

ALFRED and ROYAL WINCHESTER.

By HENRY WINTER.

THE recent Millenary of King Alfred has revived public interest in this ancient city, whose earliest history may almost be said to have been the history of the nation. It was founded long before the Christian era, and was in the time of the Ancient Britons, the most important city in the country.

The whole place is rich in historic connections. It was occupied in succession by the Iberians, Britons, Belgians, Romans, Saxons and Normans. Where the present cathedral now stands was a Saxon minster in which Egbert was crowned the first king of all the English.

A meadow—"Danemark Mede"—near the city is still pointed out as the scene of a terrific encounter between Guy, Earl of Warwick and the Danish giant Colbrand. In the reign of Athelstan the Danes were trying to reduce Winchester, and agreed to settle the matter between two champions, one from either side. The terrible duel ended in favour of Guy, and the Danes withdrew. From a turret in the north wall which is called "Athelstan's Chair" the king is said to have been an interested spectator of the fight.

King Alfred was born at Wantage, but he spent much of his time at Winchester, where after finally defeating the Danes with terrible slaughter at Heddington in Wiltshire he settled down. Many stories are told of him during the period when the Danes held the upper hand, but whether they are true or not is a moot point. About the name of such a

man traditions were certain to cluster thickly.

There is no doubt however that to his capital city of Winchester he was a great benefactor. He enlarged, and partly rebuilt it; he drew within its walls the sages of many lands; he founded a school and monas-

tory, and made the city the headquarters of all that was good in the arts of war and peace.

"It was from Winchester," says the learned Dean Kitchin, "that Alfred set in motion his many plans for the benefit of his people. Here he issued the West-Saxon 'laga,' the new code of Wessex law, the often mentioned Domboc or book of laws; here, too, he is said to have made some fresh distribution of land, and perhaps rearranged the counties and hundreds. Moreover, he is said to have collected at Winchester from every quarter,

which he embodied in a first 'Liber de Winton,' the earliest Domesday Book. This register, it is recorded, was kept among the royal archives at Winchester, until rendered useless as men thought by William's more complete Royal Roll, it was lost or destroyed."

But, lover of peace and education as Alfred was, he lived in an age when only the strong arm could protect the liberty of his people. The Danes were fierce foes, and to keep them at bay Alfred needed stout vessels. He was a good ship-builder, and his vessels were more than a match for those of the Danes. Four years before his death he destroyed a Danish fleet in the Solent Sea, and carrying the crews to Winchester, promptly hanged them from the walls of Wolvesey Castle.



After that memorable event the long-haired pirates gave a wide berth to the English Channel.

In 901 the famous king met an enemy more grim than any he had before encountered. Death slew him at Wilton in the twenty-eighth year of his reign, and he was buried in the Saxon Minster of that town. He was not fated to remain there long.

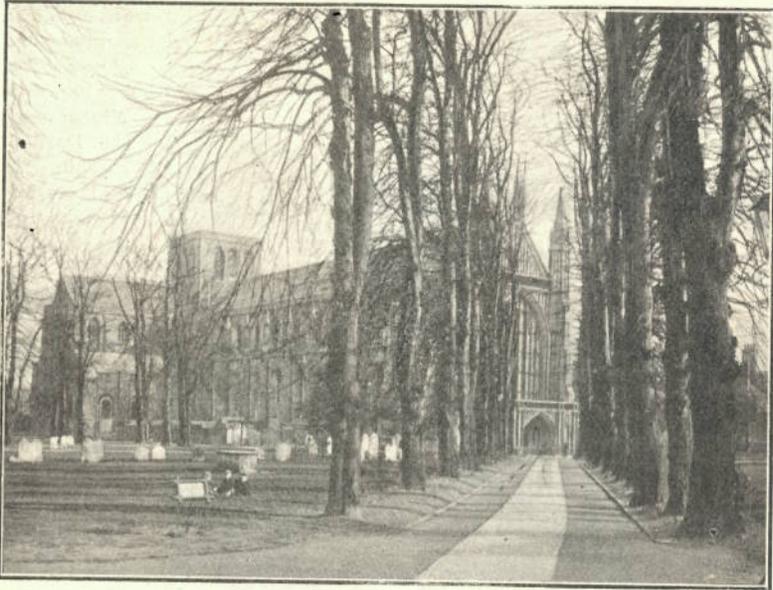
After a time his remains were transferred to the grand Old Minster at Winchester, and in the next king's reign to the New Minster, then being built from his own designs.

Here they were left in peace for two centuries, but when the New Minster was taken down in 1112, Alfred's bones were

king; the late Queen Victoria gave her valuable help, and a powerful Committee was formed to make the affair thoroughly successful.

The commemoration took the form of a fine statue of Alfred in bronze, the work of Mr. Hamo Thornycroft, R.A. The statue as can be judged by our illustration at the beginning of this article is a splendid and artistic piece of work. The figure of the king is nearly eighteen feet high. In the right hand is a cross-hilted sword; the left hand holds a Saxon shield, while the mantle thrown back reveals a sturdy and well-proportioned figure.

The sculptor has made a fine handsome face; the beard is long and wavy; so is the



WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL, EXTERIOR.

moved to Hyde Abbey of which only a small portion now remains. What finally became of them, or where they are now we do not really know. There is a story to the effect that they were found in an old coffin between thirty and forty years ago, but the real truth is never likely to be known.

The Millenary of King Alfred was felt by many people to be a suitable opportunity for doing honour to the memory of one of our greatest sovereigns. The people of Winchester with their Mayor, Mr. Bowker, exerted themselves to make the celebration truly national.

Subscriptions were opened, men of influence joined the movement, which spread even to the United States, for our cousins across the water are justly proud of our great Saxon

hair, and on the king's head is a Saxon helmet. Altogether it is a noble monument of our ancient law-giver.

