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Select Poetry.

THE FIRST SNOWFALL.

These lines were penned by James Russell Lowell, though not included in the latest editions of his works. Aside from their sweetness and beauty, there seems to be a sort of appropriateness in their publication at this time.

The snow had begun in the gloaming,
And busily all the night
Had been heaping fields and highway,
With a silence deep and white.

Every pine, and fir, and hemlock,
Wore ermine too dear for an earl,
And the poorest twig on the elm tree
Was fringed inch-deep with pearl.

From sheets, now roofed with Carrara,
Came Chanticleer's muffled crow,
The still tails were softened to swan's down—
And still fluttered down the snow.

I stood and watched by the window
The noiseless work of the sky,
And the sudden flurries of snow-birds,
Like brown leaves whirling by.

I thought of a mound in sweet Auburn,
Where a little head-stone stood,
How the flakes were folding it gently,
As did robins the babes in the wood.

Up spake our little Mabel,
Saying "father who makes the snow?"
And I told her of the good All-Father
Who cares for us all below.

Again I looked at the snow-fall,
And I thought of the leaden sky
That arched our first great sorrow,
When the mound was heaped so high.

I remember the gradual patience
That fell from the cloud like snow,
Flake by flake, healing and hiding
The scar of that deep-stabbed woe.

And again to the child I whispered,
"The snow that husheth all,
Darling, the Merciful Father
Alone can make it fall."

Then, with eyes that saw not, I kissed her,
And she, kissing back, could not know
That my kiss was given to her sister,
Folded close under deepening snow.

Original Tale.

Written expressly for the "Bedford Gazette."

Idle Hours.

BY A FLOWMAN.

Chap. I.

Most young men who are acquiring the rudimentary knowledge which is designed to qualify them for the honorable position of merchants, have their evenings which are generally spent in pleasure and amusement. Some have their mothers and sisters, with whom they enjoy the refined pleasures of the social circle, during these so-called "Idle Hours;" but, with the majority of them, such is not the case. They are sent up from the country to the metropolis, either, because the father is ambitious that one member of his family, at least, should occupy a respectable position in the world; or because, from ill health or defective physical organization, they are incapacitated for the labors of the farm. Being denied entrance into refined female society, (for they are yet only embryo business men, and the ladies do not, generally, assume the duties assigned to the clerical profession; viz, that of saving souls) they are thus thrown upon their resources for the means of passing away their idle time. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that these young men, far away from home, from a mother's tender care and warning voice, and sister's solicitude, should, occasionally, form intimacies which lead to evil.

Robert Baldwin having almost completed his novitiate, and looking forward to the few months which were yet to intervene before he should return, a well-fledged merchant, to his father's residence and the lovely Constance to whom he had long since been betrothed, was called upon to spend his evenings, and sometimes nights, by the bedside of a sick fellow-clerk, who had been his intimate friend during the whole period of his pupillage. Occasionally, other young clerks would share his labors in behalf of their mutual friend.

As men are generally but indifferent nurses,

their sympathy for the invalid soon diminished, they began to think the duty of officiating as nurse-tender, irksome in the extreme, and means were sought to while away the hours which hung idly and heavily upon their hands. Recourse was had, as is usual on similar occasions of *ennui*, to cards and dice. Contrary to his usual practice, Robert Baldwin took his part in these games, more to oblige his friends than from any pleasure he took in such pastimes. The transition from one extreme to another is proverbially rapid, and, perhaps, of all bad propensities, that of gambling is most speedily acquired; such, at least, proved to be the fact in this case, for he soon became the highest and most constant player amongst his young friends; and in the course of a short space of time he abandoned their society for that of the disreputable frequenters of the lowest hells of the metropolis, where the opportunities for indulging in his newly acquired passion, were more frequent.

Like most young novices, he was, at first, successful, and, generally, rose from the hazard table a considerable winner. His leisure hours, even his nights, were given up to this absorbing passion, and morning was frequently far advanced ere he could relinquish the dice-box. He was, nevertheless, soon doomed to experience the fickleness of fortune, and with it, the innumerable inconveniences of a death of cash, to which he had hitherto been a happy stranger. However proof a man's honor and moral worth may be against all other attacks, it is a rare case, indeed, that he can long remain unsullied, when hourly exposed to the persecution of duns and money jobbers, without possessing the means of satisfying them. Robert Baldwin did not prove an exception to this lamentably general truism; and the expedients to which he was obliged to have recourse, to raise money, not only lowered him in his own opinion, but deprived him of the esteem of his friends and acquaintances, who, as is generally the case, with friends and acquaintances, were never inclined to indulge in charitable observations on his character and conduct.

