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of the earth, and, like most people who have lived in large towns, he had never come across them since. But he was an inquirer into all out of the way things, and his curiosity was piqued accordingly.

He was in love and therefore superstitious: the next few hours were to decide his fate, and there is scarcely one man in ten who would not have tried some kind of *sortes*, if it fell in his way. One natural instinct implies another. So, both as a lover and as an ethnologist, he took out what change he had and put it into Zelda's brown hand, which received it as a matter of business. She examined his left hand carefully.

(To be continued.)

MERMAIDS.

SAILORS and seaside folk have always had a tendency to believe in mermaids. They see more varieties of fish, and stranger forms of amphibia, than landmen; and, moreover, they enjoy marvellous stories about wonderful things. Classical writers tell us that the Sirens were two maidens who sat by the sea, and so charmed with their music all who sailed by, that the fascinated wayfarers remained on the spot till they died. The Sirens (afterwards increased to three in number, and called by various names) are supposed to have had much to do with mermaids — that is, people who believed in the one had no difficulty in believing in the other.

Tracing down century after century, we find an abundance of mermaid stories, vouched for with all the gravity of genuine belief. In an old book descriptive of Holland, the reader is told that in 1480 a tempest broke through the embankments of the low-lying districts, and covered much meadow and pasture land with water. Some maidens of the town of Edam, in West Friesland, going in a boat over the flooded land to milk their cows, perceived a mermaid entangled in the mud and shallow water. They took her into the boat, and brought her with them to Edam, dressed her in woman's apparel, and taught her to spin. She fed like one of them, but could not be brought to speak. Some time afterwards she was brought to Haarlem, where she lived for several years, though still showing an inclination for the water. "They had given it," we are further informed, "some notion of a deity; and it made its reverences very devoutly whenever it passed by a crucifix."

In 1560, on the west coast of Ceylon, some fishermen brought up at one draught of a net "seven mermen and maids," which a Jesuit missionary certified to be veritable types of human beings — excepting, we suppose, in regard to fish-shaped tails. This tail question was, in the same century, settled in a peculiar manner by engravers and herald painters. Mermaids with two tails were often engraved in French and German books on heraldry; a double-tailed mermaid was engraved in a Swiss edition of Ptolemy's Geography, published in 1540; and the Venetian printers had a liking for the same kind of symbol on their title-pages.

Mary Queen of Scots was made the butt of numerous caricatures, some of which represented her in the character of a mermaid, sitting on a dolphin. One has been discovered in the State Paper Office — a mean and unmanly production, intended to cast ridicule on a woman who could not defend herself from its effects. It is supposed that Shakespeare, writing some years after the appearance of this caricature, had it in his mind when he created the "Midsummer-Night's Dream." Oberon says to Puck, —

Thou remember'st
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea-maid's music.

We well know that Shakespeare made many of his char-

acters talk about mermaids and sea-sirens: "I'll draw more sailors than the mermaids shall;" "I'll stop mine ear against the mermaid's song;" "At the helm a seeming mermaid steers;" "Oh, train me not, sweet mermaid, with the note!" "Her clothes spread wide, and mermaid-like awhile they bore her up" — are passages well known to readers of Shakespeare. Nor are musical folk less acquainted with the charming air which Haydn gave to the mermaid's song, where the siren of the sea says to some enchanted mortal, —

Come with me, and we will go
Where the rocks of corals grow,

An almanac for 1688 gravely told its readers, "Near the place where the famous Dee payeth its tribute to the German Ocean, if curious observers of wonderful things in nature will be pleased to resort thither on the 1st, 13th, and 29th of May, and in divers other times in the ensuing summer, as also in the harvest time to the 7th and 14th of October, they will undoubtedly see a pretty company of Mar Maids, creatures of admirable beauty, and likewise hear their charming, sweet, melodious voices." The prognosticator kindly tells us the exact song which these Scottish mermaids would sing; it was nothing less than a new version of God Save the King; but as the year 1688 was rather a critical one in matters dynastic, we are left somewhat in doubt whether the king to be thus honored was James the Second or William of Orange. At any rate, the mermaids were pious as well as loyal, for one of the things they were to do was "to extol their Maker, and his bounty praise." About the same time, Merollo, a Spaniard or Italian, who make a voyage to Congo, told the readers of his narrative that he saw, in the sea, "some beings like unto men, not only in their figures, but likewise in their actions; for we saw them plainly gather a great quantity of a certain herb, with which they immediately plunged themselves into the sea." The sailors tried to catch them in a net, but the mermen were too wide awake — "they lifted up the net, and made their escape."

