

DIABOLO AND THE DUKE.

Miss van Busker stood poised on the doorstep.

"Is that how you play the thing anyway?" she said, holding the diabolo sticks awkwardly but with an indescribably bewitching air.

We were all a little bit jealous of Miss van Busker, I think. She had arrived last night before with three monster trunks, four large hat boxes, a poodle and a very French maid.

An extremely smart "shoot" was assembled at the Towers, but Miss van Busker seemed to take the shine out of the rest of us when she came down to dinner in pale pink velvet and not an ornament of any description on her alabaster neck and shoulders.

However, as I was saying, Miss van Busker stood on the doorstep with diabolo sticks in her hand.

The guns were going to shoot at ten, and everyone knows how fussy men are just before they start, but Miss van Busker actually responded to Miss van Busker's challenge.

"I'll show you," they exclaimed, but the Duke of Derry didn't pretend to hear and went on wiping his gun or whatever it is men do.

"I won't bother now," Miss van Busker said slowly, and presently the guns drove away in the big brake to the home covert.

We all knitted stocks by the fire in the morning and exchanged confidences in our rooms after lunch.

Miss van Busker was as bright as well, as bright as one can be all day, though Lady Jane said it was much too damp for us to lunch.

"They were playing Diabolo in the hall," she said, and we stayed in until tea time. Miss van Busker came down to tea in a clinging white crepe de chine and looked quite lovely.

"She's beautifully turned-out and all that," pretty Lady Hildegarde St. Helens said to me as she landed me the toast, "but she's no charm, has she?"

"Oh, I don't know," I said doubtfully. "I think she has."

The men came in just then, and first one and then the other went over and talked to Miss van Busker, except the duke, who sat by his sister and told us of the day's sport.

The Duke of Derry was young, not married, and as everyone knows, quite poor: "stony" is his own expression, so most of the girls treated him as a sort of brother.

After tea, I don't know how it happened, but Miss van Busker sat reading a paper, and when the men went off into the smoking room, the duke, who had to pass her chair, stopped and presently sat down by her side.

"No, I'm not a whale at games," I heard her say, and a little later she and the duke disappeared. When I went up shortly afterwards to get a book that I had left in my room and that I really wanted, they were playing diabolo in the hall, or rather Miss van Busker was looking on and the duke was holding the sticks.

"This way, d'you see?" he was saying very earnestly, as I passed.

"My now if that ain't too cunning," Miss van Busker said in her pretty nasal twang that seems to get worse the longer she stays in England. (She'd hardly any accent when Lady Bulstrode began taking her out last season.)

That evening when we had been given our candlesticks and were going to our rooms, Miss van Busker followed me.

"Now, may I come in a moment?" she said in her girlish way that is very appealing.

"Oh, do," I said, though I was very sleepy.

Miss van Busker went over to the fire and placed a marvellously small foot on the fender.

"My! ain't this the room Henry III. slept in before the battle of Lewes?"

"Oh, is it?" I said with some confusion, "perhaps it is."

Miss van Busker looked at me meditatively. "You British are queer," she said. "But if you will pardon me I don't think you're one mite British. No," she continued, "I kind of feel a confidence in you; the others here are what I call pretty nosey."

I had known Miss van Busker all the summer, and I gathered her now to mean that the house party struck her as "stuck up."

"They don't mean anything," I murmured.

But Miss van Busker was not listening, she was gazing into the coals.

"I got to get engaged to a duke," she said suddenly, "all my girl friends were when they came home from Europe, and I don't intend to be left on the mat."

"Indeed," I murmured rather lamely.

"I don't know about marrying."

Miss van Busker looked plausibly at me. "I'll see about that another day," she said, holding the diabolo sticks and the girls' lurching air. "But is that quite fair?" I murmured once again, "and—and are you sure you can?"

"Fair? Why, I reckon most young men have a pretty useful amount of horse sense," Miss van Busker replied. "I don't worry any about them. And I s'pose most of us can get what we feel we want."

We both stared into the fire. It seemed a simple and cheerful philosophy.

