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CLOUDS.
Soft and fleecy clouds above me
Scarcely seem to move at all,
Yet are rolling, drifting, shifting,
Free from every sort of thrall.
Sun-illumined, gray and silver,
Banked against the azure sky—
On such couches bathed in nectar,
Might the gods from heaven lie.
Twisted into shapes fantastic,
Frowning cliffs and towers high,
How I oft have gazed upon them
With a beauty-raptured eye!
Those light forms, so freely floating,
All my soul with longing fill,
Fill it with a languid longing,
That is out of reach of will.
Fill it with a restless longing,
For what things I know not well;
Fill it with a mournful longing
That no words can ever tell.

THE INVISIBLE GIRL.
Having decided to finish the year in Italy, I looked around me for a dwelling, to be had upon reasonable terms. I found what I wanted in the outskirts of the ancient city of Lunca, one of the loveliest spots on the peninsula. The house was quite new, and in every way desirable, while the rent asked for it was absurdly low. I questioned the agent in regard to this circumstance. Having my money safe, he could afford to be truthful.

"There is nothing against the house itself, but the grounds have the reputation of being haunted. Strange sounds are said to be heard near that ledge of rock in the park yonder. We Italians are superstitious, signor," he added, with a bow, "but I presume to an American a ghost is no objection."
"So little," I replied, laughing, "that I am obliged to you for the opportunity of making the acquaintance of this one."

Such superstitions are common in Italy, and the agent's story made very little impression on me.
During a tour of inspection around the premises I came upon the rock in question. It consisted of two walls of granite, perhaps 20 feet in height, meeting at an oblique angle, covered over their greater extent with wild vines. It struck me as an exceedingly beautiful nook, and appropriate for my hours of out-door lounging.

On the following morning, provided with a book and a cigar, I went thither, and disposed myself comfortably in the shade of an olive. I had become absorbed in the volume, when I was startled by the sound of a voice near me. It was evidently that of a woman, wonderfully soft and sweet, singing one of the ballads of the country. I could distinguish the words as perfectly as if spoken at arms' length from me.

I started up in amazement. I had no visitors, and my only servant was an old man. Nevertheless, I made a thorough exploration of the neighborhood, and satisfied myself that there was no one in the grounds. The only public road was half a mile distant. The nearest dwelling was directly opposite, across a level plain—in sight, but far out of ear-shot. In a word, I could make nothing of it.
"I observed that when I left my original position under the olive, the voice became instantly silent. It was only within the circumference of a circle of about two yards in diameter that it was audible at all.

It appeared to proceed from the angle between the two walls of rock. The minutest examination failed to reveal anything but the bare rock. Yet it was out of this bare rock that the voice is sued.
I returned to my former station in downright bewilderment. The agent's story occurred to me, but even now I attached no weight to it. I am a practical man, and was firmly convinced that there must be some rational explanation of the mystery, if I could but discover it. The voice was certainly that of a young girl. But where was she? Was the old fable of the wood nymph a truth after all? Had I discovered a dryad embosomed in the rock? I smiled scornfully even as these fancies ran through my head.

For more than half an hour the singing continued. Then it ceased, and though I waited patiently for its renewal, I heard no more of it that day. When I returned to the house I made no mention of the matter, resolving to keep it to myself until I had solved the mystery.

The next morning at an early hour I returned to the spot. After a tedious interval the singing began again. It went softly and dreamily through one verse of song then ceased. Presently I heard a deep sigh, and then in a slow, thoughtful tone, the voice said:

"Oh, how lonesome it is! Am I to pass my whole life in this dreary place?"
There was no answer. Evidently the person was only soliloquizing. Could she hear me if I spoke, as I heard her? supposing her to be a living at all. I determined to hazard the experiment.

