

SNOWING.

BY L. T. WEEKS.

Feathering the willows,
Drifting in the hedges,
Piling down the valleys,
On the mountain ledges;
Bordering the streamlet
Where the sedges shiver,
Waiting on a dreamlet
To the drowsy river;
Weaving robes of ermine
For the perished roses,
Soft as couch of merman,
When the deep reposes;
Sparkling in a whisper
Mystical and olden,
Silver-throated lipser
With a language golden;
Smoothing out the wrinkles,
In the cemetery,
Laughing where the tinkles
Of the bells are merry;
Dancing like a fairy,
Vanishing, returning,
Till the spirits airy
Set the woods a-yearning.
—From the Century Magazine.

THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING.

"That has always been my opinion, or, at least, always since I stopped letting mamma form my opinions for me," said a distinctly pleasing feminine voice behind him.

Colton turned casually around from the desk by the wall, where he was writing his usual grist of Sunday letters, not so much because the hotel stationery is both excellent and inexpensive, as because his own room was lonely, to see who the speaker might be. The great room was filled with men and a few women, seated at the small tables drinking and chatting, while the waiters moved silently about, well groomed products of the tipping system. The table a few feet from Colton's elbow was now occupied by a wholly charming girl and a young man who Colton instantly decided was unworthy of her. In the first place he was a touch too good looking, and in the second place his clothes fitted his figure too well, so Colton thought, for a man evidently in his senior year in Divinity.

Colton turned back to his desk, not to write, but to listen.

"I'm glad to hear you say so," the student said, continuing the conversation begun before entering the room. "I've found lots of girls, up-to-date girls, too, who didn't agree with me. But what will you have to drink?"

"Lemonade," said the girl.

"Oh, try a cocktail," urged her companion.

"No, thank you," she answered. "With that peculiar half laugh those who know women are aware is the expression of finality."

Colton mentally scored one for the girl, while her companion, calling a waiter, ordered a lemonade and a Scotch.

"Yes," the man continued, "I have always said that it was unjust and silly in a country so universally respectful to women as ours, to deny a girl the opportunity of making chance acquaintances, say during a long, tiresome railway trip, or something of that sort. If a girl is coming alone from Cleveland to New York on a Pullman car, and if there is a young man near her, evidently a gentleman and of her social position, why on earth isn't it all right for her to accept his offers to make her more comfortable and to pass away the dismal time of the journey in conversation pleasant for both of them? I can see no harm in it."

"Nor I," said the girl. "I have always thought that, as I told you, if one has common sense, such things can be managed all right. The trouble is, girls put our theory into practice too young, when they don't know the world, and get scared into prudence."

"Now, if they'd only wait till they are grown up and sensible like you," said the man, with what Colton decided was undue effusiveness, "how much more delightful a time they could have, with something of the freedom in getting fresh viewpoints from strangers a man enjoys."

Colton stole another look at the girl. Yes, she was decidedly charming. He began to wish he were a hypnotist and could make the man ask her on what day and train she would return to Cleveland. Just then she glanced at him. He turned back quickly. Could it be possible? No, he told himself; on the train, perhaps, but not here while her caller was with her; it was his only hope of reading fulfillment into what was not there. As the dramatist said, there is a limit to all vanity, even that of a Harvard man.

"Again, haven't you been forced to wait alone sometimes for a long while in a place where it was not wholly pleasant for a girl to be without an escort?" continued the young woman's companion. "Such situations are bound to occur. Now, would it not be more pleasant for you if a nice man, perhaps seeing your embarrassing position, spoke to you, to feel free to accept his friendliness in the spirit intended, and to chat with him to pass away the tedious wait?"

"I should feel quite free to talk with him," said the girl, "if he behaved himself."

"And if he didn't you girls have always a way of artistically turning us down," said her companion, with a "worldly snigger" (so Colton mentally tagged his laugh).

"Rather!" said the girl.

"But I'll tell you what makes me

angry," the man went on. "That is to have a girl, when she has met a man in this fashion, and found him perfectly presentable, introduce him to her friends as 'Mr. So-and-So, whom I met at the beach,' or otherwise invent a lie to cover up what needs no covering. Even from a worldly point of view, lying is to be indulged in as rarely as possible. Besides a girl, though she needn't go out of her way to stick up for her principle, shouldn't back down from it when—when—"

"When she's caught with the goods," laughed the girl. "Let me help you out with a lay phrase. No, you are quite right. I've known girls to do just what you say. It's a touch of their feminine timidity that causes them to do it. Of course, as a matter of fact, they don't need to make any explanation, one way or the other, when they introduce a chance acquaintance."

