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Five hundred and thirty million bushels is the official estimate of the United States wheat crop for 1897.

New York claims to be growing healthier. The death rate has decreased six and a half per cent, since 1891.

The Pennsylvania Bankers' Association has voted to organize a chapter of the association, whose purpose shall be the erection in Philadelphia of a bronze statue of Robert Morris, the patriotic financier of the Revolution, and the founder of the first organized banks in the State of Pennsylvania and the United States.

Mr. Peary, the Arctic explorer, speaking of the generous gift of the Windward made to him by Mr. Harnsworth, the London publisher, expresses great gratification over this striking exhibition of English good feeling. He considers it another link in the long chain of international courtesies exchanged in Arctic exploration.

It is thought that the influence of the French language, with its unspiced, is the primary cause of that letter being so much ignored by English people. French having been spoken so long in England and the people near the coast having come in contact continually with that language, an indelible impression, it is said, is left upon it, increased now by usage.

According to the Chief of the Pennsylvania State Bureau of Railroads, the bicycle is hurting the business of the railroads. He says: "In cities like Harrisburg and many others it cannot be gainsaid that the bicycle has become a most serious competitor of the railway. To reinforce this view of the case an observation was made on Third street in that city during the month of October, 1897. The observation covered two days, from seven in the morning to six in the evening. During that time 6078 persons passed a given point, 1662 in the cars and 4416 on bicycles; 67.7-10 per cent. on bicycles and 32.3-10 per cent. on the cars, or more than two to one in favor of the wheel."

Says the Philadelphia Record: Justice Patterson of New York, in a speech before the Law Club of that city recently, deplored the fact that the law had become so largely a trade instead of a profession; and on the following day Dr. Edward Everett Hale, in an address before an educational body in the same city on "Morality in the Public Schools," made the declaration: "There is danger of the managers of a great machine taking more pride in the machine and its workings than in the results it turns out. This is the danger in our public schools." These words will, of course, be resented as the views of pessimists; yet they come from men qualified to speak as public teachers, and coming simultaneously they gain an emphasis which must command attention. We are accustomed to flatter ourselves with the idea that our development along material lines necessarily involves a corresponding development along intellectual and moral lines. However that may be, the fact can no longer be denied that the commercial instinct is beginning to dominate almost every action of our people.

Ament the agitation in the South for more diversified farming as a partial remedy for the alleged over-production of cotton, a correspondent of the Charleston News and Courier directs attention to the fact that many years ago South Carolina had a place in the records as an exporter of wheat flour and of corn. The flour exports began about 1760 and continued into the present century until cotton supplanted wheat. It is believed that much more flour was manufactured in the State one hundred years ago than now, although population and resources have multiplied many fold. A century and a half ago corn was "an important article of export" from the State, and the trade continued for over fifty years, as there is a record of about 100,000 bushels exported in 1792. Not long thereafter corn became an article of import, and some years ago was reported as "the largest" article of that character. What was done with the soil of the State 100 years ago, the Courier says, can be done again. In one country the growing and grinding of wheat for local consumption has been undertaken, and other counties are advised to follow the example. "We have proved by a long and stumbling experience," the Courier says, "that cotton does not take the place of what is the 'staff of life,' and that no community can thrive whose only manufacturing industry is that of ginning the fibre for market."

THE REASONS OF THE SEASON. If we be little and warm at heart, If we be sound and pure within, If we be sound and pure within, No sorrow shall abide with us...

THE RIDDLE OF A LOCK.

By WILLIAM O. STODDARD.



HERE was upon his face an intense, and even a combative look, as he stood in the wind-swept piazza, with his hand upon the bell-pull. He seemed about to ring again, when the door opened and he stepped quickly in, while a graceful form receded timidly before him. A pair of moist, dark eyes and a troubled face were averted from his, and there was a husky tremor in the voice which said to him: "You mustn't come in, Jeff."

There was a motion of a thin hand on the coverlet, and it was obeyed. Madeleine stooped and kissed her mother, and then glided out of the sick-room, closely followed by the wrathful face of old Jacob Lapham.

As for Jefferson Meredith, his walk to the village had been rapid, and his first visit was made at the bank. His next errand was to a dingily respectable law office.

"I had an idea, from herself, that I was to be one of them—" "And she wishes you to be ready to act at once. She is not upon good terms with old Jake and Steve."

"I heard Mr. Lapham say, 'Sign here, and sign here,'" said Madeleine. "Judge Wickham was leaning over mother and saying something to her."

