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In the Interests of the Colored People of the Country.

Able and well known writers will contribute to its columns from different parts of the country, and it will contain the latest General News of the day.

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The number of applications for patents in the United States, with our 60,000,000 inhabitants, last year, was 21,797, while in Great Britain and Ireland, with a population of about 40,000,000, the number of applications was 17,-102, which makes the ratio of ingenuity not very different in the English-speaking countries. France comes next on the list, judging by the number of applications for patents, and Germany stands next to France.

A report has been returned by the Government relative to the amount of forests consumed in the country to supply railroad ties. We have at present [illegible] miles of railroad and the report is based upon the return from 63 per cent. of the roads. From this report we find that, allowing the ties to be renewed once in seven years, there will be required for this purpose and for the supply of new roads from year to year, the timber from 563,814 acres. As thirty years will be necessary to renew the growth, we must set aside as a "railroad reserve" a tract of woodland embracing 16,971,420 acres to supply the necessary timber for ties—or an area larger than Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts combined.

In a recent article Commander H. C. Taylor, the well-known authority on naval affairs, has made some interesting statements in regard to the needs of New York harbor from a commercial point of view. The complaint that, despite the superiority of the harbor in every other respect, its entrance is obstructed by bars and sand banks, and its channels are narrow and shallow, and except at certain conditions of tide are unnavigable by the heavier class of ocean steamers, is familiar to every one. A great many different plans have been suggested for remedying this evil, but none of them seem to have found favor, either on account of their expensiveness, or the uncertainty as to whether they will be of any permanent value. Commander Taylor is of the opinion that if any thing is done in this direction—and the growing demands of commerce obviously require that something shall be done—it will be necessary to make a careful survey of the harbor, by way of preparation, before any definite policy can be determined upon.

The Pension Office has prepared a circular showing who are entitled to the benefits of the Mexican Pension Act, which is now in force. A copy of the circular will be sent to any one on application. The Commissioner of Pensions has been receiving daily bushels of letters from those who think themselves entitled to pensions under the act. In order to settle all doubt as to who are so entitled General Black has embodied in the circular the portions of the act which indicate who are to enjoy the benefits, with explanatory remarks calculated to make such sections clear. He announces that only soldiers of the Mexican war who served sixty days and are now sixty-two years of age can secure a pension unless they can prove disability or dependence. The widow of such soldier is also barred from the benefits of the act unless she has reached sixty-two years, or is dependent upon others for her support. The Commissioner also informs the surviving officers of the war that the act places them on the same footing with the soldiers, and they only receive pensions upon the same conditions. The amount of pension can in no case be greater than eight dollars per month.

AIMS.

Aim well!
No time is lost by care.
Haste fails. Beware! Beware.
A true aim wins, then dare
Make each aim tell.

Aim high!
No shaft is e'er misspent
Which, aimed with true intent,
Strikes near the mark. Well meant
Is victory!

—*Walter A. Lees, in Youth's Companion.*

MARION.

One evening, from my seat in the parquet, I saw in an opera box a vision of beauty, remarkable for the sentiment expressed in the pose and costume. A squint through the glass revealed a friend, and a few minutes later I was seated noiselessly a few feet behind her listening to "Lohengrin" and enjoying not for the first time, the charm of a nearly perfect woman. Her profile came against the dark lining of the boxes across the way; her head, like those of maidens in the Panathenæan procession, bent forward a trifle moodily; a small, pink, round ear was listening to the slow words of a youth directly at her back, and I thought the polished right shoulder—shoulders are immensely expressive sometimes—had a certain protesting turn to it. My admiration for this lovely vision had been open enough the winter before to warrant friends in retailing all the gossip of the summer in regard to her, particularly as to things I might be expected by no means to relish, and I sat wondering wether any of it was true and whether the abstracted look in her face had to do with what I had heard.

