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ACROSS THE PLAINS.

The plains were wide and vast and drear,
The mountain peaks seemed cool and near,
The sun hung low toward the west,
"So near," we sighed, "are we to rest."

But journeying through the closing day,
Our feet are weary of the way;
Far, far before our aching sight
The plains lie in the waning light.

The mountain peaks that seemed so near.
And hold our rest forever there,
Are far across the desert lands—
We vainly cry with lifted hands.

O hills that stand against the sky,
We may not reach you ere we die;
Our hearts are broken with the pain,
For rest and peace we may not gain.

Upon the plains we faint and fall,
Our faces toward the mountain tall;
Our palms are clasped, but not to pray;
So die we with the dying day.

THE CRUISE OF THE TOM.

The Tom, of Baltimore, was a saucy hermaphrodite brig, whose men took great pride in the tony forty two pounder which she carried amidships, and entertained also an exceeding admiration for the skill of their first lieutenant, Mr. Gale, who in all cases of emergency took upon himself the immediate direction of that destructive engine.

One extremely foggy night off Bermuda, the Tom found herself in the midst of what seemed a fleet. The ships of a convoy always carried lights aloft after dark, in order that each might know the whereabouts of the others, but upon this occasion the air was so thick with mist that no light would show unless very close at hand; so that it was only at intervals that the crew of the privateer could detect the glimmer of one; yet the fact that they could occasionally do so proved their unknown neighbors to be much nearer than could have been wished under all the uncertainties of the case. It appeared probable that some of the strangers might be merchantmen and others men-of-war, but, of course, no definite conclusion could be arrived at in this respect.

As there fell at the moment an almost entire calm, the relative positions of the vessels could be changed but very slowly, if at all; but the men of the Tom keeping a careful silence, her proximity remained unknown to the others, whatever they might be. Now and then a light would show faintly through the fog, seeming to be close to the privateer, then becoming wholly obscured by an increasing density of the mist. The weather was precisely in that state which is apt to keep sailors at work shifting studding sails from one side to the other of their vessel, in order to profit by whatever light air there may be, as it comes now from starboard and now from port. Occasionally a boatswain's pipe was heard; and the hollow atmosphere permitted even the words of command on board of some of the strangers to be made out with great distinctness by the privateer's men. The sentences were somewhat like these:

"Lay h'aft, 'ere, and give a pull h'on that mizzen-top-s'l-'alyars! The yard's sagged—git it h-up w'ere 't belongs!"

"H'in with them larboard stunners'ls!"

"Small pull h'on the weather brases!"

"Come h'up with the fore and main tacks and h'ease h'aff sommut h'on the sheets;"

"H'eight bells! Call the watch there."

The nationality of the strangers could no longer remain in doubt.

In the morning, after the sunbeams had dispersed the fog, it was found that the fleet consisted of three West Indiamen and a seventy-four-gun ship.

The man-of-war immediately gave chase to the Tom, then about three miles off, and, as the pursuer had the best of the breeze, the privateer's-men saw themselves in a position of no little peril. But, after the king's ship had succeeded in decreasing the distance by a third, she ceased to gain. The chase was continued in this manner for a number of hours—for the American captain, finding that the breeze had become steady, and consequently that he could sail three miles to the enemy's two, slung a drag under the Tom's bows in order to deaden her headway and give the Briton such hope of overtaking her as would cause him to continue the chase until he should be widely separated from the merchantmen.

Ere long the West India vessels were so far off that their top-masts could scarcely be seen above the bending ocean; and now the Tom began to try her great pivot-gun upon the seventy-four. It was longer and heavier than any of the enemy's guns, and, although the distance was two miles, Lieutenant Gale had strong hopes of being able to make his mark somewhere about the busy Englishman.

"But you won't hit him at the first trial," said Captain Brown, the commander.

"No, I don't expect to," replied the lieutenant. "I guess about the third fire I'll plump a shot into him. The first may go over and the second under, but the third'll fetch him!"

Mr. Gale was no boaster, and seldom undertook more than he could perform.

The privateer was going very steadily, with but little rise and fall of the deck, so that the occasion was favorable, but still, even a big seventy-four pounder at a distance of two miles could be no very encouraging mark for a single cannon ball.

In those days, the big guns were not fired as now, by means of percussion caps; but a man stood by with a slow-match and clapped it upon the priming at the word.

Mr. Gale took unusual pains in sighting the long forty-two. Once or twice he was upon the very point of giving the order to let drive, but hesitated and sighted again, the man with the match all the while standing with arm outstretched and the bright coal glowing. Now a little higher, and again a little lower, was brought the muzzle of the huge cannon, as the lieutenant squinted along the iron, till the lookers-on became impatient for the flash and roar.

"O, never mind the first shot," said the captain; "you'll have to try a good many times before you hit the fellow!"

"I know it," said Mr. Gale, still squinting intently and never looking up; "but I want to come as near as—ah, there! a little lower! I want to come as near as—Fire!"

