DICK RODNEY;

Or, The Adventures of An Eton Boy...

BY JAMES GRANT.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Island of Alphonso.

We had some dread of savages, and being totally unarmed, we penetrated inland with more anxiety than pleasure at first; but ere long we became convinced that the island was totally destitute of human inhabitants.

Not a vestige of wigwam or hut, of road or path, not even of the smallest track or trail (save such as the wild goats made) was visible anywhere, and thus we became impressed with new emotions of wonder and awe, in treading a soil where man lived not—where no human foot seemed to have trod and where only the hum of insect life stirred the solitude of that wild island of the South Atlantic.

For a considerable distance we traversed flat ground that was covered with sedge grass, interspersed by shrubs of bright green. Beyond this level plain rose a series of ridges covered by trees, and those ridges formed the first slope of the great mountain, which was some thousand feet in height, and also of the great bluff we had first descried at sea.

We found Alphonso to be the largest of a group of three islands. It is a mass of rock nearly twelve miles in circumference. The other two are cavernous and inaccessible, and every approach to them is dangerous and difficult, in consequence of the foaming of the sea about them, so that during the weary days of our sojourn there we made no attempt to explore them, lest the longboat, in our circumstances a priceless property—might be swamped or dashed to pieces.

Hislop informed me that he had read somewhere that in the month of March, 1506—the same year in which the great Columbus died—two adventurers of Spain or Portugal, named Tristan da Cunha and Alphonso de Albuquerque, sailed for the Indies on a voyage of discovery, with fourteen great caravels.

During this expedition they found three great islands, which they named after Tristan da Cunha, and elsewhere three others, which were named from Alphonso, who, after their fleet had been scattered by a great tempest, sailed through the Mozambique channel. He discovered many sea isles and channels hitherto unknown to the Portuguese or Spaniards and ultimately reached the Indies, of which he became viceroy for Ferdinand the Catholic, and died in 1515, holding that office.

It is very strange that since that remote period no European country has turned these islands to any account, as they do not lie more than fifty leagues from the general track of the shipping bound for the coast of Coromandel or the Chinese seas, and in time of war would form a useful and important rendezvous for a fleet.

They lie exactly in that portion of the wide and mighty ocean where it was fabled and believed a great continent would yet be found.

The three isles of Tristan da Cunha, which lie some hundred miles distant, have now a mixed population of English, Portuguese and mulattoes; and a strong garrison was maintained there during the captivity of the Emperor Napoleon at St. Helena.

Being thus cast away upon a shore so far from the general track of ships we resolved to make preparations for a probable residence of some time—to build a hut wherein to store our provisions, and to use every means for adding to our stock, by angling in the creeks, which seemed to abound with fish, and by hunting in the woods, which teemed with goats and boars running wild; by collecting birds' eggs, as the cliffs seemed to be literally alive with petrels, albatrosses and sea-hens; and all these exertions were the more necessary, as none could foresee the probable length of our sojourn there.

A ship might heave in sight tomorrow; but a year might pass before one came near enough to be attracted by our signs.

We resolved to have a signal-post erected on the mountain top, a beacon-fire prepared, and amid these and many other deliberations the night closed in and found us tolerably contented with our island, and even disposed to be merry over misfortunes that we could not control.

But considerable speculation was excited when Billy Wilkins, the cabin boy, who had been in pursuit of a little kid along the beach, returned to us, dragging after him a long spar which he had found among the layer of shingles, bright shells and dusky weeds deposited by the sea; and on examination this spar proved to be one of the lower studding-sail booms of the Eugenie, and the same which had parted from the brig on the eventful evening of the punishment!

"It is our own property," said Billy, "and may be useful when we have a fire to light."

"Boy Bill, we have a better use for it than burning," said Tattooed Tom; "'tis the mast for our signal-post, already made to hand, and we'll step it on the hilltop tomorrow."

For that night we bivouacked under a large tree, the name and genus of which were alike unknown to us. At times some were conversing, some slept, others lay waking and thinking, with the murmur of the shining sea close by in their ears; and I could see the stars of the Southern Cross shining with wonderful brilliance at the verge of the watery horizon.

The novelty of our situation kept me long awake, and with my head pillowed on a bundle of dry seaweed, with the sail of the long boat spread over us as an impromptu tent and for protection from the dew, I lay in meditation and full of melancholy thoughts ere sleep came upon me, and with it confused dreams of the burning ship, of my secluded home, and of

"—the schoolboy spot,
We long remember, though there long forgot."

