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The Bells of San Blas.

FROM MR. LONGFELLOW'S LAST POEM IN THE JULY ATLANTIC.

What say the Bells of San Blas
To the ships that southward pass
For the harbor of Mazatlan?
To them is nothing more
Than the sound of surf on the shore—
Nothing more to master or man.

But to me, a dreamer of dreams,
To whom what is and what seems
Are often one and the same—
The bells of San Blas to me
Have a strange, wild melody,
And are something more than a name.

For bells are the voice of the church;
They have tones that touch and search
The hearts of the young and old;
One sound to all, yet each
Lends a meaning to their speech,
And the meaning is manifold.

* * * * * *

THE LITTLE KEEPER.

$500 PRIZE STORY.

BY ELEANOR C. LEWIS.

About forty miles inland from the coast of California is a long, narrow valley, curving in and out to suit the vagaries of a boisterous little river—the San Miguel.

A high banked railroad adapts itself just as faithfully to the undulating line of water. Twice, however, in the valley's length, it crosses the stream by covered bridges, emerging from them to wind on as before by the water's edge.

The first bridge is within a quarter of a mile from the entrance of the valley, and the little village of Dickson's Junction is in plain sight. The second bridge is three miles from the first, in the lonely heart of the hills. The hills form a sloping background for the keeper's house at the north end of the bridge, but in front they rise so steep as to seem almost perpendicular.

No other houses are in sight. The nearest is at Dickson's Junction. A number of trains pass day and night, but none stop at the keeper's house.

The "keeper" of the bridge some years ago was a Scotchman called Donald Craigie—a hard-featured, tall and large-boned man, with stooping shoulders and weather-beaten face.

In his earlier days he had been a miner—an adventuresome and successful one. But all at once misfortune came upon him. The bank failed in which he had placed his earnings: there were many sad hearts, but his perhaps was saddest.

Not only was the work of a lifetime gone, but the hopes of a lifetime too. The old mother in Scotland whom he had left when a mere boy he could not now expect to see.

When the news of her death came a few months afterward he was hardly surprised—he had felt in his heart that it would be so. But this was not the worst; a few weeks more and his sweet wife died, leaving him alone in the world with a helpless baby daughter.

And now for a year or two he carried on a desperate struggle with fortune; so desperate that it is not much wonder he grew bitter and gloomy. When at last through an old mining acquaintance, who, more fortunate than himself, was now a wealthy director of the San Miguel railroad, he was offered the post of bridge-keeper, he was glad to accept it. The pay was small, but it was sure; and above all it gave him a home and the chance of keeping little Jenny under his own care.

So here in the rough cottage by the bridge he anchored, and was bridge-tender, housekeeper and father all in one. He taught Jenny her alphabet when she was old enough; he made her clothes—and curious affairs they were; he whittled out little playthings for her; he told her rambling and poorly-invented stories, and found the interest of his life in her daily pleasures and griefs.

Once a fortnight in summer, once a month or less in the rainy season, he went to the Junction for provisions, matches, thread or whatever was needed in his little household. He spoke to no one except those he had dealings with. His old acquaintances he quite passed by.

With bowed head and hasty steps he went through the town, did the necessary errands and hurried away, breathing more freely as he left the houses behind him and entering the deep valley came nearer to his bridge and Jenny. For Jenny was such a comfort! She was growing up into a slender, delicate little creature, warm-hearted and loving, but sensitive and grave beyond her years. The father and child lived like two hermits, saying little to each other, happy in the mere being together.

It was a great day when she first went to the village, when she was in her sixth year. Part of the way her father carried her, part of the way she trotted by his side, her hand in his, and talking with unusual animation.

But as they went up the long street, hand in hand, somehow her baby eagerness died away. She felt rather than understood the amusement, almost ridicule, with which they were greeted. And they must have been a queer-looking pair—the child especially must have attracted attention with her outlandish dress and frightened, wild little face.

It was only human nature after all that the children should giggle and the grown-up people stare; but all the [illegible] child felt it in her life—the sense of grief and personal hurt. She would not refuse to go with her father since he liked to have his little girl with him, but each trip to the town was a small torture to her.

Craigie—long used to being the object of a not too kindly attention—hardly noticed that bestowed upon the child, except as it reflected on himself, and formed one reason more why they should keep to themselves and be all in all to each other. So back they would go from the town, and at the first sight of the bridge his heart would warm.

