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Poetry.

MAY DREAMS.

"Where have you been, this long, bright day?"
I asked last night to a little child.
"I've been to the woods to see if May
Is coming," she said, and gravely smiled.

"And what did you find, sweet searcher—what?
How did the woods reward you quest?"
"I found one blue forget-me-not,
And a robin thinking about her nest;

"And springing grasses and clover-shoots,
And a bluebird singing overhead;
Violets under some gnarled old roots,
And nodding columbines white and red;

"Some star-flowers, too, by a shady pool—
Such wee white things!—and I bathed my feet
In a dancing rivulet, clear and cool,
And I gathered ferns and mosses sweet;

"O, and so many things besides!
But now I am tired; please—good night!"
And she lays her hand in mine and glides
Gently, gracefully out of sight.

But her last words haunt me, soft and low—
"And so many things besides!" I say,
Ah, sweet dreamer! you little know
All the meaning that in them hides.

Faith in an End as yet unseen,
Boundless trust in a promised God—
These were thoughts that came, I ween, to the pensive queen,
Richest of all, from that dim old wood!

But lo, O robin, your downy nest!
Sing, O bluebird, and dance, O stream!
Spring, all green things, and own her quest!
Faith, O May-time, and crown her dream!

THE MULE THAT STOOD ON A STEAM-BOAT DECK.

The mule stood on a steamboat deck,
The land he would not tread;
They pulled the halter round his neck,
And cracked a whip over the head.

Yet firm and steadfast there he stood
As much formed for to rule;
A critter of heroic blood
Was that there cussed mule.

They cursed and swore—he would not go
Till he felt inclined to;
And though they showered blow on blow,
He wouldn't change his mind.

The deck hands to the shore then cried,
"This here mule's bound to stay."
And with upon the planks they slide
With lash they fired away.

His master from the shore replied—
"The boat's about to sail,
And every other means you've tried,
Suppose you's let Mule try!"

"It's likely that will make him lar-d."
The deck man, brave, though pale,
Approached him with his outstretched hand,
To twist that there mule's tail.

There came a sudden kick behind!
That man—all! where was he?
Ask of the softly blowing wind,
The fishes in the sea.

For a moment there was not a sound,
As that mule winked his eye,
A thinkin' look of those around,
"Now, how is that for high?"

"Cut that there mule's throat right away,"
The captain did command.
But the sagacious critter died that day
Was the fearless, brave deck-hand.

—*Exchange.*

Miscellaneous.

[From Appleton's Journal.]

The Death-Watch.

BY FLORENCE MCLANDBURGH.

"Didn't you hear it?"
"When?"
"Just now."
"No."
"They say it foretells death. Hush!"

The two men sat motionless. Not a sound broke the silence, not even a creak of the old boards in the floor, or a sigh of wind, or a flapping shutter.

"They say it foretells death. I heard it last night and the night before. What's that?"

"Nothing. It's stiller than a graveyard."

"I heard it last night and the night before about this time, near one. 'Tain't a very pleasant sound, and this old garret's dismal enough any way."

"Monk, you're afeard. It's nothing. Don't waste no more time. I'm dead-tired and sleepy. You wouldn't have been in this old hole now if it hadn't been for Peters."

"No, if it hadn't been *for Peters*, the strike, like enough, would have took, but he won't stand in nobody's way again."

While Monk spoke, he drew out a sharp, slender knife, and ran his finger along the blade.

"I tell you, Shiflet, we must do it the night after this blast's done, and the men in the shed say the coal will run out on the 6th, that's to-morrow. When Peters is fixed, the manager will have to give in or quit running the furnace."

Both men sat with their arms leaning on the table, and the flickering light of the tallow-candle between them showed two faces, rough, begrimmed by smoke and soot, and disfigured by evil passions, that grew fiercer as they calmly plotted against the life of a fellow-being.

"Well, meet at one, where the roads cross. It'll be quiet then, and Peters' house is alone."

"I'll be all right," said Shiflet, with a grin that rendered his brute-like countenance doubly repulsive. "I'm confounded tired. Bring your candle and light me down the infernal stairs."