Again I was at Eton! Again I saw the smooth green playing-fields alive with ardent schoolboys in the merry summer sunshine, and again I heard the clamor of their young voices and the balls rattling on bat and wickets; again I heard the pleasant green leaves rustle in the old woods of the Tudor times; or again I was in the shady quadrangles where the monotonous hum of many classes poring over their studies stole through the mullioned windows on the ambient air; and in my dreaming ear that "drowsy hum" seemed strangely to mingle with the chafing of the surge upon "th' unnumbered pebbles" of the lonely shore close by.

At last, overcome by weariness, by lassitude and toil, I slept soundly.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

We Build a Hut.

My old tutor at Eton used to say, quoting some "wise saw," that "a lazy boy made a lazy man, just as a crooked sapling makes a crooked tree."

It was fortunate for me, however, while on the island of Alphonso, that my habits were those of activity, and that I was never lymphatic by nature.

After dawn next morning we set about the erection of a hut, though we had no other tools than a small hatchet and our clasphnives. With these we cut or tore down a great number of large branches, and stuck them in the earth, selecting a place where two angles of impending rock conveniently enough formed two solid walls for our edifice, leaving us but two others to erect.

As Tom Lambourne said, "the fellow who cannot use a hammer or ax is only half a man," so we all worked hard with such implements as we had, until our hut was complete.

We left an entrance next the rocks by which to creep in and out, and then thatched or built over the intertwisted branches with turf, torn up by our hands, and with broad plantain leaves, creepers and all kinds of tendrils that had toughness and consistency woven to form a roof.

At the erection of this most primitive wigwam we toiled the whole day, save during the scorching interval at noon, and ere nightfall it was complete, with piles of dried leaves and seagrass for couches and bedroom furniture.

Therein we placed all our provisions—the three bags of bread, two kegs of rum (which, by unanimous consent, were placed under the sole supervision of Hislop), our four casks of water were also brought ashore, though there was no lack of pure springs on the island.

In this wigwam were also placed our blankets, the sails and tackle of the longboat, and then the succeeding days were spent in accumulating provisions (as we looked forward with dread to our last biscuit), and a signal-post was erected on the mountain.

With Probart, the carpenter, and Henry Warren (one of our stoutest hands), Tom Lambourne and I went upon this duty.

Alternately carrying upon our shoulders or dragging in our hands the studding-sail boom, we toiled through wild and untrodden wastes toward the summit of the great and yet nameless conical mountain that rears its lonely scalp to the height of five thousand feet above the waves of the Southern sea.

The hope that on reaching its summit we might descry a sail was an additional incentive to toil up the steep slope without lingering by the way.

On leaving a flat savanna of sedge grass we reached a series of wooded ridges, which form the base of the mountain, at every step rousing clouds of birds, especially a species of blackcock, and twice in the jungle we came upon the lair of wild boars of great size and such ferocity of aspect that we were glad to shrink astern of Tattooed Tom, who carried the hatchet.

This jungle was exceedingly difficult of penetration, owing to its density, the number of wild aloes, with creeping plants, prickly pears and other tropical weeds, of what kind I know not, twined about them, it was a literal wilderness of serrated grass blades, yellow gourds and great squashy pumpkins, like gigantic vegetable marrows, all woven into an inextricable network of leaves, tendrils and branches.

In other places we had to force a passage through thickets of richly flowered shrubs and tall plants, with mighty leaves, the general greenery of the landscape being increased by the many runnels of fine spring water which poured down the fissures of the mountain into the plain we had left.

By the sides of these runnels we frequently paused, and making a cup of a large leaf, filled it with the cool, limpid water that gurgled over the rocks, to quench our constant thirst; and for a time such cups were the only drinking vessels we had while on the island of Alphonso.

At last we gained the summit of the mountain, and with mingled satisfaction and anxiety in our hearts, swept the horizon with eager eyes.

Not a sail was in sight!

Far as our eyesight could reach around us in a mighty circle, rolled the waters of the Southern Atlantic, almost tepid with heat, and pale and white, they seemed to palpitate under the rays of the unclouded sun.

At our feet lay the whole isle of Alphonso and its two rock appendages, with the encircling sea boiling in the narrow chasms between them with a fury which was the result of contrary currents, and which formed a singular contrast to its calmness elsewhere.

After a brief rest we prepared to set up the signal-post.

