THE WINTER WINDS.

Hear the winter wind rejoice,
Lifting high its frigid voice
As it frolics on the housetops
In a wayward, wanton choice!
Now it mounts a lordly pile
In a dashing daring style,
Shrieking with demoniac pleasure
As it leaps from tile to tile!

Now it whistles on the rim
Of a building high and dim—
Standing far above its neighbors—
And with keen appalling vim,
Tears a snowstorm into shreds,
Catches up the tangled threads,
Whirls them to the streets and chuckles
When they fall on trav'lers' heads!

Now it rides a cottage roof
Pounding it as with the hoo
Of an imp from shade infernal;
Then, to give an added proof
Of some diabolic spell,
With a frantic, fiendish yell,
It goes charging down a chimney,
Near where frightened children dwell!
Then it makes the shutters clash,
Bangs the stormdoor with a crash
And goes howling through the treetops
In a sudden startled dash!
Now it races down the street,
Tripping up unwary feet,
Tossing hats and skirts with roguish
Haste and freedom indiscreet!

A Romance.

Old Paulo Serati sat beneath the tree in his front yard during the long summer day and listened to Angela Argenti read to him. She lived on another street, but she was a firm friend of old Paulo, and there was not a day that passed that she did not come and read to him.

She was bright and pretty, with long eyelashes and deep black eyes that looked up into the old man's face, mirroring the love she had for him in her heart. There were times too, when she would tell him that it was not necessary to read so much, and then she would sing some of the good, old fashioned tunes that he had sung when he was a boy on the farm.

Her laughter, too, used to lighten up the gloomy house, and old Paulo used to say:

"Ah, my lass, you must get a good husband."

This always caused her to toss her head and laugh, showing two rows of pearly white teeth.

"You are already married," she would retort, and his wife would often join them in this good-natured joking.

"There is not a girl in all Italy any prettier than you," old Paulo used to tell her, "and I don't believe there is one your equal in Milan. I like you so well my lass, that I am anxious to have you marry some good man. The good father was telling me just the other day that I must look after you."

"But my own father and mother can do that," she would answer. "You do not seem to realize that they are living and that I am very happy with them."

"I know," said Paulo, "but I don't think that they can think more of you than I do. Why, I've known you since you were a little baby lying in your mother's arms and cooing whenever I came near you."

"We are good friends," she would say.

"That we are," he would answer, and times when you don't come when I expect you, I realize how dear you are to us. Neither wife nor I thinks that the morning or afternoon is perfect if you don't come in to see us. Your father told me the other day that I would spoil you; that you had begun to have ideas of marriage, as I spoke about a few minutes ago."

"There is no one I know of," she answered.

"There are so many young fellows around here who would like to marry you, that I know," he answered.

"I don't love them," she would say, with a shake of her head. "The man I marry must have my love."

"That's right, Angela," he said, "you must marry for love and not for wealth, but still you must be sure that your husband can support you."

"Oh, I will," she replied.

Then she took up the book she was reading aloud to him and went on, while he lighted his pipe and sat looking at her. Sometimes when she read for a few minutes she would stop and the two would sit perfectly still, looking up through the trees at the sky, always the bluest in Italy.

They were occupied with their own thoughts, and once she suddenly asked him:

"How is Martino?"

"He is well," answered Paulo. "He is in St. Louis in far-away America."

The two sat for several seconds, and then he said:

"He is a good son. Yes, he's a good son," he repeated.

The girl looked at him and nodded assent.

"Yes he is good—and handsome," she added, for she had seen his photograph, though she had never seen him.

Then she sang a few lines of a love song and, as if suddenly recollecting herself, stopped abruptly. She was blushing and an odd light was in her eyes when she picked up the book and resumed her reading.

The old man looked at her a moment. She was conscious of his scrutiny, and held the book up in front of her face. He noticed that her little hands trembled.

Then he nodded his head and laughed and chuckled to himself. He thought that he had learned something that perhaps even she did not know.

Martino Serati had prospered in America. He was a poor but hard-working Italian lad when he came to this country. His knowledge of the language was limited, but he started in to learn the American ways and the American language.

"It is slow," he said to one of his friends once, "but I will learn after awhile. Others have had to learn and so will I."

"You must marry an American girl. Then you will always have someone to talk to you in the language," replied his friend.