The men stood up. Monk, small and slim, was dwarfed by the almost giant stature of his companion. With a few parting words as to secrecy and silence, they separated.

Monk stood on the upper step until Shiflet disappeared, then closed the door and replaced the candle on the table.

The room, neither large nor small, was a mere hole, smoked, dirty, and unplastered, high up in a frame tenement house. Two or three chairs, an old chest of drawers, a rickety bedstead, and pine table, composed the furniture. Some old boots and broken pieces of pig-iron lay scattered about. The small, box-shaped window was set just below where the ceiling or roof sloped to the wall. The only door led directly to the stairs that went down two, three flights to the ground. There were many such places in Agatha, where the furnace-hands lived!

Monk walked rapidly up and down the room, as if making an effort to wear off the excitement that the last few moments had brought upon him. His features had lost much of a malignant expression which was by no means habitual. His countenance was not hardened or stamped with the impress of crime like Shiflet's, who had just parted from him at the door—a countenance in which every trace of conscience had long ago been erased. Monk's face was neither good nor bad, neither bright nor dull; but he was a man easily wrought into a passion, governed by impulse.

Crossing to the table, he slung his coat over a chair, and stretched out his hand to extinguish the light. Midway in the action he suddenly checked himself, looked hurriedly around the room for an instant, and stood motionless, with inclined head, listening intently. Not a sound disturbed the stillness.—Pinching out the light, he threw himself on the bed, and in the darkness there soon came the heavy regular respiration of sleep.

The houses at Agatha nestled under the north cliff. A hundred feet above them the railroad lost itself in the black mouth of a tunnel and reappeared beyond, a high wall of trestle-work, stretching southward down the valley to Ely's Mines. Hours ago, the toiling men and cattle had lain down to rest, and now the wild, rocky hills around slept in the moonlight. No sound broke upon the stillness but the muffled puf, puf, of the furnace, and a number of frogs that rose and fell interruptedly along the shrunken water-course. The cabins under the cliff shone white and sharp; the iron on the metal-switch flashed with a million gems; the rails upon the trestle, receding, turned to silver, and the foliage of early Summer glitttered on the trees. A few passionless stars blinked feebly in the yellow light, where the hill-tops cut against the sky, and sank below the verge. Calmly, peacefully waned the night—calmly and peacefully, as though the spirit of evil had not stalked abroad plotting the death and ruin of men's bodies and souls.

That narrow spot of ground, with the houses down in the valley, formed the world for four hundred people. The furnace-hands and their families saw nothing beyond the hills that rocks at their hemmed in their village; knew nothing of the mad tumults outside. An untaught, sturdy race of men, they differed little from one another. Every day, when the sun rose, they went forth to toil, and every night, when the great furnace over the creek glimmered red, they lay down to sleep. But ignorance and superstition filled their hearts, and anger and hate, and jealousy, were as rife among them as in the crowded cities.

Another day passed, and the night which followed it was dark and cloudy. Near midnight, the great bell signalled for the last run of iron. Occasionally, blue flames leaped up from the furnace, lurid as the fiery tongues of a volcano. The long and narrow roof brooded over the sand-bed like the black wings of some monster bird hovering in the air. Under its shadow groups of men were busy, but wavering, dusky figures. Suddenly, as an electric flash, a dazzling yellow glare broke out, and a fierce, scorching, withering blast swept from an opening that seemed the mouth of hell itself. Slowly out of the burning cavern a hissing stream of molten iron came creeping down. It crawled, and turned and crawled, rib after rib, until it lay like some huge skeleton stretched upon the ground. A thin vapor floated up in the sulphurous air and quivered with reflected splendor. The scarlet-shirted men looked weird in the unearthly brightness. The yellow glow faded to red—that deepened to a blood-colored spot in the night. The bell rang to discharge the hands, and squads of men broke up, scattering in the dark.

Monk went to his garret-room, hesitated a moment at the door, then passed in and shut it so violently that the floor shook. He struck a match. In the brimstone light a horrible demon countenance wavered, blue and ghastly; but, when the candle flamed, it grew into Monk's face, covered by the black scowl of rage that had disfigured it once before—a rage that was freshly roused.

