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Select Poetry.

THE DEVIL FISHING.

The devil sat by the river's side— The stream of time, where you'll always find him Casting his line in the rushing tide, And landing his fish on the bank behind him. He sat at ease in a cozy nook, And was filling his basket very fast, While you might have seen that his deadly hook Was differently baited for every cast. He caught 'em as fast as a man could count, Little or big—it was all the same; One bait was a check for a round amount, A congerman nabbed it, and out he came. He took a gem that no Saturn shone, It sank in the water without a sound; A woman caught it who long was known As the best and purest for miles around. Sometimes he would laugh, and sometimes sigh, For better luck no one could wish; And he seemed to know to a dead sure thing The bait best suited to every fish. Quoth Satan: "The fishing is rare and fine!" And he took a drink, somewhat enthused; But now a parson swam 'round the line, Who 'e'en the most tempting of baits refused. He baited with gold, and with flashing gems; He hung fame and fortune upon the line, And dressed his gowns with embroidered hems— But still the Dominic made no sign. A woman's garter went on the hook, "I have him at last," quoth the devil bright'n'ing. Then Satan's sides with laughter shook, And he landed the preacher quick as lightning.

A TERRIBLE NIGHT.

I AM no politician. I am a provision dealer—a wholesale provision dealer—doing business in New York city. Having commenced my veritable history with the above assertion it is necessary that I should inform the reader how it was that I was a member of the New York delegation to the democratic convention held in Baltimore some time ago. One evening in the latter part of May I was seated with my wife in our pretty house on Eight street, enjoying a fragrant cup of tea—for if there is one thing I am a good judge of it is tea. My wife had been shopping, and while I was sipping my Hyson flavored with orange, Pako she was showing me her purchases. She was expatiating on a "love of a bonnet," when we were both startled by a violent ring at the bell, and in a minute or two afterward a servant entered, informing me that Mr. Lawrence Ardew wished to see me immediately. As Ardew was a particular friend of mine I immediately ordered him to be admitted. "Gunby," said Ardew, as soon as he had paid his respects to my wife—"I should have told you before that my name in Jonathan Gunby—" Gunby, I want you to do me a great favor." "What is it, my dear fellow?" I replied. I could afford to be affectionate, for I knew that Ardew was too rich to want money. "You know I am a politician?" said Ardew. "I know you are," I returned, "and not much good has it done you. To my certain knowledge you have not received a cent's benefit from it; on the other hand you have spent a good many hundred dollars." "Just wait till — is elected president, and then you will see; but that is not the question. I am a delegate to the Baltimore convention, and I want you to act as my substitute." "What?" I cried, jumping up from my chair in excitement. "I, Jonathan Gunby, wholesale provision merchant, act as a member of a political convention? never, my dear friend, never!" "But you must. I will pay all expenses and the trip will do you good. I have noticed that you seem to be thinner than you used to be; a change is the very thing for you. The fact is, I have an important lawsuit going on and it is

utterly impossible that I can leave New York. You must do this favor for me, my dear Gunby.

"But, Ardew, I never attended a political meeting in my life," I replied, somewhat softened by the fact that all my expenses would be paid. "I should make a blockhead of myself, for I know nothing of the rules and regulations of such assemblies."

"You don't want to know anything; all that you have to do is to vote through thick and thin for—"

"But I don't like the man."

"You have nothing to do with that. I do like him, and you will be voting for me."

"You are right—I forgot that."

"Jonathan shall not go to that awful rowdy city, Baltimore," said my wife. "He will be killed by the 'Plug Uglies,' 'Blood Tubs' or 'Black Snakes.' It is not safe to walk the streets there. I'll never consent to his going."

"You need have no fear on that head, madam," said Ardew; "they have got a new police there, and Baltimore is one of the quietest cities in the Union."

I need not detail any more of the conversation; suffice it to say that Ardew persuaded me to act in his place, and the hint of a handsome present from the monumental city so mollified my wife that she gave her consent.

On the appointed day, provided with the necessary vouchers, I started on my journey, having first faithfully promised my wife that I would not venture in the streets of Baltimore after dark. I shall not detail the particulars of my journey. Were I to do so I might describe how crowded we were; how we were annoyed by a squalling infant that it was utterly impossible to silence; how we were delayed in the crossing of the Susquehanna by some accident to the ferryboat; how I tried to read but could not on account of the perfect Babel around me; how I endeavored to make fun of the boys who sold apples, and had the laugh turned against me by those youthful vendors of that wholesome fruit. All this and a great deal more I might tell, but as every traveler goes through the same experience it would only be repeating an old story.

We reached Baltimore at last, and I was immediately driven to Barnum's hotel. I had some difficulty in making my way to the clerk's counter, the hall was so crowded with people.

"All full, sir," said the gentlemanly clerk, as I pulled the book toward me to enter my name. There was no help for it. I went round to the Gilmore house and received the same reply. It was the same with the Eutaw, and the Howard house and half a dozen other hotels. It was getting dark, and I began to think I should have to sleep in the hack all night.

"Try Old Town, Bill," said a friend to the hackman, who saw my dilemma.