The statue was unveiled on September 20th, 1901, by Lord Rosebery in a memorable speech, but much interest attaches to the proceedings of the two preceding days. Many visitors had flocked to the city and they were taken to see the various objects of interest, such as the ancient West Gate, the only one left; the Castle Hall, the home of the early English Parliaments; and Hyde Abbey, the final resting place of the Saxon king. Of the abbey little remains now but a few old barns and farm buildings.

A visit was also paid to the cathedral, the pride of Winchester. Although considerably altered it owes its origin to Bishop Walkelin,

and the transepts remain practically unchanged from his day.

This magnificent structure probably stands on the site of the oldest Christian place of worship in this part of England, on the very spot from which the earliest missionaries from Rome first of all preached Christianity to Englishmen. All the stone was brought from Quarr in the Isle of Wight, and an interesting story is told of how the wood for roofing the nave was obtained.

It is said that William the Conqueror offered Walkelin as many trees in Hempage Wood, as he could fell in three days. The worthy bishop immediately set to work to collect an army of carpenters, and so industriously did they work that in three days the whole wood was swept clean, the only tree left being the "Gospel Oak" under which according to tradition, St. Augustine preached. The splendid timber thus won for the building of the Cathedral may be seen in the nave roof above Wykeham's stone groining, and it is as sound and strong to-day as when it was placed there nine centuries ago.

Another place of great historical interest visited was Wolvesey Castle, where the old palace of the Saxon kings once stood. This spot has the very closest associations with the memory of Alfred the Great.

To quote again from Dean Kitchin.—"It is a source of legitimate pride for Winchester, that within her walls Alfred made this first and greatest history-book of the English people (his Chronicle). At Wolvesey Castle, with the help of the brethren of St. Swithun's Convent, the earlier part of the book was compiled and copied."

The ruins seen at Wolvesey to-day are not those of Alfred's Castle, at least to any great extent. In 1129 Henry de Blois, brother of Stephen, afterwards King of England, was made Bishop of Winchester. It was a wild time and the new bishop speedily converted Wolvesey Castle into a strong and massive fortress.

In the Civil War between Stephen and Matilda, Henry of Blois took a prominent part, siding sometimes with one rival, sometimes

with the other. Winchester suffered terribly.

"From the high tower at Wolvesey burning missiles were hurled into the north-eastern parts of the city. The huts which then lined Colebrook Street were probably the first to blaze up; the venerable "Nunnamenstre," lying between that lane and High Street, was soon burnt to the ground. The wind carried the flames across the broad High Street, and the northern quarters were soon ablaze. Not even did the walls arrest the ruin; the stately buildings of Hyde Abbey were burnt and ruined."



WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL, THE NAVE.

Most of Winchester indeed lay in ashes. Twenty Churches and two Minsters were destroyed, and the people were homeless. It was not until Henry II. had firmly established himself on the throne, that the city was rebuilt. Wolvesey Castle was dismantled and afterwards became the residence of the Bishops of Winchester. The ruins of the castle shown in our illustration are surrounded by a stone wall, a portion of which belongs to Saxon times, and indeed formed part of the old Saxon palace. Altogether, Wolvesey is very rich in historical associations which we

have not space to set forth here, but its greatest interest most surely lies in the fact that it is the birthplace of Alfred's *Chronicle*, "that mother of the English literary language."

The Millenary celebrations were brought to a close on September 21st, 1901, by a series of popular rejoicings, but on these there is no need to dwell.

Perhaps it may be as well before bringing this article to an end, to take a last fleeting glimpse at this man, whom a nation honours

the foundation of our Navy. As a king he made wise laws, set them on a firm basis, and saw that they were obeyed. As a teacher he fully understood the value of education, and tried hard to impress it on his subjects. As an author he wrote the first prose book in the English tongue, and showed how to clothe the dry bones of history with the warm, living flesh of human interest.

"Let every youth abide at his books till he can understand the English tongue."

A good phrase that, from the writings of



WOLFESEY PALACE RUINS.

after he has been dead a thousand years. There can be few such characters in history since the world began.

Many of the stories told of him are no doubt due to the efforts of a vigorous imagination, while the glamour of age and tradition has cast a mantle of romance about him. Yet there is enough of reality to show that he was a really great man.

As a soldier he fought bravely against heavy odds, though probably no lover of war. As a leader he laid his plans skilfully, and to his shrewd common sense may be ascribed

the Saxon king, and one that should be common in every schoolroom.

Let us finish with one more brief extract from his works.

"So long as I have lived, I have striven to live worthily," he wrote, and the verdict of history after the lapse of ten centuries is that he succeeded in his aim.

In honouring the memory of Alfred, Winchester honours itself, and on the English-speaking peoples of the world is reflected some of the glory of this brave warrior, wise king, and learned statesman.



HOBBIES.—PYROGRAPHY OR POKER-WORK.

By DOUGLAS COCHRANE.

PYROGRAPHY, burnt wood engraving, or, as it is more popularly called, poker-work, is an occupation for leisure time that has, for a very considerable period, held its own among other well-known hobbies.

Its very simplicity appeals even to the youth, who as a rule, cannot be *fussed* with anything more troublesome than the reading of a book whereby to wile away the hours of freedom from lessons.

Hard white wood that has been well seasoned, so as to prevent warping and cracking, is the material usually operated upon by youths. It is not, however, an employment which boys only can work at, inasmuch as there are materials other than wood which may be beautified by the red-hot poker.