Down came the burning match, and the whole vessel shook at the roar of the forty-two. For a moment the smoke was blinding—and what a smell of burnt powder there was about the deck!

"I saw a gray streak," says the captain; and a mighty straight one, too! but I didn't see where it ended, for the smoke was in my way."

"If the ball had struck the water," said one of the officers, "we should have seen it skip, I think. I had a glimpse of something between us and the enemy, but I don't know what became of it."

Every one looked anxiously toward the seventy-four; and in a minute or two some operations were observed on board of her which made the excitement intense.

"Hello!" exclaimed Captain Brown, "what does that mean? They have lowered their head-yards and are hauling up their foresail! My soul! they must have got that shot through their foremast! They're afraid the mast will go over, and are getting in all their headsails as fast as possible! Look at the hands going up the forerigging! And there they start their fore-topsail sheets! You'll see the yard alive with men in a minute!"

By the time the sails were clewed up, those who were to furl them were lying out on the yards in long dark rows. With that numerous crew there was a simultaneous handling of foresail, topsail, topgallant sail, and royal—as, indeed, would have been the case with all the canvass upon the ship had necessity required it to be taken off; and even she would have had a large force to spare.

But just as the sails had been handsomely stowed under the gaskets, the mast began to waver. Faster and faster it inclined to leeward, then, suddenly, as if the weather rigging itself had given away, down it went with all its hamper, broken short off by the deck! It was a startling spectacle. Lowermast, topmast, topgallantmast, royalmast, yards, men, and all, plunged splashing into the water.

There was a most lively scrambling among the wrecked spars and rigging where the numerous fellows who had been aloft were seen like so many engulfed rats; but, as was afterwards ascertained, the casualities were fewer than might have been expected—only three men being lost, although four or five others were somewhat injured.

From the loss of all her head canvas the seventy-four was obliged to take in all her sails on the mizzen also, as otherwise she would not answer her helm. She, however, kept everything set on the mainmast, and, bringing her broadside to bear on the privateer, sent the round shot whistling thick and fast. Nevertheless, the distance being somewhat too great for her guns, the execution done was very little

Mr. Gale repeated his fire with the forty-two-pounder a dozen or twenty times; but could not succeed in bringing down another spar, although he evidently hulled her more than once. A number of her own shot reached the privateer; one of them rolling across the deck, wounding a marine in the foot, and bringing up the opposite plank-sheer. A few of them went hustling past with great force, while others fell short.

"This is time lost," said Captain Brown. "You have disabled her, Mr. Gale—good for you! But we have no further business here—we are sure of the West Indiamen now, and I am going after them forthwith!"

The wind had freshened, and the Tom was put in chase of the merchantmen. They were more than twenty miles off, but it was soon discovered that they had lost the breeze which was helping the privateer, and, coming up with them near sunset, she captured all three.

Upon a subsequent cruise, the Tom, with the same officers as before, and with many of her former crew, went ranging along the coast of Africa. Here, upon rounding a bluff which sheltered a little inlet, her captain discovered a Guineaman lying cozily in the basin, and, going in, dropped anchor within a cable's length of her.

Not a soul appeared upon her deck, but on her stern were read the words, "Gambia—Liverpool," which gave the Yankee commander all the information he desired. A boat was manned, and the vessel, which was a large square-rigged brig, taken possession of, still without arousing any one to call this summary proceeding in question.

Lieutenant Gale, who was in command of the boat's crew, went into the cabin, where he found the English captain lying on a transom fast asleep! He had his hand on a book, which lay partly open, and the reading which had probably been a powerful adjunct to drowsiness. At all events his slumber must have been very profound, to have suffered no interruption from what had been going on so near him. Opening his eyes, he stared in astonishment at the American officer, whose undress uniform had a suspicious look.

"H'indeed, sir!" he said, "'ow is this? Who are you, sir, if a man may h'ask?"

"I am a naval officer, sir," replied Mr. Gale.

"Ah, yes! I see! One of 'is Majesty's blue-jackets, I must 'ope, sir?"

"Not quite that, sir," replied Mr. Gale. "The majesty I serve is called 'The Sovereign people.' I am first lieutenant of the privateer Tom, of Baltimore, to which vessel your brig has become a prize! I am sorry for your misfortune, but it is our business to make war on England's commerce, as it is her policy to distress us."

The English captain yielded sadly to his fate. His officers and men, he explained, were all gone on shore, and he himself, having had no particular business on hand at the moment, had sat down to read in the cabin, and so fallen asleep.

The Gambia proved to be one of the richest prizes ever captured by an American privateer. She was of about three hundred tons burden, and had almost completed her cargo for home. Its bulk consisted mainly of palm-oil, tamarinds, and valuable wood; but she had likewise an unusual amount of gold dust and ivory, with an abundance of ostrich feathers and various kinds of choice gum. She was, beside, a fine new vessel, upon her first voyage.

