

worked for, some had cost a year's earnings, all were dear to him, but the triumph of human affection was complete, and the sum he handed over to Sam was enough to put the young fellow well on his feet.

It was uphill work to pull the business round, for customers, once alienated, were slow to return; but in the end Sam's straightforwardness and energy told, and when once the change in the management was recognised, success was insured.

At last came the day when, seeing his way to the full discharge of his debt to Hope, he was able to take round to the designer, by way of first-fruits, a vase that had formed part of the old collection.

"There, Daddy Pipes, there's an old friend for you. Of course I can't see the beauty of the thing, but

I know it was always a favourite of yours. It shan't be the only one to find its way home, I promise you."

Too moved to speak, Hope took the vase from him and literally fondled it, passing his hand lovingly over the shapely outline, holding it up to the light and dwelling with tender interest on every detail of the well-remembered design.

"God bless you, Sam!" he said at last; "I never could have believed the pleasure of having it back would make up in a moment for all the missing of it, but it is so—it is so. You're better than a son to me, Sam, and you've gone the way for a long time now to make me perfectly happy—proud of you, lad, and perfectly happy."

H. L.

"THE ELIXIR OF YOUTH."

BY THE REV. S. BARING-GOULD, M.A.



T was said in the Middle Ages that the Evil One gave to mortals a certain Elixir of Youth, on condition that he or she who received it should eventually become his prey. This elixir was supposed to confer perpetual youth on those who consumed it; age had

no effect on them to dim the eye, to blanch the hair, to furrow the skin. Very seldom do we find these old myths without some foundation in fact, on which they were reared, or out of which, as a root, they threw up their fantastic outgrowth. It was so with the fabled Elixir of Youth. That elixir is still sold, still produces some of its fabled effects, and still brings with it a Nemesis.

That elixir is arsenic, a mineral that has a powerful effect on the blood and skin, and is therefore used as a medicine, but which is also a virulent poison. The name is derived from the Greek *arsen*, which signifies male, and, metaphorically, that which is strong and mighty; and the name is given to this mineral because of its vigorous properties. The ancients only knew it as orpiment; and Avicenna, in the eleventh century, is the first to speak of white arsenic, as well as its sublimate; and it is precisely at the time that arsenic began to be known, that the first rumours of the compact with the Evil One for the Elixir of Youth began to spread. It is well known that among horse-dealers arsenic is used to give plumpness and gloss to the beasts they desire to sell; but it is not as generally known that there are men and women who take arsenic habitually to improve their complexions and ward off the advance of age.

We generally suppose that the use of artificial methods of preserving or enhancing beauty is confined to the wealthy, but the eating of arsenic is most prevalent precisely where we should least expect to find it—among the hardy, lusty dwellers in the Alps.

Throughout the Tyrol there are to be found peasant-girls and men who secretly are addicted to this habit; but it is chiefly in Styria and Carinthia that arsenic-eating has become a habit.

Before, however, we come to consider this mischievous habit, with its effects, I wish to say a word about the inhaling of arsenic, which is unconsciously done in England and elsewhere.

A few years ago my children suffered from sores that formed about the wrists and ankles, and at the corners of the mouth. They were obstinate, and would not yield to the ordinary treatment for heated or poor blood. The country doctor was called in, and the whole family was visited and physicked for a fortnight, with no results. Then I was convinced the seat of the evil was to be sought elsewhere. The schoolroom was papered with an æsthetic olive-green paper obtained from one of the first art decorators in London. This paper I found when rubbed gave off a fine green dust. The adhesive matter which fixed the paint to the paper had lost its strength; thin particles of the coloured dust floated in the air. I sent some of the paper to be analysed, and ascertained that it was largely charged with arsenic. The children were all sent out of the house, the paper removed, and the little patients rapidly recovered.

A few months later we went abroad for the winter. My first call on settling in a South German city was on a colonel of my acquaintance. Almost the first thing the colonel said to me, on my inquiry as to the health of his family, was, "The young people have suffered for some time with sores about their faces and joints, which will not heal."

"Oh!" said I, at once, "you have arsenical wall-papers in the house."

We went together to the bedrooms and tore off pieces of the paper, and they were sent to the city analyst. In one room were three layers of paper, one over the other, all laden with arsenic.

"This," said the colonel—"this is very strange.

My neighbour, General von Birkenheim, has had his family suffering in the same way, and we supposed it was an epidemic. I will run in to him and inquire about his papers."

