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G. E. ELWELL, J. K. BITTENBENDER, } Proprietors.

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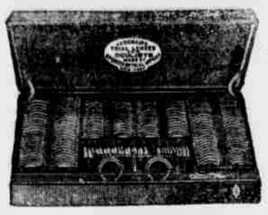

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HOW TO READ A STORY.

One midsummer night a farmer's boy living about ten miles from the city of Cincinnati was following a bridlepath through a dense and dark forest. He had been searching for some missing cows, and at nightfall found himself a long way from home and in a part of the country with which he was but partly familiar.

The night was clear but in the woods it was exceedingly dark. It was more by the sense of touch than by that of sight that the lad kept the obscure path. He had gone into the forest a mile or more when he was surprised to see a feeble gleam of light shining through the foliage skirting the path on his left. The sight of it startled him, and set his heart to beat audibly.

"The old Breede house is somewhere about here," he said to himself. "This must be a continuation of the path which we reach it by from our side. Ugh! what should a light be doing there? I don't like it.

Nevertheless he pushed on. A moment later and he had emerged from the forest into a small open space, mostly ungrown to brambles. There were remnants of a rotting fence. A few yards from the trail, in the middle of the clearing, was the house, from which the light came through an unglazed window. The window had once contained glass, but that and its supporting frame had long ago yielded to missiles flung by hands of venturesome boys to attest alike their courage and their hostility to the supernatural; for the Breede house bore the evil reputation of being haunted. Possibly it was not, but even the hardest skeptic could not deny that it was deserted—which in rural regions is much the same thing. Looking at the mysterious dim light shining from the ruined window, the boy remembered with apprehension that his own hand had assisted to break alike their windows and their peace. Yet this stubborn lad, shaking in every limb, would not retreat. The blood in his veins was strong and rich with the iron of the frontiersman. He started to pass the house at a run.

As he was going by he looked in at the blank window space and saw a strange and terrifying sight—the figure of a man seated in the center of the room, at a table upon which lay some loose sheets of paper. His elbows rested on the table, his hands supporting his head, which was uncovered. On each side the fingers were pushed into the hair. His face showed pale in the light of a single candle a little to one side. The flame illuminated that side of the face; the other was in deep shadow. The man's eyes were fixed upon the blank window space with a stare in which an older and cooler observer might have discerned apprehension, but which seemed to the lad altogether soulless. He believed the man to be dead.

The situation was horrible, but not without its fascination. The boy paused in his flight to note it all. He endeavored to still the beating of his heart by holding his breath until half suffocated. He was weak, faint, trembling; he could almost feel the deathly whiteness of his face. Nevertheless he set his teeth and resolutely advanced to the house. He had no conscious intention—it was the mere courage of terror. He thrust his white face forward into the illuminated opening. At that instant a strange, harsh cry, a shriek, broke upon the silence of the night—the note of a screech owl. The man sprang to his feet, overturning the table and extinguishing the candle. The boy took to his heels.

* * * * * * *

"Good morning, Colston—I am in luck, it seems. You have often said that my commendation of your literary work was mere civility; and here you find me absorbed—actually merged—in your latest story in The Messenger. Nothing less shocking than your touch upon my shoulder would have roused me to consciousness."

"The proof is stronger than you seem to know," replied the man; "so keen is your eagerness to read my story that you are unwilling to renounce selfish considerations and forego all the pleasures you could get from it."

"I don't understand you," said the other, folding the newspaper that he held and putting it in his pocket. "You writers are a queer lot anyhow. Come, tell me what I have done or omitted. In what way does the pleasure that I get from your work depend on me?"

"In many ways. Let me ask you how you would enjoy your dinner if you took it in this street car. Suppose the phonograph so perfected as to be able to give you an entire opera—singing, orchestration and all. Do you think you would get much pleasure out of it if you turned it on at your office during business hours? Do you really care for a serenade by Schubert when you hear it fiddled by an untimely Italian on a morning ferryboat? Are you always cocked and primed for admiration? Do you keep every mood on tap, ready to any demand? Let me remind you, sir, that the story which you do me the honor to begin as a means of oblivion to the discomfort of this street car is a ghost story!"

"Well!"

"Well! Has the reader no duties corresponding to his privileges? You have paid five cents for that newspaper. It is yours. You have the legal right to read it when and where you will. Much of what is in it is neither helped nor harmed by time and place and mood; some of it actually requires to be read at once—while it is fizzing. But my story is not of that character. The stuff will keep until you have leisure to put yourself into the frame of mind appropriate to the sentiment of the piece—which I submit that you cannot do in a street car. An author has rights which the reader is bound to respect."

"For specific example?"

"The right to the reader's undivided attention. To deny him that is immoral. To make him share your attention with the rattle of a street car, the moving panorama of the crowds on the sidewalks and the buildings beyond—with any of the thousands of distractions which make our customary environment—is to treat him with gross injustice. By God, it is infamous!"

