

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 unappreciated h, 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, 1962 in the cars and 4116 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."

Since 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.

Anent 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 manyfold. 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 countries 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 wheat as the 'staff of life,' and that no community can thrive whose only manufacturing industry is that of ginning the fibre for market."

THE SEASONS OF THE HEART.

If we be blithe and warm at heart,
If we be sound and pure within,
No sorrow shall abide with us,
Longer than dwells the sin;
Though autumn fogs the landscape fold,
Though autumn tempests roam,
Our summer is not over yet—
We keep the sun at home.

But if our heart be cold and cold,
Be sure no good will live therein,
No sorrow for the sorrow's sake,
And sin because of sin;
And aye the dropping of the leaf,
And aye the falling of the snow,
And aye the barren, barren earth—
Though summer winds do blow.

—Edward Wilbur Mason, in Youth's Companion.

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 windswept 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."

"Madelaine," he blurted out, "what does this mean?"

"Mr. Lapham! Steve Lapham!"

"Old Jacob Lapham's only son, stepfather. He has no authority over you. His son is a fraud! Your mother—"

"Oh, Jeff, dear! that is the trouble! They have made her forbid me to speak to you! I cannot disobey her! She is dying! They have almost made her make me promise. Oh, Jeff, dear, I'm almost crazy!"

"I should say you were," he growled, with a fierce light dancing across his face. "It was time for me to come. Is your mother really so low?"

"She may last many days yet; perhaps not twenty-four hours. Stephen Lapham isn't there, but his father doesn't leave her for a minute. I've no chance to see her alone. She commanded me not to speak to you."

"No, she didn't," said Jeff. "She only repeated something after old Jake Lapham. What she was forced to say was no command of hers. Do be reasonable. She has no right to do it, anyhow; and she really didn't do it. Old Jake did. As for Steve, the young—"

"Don't I know what he is?" said Madelaine, hysterically. "Didn't I hear what his father said to him? They didn't know I heard—"

"What did they say?" demanded Jeff, as she hesitated, and he closed the door behind him and led her into the parlor as he added: "What did you hear? Tell me the whole of it."

"Oh, Jeff, dear," said Madelaine, "Mr. Lapham said to Steve that as soon as mother died they would record all the deeds, before proving the will, and then they would own every dollar of the property. He said they could make me do what they pleased then."

"What deeds?" he asked, in a firm but unexcited way, that seemed to help her.

"Deeds that mother made," she said. "Deeds and things that give them everything there is to give."

"Did you ever sign any papers yourself?" asked Jeff. "She couldn't do it alone."

"I don't know what they were," replied Madelaine. "I signed every paper they had on the table, the night they said she would die before morning."

"When was that?" he asked.

"More than a month ago," she said; "and they put them all into the safe in the library."

"I know where it is," said Jeff. "It's your own safe now. It opens with a combination lock. You know the numbers, of course, and how to open it."

"No, I don't," she replied despairingly. "I never knew how to open it. I don't know the numbers, and I can't tell you. They've kept them a secret. Mother said once that it was the Declaration of Independence and the days of the week."

"Oh!" exclaimed Jeff, with almost a laugh; "that's a riddle. Is anybody in the library now?"

"No," said Madelaine. "Nobody goes there."

"This is your safe, Madelaine Lane," he said. "May I open it?"

"You may, but you can't," she replied; but his hand was on the knob of the safe-lock, and her cheeks burned with feverish excitement as she watched the quick, though careful, turns of his wrist.

"Three times that way," she counted. "Three times that way. Once around again—or was it twice?"

Just then she heard a faint click, and she saw the door of the safe swing wide open. It was as if a feat of necromancy had been performed before her eyes. Those of Jeff were searching the interior of the safe.

"Here they are!" he exclaimed, as he pulled out of a pigeon-hole a package of long-folded, legal-looking documents, and rose to his feet.

"Please examine them with me, Madelaine."

"This first lot," he said, turning them over, "are all deeds, of one sort

or another, to your own father, two or three to your mother, by which they owned their entire property. All of them are recorded. We have nothing to do with them. I'll put them back. There! Now, Madelaine, just look at these! All of them new deeds. You and your mother to Jacob Lapham. You and she did actually sign them all."

