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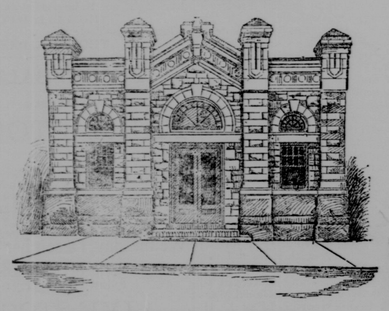
The Peoples National Bank

Denton, Maryland



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JEWEL AND LORAIN RANGES

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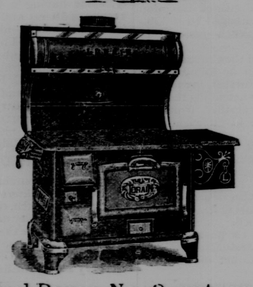

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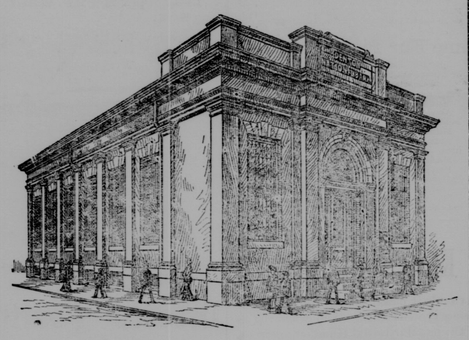

Capital, - - - - -	$ 75,000
Surplus, - - - - -	$100,000
Undivided Profits, - -	$ 12,000
Stockholders' Liability,	$ 75,000
Security to Depositors,	$262,000

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We treat everyone courteously.
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The Mysterious Bird of Mont Pelee

By MARION E. CROSSKILL

Copyright, 1906, by Marion E. Crosskill.

IN the fall of 1901 Tom McLaren sailed from New Orleans on board a vessel bound for Rio Janeiro. He shipped as second mate, with every prospect in the world of promotion.

We were to be married on his return, and the last words he said to me before he jumped on board the Kitty Kelly the morning he sailed were, "The next time I go away, Lucy, I'll be leaving my wife behind instead of my sweetheart."

The Kitty Kelly was expected to return to New Orleans in five months, but the five months lengthened themselves out into seven, and still no tidings of the vessel had been received since she had left Rio on her return trip, and as the rays passed the anxiety began to wear on me in spite of my efforts to keep my courage up.

Ever since my childhood I had heard of an old negro sorceress who lived in a lonely spot some distance outside of the city and who was said to possess wonderful powers of divination and prophecy.

I found myself listening to black Sarah's account of how this old woman told them where little Sam Lathrop was after he had been kidnaped, and they found him exactly as she said.

Driven now by anxiety and fear to seek out any possible source of comfort or advice, I at last decided to go to the old woman.

I found some difficulty in following the rough, ill defined path which had been indicated by old Sarah, but after much trouble I at last succeeded in reaching the little hut, half hidden in a clump of magnolia trees. As I approached it the door opened, and a woman stood in the doorway.

I started in surprise. I had expected to see a little wrinkled form, bent with age, for the negress must be old, very old. Nobody remembered the time when she had not been called "the old woman over the hill."

Instead of being small and bent with age I found myself gazing with a feeling almost of awe at a large, erect and well proportioned figure with a fearless, somewhat commanding air. Her skin was a smooth ebony black. Her features were peculiar. Instead of the thick lips one always associates with the race hers were thin. Her nose was straight and well shaped, the nostrils spreading very slightly. Her eyes were large and prominent, showing a great deal of the white, which gave them a strange, wild look. She had a fashion of narrowing them sometimes, like a nearsighted person, and at these times it seemed as if their owner were looking out at you from another world. So clear cut were her features and so straight, strong and well poised her figure that I could think of nothing which she might be so fitly compared to as a statue of black marble. This effect was heightened by her dress. She wore a queer one piece garment of some coarse black material, and a colored handkerchief was twisted about her head.

I had not recovered from my surprise at her appearance when she spoke, and her voice startled me as much as her looks. It was not the voice nor the speech of the negro. The tones were

I STARTED IN SURPRISE.

deep and resonant, without a touch of the soft accent of the race. There was instead something foreign in their sound.

"For what have you come?" she asked, narrowing her eyes and looking at me intently.

I explained my errand as I followed her into the hut. She pushed a chair for me, while she stood at a little distance, regarding me intently.

After a minute she said:

"You want to know about—yes, yes, but I may have to go a long distance to find him, and you must sit where you are and not stir."

She turned to leave the room. On reaching the door she stopped, and, looking me through and through once more, she said:

"Remember, no matter how long I am gone, you must not leave your seat or I can't tell what will happen."

I waited a long time, so long that I began to fear dark would overtake me before I could get home, and there was a storm coming.

