and the old inn appears to have remained entirely unchanged."

A brief silence ensued, during which Mr. Aston remained apparently buried in mournful thought, from which he was at length aroused by the landlord, who said abruptly—

"I've been thinking, sir, that since you seem to have known so many of the old folk of the village, mayhap you might remember old Matthey Budge—him as was parish clerk and sexton for so many years?"

"Old Matthew Budge? To be sure: I knew the old man well. But he was an old man, in my estimation, when I was a child! You don't mean to tell me that *he*, of all others, is still alive?"

"Old Matthey, sir, is living and hearty; that is, for a man of his years, and he's well-nigh a hunderd year old. He can tell you all you want to know about the old family at the Briers, for he minds things as happened long years ago, better than things as took place last year."

"Is it possible that, at his great age, his faculties are still perfect?"

"Well, sir, the old man's eyesight is some'at dim, and he's a bit deaf; but, speak to him of times gone by, and he brightens up wonderful. I've heard that old Matthey was quite a favourite of old Squire Morton's, sir."

"I must visit the old man. Where does he live?"

"In the same old 'thacked' cottage, sir, as I've heard say he were born in, and his father before him. Squire Morton left in his will as the old man was to live in it, rent free, until the day of his death."

"I must visit the old man," repeated Mr. Aston. "The cottage stands near the common, if I recollect aright?"

"On the common, just beyond the church, sir. You must have passed it to-day, on your way to the Briers?"

"I did; but I little thought old Matthew Budge was still living in the cottage. I will call there to-morrow."

The landlord, growing chatty over the wine, of which he had needed no pressing to share, amused his guest until the hour at which he went to rest came round, with a variety of village gossip relative to the family at Morton Hall, and other resident families of the neighbourhood. When Mr. Aston had gone to his room, and the "Wheatsheaf" was closed for the night, a long discussion took place relative to their guest between the landlord and his wife, who could not make out who the gentleman could be who had evidently known the village and its residents so well of old. They knew the names, not only of the gentry of the neighbourhood, but also of most of their visitors; but the name of Aston was strange to them, and they thought it singular that a gentleman whose name they had never heard mentioned by any of the villagers should have been so familiar with the old family at the Hall. However, the discussion came to nought, and they were obliged to wait for time or chance to explain the mystery.

"OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT."

Who is the mysterious and apparently ubiquitous functionary that figures every morning under the above designation in the columns of the newspaper, few people comparatively have any very definite notion. We accept the information he sends us as though it were a matter of course, and in stirring times we look for it hungrily and devour it eagerly, but are apt to waste little thought upon the painstaking person who devotes himself to the gratification of our curiosity. For the benefit of general readers we shall jot down a few particulars concerning him, from which they may gather in some measure the extent of their obligations to one who, whether he be ignored altogether or justly appreciated, ought to be regarded in the light of a public benefactor. The qualifications of Our Own Correspondent have risen amazingly during the life of the existing generation. We can recall the time when, as regarded the majority of English newspapers, he was a mere myth—a *nominis umbra* perched at the top of a column, but perched nowhere else unless it was on the high stool of the editor's "sub," and giving forth his utterances through the medium of rather questionable translations. All that is changed now. The Own Correspondent of to-day is the best man that can be induced to undertake the arduous duties which devolve upon him, and which, it may be truly said, he can at the best but perform in part. He ought, in the first place, to be a practical politician, versed in the current Continental predicaments and tendencies; he should be a thorough man of the world, endowed with sufficient *savoir-faire* and self-confidence to feel at home in the first society; and he should be energetic and enterprising—capable of instantaneous decision when decision is required of him—fearless of peril on the road or in the battle-field—and ready and fertile of resources in all cases of emergency. Even with all these rare qualities he will be nothing unless he have a faculty of observation rapid and comprehensive enough to seize upon everything that comes in its way, and sufficient volubility with the pen to chronicle all events as they take place, and pourtray all circumstances at once with a fidelity not to be impeached, and sufficient graphic effect to render the perusal of his despatches interesting and agreeable. If he is not of too refined a *morale*, so as to be over-scrupulous in the adoption of means for obtaining information, it may be none the worse for him in the estimation of the news-devouring public. We are not speaking now of the regular correspondent, who, residing constantly in some foreign capital, gleans from the officials of the Government such information as they choose to impart, and as much more as he can; but of him who is the special messenger of the London press, and is ready to start to any quarter of the globe at a moment's notice.

