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THE STRENGTH OF THE HILLS.

My thoughts go home to that old brown house, With its low roof sloping down to the east, And its garden fragrant with roses and thyme, That blossom no longer, except in rhyme, Where the honey-bees used to feast. Afar in the west the great hills rose, Silent and steadfast and gloomy and gray, I thought they were giants, and doomed to keep Their watch, while the world should wake or sleep, Till the trumpet should sound on the judgment day. I used to wonder of what they dreamed As they brooded there in their silent night, While March winds smote them, or June rains fell, Or the snows of winter their ghostly spell Wrought in the long and lonesome night. They remembered a younger world than ours, Before the trees on their top were born, When the old brown house was itself a tree, And waste were the fields where now you see The winds stir in the tasselled corn. And I was as young as the hills were old, And the world was warm with the breath of spring, And the roses red and the lilies white Budded and bloomed for my heart's delight, And the birds in my heart began to sing. But calm in the distance the great hills rose, Deaf unto raptures and dumb unto pain, Since they knew that Joy is the mother of Grief, And remembered a butterfly's life is brief, And the sun sets only to rise again. They will brood, and dream, and be silent, as now, When the youngest children alive to-day Have grown to be women and men, grown old, And gone from the world like a tale that is told, And even those who echo forgets to-day. —Louise Chandler Moulton, in Harper.

AN UNMASKED SHARPER.

A STORY FROM THE FRENCH. They were discussing the latest scandal. A young man of good connections had been ignominiously expelled from a club. Playing in collusion with a professional gambler, he had cheated at cards and in a few months had won a considerable sum. "And has he killed himself?" asked one. "No," replied another. "Do men kill themselves for so little now-days? It is different in the good old times." "In the good old times, as you call them," said old General Roy, "those who adopted the card-sharper's profession killed themselves no more than do those of the present time. A few exceptions there may have been among those who were detected at the outset. But if the first attempt succeeded, they did as they do to-day, they quickly accustom themselves to their degradation. Ah, it is so easy! When respect for his own good name will not restrain a man at the first step, it is entirely dead within him, and even a scandal will not revive it. By the way, I can tell you of a curious case in point, where the hero blew out his brains, but it was not a suicide. No, strange as it may sound, it was not a suicide. Listen: "It was some fifty years ago. The press of that time was not the terrible gossip that it is to-day, and sensational news never passed certain bounds. There were not fewer scandals, but the scandals were less known. In fact, I think there were rather more. Not that we are more virtuous, but the fear of publicity is certainly a great check. "Among the elegant young fellows, the gilded youth of those days, who furnished the greater part of the scandalous gossip by their eccentricities and duels, was a young gentleman attached to the king's household. I shall call him the Vicomte Roland. The name was not an illustrious one; in fact, the vicomte was the fruit of one of those mixed marriages introduced by Napoleon I. General Comte Roland, whose heavy cavalry charges are matters of history, had married the daughter of the Marquis de Bransac, a member of one of the wealthiest and most powerful families of France. His son was then about twenty-six years of age. He had not the robust, plebeian beauty of his father, who had been one of the handsomest men in the army. His was rather the delicate and distinguished grace of his mother, whose idol he was. Having loved her husband passionately, the countess was now wrapped up in her son. "The extravagant life led by the son had caused a quarrel between the parents. The countess lived in the Faubourg Saint Germain, while the general, secluding himself in a little chateau in the forest of Senart, passed his time in the pleasures of the chase. They say he had ill-treated his wife, but it was utterly untrue. The fact is that there had been between the general and his wife two terrible scenes. "The first was caused by an idea which took possession of the countess. She found this name 'Roland' too plebeian for her son, and tormented her husband to obtain the king's authority to add to it that of De Bransac. The general energetically refused. "My name has sufficed for me," said he, "for me who have made it famous. It will do for this fine gentleman, my son. If he does not find it brilliant enough, let him try to add to its luster."

MANY TONS OF LETTERS.

