

THE ISLE OF BOREDOM.

As you sail through life take pains and steer away from the island that lies too near—The Isle of Boredom, which all men fear.

MAN-SIZE IN MARBLE.

When we were married we knew quite well that we should only be able to live by "strict punctuality and attention business."

Thursday passed off pretty well. Friday came. Everything that happened on that day is burned into my brain I got up early, I remember, and lighted the kitchen fire.

I did not tell Laura the legend of the shapes that "walked in their marble," because the legend concerning our house might, perhaps, trouble my wife.

I strolled out of the front door, leaving it unlatched. What a night it was! The jagged masses of heavy dark clouds were rolling at intervals from horizon to horizon.

I heard a bell beat from the church eleven already! I turned to go in, but the night held me. I could not get back into our little warm rooms yet.

I walked slowly along the edge of the wood. A sound broke the stillness of the night—it was a rustling in the wood. I stopped and listened.

I stepped and listened. The sound stopped too. I went on and I distinctly heard another step than mine answer mine like an echo.

It was a poacher or a wood stealer, most likely, for these were not unknown in our Arcadian neighborhood.

But whoever it was, he was a fool not to step more lightly. I turned into the birch-walk and passed through the corpse gate between the graves to the low porch.

I paused for a moment on the stone seat. Then I noticed that the door of the church was open, and I blamed myself for having left it unlatched the other night.

It will seem strange, perhaps, that I should have gone half way up the aisle before I remembered—with a sudden chill, followed by as sudden a rush of self-contempt—that this was the very day and hour when, according to tradition, the "shapes drawn out man-size in marble" began to walk.

Having thus the legend, I could not do otherwise than walk up toward the altar, just to look at the figures—as I said to myself, really what I wanted was to assure myself, first, that I did not believe the legend, and second, that it was not true.

With my hands in my pockets I passed up the aisle. In the gray dim light the Eastern end of the church looked larger than usual and the arches above the two tombs looked larger, too.

"Tell me all about it, Mrs. Dorman," I said; "you needn't mind about telling me. I'm not like the young people who make fun of such things."

"Well, sir"—she lowered her voice—"you may have seen in the church, beside the altar, two shapes. I mean them two bodies, drawn out man-size in marble," she returned, I had had to admit that her description was a thousand times more graphic than mine.

"They do say, as on All Saints' Eve them two bodies sits up on their slabs, and gets off of them, and then walks down the aisle, in their marble, and as the clock strikes eleven they walk out of the church door, and over the birch-walk, and if it's a wet night they come back here to their home, sir, and if anyone meets them—"

"Well, what then?" I asked. "But no—not another word could I get from her. I could get nothing but warnings."

"Whatever you do, sir, lock the door early on All Saints' Eve, and make the cross sign over the doortstep and on the windows. And I'm sorry to inconvenience you and your lady, but I must go on Thursday."

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My arms were caught just above the elbow and held as in a vice, and the raw-boned Irish doctor actually shook me.

"Let me go, you fool," I gasped. "The marble figures have gone from the church; I tell you they've gone." He broke into a ringing laugh.

"I'll have to give ye a draught to-morrow, I see. Ye've bin smoking too much and listening to old wives' tales. Come back with me we'll look at the church, and let me see the bare slabs."

"You go if you like," I said, a little less frantic for his laughter; I'm going home to my wife.

"Rubbish, man," said he; are ye to go saying all yer life that ye've seen solid marble endowed with vitality, and me to go all my life saying ye were a coward? No sir, ye shan't do it."

The night air, a human voice, and I think also the physical contact with this six feet of solid common sense, brought me back a little to my ordinary self, and the word "coward" was a mental shower bath.

"Come on, then," I said perhaps you're right.

He still held my arm tightly. We got back to the church and walked up the aisle. I am not ashamed to confess that I shut my eyes; I knew the figures would not be there. I heard Kelly strike a match.

"Here they are, ye see, right enough; ye've been dreaming or drinking, asking yer pardon for the imputation."

I opened my eyes. By Kelly's expiring vesta, I saw two shapes lying "in their marble" on their slabs. I drew a deep breath and caught his hand.

"I am awfully indebted to you," I said. "It must have been some trick or light, or I have been working rather hard, perhaps that's it. Do you know I was quite convinced they were gone."

