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## Ridiculous Story of Mrs. Byrde.

The funniest story I ever heard.  
The funniest thing that ever occurred,  
Is the story of Mrs. Melville Byrde,  
Who wanted to be a Mason.

Her husband, Tom Byrde, is a Mason true,  
As good a Mason as any of you;  
He is Tyler of Lodge Germania here,  
And tries and delivers the summons due,  
And she wanted to be a Mason too;  
This ridiculous Mrs. Byrde.

She followed him round, this inquisitive wife,  
And nagged him and teased him half out of  
his life;  
So, to terminate this unwholesome strife  
He consented at last to admit her.

And first, to disguise her from bonnet and  
The ridiculous lady agreed to put on  
His breech—ah! forgive me! I meant pants-  
trousers.

The lodge was at work on the Master's de-  
gree,  
The light was ablaze in the letter G;  
High soared the pillars J. and B.  
The officers sat like Solomon, wide,  
The brimstone burned amid horrid cries;  
The goat roared wildly through the room,  
The candidate begged, "can't let me go home,  
And the devil himself stood up in the east  
As proud as an alderman at a feast;  
When in came Mrs. Byrde.

Oh! horrible sounds! Oh! horrible sight!  
Can it be that Masons take delight  
In spending thus the hours of night?  
Ah! could their wives and children know  
The unutterable things they say and do,  
Their feminine hearts would burst with woe  
But this is not all my story.

For those Masons, Jerry in a hideous ring,  
The candidate howling like everything,  
And thus in tones of death they sing—  
"Blood to drink, and bones to crack,  
Skulls to smash, and lives to take,  
Hearts to crush, and souls to burn;  
Give old Mory another turn,  
And make him all grim and gory."

Trembling with horror stood Mrs. Byrde,  
Unable to speak a single word;  
She staggered and fell, in the nearest chair  
On the left of the Junior Warden there,  
And scarcely noticed so loud the groans,  
The chair was made of human bones!

Of human bones! on grinning skulls  
That glisten'd with the horror rolls;  
Those skulls, the skulls that Morgan wore,  
Those bones, that were the bones of Gore,  
His scalp across the top was laid,  
His teeth around the arms were strung—  
Never, in all romance, was known  
Such uses made of human bones.

The brimstone gleamed in lurid flame  
Just like a place we will not name;  
Good angels, that inquiring came,  
From blindest corner with shame  
And fearful melancholy  
Again they dance, but twice as bad,  
They jump and sing like demons mad,  
The tune is "Hanky-Dory—"  
"Blood to drink," &c., &c.

Then came a pause—a pair of paws  
Reached through the door, unrolling doors,  
And grabbed the unhappy candidate,  
How can I, without tears, relate  
The lost and ruined Mory's fate?  
She saw him sit, she saw him rise,  
She heard him scream "my soul! my soul!"  
While roars of fiendish laughter roll  
And down the yells of Mory;  
"Blood to drink," &c., &c.

The ridiculous woman could stand no more,  
She fainted, and fell on the floor  
'Midst all the diabolical roar.

What then, you ask me, did befall  
Melville Byrde? Why, nothing at all!  
She dreamed that she'd been in the Mason's  
hall.  
—Masonic Jewel.

winter night—and one of the men winked  
at me over her head, while the other  
guarded her treasures with a face of con-  
centrated anxiety, and thoughts en-  
grossed by possible fees.

"This is the London train, is it,  
ga'd?" she asked, peering sharply in  
to my face with her half-closed eyes, as  
if she found it difficult to distinguish  
me even through her spectacles.

From her whole attitude I guessed her  
to be deaf, but I never guessed how deaf  
until, after yelling my answer so loud  
that the engine-driver must have heard  
it eighteen carriages off, she still remain-  
ed stonily waiting for it.

"Deaf as a dozen posts," said the de-  
tective, aloud, giving the old lady an  
expressive little nod in the direction of  
the train.

"Slow train?" she asked, in that  
plaintive tone which the very deaf often  
use.

"Mail!" I shouted, putting my  
mouth as close to her cheek as I fancied  
she would like.

"Ah!" she shrieked back at me, the  
spectacles shaking a little on her thin  
nose. "Why should you want me for  
listening to civil questions that you are  
paid to answer? Ah, indeed! I be-  
lieve railway men think of nothing  
else."

Then she shook her head angrily and  
waddled off, looking as acid an old party  
I should ever try to avoid. In at  
every door she peered through her glit-  
tering glasses, the two porters following  
her, until she made a stop before an  
empty second-class carriage near my  
van, and with much labor and assist-  
ance got herself and her packages into it.