Velvet, velveta—which is really a short-piled velvet—as also some kinds of plush, lend themselves beautifully to adornment by poker work. An ivory white velvet, yellows of various shades, and some of the art shades of green look extremely well when engraved thus, as the lovely brown tone resulting from contact with the hot poker, contrasts so well with these colours. Great delicacy of touch, however, is required, as well as evenness of outline and uniformity of heat.

There is no obvious reason why boys also should not work upon these materials, except that, as a rule, they scorn to touch what they sarcastically term *rags*!

Stools, small tables, pencil cases, book-rests and cases, paper-knives, sabots, letter-racks, oblong panels, boxes of all sizes, made of white wood, beautifully planed to a smooth surface, can be bought at comparatively small cost, and decorated by the skilful manipulator of the poker.

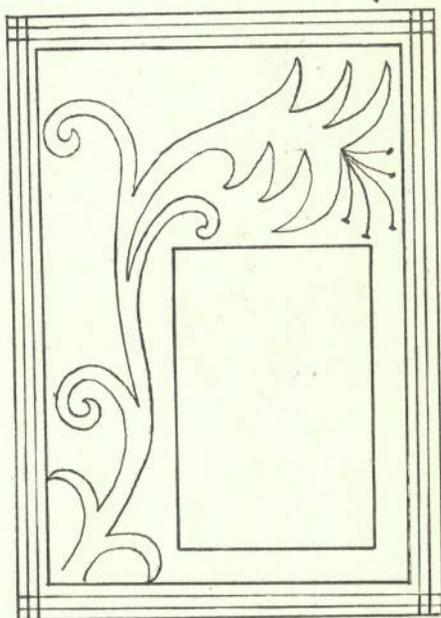
For those to whom the drawing and tracing of designs would be a difficulty, these and many other articles may be obtained ready-traced for engraving.

In some cases the design is traced upon the wood, and then simply outlined by an equal and careful application of the hot poker. The whole of the back-ground, that is, the space not occupied by the design, is then burnt either a uniform light brown, or shaded by greater heat to a darker brown. The design thus stands out white upon a dark back-ground, or, the design may be shaded in, and the back-ground left white. This, of course, depends upon the subject of the design as well as upon the artistic taste of the operator.

Japanese figures, in white relief upon a

dark back-ground, engraved upon white wood panels about eighteen inches long and nine broad, look very well for hall decoration. When finished the panels should be varnished with a light-oak *indoor* varnish, and, when quite dry, a ring may be screwed into each side, on the back, about six inches from the top. A strong twine, or fine wire should be passed through the rings, and the panels are then ready to be hung in any suitable place.

Photograph frames may be tastefully decorated by engravings of birds of graduated size, according to space, or by a graceful floral or curved design.



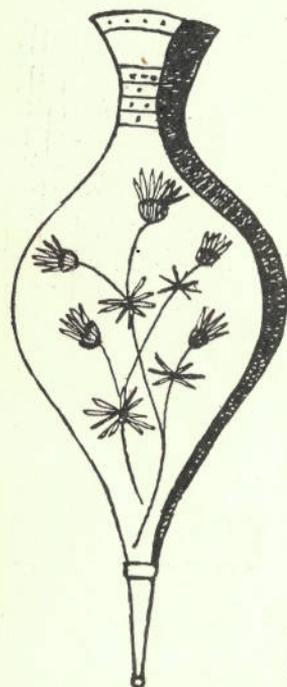
The engraving is done by means of small pokers, each having a cork or wooden handle. The points are made both in size and shape according to the particular purpose for which they are intended. For example, for a very fine line a poker with a fine edge is required; for dots and points a pointed one is needed, while for making broader and deeper lines it is as well to have one with a rather blunt though curved point.

A good supply of these little pokers is most essential, as the operator must not be hindered in his work by waiting for his tools.

A sharp *glowing* fire, a stove fire by preference, is needed for heating the pokers. A smoky fire would, of course, make a sooty poker, and a sooty poker would spoil the article.

A specially prepared set of poker-work

requisites can now be obtained at almost any fancy-bazaar. It consists of a small cabinet, in the right-hand side of which is a small glass bottle of benzoline, and in the left-hand corner a tiny spirit lamp. Between these two is a metal stopper. This must be put into the benzoline bottle. From this stopper project two short brass pipes. These pipes are connected with a small platinum point and the spirit lamp by means of gutta-percha tubes. The operator manages the air pump of the tube with the left hand, and with the right hand he works the platinum point or poker. The heat is conducted to the platinum point through the tube. One advantage of this method of engraving is that a uniform heat is maintained, and the whole design,



therefore, is worked with greater facility. On the other hand, however, the worker loses the benefit of the various sizes and points of the small ordinary pokers. The advantage of the ordinary poker over the platinum point is that both hands are free to guide the poker and the article being operated upon.

The poker-workset is much more expensive than the pokers, however, although the latter have to be specially ordered at

some tool-shop, as they are rarely kept in stock.

The design with which it is intended to decorate any article should first be drawn on tracing paper, if the operator has any doubt as to his drawing ability, and then transferred to the article by means of Carbon paper, but there is no reason why the design should not be drawn directly upon the wood.

It is not advisable for beginners to try more than *outlining* designs with the hot poker at first. The *elaboration* of them should be left to a time when they are more expert in the use of the tools.

The operator should be very careful to ascertain that the design is quite distinct upon the article before beginning to outline it. Pass the platinum point or poker lightly

and evenly over the tracing, taking care that after lifting the poker, as it is necessary to do occasionally, no ugly join is apparent to the eye. Do not put the poker down upon any part of the already burnt outline, but carefully place it so as to join the line without covering even the smallest part of the last bit. This will prevent a density of line where the joining takes place. When the whole design has been thoroughly gone over with the red hot poker, it should be plainly visible in brown lines upon the white wood.