MISSIVES SENT TO AND FROM THE WASHINGTON OFFICIALS. Fifty Thousand a Day to the President Alone—How an Immense Daily Mail is Handled. The President of the United States receives daily an average of 50,000 letters, which, as a rule, are answered, or their receipt acknowledged on the day of delivery. To enable him to cope with this vast correspondence, much of which requires not simply a formal reply, but considerable research and special knowledge, the executive is furnished with about ten thousand clerks, who, for convenience, are divided into seven departments, according to their work has to do with our foreign relations, the army or navy, the fiscal machinery of the government, its internal relations, the postal service, or the administration of justice. The heads of these seven principal departments are asked by the President to meet him once or twice a week at the White House, and form what is known as his cabinet. At these conferences the more important business of the departments is discussed, so that the work may be done promptly and harmoniously; and so well regulated is the system that it is not necessary for the President to see personally but a very small part of the executive correspondence. Two or three sacks only, out of the tons of mail matter that is dumped every morning on the floor of the Washington city postoffice, goes to the White House. This postoffice is the third in the country in volume of business, though Washington is only the fourteenth city in population. This is on account of the enormous official mail that passes through Postmaster Conger's hands. During the fiscal year which ended June 30, 1885, the letters received were in excess of 25,000,000, or about 70,000 daily, and of this total it is estimated about seventy per cent. goes to the departments. The affluent tide is even larger for the outgoing delivery includes all the publications of the government. Statistics in this field would be staggering. They would be on such a huge scale that the figures would lose their meaning. On some days, for instance, during the busy days of Congress, 2,000 large sacks, mostly of executive documents, will pass through the office, and the average for the summer months is 20,000 sacks a month. Much of this is registered, for greater safety, so that the work thrown on the city force is prodigious. Evidently, then, the Washington postoffice is a busy place. The busiest time of the day for the incoming mail is early in the morning, when the great night mails arrive. From 7 till 9 o'clock the office seethes with activity. Shortly before 9 o'clock the mail wagons for the departments and the outlying bureaus are hauled up in the rear of the office, and the mail is handed out to them for distribution. These vehicles are of every description, from heavy, red, circus-like vans to neat covered carriages, which have a strong suspicion of willigt and Sunday excursions about them. The heaviest mail generally goes to the postoffice department, due to the outline correspondence between the department and the 50,000 postmasters of the country. Each postmaster has occasion to write at least four letters each quarter to the department, thus involving a mass of 200,000 letters every ninety days, or more than 2,000 a day from this cause alone. Then there is an equal volume of business in the dead letter bureau, where all uncalled for, misdirected, or unintelligible letters are sent. The other two departments that receive enormous mails are the interior and the treasury. The mail for the pension bureau of the interior alone often amounts into the thousands. All the departments have a mail room where the letters are received and sorted. In the larger departments these rooms have quite a postoffice look of their own, and exceed in the volume of business transacted the figures of many towns of considerable size. Here the sacks are opened and the contents distributed into trays or boxes which represent the office of the secretary and the different bureaus. When thus sorted the letters go to the chief clerks, who go through the pile, whether "confidential" or not. Heads of departments are not supposed to have any guilty secrets, and they certainly have not the time to read all the missives which come to them as confidential matter. So the clerk rips open everything and many "confidential" letters drop into his waste basket. Communications on business matters the clerk tosses into wicker trays, and these are borne by messengers to the chiefs of division and the heads of rooms having special supervision of the matter. If, however, the letter is seen to be important, it is sent up instead of down, and eventually may find its way to the desk of the secretary, or even to the President. In the ordinary routine, however, a letter goes first to the city postoffice, then to the department, and then, step by step, to the chief clerk of the bureau, the chief clerk of division, and the particular clerk who is assigned to attend to its subject matter. Then, in due progress, the reply goes back, on thick white letter paper of official size, elaborately headed, and gathering endorsements as it proceeds—red marks and blue marks, numbers and dates, circles, squares, and crosses—till it is finally signed, folded, and mailed again. Necessarily there is some red tape, for unless a rigid system was followed there would be fatal confusion in a week in all the large departments. These mysterious marks still have a meaning, as the careless or stupid clerk finds out soon enough, for by them every step is registered and a blunder traced back to its source. The last hour or two of each office day in the departments is devoted to finish-

SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL.

