

LITERATURE.

THE THREE MELON SEEDS;
OR, THE DUELLIST AND THE JOKERS.

"A Sexton of the Old School," contributes the following to the Boston Transcript.

Three young gentlemen, who had finished the most substantial part of their repast, were lingering over their fruit and wine, at an eating house, in London, when a man, of middle age, and middle stature, entered the public room, where they were sitting, seated himself at one end of a small unoccupied table, and calling the waiter, ordered a simple mutton chop and a glass of ale. His appearance, at first view, was not likely to arrest the attention of any one. His hair was getting to be thin and gray; the expression of his countenance was sedate, with a slight touch, perhaps, of melancholy; and he wore a grey surcoat, with a standing collar, which, manifestly, had seen service, if the wearer had not—just such a thing as an officer would bestow upon his serving man. He might be taken, plausibly enough, for a country magistrate, or an attorney of limited practice, or a schoolmaster.

He continued to masticate his chop, and sip his ale in silence, without lifting his eyes from the table, until a melon seed, sportively snapped from between the thumb and finger of one of the gentlemen at the opposite table, struck him upon the right ear. His eye was instantly upon the aggressor; and his ready intelligence gathered from the illy suppressed merriment of the party, that his petty impertinence was intentional.

The stranger stooped and picked up the melon seed, and a scarcely perceptible smile passed over his features, as he carefully wrapped up the seed in a piece of paper, and placed it in his pocket. This singular procedure, with their preconceived impressions of their customer, somewhat elevated as they were by the wine they had partaken, capsized their gravity entirely, and a burst of irresistible laughter proceeded from the group.

Unmoved by this rudeness, the stranger continued to finish his frugal repast in quiet, until another melon seed from the same hand, struck him upon the right elbow. This also, to the infinite amusement of the other party, he picked from the floor, and carefully deposited with the first.

Amidst shouts of laughter, a third melon seed was soon after discharged, which hit him upon the left breast. This also, he very deliberately took from the floor, and deposited it with the other two.

As he rose, and was engaged in paying for his repast, the gaiety of these sporting gentlemen became slightly subdued. It was not easy to account for this. Lavater would not have been able to detect the slightest evidence of irritation or resentment upon the features of the stranger. He seemed a little taller, to be sure, and the carriage of his head might have appeared to them rather more erect. He walked to the table at which they were sitting, and with that air of dignified calmness, which is a thousand times more terrible than wrath, drew a card from his pocket, and presented it with perfect civility to the offender, who could not do less than offer his own in return. While the stranger unclosed his surcoat, to take the card from his pocket, they had a glance at the address coat of a military man. The card disclosed his rank, and a brief inquiry at the bar was sufficient for the rest. He was a captain, whom ill health and long service had entitled to half pay. In earlier life he had been engaged in several affairs of honor, and, in the dialect of the fancy, was a dead shot.

The next morning a note arrived at the aggressor's residence, containing a challenge in form, and one only of the melon seeds. The truth then flashed upon the challenged party—it was the challenger's intention to make three bites at this cherry, three separate affairs out of this unwarrantable frolic! The challenge was accepted, and the challenged party, in deference to the challenger's reputed skill with the pistol, had half decided upon the small sword; but his friends, who were on the alert, soon discovered that the captain, who had risen by his merit

had, in the earlier days of his necessity, gained his bread as an accomplished instructor in the use of that very weapon. They met and fired, alternately, by lot; the young man had elected this mode, thinking that he might win the first fire—he did—fired, and missed his opponent. The captain levelled his pistol and fired—the ball passed through the flap of the right ear, and grazed the bone; and as the wounded man involuntarily put his hand to the place, he remembered that it was on the right ear of his antagonist that the first melon seed had fallen. Here ended the first lesson. A month had passed. His friends cherished the hope that he would hear nothing more from the captain, when another note—a challenge of course—and another of those accursed melon seeds arrived with the captain's apology for not sending it before.

Again they met—fired simultaneously, and the captain who was unhurt, shattered the right elbow of his antagonist—the very point upon which he had been struck by the second melon seed: and here ended the second lesson. There was something awfully impressive in the *modus operandi*, and exquisite skill of this antagonist. The third melon seed was still in his possession, and the aggressor had not forgotten that it had struck the unoffending gentleman upon the left breast! A month had passed—another—and another, of terrible suspense; but nothing was heard from the captain. Intelligence had been received that he was confined to his lodgings by illness. At length, the gentleman who had been his second in the former duels, once more presented himself, and tendered another note, which, as the recipient perceived, on taking it, contained the last of the melon seeds. The note was superscribed in the captain's well known hand, but it was the writing evidently of one, who wrote, *deficiente manu*. There was an unusual solemnity also, in the manner of him who delivered it. The seal was broken, and there was the melon seed, in a blank envelope—"And what, sir, am I to understand by this?" "You will understand, sir, that my friend forgives you—he is dead!"