As the operator becomes more expert he will be able, by lightly rubbing the point or poker over certain parts, to give the necessary shade to the objects engraved.

A good way of darkening the back-ground is to punch it all over evenly with a round-headed red-hot poker. Great care must be taken, however, not to break the contour of the outlined designs. Where greater depth of engraving is required the point of the poker must be held over it a little longer time than is needed for mere outlining.

All these niceties of execution come only by long, patient, and diligent practice, and the beginner must not be disheartened if his first attempts are abortive. He should in this, as in all else, remember if at last he would succeed that he must

"Try, try, try again!"

The accompanying designs simply indicate the effect produced, and are intended only as guides in the choice of subject for engraving by beginners.

The lines round the edge of the photograph frame should be lightly traced with the poker over pencil lines previously drawn by the aid of a ruler.

The back-ground may be shaded as directed above by any boy who feels able to do it nicely.

A useful present for a sister is a nice white work-box, skilfully engraved on the top with a bold floral design, and a light and graceful running border round the sides. The boy who wishes to present his mother with a useful, and, at the same time, ornamental gift, may purchase a small pair of white wood bellows, and engrave them with some tasteful design. He may be sure that such a gift will be valued much more for the personal effort entailed than for its intrinsic value.

Any plain wooden article, even a three-legged stool, may become a thing of beauty after passing through the skilful hands of an expert burnt-wood engraver. It is essential to remember when varnishing any of these articles to use only *indoor* varnish, as it is specially made for use on those things not exposed to the outside atmosphere.



By the Author of "Madelon," "The Major," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

THERE lived in a pleasant upland country a youth named Rupert. This Rupert was tall and comely, with a lithe and graceful figure. His eyes were of a dark grey hue, and around a noble forehead there clustered a mass of dark, wavy hair.

The youth knew no other name save Rupert. He had tended sheep upon the breezy hill-sides as long as he remembered.

His only friend was his faithful dog Bruno.

As he lay upon the heath-covered heights, Rupert saw many wonderful sights, and dreamt many strange dreams.

On the opposite side of the valley there stood the frowning stronghold of the Lord of Culbin. Rupert had heard terrible tales of this blood-thirsty tyrant.

Baron Culbin was believed to be in league with the black and fearsome King of Hades, whose kingdom lay deep down in the bowels of the earth. The Baron was held in fear and awe by all the people who dwelt in the country round about his stronghold. Anyone who dared to offend him by word or deed, was instantly seized by his savage servants and hung up in the thick forest which surrounded his castle. No one could approach the Castle from any direction without passing one of the dead victims of the Baron's hatred.

Rupert often shuddered as he saw the unhappy men and women led into the dark recesses of the forest of Culbin. He well knew the dreadful fate they would suffer there, and he vowed many terrible things against the cruel Baron.

Upon the Castle itself the sun never shone, and the sulphurous vapour which always hung about it, gave it a ghostly and awesome character in the eyes of the simple country folks.

Beyond the Castle of Culbin, a great fertile plain extended to the ocean, and, from the spot where he lay, Rupert could see the golden sands on the shore, and the treasure-laden vessels passing to and fro on the ocean main.

The valley itself, with the clear river winding out and in, and at length losing itself in the broad estuary, interested Rupert more than aught else in the beautiful landscape.

By the side of the stream and almost lost in a labyrinth of lovely flowers and fruit trees, there stood a little cottage. It was occupied by Seven Sisters, all of them youthful and charming; hence it was called the "Seven Sisters' Cottage."

Every morning Rupert watched the maidens leave their lovely home and follow the zig-zag pathway up the hill to the little chapel on the plateau.

If Rupert happened to be near when the Seven Sisters passed—and he was seldom or ever far away—they smiled so lovingly upon him that his dark eyes flashed, and his heart beat with a great responsive love. Of the sweet smelling flowers in their garden the sisters always carried beautiful bouquets on their visits to the chapel, and they often presented Rupert with flowers as they passed.

Fondling his flowers meanwhile, Rupert would listen rapturously to the holy chant from the clear, full voices of his friends.

Rupert named the Sisters after his seven favourite flowers.

The eldest—stately and beautiful—who always led the way up the mountain path, and whose glorious eyes and glowing cheeks Rupert had first beheld, he named Rose. The next a lovely and graceful creature looking pure and fragile, he named Lily; and so on with Violet, Daisy and Pansy. The sixth he named Snowdrop; and the seventh, the tiniest of the Sisterhood he named Forget-me-not, for that was what her azure blue eyes always seemed to say to him.

When Rupert last saw the Seven Sisters—about whom he had built up his brightest and most extravagant dreams—they did not smile so cheerfully as of yore. Their eyes were wet with tears. They spoke not a word, but the glances they cast upon Rupert went to his very heart.

Had they said "Come," Rupert would gladly have laid down his life if only to bring back the smile to their eyes and the bloom to their cheeks.

The chant in the Chapel did not swell so beautifully and grandly as on other days. It fell upon the ears of the eager listener like a mournful dirge. Rupert feared there was something wrong, yet he dared not ask them. As he watched them returning to their cottage he had a presentiment that he had seen them for the last time.

Forget-me-not lingered behind, and gazed sorrowfully towards the comely shepherd youth, but at a sign from her eldest sister she joined the others.

* * *

CHAPTER II.

Three days came and went, and Rupert waited and watched for his lovely friends in vain.

The Seven Sisters never again passed that way to the Chapel on the hill.

Rupert's heart sank within him. Was he never again to behold the angelic beings who had brightened and cheered his lonely life?

Instinctively he thought of Baron Culbin, and blamed him for some great trouble which had fallen upon his friends.

He rolled on the green sward in his agony, and vowed vengeance against the cruel Lord of Culbin.

