Colonial Farmer.

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Correspondence.

For the Colonial Farmer.

RURAL TOPICS.

THE GRAPE PHYLLOXERA.

The phylloxera is what may be called the grape louse, that is making sad havoc with grape vines in Europe, and also to some extent in this country. It may be seen at the roots of the vines, and also in the leaf galls, but not plainly visible to the unaided vision. This year has been remarkable for the extensive diseases of grapes in the West, principally the "black rot," as it is called. Some of the best vineyards of Ohio have been almost a total failure; and where the rot was the worst, the roots of the vines were found to be badly affected by phylloxera, the lice being found on the roots in proportion to the extent of rot in grapes. The ravages of these lice on the roots may be known by the warts, or excresences on, or near the ends of the latterals, and showing decay of the roots where affected. In regard to the remedy, the only one known at present, is to grow only such vines as have great recuperative strength to form new roots as fast as the lice cause decay in the old ones. The Concord, and all varieties of as free-growing as that is, seem to escape the rot best; yet even the Concord has not escaped this season in some localities. An important avid in warding off the effects of phylloxera, is to prune rather closely, and to prevent overbearing, so as not to draw too much on the vitality of the roots. Grape growing in vineyards has received a check from the effects of the disease in 1877, that will render the business more profitable than it has been to those whose vines are exempt from the root-lice. A writer on this subject, says of a fine vineyard on the Detroit river: "The Concord, Clinton, Delaware, Salem, and Rogers' 4 and 9 are badly attacked, so that the prospects of the vineyard are really nothing." This looks bad for grape growers in the future.

CRANBERRIES.

If I were to choose whether I would prefer to own a gold mine in California, or a cranberry plantation in New Jersey, I think I would prefer the latter. A Mr. Hinchman has "astonished the natives" of Medford, Burlington county, New Jersey, in taking four acres of swamp land, and making it equal in cash returns to half the gold mines that exist. Here is what the editor of a paper says who visited the plantation: "What we desired to see most was the wonderful work of Mr. Hinchman in the old mill ponds long held as almost worthless. We went upon the old bog on which, twenty years ago, Mr. H. commenced the culture which has in successive years grown to such large proportions under his skill and energy. It contains about ten acres, and cost the owner about $1,600 to bring it to the bearing point, three years from the setting. For seventeen successive years it has borne good crops—never less than 100 bushels to the acre—and it is the base, financially as otherwise, of all his subsequent operations. That $1,600 is the original capital invested in the Taunton cranberry plantation—now variously estimated at worth $200,000 to $250,000, and producing a net income of $20,000 to $40,000 per annum. The ten acres have grown to a total of about 275 acres set in vines, nearly all in bearing and never failing to give a crop—the latter result having no parallel anywhere. This wonderful network of bogs ranging from ten to sixty acres each, shows no ordinary degree of engineering skill. Mr. Hinchman controls the stream which waters these lands, and has constructed a series of dams and canals whereby he can carry the water to any point desired and in any quantity—can flood any particular bog from ten to fifteen feet deep in a few hours' time—the great secret of his uniform success, while so many others fail." Let no one attempt to grow cranberries, if he can not flood the land in the winter season; but with good facilities for flooding, this fruit can be grown anywhere as well as in New Jersey.

BE GENTLE WITH COWS.

A New York State dairyman gives his method of treating cows as follows: "The cows are gently driven to the barn each night and morning, if they do not, as is usually the case, come of their own accord, when they take their places in the stable, each in its own peculiar stanchion with mathematical precision. No dog, no fright or worry is permitted; and the milking is done quietly and orderly, with no loud talking, no sudden and startling noises. There is no patting of the cows on the back with the stool, no persuading with the toe of the boot, no coaxing at the top of the voice. They are made to "give down" by generous feeding and gentle treatment, and the principle of kindness is illustrated by the depth of cream on their milk."

TURNIPS FOR HORSES.