When I passed, a few minutes after-  
ward, she was standing in the doorway,  
effectively barring the door to any other  
passenger by her own unattractive ap-  
pearance there, and prolonging with an  
evident relish the anxiety of the obse-  
quious porters. I fancy that though  
the purse she fumbled in was large, the  
coin she wanted was but small, for I  
passed on and left her still searching  
and still asking questions of the men,  
but hearing nothing either of their re-  
plies or of the loud asides in which they  
indulged to each other. As I had reached  
the other end of the train, and was just  
about making my way back to my own  
van, when the young lady I had before  
noticed went slowly in front of me to-  
ward the empty first-class compartment  
near which I stood.

"Am I right for Euston?" she asked  
me gently, as she hesitated at the door.  
"All right, Miss," I said, taking the  
door from her, and standing while she  
got in. "Any luggage?" For from  
that very moment I took her in a sort  
of way into my charge because she was  
so thoroughly alone, you see, not having  
any friends there even to see her off.

"No luggage, thank you," she an-  
swered, putting her little leather satchel  
down beside her on the seat, and set-  
tling herself in the corner furthest from  
the open door. "Do we stop anywhere  
between here and London?"

"Don't stop again, Miss, except for a  
few minutes to take tickets." Then I  
looked at her as much as to say, "You're  
all right, because I'm the guard," and  
shut the door.

I suppose that, without exactly being  
aware of it, I kept a sort of watch over  
this carriage, for I saw plainly enough a  
lazy young gentleman, who persistently  
kept hovering about it and looking in.  
His inquisitive eyes had of course caught  
right away the fact of my being alone,  
and I could see that he was making up  
his mind to join her; but he seemed do-  
ing it in a most careless and languid  
manner. He was no gentleman for that  
reason, I said to myself, yet his  
dress was handsome, and the hand that  
played with his long, dark beard was  
small and fashionably gloved. Glancing  
near which I stood, he lingered until the  
last moment was come; then, quite  
leisurely, he walked up to the door,  
opened it, entered the carriage, and in  
an instant the door was banged to be-  
hind him. Without the least hesitation  
I went up to the window, and stood near  
it while the lamp was fitted in the com-  
partment. The gentleman was standing  
up within, drawing on a dark overcoat;  
that young lady in the distant corner  
was looking from the window as if even  
the half darkness was better to look at  
than this companion. Mortified a good  
deal at the failure of my scheme for her  
comfort, I went on to my van, beside  
which she stood.

"No go, you see," he muttered crossly,  
"and yet it seemed to me so likely that  
they'd take this train."

"I don't see how it should seem like-  
ly," I answered, for I hadn't gone with  
him in the idea. "It doesn't seem to  
me very likely that three such skillful  
thieves as you are dodging, who did  
the sort of thing in a neighborhood so  
cleverly two nights ago, should leave  
the station any night by the very train  
which the Police watch with double  
suspicion."

"Doesn't it?" he echoed, with a most  
satirical knowingness. "Perhaps you  
haven't yet got it quite clear in your  
mind how they will leave the town; for  
it's sure enough that they haven't left  
it up to now. That they'll be in a hurry  
to leave it is sure enough, too, for this  
is longer than necessary. Well, what's  
the hand place for us to track them  
in?—London. And what's the easiest  
place for them to get on sea from?—  
London. Then naturally enough to  
London they'll want to go. Isn't this a  
fast train, and shouldn't you choose a  
fast train if you were running away  
from the Police?"

I didn't tell him what sort of a train  
I should choose, because I hadn't quite  
made up in my mind; and he was look-  
ing cross enough for anything in that  
last glimpse I caught of him.

Having nothing better to do, I won-  
dered a good deal how these thieves  
could arrange their getting away while  
the walls were covered with the descrip-  
tion of them, and every official on the  
line was up in it. There was no doubt  
about their being three very dexterous  
knaves, but then our detective force was  
very dexterous, too, though they weren't

knives, (and I do believe the greater  
dexterity is generally on the knavish  
side,) and so it was odd that the descrip-  
tion still was ineffective and the offered  
reward unclaimed. I read over again  
the bill in my pocket which described  
the robbers. "Edward Capron, alias  
Captain Winter, alias John Pearson,  
alias Dr. Crow; a thickset, active man,  
of middle height, and about fifty years  
of age; with thick iron-gray hair and  
whiskers, dark gray eyes and an aquiline  
nose. Mary Capron, his wife, a tall  
woman of forty; with a handsome, fair  
face, a quantity of very red hair, and a  
cut across her under lip. Edward  
Capron, their son, a slightly built youth  
of not more than fifteen or sixteen,"  
(though, for the matter of that, I thought  
he might have had cunning enough for  
twice his age.) "With closely cut black  
hair, light gray eyes, and delicate fea-  
tures."

