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THE BEST GIFT OF ALL.

One-and-twenty, one-and-twenty,
Youth and beauty, lovers plenty;
Health and riches, ease and leisure,
Work to give a zest to pleasure;
What can a maid so lucky lack?
What can I wish that fate holds back

Youth will fade and beauty wanes;
Lovers, flouted, break their chains,
Health may fail and wealth may fly you,
Pleasures cease to satisfy you;
Almost everything that brings
Happiness is born with wings.

This I wish you; this is best—
Love that can endure the test,
Love surviving youth and beauty,
Love that blends with homely duty;
Love that's gentle, love that's true,
Love that's constant wish I you.

Still unsatisfied she lives,
Who for gold mere silver gives,
One more joy I wish you yet,
To give as much love as you get
Grant you, Heaven, this to do,
To love him best who best loves you.

—*New York Sun.*

MRS. MORRIS' MORTGAGE.

BY EDWIN H. TRAFTON.

I.

Whatever brightness there was in that little household was strictly home-made. Home-made things may lack style and polish and a great many other qualities, but they are solid and satisfying. The widowed mother was brave and patient; fourteen-year-old George was manly and helpful; Baby Bess, a wee tot, insisted that she was "mamma's sunbeam and George's joy," and between them the love these three had for each other was their principal fortune. To be sure, they had their cottage, nestled like a brown little wren of a house among the cherry trees, but so far from the more pretentious street of the village as to be quite secluded in its modest retirement—a home-nest where there was more peace than plenty.

One thing this tiny residence had in common with many stately mansions that unwinkingly stand forth as if begging for public admiration—there was a mortgage on it. It was so very small a house that it really seemed as though it would not take much of a mortgage to crush in its low, rambling roof, like a too heavy load of snow, and, like the snow, is a mortgage on the poor man's home, a cold, pitiless dead weight.

Next after her two children Mrs. Morris loved this wren-like house best of anything, and for three long years she had worked at that mortgage, saving up and paying it off "by littles," until at last when of the original $500 there only remained a trifle less than $40 to pay, Lawyer Harding had given her notice from the holder of the mortgage that he could no longer extend the time, and that unless the balance was settled by the first day of the month he would foreclose. This simply meant that she would lose all she had paid and be turned out of doors into the bargain. At the same time the lawyer had intimated, on giving this disagreeable intelligence, that if Mrs. Morris would consent to marry him he would relieve her of all further trouble, not only in regard to this but all future financial embarrassments.

The mortgage itself was trouble enough for one poor woman to bear; but she would rather have had all the mortgages in the world to fight than endure the thought of life with a man with the mean traits of this lawyer. She gave him to understand this fact as clearly as a good use of plain, matter-of-fact English could do it. His words were smooth enough—too smooth, in fact—as he went away, but there was the sort of smile that boded no good to the object of his thoughts. It was as evident to her as though he had said so in so many words, that the time mentioned would be the last day of grace.

April 1st came—but not the paltry balance needed to clear off the mortgage. And no sum of money is paltry when one must have it to avert disaster—and cannot get it. Mrs. Morris could see no earthly way out of her trouble that morning. Everything looked dark. It was hard to have worked so long, to have struggled for weeks and months and years, as she had done, only to lose all at last. No, not all! For she had George and Bess left. Thinking of them made it still harder to bear, for it was for their dear sakes she had toiled and economized and saved. There was a suspicious suggestion of what her eyes had been doing when George came cheerily in to his breakfast.

"What, my little mammie's eyes are half drowned!" he exclaimed, in his hearty, boyish way, with part fun and more tenderness in his tone, as he hugged her like a young bear, and dabbed kisses into each damp eye.

"Tisn't me?" he continued, searching for a cause for the rather unusual display of discomfort. "No? I'm glad of that, because I don't think I've done anything downright awful lately, and it can't be Bess? She's all right, I know—no measles, or whooping cough, or anything—for I just saw her sleeping like a—a—" here he paused for a satisfactory smile, dabbing more warm kisses from rosy lips into red eyes the while—"like a happy little kitten."

"Georgie, do eat your breakfast. It's as bad to have one's eyes kissed out as drowned out."

"Oh, I know!" he continued, pursuing the subject with no intention of being put off. "That old Harding is coming again, I'll bet anything."