"If I'd had my knife, I'd have done it just now, when I stumbled against him. But he dies to-morrow night at—!"

The words froze on his lips, and his black, scowling face was suddenly overspread by a strange pallor. He stood motionless, as if chained to the floor, his eyes darted quickly about, and he seemed to suspend his very breath.

A clear, distinct, ticking sound occurred at regular intervals for a minute, and left profound silence.

Monk raised his head.

"It's a sign of coming death. That's for Peters. There it is again!"

The strange sound, like a faint metallic click, repeated itself several times.

"D—n it! I don't like to hear the thing. But there *will* be a sudden death."

Time after time Monk heard at intervals the same faint sound, like the ticking of a watch for a minute, and it made his blood run cold. He found himself listening to it with terror, and in the long silence always straining his ears to catch the dreaded sound. Growing in repetition, until the thing grew more horrible to him than a nightmare. Sometimes he would fall into a doze, and wakening with a start, hear it, while cold perspiration broke in drops on his forehead.

It grew intolerable. He swore he would find the thing and kill it, but he mocked him in his search. The sound seemed to come from the table, but when he stood beside the table it ticked so distinctly at the window that he thought he could put his finger on the spot; but when he tried to, it had changed again, and sounded at the head of his bed. Sometimes it seemed close at his right, and he turned only to hear it on the other side, then in front, then behind. Again and again he searched, and swore in his exasperation and disappointment.

The sound became exaggerated by his distempered imagination, till he trembled lest some one else should hear this omen which so plainly foretold his anticipated crime. Once an hour dragged by, and his unseen tormentor was silent. His eyes had that glittered with deadly hatred, now wore a startled look and glanced restlessly about the room.

An owl, that perched on the top-most branch of a high tree near by, screamed loud and long. A bat flew in at the open window, banged against the ceiling, and darted out.

Monk shivered. Leaning his head between his arms, he drummed nervously on the table with his fingers. Instantly the clear metallic click sounded again. He looked up, and a strange light broke into his face, a mixed expression of amazement and fright. For a moment he seemed stupefied, but raising his hand he tapped lightly against the wood with his finger-nail. The last tap had not died until it was answered by what seemed like a fainter repetition of itself.

Uttering a fearful oath, Monk recoiled from the table, but, as if drawn back and held by a weird fascination, he sat an hour striking the hard surface with his nails, and pausing for the response that each time came, clear and distinct.

Gray streaks crept along the east, and quivered like a faded fringe bordering the black canopy. Still he sat tapping, but no answer came. He waited, listened vainly; no echo, no sound, and the dull, hueless light of the cloudy morning glimmered at his window. Then he threw himself on his bed and fell into restless slumbers.

A damp thick fog enveloped the houses in its slimy embrace. At nightfall its reeking folds gathered themselves from the ground, and a noiseless dizzle came suddenly down.

Monk had not stirred from his room all day, but he had pledged pay into which he had fallen fled from him before noon, and now he stood at his window looking out into the blackness. A clammy air blew against his face. He stretched out his hand and drew it back suddenly, as if he had touched the dead. It was cold and moist. He rubbed it violently against his clothes, as though he could not wipe off the dampness. A tremor seized upon him. Hark! was that the dripping of water? No. A sickly smile played over his countenance. He went to the table and tapped lightly with his finger-nail. No answer came before. At other moments the taps were answered, and he involuntarily counted as they came, one—two—three—four—five—six seven—then all was silent. He made the call a second time, he tried it over and over, and at each response it ticked seven times, never more, never less, but seven times clearly, distinctly. Suddenly he sprang up, and through shut teeth hissed:

"The seventh day, by Heaven! But I'll cheat you—I'll not kill him!"

He darted noiselessly down the stairs, and stole out into the damp, cold night and half an hour he emerged on the edge of a clearing, a dozen yards from a chopper's cabin. Creeping stealthily to the door he shook it, then, after a moment's irresolution, cried out:

"Peters! Peters! look out for Shiflet. He has sworn to murder you to-night."