Bruno pawed the ground, and ever and anon looked into his young master's face with his great human-like eyes and howled.

"I can no longer bear this terrible suspense," cried Rupert, bounding to his feet, and winding his plaid about him like a young warrior girding on his armour for the fray. "If I had but the power and opportunity I would do something grand and noble. Here I am but wasting my life. See to the sheep, my faithful Bruno, until I return."

Bruno wagged his tail, and, after a fond caress from his master, scampered off to bring in the straying sheep.

"If I were sure that Baron Culbin had aught to do with the disappearance of the Seven Sisters, alone and single-handed would I beard him in his den. Oh! that I had the power to crush that stronghold of crime for ever out of existence."

"You may do greater things than that *if you but will it*," said a voice at Rupert's elbow. "Let no good deed be too mean for thee; greater opportunities will come unasked."

Turning round in surprise he saw nothing but a fleet-footed hare, which ran right across the vale until it was lost in the copse, on what was known as the Fairies' Hill. This hill was a curious conical eminence, situated

within a short distance of the cottage of the Seven Sisters. It was said by old people in the neighbourhood that the hill suddenly appeared in one night, and that it was inhabited by strange aerial beings, who were constantly in the air, and were yet invisible to mortal eyes.

As Rupert continued gazing at the spot where the hare had disappeared, he caught sight of a little old woman, with a bundle of sticks upon her back approaching the stream. Getting on the rough wooden plank which constituted the only bridge, the old woman, overbalanced by her bundle, fell into the water.

At once realising that a life was in danger, Rupert sprang down the hillside like a fleet-footed roe.

He threw his plaid aside as he ran, and sprang fearlessly into the rushing mountain torrent.

With great difficulty, owing to the heavy bundle upon her back and the swollen nature of the river, he managed to convey the drowning woman ashore.

"Poor old woman," cried Rupert sympathetically, with tears in his eyes, as he laid her limp and lifeless form on the bank of the river, "she appears to be quite dead."

With nervous haste he proceeded to undo the bundle of sticks. In doing so he grasped firmly a fine willow wand in his right hand.

No sooner had he done this than the apparently lifeless person vanished from sight, and in her stead there stood before Rupert a beautiful lady, decked with glistening jewels from head to foot, and a crown of emeralds and rubies on her head.

So great was the youth's astonishment at this transformation, that in rising to his feet, he involuntarily drew the potent wand entirely out of the bundle, which still remained, and held it in his hand.

* * *

CHAPTER III.

The longer Rupert held the wand in his hand the more he grew in muscular strength. He felt his limbs expanding, and so tall had he become within a few seconds, that he towered far above his dazzling visitor.

"Prince Rupert," said the beautiful lady, with a winning smile, "for henceforth such shall be your name, you have done a good and brave deed; you shall have your reward."

"Who are you, most beautiful of women?" cried Prince Rupert, at length venturing to address the enchanting being who was destined to have so great an effect upon his fortunes.

"I am the Queen of the Fairies," she

frankly replied, "and having looked upon your mortal state as entirely unfitted for the development of your great talents, I have, it may be unwittingly to yourself, made you a sharer of my dominions. The hill, which has been so well named the Fairies' Hill, is the habitation of myself and my people. When the sun beats hot and strong upon the earth, we love to dwell in our cool and shady palaces; but when Luna sheds her soft and silvery light upon the hill, and beings of the human race are asleep, we have merry gambols in copse and glade."

Rupert bowed gracefully, and waited to hear more.

"Say what thou dost most wish for, and it shall be yours," cried the Queen in clear silvery tones.

"My greatest desire is to find and succour the Seven Sisters," replied Prince Rupert, remembering the mission he had undertaken.

"I had hoped your aspirations soared much higher, most noble and gallant Prince," said the Queen in a gracious tone. "But since it is so, it is in thy power to attain thy desires; only, I pray thee, use thy powers with care and discretion.

"Prince Rupert," continued the Queen, still more impressively than before, "keep that wand in thy right hand, and as thou valuest thy new and better life, ever hold it firmly. If ever thou should'st lose thy grasp of it, or it should be found in thy left hand as an emblem of incapacity to rule, then woe be to thee if I am not at hand to succour thee."

"I have another boon to crave," cried Prince Rupert, remembering Baron Culbin. "Have I power enough to crush a vile tyrant?"

"Enough power is thine, fair youth, if thou dost but use it well, to crush twenty—ay! a hundred such tyrants. With that wand thou art endowed with much of the power that belongs to my own royal state. So great is my trust in thee that even I am thy servant. Command, and I obey."

"Let me have but one glimpse of thy

habitation, and the emblems of thy power," said Prince Rupert, bowing low.

"Point thy wand towards the hollow of the hill," commanded the Queen, "and say aloud, Open at the command of thy Prince."

Prince Rupert pointed his wand as directed and repeated the words.

