

MY BROTHER'S WIFE.

I HAD been in the employ of the Wattertown road ever since I was fourteen, and at twenty-one was running the Whately locomotive attached to the morning train between Springfield and Binghamton. The rebellion broke out soon after I was promoted to my present position, which, though it was a lucrative one, could not induce me to refuse the offer of a first lieutenant's commission in the tenth regiment, which was being recruited in our county. My brother, a machinist and older than myself, determined to accompany me and accordingly enlisted in my company, though I afterward obtained him the position as first sergeant. Well, I gave up my situation as engineer and was soon in the land of cotton and hoe-cake. Our regiment was encamped near Fairfax for a long time, and while there, my brother became smitten with a dark-eyed damsel at whose abiding place he often tarried while on out-post duty. He was a quiet sort of a fellow, my brother, and I knew nothing of what was going on until he informed me one afternoon, that he was about to marry, and gave me an account of his courtship and the manner in which he had become acquainted with his intended bride.

She was tall, dark and stately, one of whom he knew comparatively nothing, and so I told him, but he smiled in his calm determined way, and I knew how useless would be any dissuading words of mine; and so the marriage took place at the residence of the bride, only the family and myself being present, the chaplain of the regiment performing the ceremony. As soon as an opportunity offered, she went to live with our father and mother at Northampton. My father never referred to her in his letters to me; but I knew from the tone of those received from my mother, that her new found daughter was not all her heart could wish. "She is haughty and cold," said one of the letters, "will not have my love though I try so hard to make her home happy." When our term of service expired we went home, my brother and I, fortunately without a scratch. I at once resumed my old post on the Whately and began my regular trips. I did not like my brother's wife as grew to know her, for there was imperious air of reserve and disdain about her that repelled at once any advances of friendship on my part.

One day, late in autumn, I received a letter in an unknown hand, from Boston, stating simply that business of vast importance to myself and mother necessitated our immediate presence as the office of Sharpe & Flint, attorneys in that city. Of course we proceeded immediately to the "hub of the universe," and found the senior member of the legal firm alone in his office.

The object of the summons was quickly made known. My uncle Gilbert, an eccentric old bachelor, had died, leaving to us a vast wealth, but nothing for my brother, who had grievously offended him in his boyhood; a codicil however, provided that my share of the wealth should fall to him at my decease, which was certainly not likely to occur for some time to come, for I was strong, robust and hardy. There was a slight feeling of pride in my heart as I made known our good fortune on our arrival home; my mother was Uncle Gilbert's only sister and I had been his pet, in the days of my infancy. My brother's wife betrayed not the slightest emotion at the announcement of our sudden rise to affluence, but her husband felt it deeply and I secretly determined to give him one half of my portion as soon as I should possess it.

About a fortnight after my return from Boston I was transferred to the night express, a train which was run at great speed and with few stops. I had given notice to the company, that after the present month I should no longer be at their service, for I intended to live easier than I had done; I little knew of the danger in store for me before the month should pass away. That very night as we passed a highway crossing near Hatfield, I heard the sharp report of a pistol, and a bullet crashed through the cab window, almost grazing my head. We were running at a lightning speed and the spot was far behind before I fully realized what had happened.

Singularly enough, on the return trip the tire of a driving wheel broke when within a short distance of the place, and while waiting for another locomotive, for which we had telegraphed, I took my lantern in hand, and armed with a heavy iron bar, proceeded to inspect the vicinity of the crossing. No one was visible or within hearing, and I was about to return when my attention was attracted by something hanging to a bush by the roadside.

My heart rose within me as I placed the object in my pocket, for I recognized it as a fragment of a veil I had often seen my brother's wife wear, and the startling truth flashed upon me that she had fired the shot so nearly fatal to me; her object was plain enough, for at my death her husband would inherit my portion of Uncle Gilbert's property. My first impulse on arriving home was to show the would be murderer the token of her guilt and wring a confession from her but on the second thought I resolved to remain silent and watch her movements closely; my duty called me away from home all night, and the greater portion of the day was necessarily devoted to sleep, yet I generally managed to know of her whereabouts.

A day or two after the attempted murder she left the house suddenly, no one knew or asked whither. I was unusually alert that night, and when we neared the Hatfield crossing my nerves were strained to their utmost tension. Nothing unusual occurred; as we rounded a curve, the figure of a woman, stooping over the track, was sharply defined in the head light. As we came in sight the form became erect and motionless, the arms folded across the breast, and the head thrown back defiantly. I shut off the steam and whistled for brakes; an instant later we rushed over the spot, and the woman was a quivering mass beneath our wheels; as soon as the train could be stopped we went back with a lantern and gathered up the remains of my brother's wife. From the appearance of the body and its surroundings it would seem that while endeavoring to place a sleeper upon the track to throw us off, she had by some means wedged her foot tightly under a rail, and there was held in a vice, until we struck her down.