As I sat looking about me my eye rested on a little window, consisting of two small panes of glass, high up in the wall at the farther end of the room. This window evidently gave light to some other room. But, no; there was no door except the one by which I had entered, and the woman's bed stood in a corner. The window must be one looking outdoors, though it did not seem to admit any light. I sat looking at it for some time, and as I looked it struck me as odd that there should be a curtain on the outside of the window. This curtain consisted evidently of a piece of calico or some material about that thickness.

I remembered her injunction not to leave my seat, but curiosity at last gained the mastery. After I had sat a little while longer, wondering and speculating about this curious little window, I arose and tiptoed across the room toward it.

I tried to peer through the curtain, but it was too thick. I could see nothing. I examined the sides. They were close and admitted no glimpse of what was beyond. The top was above an ordinary person's reach; but, being tall and supple, I could, by clinging to a peg on the wall and raising myself on tiptoe, bring my eyes to a level with the top of the window, where the curtain sagged slightly, leaving a narrow crack. Peering through this crack, I found myself looking into another room, a small room, so dimly lighted that at first I could scarcely make it out. After a minute, however, as my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, I saw a long, narrow apartment, evidently a strip partitioned off the end of the cabin and running all the way across it. The floor was covered with some sort of carpeting and rug. I could hardly make out what, and, stretched full length upon it, was a naked form.

I drew back for a moment in terror; then, regaining courage, I once more placed my eye to the window. This time I could see more clearly. The form was that of the negress. Her black body was stretched rigid, motionless, upon the floor. For a moment I gazed at her with a strange terror creeping over me and then again withdrew my eye from the window. As I did so a muffled shriek, a cry of terror, reached my ear from somewhere out of sight. I went hastily to the door and, opening it, looked out. There was no one about. The voice had come apparently from the clouds. Could it possibly have been the wind, which was blowing hard now? No; I felt positive it was not.

It had suddenly grown darker. Stormy looking piles of clouds loomed up on the horizon, and the rain had begun to fall. I made up my mind to leave the hut and go home as quickly as possible, but anxiety to hear what the woman might tell me concerning Tom, after having come so far and waited so long, made me turn back into the cabin, close the door softly and slip into my seat again.

In a minute the door opened, and the negress entered. Her piercing black eyes looked so wild that my fright returned, and I heartily wished myself safe out of the place. Her clothes seemed to be tossed about, as though she had been out in the wind, but save for a drop or two of rain she was not wet, so it was impossible that she could have come far. Again the sight of her naked form, stretched only a few feet from where I sat, rose up before me, and I felt the creeps go up my spine.

"You disobeyed me," she said, coming quickly toward me. Her look, voice and manner betrayed great agitation.

"Your disobedience nearly cost me my life," she continued. "Why did you leave your seat? If you had not taken your eye from that window just when you did I should have been killed."

"I am so sorry," I began, but she continued, without appearing to hear me:

"I had to go a long distance to find him—a long distance—and I am tired, for dangers beset me. But I found your lover. He is safe and well on board a vessel becalmed in the Caribbean sea."

"His vessel, the Kitty Kelly?" I cried.

"No; not his vessel. That was wrecked off the coast of Trinidad. You will see him soon if he escapes the fiery mount."

"The fiery mount?" I echoed.

"Yes. Danger awaits him. It is near, very near. If you do not hear from him within the month you will know that he is dead."

"Can nothing be done to save him?" I cried.

The woman looked at me in silence for a moment and then said:

"Nothing, unless I again risk my life."

"But I will not disobey you again," I said earnestly.

"It will not depend on you this time," she returned.

"I will pay you whatever you ask; only save him." I found myself trusting implicitly this woman whom I had not before believed in.

The negress gave me a strange look and said, "Go home and wait."

I would have urged her further, but she waved her hand.

"Go now. I am worn," she said wearily, and, passing her hand over her forehead, she sank down on a rough seat beside the table with the air of one who had been through a great struggle.

I took from my pocket the purse which I had brought with me, and, laying it on the table beside the woman, I said softly:

"I am sorry I disobeyed you. I will know better another time." Then I turned and went out of the cabin and, setting my face toward the town, walked as fast as wind and rain would permit.

This eventful visit to the seeress was made on May 4, and nearly a month had passed when I received a letter from Tom.

He had had many adventures, he wrote, and had passed through many perils, concerning which I should hear on his return. The letter was followed in a few weeks by Tom himself, alive and well and looking as brown and rugged as a sailor should, and I listened with excited interest while he recounted all that had befallen him since sailing from New Orleans.

"On leaving the Bahamas," he said, "we proceeded to Rio Janeiro and discharged our cargo. We intended to touch at Trinidad on the return voyage. We, however, encountered storms, and our vessel was wrecked within sight of the island. All on board were saved. I had the good luck to fall in with a vessel bound for Santo Domingo. From there I was in hopes of finding a berth on some northward bound

"I RAISED THE MUZZLE AND TOOK AIM AT THE BIRD."

vessel.