"Dear me!" she said; but Jeff was once more investigating the safe. "Madeleine," he said, "there's a stack of greenbacks, and it's your own money. It is right where he can get it. Don't you think it ought to be in a safer place?"

"I must be mine!" she exclaimed. "It can't be his! He hasn't anything. He meant to steal it, surely!" "Meant to?" replied Jeff. "Why, he has already stolen it and hidden it here. This is your safe, to be sure, but it isn't safe enough. You are going to put your money into the Compton National Bank. Fifteen thousand dollars and more. All that old Jacob Lapham has stolen during several years, except what Steve has wasted; one way or another."

"Put it into the bank for me, Jeff," said Madeleine. "I dare not, and I cannot bear to leave the house." "I'll put the will right back where I found it," he said, as he did so. "They all said it deposited here?" "Yes," replied Madeleine. "Uncle Wickham and the witnesses came down and saw it put away there."

"That's where they will find it, then, when they come to look for it," said Jeff, and he seemed to be worrying in a very curious way around the lock of the safe. "There! That'll do, I guess. Now, Madeleine, I must go."

Not many, not very many, seconds later Jeff walked unconcernedly out of the house, as if nothing extraordinary had happened. Madeleine, on the other hand, after closing the door behind him, went slowly and thoughtfully upstairs.

There were carriages at the door. There was no occasion for remark, however, when the mourners came out of the house, in the fact that Madeleine leaned on the arm of Judge Wickham, and entered a carriage with him and his wife, her mother's sister, and with her mother's friend, Mrs. Meredith. If her stepfather and stepbrother did not like it, that was not the time for them to say so, or to employ authority.

"Wickham," said Mr. Lapham, as the old lawyer joined the rest in the parlor, "come in here a moment. I can't open the safe. Nobody else knows the combination, but it won't open. Her will is there—"

"Try it again, Jacob—try it again," said the judge, placidly. "You've been too agitated, too nervous—"

"There's the will," said Judge Wickham, calmly, as he sent a long arm in and pulled out a paper lying in full view.

"There's another will! The safe has been robbed! Money missing! Papers missing! I'm robbed!" "It isn't your safe, Jacob; it is Miss Lane's safe. If there is another will, produce it."

"I wish I could see him. My son!" she whispered. "Say good-by to him for me, dear. Kiss me, Madeleine. There—there—good-by."

"What does she mean?" he harshly, hoarsely demanded. "Her son?" There was no answer in words, but even Jacob Lapham turned pale, and the advancing nurse drew back again, while Madeleine sank upon her knees before the door, and was suddenly aware that the last messenger had come.

"How is it now?" asked the lawyer. "All independence and freedom," said Jeff. "It is 17—21—76, and that's what'll puzzle old Jacob when he comes down stairs. But it's a good thing to know how to set and reset a lock."

Jeff was in another part of the house when the Laphams were puzzled, but he knew how it was. Even the lock seemed to enjoy it as they tried to make it once more remember its old numbers.

THE MERRY SIDE OF LIFE.

STORIES TOLD BY THE FUNNY MEN OF THE PRESS.

Out of Place—A Bad Shot—He Was Overlooked—The Precious Innocent—Not Excited—Judging by the Sound—Didn't Want to Be Harried—Reforming, Etc.

Ethel—"Why does lightning never strike twice in the same place?" Dick—"Can't find the place."—Yellow Book.

Ziggs (slapping his friend on the back)—"Well, it's settled, old man; the cards are out." Ziggs (who didn't get one)—"Did they run out?"—Detroit Journal.

Mrs. Grady—"O, Pat! O! think the baby's got something in his 'trout!'" Mr. Grady—"So do O!, begorra! And O'm 'tinkin' it's either a foghorn or a locomotive phwhistle!"—Puck.

"I hear," said the zephyr, "that you have been raging through the Northwest." "Never was a worse mistake," howled the blizzard. "I was quite cool."—Indianapolis Journal.

"My wife can tell what time it is in the middle of the night when it is pitch dark?" "How does she do it?" "She makes me get up and look at the clock."—Chicago Record.

"I suppose," said the village deacon to the minister, "that your constant prayer is that you may ever be poor and humble?" "Not exactly," replied the minister. "I pray that I may remain humble, but my congregation attends to the other part of it."—Chicago News.

"I wish you could photograph mine," she returned. "Why?" he asked. "Possibly it would encourage you a little," she answered. Shortly thereafter it was decided that he should "see pap" just as soon as he could muster up sufficient courage. —Chicago Post.