My brother drew a long breath when we had borne the body home. It seemed to me like a sigh of relief, and I certainly breathed easier when I gazed for the last time upon all that remained of "my brother's wife."

Mr. Buckle's Law of Average.

The late Mr. Buckle, in his "Introduction to the History of Civilization in England," somewhat startled the world by announcing a theory of average, which he applied to all human actions, and from which he argued that we might fore cast the future. It was philosophy, teaching by statistics. In such a space of time there would be so many forgeries, arson, murders. Not only this, but the murderers would repeat themselves in the manner of their preparation; just the same number would be by poison, by the pistol, by the bludgeon, etc. If in any three months of 1820 six sons had killed their fathers, the like number of cases of parricide, with a certain increase for the increase of population, would occur in the same three months of 1860. We were under a law seemingly beyond our control or recognition.

This extraordinary theory has seemingly just received a striking confirmation in the Registrar-General's report of accidents in the streets of London. For many years past it has been observed that for the first nineteen weeks of the year, just 74 persons have been killed by being run over in the public thoroughfares. It was therefore expected, from the unflinching law of average, that the same number would be killed for the first nineteen weeks in 1869. On the 8th day of May, after the lapse of eighteen weeks, the number of fatal accidents of this kind should have been seventy, but it fell four short of that number. Obviously, then, the law of average must fail or the accidents for the week ending the 15th of May must be double. Curiously enough, for the seven days, from the 8th to 15th, eight persons were actually killed instead of four, and thus the seventy-four victims demanded by the merciless arithmetic were fully made up.—*N. Y. Evening Post.*

An instance is related of a pious Irishman who was discovered by a priest reading the scriptures in a cabin to save poor Roman Catholics, who were delighted with hearing the precious truths of God's Word. When the priest came in, he asked him, in a most dictatorial tone, "How dare you read the Scriptures to any of my flock?" "Please your reverence," said the man, with the readiness with which an Irishman is always distinguished, "I have got a search warrant to do it." "Produce it," said the priest. "I am sure that it cannot be from the bishop, or from his holiness the Pope." "No," said the Scripture reader, "it is from God; and here it is John v: 39; 'Search the Scriptures.'"

A Case of Real Honesty.

IN THE year 1847, a young man named Cobleigh, who had been engaged as locomotive engineer on the Eastern Railroad, went out to Cuba to take charge of the engine of a large sugar factory at Cardenas. Before leaving he remarked to a friend that he meant to purchase a lottery ticket as soon as he got to Havana—as he believed those schemes were fair and honorable as a lottery could be, being under the direct supervision of the Government. His friend a young, unmarried man, handed him ten dollars, saying: "There, get me a ticket too.—I'll try it just for luck, and shall set the ten spot down to profit and loss."

Time passed on. Cobleigh remained a year in Cuba, and then returned to the States and ran a locomotive for six months on the Erie Road, after which he went to Columbus, Ohio, where he remained nearly four years. During this time the young man who had intrusted to Cobleigh the ten dollars for a lottery ticket, had married, and become the father of two children. He was a sailmaker by trade, and worked hard for the support of his family.

At length Cobleigh came on to New York, where, by chance, he met his old Cuban employer, who informed him, in course of conversation, that a prize of twenty thousand dollars, drawn five years before by a sold ticket, had never been claimed. What was the number? Cobleigh obtained it, and then went home and overhauled his trunk, and among a lot of old letters he found the two lottery tickets which he had bought in Havana over five years before—and one of them was the fortunate number.

A few days after this, the young sailmaker, in Boston, received a letter from the engineer, enclosing the lottery ticket, and giving directions for obtaining the money. The poor mechanic was thunderstruck, and would not believe that his friend had written truly; but upon enquiring of the Cuban consul, he found that his claim was good, and in time he obtained the twenty thousand dollars. He tried to find Cobleigh, to give him a part of the money but could not.

A year more passed, and Cobleigh visited Boston. He was going to the gold country where he was engaged to superintend the running of engines for quartz mining. His pay was to be ample, so he would not accept any part of his friend's fortune.

"But" urged the sail-maker, "why is not the money as much yours as mine? Both tickets were together."