"I'm glad to see we agree so thoroughly," said the man. Colton turned, for he did not like the tone.

"The flirt!" Colton muttered, and dropped a book from the desk with a loud noise.

It had the desired effect, for the man straightened up. His cigar was burned out, and he remarked to the girl:

"If you'll excuse me, I'll get a fresh cigar. I know the kind I want, but I've forgotten the name, so I cannot order from the waiter. You don't mind being alone a minute, do you?"

"Certainly not," she said.

"I shouldn't think she would," thought Colton, as he watched her companion go out of the room.

Five, ten minutes, passed, and he did not return. Colton stole a look at the girl. She was sitting alone at the table, looking about her nervously, for the room was now filled almost entirely with thirsty men. Fifteen minutes passed, and two large specimens of the West entered, portly and red faced as the indirect result of fortunate mining speculations. They approached her table, the only one with vacant chairs. Her nervousness increased. She looked embarrassed and very lonely. Should he or should he not? Colton debated. Wasn't the game worth the candle, any way—or rather the snuffer? Just then she glanced at him again. The Westerners were almost there. He decided.

"Pardon me," he said, "but when a girl is forced to wait alone in a place where it is not wholly pleasant to be without an escort—"

"You have good ears," she interrupted, coolly.

"Then you acknowledge that they have not deceived me," he replied, sitting down, for the Westerners had turned away.

"They have not," the girl said, "but the conversation you took the liberty of overhearing, like the chair you are sitting in, was not meant for you."

"True," returned Colton, "nor was the chair reserved for those broad, departing backs from Colorado, if I mistake not."

"Thank you for that," said the girl, softening a bit. "I should thank you for that. But you have done your duty now—they have gone."

"Oh, no, my duty is not done—they may return!" said Colton.

"But so may my escort," the girl said hurriedly.

"A touch of feminine timidity," Colton smiled. "And you know you two agree so well," he added, mockingly.

The girl acknowledged the touch by shifting ground.

"But I haven't time to find out if you are presentable," she said.

"My ancestors came over in the Mayflower," Colton answered meekly.

"Oh, everybody's did that!" said she.

"Your point," laughed Colton, "but my name is Standish. That should pass me."

"I can hardly believe you," the girl retorted. "You would never need a John Alden."

Then they both laughed. And from a mutual laugh there is no return.

Presently the student came back, and started to ask pardon for his delay. The girl interrupted.

"Let me introduce to you," she said, pausing to watch Colton's face, "my friend, Mr. Standish, whom I met last summer in the White Mountains. Isn't it too bad that he's got to run right away to make a horrid call? Mr. Addington, Mr. Standish."

Colton braced to the shock, and said blandly:

"I am delighted to meet you, Mr. Addington. I wish you had been with us last summer at the Crawford House."

"The Crawford House," exclaimed Addington. "I thought Miss Bates always went to Bethlehem."

Colton backed off and gathered up his letter.

"Perhaps it was Bethlehem," he said, looking straight into the girl's face. "One meets so many girls in a summer it is hard to keep them differentiated."

Then he went on his way.

Not long after he might have been seen in his lonely room writing to his college chum on the unholy joy of having the last word.—New York Times.

His Offense.

Jones—"Green bought a second-hand automobile three weeks ago, and he has been arrested six times in it."

Smith—"For exceeding the speed limit?"

Jones—"No; for obstructing the street."—Pittsburg Dispatch.

True.

Western woman holds that large feet are evidence of great brains. Maybe. But it's no place to carry them.—New York Herald.

Cost of Distribution Makes Food Prices High

By JAMES C. WHITNEY

THE cost of living is high not so much because of a decrease in the production of the necessities of life, but because of the expensive system of distribution at present in operation.

Railroad transportation and commission merchants, known as middlemen, are responsible for the present high cost of living.

It is true that the farmer is getting better prices for his products than ever before, and, on the whole, this is a good thing for the country generally. But the farmer is not getting all the increase put upon provisions in recent years, nor anywhere near the increase.

Even at the present good prices paid to him there is enough going to waste on the farms of the country, a little here and a little there, which if collected and shipped would feed the suffering multitudes abundantly.

Apples rotting on the ground, turnips, beets, carrots and other vegetables fed to the hogs.

Why? Simply because it does not pay to ship these small lots, for when the railroads collect their tariffs and the middlemen have exacted their enormous tribute there is not left enough to pay the farmer for the barrel or crate in which the stuff was shipped, not to speak of his labor in raising, gathering and packing it.

A parcels post would undoubtedly go a long way toward remedying this difficulty. It would bring the producer and consumer nearer each other and cheapen the exchange between them.