"Yes, dear, he is coming;" but the little woman had not the heart to tell all that dreaded coming implied.

"Pshaw, mammie! Don't worry so about it. That blamed mortgage is almost paid off and you won't have to see the mean sneak many times more."

"I don't like to hear you speak that way. It doesn't help me and it hurts you."

More kisses that said as plainly as words could, "It was because I love you and can't bear to see you so unhappy, but if it hurts you I won't do it any more."

Then he pitched into his breakfast with as savage earnestness as though he thought he was a half-starved cannibal and his food was the luckless but well-cooked Harding

II.

"I'll bet it's an 'April fool!'" said George, at the sound of an unusually loud ring at the front door. It was in reality a boy with a large official envelope, addressed to Mrs. Morris, who simply said he was told there was no answer to wait for.

Nervously Mrs. Morris tore it open, as some people have a way of doing with their telegrams.

"It is the mortgage!" she cried, as she undid the formidable document. It was not her familiarity with law papers that enabled her to so promptly identify it; every fold and crease and blot of this mortgage she knew by long and sad acquaintance.

"Are you sure 'tisn't an April fool, mammie?" asked George, suspiciously. Neither she nor his mother had, from past experience any reason to expect any favors from Harding or the rich property owner he represented. Here was the mortgage in her hands—there could be no doubt of that—a small piece of paper, after all, to have been such a dead weight on the tiny home and the three that were in it. Careful examination failed to discover any scrap of a letter or word of explanation accompanying it.

"It is too good to be true," sighed the widow, still dazed by the event, "but people are sometimes better than we give them credit for. I've already more than paid the original amount of money which your poor father was obliged to raise, when the interest is counted in, and they may have been moved to do a kindly, generous act, although," she added, "I would as soon look for sunshine in a coal hole. If any one has been really good it is not Mr. Harding, I am sure of that much; it must have been the man to whom the money really belonged and for whom he works."

"If it ain't some kind of a mean 'April fool' I'll eat my hat," said George, with greater force than elegance, who would not believe the evidence of his own eyes, when that evidence was in Harding's favor.

Presently that person himself made his appearance. He had the air of one who had earned a warm welcome and expected to receive it. Between gratitude and doubt the widow smiled, and her manner was so much more friendly than ever before that Harding flattered himself that he had done a very clever thing indeed.

"Yes, my dear Mrs. Morris, I sent on the mortgage ahead of me because I thought you would like to get it into your own hands at last."

"Indeed, I am very glad if all my trouble with it is finally at an end."

"I fully appreciated that fact, and wished to relieve you of all annoyance as soon as possible," with a plausible, self-satisfied look. "But I felt so sure your own good sense would urge you to agree kindly to my proposition, that at last you would consent to make me the happiest of men, that I did not hesitate to let you see with what perfect confidence I was ready to carry out my part of the contract to relieve you of all financial troubles."

"Mr. Harding!" was all she could say in her indignant surprise.

"Perhaps I have been too hasty—"

"I am sorry you have put me to the disagreeable necessity of repeating what I thought I had said plainly enough before; I would rather give up this little home of ours and take my children I know not where than to accept any home you could provide."

Rising as she spoke, with a very becoming color in her cheeks, she indicated that the interview was at an end.

"Then, madam," he replied, also rising, "it is my painful duty to inform you that the alternative of your own selection must be enforced. If you will please to notice this mortgage still lacks my signature as agent with power of attorney. That signature I shall be pleased to affix on the payment of the balance due—thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents."

"But, I thought—"stammered the widow.

"You thought I was fool enough to release you from the obligations of this document before I knew you were ready to marry me? Hardly. Have you the $37.50 handy? No? I thought not. Then, madam, I shall foreclose without any further delay, and—"

"Count that, will you, and see if there isn't $37.50 there."

It was George who had heard enough of the conversation to find out that the mortgage was not paid off, after all, and slipping out of the room had returned a minute later with a small box full of silver and copper, which he slapped down rather unceremoniously on the the table in front of Harding. Which was the more surprised, the mother or the lawyer, it would be quite impossible to tell.

"What's all this mean?" demanded Harding with a scowl.

"Never you mind what all this means. Just count that money and sign your name, and then if you ever bother my mother again just look out for yourself, that's all!"