Suffice it to say, the general's wall-papers were also charged with arsenic. Here were three families being slowly poisoned by arsenic, within my knowledge, in one month.

I may add that I went to the art decorator and complained, but the only answer I got was that no other colour met artistic sense like orpiment; consequently it could not be done without. It is a mistake to suppose that the crude green papers are the most dangerous—it is those of a yellowish tone; but arsenic combined with sulphur gives also a red which is employed. And now to return to the eaters.

In 1875 a congress of naturalists assembled at Gratz, in Styria, when the subject of arsenic-eating came under discussion; and two men, whom public report affirmed to be inveterate arsenic-eaters, were brought before the congress to be examined. One came from Stainz, the other from Liegitz; they were vigorous, well-built men, and no apparent injury had been done to their constitutions by the amount of the poison they had consumed. According to their account they had taken to the habit to protect them from infection, and to assist their digestion. To the astonishment of the naturalists, these men swallowed before their eyes several grains of the poison, sufficient to have killed any two who had not become accustomed to it.

The poison is bought by the peasants as rat poison; the foresters also have it, as arsenic facilitates the running of bullets and shot in globular form; and from these men it can be sometimes procured. The pedlars also dispose of it secretly. There is, however, a good deal of difficulty in obtaining regular supplies, and the traffic in it is kept secret.

It is said that the manager of a Salzburg arsenic manufactory, who began at seventeen with three grains, in his later years was able to consume as much as twenty-three grains at a time, and that he reached an advanced age. This seems incredible; but one who intimately knows the people writes: "I have found arsenic-eaters in the neighbourhood of Eisenerz, in Judenburg, at Köflach, and Voitsberg. In the valley of the Suhn this poison is largely used, and is derived from Carniola. At first it is taken in small particles, or in the drink, or strewn as a powder on bread or bacon, once a week, or every two days, in very small doses, gradually increasing the amount to ten grains, and even as much as twenty grains, taken daily; and those who take it have assured me that it makes them strong and lively, that it gives brightness to the eye and a youthful appearance."

In the conscience of the people, the indulgence in arsenic is regarded as sinful, and the clergy use their utmost influence to hold the habit in check. Doctors dissuade from it. Lovers make inquiries, before they commit themselves, whether the girls of their choice are arsenic-eaters, for even the most ardent lover will draw back if he thinks that the girl he desires to take

to his heart and home keeps a supply of deadly poison always by her.

But priest and doctor, and public opinion and private conscience, are powerless to prevail on one who has acquired the habit to break it off; for to give up arsenic means to wither and die.

It is said that wives gradually accustom their husbands to arsenic, the man being unconscious that he is given it; and the woman's object is to have her husband so completely in her power that, if he gives her occasion to be jealous or angry, she withholds the amount put daily with his food, and his collapse is certain. It is also said that on more than one occasion farmers or their wives have taught their servants to take arsenic, and then have held them in their power. The servants are afraid to leave, or ask for increase of wage, lest they should be denied their daily dose, and so prematurely decay. Whether the cessation from taking arsenic is certainly fatal can hardly be said, as it is difficult to obtain statistics and accurate observations in these cases, but the prevailing conviction is that if the dose be intermitted the cheeks fall in, the hair loses its gloss, the eyes grow dull, and the health fails altogether. Death rapidly ensues unless the medicine be again promptly resorted to. The arsenic-eater is said to be known by the brightness, but somewhat metallic lustre, of the eye, by a nervous excitability and irritability, by transparency of complexion, and plumpness of flesh. Even when advanced in age, the arsenic-eater preserves an unusual freshness of appearance and absence of wrinkles. Medicines have no effect on arsenic-eaters, and many an one addicted to this habit ends his days by an overdose taken purposely to relieve him of pains which the physician is unable to overcome.

The old fable is, after all, true in many cases, that the Evil One claims his tribute unexpectedly if once this Elixir of Youth be had recourse to; for among arsenic-eaters it happens, as with the takers of chloral, that they exaggerate their powers of withstanding the poison, or on certain occasions think they require extraordinary doses, and these extraordinary doses of the beloved medicine kill them.