"Weel, Jinny," he would say, "here's oor brig again." And with intuitive womanliness the child felt that she ought not to sadden poor father with her troubles, so she locked them in her own small breast.

In this monotonous way the time passed on till the winter that Jenny was nine years old. The dry season had been unusually prolonged and hot, so that when the winter rains at last set in they were everywhere welcomed.

The hills grew faintly green and the air had an almost springtide warmth. But Donald Craigie shook his head rather ominously when Jenny cried out that she wished this nice warm weather would last a long time.

"It's up to nae guid, I'm thinkin'," said he. "It luiks to me like there 'nd be a reg'lar doonpour by to-morrer or sooner."

When their early dinner was over he proposed going to Dickson's; for, as he told Jenny, there was no knowing when the weather would let them get there again, and various things were needed.

A soft but not unpleasant rain was falling as the two went down the main street to Jansen's store and grocery combined.

"There's old Craigie and his girl," said one person to another, as they passed.

Owing to the rain there were more loungers than usual in the store, and as is the way with an idle crowd they gave all their attention to the last new-comer.

Craigie entered the store without looking round and walked straight to the counter. "I want a dooble box o' matches," said he, "a paper o' ye'st, a gahllon o' molasses and a cahn o' oil."

These orders were filled in the midst of an attentive silence on the part of the audience. Then Jansen, who was a big coarse-grained fellow, made bold possibly by so many spectators, winked at them as if to say, "We'll have a little fun," and addressed Craigie:

"Matches, molasses, oil and yeast, here they are, sir; now what else?"

"Nothin'," said Craigie, shortly, and pulled out his leather purse.

"But these things are for your house," urged Jansen. "These are for your house; don't ye want something for yourself? Checked shirts, now, or"—

"Noo, I till you," said Craigie, who by this time had taken from his purse the right amount of change.

"Or for your little gal now; an apern, or—or— a hat, you know," continued Jansen, with a side glance as he spoke at the very nondescript article that covered the child's head.

At the word hat there was an audible titter from the loungers, and Jansen, catching his advantage, went on, "Or maybe a dress now?" This time the laugh was universal and louder.

Poor Jenny stood there mute, miserable, shamefaced; a tiny mark for so many arrows. But something in the laugh and the general stare seemed to rouse Craigie, not so much to anger as to the perception that there must be something really amiss to cause it.

He looked down at Jenny's little quivering face, and for the first time perhaps was aware that the headgear which framed it was in no respect like ordinary headgear. He saw, too, the queer tags with which her dress was adorned, and the mottled frontispiece, which only by courtesy could be called an apron.

This, to him, new aspect of things, took his mind quite away from the sneering tone of the storekeeper and from the interested crowd. He looked like a man who had just woke up.

"Ye may be reet," he said at last; "she an' I lives aloone like, and I luik at little but keepin' her warm."

Then he turned to Jenny. "What ud ye like, me bairn? A nice ap'on' 'stead o' this?" looking at the article with which she was misadorned.

Scared, yet fascinated by the thought of the new apron, she looked up at her father with a face that expressed a pleasure he was quick to read. "Shoo us the calicooes then," said he; "and Jinny, ye sall pick for yoursel."

Jansen must surely have been drinking some of his own whisky, for in general he was too sharp a business man to insult paying customers; besides, he very likely felt that public sentiment was on his side and against Craigie, whose silent, unsociable ways were not at all in his favor.

At any rate, under pretense of getting calicoes, he pulled down a pile of figured chintzes and cretonnes. One piece in particular he unfolded before the child. It was a dark ground, covered with figures of gaudy birds, presumably parrots, and monkeys climbing impossible palm trees. Jansen put his finger, as if by chance, on one of the monkeys, saying with a wink as he did so, "This is about your style, I reckon."

A roar of laughter followed this sally. Craigie made a quick, wrathful movement toward Jansen, but found himself arrested by Jenny's clinging hands. The child was weeping wildly.

"Oh faither! faither!" she kept saying, "coome away, coome home."

He hesitated a moment, but finally stooping took her in his arms and faced the loungers with blazing eyes and a kind of rough and savage dignity. By this time they were all silent, half in expectation of a fight, half from real regret as they looked at the sobbing child.