"Oh, George!" was all Mrs. Morris could say.

There was nothing for Harding to do but to count the money, which was correct to a cent, and affix his signature, which he did with a face that looked like a thunder cloud, and not without mutterings that faintly suggested the disagreeable commotion inside. When he was at last out of the house, viciously banging the door behind him as a sort of harmless malediction as he went, George caught his mother in his arms, and hugged and kissed her till both were fairly out of breath.

"I earned and saved it all myself, mammie," he finally was able to explain, "doing odd jobs and things—all but the last $10, and that I got for my stamp collection yesterday. I knew you hadn't the money to make this last payment, and I meant to surprise you all the time. I knew that was an 'April fool' when that mortgage came, but if there is a bigger April fool in this town than that blamed old Harding, I don't want to see him."

"You blessed boy!" was all "mammie" could say between laughing and crying, while it would have been hard to find three happier people on the face of the earth that day than the brave, patient mother, her manly, helpful son, and sweet Baby Bess, who got her full share of the sunshine of joy.

And it will not make you the least bit sorry, I am sure, to know that the reason Harding was so anxious to marry Mrs. Morris was that he knew of some property that was soon coming to her, of which she had never a hint. But when this new and unexpected blessing did come to them they did not desert the brown little wren-like home-nest under the cherry trees—only it made possible George's dream of college days and a broader future.—*New York Graphic.*

A United States Senator's Romance.

"Senator James G. Fair, of Nevada, was born within five miles of where I was," said a gentleman connected with the Chicago police department to a reporter. "There have been many anecdotes published about him, and especially about his divorced wife, but I think I can tell how she became his wife, by a mere accident, as it were. Jim's family lived in county Tyrone, while ours came from an adjoining county. The Fairs were known in all the country around as fighters, and right good ones they were. Beside being fellows that knew how to handle a black thorn, they were very good carpenters. Jim's father and mother did not live very happily together, so the old man packed up his traps and came to America. He made money and went back to see how his family was getting along. At the time of his return Jim was about twenty years of age. He was the father's pet, and when the old chap was ready to come back to America he took him with him. At this time Jim was engaged to a young girl named Pearce. I can't say anything about the parting that took place between them, but it must have been a tender one on the part of the future Senator, as subsequent events showed.

"At any rate, after he and the old man got over to America the went at carpentering, and made money very fast. Jim thought of his sweetheart, and longed for her. He sent a sum of money to a friend to pay for her outfit and passage to the United States, fully thinking that she would soon come to join his fortunes in the new world. A few months after this young Fair received a reply from his friend to whom he had sent the letter. The nature of the missive must have stirred his heart to the depths. It was to the effect that Miss Pearce had married another young man, and consequently could not be expected to sail on the next ship to her expectant lover.

"But the same letter which conveyed this news also said that there was no occasion for sadness. It reminded young Fair that there was a younger sister in the family whose beauty and graces were as charming as those of the elder one. His friend concluded his letter with the proposition that he should offer the rising fortunes and the money of Fair to one who could accept them. To cut it short, Jim sent back word that he could do so, and it was not long after that when the younger Miss Pearce sailed for America to wed the future bonanza king and Senator. Her subsequent history has been told in print many a time, but I think that this story of Senator Fair's early life will be new to the general public."

Cost of Bad Weather.

To the natives of countries where the climate is very warm, and where custom does not require a complete covering of the body, the expense of clothing is slight. So it is in extremely cold countries, where the discomfort of being uncovered even for a moment leads to the habit of a very unfrequent change of clothing.

How many persons have reflected upon the expense which changes of weather in the civilized temperate zone occasions? To say nothing of the ruin of fine clothing by sudden showers, let us consider what a cost is inflicted upon the community by unpleasant weather which is foreseen.

An umbrella lasts in respectable condition through a certain number of rainy days, according to its quality. Let us take one hundred rainy days as an average. Let us also suppose, for a guess, that on a day which is rainy all over the country, one million umbrellas are brought into use.

Then each of those umbrellas has lost one per cent., say two cents, of its original value, and in the aggregate the umbrelias used are not worth so much by twenty thousand dollars at night as they were in the morning. These amounts are mere guesses, but they serve to show the principle.

