alive, and, barring scratches and scars whence blood had freely flowed, seemingly unhurt, great was our joy in that dark hour. Hyder plucked the ripe figs, and they served to moisten your dry lips and to refresh us; and then he told me how he strayed away to gather fruit, when the cries of the ayah had reached his ears. He heard from her what had happened, and instantly made for a part of the woods where he knew the monkeys often come to dig up the roots of a plant of which they are fond, and which grew abundantly only in the place I have called the "grassy hollow." I may as well tell you that this plant was a species of wild-yam—the *Dioscorea bulbifera*, by no means despicable fare for man or monkey. Hyder's cow-boy belongings of a tether became useful in his pagedom novitiate; but when he assured me I must have travelled five miles, I doubted how I could manage to reach the pagoda, so tired and upset was I.

'It was almost quite dark, as we came upon a good beaten track—the Gooty road, Hyder told me. I sat down to rest awhile, and pleased was I to find my charge quietly sleeping in my lap. "Dekho, Beebee sahib! palkee atee hie Gooty say!"—(Look, lady, a palanquin is coming from Gooty!) And in truth a flash of distant lights is in my eyes, a sound of humming voices in my ears—a palanquin with its full complement of bearers and torches, and the loud but not unpleasing chorus of their song. Before half an hour they had come up to us; and when Hyder hailed them, great was their wonder on hearing what had occurred of which they immediately informed their slumbering freight.

'I have little more to say, my dear. The gentleman, whom they were conveying to Madras, was soon beside us; he was quite a stranger to me, but insisted on my taking his place with you in the palkee, and on accompanying us to the pagoda, where I need not describe the warmth of welcome that awaited us, for your poor mother was in a state of distraction, and your father had only just returned after a vain search in quest of us.'

'Dear Aunt Rosa, who was the kind gentleman?'

'My dear, there he is on the sofa: it was your Uncle Allan.'

THE GUAGER'S RUN.

I suppose there are few who have not heard of the demoralization and crimes produced in Ireland by illicit distillation. In the present day there are comparatively few disorders from this cause, as the excise laws have been considerably modified, and the appetite for whisky has become less uncompromising. Some years ago, however, the people in those parts of the country where the distilling of spirits was carried on clandestinely, were at constant war with the officers of excise, and the most fearful encounters took place between them. In Donegal, where I resided with my family, we saw much more of this than was at all pleasant, and on one occasion were accidently involved in one of these ever-occurring quarrels.

It was a very beautiful morning in June, and I was preparing to descend to the breakfast parlour, when I was startled on hearing a noise at the gate in front of the dwelling. Looking out to see what was the matter, I observed that one of the domestics was refusing admittance to a decently dressed man, who was urgently and anxiously trying to get into my premises. Hastening to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, I soon learned that the suppliant for shelter was an unfortunate excise officer—or 'gauger,' as he was called by the country peoople. 'Oh, for mercy's sake,' cried the distracted man, 'let me into your house; lock me up somewhere, or anywhere; hide me, save me, or I am a dead man!' I did not hesitate to bring him in, and making him sit down, I offered him refreshment, as he appeared exhausted and faint. I begged of him to recover himself, and to take courage, as there was no danger. At this moment an immense crowd of men and boys surrounded my house; and one of the men came forward to the door and demanded admission. I opened the window to inquire what he wanted. He replied, 'You have got the gauger in your house, sir, and we must have him out—we want him.' 'What do you want him for?' 'Oh, your reverence, begging your honour's pardon, that's no business of yours to meddle in; we want him, and must have him.' 'That may be, but I can't allow it: he is under my roof; he has come claiming my hospitality, and I must and will give him shelter and protection.' 'Doctor, there are two words to that bargain. You ought to have asked us before you let him in. And to be plain with you, doctor, we really respect you very much—you are an honest good neighbour, and mind your own business; and we would make the man sore and sorry that would dare to touch a hair of your head. But you must give us the gauger. To be at a word with you, doctor, we must either tear open or tear down your house, or get him; for get him we will!'

What was to be done? I could do nothing. I had no gun or pistol in the house. 'So,' says I, 'boys, you must and will, it seems, do as you like. But mind, I protest against what you are about; but since you must have your own way, as you are Irishmen, I demand fair play from you. The man inside had ten minutes' law of you when he came to my house: let him have the same law still: let him not be the worse of the shelter I have given him. Do you now go back to the hill yonder, at the side of the house, and I will let him out at the hall door, and let the poor fellow have the start, giving him his ten minutes' law.'