That the possession of the mineral may be a temptation to use it as a poison is also, unfortunately, true; and it is precisely the fear of this that causes those who are suspected of arsenic-eating to be regarded by the public of their own class with disapproval. As a young man will not take a wife who he has reason to think eats arsenic, so will no farmer or farmer's wife engage a servant whom popular opinion declares to be a poison-eater. Master and mistress have to be sharp with their domestics sometimes, and do not like to think that the domestics have the means of revenge accessible, and easily employed without much chance of detection.

A Styrian writer says that when he was a student he knew very well a young groom who attended to a farmer's horses. One day this fellow showed him a paper cornet in which he had what he called "sugar," and which he gave to his master's horses to give them a glossy coat and to keep them plump.

"I've a mind to try it myself," said he. "It makes one strong and able to have wind for mountain climbing."

He took a little crumb between his fingers, put it in his mouth, and swallowed it.

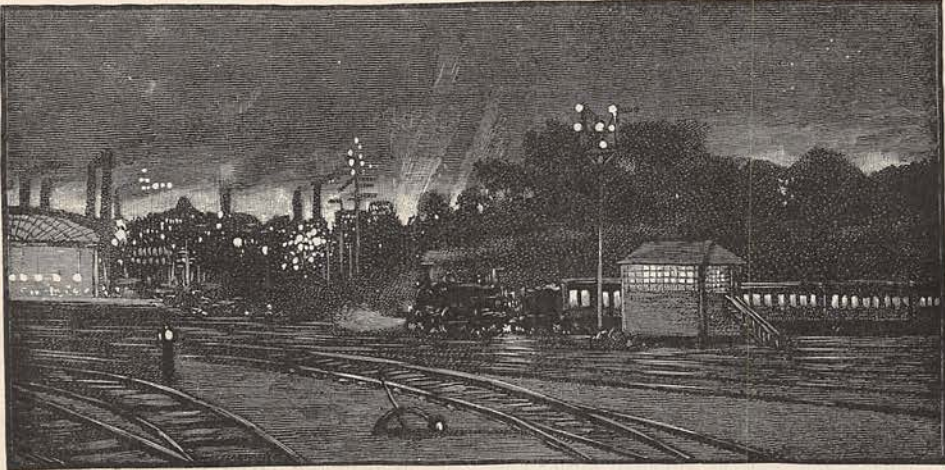
Next morning he saw the groom again.

"Look at me," said the fellow, stretching himself and showing his muscular arms; "I feel as if I had taken a draught of strong fiery wine. To-morrow I will take another crumb. I look forward to it."

Years passed, and the two did not meet. At length one day they encountered each other once more.

"Well," said our informant, "do you still nibble sugar?"

"Nibble! I eat now daily as much as a pea in size." He looked hale, young, fresh. "Ah!" he continued, "it is all right with me; but my Josephine—the girl I wanted to marry—she's dead with it. Women grow old faster than men, and so are not as patient and leisurely in increasing their doses. She took a grain too much, just before a fête, where we were to have met, and it cost her her life. I am very sorry for her, heartily sorry; but—there are more fishes in the sea than are brought up by the net."



"CERTAINLY A STRANGE SCENE" (p. 153).

ALL NIGHT AT A JUNCTION.



AN OFFICE-CLEANER.

WE travel so much now-a-days that there are few who have not had occasion at times to pass some hours at a railway station. Trains do not "fit" in; steamships are delayed, and belated passengers arriving at ports find that after a few hours' travel there is detention and delay. It is a common experience—I have known it in the three kingdoms, and in Sweden, Denmark, and

Germany, not to mention smaller countries. And the rule is that these junction-stations are bleak,

and uninteresting, so that it is a problem how to pass the time. But there are occasions when a stay at some great junction in the night-time is needful, and this is the case before us. Let us explore, with or without leave, what there is to see; and first we will wander a few hundred yards from the station, and look out for the whereabouts of railway officials who are the sweet little cherubs sitting up aloft to care for travelling Jack and Jill.

Let us enter the signal-cabin. It is nearly square in form; it is well lit day and night, the sides being nearly all window, and abundant gas-jets flaring forth. On a shelf are lamps with coloured "spectacles;" there are three chairs, and little furniture beyond. There is on one side of the cabin a long row of levers, coloured red, white, and black, and a brass plate attached to each one, which bears a distinctive word or words: "Station to Junc.," "Main dist. off," "Clear for main in," and other similar inscriptions. There are two painted gongs, and there are some magnetic instruments, with a telegraphic index. A "Bell Signal Code" indicates in part the use: a given