January 20, 1884, was a pleasant winter day in London. On January 20, 1885, there was a "London fog." On the former day a single gaslight company sent out sixty-one million cubic feet of gas; on the latter day it sent out ninety-six million feet.

The difference of thirty-five million cubic feet was wholly due to the darkness caused by the fog, and the extra gas supplied by this one company—of which there are several in London—cost the public more than twenty-six thousand dollars.

It is probable that a single foggy day in London entails upon the people of that city, in various ways, an aggregate loss of more than one hundred thousand dollars.—*Youth's Companion.*

Miles of Gold.

Australia boasts of having in its bosom the richest Dorado of modern discovery. A young engineer named Davis, after the most thrilling adventures among cannibal aboriginies of the northern district of the southern continent, at last came upon a region of the finest gold ore. Forthwith he returned to England for the purpose of studying mining operations, and soon again faced for his Dorado. To his utter astonishment he found on his return a whole colony of miners delving away in the treasured earth of which he thought he alone was aware. Himself and a companion, however, started bravely to work, and after some time struck a vein of coarse gold, specimens of which have been analyzed in London with most promising results. Mr. Davis' find was soon thrown into the shade by that of a young man named Rankie, who had the luck to meet with the quartz bursting through the surface, and extending for two miles. Near this district is the famous Morgan reef, which contains gold in immense quantities, wanting only one-tenth of being virgin gold. Verily this story of facts beats Jules Verne's fiction hollow, and threatens a revival of that fever in the heat of which so many heads and hearts have been irremediably lost.

A FACETIOUS GOLD-HUNTER

MARK TWAIN'S EXPERIENCE AS A POCKET MINER.

The Forgotten Claim—An Incident Which Probably Turned the Humorist from Mining to Literature.

The position of the pocket-miner among the other inhabitants of a mining region very much resembles that of the bee-hunter among the people of the frontier settlements in agricultural regions. The business he follows also has several points of resemblance to that of the bee-hunter. The trail followed by one leads him to the tree stored with sweets, and that of the other ends in a pocket of sweetest gold. The man who becomes an expert bee-hunter is likely to remain a bee-hunter all his days, and the same may be said of the pocket miner.

Mark Twain's narrow escape from becoming a pocket-miner has never been told. It is worth recording, as it gave him the story of the "Jumping Frog," and sent him off along the line of the literary lode and set him to scratching therein for pockets of fun.

In 1865 Mark wearied of Bohemian life in San Francisco and went up into the mining regions of Calaveras county to rusticate with some old friends—Steve, Jim and Billy Gillis. Jim Gillis was, and still is, one of the most expert pocket miners in California. Although educated with a view eventually to fight the battle of life as a physician, and though still finding solace in his leisure moments in the works of Greek and Latin authors reposing on a shelf in his cabin, Jim Gillis is booked for life as a pocket miner. The business has charms for him that he cannot break away from—he is bound to it in chains of gold. Show him a particle of quartz gold on the side of a mountain, and if it came to where it was found through the process or accidents of nature undisturbed in any way by the interference of man, he will as unerringly trace it to its source as the bee hunter will follow the bee to its hoard of sweets.

Mark Twain found the Bohemian style of mining practiced by the "Gillis boys" much more attractive than those more regular kinds which call for a large outlay of muscle. He and Jim Gillis took to the hills in search of golden pockets and spent some days in working up the undisturbed trail of an undiscovered deposit. They were on the golden "bee line" and stuck to it faithfully, though it was necessary to carry each sample of dirt to a small stream, in the bed up a canyon in order to pan it out. Each step made sure by golden grains, they at last came upon the pocket which had thrown these grains off. It was a cold, dreary, drizzling day when the "home deposit" was found. The sample carried to the stream and washed out yielded but a few cents. Although the right vein had been discovered, they had as yet found but the "tail-end" of the pocket. Returning to the vein, they dug a sample from a new place, and were about to carry it down to the ravine and test it when the rain began to pour down heavily. With chattering teeth Mark declared he would remain no longer. He said there was no sense in freezing to death, as, in a day or two, when it was bright and warm, they could return and pursue their investigations in comfort. Yielding to Mark's entreaties, backed as they were by his blue nose, humped back, and generally miserable and dejected appearance, Jim emptied the sacks of dirt upon the ground, first having hastily written and posted up a notice of their claim to a certain number of feet on the vein, which notice would hold good for thirty days. Angels' camp being at no great distance from the spot, while their cabin was some miles away. Mark and Jim struck out for the place. The only hotel in the little mining camp was kept by one Coon Drayton, an old Mississippi river pilot, and at his house the pocket miners found shelter. Mark Twain having formerly followed the business of pilot on the Mississippi river, he and Coon were soon great friends, and swapped scores of yarns. It continued to rain for three days, and until the weather cleared up Mark and Jim remained at Coon's hotel.