There is no question as to the ability of the country to produce enough and to spare so that all the people may eat, drink and be merry.

The problem is to get our products distributed at the lowest possible cost.

High Water Mark of Bliss.

By Dr. MAURIER PETER IBBETSON

THE happiest day in all my outer life! For in an old shed full of tools and lumber at the end of the garden, and half-way between an empty fowl-house and a disused stable (each an Eden in itself), I found a small toy wheelbarrow—quite the most extraordinary, the most unheard of and undreamed of, humorously, daintily, exquisitely fascinating object I had ever come across in all my brief existence.

I spent hours—enchanted hours—in wheeling brick-bats from the stable to the fowl-house, and more enchanted hours in wheeling them all back again, while genial French workmen, who were busy in and out of the house where we were to live, stopped every now and then to ask good-natured questions of the "petit Anglais" and commend his knowledge of their tongue and his remarkable skill in the management of a wheelbarrow. Well, I remember wondering, with newly aroused self-consciousness, at the intensity, the poignancy, the extremity of my bliss, and looking forward with happy confidence to an endless succession of such hours in the future.

But next morning, though the weather was as fine, and the wheelbarrow and the brick-bats and the genial workmen were there, and all the scents and sighs and sounds were the same, the first fine, careless rapture was not to be caught again, and the glory and the freshness had departed.

Thus did I, on the very dawning of life, reach at a single tide the high-water mark of my earthly bliss—never to be reached again by me on this side of the ivory gate—and discover that to make the perfection of human happiness endure there must be something more than a sweet French garden, a small French wheelbarrow and a nice little English boy who spoke French and had the love and approbation—a fourth dimension is required.

High Cost of Living Due to Extravagant Use of Land

By D. W. MARTIN

ANSWERING your query "Why Does It Cost More to Live?" in this morning's paper, I reply as follows: It lies in the extravagant use of land, whether in city, suburban or farm property.

There are thousands of lots in Manhattan and Brooklyn boroughs without an adequate improvement upon them. Speculation in suburb and subway has run riot. There is no such thing as yet in either of the boroughs mentioned as a normal congestion of population, while apparently it may seem abnormal.

Let the title to land revert to the State, and let the ownership of improvements remain with the individual under proper legal safeguards, and fictitious value upon which our people pay exorbitant interest will be destroyed.

The great centres of population and business enterprises exact terrible tribute from those within and without their confines through their landed proprietors.

The operation which represented the sum of \$24 as a value for the transfer of the Island of Manhattan several centuries ago by its primitive community to private ownership has culminated in our time to the measure of a billion dollars for that identical island in its virgin state, upon which the present inhabitants must pay interest to private ownership, whether alien or otherwise, and the end is not yet in sight.

These conclusions must be measured by percentage. One hundred per cent. owned the island then, probably one per cent. own it now. Under present conditions the State taxes the individual the minimum, but allows a few individuals to tax the other members of the State the maximum.—New York American.

Oriental Encouraged

Effect of the Russian Defeat by Japan's Armies

By SAINT NIHAL SINGH

THE defeat at arms of the Russians by the Japanese gave a self-faith and self-respect to the oriental which he never before knew. It dispelled the hallucination of self-limitation; it opened visions of what the yellow and brown races could accomplish.

Each victory that the Japanese won, each humiliation the Russians suffered, shattered a thousand shackles which had kept the dark-skinned nations of the orient chained to the pillars of prejudice and reaction. When the treaty was signed at Portsmouth, which ended a bloody war, the dawn of a renaissance had resplendently crimsoned the political horizon of every Asiatic country. China was disturbed from its inaction of ages; India became a social and political volcano; Persia and Turkey both became the storm centers of governmental change.

In the success which the Japanese parliament had achieved during its many years of tenure there was a lesson for all Asia to transform the governmental machinery according to the spirit of our times, which doubtless is strongly democratic in character; but the popular element had been introduced into the Japanese administration without any ado. The mikado had given up his absolutism bit by bit, and the carnage of the Manchurian battlefield was needed to publish the news of the Japanese political revolution to the orientals. The Russo-Japanese war turned the spotlight of investigation upon the causes that had contributed to the success of the Asian islanders.

At the root of them all, the easterners learned, was the democratic attitude that the present mikado displayed in training his subjects to exercise their inalienable birthright of self-government as opposed to being governed like dumb beasts. Once the nations of Asia discovered this, all of them became eager for political change—for change from absolute despotism to limited monarchy or republicanism.

Then he went on his way.

Not long after he might have been seen in his lonely room writing to his college chum on the unholy joy of having the last word.—New York Times.