Dr. Loring, in an address at a Farmers' meeting in Portland, Me., said that turnips are better food for horses than carrots, but this assertion was disputed by some of the farmers present, on hearing which Messrs. Welch, Teel and Palmer, of Salem, Mass., sent the Doctor the following letter:

"We noticed that in the farmers' meeting at Portland, your statement that Swedish turnips as food for horses was questioned once more, and that Mr. Ware declared you were all wrong in your low estimate of carrots. Now, we have had a good deal of experience in this thing as well as yourself. Some years ago we noticed the good condition of your horses, and on inquiry of your groom how much grain they got, we were told that they had little or none, but were fed on Swedish turnips. We had found out ourselves that carrots were not good food for continual use—that they made our horses very soft, unfit for work, and that they affected their kidneys badly, and we were glad to lay them aside and take turnips as a substitute. Since we did this, our horses have improved in every way. They look healthier, work better, and keep in good condition. You are right about carrots, and deserve the thanks of all who keep horses, for introducing the use of turnips as a feed for them. We always keep from ten to twenty horses on hand, and we know what we are talking about." It is strange, if this is true, that the farmers did not find it out till this late day. But carrots are much more nutritious than turnips; and the probability is, that what the above men say is not reliable, but it is a subject of interest to farmers.

PEAR BLIGHT.

Mr. Charles Downing, the noted horticulturist of Newburgh, N. Y., writes as follows about the blight in pear trees: "Your friend seems very despondent about his blighted trees, and I am sorry to say that no remedy that I am aware of has been given. I have tried all the cures without avail. When it first appeared here, more than sixty years since, it was very severe, and as near as I can recollect nearly every pear tree in this town died with it. My father kept cutting as fast as the blight appeared, until he cut down every tree on the place. I remember one stump, three feet high and eight inches in diameter, was left, which sprouted and made a fine bearing tree. My father then had no nursery, but twenty years after, when the blight came again, he had a good stock of nursery trees, half of which, with one-third of his bearing trees, died with the blight. The third visitation of blight was much less destructive; only about one-fourth died. Each time the blight continued two to four years, and the intervals were eighteen or twenty years. It is now twenty-four or twenty-five years since we have had any blight on the grounds where I live, but three or four miles north and south of us it has been quite bad. As to any cause or cure, I know of none, although I have heard all the theories and seen them all fail, and I suppose your friend will have the same experience. There is only one thing I can say about it, and that is that the wild, hardy pear trees seldom have any blight. Trees fifty or one hundred years old it is rare to see affected with blight."

SUPERPHOSPHATE AND POTASH.

A writer on scientific agriculture gives the following illustrations of a way in which farmers may be deceived in the value of commercial fertilizers: "A farmer has a field, the soil of which is much reduced, for which he has no yard manure, and decides to cultivate it in corn, using fertilizers. He intends it also for an instructive experiment, and applies to one part of it muriate of potasa and to another a simple superphosphate. On the portion where the potash is applied, a fine crop is produced; but on that which received the superphosphate, it is very poor. He at once concludes, and confidently states, that the superphosphate was worthless, 'the manufacturer of it a villain,' and the experiment has proved it. But he is too fast. His superphosphate might have been poor or might have been a first-class article of its kind, but the experiment has proved nothing in relation to it; it has proved, however, that his land needed potash, and it is highly probable that if he had mixed his two elements, the crop on the whole land would have been better than it was on that which received the potash."

Poetry.

"THE WATER MILL."

Listen to the water mill
All the livelong day—
How the clicking of the wheel
Wears the hours away.
Languidly the autumn wind
Stirs the greenwood leaves:
From the field the reapers sing,
Binding up the sheaves;
And a memory o'er my mind
As a spell is cast:
The mill will never grind
With the water that is past.

Take the lesson to yourself,
Loving heart and true,
Golden years are fleeting by;
Youth is passing too.
Strive to make the most of life,
Lose no happy day;
Time will never bring you back
Chances swept away.
Leave no tender word unsaid,
Love while love shall last—
The mill will never grind
With the water that is past.

Work while yet the daylight shines,
Men of thought and will;
Never does the streamlet glide
Unless by the mill;
Wait not till to-morrow's sun
Beams upon your way,
All that you can call your own
Lies in this—to-day.
Power, intellect and health
May not always last—
The mill cannot grind
With the water that is past.