The story of the "jumping frog" was one of the yarns told Mark by Coon during the three days' session, and it struck him as being so comical that he determined to write it up. When he returned to the Gillis cabin, Mark set to work upon the frog story. He also wrote some sketches of life in the mountains and mines for some of the San Francisco papers.

Mark did not think much of the frog story, even after it had received the finishing touches. He gave the preference to some other sketches and sent them to the papers for which he was writing. Steve Gillis, however, declared that the frog story was the best thing Mark had written, and advised him to save it for a book of sketches he was talking of publishing. A literary turn having been given to the thoughts of the inmates of the Gillis cabin, a month passed without a return to the business of pocket-mining.

While the days were passed by Mark and his friends in discussing the merits of the "Jumping Frog" and other literary matters, other prospectors were not idle. A trio of Austrian miners who were in search of gold-bearing quartz happened upon the spot where Mark and Jim had dug into their ledge. It was but a few days after Twain and Gillis had retreated from the place in the pouring rain. The Austrians were not a little astonished at seeing the ground glittering with gold.

Where the dirt emptied from the sacks had been dissolved and washed away by the rain, lay some three ounces of bright quartz gold. The foreigners were not long in gathering this, but the speedy discovery of the notice forbade their delving into the deposit whence it came. They could only wait and "watch and pray." This hope was that the parties who had posted up the notice would not return while it held good.

The sun that rose on the day after the Twain-Gillis notice expired saw the Austrians in possession of the ground, with a notice of their own conspicuously and defiantly posted. The new owners cleaned out the pocket, obtaining from it, in a few days, a little over $7,500.

Had Mark Twain's backbone held out a little longer the sacks of dirt would have been washed and the grand discovery made. He would not have then gone to Angels' camp and would probably never have heard or written the story of the "Jumping Frog," the story that gave him his first "boost" in the literary world, as the "Heathen Chinee" gave Bret Harte his first lift up the ladder. Had Mark found the gold that was captured by the Austrians, he would have settled down as a pocket miner. He would never have given up the chase, and till this day, gray as a badger, he would have been pounding quartz, with Jim Gillis for his "pard" in a cabin somewhere in the Sierra Nevada mountains.—*Alta California.*

The Dead Letter Museum.

Connected with the Dead Letter office at Washington, says a letter to the New York *Telegram*, is a museum of curiosities received through the mail, and they embrace articles of all grades, from a gold encased miniature to a hand saw, a honey bee or a horned frog. This old miniature represents a gentleman and lady of middle age, is painted in ivory set in gold in the style of a century ago. It has been for forty years in the office, and despite its value men and women come, and men and women go, but the owner of the picture has never appeared on the scene as yet. Further along in this cabinet may be seen a piece of the floor of the room in which Jesse James was shot, and which some enterprising person had sent to a friend. Above this, and with the upper lid partly opened, so as to bring the contents provokingly near the observer, is a box of choice raisins. Layer after layer; all perfect and undisturbed. On the other side of the museum, and evidently intended as a companion piece to the raisins, is a nice fruit cake. Then, in still another cabinet, is a ghastly human skull. In this cabinet, too, can be seen a box of gold from California—gold in the rough, and silver and cacti from Arizona. Then above these Texas is represented by the serpents she has sent, all received alive. Some of them were sent in perforated tin cans, and intended for a foreign museum. But snakes were not "nominated in the bond"—and were against postal regulations—and so they rest here.

One of the greatest curiosities of the dead letter office is not embraced in its museum collection, but is shown in the person of its oldest and most popular colored, or parti-colored messenger. She is rather a human curiosity. Originally a very dark brown, she has been growing white in some spots until now she is known in Washington as the "calico woman." She states ten years before a spot had made its appearance on hands or face she dreamed she saw one of her relatives come in her room, and, after she removed her bonnet, so that her features could be seen, she exclaimed, "Oh! Aunt Mary, you have got a calico face!" This dream she holds as prophetic of what she was to become.