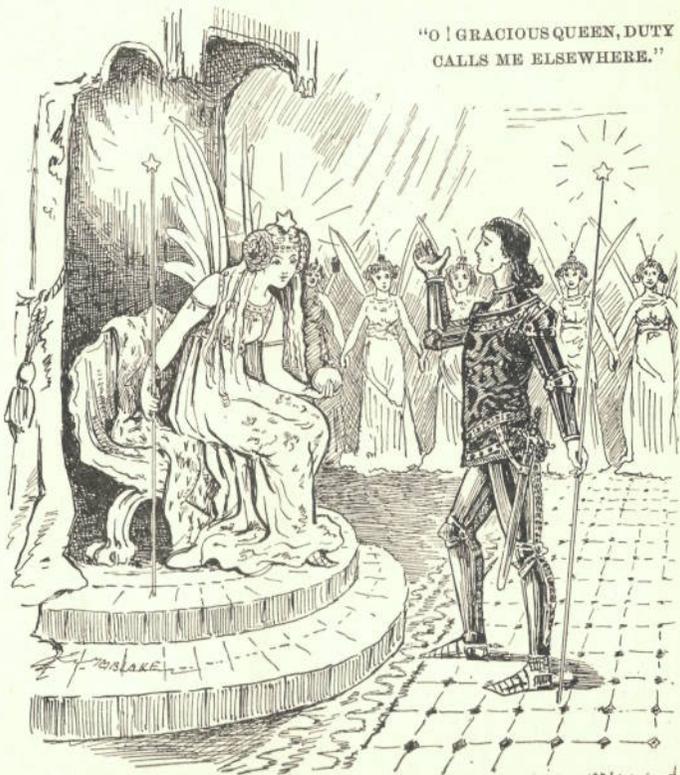
Instantly the hill parted in two, and Prince Rupert found himself transplanted to a scene which far exceeded the wildest flights of his imagination.

He gazed in wonder upon what seemed to him to be a vast cavern, or series of caverns, almost interminable in immensity, glittering throughout with precious stones, which lighted the place with a dazzling splendour. Grouped in different positions, and even flying through the air, were crowds of strange and beautiful beings.

For a moment the Fairy Queen left his side, and ascended her throne, surrounded by multitudes of her subjects.

At a wave of her hand, battalion after battalion of Fairy warriors trooped in order past Prince Rupert. They were all clad in brightly burnished armour, and Prince Rupert for the first time noticed that he too was clad in a suit of armour which seemed to have been forged of massive gold, and surpassed in beauty anything which he had ever seen. Rather under the ordinary human

"O! GRACIOUS QUEEN, DUTY CALLS ME ELSEWHERE."



stature, the warriors seemed so small that he towered high above them ; but they were well formed and resolute looking men. They all saluted the Prince with studied deference as they passed.

At the close of the pageant, he saw the Queen beckoning him to a vacant seat by her side, but merely advancing to the foot of the throne, he expressed his thanks, and said he was thoroughly satisfied with what he had witnessed.

The Queen, for the first time, looked displeased, but nevertheless she said: " My troops are at your service."

" A score will suffice," said Rupert, with great deference, and no sooner had he spoken, than twenty of the smartest men took up their position beside him as a body guard.

" Is there aught else you desire ?" - said the Queen, with one of her most bewitching smiles. " If so, it is yours. Would you not care to dwell amongst us always ?"

Music of the most dreamy and bewitching description fell upon Prince Rupert's ears, and the lovely damsels in attendance upon the Queen charmed his eyes by their graceful dancing. Everything seemed to invite him to stay ; and as the Queen placed her soft, white hand in his, he felt it was almost impossible to tear himself away.

Suddenly there flashed upon his mind the probable fate of the Seven Sisters, and he awoke to a full sense of his duty.

" O ! gracious Queen," he cried, " duty calls me elsewhere. I would fain linger in this enchanting region, but I must be gone to sterner work."

The Queen gazed sorrowfully into his face.

It required a supreme effort on the part of Prince Rupert to tear himself away.

Holding his wand aloft, he said in a firm, commanding tone: " Duty calls. Go forth ; it is the command of thy Prince."

* * *

CHAPTER IV.

In an instant the Fairy habitations vanished ; and Prince Rupert found himself, impelled by the movement of his wand, proceeding towards the Seven Sisters' Cottage, which was on a line with the Castle of Culbin.

He could find no trace whatever of the maidens he sought, and everything wore an air of wanton destruction and desolation. The very flowers in the garden, in the cultivation of which they had taken so much pride, were trampled down and destroyed in the most ruthless manner.

With one wave of his wand, Prince Rupert restored everything to its former condition of order and beauty.

Leaving several of his men to guard the

cottage, he followed the impelling motion of his wand through the thick forest to the Castle of Culbin.

Very soon he stood before the grim fortress, and, despatching his men to scale the wall at different points, he boldly approached the entrance gateway alone. He found two poor fellows being led out to execution, and setting them at liberty, he hung up their goalers on the nearest tree.

The villainous looking porter made some show of resistance, but Prince Rupert quickly chopped off his head and had it placed on the gateway.

Proceeding into the court-yard, Prince Rupert found that his little men had done their work well, and had taken the place of the Baron's warders on the walls.

The stronghold was now entirely in his possession with the exception of the great northern tower, occupied by the Baron himself, and the dungeons.

Prince Rupert at once made his way to the dungeons, and found the turnkey fast asleep. Rupert soon aroused him and summoned him to obedience by his potent wand.

The man mechanically opened all the doors, and, without the slightest noise, every prisoner was allowed to regain his liberty.

Prince Rupert then questioned the turnkey, and found that Baron Culbin was in the habit of playing at strange and mysterious games with the King of Hades at this hour.

The last dungeon entered by Prince Rupert was of a superior description to the others, and in it, to his great joy he found the Seven Sisters.

With the exception of Rose, they were all in a hopelessly despairing state when Rupert entered.

He gracefully doffed his cap, and, going up to Rose as representative of all the others, tenderly kissed her hand.

" It is dear Rupert," cried little Forget-me-not, starting up in an ecstasy of joy, and all the sisters joined in a chorus of delight.

" Why do I find you here ?" said Rupert.

" The bad Baron wanted Rose to marry him," said Lily tearfully ; " but she would not consent."

" So he said he would marry us all, whether we would or not," chimed in saucy Pansy. " He sent his men to destroy our beautiful cottage and garden, and they carried us off to this horrid place."

" But the Baron will trouble us no more," cried Rose with enthusiasm, as she gazed upon Rupert's grand and martial bearing. " You will take us back again to our own dear cottage, won't you Rupert ?" and her glorious eyes rested upon him with all their old fascinating power.