"I was to have more adventures, however. During the voyage we were driven by adverse winds far out of our course and lay for a long time becalmed in the Caribbean sea, not far from the island of Martinique.

"One day, as the vessel lay in a sea so calm that it resembled a great mirror, suddenly, from nowhere apparently, there appeared directly over the mainmast of the vessel a huge black bird. It was not like any bird I had ever seen in the tropics, nor anywhere else, in fact. Its large head resembled that of an owl, and the body was almost like an eagle's, except that it was black as a raven.

"I was not the only one who saw the bird, and in an instant a sailor came running with a gun in his hand. But the others begged him not to shoot.

"'It will bring bad luck to the ship,' they cried. 'Put up the gun.'

"I was not superstitious, however, and, seizing the rifle from the sailor, who stood irresolute, I raised the muzzle and took aim at the bird.

"But now a strange thing happened. Jut as I was about to pull the trigger the bird disappeared. Nor did it fly away, but, poised in midair over the ship, it vanished as it had come—on the instant.

"I lowered the gun, blinked my eyes and looked about me.

"'Did you see that?' I asked, turning to the sailor who had brought the gun.

"'Blow me!' he said. 'Where did it go to?'

"Then I looked around at the others, all of whom had seen the thing.

"'I told you so,' repeated first one, then another. 'It is lucky you did not shoot. No good would come to the ship.'

"By this time the captain was on the scene with his glasses and carefully scanning the sky, but no bird could be seen. It all happened in a minute, and I can hardly believe to this day that it was not a dream."

"What date was that, Tom?" I asked eagerly.

"May 4. I remember it well, because that night a breeze sprang up, and we made the island of Martinique before daybreak.

"The second night we lay in St. Pierre. At about the middle watch I was awakened by a sound as of some one moving about the cabin. At first I was going to call out, but before I had time to open my mouth a strange light began to glow around me, and suddenly the side of the ship seemed to open, and I saw Mont Pelee a seething mass of flame, which shot upward to the skies. As I gazed at the sight the same rustling noise which I had first heard again fell on my ears, and the strange black bird that had appeared above the ship two days before swooped down, spreading its huge body and wings between me and the scene. It was nearer now, and its head, I could have sworn, was the head of a human being, with a look of unmistakable warning in its eyes. As I raised my hand, with a cry of alarm, it disappeared, and I found myself sitting up in my berth staring wildly at the wall of my cabin, where a moment ago Pelee had shot forth flame and smoke.

"Only a dream? Yes, of course. But the strangest part of it has to come. The next day there was a consultation as to whether we should remain in harbor another day or sail at once. The vision of the previous night rose up before me, and I felt relieved when it was decided to set sail right away. Some delays occurred, however, and finally we sailed out of St. Pierre a few minutes before 8 o'clock on the 8th of May. I shall never forget that day as long as I live. We were just barely out of the harbor when a terrible thing happened. The most terrific noise I ever heard in my life sounded from Mont Pelee. I could think of nothing but the crack of doom. It seemed as if it must be heard around the world. Every eye was turned toward the volcano, which for some time had been sending out ashes and cinders. As I looked toward it a great volume of black vapor rose from the crater. This was filled with sparks, like electricity. Then a sheet of flame like a huge blast furnace rose heavenward. I think the whole mountain must have blown up. Again my vision of the flaming mount and the great black bird rose in my mind, but now neither body nor wings of bird, beast or spirit hovered between my eyes and the terrible sight. This time it was no dream, but a fearful reality.

"In another minute the air about us was filled with choking vapors. Ashes and dust rained upon the deck of the vessel, which rocked in a tidal wave.

"When we reached Santo Domingo we heard that St. Pierre was totally blotted out, and I shuddered at the doom from which we had escaped."

Things That Happen Only Abroad.

She was an obvious American, and she brought a breath of hominy into the coiffeur's in Hanover street. Said she, "I want you to send a man, right away, down to the Cecil to shingle my daughter's bang."

M. Toupet—Madam, I am a coiffeur, not a building contractor.—Pall Mall Gazette.

Napoleon's Tomb.

The windows in the Chapel of the Invalides in Paris, where the great Napoleon lies buried, are of a singularly translucent amber glass. When the sun shines full upon them the rays are transmuted into gold, and they fall like a ladder of light upon the bronze sarcophagus of the conqueror until he seems glorified from the skies.

The Purse.

The invention of the purse was doubtless contemporaneous with that of money. The purse is mentioned in Old Testament history as a part of a traveler's outfit. When the disciples, spoken of in the gospels, were sent forth to preach they were commanded to take neither gold nor silver nor brass in their purses.

Popular.

"He's a popular poet."