There is still another curiosity connected with the office that must not be overlooked in the museum collection, and that is the record kept by Benjamin Franklin when he was Continental postmaster general. It embraces the years from 1767 to 1778, and in the whole eleven years there were only 375 valuable letters received. This volume is yellow with age, but the writing is still legible. It is regarded as one of the most valuable possessions of the department.

Sunflowers for Fuel.

A correspondent of the *Dakota Farmer*, after having tried "turf," coal, wood and sunflowers, has settled upon the last named as the cheapest and best fuel for treeless Dakota. He says: "I grow one acre of them every year, and have plenty of fuel for one stove the whole year round, and use some in another stove beside. I plant them in hills the same as corn (only three seeds to the hill), and cultivate same as corn. I cut them when the leader or top flower is ripe, let them lay on the the ground two or three days; in that time I cut off all the seed heads, which are put into an open shed with a floor in it, the same as a corn crib; the stalks are then hauled home and packed in a common shed with a good roof on. When cut in the right time the stalks, when dry, are hard as oak, and make a good hot fire, while the seed heads, with the seeds in, make a better fire than the best hard coal. The seed being very rich in oil, it will burn better and longer, bushel for bushel, than hard coal. The sunflower is very hard on land. The piece of ground selected to plant on should be highly enriched with manures. In the great steppes (prairie) region in the interior of Russia and in Tartary, where the winters are more severe than here in Dakota, the sunflowers are, and have been for centuries past, the only kind of fuel used.

Centrifugal Force.

Artemus Ward did not claim to be a scientist, but rather an artist in wax. He once gave his thoughts, however, to one of the great problems of science with this result:

The earth moves round from west to east in a year, and turns on its axis in a day.

Supposing the earth to be suddenly arrested on its axis, we all—men, women, children, horses, cattle, and sheep, donkeys, editors, and members of Congress—with all our goods and chattels, would be thrown into the air at a speed of one hundred and seventy three miles a minute, every mother's son of us describing the arc of a parabola, which is probably the only description we should ever be able to give of the affair.

This catastrophe, to one sufficiently collected to enjoy it, would doubtless be exceedingly amusing; but as there would probably be no time for laughing, we pray that it may not occur until after our demise, when, should it take place, our monument will probably accompany us.

Artificial Cheese.

Artificial cheese, made of one par oleomargarine and two parts skimmed milk, mixed to the consistency of cream, and subjected to the usual processes of manufacturing the general article, is the latest edible commodity, contributed by Germany to the world. The cheese of the fatherland, however, is generally of too high a flavor for the uncultivated taste of foreigners, and the probability is that the new variety, by reason of its constituents, will attain the most exalted rank in both taste and smell.—*New York Commercial Advertiser.*

SELECT SIFTINGS.

A duty of four pounds was laid in 1702 upon every negro imported into the colony of Massachusetts.

Turnips weighing from twenty-five to thirty pounds are said to be very numerous in Manatee county, Fla.

A freak of nature owned by a farmer at Derry, N. H., is a calf with two noses, two tongues and three eyes.

People with locks on their doors will read with interest that an Englishman has invented a key that will open 22,000 different lock combinations.

Henry Ward Beecher's first sermon in Plymouth church was preached May 16, 1847, and the text was, "So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Of linen found in mummy cases, the finest had 140 threads to the inch of work. Some was found with 152 threads, and some even at Memphis with 540 to the inch of work.

A case now under observation is reported to the *Medical World*, in which the patient's hair having become prematurely gray is gradually returning to its original color under the internal administration of phosphorized cod liver oil.

Within a half century men have been hanged in England for sheep stealing and for stealing in a house; and in the early history of the United States many offences like forgery and horse-stealing brought the death penalty after them.

The Spanish Arabs of the tenth and eleventh centuries, drawing their inspiration, perhaps, from an older civilization, were as much superior intellectually to the French, Germans and English of that age, as are these peoples now to the Afghans or Turks.