We all knew this description well  
enough, and for two days had kept our  
eyes open, hoping to identify them  
among the passengers. But our scrutiny  
had been all in vain, and as the train  
rumbled on, I felt how disappointed the  
Police at Euston would be when we ar-  
rived again without evidences of them.

I was soon tired of this subject, and  
went back to worrying myself about the  
sad-looking, yellow-haired girl, who had  
so evidently wished to travel alone, and  
was so miserably failed in the at-  
tempt by that intrusive pair with the  
handsome beard. Foolishly I kept on  
thinking of her, until as we were dash-  
ing almost like lightning through the  
wind and darkness, only fifteen or  
twenty minutes from Chalk Farm, the  
bell in my van rang out with a sharp  
and sudden summons. I never wondered  
for a moment who had pulled the cord.  
Instinctively I knew, and it was the  
carriage furthest from my van! I left  
my place almost breathlessly as the  
engine slackened speed, and hastening  
along the footboard, hesitated at no win-  
dow until I reached the one from which  
I felt quite sure of a frightened young  
face would be looking out. My heart  
literally beat in dread as I stopped, and  
looked into the carriage. What did I  
see? Only the two passengers buried  
in their separate corners. The young  
lady raised her head from the book she  
held, and looked up at me astonished—  
childishly and wonderingly astonished.

"Has anything happened to me?"  
she asked timidly.

The gentleman roused himself leisurely  
from a seemingly snug nap. "What  
on earth has stopped us in this hole?"  
he said, rising, and pushing his hand-  
some face and his long beard past me at  
the window.

It was only too evident that the alarm  
had not been given from this carriage;  
yet the feeling of such a continuity to  
me that it was long before I felt quite  
convinced to the contrary; and I went  
on along the foot-board to other car-  
riages very much more slowly than I had  
gone first to that one. Utter darkness  
surrounded us outside, but from the  
lamp compartments eager heads were  
stuck searching for the reason of this  
unexpected stoppage. No one owned to  
having summoned me until I reached  
that second-class carriage near my own  
van, (which I had hastened past before),  
where the fidgety, deaf old lady who had  
amused me at Rugby sat alone. I had  
no need to look in and question her.  
Her head was quite out of the window,  
and though she had her back to the light  
and I couldn't see her face, her  
voice was cool enough to show that she  
was not overpowered by fear.

"What a time you've been coming,"  
she said. "Where is it?"

"Where's what?"

"But that I yelled the question with  
my night and main. I believe I  
might just as hopefully have questioned  
the telegraph post which stood beside  
us, and have expected an answer along  
the wires.

"Where's the small luncheon basket?"  
she inquired, pulling out her long purse  
with great fussiveness. "A small luncheon  
basket, my good man, and make haste!"

Shall I ever forget the sharp expecta-  
tion of the old lady's eyes as they looked  
into mine, first over the nose, then  
through her glittering, gold-rimmed  
spectacles? What surprised me most  
particularly was the fact of her decidedly  
not being, as any one might suppose, a  
raving lunatic.

"Be quick with the small luncheon  
basket, please," she said, resignedly sit-  
ting down, and pouring the contents of  
her purse out into her lap: "I'm as hun-  
gry as I can be."

I suppose that when she looked up at  
me from the silver she was counting, she  
saw my utter bewilderment. I didn't  
try to be hopeless—for she raised her voice  
suddenly to a shrill pitch of peevishness,  
and pointed with one shaking hand to  
the wall of the carriage.

"Look there! Doesn't it say 'Small  
luncheon baskets. Pull down the cord.'  
I want a small luncheon basket, so I  
pulled down the cord. Make haste and  
get it me, or I'll report you to the man-  
ager."

Seeing now that she was almost as  
blind as she was deaf, I began to un-  
derstand what she meant. On the spot  
which she pointed above the seat oppo-  
site her two papers were posted in a line;  
one the advertisement of "Small lunch-  
on baskets" supplied at Rugby, the  
other, the company's directions for sum-  
moning the guard and stopping the  
train in cases of danger. As they hap-  
pened to be placed, the large letters did  
read as she had said:

SMALL LUNCHEON BASKETS. PULL  
DOWN THE CORD.

