

THE ECONOMICAL DINNER PARTY.

BY E. V. BLAKE.

A wily Crocodile,
Who dwelt upon the Nile,
Brought his mate one day to give a dinner.
"Economy," said he,
"Is chief o' all with me,
And shall considered be—as I'm a sinner."

With paper, pen, and ink,
He sat him down to think,
And, first of all, Sir Leo he invited;
The northern Wolf, who dwells
In rocky arid deserts;
The Leopard and the Lynx, by blood united.

Then Mr. Fox, the shrewd—
No lover he of good—
And Madam Duck, with sober step and stately;
And Mr. Frog, serene,
In gero of bottle green,
Who warbled base, and bore himself sedately.

Sir Crocodile, content,
The invitations sent;
The day was come—his guests were all assembled.

They fancied that some guile
Lurked in his ample smile;
Each on the other looked, and somewhat trembled.

A lengthy time they wait;
Their hunger waxes great;
And still the host in conversation dallies;
At last, the table's laid.
With covered dishes spread,
And cut in haste, the hungry party sallies.

But when—the covers raised—
On empty plates they gazed,
Each on the other looked with dire intention;
Ma'am Duck sat last of all,
And Mr. Frog was small,
She surely swallowed him, and made no mention.

This Mr. Fox perceives,
And says, "I'm sorry, ladies,
For I'm obliged to sin for this transgression,"
He gibbled in his haste;
Then, much to his distaste,
By Mr. Lynx was taken in possession.

The Wolf, without a pause—
In spite of teeth and claws—
Left nothing of the story to tell the story;
The Leopard, all frate,
At his relation's fate,
Made mince-meat of that wolfish monster hoary.

The Lion raised his head—
"Since I am King," he said,
"It'll befit the King to lack his dinner!"
Then on the Leopard sprang
With might of claw and fang,
And made meat upon that spotted sinner.

Then saw in sudden fear
Sir Crocodile draw near,
And heard him speak, with feelings of distraction;
"Simeon! of you have dined,
Well suited to your mind,
You surely cannot grudge me satisfaction."

And sooth, a deal of guile
Lurked in his ample smile,
After which his throat the roaring Lion hasted.

"Economy, we're me!"
Is chief o' all, said he,
And I am glad to see there's nothing wasted."

THE CRUISE OF THE JEMIMA.

Charlie, my young brother, had been flogging at his studies; I had just passed the R. C. S. E., and was proportionately elated. We had earned our summer holiday, we thought; and nothing loath was I when Charlie, with a map in his hand, pointed out a spot on the Caithness coast and exclaimed:

"Here we are! There we go! What say you, Frank?"

"Very good choice. Plenty of ozone, fishing, and boating; fashion at a discount. Where is the time-table?"

A primitive fishing village—call it Clanhead—was quickly fixed upon; and after the usual delights of railway traveling we found ourselves in a place richly endowed by nature, but minus an inn.

A Highland cottage, however, proved a comfortable enough shelter; and after a night's rest and a hearty fish-breakfast, we started off toward the sea.

In the one straggling street of Clanhead were yellow-haired children who stood in wide-eyed, innocent wonder and stared at us. Perhaps they were overcome by the sight of our hideous brown sand-shoes; or it might have been that they were bewitched by Charlie's handsome face.

Charlie is the Adonis of our family; and I—well, I am an ugly young man with a marvelously wide mouth, eyesight so near that I cannot pick up a sixpence without the help of my glasses, and an expression, to say the least, of it, scared.

Such as we were, we stood the lads' and the lasses' scrutiny unabashed, plodding on till we perceived a middle-aged man leaning on a gate, in, I imagined, a dolce far niente condition.

He turned, however, and moved toward us.

"Will ye no' be takin' a sail the mornin' gentlemen?"

"Just what we want," cried Charlie.

"Aweel, tak ye the first turn to the reet, an' it'll bring ye to the head o' the cliff. Some way back y'll see the openin' to a ravine. Gang awa' through the gap, an' ye'll soon be where the sea washes the cliff foot. Be ye canny, for the tide's high the noo, and the shallowest water there may drown ye. In five minutes I'll be comin' round wi' my boat an' my mate at your servie."

The boatman touched his cap and moved off; we made for the ravine, passed down it, and came suddenly upon the most magnificent expanse of rolling water that our eyes had ever feasted upon.

Shortly from, I suppose, some sheltering nook under the cliff, came along our little craft the Jemima, with her mainsail spread and her master at the helm, while Donald, his mate, kept watch at the bow.

With a "Yo ho! Steady! Yo ho!" she was "brought to," and in scrambled we, neck or nothing.

We were scarcely seated before, emerging from the ravine, toiling on with the help of a crutch over the loose earth and boulders, came a girl with a sweet but very sad face. Evidently she was suffering in mind and body.

"Ech, Hinny! Hinny!" said our boatman, with a softened intonation. "Ye shouldnae act see, my dear! When gentlemen hire the Jemima they dinnae expect to tak her master's family aboard. Gang awa' home again, Ma'mie."