Finally I examined the youth. He proved to be a noted leader of cotillions, not born to New York, but already indispensable to young ladies and their mammas who give balls; rightfully esteemed, moreover, for his taste in flowers and the getting up of boudoir and drawing room. He, too, was worth examining. I could not but think how nice of him it was that he, like the young ladies, his patrons and clients, should give so much time and pains to his dress. Handsome to begin with, although not cast in any heroic mold, he was exquisite as a bouquet that comes from the florist's—exactly proportioned just right in the arrangement of the flowers, sweet smelling and fresh, with the ice water that artfully recalls dew glimmering neatly on rose and leaf. His face did not indeed sparkle, but it was fresh colored and the blonde mustache curled with exact care at the right number of inches below the suggestion of a curl on his white forehead. I envied heartily the perfect set of his coat, the unwrinkled line of his trousers, and the little patent leather shoe that coyly peeped below. The upper body was bent at just the right angle at the waist, creasing slightly the starched white waistcoat with gold buttons. A flower corresponding with the bouquet that she had laid on the edge of the box was in the lapel, and his gloved hands rested against each other lightly, yet with the motion of an appeal—an appeal belied, however, by the immobility of his face. I wondered if they were engaged, hoped they were not, and fortified the hope by reflecting that because they were so alike in some things, because their names were connected, because it was to the world in all respects so fitting a match—just for those reasons they never would marry.

The act ended and I waited for him to move, but he would not budge, though he saw me well enough and knew who I was. I had to rise and talk over him. The warm look of friendship the elaborate glance my friend gave round about for a chair for me were not enough to move him. She was determined, however; seeing that, he rose and bowed himself out.

"Is it true?" said I, nodding in his direction.

She looked away, frowned slightly, and said:

"Take me round to Mrs. Norman's box; she is nearly alone and there is so much chattering here."

I reflected as we passed to the other box that last year she would not have dared to suggest even such an innocent thing as this. Once ensconced in the vestibule to the box of our kind chaperon a few questions brought a flood of news.

"I always told you that you have the gift of bringing confidences down on yourself. Well, yes, I am half engaged to that—to that—"

"Leader of cotillions," I said gravely.

She laughed. "He is more than that; but I am not in so much danger as you may think. It is a tribute to my vanity to know that he is devoted to me. He is very intimate with girls who make me feel that I do not belong to them and theirs; that I am not rich; that I do not dress, live and talk like them. They invite me to their big balls, but not to their special dances—don't you know? And they ask him how his swimming-match girl is, because I was the best swimmer last year at Narragansett. But"—and here she heaved a sigh, "there is another."

"Great heavens! a third?"

She eyed me with her candid orbs and forced a faint, faint smile.

"Come! You know I never reckoned you among my conquests. You are beyond—above me. I cannot imagine you among them, and somehow should be sorry to class you with them. You are apart; you are my father confessor."

"Go on, then, small penitent; perhaps after all I have heard of him too."

She gave me a wistful look out of large brown eyes, as much as to say, "Don't believe anything wrong of me that gossips may have reported," waited a little, with her lovely head on one side, and then said:

"Harry does lead the cotillion well, and he dances perfectly. Then at Narragansett he had his horses, and made me use one, though I told mamma it was not the right thing and would cause gossip. He monopolized every moment, and Jack—that's the other one—had to fight for half an hour's talk. But Harry doesn't care for swimming, and I do. So Jack and I saw each other a good deal on the beach. And even after we quarreled he would always swim out when I got into deep water, so as to be near in case I needed him. But of course I never took the slightest notice of him then."

"So so! You quarreled! About the horses?"

"Well, yes. He was jealous—and said things—and wanted to know if I was engaged—and made himself disagreeable generally. It isn't pleasant to keep two men apart who hate each other mortally—and so somehow—to like one better than the other, and yet neither altogether."

"Very hard, I doubt not," said I, and while saying it I was surprised to detect a bitterness in my tone.

"I understand what you mean," she said quickly, "but you don't know everything, and me least of all."

"I withdraw the least suspicion of irony you may have thought to detect in what I said."

"That is right; now you are my good old dear, to whom I can say anything I choose. Know, then, Haroun al Raschid," (I started at the playful name she used the winter before, when for about three weeks I had lived a series of foolish Arabian Nights—until she cured me suddenly) "know, then Haroun al Raschid, that I am sure I do love Jack after all, and would rather see his sulky face ten minutes than Harry all day long."

"Which can be taken in two ways," quoth I to myself.