While I was gazing from her to the  
bill, getting over a bit of my astonish-  
ment, and she was giving me every now  
and then a sharp touch on the shoulder  
to recall me to my duty and hasten me  
with her refreshment, we were joined by  
one of the directors, who happened to be  
going up to town by the express. But his  
just and natural wrath—loud as it  
was—never moved the hungry old lady,  
no, not in the slightest degree. She nev-  
er heard one word of it, and only mildly  
insisted, in the midst of it, that she was  
almost tired of waiting for her small  
luncheon basket.

With a fierce parting shot, the director  
tried to make her understand that she  
had incurred a penalty of five pounds,  
but he couldn't, though he bawled it at  
her until the poor old thing—perhaps  
mortified at having taken so much trou-  
ble for nothing; perhaps overcome by  
her hunger; perhaps frightened at the  
commotion she saw though didn't hear—  
sank back in her seat in a strong fit of  
hysterics, and let the shillings and six-  
pences roll out of her lap and settle un-  
der the seats.

It seemed to me a long time before we  
started on again, but I suppose it was  
only a six or seven minutes' delay after  
all. I expect I should have wanted to  
explain the stoppage to the pretty young  
girl of whom I considered myself a sort  
of protector; but, as I said, she was at  
the very opposite end of the train, and I  
was in haste now. There must have  
been a good laugh in several of the car-  
riages where the cause of our stoppage  
got whispered about. As for me, when  
I got back into my van, solitary as I  
had been all in vain, and as I stopped  
at Chalk Farm to take tickets.

It seemed to me that the train was  
taken into custody as soon as it stopped  
here.

"Of course you have the carriage doors  
all locked, and I'll go down with you  
while you open them one by one. My  
men are in possession of the platform."

This was said to me by Davis, a detec-  
tive officer whom I knew pretty well  
now, having had a good bit to do with  
him about this Warwickshire robbery.

"It is no use," I said, before we start-  
ed, "the train was searched, as you may  
say, at Rugby. Every passenger has un-  
dergone a close scrutiny. I can tell you.  
What causes such scientific preparation  
for us?"

"A telegram received ten minutes  
ago," he answered. "It seems that two  
of the thieves we are dodging are in this  
train in clever disguises. We have had  
pretty full particulars, though the dis-  
covery wasn't made until after you left  
the junction. Have you noticed?"

"I dropped his voice a little here—"a  
young lady and gentleman together in  
a third carriage."

I felt a bit of an odd catching in my  
breath as he spoke. "No," I said, quite  
in a hurry. "No young lady and gen-  
tleman belonging together; but there  
were plenty in the train. What if  
there are, though? There was no young  
lady or gentleman among the robbers,  
with suppressed enjoyment, "was a wo-  
man who'd make herself into anything;  
and you must own that a gentleman  
with a dark, long beard isn't bad for  
a lady known to us pretty well by her  
thick red hair and a cut on her upper  
lip."

"But the young lady?" I asked, cog-  
itating this.

"Oh! that young lady. True enough;  
well, what should you say now, if I told  
you she grew out of that boy with the  
closely-cut, dark hair that we are af-  
ter?"

I remembered the pretty plaits and  
the loose, falling hair. I remembered  
the bewilderment in the eyes which en-  
veloped his natural expression, and I  
didn't answer this at all.

"I wish I had as good a chance of  
catching the old fellow as I have of  
catching the woman and the boy," con-  
tinued Davis, as we moved slowly past  
the locked luggage van. "I know they're  
here, and that I shall recognize them un-  
der any disguise; but we've no clue yet  
to the older fellow's name. He's a good  
hand, by some means, we've lost sight  
of the biggest rogue of all. Come  
along."

I did come along, feeling very stupidly  
glad that there was all the train to  
search before we could reach that car-  
riage at the other end where sat the girl  
with her natural expression, and I  
didn't answer this at all.

"When we are to be allowed to leave  
this train, pray? Call me a cab," cried  
the deaf old lady, plaintively, as we  
reached her carriage, and found her gaz-  
ing out in most evident and utter igno-  
rance of all that was going on around  
her.

"I am locked in, ga'd. Do you  
hear?"

I heard, ay, sharp enough. I only  
wished she could hear me as readily.  
Davis stood aside watching while I un-  
locked her door and helped her down.  
Then, seeing her helplessness, and her  
countless packages, he beckoned a por-  
ter to her, winking expressively to call  
his attention to a probable shilling.

The lighted lamp put in at Rugby?  
And—his carriage was empty, and  
turned away only more and more hope-  
fully from each. He was so sure they  
were there, and that escape was impos-  
sible. We reached the last carriage in the  
line, and now my heart beat in the  
oldest manner possible.