Real Estate Assets Do Not Perish

By JAMES J. HILL

EVERY nation is reduced, in the final appraisal of its estate, to reliance upon the soil. This is the sole asset that does not perish, because it contains within itself, if not abused, the possibility of infinite renewal. All the life that exists upon this planet, all the development of man from his lowest to his highest qualities, rest as firmly and as unreservedly upon the capacities of the soil as do his feet upon the ground beneath him. The soil alone is capable of self-renewal, through the wasting of the rocks, through the agency of plant life, through its chemical reactions with the liquids and gases within and about it. A self-perpetuating race must rely upon a self-perpetuating means of support. Our one resource, therefore, looking at humanity as something more than the creature of a day, is the productivity of the soil. Yet the waste of our treasure has proceeded so far here in America that the actual value of the soil for productive purposes has already deteriorated more than it should have done in five centuries of use.

Pluck and Adventure

A HERO OF THE CAB.

No newspaper ever reported the deed of Dan Fairbairn, which made his name famous among the railroad men of the Canadian Pacific system, and still keeps well kept the grave in which he lies in the little cemetery at Chapeau, Ontario. Like many another hero of the rail Big Dan escaped all the perils of his calling only to die while comparatively young from the sickness following an ordinary cold. On the Chapeau division, which includes most of the stretch between Sudbury mines and Fort William on Lake Superior, there is perennial danger from forest fires. The track runs through an uncultivated country of thick bush, and nearly all the bridges are of wood, some of them long upstanding trestle spanning broad rivers or arms of lakes. Frequently in late spring and early summer the whole force of the bridge and building inspector is detailed for days at a time to do nothing but watch these structures while the fires are raging.

With the first of the warm weather in 1887 the fires on this section of the road became even more menacing than usual, and the evening when Fairbairn backed his engine to No. 1 (the transcontinental mail) at Cartier, a pall of smoke hid the sky. Fifty-four miles from Cartier is Biscotasing, and about a mile farther on is the long Bisco trestle. From the time of leaving the point at which engines had been changed, the fire conditions had been getting steadily worse, and the pillar of cloud on the track ahead of the engine blacker and denser. The muffled roar of the consuming flames could be heard occasionally, and from time to time the glare of the conflagration could be seen for a minute or two by the passengers. Evidently the train was approaching nearer to a danger zone instead of leaving the fires behind.

The express had cleared Biscotasing and was heading for Ramsey, when the fireman, Howard Gougeon, thought he discerned a flicker of flame apparently in the middle of the track about half a mile ahead.

"Great Scott, Dan! I believe the long trestle is on fire," he said.

Fairbairn scanned the track from his side of the cab, but could see nothing of the light. "Nonsense!" he replied. "Between the bridge carpenters and the section men, we should have heard of it long ago if that was so. That is the one point they'll both be watching just now."

At the same time he took in a notch and continued to keep a sharp lookout. They were within two train lengths of the trestle at the end of a long down grade, when Gougeon said: "There it is! Look now!" he cried.

No need to tell the engineer; he had seen, understood and already made up his mind. He had only a second in which to act, and that small spurt of fire told him that he was within a few yards of a long wooden bridge that had burned long since and was now a smoldering ruin. To attempt to stop within the short distance was out of the question; it would only mean a heavy dead weight creeping on the charred woodwork and death for all.

There was just time to jump, but Dan was not considering that. Still the young fireman must have his chance; so the engineer threw a curt "Drop off!" to him over his shoulder. As he shouted the words, he yanked the throttle wide open and put on every limit of speed of which his engine was capable. With a roar and a rumble the train took the bridge. Instantly the rush of the wind created by its great speed acted as a gigantic fan on the smouldering wood; the flames leaped high and enveloped the whole train in a mantle of fire. Underneath the rails sunk as in a quagmire; but with hair and eyebrows scorched and the big blond beard actually on fire, Fairbairn held tight to the wide open throttle, and after an eternity of a few seconds the train was on the other side. High above the whir of the wheels on the ballasted roadbed sounded crash after crash. The long Biscotasing trestle had collapsed from end to end!

When the frightened passengers climbed out of cars, from which every vestige of paint had been licked, and stumbled over the ties to the river bank, they saw only a long black void. Not even a remnant of the superstructure remained to show that there had ever been a bridge at that point. For a minute they regarded the scene in awestruck silence, then with one accord they made for the engine. Clambering from the cab was a blond giant of six feet five inches, who wiped with a piece of oil soaked cotton waste a face blistered and seared by fire.

Dan summoned a very one-sided grin. "Pretty close," he said.