Receiving his instructions from "the management," Our Own sets forth on his journey, well provided with funds, and with numerous letters of introduction to persons in power, who may be able or willing to assist him in his function. He may be despatched incognito to some secret congress or quiet meeting of potentates, great or small, where certain questions of diplomacy are to be discussed in a manner under the rose, but the results of which the London editor has determined, if possible, to make public. In such a case, if the Correspondent were to declare himself he would defeat his own purpose, and, if not sent to the right-about at once, would be so closely watched as to render his success impossible. But he does not declare himself: perhaps he assumes the character of an invalid, perhaps he is a student acquiring the language, or he is an idle traveller making but a temporary sojourn; but in either character, or in any character, he manages to make friends, or to improve his introductions into friendships, and in course of time seeks out the heart of the mystery it was his business to fathom. Or he is despatched to some district on the eve of insurrection, or already in the throes of revolution. He must not think of the danger—he rarely does think of it. If the place is unapproachable

by the ordinary routes, if the roads are stopped by insurgents, or the railways torn up or in hostile hands, he mounts on horseback, and, hiring a guide, dashes across the country to the point of action. This may be the very seat of war; and if it is, so much the better for him, as his despatches will be all the more interesting and valuable. At times of special turmoil he is known to get through an incredible amount of work, being on the alert all day to catch everything worthy of note, and sitting up half the night, or the whole of it, to finish his voluminous despatch in time for the post or the express. All his motions are governed by the management at home; he is too expensive a machine to be allowed to stand idle or to waste his energies on matters of trifling importance. When he has used up one place he gets orders to be off to another. Thus, he may be in Russia one day, shivering almost at zero, and after a brief interval sweltering under the hot sun of Spain or Italy; and a month later he may be bound for India, or on the voyage to China. Wherever he is, unless when on board ship, he has his work to do, and plenty of it, for his despatches will be looked for at home, and must be as regular and frequent as possible. Much that the travelling correspondent writes is lost in its transit homewards; and the wonder is that more is not lost, looking to the rupture of communication incidental to conditions of revolution and warfare.

An "Own Correspondent" who published his autobiography about fifteen years ago, gives some curious particulars as to the means by which information is sometimes gained. Thus, he mentions that at the siege of Milan by the Austrians, the Italians within the walls sent intelligence of everything of import that occurred to their friends without, by means of small balloons, which, wherever they fell, were forwarded to the committee of observation at Novara. The exploits of this adept throw considerable light on the nature of the profession, and some of them are sufficiently instructing as well as amusing. The following may serve as an example. He was sent to the Congress of Töplitz, which was proclaimed to be merely a festive meeting of European sovereigns, but was suspected to be something very different, and he was instructed to leave no means untried to get at the real facts of the case. Arrived at the place, he found himself worn-out with travel, without a friend to appeal to, and unable to speak a word of German. Nothing daunted, by way of executing his important commission he took to his bed, and sent immediately for the royal physician, who spoke English well. The physician could find no symptoms of disease; but the patient complained of cramps, and gave him a double gold Napoleon at every visit, only insisting that the good man should stay with him for a quarter of an hour or so when he came, to be at hand in case the cramps should return. The patient led the unsuspicious doctor into conversation, and, assuming the simplest ignorance, drew him out on one topic after another. By and by the talk turned on Töplitz and the fine company with which it was filled, the patient asking innocently whether the town was always so gay. Surprised that he had heard nothing of the Congress, the doctor plunged into that fertile topic, telling the names of all the royal personages present and expected; what was the ostensible and what the real object of the meeting, and illustrating all he said by references to his illustrious patron the King of Prussia. In this way he talked till he was tired, and then he took his leave, not without his double Napoleon fee, and an appointment to come again to-morrow. "No sooner," says Our Own, "had the doctor's carriage cleared the court-yard, than out of bed I jumped, sat down to my writing-desk, and out of his conversation composed more than one opening letter, in which I took care to say nothing that could compromise him, or reveal the source from which my information came. . . The next day the excellent medical adviser returned, and in the same manner unwittingly supplied me with fresh matter; and as I procured a cicerone at the same time, who knew all the great people and their titles, I felt myself as much at home in forty-eight hours as if I had lived the whole season at Töplitz." Thus it was that the depth of that diplomatic mystery was plumbed, to the immense astonishment and gratification of the politicians of London, who learned suddenly from the columns of the "Morning Herald" facts of the first importance, of which, till then, the editors of all Europe were in profound ignorance. This happened in 1836; the Congress, as some of our readers may recollect, having been summoned by the Emperor of Austria, to consider whether any and what steps should be taken for aiding Don Carlos and Don Miguel against the Quadruple Treaty.

