for further argument, for just then Dick and the Archæopteryx returned, supporting the Dodo, who appeared half dead with fright, and followed by the Palæotherium and the Eterædarium —walking arm in arm.

"Ah! now we will settle this little matter," said the Court Glover, placing himself in an imposing attitude, and motioning the Executioner to stand a little way behind him.

The Dodo prostrated himself before them, the tears streaming from his eyes, and the offending gloves thrown on the ground in front of him.

"Miserable fowl!" began the Court Glover.

The Dodo winced.

"To what degraded depths have you sunken! I find you here hob-a-nobbing with thingummybobs and what's-his-names."

"Here, I say, hold on!" interrupted the Archæopteryx, "if you mean us, you know we are——"

"Thingummybobs and what's-his-names," repeated the Court Glover, waving his hand contemptuously. "Was it to create an impression amongst such creatures as *these* that you ran off with the very best pair of white kid gloves in the whole collection belonging to His Importance the Little Panjandrum? Oh, Dodo! Dodo! Dodo! it is too much!"

"How much too much," enquired the Palæotherium, kindly taking out his purse.

The Court Glover waved him aside with an impatient scowl.

"The vanity of the bird," he went on; "white kid above all others! Why, you might have taken a dozen pairs of coloured cotton gloves, and no one would have minded in the least; but best white kid! Oh, shocking! shocking! and look at the state you've made them in; but there—what can be expected of a creature that goes wandering about the world visiting what-you-may-call-ems."

"Of course, there's nothing to be done," continued the Court Glover, "but to execute you."

The Dodo sobbed; and Marjorie—who was greatly concerned—began: "Oh, please——"

But the Court Glover was inexorable, and murmured solemnly, "In one hour's time—here." He walked off towards the balloon, followed by the Executioner, who was giggling idiotically, and stuffing a handkerchief into his mouth to prevent himself from laughing outright.

"Inhuman wretch—there!" said Marjorie, bursting into tears, while the Dodo's friends assisted him up from the ground, where he was lying in a half-fainting condition.

"Bear up, old man," said the Archæopteryx, sympathetically, fanning him with his tail.

"When did he say?" enquired the Dodo, faintly.

"In an hour's time," said Dick, sadly.

The Dodo shuddered.

"Stop!" said the Eterædarium, suddenly. "I think I have found a way out of the difficulty."

"Oh, what is it? what is it?" cried the Dodo, eagerly; while the others all crowded round to hear what the Eterædarium had to say.

[*To be continued.*]

COMMON COMMODITIES.

NEEDLES.

TOWARDS the end of the fourteenth century steel needles were made at Nuremburg; and about 200 years ago the industry was introduced into England, and established at Redditch, where at present are made nearly all the needles used in the United Kingdom. Nearly every man, woman, and child in this pretty little Worcestershire town is directly or indirectly concerned in the manufacture of needles.

Needles are made from steel wire, which comes in large coils from Sheffield. The wire varies in thickness, according to the size of the needles to be made from it. Some kinds are not much thicker than a hair. Others are between three-quarters of an inch and an inch in circumference. The length of wire in each coil varies according to the diameter. Some of the coils weigh about 13lb., measure when uncoiled about a mile and a quarter in length, and produce from forty to fifty thousand needles.

The needle-maker first cuts the wire into small pieces called "blanks," each of which is as long as two needles, and, after straightening them, proceeds to point them. Formerly the pointing was done by hand, and very unhealthy and risky work it was; but now the work is performed by a remarkably complicated and ingenious machine.

After being pointed, the needles are introduced to the stamping shop, where another machine produces the little channel or "gutter" in the head of the needle, and at the same time makes a slight depression to indicate the exact spot where the eye is to be drilled. This is a very important and delicate operation, and yet it is accomplished with such marvellous rapidity and precision that one stamper can do 4,000 of these wires in an hour, and this notwithstanding that each one has to be separately placed upon the die. The "gutter" of the eye having been thus produced, the next process is the piercing. This is done by boys with a small hand press, and requires good eyesight and deft hands. By this time the "blanks" begin to assume the shape and appearance of a needle—or, rather, of two needles joined together; but they are black, and not very smooth. To remedy these defects they are subjected to a series of operations known respectively as "spitting," "filing," "hardening," "tempering," "scouring," "blueing," "grinding," and "polishing," after each of which they come out looking brighter and better, and altogether more presentable.

The number of needles consumed in a single year is almost past belief. The annual output of a single factory in Redditch is over 250 millions.

In conclusion, it may be interesting to note that the smallest needle manufactured is used for glove making. It is as fine as a hair, and barely an inch long. The largest is used for stitching the mainsails of our "gallant merchantmen," and bears a strong resemblance to an old-fashioned bayonet.