"Is this compartment empty, then?"  
I asked Davis, and my fingers were ac-  
tually shaking as I put my key in the  
door of the centre one. "Empty and  
dark?"

"Even if it had been empty it wouldn't  
have been left dark," I muttered, looking  
in. "Hallo! what's come to the lamp?"

I might well ask what was come to  
the lamp, for the compartment was as  
dark as if it had never been lighted;  
yet had not I myself stood and watched  
the lighted lamp put in at Rugby?  
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out into the blackness of the night as  
cleverly as they had managed their  
craft and subsequent concealment. But  
how could they have depended on this  
unusual delay—this exquisite opportu-  
nity given them in the utter darkness,  
close to the city, yet at no station?  
When I officially made my deposition,  
and explained the cause of our stoppage,  
something of the truth seemed to break  
upon us all; but it wasn't for a good  
while that it settled into a certainty.  
Then it got clear to everybody that the  
older scoundrel had dived up more in-  
geniously than the younger ones. As  
the incapable old lady (deaf as a stone,  
and so blind that she had to peer through  
her glittering glasses, with eyes always  
half-closed, and so hungry that she had  
to stop the train for a luncheon-basket)  
had played upon us the neatest trick  
of all. Where on earth were the thick  
iron-gray hair and whiskers by which  
we were to have identified him? But  
by the time the police saw the whole  
thing clearly it was too late to follow  
up any clue to him.

The cab which had taken the eccen-  
tric old lady and her parcels and flowers  
from Euston was lost in the city, and  
could not be tracked. A high reward  
was offered for information, but no one  
ever won it. My firm belief is that it  
was no legitimately licensed cab at all,  
but one belonging to the gang, and part  
of the same crew. I very much believe,  
too, that sometimes now—though per-  
haps on the other side of the channel—  
those three practiced knaves enjoy a  
hearty laugh over that December jour-  
ney by night-express.

Davis still assures me, with the most  
cheerful confidence, that he shall yet  
have the pleasure some day of trapping  
three of the most expert and skillful  
thieves in Britain. I wish I felt as sure  
of it.—The Argosy.

## Court Anecdotes.

The tedious session of the Supreme  
Court at Pittsfield was relieved by an  
incident, one day recently, that drew a  
little smile. A leading member of the  
bar, rather noted for his strategy of  
confusing witnesses by working them in-  
to a passion, had under cross-examina-  
tion a woman who seemed an apt sub-  
ject for his favorite tactics. Having  
wounded her up to the desired pitch, he  
inquired: "Madam, are you now liv-  
ing with your first or second husband?"  
"That's none your business," sharp and  
short. With an air of offended dignity,  
the attorney turned to Chief Justice  
Brigham, who remarked, with a smile:  
"I think the witness is about right in  
that, is she not?"

Which reminds the older members of  
the bar of a similar misadventure that  
a still more distinguished member of the  
Barbours bar once met at the hands of  
Chief Justice Shaw. "Where did you  
get the money with which you made the  
purchase spoken of?" asked the "learned  
brother" of a witness under the tor-  
ture of cross-examination. "None of  
your (gentle expletive) business!" thun-  
dered the victim. "Now, may it please  
your honor, be seated in this manner  
in this manner" appealed the lawyer. "Wit-  
ness," said the Chief Justice, compas-  
sionately, "do you wish to change your  
last answer?" "No, sir, I don't."  
"Well, I wouldn't if I were in your  
place!" And the chuckle that shook  
the bench was audibly echoed.

## MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS.

Duluth is the most hopeful place in  
the country. It has now a population of  
4,600, but expects an increase of 40-  
000 next year by immigration.

The Chicago and Northwestern Rail-  
road Company divided \$5,000 among its  
employees in Christmas gifts. Its divi-  
dends will never suffer abatement on ac-  
count of this timely beneficence.

The best yet. A Michigan woman,  
the wife of an invalid, and mother of  
twenty-six children, picked cranberries  
enough last fall to pay off a mortgage on  
her farm.

Mr. Porter, of Missouri, having com-  
pleted a century without any prospect  
of dissolution, has concluded to rub out  
and begin over again. Accordingly his  
gray hair is turning black and he is cut-  
ting a third set of teeth at the early age  
of 101.

A new feature in the Woman's Rights  
movement presents itself in Spain.  
Heretofore the men of Spain have heartily  
molested all the honor and glory at-  
tending the performances in the bull-  
ring, but now two young ladies, feeling  
the wrongs of their sex and burning for  
distinction, have entered the arena at  
Madrid and have slain not less than  
three roaring, wild and dangerous bulls.  
What next in the way of progress?