The British crew, upon coming down to the shore, were much surprised to find their brig a prize to a Yankee privateer, and would not pull off to her. The captain, at his own request, was set on shore among them; all the private effects of himself and his men being restored, and several hundred dollars in gold also returned from the cargo, in order to relieve the mariners who had thus lost their floating home. The captain said that himself and men would remain at a Portugese station at a little distance down the coast until an opportunity should offer of getting home.

Running along the coast of Senegambia, the Tom fell in with a stranger—a ship of three hundred and fifty tons or thereabout, well-armed and full of men. To the surprise of the Americans, she hoisted a black flag! She was a pirate, in search of prey; and the captain, rightly believing that the privateer must have a good amount of gold on board, engaged her in a very spirited manner. The buccaneer was considerably superior in force, but his men were ill-disciplined, and their gunnery was wretched in the extreme.

It was now that Mr. Gale's skill with the forty-two pounder was again turned to account. After a number of broadsides had been exchanged, he succeeded in putting a shot into the pirate's hull several feet below the water line. This was done as the enemy rolled in the heavy swell which happened then to be running, thus exposing a part of his hull which in smooth water would have been hidden.

As the spot was again instantly submerged, of course a perfect torrent began to pour in through the hole. Mr. Gale knew what had been done, for, in spite of the smoke, he had seen where his great cannon-ball had struck.

The pirates, finding their vessel in danger of sinking, hurriedly ran inboard all the guns on that side, at the same time running out those on the opposite side—hoping by this expedient to so careen the ship as to bring the hole out of water. But the moment that so much weight was shifted, over she went.

The hatches being open, the ship filled immediately, and in less than five minutes she sank with her whole crew! The Tom had one man killed and two wounded in the engagement.

The name of the pirate ship was never ascertained, nor was that of her captain; but that she was an enemy of most gloomy and threatening front the privateer's-men could well attest.

Standing to the northward until in the track of vessels from Europe to the West Indies, our patriotic adventurers next described a heavy ship which proved a more worthy foe, if a less desperate one. She was the Townsend, a mail packet, sailing between Falmouth and Barbadoes.

The English captain, feeling that he had much at stake, used every exertion to defend the property entrusted to his care. His ship carried more guns than the privateer, and they were well managed.

She had a strong crew, and, beside, many of her numerous passengers also took part in the battle, so that, altogether, she was a really formidable antagonist. One of her shots, striking the Tom on the starboard quarter, went into the cabin, where it tore through the captain's berth, and, going across to the port side, lodged in the lieutenant's mattress.

But the Tom's forty-two-pounder made sad work on board the Townsend, cutting up her hull and spars and spreading destruction among her defenders. At length, when their captain and a number of others were killed, the Englishmen struck their colors. First, however, they threw overboard the ship's mail, in order that the Americans might not profit by any information or other matter that it contined.

It was not sufficiently heavy to sink immediately, and the privateer's men, perceiving it as it floated, lowered their boat and secured it.

A proposition was now made, by the officer whom the death of the English captain had left in command, to ransom the ship in order that she might proceed on her voyage; and the arrangement was presently effected, the sum paid being forty thousand dollars, which, considering the value of the ship and cargo, was not excessive.

A romantic incident occurred in connection with the capture of this ship. One of the Tom's young officers showed much kindness to an English lad, who, although only a passenger, had taken a brave part in the battle, and received a severe wound. The English youth remembered the kindhearted American, and a year afterward, in the West Indies, when peace had been declared, the two again met.

The American, who was a young gentleman of good parentage, and a fine education, became introduced to a sister of the youth he had befriended, and a mutual attachment sprang up between them. Six months later they were married; and their subsequent life, spent partly in the Barbadoes and partly in the United States, was a prosperous and happy one.

So the voyages of American privateer's-men were not always without associations which were softer than the roar of cannon or the call of the boatswain's pipe. There was sometimes a rainbow of this description resting upon the very smoke of battle.

Few privateers were more active than the Tom, and few had more of romantic novelty in their ocean record. Her appearance is said to have been jaunty and rakish in the extreme; and one would, indeed, be apt to guess as much.

London Rousers.

Fertility of thought in necessity is wonderful. A Londoner, sorely pressed for occupation and livelihood, conceived the idea of letting out his services to men whose somnolent habits put them on their employers' black lists; so he looked about for workmen and others who wanted to be aroused at early hours in the morning, formed a party and made occupation for himself in calling his chants at any hour they pleased, charging them two, three or sixpence, or whatever sum they might agree upon, for the week's service. "Calling workmen" has now become an industry, and those who pursue it hang out their plates and "shingles" as do the doctors, the lawyers and the architects. Some of the "rousing" offices employ several men, each of whom has his route and duties, just as police officers do. The occupation is not the most desirable or congenial that could be wished for, especially in cold or stormy weather. While over on the Surrey side of the Thames a few years ago, at a very early hour in the morning, just before break of day, the writer saw one of these "rousers" shuffling along the streets in a most disgruntled way. His hands and arms were in his pockets up to his elbows, his eyes were half closed with sleep, and he looked the picture of a very discontented fellow. Halting opposite one of the old-fashioned brick dwelling houses of the borough he knocked repeatedly and loudly on the door, hallooed again and again to his client inside, and muttered and growled and grumbled at everybody in general and this workingman in particular who wouldn't be satisfied with a decent, respectable "rouse" without forcing him to wake up all London.