In 1701, according to Brand's Description of the Orkney and Shetland Islands, "A boat at the fishing drew her lines; and one of them, as the fishers thought, having some great fish upon it, was with greater difficulty than the rest raised from the ground. But when raised, it came more easily to the surface of the water; upon which a creature like a mermaid presented itself at the side of the boat. It had the face, arms, breast, and shoulders of a woman, and long hair hanging down the back; but the nether part was beneath the water, so that they could not understand the shape thereof. The two fishers who were in the boat being surprised at this strange sight, one of them unadvisedly drew a knife and thrust it into her bosom, whereupon she cried, as they judged, 'Alas!' The hook giving way, she fell backward, and was no more seen; the hook being big, went in at her chin and out at the upper lip." Brand did not see all this; indeed, most of the mermaid stories come second or third hand. The fishers told a bailie, to whom the boat belonged, the bailie told a lady, and the lady told Mr. Brand. The man who cruelly stabbed the poor mermaid was much troubled afterwards. "He is now dead, and, as was observed, never prospered after this, but was haunted by an evil spirit in the appearance of an old man, who, as he thought, used to say unto him, 'Will ye do such a thing? Who killed the woman?' The other man then in the boat is yet alive in the isle of Burra." The man was certainly more like a brute than a fisherman, or he would not have drawn his knife for such a purpose; whether human or non-human, she would have been worth more to him alive than dead, even as an exhibition to villagers at a baubee a head.

In 1737, according to a Scottish magazine, the crew of a ship newly arrived in the Thames from the East Indies reported that in the island of Mauritius they had partaken of a mermaid, the flesh of which was a good deal like veal. The mermaid weighed three or four hundred weight — rather a buxom specimen! The head was particularly large, and so were the features, which differed but little

from those of a man or woman. The story tells of two of them, one with a beard four or five inches long, the other much more feminine. "When they are first taken," the narrator proceeds to say, "which is often on the ground, they cry and grieve with great sensibility." About the same time a story came from Vigo in Spain to the effect that some fishermen on that coast had caught a sort of merman, five feet and a half from head to foot. The head was like that of a goat, with a long beard and moustaches, a black skin, somewhat hairy, a very long neck, short arms, hands longer and larger than they ought to be in proportion, and long fingers, with nails like claws, webbed toes, and a fin at the lower part of the back.

The magazines for 1775 gave an account of a mermaid which was captured in the Levant, and brought to London. One of the learned periodicals gravely told its readers that the mermaid had the complexion and features of a European, like those of a young woman; that the eyes were light blue, the nose small and elegantly formed, the mouth small, the lips thin, "but the edges of them round like those of a codfish;" that the teeth were small, regular, and white; that the neck was well rounded, and that the ears were like those of the eel, "but placed like those of the human species, with gills for respiration, which appear like curls." There was no hair on the head, but "rolls, which, at a distance, might be mistaken for curls." There was a fin rising pyramidally from the temples, "forming a foretop, like that of a lady's head-dress." The bust was nearly like that of a young damsel, a proper orthodox mermaid, but, alas! all below the waist was exactly like a fish. Three sets of fins below the waist, one above the other, enabled her to swim. Finally, "It is said to have an enchanting voice, which it never exerts except before a storm." The writer in the *Annual Register* probably did not see this mermaid, which the *Gentleman's Magazine* described as being only three feet high. It was afterwards proved to be a cheat, made from the skin of the angle-shark.

A Welsh farmer named Reynolds, living at Pen-y-hold in 1782, saw a something which he appears to have believed to be a mermaid; he told the story to Doctor George Phillips, who told it to Mrs. Moore, who told it to a young lady pupil of hers, who wrote out an account of it for Mrs. Morgan, who inserted it in her "Tour to Milford Haven." How much the story gained on its travels — like the Three Black Crows, or the parlor game of Russian Scandal — we are left to find out for ourselves; but its ultimate form was nearly as follows: One morning, just outside the cliff, Reynolds saw what seemed to him to be a person bathing in the sea, with the upper part of the body out of the water. On nearer view, it looked like the upper part of a person in a tub, a youth, say, of sixteen or eighteen years of age, with nice white skin; a sort of brownish body, and a tail, were under the water. The head and body were human in form, but the arms and hands thick in proportion to length, while the nose, running up high between the eyes, terminated rather sharply. The mysterious being looked attentively at Reynolds, and at the cliffs, and at the birds flying the air, with a wild gaze; but uttered no cry. Reynolds went to bring some companions to see the merman or mermaid; but when he returned it had disappeared. If we like to suppose that Reynolds had seen some kind of seal, and that the narration had grown to something else by repetition from mouth to mouth, perhaps we shall not be very far wrong.