"I am ill and dispirited. Harry is deep in cotillions; he leads to-night. By the way, you must go too; I will not hear no. And I believe he is questioning whether he is not throwing himself away on me. I sent a ticket to Jack, but I feel he won't come; he detests dancing and thinks Delmonico balls low—just imagine!—there is no pride like a pauper's, is there?—but then I've been far from well for the last two weeks. Of course it cannot be love, nobody gets ill from love, you know; but all I can tell you is that I have been in a wretched frame of mind ever since I saw you last, and that your ugly old face was as welcome—as welcome—as a steamer chair to a drowning person—there."

I bent formally enough over the little fragment of a hand stiff in its glove, and repressed a sigh. Ugly! ill-dressed! queer! And once I, too, dreamed dreams which this marvel of youth and beauty never so much as suspected.

"I will go—and with your party—and you must give me one dance in the hall," I cried, with all reasonable gayety. And go I did.

It was like other balls of the kind. There were the young women whom their own families "boom" as beauties, and those whom society at large has a convention to call beauties. There were those whom the reporters for some occult reason always push forward in the newspaper reports, and the belles from Boston and New Orleans who are not recognized as such in New York. There were the English people whom all other English say are considered quite second-rate in London. There was the big black crowd of men, the blasé and timid, blocking the doorways, and there was that quick-eyed, quick-heeled, quick-motioned, but, alas, not quick witted army of youths and men the size of youths, the reason for whose existence is a mystery.

Talking staidly to dowagers on the dias and watching the atmosphere thicken with dust and perfumes and the fine emanations from whirling robes, I soon placed Jack, and recognized in him a stalwart young fellow who was too poor to belong to the giddy rout, but too proud not to be a gentleman.

I saw the whole tragedy: how he would steal a Saturday and Sunday from the sweltering town only to find Marion's time "taken" by the comparatively rich Harry during all his stay; how he became madly in love and madly jealous; how he fumed to Marion and threatened to beat Harry as soundly as the carpet of which he was knight; how Marion had to resent his foolish talk; how they quarreled, made it up, and quarreled to make it up heartily no more.

He followed her with his eyes, devouring the figure of one he considered lost, yet purposely stood so that she could not see him. To do her justice, she was on the lookout for him and more than once stood irresolute, a beautiful statue of hesitation, mustering the black coats with the hope that he might shoulder his big way through the starvelings at the door. He saw it, too, and it gave him, I really believe, a mean sort of pleasure. Once or twice she waved a favor in my direction, but I bowed a negative and an apology. Then I saw Jack edge around to the head of the cotillion, and knew he meant to surprise her with a favor. He was not in the dance, but he had the right by courtesy to an extra turn, which any leader of the cotillion, who is a gentleman at heart, is glad to recognize in men who have no partners. He was about to take a favor from the rack, now almost denuded of its brilliant burden, when Harry came up. Harry had no partner, since the weight of cares on the shoulders of a leader is too great to make it possible for him to do his work thoroughly and attend to a companion.

Harry arrested his arm, and I saw Jack turn away with a look that ought to have set Harry thinking. Jack strode over to Marion. I saw her rise, a little frightened, a little bewildered, and off they went entirely alone, just as Harry was about to start a new figure with other couples. He ran up to them to ask them to be seated, but Jack would not hear. Though his partner tried to stop, he carried her on. I could see the veins on his temples swell, and he danced so as to make Harry skip suddenly to one side in order to avoid a collision. Marion was so deadly pale that I sprang up and came to the edge of the dancing area in alarm. The train of her dress slipped from her hand, and before Jack knew it, the two were bound together by its folds in such a way that none but the most expert dancer could have saved them. Alas, Jack, if no novice, was more than out of practice; half a turn more, and both fell, luckily near the seated couples, but so that Marion struck heavily on the floor and chair. Jack was still more helpless, for his head came thud against another chair, and he lay still.

I looked to see Harry rush forward to pick Marion up, but he seemed readier to run away. He was furious at this blemish on his cotillion. I expected to hear Marion call his name or that of Jack, for, in moments of fright and danger, is it not natural that affection should reveal itself? Instead of that, it was my name Marion called, and, obedient to the summons, she was in my arms and hurried into the ladies' dressing room before half the room knew that anybody had been hurt. In the bustle incident on bringing Jack to his senses the fall of Marion was almost unnoticed.