"Who is that speaking?" I asked.
"For some minutes there was no reply; then in a low, frightened whisper, the voice said:
"What was it I heard a voice."
"Yes," I answered; "you hear mine. I spoke to you."
"Who are you?" asked the voice tremulously; "are you a spirit?"
"I am a living man," I returned.
"Can you not see me?"
"No," answered the voice, "I can

only hear you. Oh, where are you! Pray do not frighten me. Come out of your concealment and let me see you."
"Indeed, I don't wish to alarm you," I replied. "I am not hidden. I am standing directly in front of the spot whence your voice seems to come."
"You are invisible," was the trembling answer. "Your voice comes to me out of the air. Holy Virgin! you must be a spirit. What have I done to deserve this?"

"Have no fear of me, I entreat you," I said, earnestly. "It is as much of a mystery to me as it is to you. I hear you speak, but you are otherwise invisible."

"Are you a real living being?" asked the voice, doubtfully. "Then why do I not see you? Come to me. I will sit here. I will not fly."
"Tell me where I am to come," I said.
"Here in my garden in the arbor," I said.
"There is no arbor here," I returned, "only a solid rock out of which you seem to be speaking."

"Saints protect me," answered the voice. "It is too awful. I dare not stay here longer. Spirit or man, farewell."
"But you will come again," I pleaded.
"Let me hear you speak once more. Will you not be near at the same hour?"
"I dare not—but yet your voice sounds as if you would do me no harm. Yes, I will come."

Then there was utter silence—the mysterious speaker had gone. I returned home in a state of stupid wonder, questioning myself if I had lost my senses, and if the whole occurrence was not a delusion. I was faithful to my appointment with the voice on the following morning, however. I had waited but a few moments, when the soft, trembling accents broke the silence, saying:

"I am here."
"And I, too," I answered; "I am grateful to you for coming."
"I have not slept the whole night," said the voice, "I was so terrified. Am I doing wrong to come?"
"Are you still afraid of me?"
"Not exactly, but it is so strange."
"Will you tell me your name?"
"I don't know—Lenore. What is yours?"

"George," I answered, imitating her example and giving my first name only. "Shall we not be friends, Lenore?"
"Oh, yes," answered the voice with a silvery peal of laughter. Evidently its owner was getting over her fears.
"Don't be offended, George. It is so strange—two people who cannot see each other and perhaps never will, making friends."

"I will solve the mystery yet, Lenore," I answered, "and find out what you are. Would you be glad to see me in my proper person?"
"Yes," she replied, "I should like to see you."
"And I would give a great deal to see you, Lenore. You must be very beautiful if your face is like your voice."
"Oh, hush!" was the agitated answer. "It is not right to speak thus."
"Why not? Do you know, Lenore, that if this goes on, I shall end by falling in love with you, though I never see you."

"You are very audacious," was the reply. "If you were really here, before me, I should punish you for it. As it is, I am going now."
"But you will come again to-morrow, Lenore?"
"If you will promise to be more discreet, George, yes."

As may be imagined, I did not fail to keep my engagement with my invisible friend. For many consecutive days these strange meetings continued. As absurd as it may seem, the voice was beginning to make a powerful impression upon me. I felt in its soft tones the manifestation of a sweet, refined woman's soul.

True, I had made no progress towards unraveling the mystery. Nevertheless, I was confident that through some inexplicable dispensation of Providence I had been permitted to hold communion with a real, living woman, from an unknown distance. She had not yet told me more than her first name, and I did not press her for more as yet. Her only answer to my question as to where she was, was "In the garden." She did not seem capable of grasping the fact that I was not invisibly near her. She seemed content with matters as they stood, and for the present I could do no more.

I made no one my confidant as to my daily occupation; first, because I knew that I should be regarded as a madman upon my mere statement of the facts, and, next because I shrank from having an auditor at my mysterious conferences. Will it be believed? I was in love with the invisible girl—in love with the voice! Absurd, of course, but I am not the first man who has fallen in love with a woman's voice. Besides I was confident that it was only a matter of time before I should see the girl in person.

One day, towards the end of summer, we had been talking, as usual, and I had said: "My stay in Italy is nearly over, Lenore."
"Ah," was the quick reply, "you will leave me, George."
"No, Lenore," I answered, "not if you wish me to stay."
"How can I help it, George, whether

you go or stay? I have never seen you—I never shall see you. What am I to you?"