Continued investigation confirms the belief that the English sparrow destroys vegetation instead of protecting it from insects. One observer has reported to Miss E. A. Ormerod, the English entomologist, that the crops of fifty sparrows, killed in one summer, contained but two insects. Angle-worms, fish, etc., are often caught up into the clouds by revolving storms, and then dropped again many miles from the place where they were taken up. Small fish have often been found in puddles of water in village streets, to the astonishment of people who were unacquainted with the phenomenon. The simplest and best test for glucose in sugar is to place a little of it under the low power of a microscope. Magnifying forty times is quite sufficient, and less will do. Cane-sugar under this power is distinctly and beautifully crystalline, and each crystal looks like rock candy. They are clear, bright and beautiful. Glucose, on the other hand, has a dull, opaque appearance, like a lump of tallow. Once seen, it will be easily known ever after. Narcoplepsy is a name that has been applied to a rare and curious malady, the main feature of which is an irresistible desire to sleep, coming on suddenly at irregular intervals—the spell lasting but a short time. It may be due to a spasm or fit-like action in the nerves controlling the circulation of blood in the brain, producing in that organ an effect similar to the loss of consciousness in epilepsy, but not affecting the remainder of the body as the latter disease does. In an article on windmills, the Scientific American says: "An 8.5-foot wheel will raise 8,000 gallons of water daily a distance of twenty-five feet. Its first cost, including the pump and a plain tower, is about \$150. A 10-foot wheel will raise about 9,000 gallons of water a day a like distance, and cost \$180, including the appurtenances above mentioned. A 12-foot wheel will raise 10,000 gallons of water a day the above distance, and cost, with the same appurtenances, \$210. So up, from 14 to 16, 18 to 20-foot diameter of wheel, which costs about \$1,200 and will raise about 100,000 gallons of water daily the specified distance." Minnie Haden, a colored blacksmith of Montgomery, Va., has lately invented a piece of very simple machinery by which the striking hammer is easily and effectively worked by his foot, while he has both hands free to hold his iron and use the small hammer. To a listener the blows come as naturally and as rapidly as if there were two men handling the hammers in the old-fashioned way, but there is a difference. The machine, by an easy motion of the foot on the treadle, strikes a harder blow than any man can strike, and can be made, at will, to strike as light a blow as may be needed. But the use of this simple and cheap device in the blacksmith shop is not half. It can be just as easily used, and will find a large field of usefulness, in driving a drill or blasting rock. Terrible Scene at a Bull Fight. A Madrid correspondent says: "The bull fight which took place in Victoria a few days ago, a scene occurred which is seldom witnessed on these occasions. The first bull having been dispatched by the primer espada Lagartijo, the carcasses of bull and horses dragged away, and the blood marks covered with fresh sand, the signal was given for the second bull. The beast appeared at the entrance, looking suspiciously around him, and as a torero ran past him, he rushed out, more like a tiger than a bull, and with such impetus that clearing the barrier by a flying leap he alighted in the midst of the terrified crowd. Those nearest to the barrier jumped or fell headlong into the arena, while others were tossed into the air. Ladies in the balconies screamed and fainted, while the bull kept driving furiously into confused crowds of men, women and children, killing some, and wounding others very severely. A company of civil guards, which were drawn up in line to keep order during the bull fight, ran off. When the bull had cleared half the plaza of its occupants, he paused to take breath and look at the arena, which was full of spectators. Finding at last a gate open, he trotted out to the promenade, sending several men, women and children flying in the air. At last he was brought down by three shots fired at him by a civil guard. When calm had been restored, the people very deservedly hissed the civil guards and toreros for their cowardice. A Strong Cigar. "Don't care if I do, stranger. Thanks. Strong? Yes? To be sure. Strongest cigar I ever smoked? (Puff, puff.) No, 'tain't (puff, puff.) Not by a long shot. What was the strongest cigar I ever smoked? Well, I'll tell you. It was so strong that it knocked some of my teeth out. You don't believe it? Wait till you hear the particulars. It was way back in 1805. I was with the Army of the Potomac, and we were closin' up on Lee in Richmond. I was on picket duty one night when I got to hankerin' for a cigar. "It was against orders to smoke on the picket line, but I couldn't stand it, and so I dove into the trench and lit my weed. Then I returned to my beat, happy as could be. It was a very dark night, an' everything quiet, an' I was just flatterin' myself that there was no danger in a smoke, when whish! bang! and that cigar of mine went to pieces an' I felt a prickly pain in my mouth. I felt, an' a couple of teeth were gone. Pretty strong cigar, that. Eh? Loaded? No; but the rifle that 'ere Johnny Reb sharpshooter was, and right here on my cheek is where the ball cum out. If the ash hadn't fell off that cigar I would have two more teeth in my head to-day."