"Diabolo's a great game," Miss van Busker added, irrelevantly. "You're learning it, aren't you?" I asked, beginning to take the diabolo sticks out of my hair.

"Yes, I'm learning," Miss van Busker laughed, and when she laughs in the firelight there is a gleam of what looks like fine pearls.

Miss van Busker said some very pretty things to me; she's certainly very attractive and we said good night in the friendliest way.

The next day the men were to shoot the great splaney; it was the big day of the week, and every one was what Miss van Busker called well on time, every one except the duke.

"We can't wait for old Stony," the men agreed after breakfast, and various expeditions to the bachelor quarters drew blank; the duke sent down to say he had strained a muscle and couldn't go out.

A big oak gallery runs round the hall at the Towers, and my room was off the gallery. I do not know that I was surprised when I opened my door to see a diabolo spool shoot up past me and fall back with a loud crash to the hall floor.

"My! a babe in arms would do it better," I heard Miss van Busker say with great apparent veneration.

When I descended the big staircase a moment later Miss van Busker, and, of course, the duke, who seemed quite well, were resting on the big oak seat with the high back.

Miss van Busker held the diabolo sticks and the duke was twirling the spool in his hands and looking at Miss van Busker.

All that day and the next Miss van Busker learned diabolo.

"I don't get on one mite," she would answer when questioned; and the other men gave up all claim to teaching her.

Our main staple of conversation became Miss van Busker's progress in the game.

On the fourth day she had improved slightly; the duke had declared the long gallery a better place for learning, and poor Lady Jane who did not want to stand in his way, asked them to be very careful.

But when I went through by mistake, the diabolo lay on the "Two people occupied ground and the tall oak seat," they were looking at the pictures. At tea that afternoon the post came in.

"I've got a lot of snapshots from Greenhays," Lady Hildegarde said suddenly, and looked at Miss van Busker.

Coralie flushed the slightest, prettiest pink, but she finished her tea, and then got up and went into the hall.

Little Lady Hildegarde handed me the snapshots. "Bertie sent them," she said briefly. "Miss van Busker was staying there. She seems to forget—games," she added wickedly.

In quite six out of the dozen or more photographs, Miss van Busker, I regret to say, appeared playing diabolo with the most finished grace.

She was depicted in the act of catching and throwing the spool with the precision of an expert.

Lady Hildegarde laughed. "What would Stony say?" she murmured. But her brother had followed Miss van Busker from the room.

I happened to pass through the hall not long after. Two people occupied the tall oak seat under the palms.

"Why, yes," I couldn't help hearing a drawing murmur as I hurried by. "I guess I knew it all the time pretty well. But I kind of thought you'd like to teach me—didn't you?"

But I shut my door upstairs upon the answer.

East and West of Fiji.

East of Fiji life is one long lotus eating dream, stirred only by occasional parties of pleasure, feasting, love making, dancing and a very little gardening work. Music is the soul of the people, beauty of face and movement is more the rule than the exception, and friendliness to strangers is carried almost to excess.

Westward of the Fiji lie the dark, wicked cannibal groups of the Solomons, Banks and New Hebrides, where life is more like a nightmare than a dream; murder stalks openly in broad daylight, people are nearer to monkeys than human beings in aspect, and music and dancing are little practiced and in the rudest possible state.—National Geographic Magazine.

High heels, it is said, owe their origin to Persia, where they were introduced to raise the feet from the punting sand.

As a rule there's nothing in a name—but sometimes everything in it. It is in the wife's name.

FOODSTUFFS, BUT THE HAPPINESS.

People of Naples May Be Half Starving. Yet Ready to Dance and Sing.

It is estimated that a quarter of a million people in Naples live from hand to mouth, and there are hundreds of children who subsist out of the garbage boxes and who sleep in churches and on doorsteps.

The taxes in Italy to provide warships and to keep the nation on a war footing with the other powers are really stupendous. There is a tax on everything, says the Dellatore, grain in the field, fruit on the vine, old bottles. Fuel and food stuffs are very dear—only labor is cheap.