Miscellaneous.

DO NOT FACE THE LIGHT WHEN AT WORK.—Statistics kept by oculists employed in infirmaries for eye diseases have shown that the habits of some persons in facing a window from which the light falls directly in the eye as well as on the work, injure their eyes in the end. The best way is to work with a side light, or, if the work needs a strong illumination, so that it is necessary to have the working table before the window, the lower portion of the latter should be covered with a screen, so as to have a top light alone, which does not shine in the eyes while the head is slightly bent over and downward to the work.—*Medical Journal.*

How the French Workman Lives.

The French labourer probably gets more for his wages than any other. His food is cheaper and more nourishing. His bouillon is the liquid essence of beef at a penny per bowl. His bread at the restaurant is thrown in without any charge, and is the best bread in the world. His hot coffee and milk is peddled about the streets in the morning at a sou per cup. It is coffee, not slops. His half bottle of claret is thrown in at a meal costing twelve cents. For a few cents he may enjoy an evening's amusement at one of the minor theatres, with his coffee free. Sixpence pays for a nicely cushioned seat at the theatre. No gallery gods, no peanuts, pipe, smoke, drunkeness, yelling or howling. The Jardin des Plantes, the vast galleries and museums of the Louvre, Hotel Clunny, palace of the Luxembourg and Versailles are free for him to enter. Art and science hold out to him their choicest treasures at small cost, or no cost at all. French economy and frugality do not mean that constant retrenchment and self denial which would deprive life of everything which makes it worth living for. Economy in France, more than in any other country, means a utilization of what America throws away but it does not mean a pinching process of reducing life to a barren existence of work and bread and butter.—St. Louis *Republican.*

Welsh Singing.

I chanced to pass one evening, in the Christmas-time, in a country inn in a little Carmarthenshire village remote from railways. Certain wanderings through green lanes (and the lanes were still green, although it was cold, mid-winter weather) had brought me to the place at dusk, and, being weary, I had resolved to rest there for the night. Some local festivities of the season had taken place during the day, which had drawn into the village an unusual number of farmer-folk from the immediate neighborhood. After a simple dinner off a chop and a half-pint of *cwrw da* (good beer), I strolled into what they called the smoke-room, by way of distinguishing it from the tap-room adjoining. It was a plain little room, with high-backed wooden settles against the wall; indeed, the backs reached nearly up to the ceiling, and gave an old-fashioned air of comfort to the room which no amount of gilding and mirrors could possibly impart. Two or three farmers were sitting there drinking their beer and smoking their pipes, and toasting their trouserless shins before a blazing fire. Presently a Welsh harper with his harp entered from out-doors, and, seating himself in a corner of the room, began to tune his instrument. The room quickly filled up with men and women, and the air was soon reeking with tobacco-smoke and music. No drinks but beer and "pop" were indulged in by the company, save that some of the women drank tea; but Bacchus never saw a more genial company. By my side sat a jovial, collier-looking man, with a shock of tousled hair, who presently struck up in a loud, clear baritone a ringing song, which the harp immediately took up and followed. It was evidently a song all present knew, for they listened to the singer with every manifestation of delight, and when the chorus arrived they joined in with a lusty roar, that made the windows rattle. The singer constantly leaned forward in his seat, swaying his body as he sung, and placed the palm of his huge right hand against and under the edge of the table before him with an awkward gesture, that seemed absolutely essential to his comfort—as if he were holding himself down in his seat thus, in opposition to an instinctive disposition to rise and dance and, instead of looking at the company, or at the ceiling, he looked at the table where he was holding it. I complimented him on his singing when his song was done, which seemed to gratify him very much; he offered to sing the song over again, in English, if I would like; he could sing it in either language equally well, he said. But, before I could ask him to begin, some one else was singing—an English song this time—with words like these:

"Thrice welcome, old Christmas, we greet thee again,
With laughter and innocent mirth in thy train;
Let joy fill the heart, and shine on the brow,
While we snatch a sweet kiss 'neath the mistletoe-bough—
The mistletoe-bough,
The mistletoe-bough,
We will snatch a sweet kiss 'neath the mistletoe-bough."

