

garment, which does duty for regulation street attire, brown arms and shoulders are usually bare in summer and skirts elevated nearly to the knees through the ever present chord. This completes a general sketch of the female squatter anywhere throughout the comet's-tail.

The one discomfiting element in the "tar heel's" life and the only one able to startle him out of habitual composure is the snake of which mates and "balls" exist throughout the long grass and open spaces of that region. Rattlers, which are most numerous, have deprived many families of a somewhat passive member, but their wonderful promptitude (considering usual inactivity), and skill in the use of herbs, prove often successful in coping with the dangerous enemy.

They seemed indifferent and taciturn without history or traditions but acknowledged among themselves one exception spoken of in slow deliberate tones as for "Scott what come fum Carliny." On hunting him up we found Joe more communicative than his conferees. A dirty aged patriarch was the oracle, who told a story substantially to this effect. He left South Carolina a mere boy in company with the retinue of Vick founder of Vicksburg. Pushing their way through the country they stumbled upon the present site of the city. Charmed with the location, the far seeing intelligence of his friend grasped the advantages of the situation at once, and induced him to plant his staff and tent on the brow of those hills overlooking the Mississippi which now perpetuate his name. But Scott with dissatisfaction, and less judgment returned to Marion county in search of a golden egg. Evidently it had eluded his grasp.

At the time he had related his experiences, his greatest ambition was to be allowed a meal partaken from the granite ironware plate used by the travelers to whom he related his story. The request was granted and Vick's whilom companion shuffled off mumbling thanks through the white unkempt beard laden with crumbs.

Having absorbed all the possible information for the moment, we left Marion county for a closer study at some later date.

SEMRICK.

Corroborative Satisfaction—Mother: "I gave you ten cents to be good yesterday, and to-day you are just trying to show how bad you can be." Willie: "Yes, but I am just trying to show you to-day that you got the worth of your money yesterday."—Sunshine.

Applied Irony—Georgie: "Auntie, what does irony mean?" Auntie: "It means to say one thing and mean the opposite, like calling a rainy day a fine day." Georgie: "I think I understand you, auntie. Wouldn't this be irony, 'Auntie, I don't want a nice big piece of cake?'"—Youth's Companion.

With a Reservation—Mamma (to Johnny, who had been given a pear with pills artfully concealed in it): "Well, dear, have you finished your year?" Johnny: "Yes, mamma, all but the seeds."—Druggist's Circular.

THE LOUIS-D'OR: A FRENCH CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY FRANCOIS COPPEE.

When Lucien de Hem saw his last bill for a hundred francs clawed by the banker's rake, when he rose from the roulette-table where he had just lost the debris of his little fortune, scraped together for this supreme battle, he experienced something like vertigo, and thought that he should fall.

His brain was muddled; his legs were limp and trembling. He threw himself upon the leather lounge that circumscribed the gambling table.

For a few moments he mechanically followed the clandestine proceedings of that hell in which he had sullied the best years of his youth, recognized the worn profiles of the gamblers under the merciless glare of the three great shadeless lamps, listened to the clicking and the sliding of the gold over the felt, realized that he was bankrupt, lost; remembered that in the drawer of his dressing-table lay a pair of pistols—the very pistols of which General de Hem, his father, had made noble use at the attack of Zantcha; then, overcome by exhaustion, he sank into a heavy sleep.

When he awoke his mouth was clammy, and his tongue stuck to his palate. He realized by a glance at the clock that he had scarcely slept a half-hour, and he felt the imperious necessity of going out to get a breath of the fresh air.

The hands on the dial pointed exactly to a quarter of twelve.

As he rose and stretched his arms it occurred to him that it was Christmas Eve, and by one of those ironical freaks of the memory, he felt as though he were once more a child, ready to stand his little boot on the hearth before going to bed. Just then old Dronski, one of the pillars of the trade, the traditional Pole, wrapped in the greasy worn cloak adorned with frogs and passementerie, came up to Lucien muttering something behind his dirty, grayish beard.

"Lend me five francs, will you, Monsieur? I haven't stirred from this place for two days, and for two whole days seventeen hasn't come out once. You may laugh at me all you like, but I'll bet you my fist that when the clock strikes twelve, seventeen will be the winning number."

Lucien de Hem shrugged his shoulders; and fumbling through his pockets, he found that he had not even money enough to comply with that feature of gambling etiquette known among the frequenters of the establishment as "the Pole's hundred cents."

How could he give what he did not have? And if he had found but a single louis, would he not hazard it to retrieve the fortune he had lost?

He passed into the ante-chamber, put on his hat and cloak, and disappeared down the narrow stairway with the agility of people who have a fever. During the four hours which Lucien had spent in a den it had snowed heavily, and the street, one of those narrow wedges between two rows of high build-

ings in the very heart of Paris, was intensely white.

Above, in the calm sky, cold stars glittered.

The exhausted gambler shivered under his furs, and hurried along with a blank despair in his heart, thinking of the pistols that awaited him in the top drawer of his dressing-table. He had not gone a hundred feet when he stopped suddenly before a heart-rending spectacle, one that would have touched the sympathies of all but the most hardened of gamblers.

On a stone bench, near the monumental doorway of a wealthy residence, sat a little girl six or seven years old, barely covered with a ragged black gown.

She had fallen asleep there in spite of the bitter cold, her body bent forward in a pitiful posture of resigned exhaustion. Her poor little head and her dainty shoulders had moulded themselves into the angle of the freezing wall.

One of her worn slippers had fallen from her dangling foot and lay in the snow before her. Lucien de Hem mechanically thrust his hand into his vest pocket, but he remembered that he had not even been able to fee the club waiter.

He went up to the child, however, impelled by an instinct of pity.

He meant, no doubt, to pick her up and take her home with him, to give her shelter for the night, when suddenly he saw something glitter in the little slipper at his feet.

He stooped. It was a louis-d'or.

Some charitable soul—a woman, no doubt—had passed there, and at the pathetic sight of that little shoe in the snow and had remembered the poetic Christmas legend, and with discreet fingers had dropped a splendid gift, so that the forsaken little one might still believe in the presents of the Child-Christ, and might awake with renewed faith in the midst of her misery.

A gold louis!

That meant many days of rest and comfort for the little beggar.

Lucien was just about to awaken her and surprise her with her good fortune when, in a strange hallucination, he heard a voice in his ear, which whispered with drawing inflection of the Pole:

"I haven't stirred from this place for two days, and for two whole days seventeen hasn't come out once. I'll bet you my fist that when the clock strikes twelve, seventeen will be the winning number."

Then this youth who was twenty-three years of age, the descendant of a race of honest men—this youth who bore a military name, and had never been guilty of an unmanly act—conceived a monstrous thought; an insane desire took possession of him.

He looked anxiously up and down the street, and having assured himself that he had no witness, he knelt, and reaching out cautiously with trembling fingers, stole the treasure from the little shoe, then rose with a spring and ran breathlessly down the street.

He rushed like a madman up the stairs of the gambling-house, flung