"All the world, Lenore," I answered. "Ours has been a strange experience. Without knowing each other as people ordinarily do, we have yet been close friends. You are more to me than a friend. I love you, Lenore."

There was a quick, suppressed cry, no other reply.
"Be truthful, Lenore. Tell me your heart. If you love me, trust me to discover your whereabouts and come to you. If you do not, say it and I will spare you the pain of meeting me, and let us never speak again."

There was a pause; then she tremulously said:
"I have never seen you, but my heart tells me to trust you. I know you are good and noble, and I am willing to leave my fate in your hands. Yes, George, I love you."

Even as she said the words she uttered a cry of alarm. Then a gruff man's voice spoke:
"Go to your room, Lenore. As to this villain with whom you have been holding these meetings, we shall soon find him and punish him as he deserves. Search for the rascal, Antonio, and bring him to me."
There was a quick trampling of feet and the sound of crushing shubbery, as if the men were breaking through it. Then another man's voice spoke:
"He has disappeared, your excellency."

"Very well, we shall find him yet. He cannot escape me. This is a fine piece of business, surely—the daughter of Count Villani holding secret meetings with some common vagabond. Lenore shall take the veil."
"Yes," I cried, "the bridal veil, count. I shall pay my respects in person to-day."

Then leaving them to get over their astonishment as best they might, I returned to the house in high spirits. The name, Count Villani, had given me the clue to the whereabouts of Lenore. The dwelling of which I have spoken as situated across the plain and opposite the rock, was the residence of Count Villani. I had met the old gentleman in the city and formed a speaking acquaintance with him. As neither of us had mentioned our private affairs, I had no means of connecting his daughter with my invisible girl.

That afternoon I presented myself to the count, and after amazing him with my story, which a few tests convinced him was true, formally proposed for his daughter's hand. As my wealth and social position were well-known, he offered no objections and his daughter was sent for.

As she entered the room. I saw that my idea of her had been less than true. I had never seen so lovely a woman, nor one who has so perfectly embodied my highest conception of grace and beauty. Her dark eyes, still wet with tears, met mine enquiringly.

"Lenore," said I, "I have come as I promised."
"George," she cried, with a radiant smile, "is it you?"
"Are you disappointed?" I asked, "am I what you expected?"
"You could not be more," she answered natively, "you are no less."
"Now that we meet as solid and material beings," I continued, are you willing to ratify the contract we made when we were only voice, Lenore? Your father gives us permission."

It may be supposed that I received a satisfactory answer, when the good-natured count found it discreet to turn away his eyes during my reception of it. As to the strange circumstance which was the means of uniting us, a series of tests revealed a remarkable acoustic property in the rock, by which persons standing in certain positions with reference to it, were able to hear each other with ease, more than a quarter of a mile apart. It is a matter-of-fact solution of the mystery, but Lenore and I are none less grateful for the good offices of the rock.

Fertilizer Experiments.

Nitrogen is the most costly ingredient used in commercial fertilizers, and the most difficult at the present time to obtain. It would be wasteful, therefore, to use a greater quantity than is really needed, and such waste is exceedingly costly to the farmer. As it is found that less nitrogen is required, the price of fertilizing has been gradually dropping in market, and this gain is greatly to the benefit of the farmer. It enables him to buy more, and to use more with a fair prospect of obtaining a profit. One objection to the use of guano, he believed, was that it contained a larger percentage of nitrogen than is needed and consequently a larger proportion than farmers can afford to pay for it. A saving of one per cent in the amount of nitrogen in a ton of fertilizer will cheapen the cost about four dollars. The most profitable way to use fertilizers is in connection with stable manure, the fertilizer being compounded in such a way as to make the manure and fertilizer together just meet the wants of the crop to be grown. Exactly how the nitrogen is taken by plants, is not explained, but it is evident that soil which is well filled with the tops and roots of clover and other plants contains a large amount of nitrogen that the growing crop will in some way appropriate.

How the Spanish Ladies Shoot.