A MAIDEN'S MISTAKE:

OR A KISSING ADVENTURE.

Say what you will about it, I am ready to take an oath that I never was kissed, so far as I remember, but once. But that once has not been forgotten, and if you will leave your main yard aback, I'll tell you the story, though it won't do for me to catch you a laughing at it.

It lacked only a half an hour of midnight. I had been on a visit to one of my neighbor's and found such agreeable company that the hours passed by unnoticed—by me, at least, but I finally got under way for my lodgings. The night was cold and nearly starless, and the wind blew fresh from the north; but it did not worry me much, for I sauntered along whistling the very familiar tune of "Oh no, I never mention it."

Suddenly while passing an aristocratic-looking mansion, I saw a front window in the second story softly raised, and a white hand seemed to beckon me to approach. Wondering who it could be, and what was wanted I darted through the front gate and was under the window.

"Is that you Charley?" asked one of the sweetest voices you ever dreamed of hearing. I was surprised—astonished—as you will readily believe, considering the lateness of the hour; but I was pretty well convinced that it was me, and nobody else, so I replied—

"Yes here I am!"

And there I was trembling like a sky-sail pole in a gale of wind. And then came the response to my answer—

"Well, I am ready!"

What do you think of that, coming as it did from a young lady at that hour of the night?—fitting time for a revelation of horrors! Ready! what could she mean. I was thunderstruck.

Ere my curious speculation assumed any definite shape, the unseen lady lowered the end of a rope ladder to the ground, seemingly inviting me to ascend; but I fell back aghast. However, I was spared the agony of a refusal. I saw in an instant that the lady was about to descend to the ground; I saw her suspended between heaven and earth. Oh! how I wished that the ropes might give way, so that I might have an opportunity of catching her in my arms. But

they didn't break, and she reached *terra firma* in safety.

And oh! joy! the instant she touched the ground she threw her arms around my neck and kissed me again and again! Wasn't I happy?

Of course I pressed her to my bosom with a lover's ardor, and returned her kisses with compound interest.

"Oh! I am so glad you have come!" murmured the fair creature, in tones that thrilled my heart with delight. "I have taken nothing but my jewels and ready money, for I have hopes that a reconciliation will be effected. If not we will live, love and be happy in a little world of our own."

"Yes, we will," I replied in an emphatic manner, for I felt that she was all that mortal man could desire. I now really thought that I had secured a bride: and then the "jewels," "money," and "reconciliation," rang in my ears like a dinner-bell in a one-eyed tavern.

"And now let us hurry away before we are discovered," said the lady, taking my arm and leading the way. No doubt she thought me very backward, but, to tell the truth, I didn't know where to direct my steps. Following "the bent of her inclination," we passed rapidly up the street.

"Go ahead my beauty, I'm yours till death," thought I. But a sad change soon "came o'er the spirit of our dream." Our rapid pace soon brought us to the gas-light on the corner, and then, for the first time, she caught a glimpse of my features. The effect was electrical. She disengaged her arm from mine, recoiled a few paces and murmured:

"Merciful heavens! you are not my Charles."

Her face was turned towards mine, and never had I seen woman more beautiful. Her eyes were as dark as the starless night that enshrouded us, and expressive of her gifted soul. While I gazed upon her, I heard somebody in the direction of the house we had just left whistling the same tune. I had been indulging in a few moments before. As I was about to make some sage remark upon the singular coincidence my fair companion darted away in the direction of whistler No. 2. The whole adventure seemed a mystery to me; and there I stood, wondering what would be the next move. The cup of my bliss had been overturned.

Five minutes might have elapsed, and then the lady made her appearance, leaning upon the arm of a noble-looking man of about my own age. I was just about to ask myself who could furnish us with pistols for two and a coffin for one, when the lady took my hand, and looking archly up into my face she asked:—

"Will you not accompany us to the Rev. Mr. Smith's residence and see us married."