A far more cunning and audacious exploit was achieved in 1848, by the same hand, who was then in the service of the "Times." The Portuguese Chambers had not been called together for three years; but they were now to assemble on a certain Monday, and there was the greatest anxiety prevailing, both in Lisbon and London, to ascertain in what terms the speech from the throne would speak of the home policy of the Government. It happened perversely that the mail-boat, which left for Southampton only once in ten days, would start on the previous Saturday; so that there would be eight days to wait for the next post. This did not suit Our Own, who resolved to send home by the Saturday steamer the unspoken speech of the Monday. He set to work accordingly. By dint of coaxing, and liberal promises, and doubtless the usual etceteras, he won over to his interest certain persons in close attendance upon the Queen. From one he obtained some words of importance agreed to at the council. Armed with these, he was able to persuade another that he was in possession of all that was material in the speech, and that all he wanted now was merely a copy of the exact words. The copy was promised him, but the promiser would not deliver it till half-past three, by which time, as he (or she) knew, the mail-boat must be off, in order to tide it over the bar. But before sailing time Our Own had seen the captain of the steamer, and arranged matters with him. The vessel sailed before three; at half-past three the speech was forthcoming, and in half an hour more was being translated by Our Own himself in the cabin of the steamer, which had awaited him in the offing, and sailed off with its precious missive before six. When it appeared in the "Times" of the following Wednesday, all London set it down as an invention; but, on its arrival in Lisbon on the Sunday, it raised a commotion and hubbub without parallel. The court and the ministers were indignant beyond measure, and the British Legation, dumbfounded, knew not what course to take. Our Own took the matter in his peculiar way, confessing nothing and denying nothing, talking of balloons and air-currents, and hinting at chartering a grampus or the sea-serpent for his next express. They could get nothing out of him but blarney (he was an Irishman), and they had to put up with the grievance.

The use of the electric telegraph, now so general, has much modified the function of the travelling correspondent. Great events are now flashed from country to country in a few words, and we look to the correspondent rather for graphic details and attendant circumstances than for the earliest information concerning

facts of national importance. The Own Correspondent of to-day is far less an impersonality than was his predecessor even of twenty years ago. That change in the literary likings of the public, which is marked by so decided a preference for the objective, has affected even him, and he now writes less as a politician and more as an observant traveller; and, so doing, writes more acceptably to the public. The change has not at all lessened the perils of his vocation. The search after interesting detail leads him to face dangers of every kind. On the theatre of war he will pass hours or days under fire; he will join any expedition, whatever the risk, finding compensation in the material he can collect for perils however great. The advantage of this to the general public requires no pointing out. We do not so much *hear* of the stirring events which take place abroad, as *see* them through the optics of the correspondent. We travel with him on his devious round, and share the excitements of the way; while, knowing everything through his minute and faithful reports, we need not accept his conclusions, because he furnishes us with the means of arriving at our own.

The responsibility of the correspondent has vastly increased of late years, and as one result the post has been filled by men of a higher class. It is recognised that, to a great extent, it is they who furnish the materials for future historians; and it is felt, therefore, that they cannot be too diligent in the collection and verification of facts, or too scrupulous in literal adherence to the truth. The value set upon these communications was illustrated during the Crimean war, by the eagerness with which the despatches of Mr. Russell were expected, and the unabating interest with which they were devoured. No man who sets about writing the history of that war could get on without these documents, which contain living pictures of everything of note that occurred, but which the newspaper correspondent alone chronicled on the spot. The same gentleman, it will be remembered, accompanied the North American army in its campaigns against the South, until he was stupidly dismissed by the commander-in-chief. He was further present at Sadowa, where it may be said he was almost the only man who viewed that tremendous battle in its entirety, and where, with an observation more than lynx-eyed, he took in the details of that famous description which we all remember, and which has since become the basis of the Prussian history of the campaign.