While her Majesty was at Madrid the great banker and railway contractor, Salamanca, gave a hunting party in her honor at his seat, near Albeocete. All the royal family except the young Queen whose health is not satisfactory, went. Prodigal expense was gone to by the banker to receive them worthily. The hunt was a battue of easy butchery. This is how the august, royal and noble personages hunted. The Comte de Salamanca has a forest in his domain. Large spaces are cleared in it. In the centre of these spaces pavilions or stand-houses like those one sees at race-courses are erected. They are beautifully painted and adorned with sylvan trophies. The royal family was taken to one of these stand-houses and its different members present took up their stations according to the order of courtly precedence. The courtiers stood on the steps behind. Those who were least distinguished were higher up. In front of each to whom a gun was given there was a forked support on which to rest the muzzle. But no courtier was to fire until his betters in the front row had had enough of sport.

A band of guitar players had a tribute to themselves and played lively airs. The musicians were dressed like Figaro in "The Barber of Seville." Then there were wood rangers, whip-pers-in, huntsmen and sylvan guards, the notes of whose horns contrasted sharply with the frivolous music of the guitars. While the former instruments were blowing loud blasts a herd of deer rushed before the pavilion, followed by dogs. The King, his mother, sisters, Prince Philippe of Braganza, fired. The ex-Queen knocked down two stags; the ex-Princess of the Asturias, four, and the other two Infantas three each. When this herd had swept by the ex-Princess of the Asturias got on horseback to be ready to follow the second herd, which she and the King chased through the forest. They had small fowling pieces slung to their holsters and sometimes took flying shots. I dare say the whole scene was picturesque and stirring. English or American taste would be shocked if Queen Victoria and her daughters, or the ladyhood of Fifth ave., indulged in sport of this kind. Spaniards like to see their senoras and senioritas intrepid huntresses. It is a sign, they say, of old race when a woman handles a fowling-piece deftly. Slop keepers and artisans daughters have few opportunities for using guns. Velasquez painted the beautiful little Condessa de Haro, daughter of Don Luis de Haro, equipped for a battue or butchery such as was organized the other day at Albeocete for the delectation of the Queen Mother and the Infantas. She had on a mousquetaire or cavalier gray felt hat and feathers, a steel cuirass damascened, a farthingale, strong-soled buskins, and a gun in her hand, which she manipulated in a soldierly manner. This portrait, which I saw eight years ago, is still before my eyes, so vivid was the impression that it made on me. There is nothing theatrical in the Condessa, who is a pocket Diana. She means to do business with her gun. A French lady when she goes out to shoot has an opera comique look. If high heels are the fashion she wears them, although they are detestable for walking over soft ground. One sees that she has not the taste for sport and only thanks of it as affording an opportunity to appear in a new, striking, original and captivating toilette.

Six Thousand Years Old.

The Ashmolean Museum, at Oxford, contains one of the oldest monuments of civilization in the world, if, indeed, it is not the very oldest. This is the lintel stone of a tomb which formed the last resting-place of an officer who lived in the time of King Sent, of the second dynasty, whose date is placed by M. Mariette more than six thousand years ago. The stone is covered with that delicate and finished sculpture which distinguished the early periods of Egyptian history, and was immeasurably superior to the stiff and conventional art of the latter ages of Egypt which we are accustomed to see in our European museums. But it is also covered with something more precious still than sculpture, with hieroglyphics which show that even at that remote period Egyptian writing was a complete and finished art, with long ages of previous development lying behind it. The hieroglyphic characters are already used, not only pictorially and ideographically, but also to express syllables and alphabetic letters, the name of the King, for instance, being spelled alphabetically. In the hands of the Egyptian scribes, however, Egyptian writing never made any further progress. With the fall of what is called the Old Empire (about B. C. 3500) the freshness and expansive force of the people passed away, Egyptian life and thought became fossilized, and through the long series of centuries that followed Egypt resembled one of its own mummies, faithfully preserving the form and features of the past age, and of a life which had ceased to beat in its veins. Until the introduction of Christianity the only change undergone by Egyptian writers was the invention of a running hand, which in its earlier and simple form is called hieratic, and in its later form domestic.

Drugged Again.