"I will become a native of this country," Martino responded, "but I will marry an Italian girl. I don't know who it will be," he hastened to add, "for I don't intend to marry until I am prosperous; until I can support a wife in the manner in which she should be supported. You know I hope some day to have a home of my own, out in the suburbs of some city. There I can have room to stir around in and not be huddled together like we are compelled to live in the tenements and in the crowded city streets."

"You want to sit out in the yard like the old people in Italy, eh?" said his friend. "Do you often think of that?"

"Very often," responded Martino. "My father and mother, I warrant, are at this instant sitting out in our yard—"

His voice choked, and two big tears came. But that was a dozen years ago, and he was a young man, and he was unacquainted with the country and the customs and was often homesick. But he learned rapidly. He bought a reader and he soon mastered the language, and aside from this he heard the language all the time.

Martino first lived in New York, but he did not like it there, and so he came West, finally settling in St. Louis. His fruit business prospered, and he accumulated considerable wealth, which he invested in property. The city grew out and around 5,213 Shaw Avenue. He lived there and owned the property. Time dragged along. He was lonely.

"You ought to be married," one of his friends told him. "I remember you said once that when you were able you would marry some Italian girl."

"But I don't know of any," he answered.

"Wasn't there one in Italy?" his friend asked him.

"None," he replied.

But the subject reverted to his mind a dozen times. He thought about it much of the time. He looked ahead into the future, and saw himself married, with a family around him, and spending the last days quietly and peacefully like his old father over in Italy."

"I will write to my father," he said.

Old Paulo Serati held the letter in his hand and laughed aloud and long.

"Martino wants us to find a wife for him," he said to his wife. "He likes America, but he knows where the beautiful women live; where the good wives come from. It is here in Milan; here in Italy."

"We can find him a wife," she answered.

Then Paulo laughed and laughed again.

"Here comes Angela," he said. "I will let her read the letter."

When Angela came up to them she saw that both her friends were much pleased over something.

"We have a letter from Martino," he said, "and I want you to read it. See what he says."

The girl took the letter and read it.

"Have you found him a wife?" she asked.

"Yes," said Paulo. "I think I know a girl who loves him now. She will make him a good wife. She has never met him though."

"Who is it?" she asked, her voice being so low that it was with difficulty that she was understood.

"You," said Paulo.

She threw the letter down on the chair and ran out of the room and to her home. There she told her parents what her friends had decided.

"But that is a long way," said her father.

"Not for a girl to go to the man she loves," she replied, "for I do love him. I believe I've loved him ever since I was large enough to love anybody."

"He is a good man, too," said her father.

Old Paulo and his wife came over and told her parents what she had told them.

"I have written to him several times about Angela," said Paulo, "and he knows her almost as well as I do. I will tell him that I have selected his wife."

That very night the letter was written and mailed. Next day it was speeding for St. Louis.

There was great excitement in that neighborhood. It became rumored around that Angela, the prettiest girl in the vicinity, was going to St. Louis, America, to marry Martino Serati. Several of the people around knew him. They remembered when he packed up and left for the New World. They knew, too, that he was sturdy and honest, and had prospered. The girls flocked around Angela. It was romantic, they declared, that she was going to marry a man she had never seen; also that she was going so far.

For days they were very busy at her home. There were so many clothes to be made, and there were also friends to call on and bid adieu. But the time slipped by, and almost before she was aware of it the day had come for her departure. She went over to Paulo's house and walked about the yard and looked about the house. She knew that Martino would want to know all about it and how his parents were. She wanted to be sure that she had not overlooked anything, from the chintz cover to the table in the sitting room to the trees out in the yard.

She was very happy, for she told her parents and also Martino's father and mother that she knew she would be happy, for she did love Martino, and she believed that he would love her. Paulo was certain of this and so assured her.

Finally all the adieux were said and she had started for America. The trip was a long and tedious one, particularly the ocean voyage. Sometimes she thought that she would never reach land again, and after reaching land she wondered how long it would take her to get to St. Louis.

There was much to interest her and the time flew by in the train, and soon she saw the city. Her heart beat violently as the train rushed up through the yards, passing scores of cars that were being switched here and there, and then the train came to a standstill. It was such a big place that she was a bit frightened at first. There was a big crowd around, too, and she was a little afraid that Martino would not be able to find her.