"I'm aware of that, he answered, grimly; ye'll have to be careful of that brain of yours, my friend, I assure you."

He was leaning over and looking at the right hand figure, whose stony face wore the most villainous and deadly expression.

"By Jove!" he said, "something has been afoot here, this hand is broken."

And so it was. I was certain that it had been perfect the last time that Laura and I had been there.

"Perhaps some one has tried to remove them," said the young doctor. "Come along," I said, "or my wife will be getting anxious. You'll come in and have a drop of whisky and drink confusion to ghosts and better sense to me."

No One Can Escape.

He met Mrs. Dr. Sherlock Holmes and She Was His.

All of a sudden she turned to the man in the street car on her left and said: "You were putting down an ingrain carpet at your house this morning. Don't attempt to deny it, for I have the most conclusive evidence!"

"How do you know?" he stammered in surprise. "There is lint on your knees, sir, showing the kind of carpet, and your thumb is done up in a rag to prove that you hit it with the hammer. You have a bunion on your left foot. Deny it at your peril!"

"Yes, I have a bunion, but—" "I know it, because you can't keep that foot still, while n-w and then you utter a cuss word below your breath. You are living with your second wife. Admit the truth of what I say or take the consequences!"

"How on earth can you tell that?" he asked as he began to turn pale around the mouth.

"By the hairs and dandruff on your coat. Your first wife always brushed you before you went out. Now, sir, you have a small child at home."

"Yes, a little boy 3 years old, but—" "I knew it, because he showed that jumping jack into your pocket while you were playing with him just before you came out. You are also an absent-minded man. Denial will be useless and may get you into serious trouble."

"I—I—" "If you were not an absent-minded man, you would not have pocketed that table napkin for a handkerchief nor come out with your old hat on. While your first wife has been dead for several years, you have not placed a combstone at her grave. Don't try to bluff me, sir!"

"You are right, but—" "Of course I am. When we passed that marble shop, you gave one look at the tombstones and placed your hand on your wallet. Your present wife is not domestic."

"No, she is not, but how on earth can you tell?" "The moths have eaten your coat, there are two buttons off your vest, and from the way you wiggle that right foot I'm sure you have holes in your stockings. Think not to deceive me!"

"Great lands, woman," he gasped as the perspiration stood out on his forehead, "but you must be—" "Mrs. Dr. Sherlock Holmes, sir," she finished. "I have to get out here to solve a mystery in a butcher shop. Blood has been found on a cleaver, the butcher's wife has got a new sealskin sack, and the errand boy has a boil on his leg. Steady! I will unravel the whole affair in five minutes and spot the murderer! Good day, old man. By the way don't use sandpaper on your celluloid collar, as it leaves scratches!"

New System of Grading.

W. J. Shearer, superintendent of the public schools of New Castle, Pa., has introduced a new system of grading pupils which has been in successful operation in that city for two years.

He believed that in the manner of grading and promoting was to be found the weakest point in our public schools and his system is the result of special study of the subject. His object is to do away with the "iron clad" system of yearly grades and to give something more plant. This is attempted by removing the cause and dividing each grade into small classes, according to ability, with but a short interval between the classes so that pupils may easily pass from class to class as they are able.

One excellent feature of the new system is the abolition of the examination period, looked forward to with dread by teachers and pupils. His reasons for thinking the final examination is not best for the children are given at length in the forthcoming Pennsylvania School Journal, and may be briefly stated as follows:

It is a test of memory rather than of power. It may show some things the pupil does not know, but does not show what the pupil does know. It destroys and prevents broad and intelligent teaching, makes out of the teacher a "grind" and turns out "machine pupils."

It forces many to take far more than they can grasp or understand and causes many to leave school. It brings unnecessary mental worry to the nervous ones who often fail to pass, while the less worthy succeed. It is a great temptation to deceit. It demands one third more time than is necessary to give as much knowledge and better training.

Japan is Impatient.

Has grown Weary With Waiting for China to Close the Negotiations.—May Declare them off. Hinted That Conditions First Proposed will not Be Accepted.—The Army Has Not Been Asleep. Evidently at Any Time to Still Further Demonstrate Their Strength. The Annexation Idea Is Favored.