In Maryland, in early times, a box of forty pounds of tobacco was levied upon every taxable inhabitant for the pay of the preacher's salary. This tax was collected by the sheriff, who charged four per cent. for his services, and also deducted from the total collected 1,000 pounds per annum for the payment of the parish clerk. By the laws of Virginia every clergyman received annually 1,500 pounds of tobacoo and sixteen barrels of flour.

A WALKING PLANT.—To the number of curious plants, such as the carnivorous and fly-catching plant, a new specimen has lately been added which is described as the traveling plant. It is said to be of the lily of the valley species, and has a root formed of knots, by which it annually advances about an inch distant from the place where the plant was first rooted. Every year another knot is added, which drives the plant further on, so that in twenty years' time the plant has traveled about twenty inches.

Precious Stones and Their Qualities.

George F. Kuntz, the gem expert of Tiffany & Co., and one of the most skillful young mineralogists in the country, says: As worn, gems are of two forms, a few have the cabochon or rounded shape, such as carbuncles and sometimes sapphires and rubies; all others are cut like the diamond.

Diamonds, according to the forms in which they are polished, are known as brilliants, rose diamonds or table cut. The former is much the better method for showing the light of the gem, and it is in this shape that ninety-nine per cent. of the diamonds are worn. Gems of this class have thirty-two facets. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, the great diamond merchant and traveler of the seventeenth century, saw and described most of the now famous gems of Europe and Asia. The Grand Mogul spoken of by him is, however, supposed to be fictitious. The Regent weighing 136 carats and valued at 12,000,000 francs, is the finest known diamond in the world. The Koh-i-noor weighs 162½ carats, but is "bad form." One hundred millions of dollars is invested in diamond mines and machinery. The stealing done there would cause a New York burglar to blush for his calling. Stolen diamonds worth $700,000 were bought by one firm in four months, and without having the figures in the case I venture to estimate the amount stolen every month at $1,000,000.—*New York Tribune.*

The Value of Soup.

It may be safely taken as a stable physiological fact that the stomach will not so readily digest solid substances when these are taken alone as when they are preceded on the digestive journey by soup. The bread which is eaten will be converted into dextrin in the mouth and the essentials of the soup, on reaching the stomach, will apparently supply the little glands of the organ with the power to manufacture the pepsin of the gastric juice in due quantity. It would seem, in truth, as if these glands demanded nourishment and stimulation in their own turn; and the soup, through its containing an abundance of dissolved matters, presents them with the wherewithal from which to derive the necessary energy. An Italian physician points out that where the meat we eat is juicy and tender the savory principles are readily extracted from it and are thus seized by the stomach without trouble. But if the meat be tough and the reverse of juvenile and juicy, it will, in consequence, be digested with difficulty. The Frenchman, in this view of matters, has found by experience that he can more readily digest his tough meat if the meat is thoroughly boiled, and if bread be added to the soup which forms the introduction of his meals.—*Brooklyn Eagle.*

Persian Bread.

"Persian bread," writes a correspondent now in Afghanistan, "is a very peculiar production; it is made in large flaps, in some cases about a yard long—if ever the Persians reach the advanced state of morning newspapers they might have them printed on their bread, so that they could read the news while they eat and swallow everything literally. On seeing these large flaps I have often thought that they must resemble the blacksmith's leather apron which was the old standard of Persia; if the bread is not made after that model they have managed to produce an article very much like it, not only in size, but in color and toughness at the same time. We have had now nearly two months' experience of this material, and it was a delight on coming here to get for our breakfast the first morning bread that was made on a somewhat later model than an old leather apron."

A SPRING POEM.

The old man sits in the garden chair,
Spring, Spring, beautiful Spring,
His hat is off, so his head is bare,
Spring, Spring, beautiful Spring,
He readeth Tupper, it makes him weep,
And anon he falls in a calm, deep sleep,
Spring, Spring, beautiful Spring.

The early wasp hath a vicious look,
Spring, Spring, beautiful Spring.
As he cometh out of his winter's nook,
Spring, Spring, beautiful Spring.
He seeth the old man's shiny pate.
And his wild eye gleams with a deadly hate,
Spring, Spring, beautiful Spring.

Loudly the old man snores in the sun,
Spring, Spring, beautiful Spring,
Quickly the little wasp hies to the fun,
Spring. Spring, beautiful Spring.
He sits him down with a fiendish glee,
And goes for that head with a one, two, three,
Spring, Spring, beautiful Spring.