The New Volcano.

News of a remarkable volcanic outburst in the Arctic regions has recently been received in San Francisco. In a letter from Mrs. Frederick Smith, to her father, Dr. J. H. Hatch, of San Francisco, dated October 16, the writer says that on that day a most unusual sight was witnessed in the heavens to the north of Ounalaska, and that soon afterwards the sky grew very dark, a dense black cloud covering the whole horizon and hanging so low as to permit a close inspection of its composition, though this could not be made out at that time. This cloud and its general color and outline were so unlike anything the writer had ever seen before as to defy comparison. The light of the sun was completely excluded from that section, many ascribing this to a total eclipse, and others, seeing the cloud and experiencing a peculiar and very unusual heat in the atmosphere, thought the world was approaching its end. Mr. Applegate, of the signal station, predicted a heavy gale on the appearance of this phenomenal cloud; but it was not until it broke, which occurred half an hour afterwards, that its real nature was discovered. On collapsing, the entire mass fell to the earth, enveloping everything to the depth of four or five inches in a sheet of dull, grey ashes. Its volcanic origin was soon apparent; but there being no active volcano on the island, and the only mountain of any great extent, Mokashin, 5,474 feet in height, being close at hand, and showing no disturbance, the eruption was thought to have taken place on the island of Bogoslov (God's land), thirty miles northwest from Ounalaska. Reports had been brought in from time to time during the summer by natives of the doings of the "angry mountain" of Bogoslov, and to this volcano the cloud of ashes seems to have been attributable.

In the San Francisco *Chronicle* of November 26, in addition to the facts above recited, is the following interview with Captain Hogue, of the steamer Dora, which brought the letter of Mrs. Smith from Ounalaska. Captain Hogue said, in reply to an inquiry, that he had been at Bogoslov twice during the past season, and added:

"'When I say that I was at Bogoslov you must not take it for granted I landed there.'

"'Is it not a habitable island?' we asked.

"'At certain seasons, perhaps, but at the time I saw it there was nothing visible there but a mass of flame and smoke, with pieces of red hot rock issuing from the great cone in the centre of the mass and great quantities of lava running down to the sea.'

"'How near did you approach?'

"'I stood off about a mile and a half, not daring to venture nearer. It was the grandest scene I ever witnessed, and I have been pretty nearly everywhere.'

"'How long did the eruption last?'

"'I can't exactly say as to that, as I found the cone in a disturbed condition, and left it next day, still in a state of eruption. I have learned that it had been throwing out lava for several weeks, and that it had still continued to do so up to the date of my departure from Ounalaska. But what was most remarkable and singular was a new feature which was then visible on the scene. A new island had sprung up not far distant from Bogoslov since my previous voyage to that spot. At first I could not believe my senses, and thought I had made a miscalculation in taking my surroundings, but there it was, a new island, with a cone-shaped peak in the centre, 500 to 800 feet high' and lying only a short distance from where we stood, that portion of its irregular outline nearest to Bogoslov being but a few miles away from the old island.'

"'What would you consider a fair estimate of its area?'

"'Well, its irregular proportions would hardly admit of anything but a rough guess. I should think it about three-fourths of a mile in length and about the same in width.'

"'In what latitude and longitude was it?'

"'Well, I will tell you about that,' said the Captain. 'You see, I made calculations, but not knowing what might have happened there since, I wouldn't like to publish them, as they might mislead other navigators.'

"'Did you meet any other sailors who had seen the land recently thrown up?'

"'Captain Anderson of the Matthew Turner said that he had also observed it,' replied the captain. 'His observation was made about the same time, but the island was then a mass of fire and smoke, and not yet in a compact state. He said that he had sailed over the same spot now occupied by the island two or three times during the previous season.'

"'What do the natives have to say in regard to the phenomenon?'

"'Their information cannot generally be depended upon, and their knowledge of time—days, weeks, and months especially—seems to be sadly deficient. They say, though, that the eruptions began about half a year ago and have continued intermittently. This statement has been partly borne out by reports of white men, but all is generally vague and unsatisfactory. One thing is certain, a new island has been formed, and navigators sailing those seas cannot be too particular about the manner in which they approach Bogoslov.'

"The Captain went on to say that the island of Bogoslov had been uninhabited by natives and was barren of vegetation, the capture of sea-lions being the only industry engaged in, and that wholly by natives. A remarkable assertion was made in regard to the sea-lions. Many of them were reported as having been killed by the volcanic eruptions, and the sea was said to be swarming with these animals. The greater portion of those still alive were hairless, the heat to which they had been subjected having removed their outer fur, rendering those caught in this vicinity of no value to the hunter.