I went the other day to Marion's wedding, rather giddy in mind, but I hope always as a philosopher. I could not help smiling underneath my face to remember Harry's look a few days after that ball, when he came into "Del's," as the gnomes of society call the restaurant of the swell mob. I regret to say that Jack had got in some pretty work on the faultless face, in vulgar truth had mauled poor Harry in a most brutal fashion with his fists, and Harry thought that nobody would perceive the traces of that Homeric encounter.

Turning at the altar I see both of them behind me, reconciled, and turning back again, I listen in a dazed way to the clergymen, and awake to find myself in some inexplicable way, and by paths of which to this moment I can give no lucid explanation—Marion's husband.—*New York Times.*

Devil Fish.

"Some of the biggest 'squids' or devil fish that have ever been caught," said an old sailor, "have been found around West India Islands in the Gulf of Mexico and Carribbean Sea. I was first mate on a little chunk of a sugar drougher, as the vessels in that trade are called, and was bound from New York to Jamaica. There was fever at the time, so we laid off in the roads and the bark was loaded by coolies with lighters. As we could not go ashore, we rigged sails in the long boat and used to cruise around through the little islands hunting for turtles and eggs. One day we towed the dingy behind the long boat, intending to split the party at one of the islands. When we reached the big island, we separated, part staying on the island and some of the men taking the two boats and going to other islands. I and two men stayed on Devil's Rock and hunted around for whatever we could find. About 100 yards off was a small rock, where the dingy and her crews had gone. We could see the boat tied up and the men loafing around the island. We got tired and sang out to them to come over and get us. They started to the boat and pushed her off, wading out a little way to keep clear of the rocks just covered at high tide. All of a sudden one of them uttered a fearful scream, and something blueish rose out of the water and encircled his body and neck. He drew his knife and slashed at it, when another arm arose. It was a 'squid.' The other fellow was nearer the shore and was just stepping out of the water, when two long feelers wriggled up and around his legs, and in another minute he, too, was being drawn under the water. Their shrieks and cries were pitiful, but we could do nothing. We had no boat and the other party were not in sight. The men fought bravely, but to no end. What could they do against fifty arms, from ten to twenty feet long, each with a grasp of steel. Slowly but surely they were first crushed to death and then dragged down. Their fighting seemed to have maddened the creature, for shortly after the men disappeared the long blue arms wound themselves around the little boat and crushed it as you would a nutshell between your fingers. The horror we felt at the bare sight of the poor fellows' agony nearly drove one of the men crazy who was with me. When the long boat came back we reported the matter, but after that we were never allowed to go over to the islands. Several times we hunted for the devil fish with guns and harpoons, but he was never seen again by any of our crew.—*Chicago Herald.*

Antiquity of Gingerbread.

It will surprise housekeepers to learn that our homely everyday luxury—gingerbread—has been used since the fourteenth century. It was made then and sold in Paris—so Monteil affirms in his "Histoire des Francais." It was then prepared with rye-meal, made into a dough, and ginger and other spices, with sugar or honey, were kneaded into it. It was introduced into England by the court of Henry IV. for their festivals, and soon brought into general use. Since then it has retained its popularity and contributed much to the pleasures and enjoyments of young and old. A great change, of course, was after a while made in its composition, and particularly after it was introduced into this country. Honey, being more expensive than molasses, was less used, and the darker color hidden under some other ingredient, or gilded. "To take the gilt off the gingerbread," was a common proverb, and in the old country boothe, glittering with their rude devices in gingerbread, are still seen in many country towns to this day.

Queen Victoria ascended the throne at the death of her uncle, King William IV., June 20, 1837, and was crowned at Westminster Abbey, June 28, 1838.

A TYPICAL SWELL DINNER.

HOW ONE WAS GIVEN BY "EXCLUSIVE" NEW YORKERS.

Bills of Fare With Each Guest's Portrait Drawn by an Artist—What was Eaten.