Yells of "murder" are heard around,
Spring, Spring, beautiful Spring,
The old man rose with a terrible bound,
Spring, Spring, beautiful Spring.
He sprang three feet and came down hard
And hence this song by a Springtide bard,
Spring, Spring, beautiful Spring.

—*Hal Berte, in Detroit Free Press*

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

Some people pass through various vicissitudes in life without losing a hair. Probably because they were bald-headed.—*Waterloo Observer.*

A widow in India burns herself for her husband. In America she marries another and gives him a roasting.—*Pittsburg Chronicle.*

"The way to sleep," says a scientist, "is to think of nothing." When an editor wants to slumber all he has to do is to try and remember how much money he has in the world.—*Boston Post.*

Court plaster on ladies' faces in public places is becoming fashionable in the East. In the West the girls use the old style of court plaster, which consists of a mustache mixed with a loud noise.—*Pittsburg Chronicle.*

A baseball player says he would never vote again for a certain member of the legislature, because when a certain clause in a bill was up, he had understood the member had made a motion to strike out.—*Merchant-Traveler.*

If the world is indeed worse than it was some centuries ago, we suspect it may be accounted for by the fact that in those times a man didn't have to wear suspenders without buttons to match, or use matches for buttons.—*Brown Bread.*

Says a writer on table etiquette: "If you are of a party to dinner or lunch wait by your chair until all seat themselves." If this rule is rigidly observed, the dinner or lunch is apt to get cold before the company is successfully seated.

First policeman—"Arranged your plans for next summer?" Second policeman—"Oh, yes; I shall spend the entire season among the breakers." "The entire season! You don't say so?" "Yes; among the law-breakers."—*Philadelphia Call.*

We are glad to learn from a valued contemporary that "pickled walnuts are now introduced at dinner." If there is anything we dislike it is to sit opposite a pickled walnut at dinner and not be on speaking terms with it.—*Philadelphia Press.*

No one is ever killed by lightning when asleep in bed, according to the assertion of an English electrician. Whenever you hear a clap of thunder always go to bed and fall asleep immediately. This is a sure precaution.—*New York Graphic.*

Scene on a horse car: Passenger—"Conductor, what are we being delayed for?" Conductor—"Misplaced switch, sir." Little boy in the rear—"Well, that is what I told mother this morning when she gave me such a whaling." Passengers in chorus all smiling and satisfied.

"How are you, Smith?" asked a Fourth avenue man of a friend he had not seen for nearly a year. "How are all the girls? Are you as sweet upon Miss Jones as you used to be?" "Oh, no. I left that off several months ago." "Have a quarrel?" "No. I married her last August."—*Graphic.*

There was a man in Norristown,
And he was very tall;
He went into the skating rink
And got a heavy fall.
And when he found himself laughed at,
With all his might and main
He quickly sprang upon his feet
And fell right down again.

—*Norristown Herald.*

"My dear," said a husband to his wife, "I am unable to get any sleep; I have tossed ever since I came to bed; I wish you would get up and prepare me a little laudanum." "It's hardly worth while now," she replied, consulting her watch; "it's almost time to build the kitchen fire." Then he sank into a quiet, restful slumber.—*Boston Journal.*

A well-known gentleman in this city is the author of a novel which relates to the adventures of a party on a desert island. In the course of the story he describes the building of a steel yacht, and remarks that the plates were riveted together. A critic, picking him up, asked him how they accomplished the riveting, and was met by the reply that the goats which they found on the island butted them in.—*Boston Post.*

IN THE SPRING.

In the spring the gentle poet braves the terrors of the club;
In the spring the fisherman goes forth to hunt the early grub.

In the spring pugnacious rams fight every thing that comes along,
And the fish-dispensing huckster fills the air with chunks of song.

In the spring the dandelion star begems the vernal scene;
In the spring the lettuce salad antedates the lima bean.

In the spring a hungry cry goes upward from the porcine pen,
And the early cackle blossoms from the gullet of the hen.

In the spring the Vassar maiden sits upon the sylvan moss;
And the billygoat devours tomato cans with hoopskirt sauce.

In the spring the funny writer courts the ice-cream joke once more.
And the great spring-poem is bewildering table in a roar.

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