"Some of the ashes which fell at Ounalaska were examined by the reporter. They were peculiar in their lightness and cottony appearance, and the statement of their having been borne thirty miles in the air by a light wind may be easily credited.

"Captain Hogue has given to his discovery the name of New Bogoslov."

THE Government comes down so rough on counterfeiters and keeps such a sharp eye open for bad bills, we wonder that it doesn't supress the passing of Congressional bills. Here's a chance for the Administration to make itself solid with the people.

Poles Must Go.

The German empire alone has no less than 23,000 miles of subterranean wire, out of a total of 152,000 miles of line. France has 7,200 miles of underground wire in successful use. Austria-Hungary comes next, with 354 miles of her underground, and Russia follows, with a subterranean system covering 155 miles.

We have not at hand the means of showing all the cross-country lines making up these several totals, nor is such showing necessary at the present time, either for the purpose of making good the statements heretofore made or of establishing the points we had in view, which related solely to intramural service, or the use of wires in cities. We are, however, able to name a number of instances where wires are carried for long distances under ground through stretches of open country, where there are no objections to the pole-strung lines, such as exist in populous and crowded cities.

Between Berlin and Halle, in Germany, there are over four hundred miles of wire, in all, laid beneath the surface of the earth, and working as satisfactorily as the air-strung lines, with the additional advantage that they are less liable to injury and interruption from atmospheric and other causes. In France the telegraph lines belonging to the railway between Paris and Nancy, a distance of one hundred and seventy miles, are wholly laid under the ground.

A portion of those belonging to the Paris, Lyons and Mediterranean railway line are similarly constructed, and measures are now being taken to put the system into more general operation on that route. In England the underground wires have also been worked successfully between distant points for some time past—the lines between Liverpool and Marchester, some thirty-six miles apart, being a notable instance.

It is, however, with the desirability and feasibility of underground wires in cities that the discussion of the subject has mainly to do at the present time, and upon this phase of the question we are fortunately able to show a good deal of positive and quite conclusive light. An official report, prepared some three years ago from authentic data then obtained, showed that there were nearly 600 miles of subterranean wires worked successfully at that time in the principal cities of the British islands and the continent, as follows: In London, 110 miles; in other cities in Great Britain, 120. In Paris, 119; other cities in France, 100. In Berlin, 50; thirty-two other cities in Germany, 40. In Amsterdam, 7½; the Hague, 4; forty-five other places in Holland, 19½. In Brussels, 3½; Antwerp, 2. In various cities in Switzerland, 4½.

Since these statistics were furnished, the underground system has been very much extended in the countries named, as well in the cities where it was then in use as in other places where the experiment had not yet been tried, so it is quite within reason to assume that the length of wire as reported at that time has now, very nearly, if not wholly, doubled. But the figures given above very clearly demonstrate as they stand the hollowness of the pretense set up by the telegraph interests of this country and those serving them, that the underground system is not practicable.

The Open Fireplace.

If there were no other thing in the esthetic renaissance to be thankful for its restoration of fireplaces to our homes would entitle it to respectful consideration. Open fires have more than an esthetic influence. As centres for the home circle or family semi-circle that forms them, and as disseminators of cheerfulness and content, it may be claimed that they serve an ethic purpose. The snapping, fragrant back log, or the genial glow of cannel coal, mantled in limpid flames of blue, dispose one to profitable reflections, to generous and sympathetic feelings, and to a placidity of mind that was for a time supposed by the rushing public of the nineteenth century to be one of the lost arts. Gassy furnaces, cast iron stoves, and such poor pretexts as kerosene and gas radiators can never impart more than physical warmth, Mentae caloric and those airy fancies, delicate as the flames that give them cause, are not evolved by hugging stoves and sitting over registers. The cheerful effect of visible fire gives it decorative value, and it is doubtless for this reason that appropriate settings for irons and grates have recently invited the attention of architects and designers. Fires were almost the sole decorations, if they may be so regarded, of early settler's homes in this country, and many an old farmhouse would be dismal enough to-day, but for its cosy hearth, the focus of family heart warmth. Yet a certain severe beauty was seen in many of these fireplaces of yore, and such beauty as they possessed is very justly perpetuated. Their brass furnishing was a more tasteful concession to the appropriate than might have been looked for among the early New Englanders, for brass approximates more nearly to flame, in color and brightness than any other metal. The glitter of the flames was cheerfully repeated also in rows of pictured tile, the religious austerity of whose designs was odd when seen in contrast with a rousing fire that ought to melt austerity out of any company.

Even when it flashes from a rude cavern of brick and mortar, a fire may be regarded as the eye of an apartment, giving cheer and animation to what might else be cold and lifeless. It naturally attacts the human eye, and is therefore a fitting spot about which to group objects of attractiveness and beauty. Antiquity of decoration is not amiss, so the designs be cheerful, but let not admiration for antiquity betay us into admiring antiquity for its own sake. Select what is beautiful and useful in it, for a catholic spirit is the spirit of the time, but do not, as one house-owner of my acquaintance has done, hang the ancestral pots and kettles upon a crane over the drawing-room fire, showing them complacently to visitors as things to respect.