"You know what I mean," continued the writer impetuously, crowding his words—"You know what I mean, Marsh. My stuff in this morning's Messenger is plainly subheaded 'A Ghost Story.' That is ample notice to all; every honorable reader will understand the conditions under which the work is to be read."

The gentleman addressed as Marsh winced a trifle, then asked with a smile: "What conditions? How, when, where should I read your ghost story?"

"In solitude—at night—by the light of a candle. There are certain emotions which a writer can easily enough excite—such as compassion or merriment. I can move you to tears or laughter under almost any circumstances. But for my ghost story to be effective you must be made to feel fear—at least, a strong sense of the supernatural—and that is a different matter. I have a right to expect that if you read me at all you will give me a chance; that you will make yourself accessible to the emotion which I try to inspire."

The car had now arrived at its terminus and stopped. The trip just completed was its first for the day, and the conversation of the two had not been interrupted.

"Do you mean to say," Marsh began "that if I take the trouble to observe your directions—place myself in the condition which you demand; solitude, night, and a tallow candle—you can with your ghastliest work give me an uncomfortable sense of the supernatural, accelerate my pulse, make me start at sudden noises, and a nervous chill along my spine and cause my hair to rise?"

Colston turned suddenly and looked him squarely in the eyes as they walked. "You would not dare—you have not the courage," he said. He emphasized the words with a contemptuous gesture. "You are brave enough to read me in a street car; but—in a deserted house—alone—in the forest—at night! Bah! I have a manuscript in my pocket which would kill you."

Marsh was angry. He knew himself a man of courage and the words stung him. "If you know such a place," he said, "take me there to-night and leave me your story and a candle. Call for me when I've had time enough to read it, and I'll tell you the entire plot and—kick you out of the place."

That is how it occurred that the farmer's boy, looking in at an unglazed window of the Breede house, saw a man sitting in the light of a candle.

* * * * * * *

Late in the afternoon of the next day three men and a boy approached the Breede house from that point of the compass toward which the boy had fled the preceeding night. They were in high spirits apparently; they talked loudly and laughed. They made facetious and good humored ironical remarks to the boy about his adventure, which evidently they did not believe in. He accepted the raillery, with seriousness, making no reply.

Arriving at the house and finding the door bolted on the inside, the party of investigators entered without further ceremony than breaking it down. Leading out of the passage into which this door had opened was another on the right and one on the left. These two doors also were fastened, and were broken in. They entered at random the one on the left first. It was vacant. In the room on the right—the one which had the black front windows—was the dead body of a man.

It lay partly on one side, with the forearm beneath it, the cheek on the floor. The eyes were wide open; the stare was not an agreeable thing to encounter. The lower jaw had fallen; a little pool of saliva had collected beneath the mouth. An overthrown table, a partly burned candle, a chair and a paper with some writing on it were all else that the room contained. The men looked at the body, touching the face in turn. The boy gravely stood at the head, assuming a look of ownership. It was the proudest moment of his life. One of the men said to him. You're a good 'un"—a remark which was received by the two others with nods of acquiescence. It was Skepticism apologizing to Truth. The one of the men took from the floor the sheet of manuscript and stepped to the window, for already the evening shadows were gloaming the forest. The song of the whip-poor-will was heard in the distance and a monstrous beetle sped by the window on roaring wings.

* * * * * * *

"Before committing the act, which rightly or wrongly I have resolved on, and appearing before my Maker for judgment, I, James R. Colston, deem it my duty as a journalist to make a statement to the public. My name is I believe, tolerably well known to the people as a writer of tragic tales, but the somberest imagination never conceived anything so gloomy as my own life and history. Not in incident; my history has been destitute of adventure and action. But my mental career has been lurid with experiences such as kill and damn. I shall not recount them here—some of them are written and ready for publication elsewhere.

The object of these few lines is to explain to whomsoever may be interested that my death is voluntary—my own act. I shall die at 10 o'clock in the evening on the 15th of July—a significant anniversary to me, for it was on that day and at that hour that my friend in time and eternity, Charles Breede, performed his vow to me by the same act which fidelity to our pledge now entails upon me—he took his life in his little house in Copeton woods. There was the customary verdict of temporary insanity. Had I testified at the inquest—Had I told all I knew—they would have called me mad! I have still a week of life in which to arrange my worldly affairs and prepare for the great change. It is enough, for I have but few affairs, and it is now four years since death became an imperative obligation. I bear this writing on my body: the finder will please hand it to the coroner "JAMES R. COLSTON.