In the matter of correspondence from abroad the illustrated newspapers are often at a double charge, inasmuch as they have to send out a pictorial correspondent as well as a literary one. The artist imperils himself quite as much as the writer, and at times even more, because when he is busy with his sketch he remains a fixture, and is for so long a mark for any keen-eyed rifleman's aim. The late Mr. Julian Portch, a young artist of great promise, used to narrate some striking bits of adventure which were parts of his experience while he was sketching at the siege of Sebastopol for a pictorial paper in London. One day he was in the trenches, getting on with a full-page picture. He sat on his camp-stool, and as he looked down into the besieged city he could watch with his glass the movements of a little man, who, at the head of a party of gunners, directed the charging of a huge mortar, which, every time it was fired, sent a thirteen-inch shell right up into the trenches of the English—a distance of near two miles—the little man always adjusting the piece for the aim, and firing it himself, not without some rather theatrical antics and airs of defiance. When the mortar was fired the men in the trenches would look out for the projectile and mark the direction it took, and, of course, those who were in its vicinity when it was near would betake themselves to the holes and shelters provided for them, and there remain until it had burst and the danger was past. One morning, while busily touching up his work, P. was startled by loud shouts of "Jemmy! Jemmy! Singing Jemmy!" uttered close to his ear. He immediately sprang up, knowing that Singing Jemmy was the monster shell, so called from the hissing noise it made in rushing through the air. In his haste to get out of its way, he rushed, headlong almost, into another man's hole, mistaking it for his own. He had hardly got himself snugly ensconced when the right owner of the refuge rushed at it too. There was barely room for one person, and there was no time to seek another shelter, for Jemmy was singing disagreeably near overhead. The soldier jammed himself close to the artist to shelter as much of his person as possible. Down came Jemmy, and burst with a roar that well-nigh deafened them, and in bursting threw up, together with a volcano of mud, a huge fragment of something which struck the soldier heavily in the back. The poor fellow turned white as a sheet, and then of a livid hue, and would have fallen had not P. caught and supported him. On looking for his mortal wound, however, all the damage that could be discovered was confined to his garments, to which the muddy soil clung in a mass; the fragment which had struck him was nothing more than a portion of the sod torn up by the bursting shell, and which, though it had almost knocked the man's breath out of him, had really done him no injury beyond the momentary, though terrible, fright it had occasioned him. The incident, though treated at the time with some levity, was remembered as a providential escape, and shows well the perils sometimes undergone by "Our Own Correspondent."

SALMON AND TROUT EGG COLLECTING.

BY FRANK BUCKLAND.

I AM happy to find that the new and important science of fish culture is attracting increased public attention in England. I am always pleased to take any opportunity of making the matter better known among my countrymen, and therefore gladly pen the following remarks.

Fish culture is of two kinds. Firstly, it consists in allowing the fish, salmon especially, to have their own way, assisting them over weirs, through mills, and other obstructions, and then preserving them against poachers by means of water-bailiffs and river-watchers while they are making their nests in the small tributaries of the main streams. Secondly, salmon and trout may be cultivated artificially, that is to say, their eggs may be taken from them, and hatched in troughs, in running water, under the superintendence of man.

After many years' careful observation, I have no hesitation in saying that the natural mode of cultivating a river (especially in the case of a salmon river) will be found far to supersede the artificial mode. The latter, nevertheless, is of the greatest possible service when the former cannot be put into execution, and it also enables us to transport large numbers of salmonidæ, packed in the form of vivified eggs, for very long distances, when it would be utterly impossible to convey the living fish themselves. The transport of salmon to Australia is a good case in point.

The eggs of the fish are the hard roe, and each fish carries an amazing quantity of eggs. In the herring, for instance, I find that there are no less than 19,840 eggs;