"Oh, by all means, take your friend aboard, Mr. ——"

"Ben is my name, sir, an' I thank ye for your kindness. Come, then, bairn! an' look ye, dinna trust to your crutch when ye step aboard. Should the boat duff, it may slip frae under ye. Let me lay it doon at the stern, an' gie me your hand. Now, steady, an' in ye are."

Ben guided the boat off, then turned to the girl again. "Eh, my bairn, not see me like a speck o' head gear! an' they bits o' fal-fal clothing flyin' about ye. Ye'll catch your death! ye maun have my jacket on. Mebbe, sir, ye'll be a' kind as to haud the tiller

while I dress her oop? There, now, Mamie, are ye no warmly buskit?"

Off we were before the wind, our swelling mainsail hiding the man at the bow. The grand sea and sky threw Charlie and myself into ecstasies; Ben, used to such scenes, was quiet, and, I thought, sad, while the lassie looked decidedly sleepy.

"Eh, my doo," said Ben, "ye were oop wi' the birds; I marked ye wendin' your way to the cliff by the first glint o' the sun. Ye's likin to a wrath, my dearie! Ye's aye wanderin'! Aweel, lay down your head a while on my shoulder, and be takin' a wee bit nap the noo."

With his disengaged arm Ben supported the frail little body, and soon his charge was dozing as restfully as any weary child.

As she slept I espied a wedding-ring on her finger; and even in repose her face told a tale of mental and bodily suffering. Some heavy calamity, I thought, must have fallen upon her. Her childlike confidence in Ben and his tenderness toward her were pathetic; and, altogether, my sympathy was won.

Presently I ventured to ask if she were not an invalid; and returned Ben, "Oo, yes, sir; an' she is my only bairn. Pretty doo! She married over early. An' a week after, Tam, her husband, sailed forth wi' his crew for the fishin'. Three months haas passed sin' the wof'd day, but nae word can we get o' boat or men."

"Then you think the vessel—"

"Went down, sir, is what ye mean? There is nae doot about it; for, miles awa along the coast, piece of her sail was washed ashore. But my lamb knows that; an' sae, i'stead o' puttin' on widow's weeds, the aye says we's bound to find him; an' she watches the sea, an' questions every fisherman she meets, till it's just pitiful to hear her."

"She is nearly distraught," thought I.

Then I gave Ben a warning note regarding the imperative need of trying to divert her mind from her trouble. Also I proffered a word of advice about her lameness, which, it appeared, rose from some recent injury done to the muscles, and which, I gathered, had been treated in anything but a scientific manner.

Ben was delighted to find that I was a doctor, and most grateful for my interest in him. Indeed, he was so earnest in pouring out his thanks when I volunteered to take Mamie's case in hand while I was at Clanhead, that the man at the bow (as he afterward owned) became an absorbed and sympathetic listener; for Mamie and he had been playmates, and he felt rather down-hearted, Ben told me, when Tam carried her off.

Deep in our compact, and entirely free from apprehension, we sledged pleasantly along. One moment all our thoughts were o'er hunting; the next crash! crash! crash! over our heads under our feet, everywhere!

A swift glance at the mainsail, a wrench at the tiller, and a tremendous shout from Ben—

"Bow, there, bow! Are ye sleepin' mon?"

The warning was too late. A large vessel was down upon us; our mainsail was pierced through by her bowsprit; our timbers were shivering under her bows. I heard shouting on the deck above us; I saw a man leap from the vessel's side; I saw Mamie wake up in an agony of terror and throw her arms round her father's neck; I heard Ben say, "Nae, dinnae cummer me, but strike ye cot an' trust." I knew we were all in the water, for I saw Ben supporting his child as he swam vigorously toward the man who had leaped over. I saw Charlie going down (neither he nor I was a swimmer); I clutched at him fruitlessly; then came confused cries of, "Keep your heads up!" "Here's a life-belt!" "Catch this rope!" and so on. But soon the voices sounded far away and indistinguishable. I knew that salt water was in my nostrils and mouth; there was singing in my ears, roaring in my head; I felt a mad impulse to rise; I did rise; again for a moment only, I heard eager voices near me, and caught a glimpse of the efforts that were being made to save us. In an agony I made an effort to keep up; it was futile. Then hiss! hiss! swish! through my very brain; after that, darkness, dense darkness! a clear consciousness that the hand of death was on me, a cry from my inmost soul to heaven, and—a strange, deep calm.

The sun was going down in a flood of crimson glory. I lay upon well-swabbed deck all alone. Where had I been? Where was I going? What had happened? I pinched myself and felt the pain, so I was still in the flesh. I tried my voice, "Hi! hillo! some body!"

One came. I sat up and took a speculative survey. The vessel was taut and trim, and she smelled of timber, but she was not of British build. As I cogitated—rather weakly, I must own—a footstep sounded on the deck, and along came a good-natured-looking seaman, fair and blue-eyed; he made his way to me and looked smilingly down.