I was in hopes that, by gaining these ten minutes my man, who was young and healthy, would be able to reach the river Lennan, which ran deep and broad, between high and rocky banks, about a quarter of a mile off in front of the house, and, by swimming across, that he would effect his escape from his pursuers. The enemy outside agreed that the proposal was a fair one; at any rate they promised to abide by it. My refugee, seeing the dire necessity of the case, consented to leave his shelter. I enlarged him at the hall door; the mob, true to its pledge, stood on the hill about two hundred yards distant.

The gauger started off like a deer, and as a hunted deer he ran his best. He cleared the first little rivulet in excellent style, and just as he was rising the hilly ridge which divided the smaller from the broader stream, his pursuers broke loose like a pack of hounds in full chase. The huntsmen were all Highlandmen—tall, loose, active, young, with breath and sinew strong to breast a mountain; men who many a time and oft, o'er bog and brae, had run *from* the gauger, and now they were *after* him with fast foot and full cry. From the hall door the whole course of the hunt could be seen; they, helter skelter down the lawn, rushing swift and wild; he, trudging along, toiling up the opposite hill, and straining every nerve to gain the top. At length he passed the ridge, and, disappearing rushed down to the Lennan. Here, out of breath, and no time to stop or hesitate, he took the water, and boldly made the plunge into the foaming river. A bad swimmer, out of breath, encumbered with his clothes, the water rushing dark, deep, and rapid, amid surrounding rocks—the poor man struggled and struggled on for life: the enemy yelled behind him, whilst a watery grave seemed to encompass him about. Frightened and exhausted, he had well nigh sunk for ever—another minute, and he had been a drowned man—when his pursuers coming up, two or three of the boldest and best swimmers rushed into the river and saved him.

The huntsmen now gathered round their stricken and captive deer. They rolled the poor man about until they got the water he had swallowed out of his stomach; they dried his body with their long frieze coats; twenty hands were engaged in rubbing him into warmth. They did everything which humanity could suggest to bring him to life. Happily our friend had not fallen into the cruel clutches of a party of Rokites, who are more careful of the life of a pig than a human creature! No; the Donegal mountaineers had a deed to do—but not a deed of death; they were about a deliberate work—but not a work of blood.

The moment the poor gauger was restored to life (and in order to contribute to and hasten his recovery, an ample dose of the 'poteen' he had come to prosecute was poured down his throat), they proceeded to tie a bandage over his eyes, and mounting him on a pony, off they set with their captive to the mountains.

Removing him from place to place, during a whole day, through glens and defiles—up one mountain, and down another—at length, towards the close of a summer's evening, they brought him to the secluded lake of Glen Veagh. Here they embarked him in a curragh, or wicker boat; and after rowing him up and down the lake for some hours, they landed him on a little island, where was a hut, which had often served as a shelter to the fowler, as he watched his aim at the wild water-birds of the lake, and still oftener as the 'still-house' to the distiller of poteen. Here was our captive led, and consigned to the charge of two trusty men—the bandage still carefully kept on his eyes. He was well cared for, and fed on trout, grouse, hares, chickens, and other delicacies of the place and season; plenty of poteen, mixed with the pure water of the lake, was his portion to drink: and for six weeks he was thus kept cooped up, as it were, in the dark, like a fattening fowl. The period of his strange captivity being now about to expire, his keepers one morning took him under the arm and conducted him to a boat, in which they rowed him up and down from island to island. They then brought him to the mainland, put him on a pony, and again, for the length of a day, led him hither and thither, through glen and mountain, till towards the close of night, the bewildered but now liberated gauger finds himself alone on the high road to Letterkenny. The poor man returned home that night to his family, who had given him over, weeks ago, as either murdered or gone to America. Yet how *changed* he stood before their eyes!—not as a grim ghost at the door, but as a well fed, fat, and happy-looking man.

Now, it may be asked, why all this mad pursuit to catch a gauger, merely to fatten him and let him loose again? The capture was a matter of important consequence to the mountaineers. A lawless deed it surely was, yet almost pardonable, seeing that the result might have produced serious consequences to the perpetrators in the district. To repress the system of illicit distillation in Ireland, amongst other enactments, there was an act passed as contrary to the spirit of the British constitution as to the common principles of right and justice—a law punishing the innocent in substitution for the guilty! This law made the townland in which the *still* was found, or any part of the process of distillation detected, liable to pay a heavy fine, to be levied on all its landholders. The consequence of this act (now repealed) was, that the whole north of Ireland was involved in one common confiscation. It was the fiscal triumph of gaugers and informers over landlords and proprietors. Acting on this anti-social and iniqitous system, the gauger of the district in question had informations to the amount of L. 7000 against its several townlands. These informations were to be brought forward at the approaching assizes, and, if sustained, as no doubt they would, the result would be utter ruin to the people.