For the very poor, meat is a luxury unheard of, and even macaroni is too dear to be indulged in often. There are any number of parambulating street kitchens, where various kinds of soup, cakes and fruit are sold in portions costing one cent. And yet these people seem very happy.

Bands of musicians are always playing in the streets; the guitar and mandolin are to be heard everywhere—on the boats in the hotels and the stranger is lulled to sleep by a soft serenade under his balcony.

The story teller thrives in Naples, as there are so many idlers there. He collects a little crowd around him and proceeds in the most dramatic way, gesticulating wildly and working his face into the most excruciating expressions, to relate stories of adventure or other events, much to the edification of his hearers, who, to show their appreciation, are often betrayed into giving a son which might have been better spent for bread or polenta.

The public letter-writer is another street dignitary of importance, and in great demand, especially with timid and burked maids of all work, who have themselves neglected to learn the art of writing. Of such the public letter-writer holds all the secrets of their lives and is often their adviser as well as amanuensis.

Wind and Fish.

A singular correspondence has lately been brought to light between the prevailing direction of the wind on the coast of New South Wales and the average catch of fish. The winds influence the ocean currents, which in turn influence the course of the fish. These influences have been noted for three or four years. Thus in 1898 there was a general scarcity of fish, but afterward they became more and more abundant up to 1901.

In 1905 there was another scarcity of fish, but the next year they began to return in increasing numbers. The cause of these variations was a mystery until the coincidence with the prevailing direction of the coastal winds was noticed. Now it is thought that by the study of the winds the prospects of the fishermen may be predicted two or three years in advance.—Youth's Companion.

A Snake Bite Knife.

The British government has been actively fighting snakes in India for a dozen years or more, and still these reptiles kill many thousand natives annually. Sir Lander Brunton, a little while ago, devised a neat pocket instrument for handy use in case of snake bite, and the Indian government has decided to distribute the apparatus widely among the natives. It consists of a small knife in the handle of which is a cavity.

This is kept filled with permanganate of potash, a powerful antiseptic and caustic. When a person is bitten he immediately cuts the wound open widely, and rubs the permanganate upon the raw surface. If the bite is in the extremities, and this operation is performed without delay, the treatment is very effective.

When the Blackster is Most Zealous.

"I never buy anything," from a blackster who makes a great outcry about his stuff or seems very anxious to sell," says a South End housekeeper, "for the chances are ten to one that there is something the matter with whatever he has to sell."

When two men with one wagon come up the street roaring, "apologies so they can be heard for four or five blocks, I know that some cold storage man has a big stock on hand, and I know that condition of the apples as well as the cold storage man's hence their zeal and energy to get rid of their stock."—St. Louis Globe Democrat.

The Chre-All.

Are you fat? Walk.

Are you thin? Walk.

Are you nervous? Walk.

Have you no appetite? Walk.

Or do you gormandize? Walk.

Have you lost interest in life? Walk.

Maybe your poor stomach won't work. Walk.

Or perhaps your liver has gone on a strike. Walk.

Cupid may have put a kink in your suffering heart. Walk.

In short, walking seems to be the remedy for all ills, save, perhaps, broken legs.

Room Enough for All.

The national Government authority on milk says that there are 35,000,000 microbes in every cubic centimetre of the latest fluid. If we accept this statement as one of fact, why should we continue to pretend against overcrowding in the subway cars.—N. Y. Press.

As a rule there's nothing in a name—but sometimes everything in it. It is in the wife's name.

CATCHING FISH IN BARRIERS.

An Easy Method Which Obtained Around the Bay of Fundy.

The Bay of Fundy has always been a famous fishing ground, especially for salmon and mackerel. Fifty years ago the fish were so plentiful that a method was used to catch them which seems odd nowadays when a fish has at least half a chance to escape the hook or the net.

The tide runs high in the Bay of Fundy and its headwaters, and of this fact the fishermen of fifty years ago took full advantage. At high tide the water makes stable rivers of day streams. Large schools of mackerel and other fish in these days came up the river with the tide.