"They are only third and fourth rate inns, there," said the driver, "and perhaps the gentleman would not like to lodge there for a night?"

"Anywhere that I can get a bed, my good fellow," I returned. "It is no use being particular at such a time as this."

The horses heads were turned round and we proceeded down Baltimore street over a bridge which spanned a muddy stream of water called Jones' falls, I believe. We then plunged into a mass of intricate narrow streets, and at last stopped before the door of a very ordinary looking tavern.

It bore a nondescript-looking sign, which I was told represented a Golden Angel, by which name the tavern was known.

I entered and made my stereotyped inquiry—whether I could have a bed there for the night. The landlord, a thick, burly-looking man, with a gleam of latent humor in his face, shook his head, and repeated the hateful words: "All full."

I turned to go away, but was recalled by the voice of the host.

"Would you mind sharing a bed with another party?" said he.

"If there is no help for it I suppose I must," I replied, "although to tell the truth it is by no means agreeable to me," and I inwardly heaped denunciations on Ardew's head for persuading me to be his substitute.

"Your bedfellow is a quiet fellow when he is asleep, although I must say

he is violent when annoyed. He sleeps very soundly and all you have to do is to be careful not to wake him. He has been in bed some time."

I must make a humiliating confession to the reader: I am not a brave man. I have often tried to persuade myself that I am, but truth compels me to state that a greater coward does not exist than myself. The landlord's description of my bedfellow was anything but assuring, and I was on the point of declining when the proprietor of the Golden Angel, no doubt reading what was transpiring in my mind, exclaimed: "You are not afraid, are you?" "Afraid! I should think not, indeed," I replied, for I was too much of a coward to brave being thought one. "I accept your offer of half a bed. Bring me some brandy and water and a cigar."

I sat down at one of the little tables in the bar room, and puffing away at my cigar I tried to persuade myself that I was very jolly. It was a miserable attempt, however. I had previously supped at a restaurant in a more modern part of the city. After my cigar was finished I asked to be shown to my chamber. The landlord took upon himself the task of being my conductor, and I followed him up a narrow, rickety staircase. We kept on ascending until we reached the top of the house, when he entered a moderate sized room, but cleaner than I had expected to find it. The ceiling was very low, and inclined in front to the slope of the roof. The apartment contained but one bed, which was placed against the wall near the door. At the opposite end of the chamber was a table, placed between two windows, which looked upon the roof.

The landlord placed the lamp upon the table, and then I noticed that he shielded the light with his hand, as he passed near the bed.

"Be sure and don't take the light near him," whispered the proprietor of the Golden Angel, "nothing wakes him sooner than that. You see I don't know how he might like my putting another man with him; and he is a very ugly customer when he's riled, I can tell you."

"I shall be careful," I replied. "That's right! Good night," he whispered and left the room.

He had no sooner gone than I cautiously sat down, taking care not to make the least noise. I then calmly surveyed my position. It was certainly not a very enviable one. According to the landlord's account my companion for the night was anything but an amiable character. If I should chance to awaken him I knew not what might occur. He might assault me dangerously before I could enter into any explanation, I half resolved to pass the night in the chair. But it was one of the old-fashioned, high-back chairs, and made such an uncomfortable seat that I soon tired out. I then ventured to glance around the room. My eyes naturally fell on the bed. There was one thing that consoled me; my companion appeared to be in a deep sleep, for he did not even move. I could see the ridge made by his feet at the end of his bed, and that was all. I also noticed that the bed was a very large one. The man who had possession of it lay near the wall, and there was plenty of space between him and the outside for me to lie without touching him. I screwed my courage up and began to undress—but I suddenly remembered the landlord's words, that the stranger was an "ugly customer when he was riled," which made me desist. The thought struck me that I might manage to lie on the floor, but a moment's examination settled the question in the negative, for the floor was entirely bare, and the air blew very cold through the wide chinks in the planking. I cast my eyes to the ceiling, and noticed for the first time that a heavy beam studded with numerous hooks ran through the apartment; but as I was not a bird and could not perch there, this discovery was of little use to me.

Half an hour passed away in this state of indecision. I stole cautiously to one of the windows, and gazed on the beautiful city bathed in the light of a full moon.

How quiet and calm everything looked. But the air felt fresh and cold, and I determined to put it into execution. I took the dead man's handkerchief

wondering what avocation my friend in bed followed. I suddenly cast my eyes on a heap of clothes which lay on a trunk, covered over with a handkerchief, no doubt belonging to the sleeper. My curiosity got the better of my politeness, and before I scarcely knew what I was about I found myself examining his apparel. The handkerchief which covered them was coarse cotton one, and his clothes of coarse homespun, and were such as are usually worn by drovers. My companion, then, was evidently a drover—a rough class of men who usually stand upon very little ceremony.

Partly undressed as I was, I began to feel very cold—but before venturing into bed I determined to try an experiment to see if the drover slept soundly or not. I had taken the precaution to leave the bed room door open so that I could make a run of it if necessary. I fixed my eyes on the bed as I let my boot fall. The drover was evidently a sound sleeper, for although the noise made was considerable he did not make the slightest motion. This decided me, and I hastily finished undressing and crept into bed.