She recognized him at once, from the photograph, and he knew her, too. Then she knew that her worry was over, for she was safe, she knew, with his arm around her and his kiss still hot on her lips. The marriage was yesterday afternoon in the little church on Manchester Road. To-day a letter will start for Milan, and there will be four supremely happy people in that city when the letter is received.—St. Louis Republic.

THE FIREMAN'S LIFE.

The Spectacular Side of It Doubtless Has Strong Attractions.

In the Century there is an article on "Heroes Who Fight Fire," by Jacob A. Riis in the series of "Heroes of Peace." Mr. Riis says:

Doubtless there is something in the spectacular side of it that attracts. It would be strange if there were not. There is everything in a fireman's existence to encourage it. Day and night he leads a kind of hair-trigger life, that feeds naturally upon excitement, even if only as a relief from the irksome idling in quarters. Try as they may to give him enough to do there, the time hangs heavily on his hands, keyed up as he is, and need be, to adventurous deeds at shortest notice. He fails to grumbling and quarreling, and the necessity becomes imperative of holding him to the strictest discipline, under which he chafes impatiently. "They nag like a lot of old women," said Department Chief Bonner to me once; "and the best at a fire are often the worst in the house." In the midst of it all the gong strikes a familiar signal. The horses' hoofs thunder on the planks; with a leap the men go down the shining pole to the main floor, all else forgotten; and with a crash and clatter and bang the heavy engine swings into the street and races away on a wild gallop, leaving a trail of fire behind.

Presently the crowd sees rubber-coated, helmeted men with pipe and hose go through a window from which such dense smoke pours forth that it seems incredible that a human being could breathe it for a second and live. The hose is dragged squirming over the sill, where shortly a red-eyed face with disheveled hair appears to shout something hoarsely to those below, which they understand. Then, unless some emergency arises, the spectacular part is over. Could the citizen whose heart beat as he watched them enter, see them now, he would see grimy shapes, very unlike the fine-looking men who but just now had roused his admiration, crawling on hands and knees, with their noses close to the floor if the smoke be very dense, ever pointing the "pipe" in the direction where the enemy is expected to appear. The fire is the enemy, but he can fight that, once he reaches it, with something of a chance. The smoke kills without giving a show to fight back. Long practice toughens him against it, until he learns the trick of "eating the smoke." He can breathe where a candle goes out for want of oxygen. By holding his mouth close to the nozzle, he gets what little the stream of water brings with it and sets free; and within a few inches of the floor there is nearly always a current of air. In the last emergency there is the hose that he can follow out. The smoke always is his worst enemy. It lays ambushes for him which he can suspect but not ward off. He tries to by opening vents in the roof as soon as the pipe men are in place and ready; but in spite of all precautions he is often surprised by the dreaded back draft.

Paper for Paper Money.

"It is safe to say," said a Secret Service officer recently, "that what a man in government employ can do, a man outside of the government can do also. One of the safeguards on which people largely rely is the paper on which a government note is printed. There is a popular belief that this paper is difficult to reproduce. It is currently believed that there is some secret about its manufacture. This is all wrong. Any paper manufacturer with a good plant, capable of making good paper, can produce the same quality and texture of paper as that on which our currency is printed. There is no secret at all in the process. The only distinguishing feature of the currency paper is that silk is run through it. Any paper maker can do this. The time will come when a counterfeiter who can produce a fac-simile plate will have no trouble in getting the right sort of paper."

Electric Eel in London.

Once more an electric eel is in residence in the insect house at the London Zoo, and once more visitors, anxious to test its powers, can be thoroughly shocked for sixpence. Pretty well half of the body of this extraordinary being is occupied by organs which are not only electric batteries, but accumulators as well, and the shock is sufficiently powerful to numb one's arm for a minute or two, and to kill a good-sized fish on the spot. The two ends of the fish seem to be in opposite electrical conditions, so that those who wish to make the experiment of its properties should grasp both head and tail simultaneously in order to obtain the full benefit of the discharge.

STOBY OF A PALM.

Once Owned by Washington, It Now Graces the White House.

Recent changes in the White House conservatory have brought to light a spreading palm of great age and historic interest. It was once the property of Washington, and is considerably older than the government, having come originally from the island of Cuba, where it had attained a respectable antiquity before its importation into this country.