It is the belief of officials in a position to know the state of affairs between Japan and China, that Japan will declare the peace negotiations off unless China hasten them. There is increasing irritation on the part of Japan because of the delays in presenting definite peace proposals.

More than a month has passed since it was agreed that a tender of peace conditions would be considered by Japan, and as yet the conditions have not been offered, and there is doubt as to China's plenipotentiaries having the right to make any final offers.

At one time the general understanding was that the basis of peace would be a cash indemnity and the independence of Korea, and the work of the plenipotentiaries was to settle the exact amount and terms of the cash indemnity.

Now, however, there is an intimation that Japan may no longer accept the two conditions first proposed, but may insist also on China's ceding extensive territories, probably the Island of Formosa, or the valuable strategic points of Port Arthur or Wei-Hei-Wei, or a portion of Manchuria, already occupied by Japan.

Opinion differs in Japan as to which piece of territory should be demanded. This annexation sentiment is universal, and it is believed Japan will soon make it known to China, probably through Minister Dan at Tokio, that the procrastination in presenting the terms of settlement is such that the negotiations will be abandoned unless closed within a reasonable and definite time.

In the meantime there are evidences that Japan is preparing for an aggressive military movement calculated to impress China and the plenipotentiaries with Japan's ability to increase the advantage she has already secured.

A gentleman who has been some years in diplomatic service in China, and is a recognized authority on international custom, points out that it is an invariable rule with China not to grant absolute power to her plenipotentiaries, but merely to confer advisory powers on them.

Detectives Made Love.

To a Pretty Girl Who Finally Told of an Illicit Distillery.

HAZLETON, PA., Jan. 5.—George Hess, a moonshiner, was captured and held to this city to-day by Chief of Police Hampton and U. S. Marshal John W. Walker, of Pittsburg. Hess has been conducting an illicit distillery in the mountains near Hobby for a year. An officer attended a dance two weeks ago. Among the girls there was Amanda Shive. There was lots of cheap whiskey on hand. The detective was convinced that she knew something of the distillery and made love to her.

He ingratiated himself into her confidence. The result was that Miss Shive told the spy that George Hess, of the Valley, was making whiskey on the mountain near Hobby.

With this clue the officers started out in search of Hess. Hess was captured and held before United States Commissioner Hill here. Amanda Shive was also taken before the Commissioner and testified against Hess.

The wild rush for office at the opening of the Legislature is unprecedented. There are from ten to twenty applicants for every position, from the highest to the lowest. So great is the rush that the leaders, who are supposed to be able to divide the official pap among the hungry applicants, are at their wits end, and the bigger tycoons are compelled to hide from the hordes to keep from being run over.

The proposition that successful seekers for places should divide their salaries with one or two who may miss connection, causes a great deal of kicking. Anybody who is an uninterested witness of the scramble will agree with Mr. Jefferson, who once said: "The post of honor is the private station." Yet there are hundreds of men who would rather carry in wood or shovel coal for the Commonwealth than to earn better wages, and retain their independence and self-respect, in a private capacity.

Official place, however, is a big thing in the eyes of the perennial office seeker.

There is likely to be a call on Irish Americans for help for "the folks at home," as there is something like a famine prevailing among the peasantry of the west of Ireland by reason of the failure of this year's potato crop. The chief secretary for Ireland has officially notified the cabinet that the distress is urgent and that means should be immediately taken to alleviate the suffering. According to the Dublin papers the calamity is widespread, people are starving, and any relief under the poor laws is wholly inadequate for the emergency.

There must be in America, the New York "Sun" estimates, a million of immigrants from the most seriously afflicted region of Ireland by the present calamity, which includes the counties of Sligo, Galway, Connemara, Mayo and Clare. It is advised they take measures for relief, either by sending an agent over to gather information, or what would probably be better, seek the advice of the archbishop of Tuam, who is cognizant of the facts. On this they could cable relief in a very short time. Electricity annihilates space in works of charity as well as other undertakings.

For and About Women.

Miss E. V. Askew, of Tampa, Fla., is a stenographer and typewriter with a record to be proud of. In a document of 100 pages of legal cap sent up to the Supreme Court of the State there was not one erasure, omission, or mistake in punctuation.