The truth dashed upon my mind in an instant. The lady was the only daughter of wealthy parents, and they were opposed to her lover, considering him as too poor, as he was a young merchant who had just set up in business. He was forbidden the house, and, as a natural consequence, the lovers planned an elopement. She was to be ready on a certain night, and he was to give notice of his whereabouts by whistling the tune "Oh, no, I never," &c.

Well there was no law against whistling, and at the appointed hour I happened to be near the lady's residence, and whistling my favorite tune, which chanced to be the signal agreed upon by the lovers. It was thus that she mistook me for her lover, whose name was Charles.

To make a long story short, I accompanied them to their place of destination, and saw the lovers united in the holy bonds of matrimony.

The rest of the night was passed in rejoicing, and the next morning I called upon the lady's parents—gradually imparted the news to them—received their forgiveness for the lovers, saw them reconciled, and, agreeable to the request of the newly married couple have made their house my home ever since—but never shall I forget the kisses I received by reason of the "Maiden's Mistake"

"Sire, one word," said a soldier one day to Frederick the Great, when presenting to him a request of a brevet of lieutenant. "If you say two," answered the prince, "I will have you hanged." "Sign," replied the soldier. The monarch, surprised at his presence of mind, immediately granted his request.

From the London "Punch."

M. LOUIS NAPOLEON,

PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SLEIGHT-OF-HAND
AND SLEIGHT OF EVERYTHING ELSE.

Has the honor (?) to inform the Public that he intends continuing his extraordinary Performances, and playing his unprecedented Tricks, until further notice.

The Programme will be selected from the unrivalled stock of Illusions and Impositions, which he has lately practiced with so much success at Paris, assisted by his unrivalled Collection of Ministerial and Military Automations.

Among the principal Tricks of the present season will be found—

1.—THE INEXHAUSTIBLE BALLOT-BOX.—From which eight millions of white balls will be produced, by a *coup de mai*, which defies all detection.

2.—THE CELEBRATED GUN TRICK.—(As practised on the 2nd and 3rd of December, 1851, in the Boulevards of Paris.) In the course of this wonderful experiment, combining the characteristics of a *coup d'état* and a *coup de tele*, the spectators will have an opportunity of catching the bullets in their own heads, so as to leave no doubt of the reality of the experiment.

3.—THE AUTOMATON SOLDIER.—A piece of mechanism of the greatest perfection, which will load his musket and fire in the face of any person whom M. Louis may indicate.

4.—THE MINISTERIAL PUPPET.—These little imitations of humanity will go through the whole official routine; and though without the smallest intelligence, will bow their wooden heads, and sign decrees, or any other documents, at a mere nod from their master.

5.—THE OFFICIAL SECOND SIGHT.—M. Louis Napoleon will, with the aid of a police spy-glass, read the most private papers in the possession of individuals, and not only tell their thoughts, but transport them, before they are aware of it, to Cayenne, and other remote regions, for having entertained the opinions which his police spy-glass has made him acquainted with.

6.—THE ESCAMOTAGE D'UNE DAME.—Consisting of the total disappearance of *La Belle France*, under a dictatorial extinguisher.

The Tricks will be accompanied by all sorts of Airs, performed by a Band of Military Instruments.

Places can only be secured by application to M. Louis Napoleon.

No Money returned. Vival Nobody.

DID YOU EVER?—Did you ever know a great man that was a dull boy?

Did you ever see a man that was satisfied with his position? If he finds a dollar does he not grumble that it was not two?

Did you ever see a handsome woman that had to be told of her beauty before she was aware of it herself?

Did you ever see a plain miss that forty thousand dollars would not make decidedly handsome?

Did you ever know a person who paid promptly for his paper to find fault with it?

Did you ever know of a politician that was not one of the people decidedly, before election and himself after?

Did you ever know a man going down hill that every body was not desirous of kicking, and in going up the same ones just as desirous of hanging on to his coat tail?

Did you ever know of a place on the habitable globe, where you could not find a Yankee?

Did you ever know a man to throw a stone at a brother, if he waited to divest himself of all sin?

Did you ever know a lawyer to take less than he asked for doing business for you?

In the following eight lines a question is asked and answered; will some of our riddle-solving readers pick them out:—

When sudden storms arise
Will peaceful calms expire;
You know full well in ashes hid
Stay sparks of kindled fire.
With good intent mark well my mind,
Me-thinks you will some secret find

To answer you I won't be long,
Night is the shade of many a wrong.

He that makes an ass of himself must not take it ill if other people ride him.