"You love me not!" she cried petulantly. "Don't say that!" he urged in a pained way. "But it is true!" she retorted defiantly. "Yes," he admitted. "Aha!" she exclaimed. "Yes, it's true," he continued, as he caressed the Psyche arrangement of her hair.

"Whatever are you crying for now, Johnny?" asked his mother. "I don't see why a boy should shed tears because he has to go into a warm bed this cold weather."

"I feel so safe now," she said; "and it is what mother would have wished." "Madeleine," he answered her, "there are some combinations of this which only God knows the secret. This is one of them, and it is locked forever."—McC.'s Monthly.

A place for physicians to emigrate to is the city of Hamah, south of Aleppo. Though it contains 60,000 inhabitants, among whom diseases of the eye, in particular, are rampant, there is not a single physician in the city.

MERRY, though the moon shines pale And the wind-tossed branches wail; Forest crystals frost and fall; There they sparkle, there they sparkle, Here they sparkle, On the pine and lonely wail.

Merry, though the stream is still 'Neath the cold and trackless hill! There the roams of Hepler glow; 'Tis the light of fingers, Shining fingers, Gild the sleeping folds of snow. —Genevieve Richardson, in Woman's Home Companion.

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

It is very seldom that we seriously regret anything we didn't say.—Life. When a woman runs it is a mean man who will use his camera.—Somerville Journal.

Judge—"Why did you steal the complainant's turkey?" Prisoner—"He had no chickens, your Honor."—Detroit Journal. Sle—"Why is it called the 'silver moon'?" He—"Because it comes in halves and quarters, I suppose."—Chicago News.

Bacon—"And he's kind-hearted, is he?" Egbert—"Kind-hearted? Why, I don't believe he ever saved an unkind word, even to an alarm clock!" "What would you do if you had only ten cents in the world, Kitty?" "I would buy caramels with it to raise my spirits."—Chicago Record.

Doubtful Spendley—"Well, if my money should go, dearest, you'll still have me!" Mrs. Spendley—"Don't you be too sure about that!"—Puck. Instructed Johnny—"And does the gasmeter measure the quantity of gas you use?" Papa—"No, my son; the quantity you have to pay for."—Puck.

"Ma, is there any pie left in the pantry?" "There is one pie, but you can't have it." "You are mistaken, ma, I've had it."—Cleveland Plain Dealer. "He told me to get off the earth. What do you suppose he meant?" "He seemed to think that you needed a bath, evidently."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

"You may fetter my body," he shouted, "but my mind will wear no chain!" In other words, the wheel in his head was of the '98 pattern.—Indianapolis Journal. Customer (in restaurant)—"This breakfast must be at least three weeks old, isn't it?" Waiter—"Don't know, sah; I've only been here two weeks, sah."—Chicago News.

Raggs—"Say, do you believe that story of the goose laying the golden egg?" Jiggs—"Well, it would be just like a goose to do such a foolish thing."—Chicago News. Sloper (as Miss Eastlake, his intended, finishes a solo)—"What a voice!" Duncan (who has been rejected by Miss Eastlake)—"Yes, what a voice!"—Harlem Life.

A North of England paper says: "We have adopted the eight-hour system in this office. We commence work at 8 o'clock in the morning and close at 8 in the evening."—Tit-Bits. Matilda—"Have you spoken to papa?" Berlie—"Yes; I asked him through the telephone and he answered: 'I don't know who you are, but it's all right.'"—Pick-Me-Up.

Not Necessarily: Walter—"So Bilker rents that forty-dollar-a-month house of yours, does he? He pays too much rent." Landlord (sighing)—"You don't know him."—Puck. "Men's promises," the young wife said between sobs, "are like pie-crust." "That's tough," said the young husband, and then she got angry enough to cry.—Indianapolis Journal.

The Klondiker who returns with \$4000 in gold dust usually estimates the claim left behind at \$500,000. It is well to keep these assets in a separate class.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat. Bride—"Counting your change, George? It has been an expensive trip, hasn't it?" George—"That's right. It looks as if this honeymoon would soon be off its last quarter."—Puck.

Rapturous Youth—"Darling, my salary is \$20 a week. Do you think you could live on that?" His Affianced—"Why, yes, George, I can get along on that. But what'll you live on?"—Chicago Tribune. Bingham—"Bonny is so aggravatingly self-possessed." Rawlins—"Yes. He could wear a checked golf suit at a wedding and carry himself as though the groom was a mere caddy."—Philadelphia North American.