He Kept His Word.

A romantic episode in the lives of two lovers is at present exciting great interest near Coalton, Pa. William Craig, a young farmer, and Mary Barker the eighteen-year-old daughter of William Barker, also a farmer, were to have been married on Christmas Day, 1863. On the evening of the 7th of December in the above-named year there was a social party at Farmer Barker's house, and among the guests was a young man from this village. Miss Barker danced with him twice in succession, and young Craig reproved her for such marked attention to another and told her that he did not wish her to dance again with the young man in question. This aroused the spirit of the young lady, and she replied that she would dance with him or any one else she chose and as many times as she liked. Craig then informed her that she might do so, but that she wouldn't see him again for twenty years. To this she tauntingly replied that "he couldn't stay away from her twenty hours if he tried ever so hard." Craig went home, and the next day he was missing. He lived with his parents, who were unable to find any trace of him. Miss Barker vowed she never would go into or receive company again until he returned. As years passed by and no traces of the missing son were received, his parents came to look upon him as dead. Miss Barker, however, had a singular faith that he would come back some day. She kept her vow as to living a secluded life, and few people ever saw her after the night she had quarreled with her lover.

Friday evening, the 7th of Dec., a stranger knocked at the door of old Mr. Barker's house and asked to see Miss Barker. He was a large, fine-looking man about forty years of age. He was admitted, and when Miss Barker appeared he held out his hand and said:—

"Mary Barker, did't I tell you that you wouldn't see me again in twenty years?"

It was William Craig. He had returned to his parents' home in the afternoon. Both his father and mother were still living. The secret of his arrival was kept, and when he appeared in so dramatic a manner in the presence of his old sweetheart she fainted in his arms.

Craig's story of his disappearance and long absence was that he had gone straight to Philadelphia after leaving home, and there enlisted in the army under an assumed name. He served until the end of the war, and was mustered out at Philadelphia. He longed very much to return home, but he permitted his determination to remain away twenty years to control him, and he went directly to Nebraska. There he took up a tract of land and went to farming, remaining there until the twenty years was up. He resolved to time his return and the meeting of his old sweetheart, if she was still alive and unmarried, at as near the hour of his leaving her as it was possible to do. He came back with an ample fortune, and found matters much as he had left them. The wedding that did not come off twenty years ago will be celebrated at the approaching Christmas.

The Trade in Birds.

"The bird business is not a very profitable one on account of the few sales made," said a Chicago bird dealer, "and we therefore have to make a pretty good profit when a sale is effected. You notice we have a number of mocking-birds; well, they are bought in New Orleans, and are about the only bird we buy there. Good canaries are more valuable there than here, and a bird that costs $2 or $3 here is worth from $4 to $5 there. The mocking-birds cost 50 cents in the South when they are bought from the merchants. These merchants are creols, who buy them from the boys who make a business of robbing the nests for the young birds. The boys only get from 10 to 15 cents apiece for them, but we don't often have the chance to buy them from the boys, as we don't wish to stay long and must get up a lot as soon as possible.

The bird catchers are little black and white boys who live on the coast and plantations. They attend to it regularly, and when they catch enough to pay they take them to the city and dispose of them to the street bird merchants. Of late a law has been passed against taking mocking-birds from the plantations, and most all of them come from the sea coast. The old ones build their nests generally in wild rose bushes, old trees and fences. They are not very particular, and make them out of sticks, which they put together in a rough manner just so they will hold the eggs. They lay four or five, and every one hatches. In their wild state they raise only two broods, if not disturbed; but when a boy finds a nest and is careful in robbing, it he is sure of three or four broods during the season. The business is quite large in the South, and thousands of birds are bought and sold every day.

"Now, I will tell you something about parrots that will surprise you. We buy them at New Orleans, and the dealers there get them off boats which go out on the coasts and islands to catch them. They are not real parrots and cannot talk, but they sell just as as well, and it isn't our fault if they don't learn to talk. We pay about $3 for them down there and get $12 for them here. In the northern towns the people buy more birds, than they do further South, and canary and mocking-birds are the general favorites. Canaries command the most sales because we can sell them cheaper than the mockers."

There are a set of malicious, prating, prudent gossips, both male and female, who murder characters to kill time; and who will rob a young fellow of his good name before he has years to know the value of it.

A shrewd observer once said that in walking the streets of a slippery morning, one might see where the good natured people lived, by the ashes thrown on the ice before the door.

Blame not before you examine the truth.

Relic Hunters.