There was one individual from whom Baldwin was desirous of keeping his conduct a secret; this was a Colonel Prussing, who had long been on terms of intimate friendship with his father, and from whom he had received the most generous assistance when in difficulties. His manners and appearance were anything but prepossessing, and his countenance, if, as he considered, it could lay claim to any expression, had that of low and sordid cunning. Robert Baldwin both feared and despised him, and any intercourse which existed between them, was limited to short and formal visits. It may, therefore, be easily imagined, how much he was annoyed at meeting the Colonel at one of the low haunts where he now passed the largest portion of his nights. He was so absorbed in watching the play that he appeared at first unconscious of Robert's presence, who, however, fearful of the odd interpretation that he would not fail to give his conduct, if he had by chance been perceived by him, were he to leave the room without addressing him, resolved on putting a bold face on the matter. He approached him, and with a nonchalant air as he could at the moment assume, said "it was a long time since he had had the pleasure of meeting him, and that he supposed he would be surprised at seeing him where he did."

"When you have lived as long in the world as I have," replied the Colonel, in a dry and sarcastic tone of voice, "you will cease to be surprised at anything."

The conversation dropped, and young Baldwin notwithstanding the restraint imposed upon him by the presence of his father's friend, did not long remain a passive observer of the game, and his purse, as usual, was soon emptied of its contents.

While pondering over the difficulties which the loss he could so ill afford, must occasion to him, he felt himself gently tapped on the shoulder, and turning round, was greeted by the Colonel, who told him, with a more confidential and familiar tone than he was wont to use towards him, that he had learned that, during his recent absence from town, his young friend had contracted the propensity in which he had at that moment been sorry to see him so unsuccessfully indulging. "You are not a stranger," he continued, "to the many obligations I am under to your respected father, and I hope you will do me the justice to think, I shall eagerly avail myself of all occasions of lessening the debt of gratitude I owe him. I request, therefore, that whenever a run of ill luck, should make it necessary for you to raise funds, you will not scruple to apply to me."

He accompanied this offer of pecuniary assistance, with a hearty and affectionate squeeze of the hand and withdrew. Robert was staggered and surprised at a proposal of such a nature, from such a quarter, as he had thought the Colonel was the last man who would give him the means of continuing his present vicious course of life; his duplicity and hypocrisy disgusted

him, and he secretly determined on never availing himself of his services.

This resolution was, however, soon shaken; for on returning to his lodgings, he found a letter from home, which apprised him of his father's sudden and dangerous illness, and of his anxious wish to once more behold him ere he breathed his last. This mournful intelligence at first overpowered him, for the passion for gambling had not yet taken such hold of him, as entirely to eradicate his nobler feelings, but he soon became alive to the necessity of making immediate preparations for his departure, and by far the most important of these, was the means of procuring the necessary sum of money to defray his travelling expenses. His credit was exhausted, and whatever money his father had lately sent him to defray his current expenses, had been risked and lost; however reluctantly, he was compelled, in this emergency, to place himself under a pecuniary obligation to the man whom he most feared and despised. No time was to be lost, and notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, he repaired forthwith to the residence of the Colonel, whom he found on the point of retiring for the night.

Contrary to young Baldwin's expectations, he appeared to repress with difficulty his feelings at the news of his benefactor's precarious and almost hopeless state, which tended not a little to reanimate him in his good opinion. He announced with less reluctance than he had anticipated, the purpose of his visit.

The money was promised to be sent to him at an early hour the next morning, on two conditions: viz, that whenever, in future, he should have occasion for further supplies, he would apply to no one else but to him, and that he would promise to risk his money no where else but at his house.

"Can it be possible," cried young Baldwin, "that you are—"

"I forgot," said the Colonel, hastily interrupting him, "to impose the strictest secrecy; a small but select company assembled at this house four times a week. Persons," continued he, while his countenance for the moment seemed to change its usual dogged expression to that of animation and enthusiasm, "swilling to risk thousands on the turn of a die, such as ought to be the associates of a young man with your hereditary wealth, and not the low and grovelling frequenters of disreputable hells."