"I didn't know what I was signing," gasped Madelaine. "But there were witnesses and a notary."

"Each deed acknowledges a large sum of money actually paid, and here are the mortgages, bonds, notes, that old Jake Lapham paid that money out for."

"There never were any mortgages," said Madelaine, "but those are my own signatures—all of them."

"They are dated as if they had been signed three years ago," he said; "as soon as you were old enough. It's a very completely finished piece of robbery. Hello! What's this?"

"She signed her will that very day," replied Madelaine. "Aunt Wickham and Judge Wickham, and two other gentlemen, came here with Mr. Lapham, and we were all in mother's room, but none of them knew what was in the will."

"Exactly!" said Jeff. "How they did work the matter! Here are two wills, made the same day. How could they make those stupid witnesses sign twice?"

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

"He was unsuspecting," said Jeff. "This is really her will, giving all to you and making Judge Wickham and Deacon Morris her executors. This other thing gives all to Jacob Lapham and makes him sole executor, giving you only a life estate. It says a great deal more, but it's a fraud."

At that moment he was lighting a match and removing the blotter from Madelaine, hysterically. "Didn't I hear what his father said to him? They didn't know I heard—"

"What did they say?" demanded Jeff, as she hesitated, and he closed the door behind him and led her into the parlor as he added: "What did you hear? Tell me the whole of it."

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"Oh!" exclaimed Jeff, with almost a laugh; "that's a riddle. Is anybody in the library now?"

"Give him my love, dear. My son! It is easier to leave you with him—"

Just then the nurse turned suddenly from the window, and a burly form which had lain upon a sofa near it sprang vigorously to its feet and strode to the bedside.

"Madelaine Lane! how dare you? She must not talk! Have I not forbidden this sort of thing?"

"She is my mother, Mr. Lapham, and you are not my father," said Madelaine, resolutely. "But I think it best not to speak to her again, just now. If I did think best I should do so."

There was a motion of a thin hand on the coverlet, and it was obeyed. Madelaine 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.

"Judge Wickham," he said to the white-haired gentleman who welcomed him, "Miss Lane is somehow aware that you and Deacon Morris are executors of her mother's will—"

"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."

"Ugh!" exclaimed the old lawyer. "Tell her I'll be ready."

Perhaps it was as well that Madelaine watched at her window, looking toward the village, and that Jeff was not again compelled to ring the doorbell, for at the moment when she admitted him old Jacob Lapham was in the library.

"You take care of the bank-book," she said, when he had swiftly detailed his business doings. "Don't stay."

His face had darkened cloudily over what she had herself told him, but it cleared somewhat as he turned away. Even Madelaine did not hear him say to himself, aloud, as he was going down the steps: "Oh, but don't I wish I could see old Jake and Steve at work on that safe!"

Madelaine reached her room again unobserved, all the more safely because her stepfather was crouching before that obstinate fireproof safe, twisting the knob to numbers that she knew, but which the lock refused to know anything about. He muttered, too, fiercely, even explosively, and at last he arose, exclaiming:

"Well! If I can't open it, nobody else can. Sometimes those things will work so. I've known it happen before. At any rate, I've got all those things fixed so that the property can't get away from me. I'm sole executor, and the will just nails and clinches the deeds."

Madelaine lingered in her room only for a long, deep, silent fit of thinking. At the end of it she arose from her chair with a hard-drawn breath, and once more went over to the sick-room.

The form upon the bed lay very still, but the loving blue eyes opened as Madelaine again grasped the thin hand in hers.

"I gave you my message to Jeff, mother. He sent his love to you again."

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

There was a heavy hand upon Madelaine's shoulder, as she rose, but she did not turn her fixed gaze from her mother's face.

"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 Madelaine sank upon her knees—for they were all suddenly aware that the last messenger had come.

For Madelaine Lane all earthly things were veiled and put away. That hour of sobs and silence was no time to consider questions of property.

There were others in the house, however, whose business activities were hindered, very apparently, less by the presence of death than by the strange perverseness of the lock of the safe in the library. The knob of it was twisted and twisted in the most wearisome way.

"Steve," remarked an anxious voice, at last, "we must have that money out! The deeds and mortgages must be recorded! Only one will must be found there! This is awful!"