"Well, Catharine Davis?"
"I'm not well, at all, sir; and what lady would be after passing the night on the hard benches here!"
"Catharine, you are charged with drunkenness."
"Then the charge is false, sir. I was no more drunk than that stove."
"But you were arrested while trying to make a speech on the street, and you couldn't walk down here."
"Well, your Honor, I wasn't drunk. On my way home I stopped into a grocery to buy some soap and the clerk offered me a glass of cider. In five minutes after drinking it I was as crazy as a loon."
"Do you think the cider was drugged?"
"Of course it was."
"There wasn't any drug in this, was there?" continued the Court, as he held up a whiskey-bottle taken from her pocket the night before.
"Bless me, I never saw it before!" she gasped.
"But it was taken from your pocket."
"Then some one put it there to convict a poor woman who lost her husband by a tornado nineteen years ago. Oh, sir, if you only knew how I had struggled."
"I do know, Catharine. You have struggled with the officers at least four times in the past year."
"But I was drugged, sir."
"That's the fourth time you've told that same story. Come, Catharine, you must go up."
"For one day, sir?"
"No—for thirty."
"Then I'm a dead widow, sir. I can never stand the disgrace of it. Can I send out and buy some poison?"
"Bijah will fix all that. Please fall back into the corridor, and I hope this will be a lesson to you."
Bijah gave her an apple, promised her his photograph, and so cheered her up that she forgot all about the poison, and entered the omnibus singing "The Jug I Left Behind Me."

A Pennsylvania Stage.

"All aboard for the Limestone Ridge Limited Express!" Travel between Newport, on the Pennsylvania Railroad, and New Germantown, Pennsylvania, a distance of thirty miles, is conducted by means of the primitive stage coach. The order to board came from the lusty lungs of Zack Rice, who comes of a family of stage drivers, his father, Zachariah Rice, Sr., and his brothers before him having driven the same route for "nigh on to forty years or more." The "express" is an uncouth, box-like vehicle, with blood-red paneled sides running gears the color of yellow ochre, and an enormous leather boot in the rear for storing mail pouches, Saratogas and other luggage. Sixteen passengers can be packed like herrings into the coach which is sometimes dragged by four horses and sometimes by two. Five miles toward sun-set New Bloomfield is reached, a country town, with a population of seven hundred and sixty, which requires four newspaper to keep it alive—a Heculean task that none but newspapers could accomplish.

Not long ago a reorganization and election of officers of the People's Freight Railway Company occurred. This company was chartered by the last Legislature under the old Constitution, and is one of the many projected lines from New York to the West. The surveyed route crosses the Delaware at a point near Trenton, N. J., and passes through the counties of Bucks, Montgomery, Berks, Lebanon, Dauphin, Perry, Huntingdon, Bedford, Somerset, Westmoreland, Allegheny and Washington, in this State. By reason of the fact that over fifty thousand dollars were expended in grading a portion of the road the charter has been kept alive. The financial crisis of 1873 stopped work, but recently new life has been infused therein. The officers elected are H. H. Bechtel, president; Jacob L. Markel secretary; James H. Graham, Jr., solicitor; O. H. P. Ryder, George F. Ensminger, W. F. Sadler, Hon. James H. Graham, H. H. Bechtel and John M. Smith, directors. The name of the company was changed to "The Pennsylvania Midland Railway Company." The corporation rights and franchises under the charter being very liberal, negotiations for their sale to Issac B. Hymer, of New York and Council Bluffs Railroad, are now in progress.

The work of locating the South Pennsylvania Railroad, which runs parallel with and crosses and recrosses the People's Freight from Marysville, on the Pennsylvania Central, through Sherman's Valley to the Broad Top regions, is now being vigorously prosecuted by two corps of engineers. Naturally the excitement among residents along the proposed route, many of whom have never seen a locomotive or heard its soporific shriek is intense.