In one of her New York letters Clara Belle says: The anti-dance dinners are careful affairs, it need scarcely be said, for they are inevitably compared, contrasted and discussed by the guests when they assemble immediately afterward. Mrs. William Waldorff Astor's dinner, on the last of these occasions, was for only twelve couples. The long table had no cloth, the beautifully polished mahogany being bare, except for a strip of finely embroidered velvet through the center, on which stood rare flowers in art vases and wax candles in elaborate candelabra. At each guest's place lay a hand-painted bill of fare, with his or her name not on it, but instead a caricature portrait, by means of which locations were made. These pictures did not distort the faces, nor at all offensively exaggerate any personal peculiarities, but were merely big heads on small bodies, and altogether rather flattering than otherwise. They were exquisitely drawn by some clever artist, and one who did not care to be known as having done such utilitarian work, for no mark of his identity could be discovered on the cards. To every lady was also provided a big corsage bouquet, tied with satin ribbon to harmonize with her toilet. A great variety of colors must have been provided beforehand and selections hastily but accurately made by some expert after the arrivals, because no instance of a bad match could be seen the table round. The gentlemen got button-hole bunches of flowers. Mr. and Mrs. Astor led the way into the dining-room, but separated and took places opposite each other at the centre of the board. The rest found their assigned chairs in pairs. The feminine toilets were beautiful and costly, but in no instance gorgeous. Simple elegance seemed to be aimed at.

The repast began with raw oysters, tiny ones, opened on the deep shells, the outsides of which had been burnished until they were fit for jewelry. They were not served on plates, but in frames of twisted and silvered wire, each of these novel contrivances holding ten. The next course was clear soup in hand-painted dishes. Boiled salmon, with white sauce and Parisian potatoes, came third. The fish was not brought on dishes ornamented with pictures of fish. Such crockery has gone out of fashion with the extremely swell, and now it is not thought refined to have representations of anything eatable painted on dishes. Even flowers are not approved for such purposes. The idea is, that if, in lifting a morsel of delicate food a rose should be uncovered, the highly educated and acute palate of the eater might be offended. Chicken croquettes and asparagus were fourth; next small broiled birds, then fillets of beef with mushrooms; then ices with cake, and finally coffee. It will be seen that no great variety was afforded, but the cookery was perfect. The dinner began at 8 o'clock and lasted until 11. Talk occupied much of the time, but there was hearty eating generally for it is considered stylish now for women to have robust appetites.

Was there alcohol in this dinner? Plenty. Total abstinence is not practiced in any swell New York family that I know of. A different wine was brought with every course. And each wine had its separate and fanciedly appropriate glasses. Chablis came in a small glass, with a slender stem and concave sides, holding no more than a good swallow, which was taken down at one gulp by most of the guests. That was regarded as an appetizer, and accompanied the oysters. The soup was simultaneous with red wine, tasting like Macon, and served in stemmed glass whose sides were convex, thus holding enough to sip slowly during the course. The fish was contemporaneous with a Rhenish wine in a green, thin tumbler, and in this case decanters were left within reach of all the diners, so that refilling was handy. With the chicken came red and white Bordeaux in the original bottles. Just after the beef a rum punch was served in tiny cups of some rare China ware. The champagne arrived with the dessert, and there was a choice of three makes.

Chinese Theology.

Hung Lung, who keeps a palatial dive on St. Clair street, grew quite eloquent last evening as he unfolded to a reporter the plan of Chinese theology. He said that the Chinese world was not created all at once, but was made in sections, China being the original structure, and all mankind being composed originally of Chinamen. At first a few stars were sprinkled aloft, and they were pleasing to the Chinamen. Then a bang-up sky was stretched across and the moon and sun were swung into place.

By the time this had been arranged it was discovered that there were some wicked men in the kingdom and they were, to use Hung Lung's picturesque idiom, "fired out, pletty quick."

Three or four hundred of the gods had a primary meeting one evening and decided to give them a little country by themselves. Other backsliders were sent to join them from time to time, and in this way the inhabitants of the world outside of China came to overshadow their original forefathers.—*Toledo Blade.*

Real diamonds have been produced artificially in Scotland, but were too small and expensive to be a commercial success. Paste imitations have been so perfected by French chemists that they serve the decorative purpose of the genuine stones, and can only be detected by the test of hardness. Artificial rubies and sapphires have the same composition as the natural minerals, and nearly equal hardness.

ADOWN THE STREAM.

The sunbeams gild the purple stream,
The bubbles float upon its breast;
The landscape in a peaceful dream
Seems sleeping in a soothing rest.
The tall, gaunt pines adorn the cliff,
Appearing like a fortress brown,
While she and I in gladness drift
Beyond the noises of the town.