A Baltimore merchant and shipowner whose line of vessels plied between that city and Havana purchased this sago palm in Cuba, and brought it back with him to his Maryland home for presentation to the Father of his Country.

The gift was accepted by the General, and for many years this plant graced the mansion house and gardens of Mount Vernon. With that graceful gallantry so characteristic of Washington he one day presented the palm to a fair resident of Baltimore, the woman having admired its picturesque foliage when visiting the household of Mount Vernon.

The plant remained an heirloom in the family of the Baltimore belle until about 50 years ago. In a general sale of the personal property of the last survivor of this Maryland family the sago palm was offered to the public, and was purchased by the horticulturist who was at that time head gardener of the White House. It remained there in the greenhouse ever after, and has now only been transferred temporarily to the Pension Building in Washington city, where it is one of a group of plants in the centre of the great court about the fountain. This accumulation of tropical and semi-tropical vegetation gives an air of Indian luxuriance to the rotunda of the Pension Building.

Henry Pfister, the present head gardener of the Executive Mansion, has shown a commendable industry in ascertaining the exact history of this venerable relic, and he verifies the fact above mentioned. Beyond these details comparatively little is known about this old tree, whose age is plainly indicated by its general appearance, 200 years or more being a conservative estimate of the years of its existence.

It is about ten feet in height, and has rather a thin crown, several of its beautiful leaves having been broken off in the work of removal.

It forms a unique and interesting relic of Washington and of all the Presidents during the last half century. The plant is distinguished from all others in this group by a card bearing a brief inscription.—Philadelphia Times.

Liquid Products of Wood.

Over 60 per cent of wood may be converted into liquid. The strongest hydraulic pressure would not squeeze one-half of one per cent of moisture from dry wood; but by putting the same material into an iron retort and converting it into charcoal by means of heat, the gases and smoke, to the extent of fully 65 per cent of the weight of the wood may be condensed into pyroligneous acid, from which are obtained wood alcohol, acetate of lime, and wood tars. A cord of wood weighing 4,000 pounds produces about 2,950 pounds of pyroligneous acid and 780 pounds of charcoal. The pyroligneous acid from one cord of wood produces 9 gallons of 82 per cent crude wood alcohol, 200 pounds of acetate of lime and about 25 gallons of tar, besides 35 bushels of charcoal. After the pyroligneous acid is neutralized with lime the wood alcohol is distilled off, the lime holding the acetic acid in solution. After the separation of the wood spirit, the remaining liquid is boiled down in pans to a sugar, which is dried and becomes the acetate of lime in commerce. Acetate of lime is used for making acetic acid. Fully three-fifths of all the wood alcohol and acetate of lime produced in the world are made in the United States. A considerable quantity is also produced in Sweden, and at the exhibition now being held in Stockholm specimens may be seen. Over 15,000 acres of forest per year are cleared in the United States. Wood alcohol affords a perfect substitute for grain alcohol for manufacturing and mechanical purposes, and at less than one-third the cost. It is used principally as a solvent in the making of shellac varnish and in making celluloid and photographic paper. It makes beautiful dye tints, is antiseptic, and is used for liniments and for skin-rubbing in bath-houses.

Cheerful Girls.

Good and healthy girls are almost always cheerful. No novelist would consider his youthful heroine complete if a "ringing laugh" were omitted from the list of her charms; and in real life the girls who do not laugh now and then are seldom trusted or liked by their companions. Even beauty will not save them. A belle who fails to understand the jest of her admirers and smiles in amiable bewilderment while other people are laughing, is soon left with no consolation save to wonder what anybody can see in her rival—a girl with "tip-tilted" nose, perhaps, and a large mouth and freckles, but the happy possessor of a pair of merry eyes and a cheerful mind. The gift of gayety is indeed of great value; but it must be gayety which originates in a kind and cheery heart, not that which is born of mere excitement or gratified vanity.—New York Ledger.

A man was recently convicted in England of having enlisted in fifteen places, decamping each time with advance money. England loses about $500,000 a year from such operations.

Farinelli could sing 300 notes without drawing breath, while 50 exhaust most singers.

AN ACCIDENTAL HERO.

"VINETA JIM'S" ADVENTURE ON THE PLAINS.