Baldwin had no choice, for there was no one else from whom he could obtain the money, and he was, therefore, obliged to subscribe to the Colonel's conditions. Before the close of the following day he was far advanced on his journey, which he pursued with such rapidity that on the third day he was in sight of the paternal mansion. From an old and faithful servant who had hastened to meet him, he learned that he was barely in time to close his father's eyes for he was in the agonies of death. A ray of momentary joy appeared to brighten his father's countenance as he approached him; and he bathed with tears of filial affection the withered hand stretched out to meet him.

"I have but a few moments to live, my dearly loved only son," said he in a faint and from excess of weakness, almost inaudible voice, while he was raised on his pillow by Colonel Prussing, whom Robert now perceived in his dying father's apartment, for the first time, "in my worthy and disinterested friend in whose arms I am expiring, you will find a father to replace me, and in all things, my son, be guided by his advice."

The exertion of pronouncing these few words proved too much for him, he fell senseless on his couch, and in a few moments ceased to breathe. Robert's grief was such, that many hours elapsed before he became conscious of what was passing around him; he at length awoke as if from a painful dream, and for the first time remarked kneeling in fervent prayer by his side, the dear play-fellow of his boyhood.

Her face was pale, her luxuriant tresses hung loosely over her snow-white shoulders, while the tears of regret for departed worth trickled down her cheek. The heart of the afflicted bonds with gratitude, even when it meets with the sympathy of a stranger; by what feelings then must the lover be actuated, when soothed, in the hour of sorrow, by her whom he adores? Robert imprinted on her noble forehead a kiss of affection and gratitude while she gently pressed his hand, endeavoring to afford him consolation by telling him all she could of the last hours of his departed father. The world no longer appeared to him a barren and solitary waste, and though leaning on the bed on which was extended the corpse of his dearest and best friend, Robert Baldwin indulged in thoughts of future bliss, even long after Constance had torn herself away from him to weep in private her tears of mingled grief and joy.

The only indication of feeling evinced by Col. Prussing during this heartrending scene, was by his striking at intervals and violently, his forehead with his open hand, and at length, as if struggling to master some strong feeling, he quitted the window where he had for some

hours remained stationary. Approaching Robert, whom in a stern and imperative manner, he reminded of his dying parent's injunction, he abruptly asked him what his future intentions were—whether he meant to return to town or remain in the country? This assumption of authority struck young Baldwin as being both ill-timed and unfeeling, at such a moment, and he turned away from him with ill-disguised disgust. Colonel Prussing repeated his question and insisted on an answer immediately. "You have been recalled to the country," he continued, "it is true, a melancholy event; but one which may, nevertheless, prove beneficial, in its ultimate consequences, if you neglect not to take advantage of it. The society of Constance, country amusements, and above all, the absence of all opportunities of indulging in the baneful pursuit, to which you have of late unfortunately been too much addicted, are not the least important of those to which I allude." Recalled by what appeared to him a heartless allusion, on such an occasion, to his recent follies, Robert left the apartment after having made him an angry and evasive reply, and it was with feelings of gratification that in a short time after this interview, he saw the Colonel depart in his travelling carriage. Left alone in that silent chamber with the dead body of his father, the follies of his life passed rapidly through his memory, and, kneeling by all that was left of him who had guarded and guided his infant footsteps, he, then and there, made a solemn vow to abandon forever, a practice which, he felt, was dragging down his soul to perdition. That vow has been recorded against you by the recording angel in the high Court of heaven and was to you, Robert Baldwin, if you keep it not!

Chap. II.

The bustle of the funeral had at length passed away, and visits of condolence had become less frequent. Robert's father had given the entire charge of settling his estate to his maternal uncle, thus rendering the young man's presence in the country unnecessary, and he, unfortunately, as events proved, determined on returning to the city, until he should become entire master of his property. However considerable the increase made to his former yearly allowance, since his father's decease, it was inadequate to pay the many and heavy debts he had contracted in the short space of a few months, and he was obliged to satisfy the most importunate of his creditors with the money he had at his immediate command. He had intended to have broken off all further intercourse with Colonel Prussing by returning to him the sum he had borrowed from him; but that was now out of the question; on the contrary, increasing difficulties, rendered a new loan indispensable.

This the Colonel not only readily granted him, but moreover expressed his willingness to arrange matters with his creditors. This proposal was gladly accepted and Robert emboldened by so off-handed a proceeding, ventured to allude to his promise of introducing him to the circle of friends, which he had on a former occasion tested to be in the habit of assembling in his house, more as he said to witness their play than to take in it; for, as he stated, it was his purpose to never to play again.—The Colonel, after warning him against placing himself in the way of temptation and after a short and common place lecture on the demoralizing effects of gambling, promised to accede to his wishes and the next evening was fixed upon for his introduction.