"What ship is this?" queried I. "A shake of the head. "Are you a German?"

Two shakings of the head.

"Speak, man, in some tongue or other, will you?"

The word "speak" he understood, and obeyed with energy. But no word of any language could I pick out from his strange jabber.

Feeling, no doubt, that my understanding wanted arousing, he went away and shortly returned with six other men; some strong, fair, and blue-eyed, like himself, the rest shorter, darker, but powerfully built, and all chattering the most unintelligible jargon.

As they bent their energies to make me understand something or other, I tried hard to discover their nationalities, for certainly they were not all of one when—happy thought—came fitting through my brain the words:

And then the blue-eyed Norseman told A saga of the days old.

"You are from Norway," bawled I. "And you," to the darker men, "you are Swedes. Am I right?"

"Ha! Norway! Norge! Norge! Ha! Ha! Norrike! Ha! ha!"

The words were taken up like a re-

frain with boisterous satisfaction. Had I only raised my eyes to the vessel's flag, I might have seen at first that she was called the Jarl Hakon. But just then my wits were scattered. They began, however, to disentangle themselves, and thoughts of Charlie, Ben, and the rest crowded upon me. Where were they? Where was the lame girl, and where the Jemima?

It was useless to question, so I rose up and with rather unsteady step walked across the deck and found my way to the Captain's cabin.

On one side lay Ben, with pain in every line of his face; in the Captain's berth, looking absolutely dead, was Mamie; stretched out on a rug lay my brother. He, however, managed to moan out "Bravo!" when he saw me.

I went to the girl's side and felt her pulse. Then, "Where's the Captain?" said I to Ben's careless mate, Donald, who was standing close by, the picture of helpless distress.

"Here," came a ready answer from a mellow voice behind me.

I turned. There stood a portly, gray-headed man, with a trustworthy face. He spoke English; this was worth something just then.

"I am looking for a road," I said, after exchanging "how air yers" with the old fellow, "and would be greatly indebted for any assistance you might lend me."

He grinned mercilessly, I thought, and replied:

"Whar're yer frum?"

I told him, how truthfully it makes no difference, and repeated my inquiry concerning the road.

"Stranger, did yer fetch a road with yours?"

I confessed that I did not.

"Wall, then, I don't know o' nun in this here neighborhood."

"You don't mean to say that you have no roads?"

"That's what I mean."

"How do you get along?"

"Through the woods."

"How do you haul your wood?"

"Don't haul none. Chop down trees an' tote the wood in. When the trees gets scarce, we move."

"Can you tell me how far it is to the next house?"

"Stranger, you kaint find the next house."

"Why?"

"Because it ain't thar. Say, thar, Dick," turning to his son.

"Yas, pap."

"Don't drap that gun. It mout go off an' shoot the stranger."

"It might also shoot you," I suggested.

"No, it never shoots home fokes, but it does hanker powerful airter strangers. Felt mighty sorry fur one o' these here Goverment whisky hunters tudder day. He cum er hangin' roun' here, jes like yer air doin', an' I was mighty afreed that ole Sal—that's the gun's name—would get ter cuttin' up, an' blame o' she didn't flop over airter a while an' shoot the feller through the leg spite o' everything I could do. Shot him, sah, even arter my wife had reasoned with her, an' my wife's a reasoner, lemme tell yer. Say, thar, Dick."

"Yas, pap."

"Do oot Sal look sorter ashay?"

"Yas, pap."

"Stranger, I don't wanter hurry you off, fur if that's a man in the curmunity what likes compy it's me; but, ef I was in yer place, dinged of I didn't ride!"

"I don't know which way to ride."

"Better ride straddle, I reckin."

"I mean, I don't know where to go."

"Go er way! Say, thar, Dick!"

"Yas, pap."

"Is Sal gittin' hard ter hold?"

"Yas, pap."

"Stranger, I swear that yer'd better hussle, fur when Sal gets crossways, an' ashay, an' hard ter hold, that's givin' ter hold."

"My friend, you mistake me for a deputy marshal, when, in fact" (cowardly ruse, but my only hope) "I am a wildcat distiller and am runnin' from the officials. I live over here on the creek, and when I left home the neighborhood was full of deputy marshals."

"Git right down an' come in," he said.

"Say, thar, Dick."

"Yas, pap."

"Is Sal ashay?"

"No, pap."

"Is she hard ter hold?"

"No, pap."

"Wall, lean her agin the tree an' take this hoss and gin him smthin' ter eat. Go er way, Lize," addressing the dog, "this ain't no whisky hunter."

The animal seemed to understand once, and without bestowing another sneaking glance on me, he walked away and laid down with a satisfied air.

"Jes come in, Colonel," said the old fellow; "too late ter get outen this curmunity ter night. I'll show yer the way in the mawnin. Moll," turning to his wife.