This song, although it was warmly applauded, did not bring out the choral talent of the company to any great extent; it was evidently unfamiliar. But it was quite otherwise with another English song, or at least a song in the English language, sung by the lustiest farmer lad I ever looked upon—a huge, red-faced, frank-looking boy of eighteen or twenty—with a rousing vigor that was really exciting. This was the chorus, first sung in solo by the farmer-lad:

"La-a-and of the Cymro,
Dear land of moi fathurze,
Oi'll be treue—Oi'll be treu-u-ue
To—the—la-a-ahst!"

And stentorian was the roar of the chorus, men and women together, with a heartiness and emphasis which no words can possibly exaggerate. It was enough to make a man wish his grandfather had been a Welshman just to hear it.

In one aspect the Welsh people may be spoken of as a people whose lives are passed in the indulgence of their love for music and dancing. The air of Wales seems always full of music. In the Christmas season there is an unending succession of concerts and of miscellaneous entertainments, of which music forms a part; while you cannot enter a tap-room where a few are gathered together, without the imminent probability that one or more will break forth in song. By this is not meant a general musical howl such as is apt to be evoked from a room full of men of any nationality when very much under the influence of the rosy god; but good set songs, with good Welsh or English words to them, executed with respect for their work by the vocalists, and listened to with a like respect by the rest of the company. When an Englishman is drunk he is belligerent; when a Frenchman is drunk he is amorous; when an Italian is drunk he is loquacious; when a German is drunk he is sleepy; when an American is drunk, he brags; and when a Welshman is drunk he sings. Sometimes he dances; but he does not do himself credit as a dancer under these circumstances; for when I speak of dancing I do not refer to those wooden paces and inflections which pass for dancing in society, whether in Europe or America, and which are little more than an amiable pretext for bringing in contact human elements which are slow to mix when planted in chairs about a room? I refer to the individual dancing of men who do not dance for the purpose of touching women's hands, or indulging in small talk, but for the purpose of dancing; and who apply themselves seriously and skillfully to their work—to wit, the scientific performance of the jig—WIRT SIKES *in Appletons' Journal for January.*

How Tom Sawyer Got His Fence Whitewashed.

Tom Sawyer, having offended his sole guardian, Aunt Polly, is by that sternly-affectionate dame punished by being set to whitewash the fence in front of the garden. The world seemed a hollow mockery to Tom, who had planned fun for that day, and who knew that he would be the laughing stock of all the boys as they came past and saw him to work like a "nigger." But a great inspiration burst upon him and he went tranquilly to work. What that inspiration was will appear from what follows. One of the boys, Ben Rogers, comes by and pauses, eating a particularly fine apple. Tom does not see him. Ben stared a moment, and then said:

"Hi-yi! You're up a stump, ain't you?"

No answer. Tom surveyed his last touch with the eye of an artist, then he gave another gentle sweep, and surveyed the result, as before. Ben ranged up alongside of him. Tom's mouth watered for the apple, but he stuck to his work. Ben said:

"Hello, old chap; you got to work, hey!"

"Why, it's you, Ben; I wasn't noticing."

"Say, I'm going in a swimming. I am. Don't you wish you could? But, of course, you'd druther work, wouldn't you? Course you would."

Tom contemplated the boy a bit, and said:

"What do you call work?"

"Why, ain't that work?"

Tom resumed his whitewashing, and answered carelessly:

"Well, maybe it is, and maybe it ain't. All I know is, it suits Tom Sawyer."

"Oh, come now, you don't mean to let on that you like it?"

The brush continued to move.

"Like it? Well, I don't see why I oughtn't to like it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?"

That put the thing in a new light. Ben stopped nibbling his apple. Tom swept his brush daintily back and forth—stepped back to note the effect—added a touch here and there—criticised the effect again. Ben watching every move, and getting more and more interested, more and more absorbed. Presently he said:

"Say, Tom, let me whitewash a little."