"Aye," replied Cobleigh; "but it was yours that drew the prize. When I bought them I selected mine first. Then I selected one for you, from which I nipped off a bit of the upper right hand corner. When I found the two tickets, after learning one of them was entitled to a prize, I discovered that the nipped corner bore the fortunate number! So, of course, the prize was yours."

That is what we call 'Inborn Honesty.'

A Chicken Story.

Near Erie there lives a colored person the name of James Stewart, whom the community by common consent have dubbed Commodore Stewart. He is a talented but eccentric individual, and has a weakness for chickens. On one occasion being found near a poultry yard under suspicious circumstances, he was interrogated rather sharply by the owner or the premises as follows:—

"Well, Jim, what are you doing here?"

"Oh, nuffin; nuffin; jess walkin' roun'."

"What do you want with my chickens?"

"Nuffin at all. I was only a lookin' at em, dey looks so nice."

This answer was both conciliatory and conclusive, and would have been satisfactory had it not been for Jim's hat. This was a rather worn, soft felt, a good deal too large for its wearer's head, and it seemed to have a motion entirely unusual in hats, and manifestly due to some remarkable cause. It seemed to contract and expand and move of itself, and clearly without Jim's volition. So the next inquiry was:—

"What is the matter with your hat?"

"My hat? dat's an ole hat. I'se fond of dat hat."

"Well, take it off and let's look at it."

"Take off dis hat? No, sah, I'd ketch cold in my head, sartain. Always keep my hat on, when I'm out doors."

This was fatal, and Jim was stopped and forced to remove his hat, when a plump, full grown chicken jumped out and ran hastily away. The air which the culprit gazed after it was a study for a painter. It expressed to perfection wonder and perplexity blended, but not a trace of guilt. Slowly he spoke, as though explaining the thing to himself and accounting for so remarkable an incident.

"Well, if dat ain't de funnies ting I eberb did see. Why, dat dar chicken must have clum up de leg of my pantaloons."

Did not Understand.

I once heard a pretty good thing in the Supreme Judicial Court at Portland. The case was one of severe assault upon the first officer of a Yankee barque, by one of the crew, which assault occurred on shore. Judge S. was upon the bench. He was a very small man; very neat in dress, and very fastidious; resting firmly upon his judicial dignity; a first class lawyer, and withal inclined to be self-sufficient and crusty. No attorney at the bar ever ventured to take liberties with Judge S.

The principal witness in the present case was an old weather-beaten sailor, named Jack Miller. Now Jack was called to testify against his shipmate, as he had witnessed the assault, and had interfered to terminate it; but he was anxious to tell as little against his chum as possible, and, furthermore, to soften down and excuse what he did tell; and this led him to be a little rambling in his testimony. The Judge had been making notes with a pencil, and as Jack was wandering off into an unnecessary explanation, he lifted his head, and, evidently forgetting for the moment the exact standing of the witness, with his mind partially upon his notes, he testily exclaimed—

"Come, witness—*ad rem, ad propositum!* Don't wander so."

The witness stopped and looked up at the Judge wonderingly. He repeated the abstruse words to himself as nearly as he could pronounce them and then, with earnest simplicity, asked—

"Yer honor what does them words mean?"

"Never mind, never mind," returned the judge, with a wave of the hand. "They are technical terms, used in law, not for men in your position to understand."

There was a tittle in the court-room as poor Jack turned, rather crestfallen, back to the examining counsel. Soon the witness sought to explain that his shipmate, when he made the assault, was not himself. Said he, half to the counsel, and half to the jury—

"Tom was pooty hard an' for it. He'd spliced the main-brace, an' doubled the tub, an' tapped the admiral more'n—"

The little smooth head of Judge S. bobbed up at this point.

"Stop, witness; I don't comprehend. What do you mean by 'doubling the tub,' 'tapping the admiral,' and the other equally ambiguous expressions?"

Jack's eyes snapped just a single spark, and then his face was as calm and serene as the bark of an old gnarled oak.

"Why, yer honor," he replied, with patronizing respect and deference, "them's technical terms, used on shipboard, which it aren't expected 'at men in yer honor's position would understand."

While his honor was subsiding, a titter broke loose in the court-room, which would have swelled to a roar if the sheriff had not sternly bitten his lips and loudly commanded "order!"

What a Piano is Made Of.