Tom took off his shirt, and drawing from his pocket a piece of spunyarn, which a seaman is seldom without, he lashed his undergarment to the end of the studding-sail boom, and by the aid of the hatchet and our hands, we scraped a hole sufficiently deep in which to erect the spar, and then jammed it hard and fast with stones. As the shirt was blown out flag fashion upon the wind, we hoped it would prove a sufficient indication to a vessel approaching from any quarter that there were people on the island in want of succor.

For some hours we lingered on the mountain-top, in the fond hope of seeing a sail, and then returned slowly downward to the beach, where our shipmates awaited us at the wigwam which now formed our home, and which we jocularly designated the capital city of Alphonso.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A Wild Boar.

We felt very much the want of firearms. The air seemed alive with birds—the woods with game of several kinds; and now an old musket with a few charges of powder would have proved more useful to us than the treasure of the Bank of England.

Hislop recovered strength rapidly, and his convalescence inspired our little band of castaways with new confidence and vigor, as they had implicit reliance in his superior knowledge and intelligence.

We were never idle; for, unarmed as we were, the task of procuring food for our general store was by no means a sinecure to those who undertook it.

Tom Lambourne and John Burnet, the cook, first brought us a valuable contribution in the shape of a great sealion, which was furnished with a rough and shaggy mane, that added greatly to its terrible aspect, for it was an unwieldly brute, as large as a small-sized cow.

They had fallen in with it when it lay basking on the beach. Burnet courageously attacked it with one of the stretchers of the longboat, and dealt it a severe stroke on the head.

The animal uttered a hoarse grunt and turned upon him open-mouthed, when he thrust the staff down its throat and held it there till Lambourne hewed off the head with his hatchet.

One or two others were afterward dispatched in the same way; but we had to lie long in wait, and could not catch them only by cutting off their retreat to the water.

Their hearts and tongues were considered the best food by the sailors, who broiled them over a fire which we kindled by striking two stones together, and letting the sparks fall upon a heap of dry leaves; and to the discovery of these impromptu flints we were indebted to Ned Carlton.

As for salt, I found plenty of it, baked in the crevices of the rocks upon the beach, where the spray had been dried by the hot sunshine.

(To be continued.)

KAFFIR'S ANTIDOTE.

Which Made Serpent's Venom Harmless.

A road party, comprising the usual gang of from fifty to sixty Kaffirs, was employed, says a writer in the London Spectator, on the construction of a road in the Tugela valley, Natal, about thirty or more years ago. In the course of their work they came upon a huge stone which it was necessary to remove, but beneath it was the home of a large black mamba, well known to the neighboring inhabitants as being old and, therefore, very venomous. The mamba is the most deadly of the South African snakes, and the superintendent anticipated some trouble over that rock. He offered a bribe for the snake's skin, and the gang "wow'd!" and sat down to "bema gwi" (take snuff). But a slim youth sauntered forward and, amid the jeers and protestations of the rest, declared himself equal to the task. He took from his neck what looked like a bit of shriveled stick, chewed it, swallowed some of it, spat out the rest on his hands and proceeded to rub his glistening brown body and limbs all over. Then taking up his stick and chanting a song of defiance he advance with great confidence and swagger to the bowlder. There he roused up the mamba, which, in great fury at being disturbed, bit him in the lip. The boy took no notice of the bite, but broke the snake's back with his stick and, bringing it to his master, asked for his reward, obtaining which he went back to his work, and the bite of the reptile had no effect upon him whatever. No bribe, not even that of a cow (better than any gold in the eyes of a Kaffir) would induce the native to disclose the secret of his antidote, which, he said, had been handed down in his family for generations. The snake was a very long one, and so old that it had a mane. It is a well-known fact that certain of the Zulus have antidotes for the more deadly snake poisons, which they preserve as a secret within their own families.

ENGLISH JOKES FROM RIVAL.

Grocer: "What are you grumbling about? D'ye want the earth?" Customer: "No, not in the sugar."

"Miss Makeup wears her hair just the same as she did ten years ago." Yes, Tom, but not the same hair.

"Is it true that sailors, after becoming quite old, always stop swearing?" Old Salt: "My friend, you'll have to ask some one older than I."

Grocer: "Well, little one, what can I do for you?" Jenny: "Please, sir, mamma says will you change a sovereign for her, an' she'll give you the sovereign tomorrow?"