The dealer in curiosities was turning over with marked suspicion a large group of "relics." "A curiosity," said he, "is interesting in itself; it means something. But a relic is almost always a worthless fragment. It is the thing from which the relic is taken, not the relic itself, which is interesting. The genuine relic hunters, though, are worth knowing; funniest chaps you ever saw. They're a race of beings by themselves. The man who sent these things here for me to buy says he's got seven boxes more of the same sort, the collection of a lifetime. Look at this chip, marked, "Piece of the first sleeper laid for the Hudson River Railroad.' On the man's list it is entered, 'Bought 1859—50 cents.' It may be genuine—that is, if the company used elm wood for their road—but if this chip is worth 50 cents, the whole sleeper must be worth several hundred dollars, and the company ought to saw it up and sell it. There's no logic in a relic hunter. The one who travelled all over the world and brought back several trunks full of noses broken off from ancient statues, had a definite idea. His followers are curiously diluted specimens of their predecessor.

"Some of them, however, have specialties not unlike that of the nose breaker. One of the liveliest of the relic men collected the hats of celebrities. I don't believe he would have given a dollar for Napoleon's grey overcoat; but the hat of a President of the United States had for him an almost priceless value. If necessary, he was was ready to suborn a great man's servants to get the wished for article. Some years ago I saw his collection. His finest specimens were at that time placed upon the heads of plaster busts, and arranged in long rows. He afterwards discarded this mode of arrangement, owing to the singular discrepancies which often existed between the size of the two articles. He told me that he had tried scraping down the busts, which were generally much larger than the hats, but the result was to give a peculiar appearance to his collection. One or two of his hats, notably that of Thomas H. Benton, were so small as to create a doubt in my mind as to their authenticity. I learned afterwards that hotel servants and others used to palm off their own hats upon the collector.

One of the greatest troubles with relics is that they seldom bear the least evidence within themselves of their genuineness. I have seen in my day several hundreds of the pens with which Walter Scott wrote *Waverly*, and in the old country Bobby Burns' drinking glass might almost be called a staple article of commerce. When my poor father first took me into business he gave me an awful talking to because I bought three locks of Byron's hair from a relic collector, although I only paid sixpence for the three. The trouble was they were all of different shades. Poe's hair used to be sold largely, but you can't dispose of it now unless you mount it very expensively in old gold; it takes best in mourning rings or pins. There was so much of Poe's hair sold that the relic trade in hair has suffered ever since. There was a time when a hair relic-hunter would make an effort to secure a lock from the head of a great man, even if the latter died as bald as the American eagle.

"Bless me, if here isn't one of the twenty-five million canes that have been turned out of the Mount Vernon manufactory. It is marked 'From the grave of Washington!' And this fellow wants $2 for it. What's this? 'From the Colosseum, Rome.' How's that for a rock? Here's a rag from the dress of Marie Antoinette as she was being led to execution, and this hard-looking napkin in a glass case is marked 'dipped in the blood of Lady Jane Grey, executed in the Tower of London, August 22, 1553.' Value $3, I see. Now, sir, if you'll just take a look at that pile over there, which I haven't examined yet, you'll see a glass tube, sealed at both ends, and containing a burnt stick. Wait a minute and I'll tell you what it is without reading the label. It's a 'piece of charred fagot found on the spot where Joan of Arc was burned.' Ah! I thought so; I've seen cords of them in my day. This is the most precious lot of played-out relics I've seen for some time. Yet there are people in this city who are looking for just such articles, and will pay heavily for them.

"Many relic hunters go in only for mementoes, and a precious lot of rubbish these mementoes almost always are. If a man has a fancy to gather a flower from the grave of Keats, in Rome, or a few leaves from Dryburgh Abbey, and make up a little album, it is well enough. But an idiot who goes around with a hammer chipping off pieces of famous bridges or churches, and even gravestones, ought to be sent to a lunatic asylum. I know a man who has a collection of bricks. Some one gave him a Babylonian brick one day, and it set him crazy. The second brick came from the Old South Church, in Boston, and the third from Independence Hall, Philadelphia. He picked up enough of them in Rome to build a chimney with. Two years ago he got into trouble in Pompeii for taking some rubbish from there; but when the authorities found he only wanted a brick or two and was willing to pay well, they settled amicably. He always carries a heavy steel-bound trunk with him, and he and his peculiar curiosities have caused much anxiety among Custom House officers. He told me the other day, with great solemnity, that two of his valuable bricks had been broken by an inspector. One was from the Column of Trajan, and the other from the fine old Roman triumphal arch in Marseilles. He used to hire men to pull them out for him while he remained in a doorway at a convenient distance. By the way, the old gentleman lost a box of fine old bricks a year ago; it was thrown overboard by some sailors, who thought it was dynamite. It seems that a stowaway had screwed the cover off in the belief that it contained gold. He then made a confidant of one of the sailors and persuaded them that it was an explosive. They promised him food for the voyage if he would throw the bricks into the sea. This collector's brick from the house of Columbus was lost in the same way.