The actual materials used in a piano forte may be worth stating. In every instrument there are sixteen kinds of wood, namely: pine, maple, spruce, cherry, walnut, whitewood, apple, basswood and birch, all of which are indigenous, and mahogany, ebony, holly, cedar, beech and rosewood, from Honduras, Caylon, England, South America and Germany. In this combination elasticity, strength, pliability, toughness, resonance, lightness, durability and beauty are individual qualities, and the general result is voice. There also used of the metals, iron, steel, brass, white-metal, gun-metal and lead. There are in the same instrument of seven and a half octaves, when completed, 214 strings making a total length of 787 feet of steel wire. Such a piano will weigh from 900 to 1000 pounds, and will last with constant use (not abuse) fifteen or twenty years. The total manufacture of pianos in New York alone averages 15,000 per annum.

For The Bloomfield Times.

JACKSONVILLE, FLA., Feb. 15, 1870.

Mr. Editor—I have been afloat again. This time, I reached the land of flowers "The Italy of America." On my way hither I stopped at Fernandia, a considerable town in size. The general appearance of the place indicates an enterprising and go-aheadative people but its location is irregular and operates materially against its prosperity. Efforts are being made to connect it with terra firma by means of a bridge.—This place (Jacksonville) is situated on the St. Johns River—a large but sluggish stream and not near as beautiful as our Susquehanna, Juniata or Hudson. Jacksonville contains about 8000 inhabitants, and is certainly located beautifully, but the character of its buildings and streets are decidedly southern in appearance. About one half of the inhabitants are colored, most of whom are industrious. The whites are a mixture of chivalry and adventurers, with a large proportion of invalids from the north. There is no doubt in my mind as to the benefits to be derived here by the consumptives, from the mildness of the weather. Fire seems useless, the streets are lined on either side with live oaks covered with green foliage. In the yards and gardens are roses and other flowers in bloom. Green peas are common as well as most of our garden vegetables. The orange trees are loaded with golden fruit. I saw one twig with fourteen fine oranges on it, one measuring fourteen inches in circumference. They are worth about as much here as apples are in Perry. The soil is sandy beyond any I ever saw and were it not for the evidence of vegetation, I would not believe that anything would grow here, but when I see cabbage and other vegetables growing in mid winter as luxuriantly as we have there in mid summer, I must acknowledge that this soil is productive. The inhabitants here are generous and ready to take in the stranger whoever he may be.—Boarding is from twelve to twenty-five dollars a week, and is only tolerable in quality. One of the peculiarities is the colored population walking about the streets, munching sugar cane. Almost every grocery is supplied with a stock of sugar cane, which is sold at a dime apiece about the size of a large corn stalk. I am informed that one of these contain about three half pints of juice when properly ground. Laziness is the only characteristic I observe in the natives here. I deem them indolent beyond any people I ever saw. When I told them of my impression, they readily acknowledged its truth, but insisted that were I to remain a few years, I would become as lazy as they are. All with whom I come in contact express a hearty desire to have northern men come among them, and they certainly seem kindly disposed toward such as make their home among them, yet there are here a class who have brought with them the shrewdness of their native soil.—New England has her representatives here, who are ready to make the most of those who visit this remote region. They talk north or south to suit customers. Most of this class are concerned in land agencies and are not delicate as to how they make their money. My next will probably be from the interior of this State.

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Scene in Court.

The Judge of one of the New Orleans municipal courts sat gloomy and grand on his bench, clad in his ermine. The prisoner occupied the dock, apparently meek and downcast. She had a merry twinkle in her eye however, that promised mischief, and had the magnate but perceived it, he would have been more careful in his questions:

"How many times are you coming up here?"

"What, yer honor?"

"How many times are you coming before me?" This is the third time the present week."

"Oh no' yer honor!"

"Didn't I see you here yesterday?"

"Why, no, yer honor, it was last night yer seed me, in the 'concert saloon. It was a bit of drink we had together, and yer honor did talk beautifully, and yer cunnin' ways and saucy jokes. Aye, yer honor's the man for the gals; yees are smart!"

"Stop your tongue—you can go!"

"Thank ye, yer honor."

The prisoner went out—the Judge blushed, and the audience roared.

A Miniature Steam Engine.

The ingenuity of the American mechanic has found an eccentric interpreter in W. I. Trafton, of Manchester, N. H., who is making the smallest possible specimen of an engine. Every part of it is constructed out of a silver half-dollar.—The boiler is to hold about eight drops of water, but with four drops the engine can be worked several minutes. When finished, it is to be placed under a glass case three quarters of an inch in diameter, and an inch and one eighth in height. Some of the parts will be so fine and delicate that they can not be made without the use of a magnifying-glass.

A Missouri gentleman carries about with him a memento of a lost brother in the shape of a cane cut from the tree on which that relative was hanged for horse stealing.