"I will!" exclaimed Rupert, "and that at once."

"Retire," he said sternly to the gaping turnkey, "and stir not until your master calls."

"Now," said he, turning to the seven beautiful girls, "for one instant close your eyes."

They did so, and suddenly they felt themselves drawn rapidly through the air in a fairy chariot, and heard Prince Rupert urging forward the aerial steeds.

"Open your eyes once more," he cried, "and here you are in your own beautiful cottage in which I trust you may ever dwell in peace and security."

Sure enough they were once again within the walls of their dear old home, and they could not thank their gallant rescuer enough for their wonderful deliverance.

* * *

CHAPTER V.

Prince Rupert lingered long in the Seven Sisters' Cottage. To him that modest little domicile and its inmates were dearer far than all the gorgeous fairy palaces and fairy queens in creation.

The fairy wand was laid aside and forgotten.

As the night advanced, the happy little company heard something scratching and whining at the door of the cottage.

Rupert hastened to open it, and there across the threshold lay his faithful Bruno, dead.

"Alas! alas!" cried Rupert, in tones of bitter anguish, as he stooped low, and tenderly caressed the inanimate form of his faithful friend, "I will put life again into your cold body."

He turned hastily to find his wand. Where was it? Was this a premonition of what was to follow?

Suddenly he remembered the injunctions of the Fairy Queen, and he felt that he had forfeited her confidence.

He felt the glory and strength of his person departing.

"What is your duty now?" cried a mocking voice, and on looking out into the moonlit



"I WILL NOW STAKE," CRIED THE BARON, "THE SEVEN SISTERS."

night he saw the Fairy Queen with the potent wand in her hand.

She stood regarding him coldly and sternly. "Come!" she said, beckoning him with her wand, "it is midnight and the work must be finished."

"Farewell!" cried Rupert to the Seven Sisters, who hung about him in a paroxysm of despair.

Thus Prince Rupert and the lovely Sisters parted to meet no more.

Within the short space of a moment, Rupert, now bereft of all princely power, stood with the Fairy Queen in a balcony overlooking the banquetting hall of Culbin Castle.

Here they witnessed the cruel Baron casting dice with the King of Hades.

When the Baron won, the King granted him new powers of life and death, fresh lands and an increase of riches.

The King won most frequently, and by-and-by regained all he had given, besides the souls and bodies of the Baron's retinue.

As it neared the midnight hour, he pressed his opponent still more closely, until the latter rose from his seat in desperation, well nigh stripped of all he possessed.

"I will now stake," cried the Baron, "the seven purest beings in Christendom—the Seven Sisters—for all I have lost, and a longer lease of life."

Rupert shuddered as he heard the monster speak, and he almost feared to meet the Fairy Queen's scornful glance.

"I shall agree to the compact," cried the King, "upon one condition—that failing the Seven Sisters you yield yourself to me, soul and body."

"So be it," cried the Baron, and with reckless desperation he began to play.

The Fairy Queen now spoke.

"The Seven Sisters are lost, you have no power to save them now, but if you bind yourself to me, I will yet give you power."

"They are not lost," cried Rupert. "Their bodies are out of the clutches of the Baron, and the King has no power over their souls. I do not desire your aid."

"Then, rash youth, I leave them to their fate. Know this, that the Baron shall certainly lose, and he, along with every living creature upon this barony, will be utterly destroyed. The Seven Sisters and their cottage are numbered amongst the Baron's possessions."

Rupert's heart sank within him, and he answered not a word as he turned and anxiously watched the players below.

Great beads of perspiration stood on the Baron's brow as he strained every nerve to win the game.

The hour of midnight boomed forth.

The last die was cast.

Up rose the King, malignant and triumphant.

"Baron," he roared, in tones of thunder, to the cowering wretch before him, "the souls of the Seven Sisters are not thine to give, but thine own I claim as my due, and the very sand on the sea-shore

shall blow with the tempest and blast thy domains."

The elements burst overhead in dreadful fury, and, in the midst of this fearful storm, the King and his victim disappeared.

"Our work is not yet finished!" cried the Fairy Queen, with a cruel mocking laugh as she placed Rupert on the battlements and vanished from sight.

Rupert looked towards the sea, and saw great clouds of sand and spray blowing inland. House after house, cornfield after cornfield, became entirely covered, until the place where he stood was threatened by the blast, and, to his horror, the cottage of the Seven Sisters had already been attacked.

Resolved to rescue or die with them, Rupert groped his way into the valley, and fell lifeless on the spot where the cottage had once stood, and which formed for the fair sisters a living tomb.

The dreadful storm continued with unabated fury all the night long, and, in the morning not an acre of the fertile barony of Culbin remained uncovered. Not even the highest turrets of the castle were visible amid the great waste of sand.

The dreary sands of Culbin remain to this day, but in the midst of the desert there has appeared a green oasis, where, beside a cool, natural fountain, and under the branches of a weeping willow there bloom perennially the seven sister flowers of Hope and Promise:—The Rose, the Lily, the Daisy, the Violet, the Snowdrop, the Pansy, and the tiny Forget-me-not.



ANECDOTES.

A Schoolboy's Essay.

The following highly original composition on the subject of water was recently written by an American boy: "Water is found everywhere, especially when it rains as it did the other day, when our cellar was half-full. Jane had to wear her father's rubber boots to get onions for dinner. Onions make your eyes water, and so does horse-radish when you eat too much. There are a good many kinds of water in the world—rain-water, soda-water, holy-water, and brine. Water is used for a good many things. Sailors use water to go to sea on. Water is a good thing to fire at boys with a squirt gun, and to catch fishes in. My father caught a big one the other day, and when he pulled it out it was an eel. Nobody could be saved from drowning if there wasn't any water to pull them out of. Water is first-rate to put fires out with. I love to go to a fire—see the men work at the engines. This is all I can think of about water—except the flood."