"Dear me! Why, I thought he hadn't written anything for years!"

"He hasn't; that's why he's so popular."

WEB OF THE SPIDER.

The Many Uses to Which Its Singular Spinner Puts It.

Spiders form good subjects for rainy day study, and two hours spent in a neglected garret watching these clever little beings will often arouse such interest that we shall be glad to devote many days of sunshine to observing those species which hunt and build and live in the open fields. There is no insect in the world with more than six legs, and as a spider has eight he is therefore thrown out of the company of butterflies, beetles and wasps and finds himself in a strange assemblage. Even to his nearest relatives he bears little resemblance, for when we realize that scorpions and horseshoe crabs must call him cousin we perceive that his is indeed an aberrant bough on the tree of creation.

Nature has provided spiders with an organ filled always with liquid, which on being exposed to the air hardens and can be drawn out into the slender threads which we know as cobweb. The silkworm incases its body with a mile or more of gleaming silk, but there its usefulness is ended, as far as the silkworm is concerned. But spiders have found a hundred uses for their cordage, some of which are startlingly similar to human inventions.

A list of all the uses of cobwebs would take much space, but of these the most familiar is the snare set for unwary flies—the wonderfully ingenious webs which sparkle with dew among the grasses or stretch from bush to bush. The framework is of webbing, and upon this is woven the sticky spiral which is so elastic, so ethereal, and yet strong enough to entangle a good sized insect. How knowing seems the little worker as, the web and his den of concealment being completed, he spins a strong cable from the center of the web to the entrance of his watchtower. Then, when a trembling of his aerial spans warns him of a capture, how eagerly he seizes his master cable and jerks away on it, thus vibrating the whole structure and making more certain the confusion of his victim.

Those spiders which leap upon their prey instead of setting snares for it have still a use for their threads of life, throwing out a cable as they leap to break their fall if they miss their foothold. What a strange use of the cobweb is that of the little flying spiders! Up they run to the top of a post, elevate their abdomens and run out several threads, which lengthen and lengthen until the breeze catches them, and away goes the wingless aeronaut for yards or for miles, as fortune may dictate! We wonder if he can cut loose or pull in his balloon cables at will.

A most fascinating tale would unfold could we discover all the uses of cobweb when the spiders themselves are through with it. Certain it is that our ruby throated humming bird robs many webs to fasten together the plant down and lichens which compose her dainty nest.

Search the pond and you will find another member of the spider family swimming about at ease beneath the surface, thoroughly aquatic in his habits, but breathing a bubble of air which he carries about with him. When his supply is low, he swims to a submarine castle of silk, so air tight that he can keep it filled with a large bubble of air, upon which he draws from time to time.

And so we might go on enumerating almost endless uses for the web, which is nature's gift to these little waifs who ages ago left the sea and have won a place for themselves in the sunshine among the butterflies and flowers.—C. William Beebe in New York Post.

ABORIGINES OF AFRICA.

Vaalpens Seem to Be the Lowest Order of Cannibals.

An obscure race may possibly be the true aborigines of Africa south of the Zambezi.

These are the Kattea, or Vaalpens, as they are nicknamed by the Boers on account of the dusty color their abdomen acquires from the habit of creeping into holes in the ground, who live in the steppes region of the north Transvaal as far as the Limpopo.

As their complexion is almost a pitch black and their stature only about four feet, they are quite distinct from their tall Bantu neighbors and from the yellowish Bushmen.

The "dogs" or "vultures," as the Zulus call them, are the "lowest of the low," being undoubtedly cannibals and often making a meal of their own aged and infirm, which the Bushmen never do.

Their habitations are holes in the ground, rock shelters and lately a few hovels. They have no arts or industries or even any weapons except those obtained in exchange for ostrich feathers, skins or ivory.

Whether they have any religious ideas it is impossible to say, all intercourse being restricted to barter carried on in a gesture language, for nobody has ever yet mastered their tongue, all that is known of their language being that it is absolutely distinct from that of both the Bushman and the Bantu.

There are no tribes, merely little family groups of from thirty to fifty individuals, each of which is presided over by a headman, whose functions are acquired not by heredity, but by personal qualities.

So little information is available concerning the Kattea that it is impossible to say anything about their racial affinities.—Scientific American.

A Queer Marriage Custom.

Members of the M'jiji tribe, who live on the Limpopo river, wear an extraordinary "marriage dress." This weird and uncomfortable looking costume is made entirely of split reeds, fastened together with grass, and the unhappy bachelor who contemplates matrimony is compelled to wear it for three solid months before the happy event comes off, meanwhile leading a life of strict seclusion. What effect this extraordinary custom has on the popularity of marriage among the M'jijis is not known, but it was only with the utmost difficulty that some members of the mounted police, who encountered some would be Benedicts, induced them to allow their photographs to be taken.—Wide World Magazine.