"We've some days yet, father, and we can blow it open."

"We must do it ourselves, then. It won't do to have anybody else open that safe. We must let Madelaine alone, too, until after the funeral."

"I don't care," growled Steve, "so long as Jeff Meredith is kept out of the house. Her Aunt Wickham is up there with her now."

Aunt Wickham remained with Madelaine all through the long, dark night of the first mourning. Then followed the strange days of interval between a death and a burial. Old Jacob Lapham had a great deal of walking up and down in the parlor to do, for he was a bereaved man, with more than one grief to carry. The lock of the safe had much twisting to endure, but it still refused to remember its numbers.

Judge Wickham came in, and Mr. Lapham began to say something to him about the safe and its contents, and its conduct.

"Pooh, pooh, Jacob!" responded the old lawyer; "you are in no condition or business. It's no time for it, either. Wait till after the funeral. I'll attend to everything for you just now, Madelaine, too—she's all broken down."

Another night passed and another day came, and at the hour appointed

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 Madelaine 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.

The house was regained and was reentered by the family party, and nobody else seemed to notice that Judge Wickham went in last, and that, as he did so, he took the key out of the door and put it in his pocket.

"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—"

"We'll have to have it blown open," said Mr. Lapham; "but just to show how it is—"

And he did try it, with ostentatious precision, in full confidence that the lock would continue its obstinacy, but when he remarked, "There!" and gave a hard pull, open flew the door of the safe and its contents were on public exhibition.

"I declare!" exclaimed Mr. Lapham, springing to his feet. "Remarkable—"

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

The eyes of Jacob Lapham were frantically searching the interior of the big iron safe for something which they did not seem to find.

"That is all. All correct," continued Judge Wickham. "Deacon Morris and I are executors. Everything goes to Madelaine! I'll take possession at once. That is, I'll leave her in full possession."

"Give me that paper!" roared Jacob Lapham. "It isn't the will!"

"Yes, it is!" replied the judge. "I know the signatures. I saw it put there. I was here. It's all right, Jacob."

"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."

"Leave the house! I'm in control here! Get out! I'm in possession!"

"I think not!" answered Judge Wickham. "Your authority has ceased. Miss Lane is in possession. She is absolute, unquestionable owner. You and Steve must go!"

It was of little use to storm, but of course there was a storm, and it was all the worse because of the bewildering conduct of that safe. It contained no other will, and when Judge Wickham shut it up it almost seemed to wink at him. The Judge did not storm, but he was firm, and so was Madelaine, and she, too, was calm, although she remarked:

"If Stephen were a gentleman he would not wish to remain, knowing, as he does, how utterly I detest him. After what you have said and done, Mr. Lapham, you must go at once. All that belongs to you has been put into your own room."

"Come upstairs," Steve, said his father; and as soon as they were in Steve's room, he added: "Wickham is going out to find Morris. As soon as he is gone we will search that safe."

"We'll clean it out, too," said Steve.

Hardly had they left the library, however, before Jefferson Meredith came in from the dining-room, where he had passed most of his time during the funeral services, and once more he worried the lock of the safe a little.

"Is it all right, Jeff?" asked Judge Wickham. "Am not I to know the new combination? Can't you explain it to me?"

"Simplest thing in the world," said Jeff. "Lots of people remember their safe combinations that way. The riddle was no riddle at all."

"Independence, Fourth of July, and the days of the week? How was it? I must say it's a riddle to me."

"Why," said Jeff, "don't you see it? The year, 1776. The days, 7. Divide so—17—7—76. To get your three numbers. Twist the knob the usual way. That did it."

"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.

"It's an awful riddle, Steve," growled old Jacob; "but we can't get in."

That, alas for them, meant that their plot had failed, and that they must get out.

Only a few weeks later Jefferson Meredith was slowly, thoughtfully turning a plain gold ring upon one of Mrs. Madelaine Meredith's fingers.

"I feel so safe now," she said; "and it is what mother would have wished!"

"Madelaine," he answered her, "there are some combinations of which only God knows the secret. This is one of them, and it is locked forever."—McC's Monthly.

A Physician's Paradise.
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.

AGRICULTURAL TOPICS.