* * *

A Concession.

A gentleman pulled up his trap at a hotel door in Lurgan and went inside to have some refreshment. When he came out he noticed a tramp loitering round the vehicle.

"If ye plaze, sur," says Weary William, "cud ye tell me how far it is to Portadown?"

"I could, indeed," replied the gentleman, as he prepared to step into the trap.

"D'ye see that church?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's exactly four miles from that church to Portadown church."

Still the tramp hung on with a very dejected and tired appearance.

At last the gentleman looked at him, and said in a pitying tone, "Are ye tired?"

"I am, indeed."

"Are ye very tired?"

"Very."

"Well, then, I'll make it three miles and a half to you."

As he whipped up his pony he heard the sounds of wrathful indignation pursuing him half way up the street.

* * *

Old gentleman (to railway porter): Porter, the rain is dripping in from the lamp-hole all over my clothes.

Porter: No, sir, it's quite watertight, I assure you. It's only the oil leaking.

Silenced the Archbishop.

One of our Archbishops was visiting a country house, and so commended himself to his hostess's family of children that one of them, a bright, clever little girl of about eight, threatened to monopolise the conversation entirely, but was brought to a sudden silence by her father's whispered remonstrance of "Shut up, Mabel."

For some time she remained quietly considering the rebuke. Profiting by her silence, her father and mother drew the guest on to assert his conversational powers, which he did with success, passing from one subject to another with the ease that comes of an appreciative audience.

To the child who had been rebuked for talkativeness the manifest injustice of favouritism shown to the conversational visitor became totally intolerable.

In the middle of a sentence a small but stern voice made itself heard.

"Shut up, Archbishop!" it said, in grave tones of rebuke. And, it is needless to add, the remark had the desired effect.

* * *

Where's that Printer?

The proprietor of a restaurant in a certain village near Glasgow wanted some bills printed with the words: "Try our mutton-pies. When you have eaten one you will wish to dine here." When they returned from the printer he unfortunately put one in the window without looking at it. In a few minutes a large crowd gathered round the window, and the proprietor on going to see what was wrong read the bill as follows:

"Try our mutton-pies. When you have eaten one you will wish to die here."

He then took a club and went to call on that printer.

* * *

An Irish Bull.

Pat explained that he was smiling because he had seen his cousin from Cork that day. On being asked if there was good news from home he replied, "I only saw him across the street; and when I ran up to him I found he was not the man."

* * *

Teacher: Now, Tommy, suppose you had two apples, and you gave another boy his choice of them, you would tell him to take the bigger one, wouldn't you?

Tommy: No, mum, 'twouldn't be necessary.

STAMP PAGE.

IT is very hard to find out what people are collecting just at present. Everybody is waiting "until the War is over," before they invest in anything definite. Meanwhile, no one can go far wrong who continues to pick up any specimens of Queen Victoria's "head," that are not already in his collection.

It is reported that the new English 1d. and $\frac{1}{2}$ d. may be in our readers' hands before this is in print. The $\frac{1}{2}$ d. is to be green on white, the 1d. deep carmine on white. It would be well to secure shades of the latter early in its history, as carmine in *exact* shades is a difficult colour to reproduce.

Among the latest arrivals are:—A 4 cent Newfoundland, in purple, with a portrait of the Princess of Wales; Hong Kong, 4 cents, carmine, and 5 cents, yellow; and several of the recently issued Victoria Stamps, with "Postage" inserted somewhere on the Stamps. The issue preceding these has doubled in value in the market already.

The 2nd Part of Stanley Gibbon's catalogue, containing all countries *except* England and her Colonies, is now due, and should prove interesting reading.

Some notable auctions are taking place this season in London; amongst other rare stamps some magnificent blocks of unused early English have appeared; black, 1d.; octagonal, 10d. and 1s.; rare 5s.; in fact, a wonderful lot of stamps. At the sale of Messrs. Puttick and Simpson on October 1st, a total of £3633 was recorded.

The Philatelic Society of London gave an Exhibition of the Stamps of the South African Colonies on November 16th. This will stimulate many collectors, and be an extraordinary eye-opener to those who have

not realised the possibilities open to specialists in these countries.

A great many collectors are now keeping their stamps in what dealers call "Stock Books." These have blank pages with paper on transparent calico pasted in horizontal strips so as to form a firm hold for loose stamps. When one is accumulating the stamps of a certain country with a view to arranging them when enough specimens have been collected, nothing could be more convenient than these books. A thin sheet of stiff transparent paper between the leaves is an immense addition to the safety of the stamps, especially unused specimens. The ordinary printed album has (so the Dealers say) had an enormous sale this year. This looks like an increase of beginners, and a chance of demand for our duplicates.

How many of our readers know the meaning of the following words? They are not even Technical Philatelic Terms; they are merely the names of certain coins, and can be seen in the Foreign Money Table of Catalogues:—"Chuckram," "Docra," "Folus," "Fuang," "Guerche," "Leu," "Novcic," "Pynungs," "Sucre," and "Woon!" Try to collect a Specimen of each!

Here are a few more *Technical* Terms of the science which we do not all know:—"Reseda," "Lozenge," "Foul anchor," "Pelure," "Quadrille," "Serrated," "Typographed." Try to find a stamp to illustrate each.

After Christmas we shall probably begin with new zest on the King Edward Stamps.

They have been long coming, but the stirring of philatelic zeal which they will occasion will repay the waiting. Again, we repeat, "Be sure to secure early copies and shades."