Young Baldwin, on his entrance, found the party seated around the hazard table and apparently so intent upon the game as not to perceive those who entered. They were, for the most part, men far advanced in years, and of a far from prepossessing appearance, as he thought, and the *sang-froid* with which they lost and won large sums, not a little astonished him. Not being in a temperament to remain long a passive observer, he soon became deeply engaged, and in the course of a few hours, was so considerable a winner, as to be enabled, if he had wished, to free himself from all the pecuniary obligations he was under to the Colonel. Refreshments on the most splendid scale were now introduced, and a temporary pause took place in the rattling of the dice box. While the remainder of the company were engaged in conversation and sipping their champagne, the Colonel drew Baldwin to a distant corner of the room, told him that his run of fortune had been such, with a little aid, would free him from his present embarrassments, and urged him to be guided by the advice of an old and experienced stager, and to content himself with his present winnings. Ever impatient of control, and particularly so at the present moment, while heaved by success, Robert begged that for the future, he would reserve his advice for those who solicited it, while he angrily disengaged himself from his arm.

"Then you are irretrievably and forever lost," rejoined Prussing with more than his wonted energy, and his forebodings were but too well realized.

Play was soon recommenced, and fortune was now as adverse to him as she had before proved favorable. He became impatient, he could, with difficulty conceal his agitation, and a cold perspiration poured down his forehead, while, with that determined obstinacy characteristic of the inexperienced gambler, he doubled and quadrupled his stakes, but to no effect. In less than an hour, not only his winnings of the commencement of the evening, but likewise the entire sum he had borrowed the day before, had successively disappeared. Scarcely knowing what he did, he called upon the Colonel, for a further loan, which was refused him. He, however obtained a fresh supply from him on the next day, which he lost in the evening.

Weeks elapsed in this manner, money was advanced in the morning on good collateral security, and gambled away in the evening, until his losses amounted to such a sum as made him fear that the Colonel would refuse him further assistance from his inability, much longer, to give bonds; for the loans already raised could not fall far short of the entire value of the property which he had inherited from his deceased father. A vague suspicion at first floated through his mind, that he had been cheated, that all was not fair, and when he reflected on the frequency of his losses of late, he could hardly attribute them to a mere run of ill luck, although no sign of foul play had come within his notice at the gambling table.

While in this mood of thought one day, he heard a gentle knock at his door, and an individual immediately afterwards entered, who represented himself to be a foreign mechanic. He showed Robert several articles of ivory, remarkable for the ingenuity of their mechanism, without, however, being able to tempt him to purchase. He was about leaving the room, when young Baldwin suddenly recalled him, and asked him if he could give him any information relative to the internal construction of loaded dice, of which he had often heard. The pedlar gave a cautious glance around the room, represented the many dangers to which a person known to traffic in such articles must be exposed, and expressed his unwillingness to confide such a secret to an individual who was a total stranger to him. His apparent scruples were, however, easily removed, and to Robert's astonishment, he produced dice, to all appearance, the same in formation as those to which his eyes had been long accustomed and which when in the hands of the initiated, (to use the pedlar's phraseology) invariably turned up the highest possible number; whereas, with those ignorant of their construction, all was, as with the common dice, reduced to chance: he soon convinced him, by repeated trials, of this fact.

Their possession now became associated in the young gambler's mind with the accumulation of a large and rapid fortune, more speedily to be acquired than by the slow drudgery of mercantile life, not having the means adequate to him to purchase them, he was not a little relieved by the man's agreeing to take trinkets in exchange. He immediately showed those he had in his possession, none of which, however appeared likely to suit, and he began to fear that he should be obliged to miss the purchase, when the pedlar's attention was caught by a handsomely set brooch, the first present Robert had received from Constance, which he offered to take in exchange for his merchandise. This was at first promptly refused, and he was requested to return in a few hours, when the money he asked would be ready for him. This, however, the pedlar represented to be impossible, as affairs of importance obliged him to leave the city within an hour, and besides he said the gentleman's object in delaying him might be only to hand him over to the police officers. Baldwin remained for a few moments undecided, but the temptation was too strong, and he bartered away the pledge of early affection and first love.

(TO BE CONCLUDED IN OUR NEXT.)

WHAT I WOULD DO.—If I possessed the most wonderful things in the world, and was about to will them away, the following would be my plan of distribution:

I would give the world truth and friendship, which are very scarce.