The daughter of Jefferson Davis, Miss Varina Anne Davis, but whom her friends will always know as "Winnie," the daughter of the Confederacy, has just finished her first novel, and under its title of "The Veiled Doctor" it will be published within a fortnight.

The flower bonnet of the hour is a novelty. It usually consists of a single nodding flower, which appears to be growing from the high coil of hair. The bonnet's sole foundation is a soft coil of velvet. The flower is caught at the back. One shows a twist of pink velvet, with an American Beauty rose standing with graceful erectness at the back. Another has a coil of violet velvet and a careless cluster of heliopsis arranged toward the back.

Mrs. Amelia Bloomer, who died at Council Bluffs, Iowa, on Sunday last, gave faithful service to the cause of womanhood with voice and pen and brain; but she never did her sex better service than when she bravely adopted the common sense business costume which took its name from her, and which she found necessary to her comfort and convenience in her position as postmistress. For a generation or more her independence had subjected her to much good-natured ridicule. With the rising generation her name will be apt to summon up only grateful associations; certainly such will be the case with which the many thousands of her sisters who find health and pleasure in the bicycle.

Miss Nellie Cushman, of Arizona, a tall, angular, dark-haired, dark-eyed girl, a rapid talker, and a great reader, has the reputation of being the only woman mining expert in the world. She is a Kansas girl, and began her work in examining ore at Tucson, Arizona, nine years ago, when she was a girl of seventeen.

Tartan plaids are a veritable dress rage. Paris began the wearing of silks and velvets in tartan patterns six months ago, and we have followed suit by decking ourselves gorgeously with the plaids of the Scotch clans. Every woman whose name is Stuart, Macpherson, MacGregor or anything that has the faintest smell of the heather, walks abroad in the big checks of "our tartan, you know." Men wear neckties of the solid red and black of the famous outlaw Rob Roy, women display it in velvet sleeves, and now and then in a cravat. Another coat is desirable for busy women because it does away with the necessity of carrying a muff. It has openings on a level with the arm sizes and inside pockets, just as the man's ulster possess. It is a fine idea and the pockets can be added to any coat that is not tight fitting.

The novelty of the moment is a little collar-band of fur, to be worn as velvet stock-collars are. It is merely a straight band of fur about three inches wide, standing out in projecting loops on the sides, then hooking in front, where it is adorned with two miniature heads of the animal that meet together there. This little odd *four de cost* is made of the glossiest black silk, Persian lamb or of the moire' Persian, or else of seal-skin, otter, or the shorter, brown furs, especially mink or sable.

Chinchilla is very decidedly the fashionable fur for those who have sufficient color in lip and cheek to wear it becomingly. There is great choice in this fur, the inferior skins looking brown and dingy besides the clear gray shades seen in the best qualities brought from Africa. An undulating collarette in two rows, or with a stole front, is the favorite shape, as many insist that a mass of this fur when seen in large capes is not effective: It is however, a charmingly warm and velvety fleece. It is at its best when combined with black or with seal-skin.

An idea which originated with a bright hostess is very pleasing. On a strip of white satin ribbon which hangs from a tiny brass rod in her guest chamber, she has written the hours for arrival and departure of the principal mails, and on the back of it, there is pasted a perpetual calendar. Now, there is adulterated sense for you. It saves a lot of questions, insures punctuality at meals—if her guests have any sense of honor and helps a recent memory, when important communications might be neglected but for this gentle inspiration.

Heavy dresses, with sleeves containing more material than all the rest of the gown put together, make it impossible to wear the additional weight of a big cloak or coat, with sleeves to correspond, so the Eton jacket is still with us, in the shape of a bodice of fur, minus sleeves, though sleeves can be added if you choose.

Mrs. W. D. Egenhoff has been Superintendent of Public Instruction for Mariposa county, Cal., for eight years. She was left a widow at 22 with two young sons. A correspondent in Mariposa writes: "Elected to office a year or two after her husband's death, she has proved a capable superintendent, an excellent teacher and a first-class mother. There is not a railroad in the county. Sometimes alone, sometimes with a lady friend, Mrs. Egenhoff has driven 150 miles at one trip, over steep roads skirting dizzy precipices, to visit the schools. Nearly every school in the county has been visited annually, including the one in the Yosemite Valley.

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