Fair clouds of beauty slowly float
Above us like a snowy shroud,
And hide in shade our little boat,
As tears are hidden from a crowd.
The shores grow dimmer to the sight,
The woodlands wear their plumes unfurled,
And silent shadows of the night
Descend upon a restless world.

'Tis then we whisper, soft and low,
The sacred love-words from the heart;
The joys and pleasures we would know
Together in the halls of art.
'Tis then that gladness steals around
Upon us while the star-gems gleam,
'Tis then, when Love is shadow-crowned,
We drift adown the purple stream.

—*H. Carleton Tripp, in the Current.*

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

A parlor suit—Courting in the front room.

A garden party—The Shanghai.—*Puck.*

Go West young man and freeze-up with the country.—*Puck.*

"Man wants but little here below"—zero.—*Boston Courier.*

Congressmen use six hundred towels a day. They ought to have "clean hands."—*Norristown Herald.*

Maud S. is said to have a stride of fifteen feet. How a man must envy her when the sheriff's after him.—*Philadelphia Call.*

Customer.—"Don't show me any more Astrakhan. Pray what is that fur?" Clerk.—Fur! Why, fur to keep yer hands warm!"—*Harper's Bazar.*

The toboggan business is only a temporary mania. We'll bet a new hat that every slide in the country will be abandoned before July 1.—*Detroit Free Press.*

A naturalist recommends eating raw onions for insomnia. The theory probably is that you will go to sleep to avoid smelling your breath.—*New York Tribune.*

"Would you marry an old man for his money?" asked Mildred. "Well, I declare," exclaimed Laura with a startled air, "you surely don't suppose anything else would induce me to marry him?"—*Pittsburg Dispatch.*

Mrs. Brimmer—Why, Mr. Brimmer, here's a fly. Where did he come from this cold weather? See him hover around that book. What is he after? Mr. Brimmer—Looking for the fly leaf, I suppose.—*Boston Budget.*

"If there is anything I like better than classical music," said Major Brannigan, in a high voice, as he moved with the throng out of the concert room, "it's lemons. They both set my teeth on edge."—*San Francisco Post.*

The minister's quite discouraged,
As he looks at the empty pews;
So few have his efforts encouraged,
So few who care for his views.
And he says, with a voice full of sighing,
"The gospel most people are scorning;
Ah! This world is giving to lying,
Yes, lying in bed, Sunday morning.
—*Goodall's Sun.*

Maladies of Caged Birds.

The melancholy part of the study of caged birds is the abundance of diseases to which they are liable. Especially during the winter and the early spring the pathetic little captives are apt to suffer and die in a way which makes the very fact of their captivity a reproach. After examining the grisly catalogue of their complaints, we have come to the conclusion that the excessive dullness of their lives in cages drives them to the only indulgence which is possible to them, that of overeating themselves. The excited bird which falls from its perch, in the middle of a burst of song, smitten with apoplexy; the hot and lumpy bird which is a victim to hepatitis; the corpulent bird whose figure no dandelion leaves or Epsom salts will reduce; the epileptic bird that drags on existence by sipping tincture of lobelia and drops of castor oil, all these melancholy invalids would have escaped their sad condition if they could have resisted the tempting hempseed and the luscious milksop. But how are they to drag life through their long monotonous days? In the utter insipidity of aviary existence the open and inexhaustible box of food decoys them like a vice, and they succumb to temptation, as Mme. Bovary did, from sheer unmitigated ennui. Sometimes, in the later stages of decline, all reticence is thrown aside, and the unfortunate songster sits all day long at the feeding trough, shelling and throwing aside the food that it positively cannot swallow, and yet must be handling. In these sad cases a live spider is sometimes found beneficial, as for hysterical human patients the family doctor may recommend a pantomime or a fancy ball. We cannot but think that more study might with advantage be given to the question of the food of caged birds, since this seems to be the difficulty upon which their management always strikes. It is curious that bird fanciers persist in feeding their charges with hempseed, probably because the irresponsible little wretches gobble it up with so much greediness. But this is no more a reason for giving it to them than the fact that children like macaroons would be a reason for feeding them daily upon this indigestible dainty. Birds require at least as much care as children in selecting for them, not what they prefer, but what is best.—*Saturday Review.*

Queen Victoria will receive a Jubilee address from the thirty or more survivors of the famous Light Brigade of Balaklava.