Without waiting for a reply he sprang away, and was quickly lost among the trees.

A moment afterward a tall form arose out of the shadow of a stump near the cabin, and passed rapidly in an opposite direction.

At the summit of the hill east of Agatha, a steep precipice is formed by a great, bare, projecting rock. From the valley, its outline resembles an enormous face in profile, and they call it "The Devil's Head." The full moon rendered the unbroken mass of cloud translucent, producing a peculiarly sinister effect. The mist still blew through the air, but in the zenith there was a dull ashen hue, and the surrounding cloud was the color of earth. The far-off hills loomed up majestic, terrible, against the sky, and near objects were strangely magnified in the tawny light. At the foot of this phantom crag, on a terrace, is the ore-bank and blackened coal-shed. Below rose the metal-stack, from whose stone-hearth a waste of sand sloped gently to the creek. The furnace squatted close against the hill, its bloodshot eye was shut; its gaping throat uttered no sigh, no groan; its throbbing pulse was stilled—the fierce, struggling monster was dead. The only bright spot in all the valley was the yellow circle made by the watchman's lantern in the coal-shed.

After leaving the "choppings," Monk threaded his way through the forest, coming out at last on the open road. This road led directly over the "Devil's Head," and entered the valley by a steep descent half a mile to the south. At the precipice Monk paused. The wind eddied with a mournful wail, and the constant motion of tall trees gave the scene almost the wavering, unsubstantial appearance of a vision. There was something oppressive in this strange midnight twilight, but Monk did not feel it. He only felt relief, inexpressible relief; he only stopped there to breathe, to breathe freely once more with the heavy weight thrown from him. After a moment he ran carelessly down the hill, passed under the ore-cars and into the coal shed. He hailed Patterson, the watchman, and the lantern threw gigantic shadows of the two men over the ground. Then he walked along the narrow cindered-road leading to the bridge over the creek. Sometimes the willows, that grew on either side, swept their damp hair against his face. An hour ago he would have started convulsively, now he heeded not, for he was free and light of heart.

Monk reached the stairs, and ascended to his room. As he passed in, the powerful figure of Shiflet sprang upon him from behind. There was a scuffle, some muttered oaths, then a heavy fall. Monk lay stretched upon the floor motionless, lifeless, and the echo of fleeing steps died away, leaving the place still as the now silent *death-watch*.

The Statistics of Hymen.

"The hard and unpleasant truth may as well be stated," says *Appleton's Journal*, "that marriages occur in accordance with large general facts, over which individuals can exercise no authority, and that in numbers they are in no wise affected by the temper and wishes of the people. This first fact about marriage is not only prosaic but humiliating. Shall not these people choose companions for life, and listen to the clerical "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder," at such time as they may mutually agree upon? By no means. The law says they shall do neither of these things; and the peculiarity of this law is that it cannot be violated. Furthermore, all who desire it will not be permitted to marry. What is to be said of such intolerable tyranny? Shall this be? Not marry when we choose, or whom we choose! Not to be consulted as to whether we shall marry or not! What is life worth if these things are to be decided without our knowledge or consent? Not much, perhaps; but we might just as well learn the disagreeable fact at once and submit to it. Nature is fond of cheats, and plays her charlatanry irrespective of persons—

"Man are the sport of circumstances, when
The circumstances seem the sport of men."

Prospero, and that Puck is after all nothing but the personified prize of conjure. These illusions and hallucinations are results of the operations of law, and we cannot disturb them, though we pile formula on formula, and equation upon equation, until the revolving earth is light as a feather, compared with the weight of the argument. *Per contra*, what compensation for the multiplication table, or love for the differential calculus? A rico for you, law of statistics! Nevertheless, Maud commits an unintentional perjury when she vows her husband shall be the man of her choice, and we all know that Adolphus Fitzherbert will repeal Romeo's blunder.

"Leaving the domain of fancy, we find the plain statistical facts concerning marriage running somewhat in this wise:

ROMANCE VS. STATISTICS.