"The most costly of all the collections of useless things I ever saw was one which consisted wholly of what purported to be the bones of celebrated men. A man who ever gets this mania is incurable, and will often go without the comforts of life to gratify the craze. Of course such collections are seldom heard of, for the practice of robbing graves is dangerous. A Canadian gentleman who used to call on me twice a year for fine 'rattlers'—that's what they call these cheerful relics—told me that he got the taste through hearing in his youth a graphic story about the stealing of a bone from the grave of the Rev. George Whitefield, the celebrated English preacher, who died near Boston a few years before the Revolutionary war. I supposed this is true. At any rate Boston was considered at one time headquarters for dealers in first-class 'rattlers.' There is not much call for them openly, except among collectors of morbid articles connected with great criminals. The Canadian once had a bitter fight with a fellow collector, who, on visiting him, found in his possession the skull of General Kleber, who was assassinated in Cairo in the year 1800. Now, as the visitor had himself procured in Egypt, at great expense, a skull of the General, the collectors became highly excited, and an anatomist was called in. Science decided that one of the skulls contained a piece of integument whose chemical changes proved it to be considerably less than six years old, while the formation of the other not only showed a decided Egyptian origin, but contained the teeth of a person of twenty years. Kleber was about fifty. But the funniest part of it, though I did not dare laugh over it when the report was made, was that one of the collectors had been cherishing the skull of a woman.

"It is very singular how easily relic hunters may be fooled. Neither of those two men would buy any of the religious relics so common in Europe. But take almost any kind of a bone, boil it carefully to take the fat out, dry it for several days by gentle heat in an oven, and color it yellow with tumeric and Vandyke brown, and you have a fair basis for a dicker with the best of the relic hunters. The inscription must be very carefully made on old vellum, and old private marks, partially obliterated, must appear here and there on the bone. Some dealers use a mixture of a mineral acid and water on parts of the bone, to make them crumble easily. The articles must be kept in heavy glass cases made for them, and, if mounted, must show costly work. The price asked must be large, and rigidly adhered to. These devices may appear immoral, but it is better to use them than to rob a grave.

"Of course most of the relic hunters aim to get a general collection. They will take a bottle of water from the River Jordan; a piece of rotten stone from Vesuvius, gulf weed from the Atlantic ocean, or a piece of oak bark from Hyde Park. With equal calmness they will break a piece of stone from a statue or a public building; they would steal a great man's hairbrush, or split off a piece of mahogany from his writing-table. A list of their varied collections would be very long for the average compass of a man's life. Even the specialists would make a tremendous list. I have known men who took a shell or a pebble from every well-known beach they ever visited or mountain they ever ascended. One of them had a stone from the streets of every important city in Europe. The number of collectors of pipes is quite large. A Brooklyn minister had a handsome collection of meerschaums. I knew one gentleman who cared for nothing but old clocks, and another who had between three and four hundred old-fashioned eye-glasses and spectacles."

The Rock Oysters of California.

On the coast of San Luis Obispo, Cal., are found great numbers of the rock oyster, although a scientist says it is not an oyster at all, but such is its common name. The *Parapholas Californicus* invites the curious to study its habitat, and the epicure to feast upon its juicy body when they find it. When the tide is low, this mollusk may be found almost anywhere where the rocks project into the sea, but it requires some knowledge of its peculiar characteristics to know where to look. The parapholas, when a spat, swims in the sea until it strikes a rock, when it fastens and locates that spot for its home. Apparently without shell or hard substance to bite, scratch, or bore with, the little fellow makes its way into stone and there imprisons itself for life, taking on a shell, growing and enlarging its little cavern with its growth. How the rock oyster bores into the stone and afterward enlarges its chamber is a puzzle to scientists. When grown it is about four inches in length, is a bivalve and in form resembles a pear, the small end toward the opening in the rock, through which it thrusts its tube or siphon to draw in and eject water in which it finds its nourishment. In its prison home it keeps a continual rocking motion, by which it enlarges the room in which to grow. The oyster is found by discovering the little holes in the rock and breaking it open with a pick or hammer. They are found all along the Pacific coast from Cape Flattery to Cape St. Lucas, and are plentiful along the coast of San Luis Obispo. As an edible they are considered the best of their class, and one knowing their locality and with means and industry to quarry them out can supply himself with a feast.

A Costless Dress.

A very cheap and pretty winter dress for a young lady can be made out of the thick, coarse gray woolen goods, which comes at 18 and 20 cents a yard. Twelve yards will make a suit, including a jacket. Put a plaiting, five inches deep, about the edge, then four tucks, and over this drop an apron front over-dress. Make the bodice tight-fitting and short, and cut the bottom in little square scalops. Have the jacket in the Jersey shape and line it with a thickness of cotton batting and gray silesia. Border the sleeves, neck and bottom with gray squirrel fur at 50 a yard, three yards costing $1.50. Make a little round hat out of scraps of the material, and border with the fur, and make a muff in the same way, lining it with silesia or a piece of the material. The cost of this jaunty, warm and fashionable costume will not be more than $3.50, and will look as though it cost $20. A costume very similar can be made out of fine flannel.