Saving a Herd of Cattle by Mistake—A Daring Indian Escapade—Now a United States Official.

"Vineta Jim" is one of the officials at the Capitol in Washington. He is a man of great versatility and originality. He is not known as "Vineta Jim" here in Washington, but he is best known by that name down in his home in Tennessee and in certain sections of the West. He has a reputation as a writer, a cowboy and an Indian fighter. By many he is regarded as a great hero. His friends here know him best as a keen wit.

The other day he got confidential with a Star reporter.

"Accident often makes heroes," he said. "Twice in my life I gained some fame. I have enjoyed the sensation of being a hero and have had my courage praised with loud acclaim, but I didn't have the courage to tell it was all an accident. But the fact is that things just happened to me so that I couldn't get out of being a hero, and I made the best of it.

"I went West from Tennessee to make my fortune. I got out on the cattle ranges and was looking for a job. I knew nothing at all about herding cattle. I could ride fairly well, as most Southern men can, and could manage 'most any horse that another man could, but knew nothing about herding cattle, and had no sort of conception of what one of those big Western herds was like.

"I had hardly got into camp among the cowboys on an immense cattle ranch when something happened, and the cry went up that there was a stampede. We were right out on the prairie and the herd of cattle, which was off at some distance, was coming on the jump in our direction. The cowboys jumped on their horses and scattered for high places. I had no idea how serious a thing a stampede of cattle was. I had no conception of the size of the herd and did not realize the danger.

"I rode straight toward the cattle on the dead run, trying to head them off as I would a few cows in a pasture. When I got pretty close to them the thing began to dawn on me. In front of me were thousands of cattle, covering acres of ground, bearing down toward me like a charge of cavalry, fairly making the earth tremble with the stamp of their feet. Their dilated nostrils, great spreading horns, and bulky forms wedged together in a great rushing mass convinced me that I had no business riding headlong into them. I wheeled my horse around and put on the dead run. The herd came thundering behind me. At every jump of my horse the bunch of cattle seemed to get bigger. They were right behind me. I was leading the charge. All at once I thought what would happen if my horse should stumble. I bore off a little to the right to get out of the line of their charge. They followed close in my lead. Still more sharply to the right I bore, but they were directly in my trail. They were following me to a dead certainty, and I could only guess what the finish could be, but I bore off still more to the right. Finally I got into heavily rolling ground, and, seeing my chance, I turned quickly behind a ridge and cut out directly to the left along the sunken ground, the ridge hiding me from view. The cattle kept on bearing to the right until they got to running in a great circle and got mixed and wound up to a standstill. When I appeared on the top of a ridge a mile away the cowboys came over to me on the gallop.

"'It's the best I ever saw!' cried one of them, slapping me on the shoulder. 'I never saw cattle milled better.'

"I didn't know what he meant, but saw he was pleased, so I said nothing. They were all overwhelming in their praise of my 'milling.' They said I had saved the herd, and took me up in triumph to the owner of the ranch. There was one of the cowboys I knew called Yellow John, who came from the same county I did in Tennessee. I got him aside and asked him what it was all about and what 'milling' was.

"'I kinder thought you didn't know what you were doing,' he said, 'but don't say a word.' He then explained that 'milling' was leading a stampede herd off their straight, headlong course and getting them to run in a circle, so that they would get mixed up and locked in a bunch. Cowboys take the lead of a stampede herd at the risk of their lives to save the herd from destruction or heavy loss; and this is what I had done without intending to.

"I took Yellow John's advice to say nothing, and was made a great hero of. I was at once taken into service, and was the highest paid cowboy on the ranch. With Yellow John's assistance I managed to play out the hand.

"I was still enjoying the glory of this adventure, when in 1882, the Creek war broke out, and Lieutenant Black was ordered to prevent a collision between the two bands of Indians, one under Speche and the other under Chicotah. Lieutenant Black recruited his company with some of the most daring of the cowboys, and Yellow John and I were of the party. The two bands of Indians had been advancing toward each other, and were separated by a range of hills, and there were but two passes through which they could go. Lieutenant Black's troops were camped near one of these passes. Across the pass from the camp was an elevation commanding a view of both passes. Yellow John and I were stationed on this elevation to watch the further pass under orders to give the alarm if the Indians made a move.