"Have you broken off your engagement, old man? What's the matter?" "Well, I was hard up, you see, so I quarreled and had all my presents returned, and was able to realize upon them. Couldn't possibly have raised the money any other way."

"Auntie, dear, Mr. Mabe, the artist, has asked me for my photo; he wants to make use of it for his next picture. Ought I to send it to him?" asked Alice. "Yes, you can do so, but be sure to inclose with it a photo of your mother, or some elderly lady. It would be highly improper to send your photo by itself!" exclaimed her aunt.

To Paint California Flowers.

New York Tribune: Paul de Longpre, the well known flower painter, after spending seven years in New York, is transporting both his studio and his entire establishment from West End avenue to Los Angeles, where he proposes to spend the next three years, devoting himself to the portrayal of the beautiful and relatively unknown flora of the Pacific coast. He expects to start next week.

CURRENT TOPICS.

The censorship of the press in Russia is so strict that little is known outside of the empire of the terrible famine that is ravaging and depopulating a large section of the country, except what comes through the correspondents who are more or less cognizant of the actual condition of affairs. From these letters it appears that the famine extends over four large provinces, lying west of the Volga river, inhabited by millions of the peasant population of Russia, and that the suffering and destitution are fully equal to that attendant upon the great famine of 1891 and 1892.

The cause of the present scarcity of food is the same as then—a failure of the crops over a very wide area, which reaches almost to the city of Moscow as its western limit. Within this stricken region the people are supporting themselves upon weeds, acorns and chopped straw; but this insufficiency of food added to the severity of the winter, and the unsanitary conditions under which the peasantry of Russia live, has brought on typhus fever and other similar diseases, which are depopulating whole provinces. It is reported that frequently the entire population of children has been swept off by the hunger, cold and disease acting in unison. The government has made some effort to provide for the people, and has supplied them with seed corn for spring planting, but this has all been used for food. The Russian Red Cross society reports that nearly one-quarter of the people of the districts are unable to obtain any assistance from the government, and must be supplied by private charity or starve.

The Russian government does little for the agricultural interests of the country, although 85 per cent of the population is engaged in tilling the soil. The expenditures for agriculture amount to only $22,500,000 annually, while the cost of the army and navy is $260,000,000. In India $38,000,000 is expended for irrigation purposes alone, as the best means for preventing future famines. Such is the difference in methods between the Russian and British governments.

Col. Alexander S. Bacon in a late number of the Forum discusses the question, "Is Our Army Degenerate?" with a good deal of freedom. He says "the personnel of the rank and file is superb. The younger and middle-aged officers positively have no superiors." This being the case, he proceeds to tell why "in the war of 1898 our army developed little but scandal." This is his explanation: "In the army, with the exception of the engineer and ordnance corps, which were headed by West Point graduates, every head of department at the beginning of the war with Spain was a non-graduate, all of the six brigadier-generals were non-graduates, and of the three major-generals only one was a graduate." In view of these astonishing facts, Col. Bacon asks: "Why does the government spend a fortune in the education of each of its military architects, and, when he offers his services in time of war, ignore him and take up inexperienced 'fathers' sons' instead? It is politics, not war."

While the people have understood that many unpleasant complications arose from the appointment of inexperienced men, they are not prepared for so positive a declaration as Col. Bacon makes when he says that "there were hundreds of West Point graduates with wide experience in the army and national guard who tendered their services time and time again, but were ignored because they were not backed by a political boss," and yet sons of Harrison, Blaine and Logan held positions that should have been filled by men long experienced and thoroughly disciplined in army details and service.

Col. Bacon declares that "no one should be permitted to hold the position of general or colonel, or to serve in any division or brigade staff in the regular army unless he be a graduate of the military academy or has shown special fitness during years of army service and has passed a rigid examination in strategy, tactics, logistics and military engineering at least—the foundation stones of military learning."

The Venezuelan dispute with Great Britain that during Mr. Cleveland's administration so deeply excited the American people has become an almost forgotten incident. As soon as we carried our point and forced the British government to arbitrate its difficulty with our South American neighbor, the affair ceased to be of interest, and yet it is not settled, nor is our connection with it terminated. The commissioners have now been appointed, and they will meet in Paris the last of May.

The English commissioners are Lord Russel, lord chief justice of England, and Justice Collins. (Both of these gentlemen are Irishmen.) The Venezuelan commissioners are Chief Justice Fuller and Justice Brewer of the United States Supreme court. The fifth member of the board is Prof. Martaens of the University of St. Petersburg, Russia. The counsel for Venezuela is ex-President Harrison, who will be assisted by other noted American lawyers.