SOME WEATHER SIGNS.

Cats—The cardinal point to which a cat turns and washes her face after a rain shows the direction from which the wind will blow. Cats with their tails up and hair apparently electrified indicate approaching wind. If sparks are seen when stroking a cat's back, expect a change of weather soon. When a cat washes her face with her back to the fire, expect a thaw in winter. Buzzards—A solitary turkey buzzard at a distance indicates rain. Buzzards flying high indicates fair weather. Crows—One crow flying alone is a sign of foul weather; but if crows fly in pairs, expect fine weather. Geese—If the breastbone of a goose is red or has many red spots, expect a cold and stormy winter; but if only a few spots are visible the winter will be mild. If domestic geese walk east and fly west expect cold weather. When geese or ducks stand on one leg expect cold weather. Roosters—When the roosters go crowing to bed they will rise with watery head. Spiders—When they are seen crawling on the walls more than usual indicates that rain will probably ensue. This prognostic seldom fails. It has been observed for many years, particularly in winter, but more or less at all times of the year. Snakes are out before rain, and are, therefore, more easily killed. Electricity—Increasing atmospheric electricity oxidized ammonia in the air and forms nitric acid, which affects milk, thus accounting for souring of milk by thunder. Lamp wicks: The nightly virgin, while her wheel she piles, Foresees the storm impending in the skies; When sparkling lamps their sputtering lights advance, And in their sockets oily bubbles dance. Corns giving trouble indicate bad weather. When corns ache rain follows. Logs—An easy splitting log indicates rain. Milk makes cream most freely with a north wind. Rheumatic diseases: Therefore the moon, the governor of floods, Pale in her anger, washes all the air That rheumatic diseases do abound. Coffee Drunkards. "What a bright-eyed man," said a reporter who leaned against the cashier's desk of a restaurant near the public buildings one day last week. The man in question had just paid a ten-cent check and slipped out of the door with a jerky movement and a swinging of the cane he carried which decidedly endangered the cashier's peace. "Bright-eyed? Yes," said the cashier; "he's a coffee drunkard." "What's a coffee drunkard?" "A man who comes in here four times in two hours, as that man has done this morning and does every morning, and takes a half pint of coffee every time, is a coffee drunkard. Bright eyes! Well I should say so. That man's condition all the time is the same as that of a man who is getting over a big 'batter.' I mean his nerves are up in 'G,' his muscles are all a quiver, and his mental vision is abnormally clear. He is living at a 2:08 3/4 rate." "Why does he do it?" "Has to. Must have a brace. Used to drink rum. Had to quit that, and now does worse. He never sleeps, they tell me." "Do you know many such men?" "At least half a dozen."—Philadelphia Press.

THE BEAUTIFUL LIFE AND DEATH.