"I 'suppose," said Craigie, in his strong, harsh tones, now full of suppressed passion, "I suppose ye think it fune to laugh at a mitherless baby 'at niver hairmed ye"—turning to go—"ye mah think it fune noo, an' ye mah think different sume day, when yer ain bairns are mitherless."

The men parted right and left without a word, leaving a lane to the door. When it closed behind him two or three, who had laughed among the loudest, looked after him and remembered afterward how as he turned the corner and disappeared in the drizzling rain, Jenny, whom he still held, suddenly put an arm around his neck as if to steady herself.

All the merriment was over. Jansen made an uneasy attempt at a joke, as he folded the monkey pattern; but no one laughed. The common feeling was expressed when Jim Barker blew from his mouth a quid with some violence and said:

"I'm durned if ever I laughs at them two again!"

Ah no! no one would laugh at them again!

"Dinna mind it, Jinny," said her father, as the two neared home.

"No, father," answered Jenny; yet her lips quivered as she said it.

Meantime the rain grew heavier, and if possible, wetter. By the time they reached the bridge they were drenched. The swollen river was roaring below, beating against the stone piers with a deep, angry growl.

Donald Craigie examined the timbers closely, almost inch by inch; and it was with a troubled face that he said to Jenny, on entering the house:

"I'm thinkin' there'ull be trouble, my bairn, if the water gaes on risin'."

Indeed, his anxiety was so great that Jenny quite forgot her recent grief, and the two ate their evening meal in silence. It was five in the afternoon when they reached home; in half an hour the east-bound freight-train passed, at 6 o'clock the express, and after each one Craigie made a careful and minute inspection of the bridge.

There was to be another train at 8 o'clock, then no more till midnight.

Jenny, tired out, fell asleep at last by the fire. Her father put her on the bed without undressing her, and settled himself for a short nap in his chair. But he could not sleep. The noise of the storm grew louder, the cry of the river sharper, and an anxiety possessed him that he could in no way control.

Twice, lantern in hand, he went out, crossing and recrossing the long, gloomy bridge. All was safe, however, and he called himself a fool for his pains. Still he could not rest; and at a quarter of 8 o'clock he started for a third trip.

Some noise he made woke Jenny, and she asked if the train was gone. "Not yet, my bairn; but I'm gaein' oot to see that a's safe."

So saying he bent over Jenny and kissed her. "How wad ye like it, Jinny," said he, "to gae where there'd be nae trains by night, an' nae brig wi' the water swirlin'?"

"Why, faither!" said Jenny, with wide-open eyes, "wad ye like it, yersel'?"

"I'm nae sayin' that," he answered, "but we'll think of it, we'll think of it, we'll think of it, my bairn." And with a final kiss he went out into the storm.

Jennie, flattening her face against the window, watched the lantern bobbing in and out, till it disappeared. By this she knew he had entered the bridge.

Half a minute perhaps slipped by when all at once her heart gave a bound, then seemed actually to stand still, for above the noise of the storm a dull, grinding roar met her ear, then a thud, then the rush of the storm once more.

It took but a few minutes for her to reach the bridge and call "Faither!" forgetting that even if all were well he could not possibly hear her in that elemental din.

No voice, no light, came through the rain to meet her, and hope died in her heart; she knew she should see him no more. But—the train! At that moment her scared senses came back to her. There was no time to cry. She must take her father's place as far as possible, and try to stop the train.

She hurried back to the house, and with grave, unchildish forethought, took off her shoes for fear of slipping on the wet timbers, tied a shawl firmly around her, and lighting another lantern started again for the bridge.

Once within it she advanced cautiously, throwing the light of the lantern before each step. It was only too easy now to see what had happened. The middle pier had given way, carrying with it in its fall both beams and planking. Between the two halves of the bridge there now yawned a black gulf, but feebly spanned by a ragged, shivering timber, whose length had secured it a momentary hold. The whole structure indeed was trembling, and the other piers might any moment follow the first.

Imagine it—the shaking bridge; the tremulous flare of the lantern against the darkness; the long, wet beam spanning a black chasm up through which came the growl of the wild river, down to meet which came the stormy rush of the wind; and in the midst of it all—a mere speck in space—the child.