"Youth has its illusions and middle age its hallucinations, wherefore these teachings of statistics may go begging. Does not Romeo actually know that he chooses Juliet in preference to Rosalind? Is it at all probable that Miranda would have escaped marriage with Caliban if she had never met the shipwrecked Ferdinand? Whereand what is the tricksy Puck that makes maidens see as he wills and transforms Demetrious and Lysander, subject to no law save his own? Alas! this plodding and prosaic statist, this withered and be-spectacled mathematician will prove to you that Romeo is mistaken.

"The average age of women, when they marry, is 25.46 years, and of 100 who reach this age 21 will never marry. With men it fares differently; for, strange as it may seem, more women than men get married, and, of 100 of the latter who reach the marriage age of 25.9 years, 22 will die bachelors. Thus, about one-fifth of our people are condemned to die unwedded, whether they prefer it or not.

WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS.

"Now, the marriages that occur in New York number, year by year, about 9,280—18,560 persons—and for every one of these marriages there will at some time be left a widow or widower; for, although husband and wife may live and die at the same moment. Some of those widows and widowers will remarry—more of the latter than the former—and [illegible] for the actual number of women who marry will exceed the actual number of men. The rule seems to be that about one in three widowers and one in four widows remarry.

"Of 100 marriages, about 13 of the men will be widowers, and only 11 of the women will be widows, the bachelors numbering 87 and the spinsters 89. On general principles, there may be no serious objection to old Weller's advice, 'Beware of widders;' but we, on basing our conclusion upon domestic experience, but upon a series of mathematic calculations, can absolutely affirm that widows do not, by any means, monopolize the matrimonial market, and that there is more to be feared from one spinster than from a dozen widows (let bachelors make a note of this), and that the truth is that spinsters have a better success against widows in the hunt for husbands than the bachelors have against widowers in the winning of wives. And, as all the hunting and winning is above the will, and superior to it, we cannot see "beware" to any, but simply admonish all to accept the condition and to yield as gracefully as possible to their predestinate fate, whatever it may be—whether single blessedness or wedded woe; conjugal felicity or unwedded discontent.

EARLY MARRIAGE.

"Suppose there be a hundred weddings in New York within a given time, in all respects of the average kind how many of these persons will be minors? From Paracelsus and Cagliostro down to Home and Fox, not one of all the soothsayers and clairvoyants can tell you that. No palm-reading gipsy, no spirit from the vasty deep, let him be called by no matter what boasting Glendower, can tell half so much of these occult events as this interrogating mathematician will learn from his curious figures and bewildering signs. Ask him, and he will reply, without any mummery or gibberish, twenty-four will have been married and about nineteen will be under age. Of this latter number all but one will be women—spinsters not yet out of their teens. At all events, this is the result of his present calculation, and if time and increased numbers should alter the averages, he will learn the fact sooner than any one else. The remainder will be bachelors and spinsters of the average age of 29.5 for the former, and 25.46 for the latter.

"What the law is that makes bachelors so much more prudent than spinsters we will not undertake to say; but certain it is that maidens make much more haste than young men in getting into the matrimonial net. Still, it must be remembered that girls, whether prudently or not, are regarded as marriageable at fifteen, and are certainly so at seventeen; so that in view of the fact that only eighteen in every hundred of the delicate creatures who marry are under twenty years of age, while forty-three of the young men who wed are between twenty and thirty-five, and twenty-two more between twenty-five and thirty, we must candidly confess that they manifest a degree of prudence in the matter that would seriously disturb Mr. Malthus were he only aware of it. We will not say that marriages previous to the adult age is invariably indiscreet; but we will defy any man to form a just conclusion in regard to the age of discretion from the study of marriage statistics. To find this result, the marriage and mortuary tables must be studied together. The question is of some importance, but it must be unwillingly deferred.

THE ELIGIBLE AGES.