We wish that every boy in the State  
could read the following paragraph from  
the Albany Journal: Forty boys, now  
pupils in the Free Academy, earn their  
own livelihood while they are pursuing  
their studies. Some of them rise at four  
o'clock in the morning to carry newspa-  
pers. Others are employed on afternoon  
papers and other vocations. The boys  
possessed of such spirit and capable of  
such effort will make their mark in the  
world.

In Hartford recently a case had been  
before the court for several days, and  
was finally given to the jury, who went  
out to decide upon their verdict. After  
they had been out nearly half a day,  
unable to agree, and while they were  
still conferring, the litigants agreed upon  
a settlement and the case was closed.  
The jury were informed and appeared  
somewhat disgusted at the abrupt man-  
ner in which the matter had been taken  
out of their hands, while the court and  
counsel smiled amusedly.

A lad named Minor, in Cincinnati,  
has brought an action against his father  
and mother, claiming \$50,000 damages  
for abuse and ill treatment. He says he  
was thrashed with an iron ramrod and  
with rubber whips; dragged out of the  
house and down two flights of stairs by  
the hair; thrust into a closet, under a  
tank of hot water, and kept there for ten  
hours, in such a position that he was un-  
able to stand up or sit down, and the  
like. The parents have refused an offer  
to compromise the matter.

This is the description of a terrible in-  
fant which is said to be in Fentress  
County, Tenn.: "The prodigy is only  
three years old, and weighs seventy  
pounds firm flesh; has as much beard as  
a twenty-year old; his feet are eight  
inches long, though small for one of his  
build—of course, he is fond of the society  
of the girls, but the boys he detests. His  
voice is coarse and his fits of passion are  
terrible. He expects to marry next year,  
and go to Congress the year after, with  
the Presidency in the near prospective."

Some not uninteresting statistics in  
regard to the members of the United  
States Senate are found in the columns  
of an exchange. From these it appears  
that Senator Cameron is the oldest sena-  
tor, and Senator Spencer the youngest.  
Eleven senators have been governors of  
States; nine were born in New York,  
fifty-two in New England; seven came  
from the British Isles and one apiece  
from Canada and Prussia. Of the profes-  
sions represented, the editorial has  
eleven members. There are eight man-  
ufacturers, three doctors, two clergy-  
men, one teacher and one "general busi-  
ness."

The Southern railroad companies  
which bought the railroad material and  
rolling stock that the government found  
itself in possession of at the close of the  
war, are paying their debts, and, on the  
whole doing very well. The value of  
the property sold was \$8,500,000. There  
were fifty roads involved in the transac-  
tion, and June 30, 1870, thirteen had  
paid up all their indebtedness, amount-  
ing, principal and interest, to \$2,380,000.  
A year later, on June 1, 1871, over two  
million more had been paid, leaving  
due at that time \$4,724,350. Consider-  
ing the poverty of most of the compa-  
nies and of the people of the South, this  
is doing very well indeed.

An elderly gentleman was recently  
"confided" on a train running into  
Keokuk by sharpers, who induced him  
to buy a draft (worthless) on Buffalo for  
\$157.40, he paying them two \$100 bills  
and they paying him \$12.00 as change.  
The conductor on the train took the  
first opportunity to quietly suggest to  
the old gentleman that he was afraid  
the draft was a fraud. "Well," was  
the bland response of the imperturbable  
gentleman, "if it is one hun-  
dred dollar notes were, then I am not  
forty-three dollars ahead—which I think  
I am. I am not in the habit of dealing  
in counterfeit currency, but I always  
keep a little of that sort of stuff about  
me for the benefit of that sort of custo-  
mers."

In Bristol, N. H., great public honors  
are showered upon a young gentleman  
whose only merit is that when he went  
wooing, he sat with the object of his af-  
fections, as many young gentlemen have  
done before him, until three o'clock in  
the morning. After tearing himself  
from the lady, as he was walking home  
he discovered a house on fire. Now  
there hadn't been a house on fire in  
Bristol before for a year and a half. The  
lover gave a loud yell, the engine com-  
pany was aroused, and the village saved  
from destruction. So delighted were  
the firemen with this that they made a  
handsome present to the damsel who  
persuaded her lover to stay much  
later, or rather go home much earlier  
than he should have done.