There was but one thing to do and she did it. Unsteadily balancing herself, and clutching the lantern tightly, she began to cross the beam. Her little bare feet clung to it like fingers. Step by step she advanced, though the wind seemed to snatch at her, and clutch her limbs, and try to throw her into the raging darkness below.

Once she almost stood still, afraid to go back or forward. Then she felt the timber quiver, and with a desperate effort she broke into a run that carried her over the gulf. She stumbled, but had no time for more than one backward glance, which showed her a blank where the beam had been.

A few steps more and her feet felt the wet, gravelly earth of the open track, down which she fairly flew, in the face of wind and rain.

It had taken precious time—that perilous passage—and she knew that unless she could reach the straight line of track beyond the curve all she had done would be in vain. And she did reach it, just as a luminous glow at the far end marked the approaching headlight of the engine.

The sight gave her new strength and she ran swiftly forward, waving the lantern from side to side, till all at once something seemed to give way within her, and she fell heavily to the earth. When after much panting and puffing the great engine stopped it was half a yard perhaps from a little heap that lay across the track, with a broken lantern beside it.

"It's a child," explained the engineer to the men who came running up. "Why," looking more closely, "it's old Craigie's girl. I've seen her playing by the bridge. Something's happened to bring her here."

A couple of brakeman hastily caught up lanterns and ran ahead. When in a few minutes they came back it was with pale faces and voices shaken with excitement that they told their story.

"How the child got over, I don't know," said one; "for the middle of the bridge is gone, cut clean out."

There was a great stir at the Junction after the train had steamed back and the reason made known. But silence fell on all when a big brakeman carried tenderly into the waiting-room a limp, childish figure, whose face, wet with the rain, was deathly white, and whose feet were bare and bleeding.

There was quite a crowd of people, but they fell back to give her air, while the doctor and some ladies from the train chafed her limbs and in every way tried to rouse her from her faint.

They were so far successful that at last her eyelids fluttered, then slowly opened, and she looked about her. Big Jansen's face, near by, this time full of an anxiety and grief that almost transformed it, was nevertheless familiar to her, and seemed to bring her suddenly to the memory of what had happened.

"Mr. Jansen," she said, softly, "faither meant to mak' me luik nice. We thought I did. Per'aps he didna ken how. But"—after a second's pause—"he'll no be back, the water"—

The babyish voice trailed into silence. The eyelids closed. The doctor, still kneeling beside her, quickly put his hand on her wrist, then over her heart. When at length he looked up he tried to speak, but could not. Then he turned and walked abruptly out of the circle to hide the tears that filled his eyes.

There was a long silence, broken only by sobbing from the ladies who stood around.

You should have seen little Jenny's face the next day, so smiling and white in her coffin. Another long coffin stood beside hers, but this was closed; for when they found Donald Craigie's body, half a mile below the bridge, it was crushed almost beyond recognition.

There is now a new bridge and a new keeper, who is a popular man at Dickson's. But there is no one who speaks otherwise than gently of "poor Craigie;" and no one whose voice will not tremble a little when he tells you about Jenny. Out in the village graveyard, which slants up the nearest hill, is a white stone on which is cut, not too artistically, a weeping willow. Under the willow are the words:

"To the memory of Donald Craigie, and Jenny, his daughter, who died in trying to save others. This stone is put up by Henry Jansen."—*Youth's Companion.*

Cotton Seed Oil.

The gourmand who carefully makes up his own dish of cool-looking salad, says an exchange, is very apt to be deceived into believing that the rich gold colored oil he pours upon it is from the land of olives. It is an almost even chance that it is from the land of cotton, for the sale of cotton seed oil for olive oil has become so extensive that the Italian government has begun to take strong measures toward keeping the former product out of Italy, where it is taken in Italian vessels from New Orleans, to be bottled and labeled, and returned to this country, so that merchants can say it is imported. But, to those who dread the substitution of cotton seed oil for olive oil, there is comfort in the fact that the supply of the native product is limited, for planters whose lands are thin prefer to return the seed to them, and the cotton lands of the lower Mississippi, which do not need careful fertilizing, furnish the seed for the seventy cotton seed oil mills in the South. This enterprise is bound to remain confined to the South, for the seed is so bulky that transportation would not be profitable. That the manufacture of cotton seed oil, however, will increase is beyond doubt, as the raw seed goes through processes that nearly triple its value, and its oil is being used for paint and also for lubricating machinery.