"But if women come upon the marriageable list earlier than men, they suffer the inconvenience of being stricken earlier from it. After 45, women are no longer regarded as eligible, matrimonically, and the demand for wives of this age is so slight as to be hardly worth considering, although we find an occasional widow—still more rarely a spinster—willing to marry even after having passed the sprightly age of threescore years and ten. Under 25 years of age the number of women who marry is a little more than twice as great as the number of men; but, after 45, the number of Benedicts is more than thrice that of the brides. In 1,000 marriages of the average kind as to ages, 14 women and 49 men will have passed their ninth lustrum. Widows remarry at an average age of 39 years, while the average age of widowers who again take to themselves conjugal partners is 41 or thereabout.

A TABLE OF CHANCES.

"We will not undertake to tell each of our fair readers how old she will be when led to the altar a blushing bride, if that should prove to be her destiny; but we can tell her what the chances are at the present state of our knowledge of statistical facts. If we take the weddings that actually occur, we shall find, that in every thousand, there will be 179 wives under 20 years, while there will be only 9 husbands of that age. But perhaps these facts will be better stated in statistical terms, thus: In every thousand marriages there will be:

Husbands.	Wives.	Ages.
179	484	Between 20 and 25 years of age.
348	226	Between 25 and 30 years of age.
173	81	Between 30 and 35 years of age.
85	42	Between 35 and 40 years of age.
44	20	Between 40 and 45 years of age.
25	8	Between 45 and 50 years of age.
12	8	Between 50 and 55 years of age.
16	1	Between 55 and 60 years of age.

"The remainder, nine men and five women, will be scattered along between 60 and 90 years—an age at which almost any one would be expected to know better. It will be seen, however, that the desire as well as the opportunity for marriage falls off rapidly in both sexes after 30—up to that age both seem to increase. In 27,500 marriages, or thereabout, there will be 149 men and only 16 women between 60 and 70 years of age, while 14 men and 4 women will be between 70 and 80.

ODD MAIDS.

"Interesting as these ancients are, there is still another class deserving of something more than a passing notice. We mean old maids. How many are there, and what are their matrimonial chances? Mr. Malthus has already stated that 21 out of every 100 women who reach the marriage age, namely 25.46 years, never marry. But even this does not tell the exact number of marriageable women who are waiting for husbands, if indeed so ungallant a thing as this may be said of any. But, then, there is no problem to be exhausted by figures; it possesses an expression for algebraic signs to be guilty of gallantry? From the best authority that can be had upon this exceedingly interesting topic, it appears that the number of unmarried and marriageable women, within those heretofore mentioned as the marriageable ages, namely 15 and 45, is about 25 per cent. of the whole number of women living between those ages.

"It seems to be a part of the creed of the discontented sisterhood, whether wives or spinsters, that one of the inalienable rights of woman entitles her to a husband. It will be seen that statistics set her face against this assumption, and makes a very different decree. The truth is that every woman living between the ages of 15 and 45 has 25 chances in 100 of dying an old maid—that is, her chances of marriage are as four to one. This is just enough to give them all hope, and not sufficient to cause to despair. The complaints of managing mammas are of no avail. Even the ballot will not bring them a better fate, and, with suffrage or without it, one-fourth of all between the above-named ages are doomed to live in old-maidenhood and die unhusbanded.

CONCLUSIONS.

"Our task is done. In dealing with these secrets we have doubtless been dull; but these hard facts will not admit of poetic treatment even if we were capable of treating facts poetically.—When Benedick enumerated the virtues of the woman he would woo, he said: 'Her hair shall be of what color it please God.' He might have trusted the same good Providence—call it fate, destiny, or whatever you will—for all the other qualities just as well. An old adage says: 'Marriages are made in heaven,' but Benedick's was made in old Leonato's garden, as all know; and it is absolutely true in every case, as it was in the one we are considering, that those most interested have less to do with the result than they can well imagine, or, if they knew, would be willing to admit. For the individual the thing he desires is good, that which he would shun is evil; but in the grand economy of the universe the two are so evenly balanced and so closely intertwined that he must be bold, indeed, who would undertake to say which is which.

"Volteyron, upon being introduced to two young men, one recently married, the other still a bachelor, called the former a happy man, and the latter a lucky dog. This is the broad philosophy of our deductions. Those who live under the ban of bachelorhood may envy the married men of the present generation, but, if they knew the actual number of marriages, they would be [illegible]