"P. S.—Willard Marsh, on this fatal 15th day of July, I hand you this manuscript, sealed, to be opened and read under conditions agreed upon, and at a place which I designate. I forgoe my intention to keep it on my body to explain the manner of my death, which is not important. It will serve to explain the manner of yours. I am to call for you during the night to receive assurance that you have read the manuscript. You know me well enough to expect me. But, my friend it will be after 10 o'clock. May God have mercy on your souls! J. R. C."

Before the man who was reading this manuscript had finished one of the others had picked up the candle and lighted it. When the reader had done he quietly thrust the paper against the flame, and, despite the protestations of the others, held it until it was burnt to ashes. At the inquest nothing could elicit an intelligible account of what the paper contained. The man who did this, and who placidly endured a severe reprimand from the coroner, was a son-in-law of the late Charles Breede.

From the Times.

Yesterday the commission of lunacy committed to the asylum Mr. James R. Colston, a writer of some local reputation, connected with the Messenger. It will be remembered that on the evening of the 15th inst. Mr. Colston was given into custody by one of his fellow lodgers in the Baine house, who had observed him acting very suspiciously; baring his throat and whetting a razor—occasionally trying its edge by actually cutting through the skin of his arm. On being handed over to the police the unfortunate man made a desperate resistance and has ever since been so violent that it has been necessary to keep him in a strait-jacket. It is thought his malady is due to grief and excitement caused by the mysterious death of his friend Willard Marsh.—*Ambrose Bierce in San Francisco examiner*

The Evolution of Christmas And Thanksgiving.

We have not the documents at hand and we cannot attempt to prove with accuracy just how thoroughly the festival of Thanksgiving has penetrated the South. Before the war, this festival was finding a slowly increasing observance in the North; it was carried Westward by the New-Englanders wherever they went and there began to be a pretty general proclamation of Thanksgiving by the different Governors, without any very wide-spread attention from the people invited to keep the day. It was an affair of families, of neighborhoods; and perhaps a turkey-shoot was the most prevalent expression of the rustic piety outside of New England. But after the war Thanksgiving was officially nationalized, and the Presidents relieved the Governors of the duty annully proclaiming it. While reconstruction was still imperfect, and the different races at the South had not yet reached their present condition of ideal harmony, the black race may have seized upon Thanksgiving Day as a symbol of their liberation at the hands of its Northern inventors, and revered it accordingly. But of this we are not satisfactorily advised; and we will not insist upon it as a conjecture. Probably such a conjecture must encounter the fact of an ethnical conservatism in the black race, who would cling to the elder festival of Christmas with that fondness for the things of custom which is one of their most engaging traits. What is certain, however, is the diffusion of Christmas throughout the North, not only in these parts characterized by the South and the Middle States, but in the vast regions covered by the New England civilization, and in the remotest fastness of New England itself, triply guarded against it once by the pumpkin, the codfish, and the bean. It is not much more than a yesterday in our national past since this beloved holiday, the most sacred and the dearest to the heart of humanity, was abhorred on those bleak shores as part and parcel of Romish mummery which the Puritans had banished together with the masspriests and all their works; since the good Sewall, cast down by the first rumor of its return under the protection of prelacy, walked out on Christmas morning in Boston, fearful of some sign of its presence,

"And somewhat grimly smiled"

to see the farmers coming in from their snow-choked hills with their sled-loads of firewood, as bitterly bent on their money's worth that day as on any common Tuesday or Thursday of them all. No doubt the sacred feast had been abused to evil, and Christmas had to come again, refined and purified before it could meet the acceptance it now has not only in the hearts but in the minds of men. The outward signs of rejoicing remain much the same as of old: the holly, the mistletoe, the yule-log; even the mince-pie and the wassail-bowl and the plum-pudding, are with us as before; but the mirth is decanter, and something more of the true meaning of the day is yearly expressed in its observance.—From *Editor's Study*, by WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS, in *Harper's Magazine* for December.

To Stop a Runaway Horse.

The Russian method of stopping a runaway horse is said to be very effective, and is not particularly cruel. They place a cord with a running-knot around the horse's neck near the neck-strap. To this slip-noose is attached a pair of reins, which may be thrown over the dash board ready to be seized at once. When the horse starts, the extra reins are taken up and the cord is tightened around the horse's throat. The most furious horse thus choked stops instantly, and will not kick or fail.

"SHUT THE DOOR"

DE VOE, THE WEATHER PROPHET, PREDICTS SOME STORMS.

De Voe the great weather prophet, makes the following forecast for the present winter. He Says: "The ice men will not have to look far for a supply this season. We will have good sleighing the day before Christmas, and it will last for weeks. There will be two severe storm belts this winter, one along the lakes and the other near the gulf. We are between these and will not suffer so much. All of the storms will form in the West and decrease in energy as they approach the Atlantic coast. The coldest weather will occur from December 25 to 31.