The British Empire.

The British empire is now a territory of 11,500,000 square miles, or 13,000,000 if we include Egypt and the Soudan; and in this territory there is a population of about 407,000,000, or of over 420,000,000 if Egypt and the Soudan are included—a population about one-fourth of the whole population of the earth. Of this population about 59,000,000 are of English speech and race, the ruling race in the United Kingdom, in British North America, and in Australasia; and the remaining 350,000,000 to 370,000,000 are the various subject races, for the most part in India and Africa the proportion of the governing to the subject races being about one-eighth. The increase in area and population in this empire, excluding Egypt and the Soudan, amounts since 1871 to 2,854,000 square miles of area, or more than one-fourth of the whole, and to 125,000,000 of population, which is also more than one-fourth of the whole. The increase of the ruling race included in this population amounts to about 12,500,000, or about one-fourth of the number in 1897; and the increase in the subject races is 112,000,000, or nearly one-third the number in 1897. This increase is largely due to annexation. The existing revenue of the different parts of this empire added together amounts to £257,653,000, and the imports and exports to £1,375,000,000. The increase since 1871 is £115,143,000 for revenue, or more than 40 per cent of the present total, while the increase in imports and exports is £428,000,000, or about one-third of the present total.—The Spectator.

HIS BRAVERY

Was Located in His Teeth at Bull Run.

"It was a toothache," said the old veteran, "that won me a reputation for daring at the battle of Bull Run. That was the only fight I was ever in where I didn't wish I could find a hole to crawl into. All this talk about coolness on the eve of battle is tommy rot, invented by people who have never been there or old soldiers whose tongues get away from their memories. Our men and officers were as brave as any in the war, and made good records, but they all had the ague and longed for sick leave just about the time the bullets began to fly. But I had the toothache for two days before that battle, and if there is an aggravation on earth that will make a man want to bat his best friend in the face that is it.

"On the night before the fight I did not sleep a wink. The old tooth got to jumping like a goat, and I couldn't have suffered more from an amputated leg. I was also furiously mad. I felt I'd either got to bolt for the rear in search of relief or encourage some rebel to put a ball through my head.

"We'd been waiting in battle line for hour, and the boys had grown white and were all choked up. I had been entirely occupied with that old tooth, and the first thing I knew of the fight was on. We were holding them in check, but that didn't suffice me. As I got hold of my gun and pulled the handkerchief off my jaw I yelled out for the boys to follow, and we struck a whole brigade and whirled it around and sent it back half a mile. Lord, sir, but I felt that I could lick the whole of Lee's army for an hour or two! They told me that I yelled and cheered and dodged death a thousand times, but I remember nothing but the jumps of that tooth. When they stopped, or for what particular reason, I could never say, but after a couple of hours I came to myself, as it were, and was being complimented on all sides and the jumps had ceased."

Flashless Rapid-Fire Guns.

It is reported that the new French rapid-fire gun invented by Col. Humbert gives no fish or sign of fire. If this be true, the French have made an advance in artillery second only in importance to that which marked the introduction by them of smokeless powder. In the operations around Santiago, the only means by which the Americans could locate the position of an enemy's piece was the flash. If this should be removed the art of war, especially on land, will become more difficult than ever, for a masked battery of smokeless and flashless guns would be positively undiscoverable. The only description of the gun that has come to hand is rather obscure; but it would seem that an attempt is made to cool the larger portion of the gases below their flash point before they are allowed to reach the open air. The rate of fire has reached a maximum of twenty shots per minute. To accommodate the increased expenditure of ammunition it is proposed to reduce a single battery from five to four guns and increase the number of ammunition wagons.

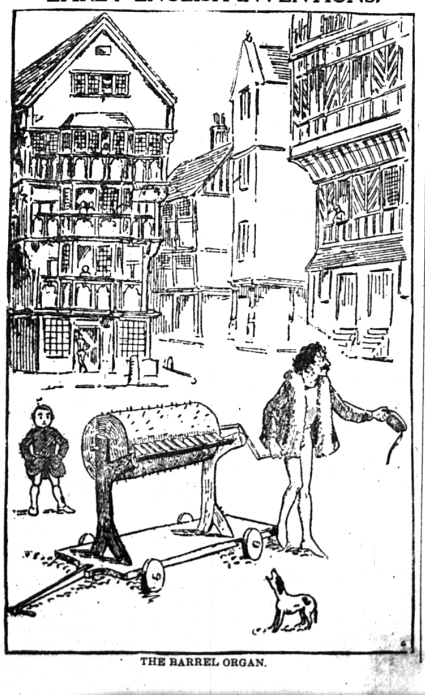
Plain Enough.