A Hen's Egg Production.
About 150 eggs per year is estimated as the production of a hen, if the flock is small and well cared for, but with large flocks an average of 100 eggs per hen for one year is about correct, as disease, lice and mismanagement cause loss. The fowls on farms give larger profits in proportion to capital represented than larger stock, but are more neglected, and, therefore, do not give as large profits as could be derived from them.

Care of Farm Implements.

Far more waste of farm implements is due to rust and disuse than is the wear of them while some one is working with them. They are too often left exposed for weeks and months during the worst weather in the year, and thus treated will not last one-third as long, as they should not be left to use any of the time. A convenient tool house near enough to the barns to be always easily accessible, yet not near enough to be in danger from fires, will pay better than almost any other investment on most farms.—American Cultivator.

Apple Pomace as Feed.

There is considerable nutriment in pomace as it comes from the mill. Stock will eat it quite readily if fed before it begins to ferment. This, however, it does very soon if exposed to the air. Consequently it is best to place the pomace in air-tight barrels or hogsheads, so as to keep air from it, and cover the pomace with something that will hold down the carbonic acid gas and prevent its escape as it ferments. This is really ensilage of the pomace itself has not nutritive value to make this worth while. Its chief value is its succulence, and it should be fed with grain, hay or meal, so as to give the proper proportion of nutrition. When put up in air-tight barrels and kept slightly below freezing temperature there will be no more fermentation in the pomace than there is in the silo, and it can be used till late in the winter.

True Life History of the Codlin Moth.

According to Professor M. V. Slingeland, of Cornell experiment station, the old story of the entomologists about the codlin moth laying its eggs in the blossom end of the apple is a myth. The moth that lays the eggs does not appear until a week after the blossoms fall, and then it deposits them upon the side of the apple. In about ten days they hatch and the little worms crawl around on the surface until they find the calyx, then creep in between the lobes which have by this time closed tightly. Up to this time the insects have not eaten, but soon after entering the calyx they begin to gnaw their way into the apple.

From this it can be seen that trees should be sprayed for this insect as soon as the blossoms fall, as the paris green can then be deposited in the calyx where it will be eaten by the worm, while if it is delayed ten days or longer, the calyx will have closed over the basin and the paris green will only be deposited on the outside of the fruit, where it will in no way injure the young worm. The closing of the calyx is in one way a good thing as it covers the poison and protects it from being washed out by rain. The calyx of the pear does not close, and hence it will be better to wait for ten days or two weeks after the blossoms fall before spraying pear trees, as there will be less danger of the poison being washed away.—New England Homesteader.

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 \$400 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—"Bonner 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.

"I have been complimented a great many times on my stage presence," said the amateur with a disposition to monopolize things. "Yes," replied the weary manager, "you're all right on that point. What you want to cultivate now is an occasional stage absence."—Washington Star.

Robbins—"What in the world does Hardy Upton mean by wearing a winter overcoat and a summer suit?" Dobbins—"Why, a report got around that he had to soak his summer suit before he got his winter overcoat out. Hardy is trying to prove that the report is unfounded."—Puck.

"Colonel Blood," says the current issue of the Weekly Battle Ax, "has called at this office and demanded a retraction of our remark that he was a famous liar. We retract cheerfully and fully, and do so by hereby stating that the esteemed colonel is an infamous liar."—Indianapolis Journal.

Clarence—"Genevieve, why did you not hear me? Can't you see that I am dying for your love? Tell me, tell me, for you will." Genevieve (interrupting)—"Oh, please go away and come some other time when I'm not busy. Can't you see that I'm right in the middle of this murder case?"—Cleveland Leader.

WINTER.

Merry, though the moon shines pale
And the wind-tossed branches wail;
Farest crystals float and fall;
There they sparkle,
Here they darken,
On the place and lonely wall.

Merry, though the stream is still
'neath the cold and trackless hill;
There the realms of liocaper glow;
Twilight fingers,
Shining fingers,
Gild the sleeping fields of snow.
—Geneva 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 turkeys?" Prisoner—"He had no chickens, your Honor."—Detroit Journal.

She—"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 said 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'd still have me!" Mrs. Spendley—"Don't you be too sure about that!"—Puck.

Instruction: 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 piece, 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.