Again to the westward twelve miles by the same primitive mode of locomotion, passing en route through a fertile valley, bustling villages and one of the most reliable agricultural districts in the State, where the farmers invest five dollars for rearing palatial barns for housing crops and protecting stock to one dollar expended on their private residences the little village is reached. A tramp of a mile to the northward and the solitary traveler stands amid the almost buried ruins of an old fort erected by the early settlers of Cumberland (now Perry) county in pre-revolutionary times to which with their families they could flee for the better protection of their lives from the oft-repeated and oft-time deadly assaults of the aborigines, upon whose domain they were encroaching and battling for supremacy, as is attested by the mounds in the vicinity which mark the graves of the Indian braves. The fort were erected in 1740 and was of unusual dimensions for its day. Its site was on a bluff commanding a good view of the surrounding country and is on the farm of Andrew Troy. It was fashioned after the block houses in vogue at that early day and surmounted a deep excavation which has been nearly filled up with stones and other debris hauled from adjacent fields.

Within sight of the fort stood the old Presbyterian kirk erected by the Scotch Irish and German settlers in 1766. As the neighborhood was but sparsely settled at the time of which I write the people came many miles to worship God in the rude structure dedicated to the advancement of His kingdom on earth. The local antiquarians are antagonistic in their description of the kirk, yet all agree that it was a log structure, quaint and curious. The first pastor was Rev. John Linn who died in 1820. It is said of Mr. Linn that he exerted a most wonderful influence throughout the entire western end of the county in his day and generation, and as he moved among his parishioners in later years was invariably spoken of as "one of those hills nearest Heaven." The remodeled church stands on the site of the old kirk, and although its situation in midwinter appears bleak and desolate in the extreme it is one of matchless loveliness in the spring and summer time, when its flowers come shyly out in all their aesthetic beauty; when its sloping banks and broad avenues are carpeted in delicate emerald and wooded by oaks which tower above all surroundings like Cyclopaean giant. It would seem that here, if anywhere on earth the worship of God could be conducted in all the beauty and simplicity of holiness. The church edifice overlooks an old graveyard, in which repose the remains of many who were identified with the settlement of the county, not a few of whom bore historic names. The oldest engraved headstone bears the inscription: "Martha Robertson, died December 22, 1766, aged 81 years," although there are many more antiquated.

The Demon in the Sky.
One of the most interesting sights in the sky, and one which can be watched without a telescope, is the variations in the light of the star Algol, whose Arabic name means the Demon. It is sometimes called the Winking Demon. This wonderful star is now in a good position for observation, being nearly overhead at nightfall. It is the brightest of the little cluster called the Head of Medusa, which, according to the old fable, Perseus carries in his hand as he hurries to the rescue of Andromeda. For a little over two days and a half Algol shines as a star of the second magnitude. Then its light begins to fade, and in about three hours and a third it sinks to the fourth magnitude, glimmering so feebly that a casual observer would be unable to distinguish it from the faint stars in its neighborhood. Thus it remains for 18 minutes, and then begins to brighten again, and in the same time that it takes in growing dim, attains its former brilliancy. From one minimum to another is two days 20 hours and nearly 49 minutes. There will not be another minimum visible on this longitude early in the evening until February 18 at 8 o'clock and 24 minutes.

The fact that a star thus brightens and grows dim at regular intervals is in itself wonderful, but it appears all the more wonderful when we are told that Algol is a sun, probably larger than ours having an enormous dark body revolving around it at tremendous speed. Some astronomers think that this mysterious body will fall into the star, producing an outburst of light and heat that would be fatal to any living beings who might exist within millions of miles of that distant sun. Such a catastrophe would be visible to us in the sudden increase of splendor in the star.

Fugitive Inks.

The aniline violet pencils now extensively used in this country, as well as inks made of the same coloring matter, must be understood to produce writing of a very fugitive character; well enough perhaps, for amatory correspondence, which, in order to be in character with the feeling that prompts it, is possibly better to be of a somewhat transient kind. It is, however, different with most writing, and permanence is commonly recognized as an essential characteristic; and, as we have said, this quality does not belong to inks of the aniline violet series. A druggist whom we know found out this to his cost. He labeled some of his bottles with purple ink of a most telling brilliancy, but some time after was much surprised to find that not a trace of the writing was to be seen. The light effectually bleaches the aniline and we have noticed that exposure in a damp place produces the same effect,