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

The death of JEFFERSON DAVIS ends a most remarkable chapter of history. It finishes the story of the most strenuous conflict that ever occured in the world, the conflict which most vitally affected the future of the human race. The closing lines of that chapter could not be written while he lived. He was too predominantly identified with its events for that to be.

He was the intellectual leader of the movements which resulted in war against the Union, undertaken in the sincere conviction of its necessity as a means of preserving the liberties which the Union represents.

He was the chosen chieftain of the new Republic which strove to establish itself, and whose adherants battled for its existence with a heroism the memory of which is everywhere cherished as one that does honor to the American character and name. Against him alone of all who participated in the war was the charge of treason brought. He alone was imprisoned. He was the only one who refused to renew his allegiance, and he died without accepting proffered amnesty. His attitude was thus made peculiar by circumstances and by his own choice. But it was peculiar also by reason of the exceptional way in which he was regarded by the public.

To the very last he was denied the generous consideration extended to all the other leaders of the Lost Cause. His acts and motives have never had the charitable interpretation given to those of his associates.

All the other Southern leaders have been judged to be sincere men, though mistaken—men of patriotic purpose, misled by false teachings and erring only through misconception. He has had no such consideration except at the hands of half of a few original Abolitionists of uncompromisingly just minds. He sacrificed all for the cause he cherished, and he alone of all the South has born the cross of martyrdom. Upon his sholders fell the burden of the hate and animosity engendered by civil war.

The other leaders have been held to have erred: he alone has been condemned as a wilful sinner. Now that he is dead it may perhaps be seen that he was in like case with all the rest, and that his memory is entitled to whatever judgment history may mete out to the others.

He was a man of commanding ability, spotless integrity, controlling conscience and a temper so resolute that at times it approached obstinacy. In his opinions he was a doctrinaire who held inflexibly to certain fixed premises of thought and followed his logical deductions from them with relentless fidelity, whithersoever the logic might lead. He was proud, sensitive and honorable in all his dealings and in every relation of life.

The key to his career is found in the two facts that he formed his convictions by the logical processes of the closet, and that he did what his convcitions dictated with the unhesitating obedience of the soldier he was bred to be. The services which he rendered the country as a statesman in both branches of Congress in the antebellum days, as Secretary of War, and as a soldier of the Union in Mexico, entitle him to the kindly rememberance of all who recognize ability and courage. His state papers will live in our archives as models.

He is dead in his eighty-second year. It remains for later generations than this to give the final Judgment upon the deeds he did in the dody.—*World.*

They Had Much Money.

AND THEY CARRIED A BRICK IN A SATCHEL FOR A BLIND.

Two men walked rapidly down Wall street yesterday afternoon and entered one of the prominent banking institutions, says the Philadelphia Press. They were sturdy, heavy-set men. One carried a small black satchel. Both kept their eyes roaming from side to side. I followed them into the bank. The man with the satchel sat down, dropping the bag carelessly on the floor. The other went into the receiving teller's inclosure, reached down in his breast pocket and extracted a package of bills. These were hastily counted, and the two strangers left. The teller jammed the bills into an envelope, sealed it and pitched it into a safe, afterward closing the door in a perfunctory manner. The entire transaction occupied less than two minutes. Then the teller turned to me and said:

"How much do you think was in that package?"

"Why, about $500."

"Yes, and a little more. It contained one million four hundred and forty-odd thousand."

"You don't mean it!"

"Yes, he said, showing his memoranda. "You see, it's nearly all in $10,000 bills. There is not great danger in carrying notes of that denomination, because, except here in New York, they are so seldom used that suspicion would at once be directed toward any one who attempted to negotiate them."

One thing still puzzled me.

"What did the messenger have in his satchel?"

"Nothing but a half brick. The sachel is carried as a blind, to throw any possible thief off the track."

He Still loves Red Top.

Ex-President Cleveland either has an ardent attachment for Washington real estate or else he hopes some day to be again located at the capital in an official capacity. At least such is the inference drawn by business men of this city who have learned of a recent offer made for the Red Top property. Several days ago a proposition was made to Mr. Cleveland for the purchase of his property, the amount offered being upwards of $150,000. This is about five times what the property cost him, but to the surprise of the bidder he was met with a flat but courteous refusal. In his reply Mr. Cleveland said that Red Top is not for sale and that his intention is to preserve it as a country residence for himself. Further, he desired it understood that some day he proposed to take up his permanent abode at Red Top and especially as it afforded him an opportunity for quietude and recreation.—*New York Sun.*

Cremation is coming more and more into vogue in Germany, in spite of the expense and certain legal difficulties which render its performance in some parts an impossibility. At Gotha no fewer than 100 bodies have been cremated during the present year.

Craven E. Silcott, cashier of the Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives at Washington has absconded with $72,000 belonging to congressmen. He is believed to be in Canada.

Henry M. Stanly, the African explorer, has been disnovered. He is at Zanzibar, and will soon return to civilization.