Tom considered; was about to consent; but he altered his mind. "No, no; I reckon it wouldn't hardly do, Ben. You see, Aunt Polly's awful particular about this fence; it's got to be done very careful; I reckon there ain't one boy in a thousand, maybe two thousand, that can do it in the way it's got to be done."

"No—is that so? Oh come now; lemme just try, only just a little. I'd let you, if you was me, Tom."

"Ben, I'd like to, honest Injun; but Aunt Polly—well, Jim wanted to do it, but she wouldn't let him. Sid wanted to do it, but she wouldn't let Sid. Now, don't you see how I am fixed? If you was to tackle this fence and anything was to happen to it"——

"Oh, shucks; I'll be just as careful. Now lemme try. Say—I'll give you the core of my apple."

"Well, here. No, Ben; now don't; I'm afeard"——

"I'll give you all of it!"

Tom gave up the brush with reluctance in his face, but alacrity in his heart. And while Ben worked and sweated in the sun, the retired artist sat on a barrel in the shade close by, dangling his legs, munched his apple, and planned the slaughter of more innocents. There was no lack of material; boys happened along every little while; they came to jeer, but stayed to whitewash. By the time Ben was fagged out, Tom had traded the next chance to Billy Fisher for a kite in good repair; and when he played out, Johnny Miller bought in for a dead rat and a string to swing it with; and so on, hour after hour. And when the middle of the afternoon came, from being a poor poverty-stricken boy in the morning, Tom was literally rolling in wealth. He had, beside the things I have mentioned, twelve marbles, part of a jews-harp, a piece of blue bottle glass to look through, a spool cannon, a key that wouldn't unlock anything, a fragment of chalk, a glass stopper of a decanter, a tin soldier, a couple of tadpoles, six fire-crackers, a kitten with only one eye, a brass doorknob, a dog collar—but no dog—the handle of a knife, four pieces of orange peel and a dilapidated old window sash. He had a nice, good, idle time all the while—plenty of company—and the fence had three coats of whitewash on it. If he hadn't run out of whitewash he would have bankrupted every boy in the villiage.

Tom said to himself that it was not such a hollow world after all. He had discovered a great law of human action without knowing it, namely, that, in order to try to make a man or boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain. If he had been a great and wise philosopher, like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do, and that play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do. And this would help him to understand why constructing artificial flowers, or performing on a tread-mill, is work, whilst rolling nine-pins or climbing Mount Blanc is only amusement. There are wealthy gentlemen in England who drive four-horse passenger coaches twenty or thirty miles on a daily line, in the summer, because the privilege costs them considerable money; but if they were offered wages for the service, that would turn it into work, and they would resign.—*From Mark Twain,s book "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer."*

Select Story.

A Romantic story.

It has always been a mystery why the site occupied by Madrid, the Capital of Spain, was selected for this purpose, the locality being absolutely devoid of the least characteristic which might recommend it as suitable for a great city. It is situated near the centre of the country, to be sure, and on the left bank of the Manzanares, a small stream whose waters join those of the Jamara, an affluent of the Tagus. The city is built on a hilly, barren, and poorly watered plain, a little more than two thousand feet above the level of the sea, exposed to the bitter winds from the Guadurrama Mountains on the north, and to the simoon-like winds from the south east.

No other city except Rome gives itself up so completely to the intoxicating pleasures and excesses of the Carnival season as does Madrid. During this annual period the people resign all labor and devote themselves systematically to the greatest freedom, often overstepping the bounds of propriety, and forgetting self-respect. But the Carnival season is accepted as being sufficient excuse for nearly any imprudence short of murder. The same remark applies to Venice, Rome and Naples.

It is to give the reader a picture of an occurrence at Madrid during the Carnival that we have taken up our pen. The circumstances which we shall relate transpired but a few years ago, and yet it has probably been forgotten by nearly all those who ever heard it. It never became very public, but was whispered about among the courts of Europe, and we believe finally got into the newspapers of London and Paris.

As we have said, it was during the Carnival season, and one of the most distinguished ladies of the Court gave a masked ball, to which all the privileged class of citizens and people of rank, including the several Embassies, were invited. The Spaniards are proverbially hospitable, and on such occasions each Member of the Embassies is permitted to invite any of his fellow-countrymen who may chance to be in the city.