"Uncle James," said a young lady who was spending a few days in the country, "is that chicken by the gate a Brahmin?" "No," replied Uncle James, "he's a Leghorn." "Why, of course, to be sure!" said the young lady. "How stupid of me! I can see two horns on his ankles."

When He Doesn't Know It.

When he talks in his sleep is about the only time a man can get his wife's absorbed, undivided attention.

EARLY ENGLISH INVENTIONS.



THE BARREL ORGAN.

OUR BUDGET OF FUN.

SOME GOOD JOKES, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

A Variety of Jokes—Gibes and Ironies, Original and Selected—Flotsam and Jetsam from the Tide of Humor—Witty Sayings.

How an Error Helped.

Jim was broke. However, he managed to reach Vancouver, and, walking into the headquarters offices of the Canadian Pacific, said to the manager in charge: "I am Jim Wardner and I am an old friend of Tom Shaughnessy, the general superintendent. Will you wire him and tell him that I am here, broke, and want transportation to Montreal?"

Back came the reply: "Don't let Jim walk." He got the transportation, and arriving at Montreal called at once to thank his friend. "Well, well, Jim, is this really you?" "Then, with a twinkle of the eye: "How under the heavens did you get here so soon if you were broke?"

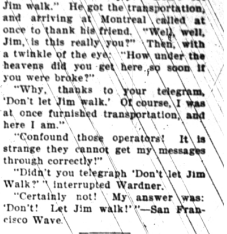
"Why, thanks to your telegram, 'Don't let Jim walk.' Of course, I was at once furnished transportation, and here I am."

"Confound those operators! It is strange they cannot get my messages through correctly!"

"Didn't you telegraph 'Don't let Jim Walk?'" interrupted Wardner.

"Certainly not! My answer was: 'Don't! Let Jim walk!'"—San Francisco Wave.

A Difference.



Nurse—"Now, Miss Effie, you must be very kind to your sister's little baby and love her very much."

Effie (much hurt)—"No, I won't. It's too bad. Father calls baby his blessed grandchild, and only calls me his little Effie. Why, I'm five times the size of that mite!"—Judy.

Dewey Will Do the Rest.

"That naval officer thinks he knows it all, doesn't he?" said the German emperor.

"His conduct certainly warrants the suspicion, your majesty."

"He's getting haughty and imagines that he can have his own way whenever and wherever he pleases."

"It certainly looks that way."

"Well, I don't want to hurt his feelings personally, but we'd better do something to hold down his overbearing pride. I guess I'll put him in charge of one of our warships and send him to Manila."—Washington Evening Star.

Explain with a Mallet and Chisel.

Fweddy—Is that your cat, Miss Gwacie? She—Yes; we call him Boomerang. Isn't that a funny name for him? Fweddy—Yes. Haw! haw! Er—aw—why do you call him that, Miss Gwacie?—Chicago Tribune.

Miles Away from It.

"As regards this matter of army-beef," remarked the man with the shoulder straps, "I consider it a dead issue." "But it isn't embalmed!" fiercely interrupted the man from the stock yards.—Chicago Tribune.

Forewarned.

"When my typewriter girl went away what do you think?" Well—what?" "She left a note for the new girl telling her I was mighty shaky on the use of 'shall and 'will' "—Chicago Record.

Aftermath.

"You married me for my money."

"What of it? You married me for my beauty."

"Well, both securities have depreciated."—Life.

A Prophet in His Own Country.

Slyvia—"I wonder whether he'll be a soldier or a sailor?"

Mamma—"Wouldn't you like him to be an artist, like papa?"

Sylvia—"Oh, one in the family's quite enough!"—Tit-Bits.

Wish.

"Do you think plagiarism is unforgivable?" asked the young woman.

"By no means," answered the man who poses as a severe critic. "I only wish some of our modern writers would do more of it."—Washington Star.

His Wife's Gift.

He beamed in joyful ecstasy
O'er a hundred dollar gift,
Till from his purse he found there'd been
A hundred dollar "lift."

—Judge.