## THE NIGHT EXPRESS.

A bitter December midnight, and the  
up-express panting through its ten min-  
utes rest at Rugby. What with passen-  
gers just arriving, and passengers just  
departing; what with the friends who  
came to see the last of the departing  
passengers, or to meet the arriving ones,  
the platform was full enough, I can as-  
sure you; and I had some difficulty in  
making my way from carriage to car-  
riage, even though I generally find that  
people (almost unconsciously perhaps)  
move aside for the guard when they see  
him walking up or down close to the  
carriage door. This difficulty was in-  
creased, too, by the manoeuvres of my  
companion, a London detective, who  
had joined me to give himself a better  
opportunity of examining the passen-  
gers. Keenly he did it, too, in that  
seemingly careless way, very pretty,  
while he appeared only an idle, loung-  
ing acquaintance of my own. I knew  
that under his unsuspected scrutiny it  
was next to impossible for the thieves  
he was seeking to escape—even in ham-  
pers. I didn't trouble myself to help  
him, for I knew it wasn't necessary; yet  
I was as anxious as hundreds of others  
were that those practiced thieves, whom  
the police had been hunting for the last  
two days, should be caught as they de-  
serted.

Sometimes we came upon a group  
which my companion could not take in  
at a glance, and then he always found  
himself unusually cold, and stopped to  
stamp a little life into his petrified feet.  
Of course for me this enforced standing  
was the signal for an attack of that per-  
sistent questioning with which railway  
guards are familiar; and, in attending  
to polite questioners who deserved an-  
swering, and unpolite ones who insisted  
on it, I had not much time for looking  
about me; but presently I did catch  
myself watching a girl who stood alone  
at some distance. A girl very pretty  
and pleasant to look upon, I thought,  
though her face, and her dress, and her  
attitude were all sad. She stood just at  
the door of the booking-office; a tall,  
slight girl, in deep mourning, with a  
quantity of bright, fair hair, plaited  
high upon her head, as well as hanging  
loosely on her shoulders, with a child-  
ishly innocent face, and very pretty, bewil-  
dered eyes. I wished I could have gone  
straight to her, and put her into one—  
the most comfortable—of the line of  
carriages at which she gazed so timidly.  
Just as I hesitated, a very remarkable  
figure elbowed its way to me; a stout,  
grandly-dressed old lady, panting pain-  
fully, and almost piercing me with a  
pair of restless, half-opened eyes, that  
looked out through the gold-rimmed  
spectacles perched on her sharp nose.  
Two porters followed her, laden with  
bags, cloaks, umbrellas and flowers—the  
only flowers in the station, I expect that

With a fierce parting shot, the director  
tried to make her understand that she  
had incurred a penalty of five pounds,  
but he couldn't, though he bawled it at  
her until the poor old thing—perhaps  
mortified at having taken so much trou-  
ble for nothing; perhaps overcome by  
her hunger; perhaps frightened at the  
commotion she saw though didn't hear—  
sank back in her seat in a strong fit of  
hysterics, and let the shillings and six-  
pences roll out of her lap and settle un-  
der the seats.

It seemed to me a long time before we  
started on again, but I suppose it was  
only a six or seven minutes' delay after  
all. I expect I should have wanted to  
explain the stoppage to the pretty young  
girl of whom I considered myself a sort  
of protector; but, as I said, she was at  
the very opposite end of the train, and I  
was in haste now. There must have  
been a good laugh in several of the car-  
riages where the cause of our stoppage  
got whispered about. As for me, when  
I got back into my van, solitary as I  
had been all in vain, and as I stopped  
at Chalk Farm to take tickets.

It seemed to me that the train was  
taken into custody as soon as it stopped  
here.

"Of course you have the carriage doors  
all locked, and I'll go down with you  
while you open them one by one. My  
men are in possession of the platform."

This was said to me by Davis, a detec-  
tive officer whom I knew pretty well  
now, having had a good bit to do with  
him about this Warwickshire robbery.

"It is no use," I said, before we start-  
ed, "the train was searched, as you may  
say, at Rugby. Every passenger has un-  
dergone a close scrutiny. I can tell you.  
What causes such scientific preparation  
for us?"

"A telegram received ten minutes  
ago," he answered. "It seems that two  
of the thieves we are dodging are in this  
train in clever disguises. We have had  
pretty full particulars, though the dis-  
covery wasn't made until after you left  
the junction. Have you noticed?"

"I dropped his voice a little here—"a  
young lady and gentleman together in  
a third carriage."