Our fellow-countryman, Bayard Taylor, one of the most extensive travellers of the day, chanced at that time to be in Madrid, and, as was customary, received an invitation to the masked ball, to which we refer. It has been more than hinted, also, that it was through Mr. Taylor that the facts of the following romantic story got first whispered about. But certain it is that Mr. Taylor, or any member of the American Embassy, can verify the facts.

General Arieta was as well known in Madrid a few years since as the Duke of Wellington was in London. He was the Spanish Von Moltke of twenty years ago—a favorite of the Queen, and though well advanced in years, still a man noted for his gallantries. He had won his spurs during the days of Wellington upon the Peninsula, and though he was a severe disciplinarian, still he was always so just and reasonable that he was immensely popular with the army. The General was a little proud, but still very genial when he chose to be so.

The occasion of the masked ball referred to was one of marked display. Even royalty was present in disguise, though that was nothing remarkable, the Queen having long before sacrificed the respect of her subjects, by reasons so public and brazen as to be disgusting. We speak of the mother of the present youthful King. The ball was long after remembered as the most splendid social affair which had occurred in the Castilian Capital for many a long year. It was more like one of those gay masquerades of the Parisian opera than aught else.

General Arieta had partaken rather freely of champagne, but not enough to more than stimulate him to concert pitch; he was too old a campaigner to get under the influence of wine or any other stimulus. Still he had swallowed quite enough to mellow his disposition, and to unloose his tongue. He was all politeness and courtesy to every one, and more particularly to those of the opposite sex who saluted him.

Pretty orange girl—pretty, at least in figure, for as to face, like the rest of the ladies, she was masked—was observed to pay special attention to the old soldiers. The General could not but observe with amorous eyes the exquisite little feet and beautifully formed limbs, which a somewhat short skirt served to display, nor did he fail to observe the delicately rounded outlines of this young girl's figure, her waist and beautiful throat and neck. Indeed he was quite taken by storm, and was prepared to strike his flag at the first summons to surrender.

On her part the orange girl danced with General Arieta, hung upon his his arm, chatted volubly with him, and in short quite appropriated and charmed the old soldier. Everybody waltzed in Spain; it is the national dance, and the young girl twirled the General about the ball room, until together with the fumes of the champagne which he had drank, he was rendered almost too dizzy to stand upon his feet. But no Spaniard was ever known to get too much of the waltz, so General Arieta kept on in dizzy delight, with his arm encircling the little girl's waist.

'Alas!' sighed the General, as the two sought the retirement of the conservatory leading out to the dancing hall. 'I am absolutely miserable.'

'And why, pray?'

'Because I shall be obliged to leave you so soon.'

'Leave me?'

'Yes I have to take my carriage by midnight.'

'Why so early?'

'To attend a Cabinet meeting.'

'Where?'

'At the palace of Aranquez.'

'That is some distance.'

'True.'

And then the two drew very near together upon the seat, and there was some low and confidential talk, no doubt to the entire satisfaction of both parties.

The marked flirtation of the General with the young orange girl was not unobserved by the assembled fashion and rank of the city, and when the two separated a few moments later, the old soldier was compelled to run the gauntlet of many a sarcastic remark. However, he was well satisfied with his success, and could afford to put up with a few jests at his expense from those he could not but feel envied him.

'Are you not afraid of brigands upon the road?' asked the orange girl.

'Oh, no, my little queen, I have no fear.'

'I suppose you are well armed.'

'On the contrary, I take no weapons with me.'

'Ah? You are so brave, you soldiers.'

'You will meet me at another time?'

'Perhaps,' was her arch reply.

'But promise me.'

'Where?'

But the midnight hour had come all too soon for him; still with a punctuality characteristic of his calling, he hastened to leave the gay scene which had afforded him such delight, and proceeded to the official destination already named. He was hardly fit, however, to sit in the council, for his head was full to repletion of the exquisite little figure with which he had been whirling in the giddy mazes of the waltz. He could not get her out of his mind for a single moment.