Curiosities of Ocean Cables.

Of the total 97,200 miles of cable in the world, some 86,420 are owned and worked by the Eastern Telegraph company and its affiliated companies, the Eastern Extension Telegraph company and the South African Telegraph company. The Eastern Telegraph company is perhaps the most enterprising of cable corporations, and makes a very fine display at the Crystal Palace, London. Cable operations have been, says *Nature*, of great assistance to the geographer, and the soundings taken in order to ascertain the nature of the sea bottom where a cable route is projected, have enriched our charts quite as much as special voyages. There is, however, another way in which these operations could be made subservient to the cause of natural science; but it is a way which has not been sufficiently taken advantage of. Besides the specimens of stones, mud and sand, which the sounding lead brings up from the deep, the cable itself, when hauled up for repairs, after a period of submergence, is frequently swarming with the live inhabitants of the sea floor—crabs, corals, snakes, mollusks and fifty other specimens, as well as overgrown with the weeds and mosses of the bottom.

Many an unknown species has passed over the drums unnoted to rot and fester in the general mess within the cable tanks. We venture to predict a rare harvest to the first naturalist who will accompany a repairing ship, and provide himself with means to bottle up the specimens which cling to the cable as it is pulled up from the sea.

Some idea of these trophies may be gathered from the stall of the Eastern Telegraph company, where a few of them are preserved. Two of these are very fine gray sea snake, caught on the Saigon cable in a depth of thirty fathoms, and a black and white brindled snake, taken from the Batavian cable in twenty-five fathoms. Twisting round ropes seems to be a habit of this creature, for the writer remembers seeing one scale up a ship's side out in the River Amazon, by the "painter" hanging in the water.

A good example of a feather star is also shown; these animals being frequently found grasping the cable by their tentacles. A handsome specimen of the blanket sponge, picked up in the Bay of Biscay, is also exhibited. But the most interesting object of all is a short piece of cable so beautifully incrusted with shells, serpulæ and corals, as to be quite invisible. It was picked up and cut out in this condition from one of the Singapore cables. The rapid growth of these corals is surprising, and head some valuable information on this might be gained if the electricians of repairing-ships in these eastern waters would make some simple observations. Curiously enough, so long as the outermost layer of oakum and tar keeps entire, very few shells collect upon the cable, but when the iron wires are laid bare, the incrustation speedily begins, perhaps because a better foothold is afforded.

A deadly enemy to the cable, in the shape of a large boring worm, exists in these Indian seas; and several of them are shown by the company. The worm is flesh colored and slender, of a length from 1½ inches to 2½ inches. The head is provided with two cutting tools of a curving shape, and it speedily eats its way through the hemp of the sheathing to the gutta percha of the core, into which it bores an oblong hole.

A Texas Cloud-Burst.

Captain Merril's corps of engineers and assistants were camped in the valley of Buck creek, in Childers county, Texas. Their tents were set one hundred feet from the dry bed of the creek. This creek was about twelve feet deep from the level of the valley on either side of the bank. The valley is nearly a mile wide, but the high lands curved in close to the place where the camp was pitched, and the valley widened on the opposite bank. The night was clear, and no cloud in the distance betokened a rainfall. The boys staked their ponies near by, turned their mules loose and laid them down to sleep in their tents. About midnight one of the boys felt water at his feet. Springing up he saw the water coming, and yelling like a savage giving his war-whoop, roused his companions. In less than a minute they were all standing in water up to their waists. Knowing to which side of them was the hill, they rushed wildly through the water and succeeded in gaining a safe foothold. The water rushed by them, covering the entire valley to a depth of six feet, and carrying away all the tents and baggage. The pony was saved by one of the boys cutting the stake-rope as he passed him, he fortunately having gone to bed with his pants on. Most of the boys were in their night clothes, and a solemn set they were. The sudden rise of water was undoubtedly caused by what is known as a "cloudburst" on the head of the stream, some twenty or thirty miles away. Any number of cattle were carried down stream, but most of them finally escaped.

"Father! when a hen sets on an egg three weeks and it don't hatch, is the egg spoiled?" "As an article of diet the egg is thence forward a failure; but as a species of testimonial it is strikingly aromatic and expressive."