With such a prospect before them, and in the circumstances mentioned, the plot was laid for the seizure and forcible abduction of the revenue officer. It having been known that, some time previous to the assizes, the gauger was to pass through the district, on his way to the coast, and it being also known that he kept these informations about his person, the scheme was therefore to waylay him and keep him prisoner, in safe custody, out of the way and out of sight, until the assizes were over. And well and effectually the plan succeeded! The crown officer not being forthcoming at the assizes, the prosecutions, as a matter of course, fell to the ground, and the people generally were saved from loss, if not from ruin. And so ended this curious case of revenue law—a law which, with other legislative abuses, helped to make Ireland very much what it is.

Vipers Swallowing their Young.—A curious fact once occurred to a sportsman. When he killed a viper he occasionally put it into his pocket to preserve the fat, which is considered valuable for bruises, rheumatism, &c. It so happened that one day he went into luncheon, and forgot that he had a viper in his pocket until he had occasion to use his handkerchief, when, to his dismay, he felt a lot of young vipers crawling about. This was a good lesson, and depend upon it, never repeated. I have known five cases of the bite of this venemous reptile, and in all extreme suffering. But one case I would particularly mention in the son of one of my tenants; he was then a lad of about ten years old. In his father's garden he stood watching a cat, as he thought, very intent upon a mouse under a stone. The mouse not appearing, he raised the stone, when to his horror, a large viper seized him by the forefinger. He very soon became sick and faint, and his arm swelled, with extreme pain. He was taken to a medical gentleman in the neighborhood, and after some time and much suffering, he recovered. But the most remarkable fact is this, that he has grown but little since, as if his blood had been literally poisoned by venom absorbed into his system; and, although he is now nineteen, you would not from his appearance, guess him to be more than thirteen or fourteen years of age.—*Notes on Natural History.*

Description of a Party of Pleasure.—"We went out clean—we came home dirty; we went out sober—we came home drunk; we went out well—we came home sick; we went out laughing—we came home crying; we went out with cash—we came home moneyless; we went out for air—we came home full of dust."

NEWS BY THE LAST ENGLISH MAIL.

(*From the European Times, January 17.*)

The last accounts from China, which are a fortnight later than those previously received, state that the fighting at Canton was still going on, and this statement is as late as the 25th of November. The Americans had made common cause with the English in the struggle, but an absurd rumour adds that the price offered by the Chinese governor for the heads of the English had caused some of the heads of the Americans to be sent in as a substitute for those of our countrymen. It was also rumoured that Shanghai had been attacked by the rebels—a very likely result, if the rebels were well informed as to the actualities of the case. On the authority of a respectable commercial house in Manchester one of the papers of that city has published a telegraphic despatch received from Trieste, to the effect that the Governor-General of India had declined to send troops to Canton, and had referred the application for aid on the part of Admiral Seymour to the Imperial authorities at home. If this be so, it conveys Lord Canning's belief that the quarrel was not one to which he could safely commit himself, but there is in it also this reading, that the English could without difficulty sustain themselves until they heard from Downing-street. It must be confessed that there is little sympathy in this country, and perhaps equally little in America, for the punishment which has been inflicted on the Governor Yeh, arising out of the affair of the Arrow, although some of the highest class newspapers, daily and weekly, have shown clearly that the quarrel was unworthy of our arms. The truth is that the exclusiveness and arrogance of the Chinese have made them greatly disliked by the commercial nations which have had to do business with them, and the talk which has prevailed that the Western Powers have entered into a compact to make the Chinese open their empire to the trade of the world has been received with satisfaction. At the same time, the offer made in this case before hostilities commenced by Governor Yeh was a fair one,—namely, "That hereafter Chinese officers will on no account, without reason, seize, and take into custody the people belonging to foreign lorchas; but when Chinese subjects build for themselves vessels foreigners shall not sell registers to them, for, if this be done, it will occasion confusion between nations and foreign ships, and render it difficult to distinguish between them." We greatly fear that if the case of the Arrow rested on its merits, and not on the feeling of self-interest which further concessions from the Chinese arising out of this quarrel are sure to awaken, the summary proceedings which our consul and admiral at Canton have taken would be more generally and strongly condemned than they are.