Beautiful faces are those that wear— It matters little if dark or fair— Whole-souled honesty printed there. Beautiful eyes are those that show, Like crystal panes where heart-fires glow, Beautiful thoughts that burn below. Beautiful lips are those whose words Leap from the heart like the hearts of birds Yet whose utterance prudence guards. Beautiful hands are those that do Work that is earnest, and brave, and true, Moment by moment a long life through. Beautiful feet are those that go On kindly ministries to and fro— Down lowliest ways, if God wills it so. Beautiful shoulders are those that bear Conesless burdens of homely care With patient grace and daily prayer. Beautiful lives are those that bless— Silent rivers of happiness, Whose hidden fountains but few may guess. Beautiful twilight at set of sun, Beautiful goal with race well won, Beautiful rest with work well done. Beautiful graves where grasses creep, Where brown leaves fall, where drifts lie deep Over worn-out hands—oh, beautiful sleep! HUMOR OF THE DAY. Should a kite be made of fly-paper? "I take the pledge and keep it," says the pawnbroker. The fruit most frequently to be observed at picnics—the pear. You cannot call a sailor a slugger because he boxes the compass.—Derrick. "Can any one suggest a sure preventive of sea-sickness?" asks an exchange. Certainly: stay on shore.—Puck. Only eight American poets have lived beyond the age of sixty years. This shows the power of the press.—Merchant-Traveler. THE LATEST CRAZE. Now the maiden sits in her crazy chair And drives away melancholy By plying her needles and knitting a pair Of scarlet silk hose for her "Cholly."—Boston Courier. The planets have been weighed and the moon blocked out into election precincts, but the heft and capacity of a boy's pocket still remain unknown.—Chicago Ledger. When a cold wave comes Then business hums, —New York Morning Journal. But when it thaws There is a pause, —Gorham Mountaineer. Can't you give us some war reminiscences?" asked a citizen of an old fellow in a party of ex-soldiers telling stories. "No, I believe not," he answered promptly, "you see I've only been married six months."—Merchant-Traveler. They were walking on the beach, and as Claude held her little hand he murmured: "I love to be with you, Claribel, it seems so bright and I feel so much fresher." "Do you, dear? I should not think that possible." And then he dropped her hand and turned sadly away, his sighs keeping time to the surges as they lashed themselves to foam on the pebbly beach.—Boston Transcript. He met her in the garden, And she was all alone, His arm he folded round her waist, And said she was his own. He on her lips impressed A kiss with true love's zest, And then, with passion's fervor, Her soft white hand he pressed. She screamed, and then he arched Was in a moment dashed, For in that soft white hand she held An egg, that too was smashed. —Boston Gazette. Is the Air Colorless? The Challenger has dredged from the bottom of the ocean fishes which live habitually in great depths, and whose enormous eyes tell of the correspondingly faint light which must have descended to them through the seemingly transparent water. It will not be as futile a speculation as it may at first seem, to put ourselves in imagination in the condition of creatures under the sea, and ask what the sun may appear to be to them, for, if the fish who had never risen above the ocean-floor were an intelligent being, might he not plausibly reason that the dim greenish light of his heaven—which is all he has ever known—was the full splendor of the sun shining through a medium which all his experience shows is transparent. We ourselves are in very fact, living at the floor of a great aerial sea, whose billows roll hundreds of miles above our heads. Is it not at any rate conceivable that we may have been led into a like fallacy from judging only from what we see at the bottom? May we not, that is, have been led into the fallacy of assuming that the intervening medium above us is colorless because the light which comes through it is so? I freely admit that all men, educated or ignorant, appear to have the evidence of their senses that the air is colorless, and that pure sunlight is white, so that if I venture to ask you to listen to considerations which have lately been brought forward to show that it is the sun which is blue, and the air really acts like an orange veil or like a sieve which picks out the blue and leaves the white, I do so in the confidence that I may appeal to you on other grounds than those I could submit to the primitive man who has his senses alone to trust to; for the educated intelligence possesses those senses equally, and in addition the ability to interpret them by the light of reason, and before this audience it is to that interpretation that I address myself.—Prof. Langley, in Popular Science Monthly.