A letter mailed in St. Louis thirty-two years ago to a man in Green Bay has just reached its destination. The family were as well as usual when the letter was written.

HEALTH HINTS.

Nothing furnishes less brain food than beef.

No two persons should habitually sleep together.

A delicate stomach should not take fruit and vegetables at the same meal.

No man or woman lives rightly whose spirit is controlled by bodily appetites.

There is no physical happiness which can come to mortals like that of perfect health.

To remove warts wash them with moist washing soda and let them dry without wiping; do this two or three times a day.

A good remedy for blistered feet from long walking is to rub the feet at going to bed with spirits mixed with tallow dropped from a lighted candle into the palm of the hand.

Arsenic poisoning is not always to be traced to green coloring. One case was due to red wall paper, and the substance is found abundantly in white, blue, mauve and brown wall papers.

Saved.

"Can you not answer me, Gwendolen?"

Up from the meadows the soft breezes of a perfect June evening were wafting the faint perfume of the cowslip and a dead horse; and as George W. Simpson and Gwendolen Mahaffy stood near the gate, whose decrepit appearance told with more eloquence than could mere words of the deathless passion that enslaved their souls, both felt that a crisis in their lives had arrived—a moment had come which would in the misty future that stretched away before them, like one of William M. Evarts' letters, be either a bright beacon of hope and joy to look back upon with gladness, or a desolate landmark like the lightning-riven trees that one never beholds without a feeling of sadness. Secure in the consciousness of his own merit—that sterling merit which always lies in a strong arm, clear brain and large feet—and yet with a modest diffidence concerning his own worth, the young man stood there in the gloaming with a half-reluctant cat-on-the-back-fence expression that lent an added beauty to his pure young face, and made more pleadingly tender the earnest father-is-coming-up-the-front-steps look with which he regarded the beautiful girl who stood by his side. He had asked her to be his wife—to leave parents, sisters, brothers, and all the endearing influences of a happy home, where two girls are kept, and go out with him into the wide world as a helpmeet and companion. He had told, in fevered sentences, of the great love he bore her, a love that would ever be the guiding star of his life, he said, cheering him when the black clouds of adversity and despair hung heavily in the horizon of his hopes, and without which his whole existence would be one arid, trackless waste on which lay the whited skeletons of Ambition and Hope—ghastly remnants of a life whose final wreck was all the more sad because of the happiness which it might have held had Love not flown away with mocking laugh when pleaded so passionately.

[When it came to ornamental lying, with two rows of fluting up the back, George took first money.]

Gwendolen had stood in graceful poise as he spoke, one ear thrown slightly forward, and her right foot covering the door-mat, and now that he had finished, was looking down in maiden shyness, while the rosy blushes that chased each other under her dazzling complexion would have told, if anybody could have seen them, of the emotions that were agitating her young soul. But no words came from her lips—those rosy-ripe portals that opened with such languid grace when there was a pie in the house—and George began to fear that perhaps he had talked her to sleep. Presently, however, she drew quite close to him, put her hand in his, and, resting her cheek upon his shoulder, she said: "Yes, George, I will marry you."

"But when?" asked the young man, a horrible fear that his bluff was to be called chilling his very blood.

"I will marry you," repeated Gwendolen, "when a bicycle rider is elected president."

Turning away to hide his emotion, George muttered in low, piratical tones: "Thank heaven, I am safe."—*Chicago Tribune.*

The Future of Alaska.

Lieutenant Wood says in the *Century*: With a comparatively mild climate throughout the archipelago, with most valuable ship-building timber covering the islands, with a cedar that now sells at $150 a thousand feet in Sitka, with splendid harbors, with inexhaustible fisheries, with an abundance of coal, and the probability that veins of copper, lead, silver and gold await the prospector, with the possibility of raising sufficient garden vegetables and with wild cranberry swamps on nearly every island; with all these advantages it is surprising that an industrious, amphibious, shipbuilding, fishing colony from New England or other States has not established itself in Alaska. One drawback is that Congress has not yet organized a territorial government, but when this region shall have been opened up to individual enterprise and settlement it will then be discovered that Alaska is a valuable possession.

The secret of the Keely motor has been divulged. It is money.