The method of catching them was simple in the extreme. At low tide a seine would be staked to the river bed and the top of the seine weighted to the bottom with lead. Then after the tide had risen the fishermen would pull up the seine so that it formed a barrier across the entire river bed.

When the tide began to run out the fish would find their return to the sea and freedom barred effectively. The little fellows, of course, would make their way through the seine, but the ones worth catching would stop impotently against the meshes.

Soon the tide would be out completely, leaving only a foot of water in the river. Several thousand fish would be there for the taking. A pair of rubber boots and a basket would be sufficient equipment for the fishermen, who waded out and gathered them in wholesale.

The fish don't run up the rivers any more, and the seining must be done in the bay itself. This is profitable, it is true, but a fish with half a head can avoid capture for a long time.

Iron Cases for Exercise.

Among fashionable accessories of the masculine costume the very newest item is the iron case. It weighs possibly seven and a half pounds, and it is intended as an exerciser.

For the business man who has little time for chest weights, dumbbells and all the other devices for keeping himself in trim the case may prove a boon. It can be used as one walks in the open air, and consequently is the city man's nearest substitute for the natural exercise which comes from outdoor sports. While walking along the case may be swung first in one hand and then in the other, so that development will be uniform.

So if men of somewhat portly build or of faded overworked complexion or otherwise afflicted with the signs of city confinement and lack of exercise are observed during the next few months promenading the city streets and gracefully lighting stilly swinging cases after the manner of major domos, the spectacle will not be caused by a sudden attack of springtime gaiety. It will simply be the man with the iron case out for his daily stroll.

Coffee, the Inspire.

The Italian composer, Donizetti, courted inspiration by a means which proved so injurious that it caused the premature decay of his faculties. He was accustomed to shut himself in his room with a quantity of music paper, pens, and ink, and three or four pots of strong coffee. He would then begin to write and drink, and when the supply of coffee was exhausted, he would order more, and continue to drink as long as he wrote.

He asserted that the coffee was necessary for his inspiration. The result of this pernicious habit was a yellow, parchment-like complexion, with lips almost jet black, and a nervous system, which soon caused his breakdown and death.

An Odd Test for the Postal Service.

Postal officials say that the most baffling test ever made of the safety of Uncle Sam's mail service was the experiment tried by a Western man.

He pasted on one side of a silver dollar a bit of paper on which he wrote his son's address in another city. On the other side he affixed a one-cent stamp, sending the coin at merchandise rates.

The sender received a letter two days later from his son acknowledging the receipt of the dollar.

The test was, it is stated, the result of a dispute the sender had with a foreigner who doubted the American's assertion of the safety of the United States mails.

Modern Boats.

While waiting for the Mauretians to come down the Tyne, the following conversation was heard between two miners:

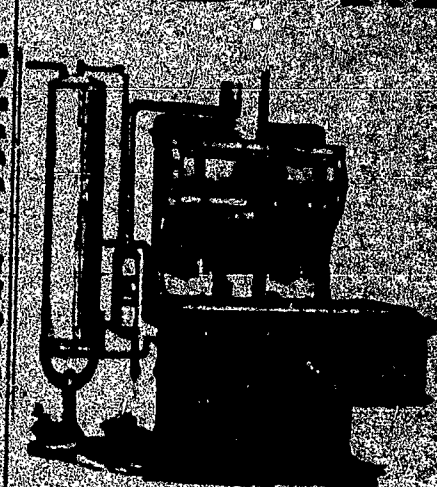
"They tell me, George, she's an awful big ship; she burns 13,000 tons of coal a day!"

"Ay!" says George, "and I'll tell you another thing: The Armeses go about the stockhold in motor cars, and when they want to get on deck they come up in balloons."—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Asleep for Three and a Half Years.

An astonishing trance case has come to light in Berlin. A clerk aged forty-six—a healthy, normal man—suddenly fell asleep in June 1904. All efforts to awaken him were unsuccessful and he was placed in bed, where he is still. The sleep, it is said, has never opened his eyes. He breathes normally and swallows his food unconsciously, but is insensible to the most powerful of drugs.—London Standard.

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