I would give an additional portion of truth to lawyers, vendors and merchants.

I would give to physicians skill and learning.

I would give to the printers their pay.

To gossiping women, short tongues.

To young women, good sense, large waists and a natural complexion.

CENSUS OF PENNSYLVANIA.—The late returns of the census of Pennsylvania have been received. The population is given at two millions nine hundred and thirteen thousand four hundred and forty-one (2,913,441) that being an increase of 569,328 in ten years.

POPULAR VOTE.—The footing up of the vote for President will probably be as follows:—Lincoln 1,846,203; Douglas 1,564,650; Breckinridge 675,783, Bell 580,249.

THE official vote of the State of Missouri gives the electoral vote of that State to Senator Douglas by a plurality of 429 over Bell; 32,065 over Breckinridge; and 41,779 over Lincoln.

Horrible Murder in New York.

One of the most appalling murders that ever was enacted, occurred in the city of New York last Friday morning, at No. 22 East Twelfth street. The victim, an old widow lady, named Sarah Shancks, who kept a *fatty goods* and millinery store at the above number was found dead in her bedroom, at the rear of the store, with her throat cut from ear to ear, and her head and face mashed to a jelly. Robbery seems to have been the motive for the commission of the shocking murder, judging from the ransacked condition of the apartments.—The suspected murderer is Alfred Buchanan, a young man about 20 years of age, a native of New York city, who resided with his parents, at No 187 East Tenth street, and has heretofore borne an excellent character. He has been subject to severe fits nearly all his life, and as a consequence is not of sound mind. He was arrested at Susquehanna, Pennsylvania, and brought to New York on Tuesday.—When first arrested the prisoner denied all knowledge of Mrs. Shancks, but subsequently he admitted that he was acquainted with the deceased. Evidence of such a character has been obtained as to leave little doubt of his guilt.—N. Y. Exchange, 14th, inst.

A New Society.—Old men and young men, women and children, are admitted as members, if they possess the following qualifications:

1st. They must devote their whole attention to other people's business, and entirely neglect their own.

2d. When they hear a scandalous report about a neighbor or a friend, they must not eat, drink or sleep, until the chief officers of the society are informed of the same.

3d. No person shall become a member, unless he or she is a person of leisure, and can loaf about town, or make about seventeen calls a week and watch the actions of the people generally; and be ready to report at headquarters the slightest intimation of a report.

The following are some of the by-laws and rules of this society.

Art. 1st. This society shall be known as the Bedford Tattle & Gossiping Society. The principal and ruling officers shall be as follows: One great liar, and two lesser ones, three tattlers and four gossipers; any one of which will constitute a quorum, and shall have power to transact business at any time.

Art. 2d. If any member of this society shall be found guilty of knowing more about his own business than that of his neighbor's he shall be expelled forthwith.

Art. 3d. Any person belonging to this society who makes a practice of telling the truth two or three times shall be expelled without a hearing.

Art. 4th. Any member who does not report regularly what his neighbors residing within three doors of him have for dinner every Sunday, and for tea every time they have company, shall be cut off from the rights and privileges of this society.

Art. 5. If any member of this society shall see, hear tell of, or even suspect that a young man has waited on a lady twice, he must report them to be married soon, or already married, or he shall be looked upon as no tattler, and shall be fined to the full extent of the law, for any such misdemeanor.

Art. 6th. Any man or woman, who shall not neglect their own business to take the trouble to circulate about town scandalous reports which they know to be false, shall be deemed by all respectable citizens, as Commander-in-chief of said society, and shall be looked upon as such by all its members.

A candidate for office calls at the residence of a gentleman to solicit his vote.

Candidate—Madam, is your husband at home?

Lady—Yes, sir; he has gone to haul away a dead dog, and will be back directly.

Candidate—Sleep killing dog, I reckon madam?

Fierce spoken urchin—No, sir; just barked himself to death at candidates—so papa said.

Senator Yulee, of Florida, has written a letter from Washington to the Legislature of that State, announcing that upon learning at any time of the determination of Florida to dissolve connection with the Northern States, he will promptly and joyously return home to support the banner of the State to which he owes allegiance.

The Pony Express has arrived from California. The vote of that State stands:—Lincoln, 38,702; Douglas, 38,060; Breckinridge 34,000. The census returns give the State a population of 400,000.

As near as can be ascertained, the total population of the States and Territories is 31,000,000 therefore the ratio of representation in the House of Representatives will be about 133,000.