As all fashionable Madrid was abroad that night, it was some considerable time before the General's carriage could be found and brought forward in response to his order. In his tedious moments of waiting, he once more sought the ball-room, endeavoring among the revelers to distinguish his gay young partner, but to his great disappointment she was nowhere to be seen. Like Cinderella, at the midnight hour she had vanished from the gay scene, as though a fairy spell had been broken. The General rubbed his eyes as if he expected to awake and find that it was all a dream.

His carriage came at last, and, entering it, he started at once to fulfill his appointment.

It was a clear, bright night: the moon was full and serene in its effect. The General looked out as he left the city gates and started upon the road, then settled himself into an easy position, hoping to catch a nap by the way. With that happy faculty acquired in camp life of being able to sleep under nearly any circumstances, he was soon quite oblivious to all about him. He was soon dreaming of the bewitching eyes that had been beaming upon him through the mask of the orange girl.

Suddenly his ears were saluted by a loud, peremptory direction:

'Halt!'

At which the vehicle very suddenly come to a stand-still. He was hardly sufficiently awake to ask himself what all this signified, or how any one dared to interfere with a person of rank upon the road, when the door of the vehicle was thrown open and a couple of brigands, armed to the teeth, jumped into the carriage in the most unceremonious manner. The General was too much amazed to make or attempt any resistance, besides which, while he was entirely unarmed, his ears were saluted by the ominous sound of cocking a pistol, which he saw by the bright moonlight was held by one of the brigands ready for instant use.

'What means this insult?' demanded General Arieta.

'Don't use harsh words, General,' said one of the brigands, while the other, putting his head out of the carriage window gave the word for the vehicle to be driven on.

'Now, General,' said he who evidently was Captain of his fellows, 'you are my prisioner.'

'So it seems; but what is your object?'

'Answer my questions faithfully and truly, and I shall not put you to any great inconvenience.'

'But suppose I decline.'

'My advice to you is not to try it.'

Why not?'

'Because we should split your ears and nose in a way which would make you a human curiosity to your friends and the public,' was the cool reply.

The General saw it would be useless to contend with these men. He knew how literally they often carried out their threats, when they held a prisoner for ransom, and he shuddered internally, though a brave man, at the idea of being personally maimed for life.

The carriage, in the meantime was moving along at a smart pace.

'Whither are you conducting me?' asked the Queen's officer.

'You will be informed by and by,' was the reply.

'But I have an important appointment.'

'What do you suppose we care for that.'

'You will be made to suffer for this.'

'First catch your hare,' said the robber chief.

'Take what you desire of my personal property, but I beg that you will not detain me,' said the General.

'Well,' said he who had acted as spokesman, 'you may give me that signet ring, General.'

'Nay, anything but that.'

'It suits my fancy, and, indeed, it is all I require of your personal effects.

'I will give you a note for a hundred pesos, rather.'

'It will not answer; I require the ring.'

'Strange!'

'Do you think so?'

'Its intrinsic value is not half the sum.'

'True, but it is a signet ring.'

'The General reluctantly handed his ring to the robber, saying,

'Let our interview be brief, for you detain me from a cabinet meeting of importance.'

'Exactly; and now, General, what question in politics is up that should demand a Cabinet meeting at so unusual an hour?'

'That is the Queen's business.'

'Undoubtedly, but you have not answered me, and until you have done so be sure you lose time.'

It seemed to be of no use to try to avoid the inquiries of the curious brigand. Indeed, the General felt that the best course was to answer all inquiries frankly, believing that he should facilitate his deliverance thereby.

And then commenced a series of interrogatories which showed remarked intelligence on the robber's part, and to which the General responded frankly and truthfully. He was forced to retail all the Court gossip, to tell who was in favor with the Queen and who was under the ban of her displeasure; what appointments, civil and military, were under discussion, and who were likely to be dismissed from favor.

At last, after the General had been absolutely pumped dry of all the information he was capable of imparting and without robbing him of any other property save the signet ring, the carriage was ordered to stop. The two brigands stepped out, and were at once joined by the one who had mounted the box beside the driver. The Gen-