I felt a bit of an odd catching in my  
breath as he spoke. "No," I said, quite  
in a hurry. "No young lady and gen-  
tleman belonging together; but there  
were plenty in the train. What if  
there are, though? There was no young  
lady or gentleman among the robbers,  
with suppressed enjoyment, "was a wo-  
man who'd make herself into anything;  
and you must own that a gentleman  
with a dark, long beard isn't bad for  
a lady known to us pretty well by her  
thick red hair and a cut on her upper  
lip."

"But the young lady?" I asked, cog-  
itating this.

"Oh! that young lady. True enough;  
well, what should you say now, if I told  
you she grew out of that boy with the  
closely-cut, dark hair that we are af-  
ter?"

I remembered the pretty plaits and  
the loose, falling hair. I remembered  
the bewilderment in the eyes which en-  
veloped his natural expression, and I  
didn't answer this at all.

"When we are to be allowed to leave  
this train, pray? Call me a cab," cried  
the deaf old lady, plaintively, as we  
reached her carriage, and found her gaz-  
ing out in most evident and utter igno-  
rance of all that was going on around  
her.

"I am locked in, ga'd. Do you  
hear?"

I heard, ay, sharp enough. I only  
wished she could hear me as readily.  
Davis stood aside watching while I un-  
locked her door and helped her down.  
Then, seeing her helplessness, and her  
countless packages, he beckoned a por-  
ter to her, winking expressively to call  
his attention to a probable shilling.

The lighted lamp put in at Rugby?  
And—his carriage was empty, and  
turned away only more and more hope-  
fully from each. He was so sure they  
were there, and that escape was impos-  
sible. We reached the last carriage in the  
line, and now my heart beat in the  
oldest manner possible.

"Is this compartment empty, then?"  
I asked Davis, and my fingers were ac-  
tually shaking as I put my key in the  
door of the centre one. "Empty and  
dark?"

"Even if it had been empty it wouldn't  
have been left dark," I muttered, looking  
in. "Hallo! what's come to the lamp?"

I might well ask what was come to  
the lamp, for the compartment was as  
dark as if it had never been lighted;  
yet had not I myself stood and watched  
the lighted lamp put in at Rugby?  
And—his carriage was empty, and  
turned away only more and more hope-  
fully from each. He was so sure they  
were there, and that escape was impos-  
sible. We reached the last carriage in the  
line, and now my heart beat in the  
oldest manner possible.

out into the blackness of the night as  
cleverly as they had managed their  
craft and subsequent concealment. But  
how could they have depended on this  
unusual delay—this exquisite opportu-  
nity given them in the utter darkness,  
close to the city, yet at no station?  
When I officially made my deposition,  
and explained the cause of our stoppage,  
something of the truth seemed to break  
upon us all; but it wasn't for a good  
while that it settled into a certainty.  
Then it got clear to everybody that the  
older scoundrel had dived up more in-  
geniously than the younger ones. As  
the incapable old lady (deaf as a stone,  
and so blind that she had to peer through  
her glittering glasses, with eyes always  
half-closed, and so hungry that she had  
to stop the train for a luncheon-basket)  
had played upon us the neatest trick  
of all. Where on earth were the thick  
iron-gray hair and whiskers by which  
we were to have identified him? But  
by the time the police saw the whole  
thing clearly it was too late to follow  
up any clue to him.

The cab which had taken the eccen-  
tric old lady and her parcels and flowers  
from Euston was lost in the city, and  
could not be tracked. A high reward  
was offered for information, but no one  
ever won it. My firm belief is that it  
was no legitimately licensed cab at all,  
but one belonging to the gang, and part  
of the same crew. I very much believe,  
too, that sometimes now—though per-  
haps on the other side of the channel—  
those three practiced knaves enjoy a  
hearty laugh over that December jour-  
ney by night-express.

Davis still assures me, with the most  
cheerful confidence, that he shall yet  
have the pleasure some day of trapping  
three of the most expert and skillful  
thieves in Britain. I wish I felt as sure  
of it.—The Argosy.

## The Empire of Japan.

With its forty millions of inhabitants,  
has recently been the scene of a blood-  
red and radical revolution. For cen-  
turies past the provinces of the empire  
were ruled by a feudal aristocracy,  
known as Daimios, descendants of petty  
kings, who once maintained independent  
sovereignty. These Daimios, like the  
feudal nobility of medieval France,  
always seized opportunities to weaken  
the power of the reigning sovereign, and  
raise themselves to the dignity of in-  
dependence. In 1549, when Xavier  
visited Japan, he found the princes of  
Bungo, Ayma, and Xuma maintaining  
regal state and authority. The record  
of the struggles during the fourteenth