In fact, these Eastern squabbles are becoming serious matters. Take the war with Persia as a case in point. The leading journal of Wednesday, the 14th, contains this stinging notice in one of its leading articles:—"But is Herat really the cause of the war? Why, at this very moment there is going on in the metropolis, and amongst all circles pretending to be well informed on political affairs, a farce as broad as any that ever appeared on the public stage. While the newspapers and correspondents and officials, with patriotic decorum, are assuming that Herat is the cause of the war, there is not a company in which it is not stated as a matter of notoriety that the real cause is a ridiculous quarrel *about a Persian lady!* The British Minister had the indiscretion to extend the British ægis to a lady of indifferent character, claimed by a member of the Persian court, and on his refusing to give up the lady to the outraged feelings and the violated law of the country, had himself, as a matter of course, to retire from it. We are told that first-rate Oriental authorities, with a full knowledge of the case, have declared that the British minister was unquestionably in the wrong, and that Persia had no alternative but to do as she did. Whether this be so or not, it is in everybody's mouth that it is not Herat but a frail fair one who is the cause of the war." We suspect that a large portion of society will speedily arrive at the conclusion, with such facts as these before them, that ambassadors of foreign Courts are principally concerned in getting up misunderstandings instead of healing them, and the dignity of this country is often more compromised than promoted by their presence and interference.

This Herat business may prove a serious affair; in any case, it cannot fail to be a very expensive one. We hear from St. Petersburg of a political alliance between France and Russia, negociated by Count Morny, the personal favourite of Louis Napoleon, and the Count has shown in his own person a strong sympathy for the Russian alliance by marrying a young lady attached, or intended to be attached, to the Court of the Czarina. The ceremony was celebrated in St. Petersburg on the 8th, in the presence of the Emperor and Empress. The mother of this young lady resided, it appears, a number of years in France; and as a proof of the sympathy which at present exists between the Courts of St. Petersburg and the Tuileries, it is mentioned, that since the war ceased the Russian nobility who have visited the French capital have been unusally numerous—flocked over in numbers greater than ever was known previously. These facts are significant, and ought not to be lost upon us. The late Czar Nicholas made no secret in the hey-dey of his power of his sympathy for the English, and his dislike of the French, and so recently as his conversations with Sir Hamilton Seymour about the "sick man," the same feeling was apparent. His successor is evidently playing a different game, and the cold shoulder which we have turned towards Louis Napoleon since the war was brought to a close may have prepared our neighbour to entertain an alliance which was previously distasteful. The French, too, are so capricious as a people—blow so hot and cold in their friendships, that the dislike which they have entertained towards Russia since the burning of Moscow and the overthrow of the first Napoleon may be displaced by an opposite feeling. In fact, hatred of the English, in consequence of the crowning defeat at Waterloo, was at one time supposed to be too deep and abiding to be eradicated; but it was partially, if not wholly, effaced, by our common disasters and dangers in the Crimea, and it ought to be the policy of the English Government, whoever may be temporarily the Sovereign of France, to remember that the people are permanent and enduring. No doubt, we believe, exists that the Russian flotilla in the Caspian Sea has landed troops in the Persel Islands, alleging ancient treaties of alliance between Russia and Persia. It is also said that the Russian Ambassador has quitted Teheran to demand assistance for Persia at St. Petersburg. The policy of Louis Napoleon in thus coquetting with the Northern Autocrat is masterly in a personal sense. It makes him independent, to a large degree, of the English alliance, and may enable him to hold, as it were, through the medium of Russia, the gates of our Indian empire.

It is satisfactory to know that the dispute between Switzerland and Prussia has been brought to a close, as we always declared that it would, through the intervention of diplomacy. The Swiss Federal Assembly has met and received a message from the Federal Council respecting the negociations, on the Neufchatel question. The proposition is this—to annul the proceedings against the insurgents of Neufchatel, and to set them at liberty, with the reservation of sending them out of the Helvetic territory until the negociations are completed. It seems that this is enough to satisfy the wounded pride of the King of Prussia, whose bounce in the first instance about his sovereign rights, and appealing to the sword to defend them, was quite in keeping with the opposite character which he played during the Russian war. The contempt with which the Swiss have treated the Royal waverer may be inferred from the following despatch from Berlin: "Great irritation is felt in official circles at the conduct of the Swiss Federal Council. Prussia has formally announced to Europe that her army would be mobilised on the 15th, and Switzerland calls the Federal Assembly