The present century, like its predecessors, has had its crop of mermaid stories, reappearing from time to time. In 1809, one of these strange beings made its appearance off the coast of Caithness, in Scotland. The particulars we have not at hand; but it happens to be on record by what channels the narrative reached the public. Two servant girls and a boy saw something in the water which they decided must be a mermaid; they mentioned it to Miss Mackey, who wrote of it to Mrs. Jones, who showed the letter to Sir John Sinclair, who showed it to a gentleman, who caused the statement to be inserted in a newspaper.

The Philosophical Society brought these facts to light. Even so grave a publication as "Rees's Cyclopædia," in 1819, said, "We have a well-attested account of a merman near the great rock called Diamond, on the coast of Martinique. The persons who saw it gave in a precise description of it before a notary. They affirm that they saw it wipe its hands over its face, and even heard it blow its nose."

Bartholomew Fair was of course not without its mermaid — more or less like a fish, as the case might be. In 1822, the fashionable West End had given half-crowns to see a mermaid. It was a clumsy and barefaced piece of workmanship, made up chiefly of a dried monkey's head and body, and a fish's tail; and was altogether about as ugly an affair as ever drew silly people to an exhibition. After a career of half-crowns, the show came down to a shilling admission fee; and although naturalists and journalists were not slow in exposing the fraud, the success was considerable; for, we are told, "three to four hundred people every day pay their shilling each to see a disgusting sort of compound animal, which contains in itself everything that is odious and disagreeable." A drawing of this precious production, as exhibited in an upright glass case, was etched at the time by Cruikshank. The mermaid gradually went down in dignity, until at length she became a penny show at Bartholomew Fair in 1825. How many mermaids there are at this present moment boxed up in caravans rambling from one country fair to another it would be hard to guess; but some there are, beyond question.

Our own pages contained, about eight years ago, a narrative tending to show that a belief in mermaids still lingers in our western maritime counties.

Some naturalists have pointed out characteristics in marine animals which afford a very probable groundwork for many of the current mermaid stories. Witness Sir J. E. Tennent's account of the dugong: "The rude approach to the human outline, observed in the shape of the head of the creature, and the attitude of the mother while suckling her young, holding it to her breast with one flipper, while swimming with the other, holding the heads of both above water; and when disturbed, suddenly diving and displaying her fish-like tail — these, together with her habitual demonstrations of strong maternal affection, probably gave rise to the fable of the mermaid." Woman or fish, normal or abnormal, the mermaid has taken a good hold of poets and composers, interlude writers and farce writers; and the Mermaid in Fleet Street was one of the famous old taverns of past days. The orthodox mermaid has, of course, a comely maiden's face, with beautiful hair, which she is combing with one hand, while in the other she holds a looking-glass.

LOUIS NAPOLEON PAINTED BY A CONTEMPORARY.

IN the year 1863, shortly after the last visit paid by Mr. Senior to Paris, he selected from his journals the conversations which threw most light upon the character of Louis Napoleon.

Many of them were with statesmen who are still playing a distinguished part in public life, and could not therefore be published with the names of the speakers. Thus their chief value would be lost. But the same objection does not apply to the most interesting portion of the book: the conversations with Madame R., a lady who was brought up as a sister with the Emperor, and who continued her intimacy with him till the *coup d'état*, which she, as a woman of integrity, and a staunch republican, could not forgive.

Mr. Senior made her acquaintance in 1854, shortly before the Crimean War.

February 17, 1854. — I went in the evening to Mme. Mohl's and found there Madame R. We began, of course, with the letter of Louis Napoleon to the Czar: —

"It was Louis Philippe," said Madame R., "that made Louis Napoleon *un homme de lettres*. It was at Ham that