"Yellow John was on his horse and I was standing with my hand on the saddle. Directly there was a whiz, and an arrow went through the calf of Yellow John's leg, through the saddle tethers and into the horse. It was just enough to set the horse wild, and it dashed off toward the camp. I threw myself into my saddle, lost the reins, and my horse followed that of Yellow John. This happened in an instant. A shower of arrows followed the first one, and they came from between us and the camp. Neither of us had any control over his horse nor any choice of what direction we would take. We knew the Indians were between us and the camp, and that we were dashing right into them, but we had to go where our horses took us. The Indians had refrained from using firearms lest they should alarm the camp. I do not know just what happened, except that the arrows were whizzing about me and I was lying as close to my horse's neck shooting, while the horse was going like all possessed. I rode into camp with a revolver in each hand with all the chambers empty. The troops got out and drove the Indians back, preventing their escape. The next morning I found that both flanks of my horse were powder burnt. I had been shooting straight down into the ground with both hands instead of shooting at the Indians. I was so scared I did not know what I was doing. But I was a great hero. Lieut. Black complimented me on my daring, and it was reported to the department that the escape of old Speche had been prevented by the daring venture of Vineta Jim and Yellow John—only giving our right names—who had fought their way through and warned the command.

"I did not like to look at Yellow John, and he avoided looking at me when these things were being said."

ABOUT SLEEP WALKERS.

Queer Things About Them and Their Narrow Escapes.

The mention of a sleep walker standing upon the street railway track the other night and barely escaping being run down has brought to the minds of many people incidents in this line that have come under their observation, and it is simply astonishing how general is this singular habit, says the Hartford Courant. One person mentions the case of a member of the household who was found wandering about on the housetop, all unmindful of his danger, while the observer was at his wits' end to know how to get him in before he should make a misstep and fall to the ground. Usually the eyes of the somnambulist are wide open, and now and then a story indicates that the vision must be fairly good at times. For instance, a gentleman remembers that when he was a young man an acquaintance was badly given to the habit, and he would often go out into the yard and wander about. One night a number of them lay in ambush for him just to watch his operations. By and by the door opened in a business-like way and out came the young man. He went straightway across the street into a lot where there was a nut tree, and proceeded to pick up nuts and put them in a pile. A few moments at this task and he started toward the house. In spanning the fence he slipped, and while he was in the first act of collecting his thoughts he saw in the darkness the young men who were watching him. Just at that time their appearance so startled him that he fled like a deer. The circumstance was so impressed upon his mind that he never afterward indulged in the habit.

A gentleman told an amusing incident that happened in his early life. He was sure that he could not have been more than 5 or 6 years old at the time. He often found himself at the far end of the long, unfinished chamber where he slept, and usually could not awake sufficiently to find his way to bed again, so one or the other of his parents would hear him crying and come to his rescue. Naturally they got tired of the bother, and no one should be blamed for what followed. As stated, the chamber was an unfinished one, and in place of the guard rail at the danger end of the stairway a number of barrels had been placed. When the night's somnambulist tour culminated—that left a lasting impression on his mind as well as his body—he was near those barrels, and it seemed had been struggling to get through between them, when he surely must be killed by falling down the stairs. The noise aroused the parents, and on this memorable occasion the father visited the chamber, and just in time to save the lad from getting through.

A Veteran Vengeance Hunter.

"I had a queer passenger over with me from Russellville one trip about eight years ago," said Capt. Cardwell on one occasion, while telling of strange experiences during his long services as a passenger conductor in the Pennyrile, "and I often thought of him afterward. The man was about 60, but as well preserved as any mortal I ever saw. His step was quick and elastic, and his eyes as bright as the sun's ray. While en route to Central City he called me to him and told me that he was going to Hopkins County to see an old woman friend, who probably knew the whereabouts of a man he had been searching for over half his lifetime. He said the party he referred to insulted him when he was in it, and quickly skipped out; but he swore he would search the nation over to find the fellow and make him stand 40 paces away with a rifle. The old stranger was in dealy earnest, and there was a snap in his eyes that meant business. He was an old one to engage in a duel, but if he ever located his mark I'll bet he fought him."

Shoe Leather in Great Britain.

Every day the inhabitants of the United Kingdom wear about $1,000,000 worth of shoe leather, or about enough leather to make 100,000 pairs of boots.