

For some minutes vocal silence reigned at the little table.

Suddenly and ferociously Louis ended the reign of silence.

"Number 13 I abominate! It is the snake among numbers—*n'est ce pas?*"

"Oh, don't mention it!" replied Oliver. He had been thinking of Phyllis so far away at Palm Beach and for some reason imagined he was being thanked for the dinner.

"Exactly my sentiments! But this is a case in which I *must* mention it if you are to hear my story. If I were a mathematician I'd spend all my time and brains in persuading the world to strike 13 from its position between 12 and fourteen and use it no more."

"Would you put anything in its place?" asked the cartoonist.

"In its place? Why yes! The sweetest word in the world; a word that floats smoothly as a canoe down the auditory canal and hastens the beating of the heart. A potent power for good my friend to make fair the one-time habitation of the late unlamented snake, the evil 13, so long unlucky to others now out of luck itself. Allow me to eat for a moment and I shall explain."

"Oh, no hurry at all," said "O. V. B." "don't starve yourself for my sake."

Louis Jean waved this aside with easy eloquence "Pooh my dear fellow, it is my pleasure to talk. The name which I should put in its place would be 'Madaline.' It is, I think, a brilliant idea—eh?" and he sparkled with pleased excitement. "You see she will thus be kept forever in the minds of men."

"Her name you mean," said Oliver.

"Ah yes, but it conjures pictures. Let us consider how it sounds. Ten, eleven, twelve, madaline. Madaline, multiplied by three equals—What does it equal? I'm no mathematician."

"Then what matter how much it equals?" sighed Oliver. "It's sad to think of, but you'd never be able to make it popular."

"Who knows?" said the other hopefully, "much that is hard to believe is done beneath the stars."

Then silence again held sway for several minutes above the little table.

The Parisian lightly licked his lips after the manner of some great singer about to burst into song.

"Three days ago; I think it was in the morning," said he with a look in his eye suitable for one who viewed such distant fields, "I was writing a poem called 'A Day with an Old Gentleman,' of which the first verse runs thus:

He washed his face and he brushed his hair  
And he said at his bed his morning prayer.  
Then whom should he meet at the very top stair  
But his chamber-maid with the auburn hair;  
So he kissed her "good morning" right then and there.

I had written thirteen verses of it when I heard a voice speaking close to my ear. For a brief and rapturous moment I believed it was my Muse, a