Close! Didn't they realize how close it had been? Could they not picture what might have been, had this man sought only his own safety or hesitated with his duty for one moment?

They lifted him, giant as he was, on their shoulders, and carried him to the dining car. One of their number was a doctor, who set about bandaging the face of the hero, much to Dan's disgust.

"That's all right," said the engineer; "but first let's find out whether they've sent a brakeman back. It's no use our escaping if the next fellow following is dumped into the drink."

"Certainly," answered the driver. "I'm afraid you won't find much black left there now," said the clergyman. "It has become almost entirely white."—New York Tribune Sunday Magazine.

Assured that the conductor had done his best by placing three red lanterns on the bank and leaving a trainman in charge, Dan became only more impatient of attention. "Get 'em all aboard, gentlemen," he said almost harshly. "If the brakeman can't swim, it's up to us to hustle to Ramsey as quick as we know how and let the despatcher know what has happened. No time for tomfoolery just now, though I'm much obliged just the same."

The seventeen miles to Ramsey were made in eighteen minutes, and the warning message telling that the Bisco bridge had gone was sent in. At Chapeau the conductor what had happened, since such a message came from the conductor and engineer of No. 1 at the station next beyond this very bridge.

In due course the conductor and engineer made reports. Dan's (which has been read by the writer of these lines, who knew him well) was a dry, terse statement of facts. That of the conductor had more of imagination and color. Both were forwarded to the head office in Montreal, and a little later Daniel Fairbairn was ordered to report at the office of the general manager. There he was presented with one of the best gold watches money could buy, which bore insidiously the case a suitable inscription testifying to the gratitude of the company for his heroic action. On his return to Chapeau another surprise awaited him. The division superintendent had received by express from Vancouver an embossed address suitably framed, from the passengers who had reached the end of their journey, with a request that it be presented to Fairbairn, together with the purse of gold that accompanied it.—New York Tribune Sunday Magazine.

STRANGE ACT OF PROVIDENCE.

How remarkable are some of the experiences of those who drive locomotives for any length of time may be gathered from a story of early days in the West told by an engineer not long ago in the official organ of the Order of Railway Conductors.

About twenty-five years ago, while working on what was known as the P. M. & O. railway, which ran through the eastern part of Missouri, he left Tacoma about ten o'clock one morning with a train of twelve heavily loaded passenger cars containing the members of a Sunday-school bound for a picnic at a place known as Picnic Grove, about fifty miles distant. It was infernally hot, and before the train had made more than half the distance clouds began to gather, and soon the sky became black as ink. Evidently an exceedingly heavy thunder storm might be expected at any time.

At last it came, a regular cloudburst. The children in the train thought only of a spoiled outing; but the man in the cab was seriously considering the possibility of a washout and spread rails.

As they swung round a curve and bore down on a small station at a speed of about thirty-five miles an hour, the engineer, keenly on the lookout despite the falling sheets of rain, was horrified to discover that the switch for the siding was set foul. Probably a freight train had used it and the brakeman had forgotten to set it properly after backing out his train.

To run over it meant a terrible disaster, and even the fireman, feeling sure that his own death was near, could only whisper hoarsely, "Oh, the kids, the poor kids!"

The engineer reversed and did all in his power to bring the train to a stop; but he knew that he could not hope to bring up in time; the speed was too great and the switch too near. "Better stick to it!" he shouted to his fireman.

"I mean to," was the answer. "God help us!"

Scarcely had the words left his mouth when a bolt of lightning more blinding than any before flashed directly in front of the engine, followed by the terrific and peculiar crack of thunder which indicated that the bolt had struck something. Engineer and fireman were half dazed, and by the time they had fully recovered their senses were astounded to discover that they had passed the switch and were still riding safely on the main line.

As soon as possible the train was brought to a stop, and both hurried back to discover what had happened. The fireman took off his cap. "If that isn't what they speak of as the act of God, I know know what is!" he said.

The lightning had struck squarely between the switch and the rail, forcing over the track, and so allowing them to pass in safety. While the conductor hurried back to the station to make a report and call for section men to make permanent repairs to the switch, the pastor in charge of the excursionists was listening to the story of the engineer. At the end he gazed at him curiously for a moment, then said quietly:

"Yes, I think we should all give thanks to our heavenly Father. By the way, your hair was black when you combed it this morning, was it not?"

"Certainly," answered the driver. "I'm afraid you won't find much black left there now," said the clergyman. "It has become almost entirely white."—New York Tribune Sunday Magazine.

Mean to the End.

The meanest man in Cinnaminson has just passed away, leaving careful testamentary instructions that his doornails was to be taken down and put on his coffin.—Los Angeles Times.