Of course, I was careful not to touch my companion. I do not know how long I lay awake, but the novelty of the situation drove sleep from my eyes for some time. By degrees, however, the strangeness of my position wore off. I felt reassured by my bedfellow's sound sleep, and the gentle murmuring of the breeze outside caused me to follow his example.

I have no idea how long I slept before I commenced to dream. I suddenly, however, thought that my companion woke up and sat upright in bed; that he glared around him and at last his eyes fell on me. He uttered a terrible cry and threw himself upon me. In spite of my natural cowardice, I saw if I did not struggle I should be killed. I thought I seized him by the throat, and tightening my grasp, I saw him getting black in the face. His hands fell powerless by his side, a smothering groan escaped him, but still I pressed his throat tighter, tighter—his face grew blacker and blacker.

In agony of fear I awoke, and what was my horror and dismay to find that my hand was really pressing my companion's throat. He did not move nor stir and his body felt as cold as ice.

"Great God!" I exclaimed aloud. "Can he be dead?"

I jumped out of bed. Morning had dawned although the sun had not yet risen. I rushed to the window and pulled back the curtain. I then ran to the bed again and looked at my companion. My worst fears were realized. He was dead, black in the face, strangled in my sleep.

I shall not attempt to describe my sensation at this horrid spectacle. My body was bathed in a cold perspiration, my hands trembled, and for a few moments I believe I was bereft of my senses. I recovered by degrees—but it was only to realize in a more acute degree the horrors of my situation. There lay my victim, and I was a murderer! My trial, conviction and the hideous gallows all passed in rapid review before me. Who would believe me? I sat down, buried my face in my hands, and sobbed like a child. My wife, my own comfortable home—should I ever see them again?

What was to be done? Should I arouse the house and make a clean breast of it? But what could I say?—tell them I had killed a man in my sleep? Not a soul would believe the story. Could I effect my escape? Impossible; the crime would be discovered before I could leave the city, and I should be arrested; then the law would take its course and I should be hanged by the neck until I was dead.

Hanged by the neck? Yes, that would be my fate. As this terrible thought crossed my mind I cast my eyes around the chamber, and they fell upon the beam with the hooks in it. From thence they wandered to the handkerchief covering the dead man's clothes.

A means of safety suggested itself to my mind. Suppose I could make it appear that the man had committed suicide. Yes, that was my only chance, and I determined to put it into execution.

I took the dead man's handkerchief

and advanced to the corpse with a great deal of repugnance, but with more courage than I could have anticipated. My own fearful situation no doubt animated me to an extent that I should never otherwise have dreamed of. I made a noose in the handkerchief and slipped it over the dead man's neck. I then lifted the body out of bed, and standing on a chair fastened the other end of the handkerchief to a hook in the beam. I now let the body go, and it swung in space.

I jumped into bed and shut my eyes to close the horrid sight from my gaze. I determined to wait there until somebody should come into the room, and then pretend that I knew nothing at all about it, but that the man must have got up in the night and hanged himself.

I lay quaking and trembling for over an hour. It grew broad daylight. I felt the sun shining directly on the bed, but I dare not open my eyes for fear that I should encounter the dangling corpse. Suddenly I heard the step of two men on the stairs. They appeared to be carrying something heavy between them. The long anticipated moment was approaching. In a few seconds more they would discover the body. My life depended in a great degree upon their opinion. If they were deceived by my ruse, others might be.

The door opened, and two men entered the chamber, placing something heavy on the floor.

"Well, I'm blessed if the man hasn't hanged himself again," exclaimed a voice which I knew to be the landlord's.

"By golly! that's true," said the other man. "No, I see how it is; the stranger found out the trick you played on him, and not liking the idea of sleeping with a corpse, he tucked him up there to get him out of the way."

"You're right," replied the landlord; "well, he's a cool 'un, anyhow, and would you believe it, last night I thought he was a coward—that only shows how easy it is to be mistaken in people. And now he sleeps as soundly as a church; let's be careful not to wake him."

I breathed freely, for I immediately understood the whole matter. The landlord had put me to sleep with a dead man. I heard them take down the body and put it into a coffin—for it was what they had brought with them. They carried it away and I was left to myself. With my mind thus relieved I fell asleep, and enjoyed two hours' delicious slumber. I then got up, dressed myself and proceeded down stairs.

"Good morning," said I to the landlord who was behind the bar.

"Good morning, sir," he replied, sheepishly; "I hope you slept well."

"Splendidly," I returned; "my bedfellow gave me trouble at first, but I soon got rid of him."

"I know you did," returned mine host, with a knowing wink. "Well, I must say you are the coolest chap I ever saw."

Not another word passed between us with reference to the affair. And I afterward learned from the conversation of the people while I was at breakfast that my companion for the night was a drover, who, having made a ruinous speculation in cattle, had committed suicide by hanging himself in the chamber the night before.

I left the Golden Angel that morning, having obtained quarters at Barnum's hotel. I went to the convention, voted six hundred times for —, and returned home, having given full satisfaction to Mr. Ardew.

I told my adventure to my friends—not as I have told it to you, dear reader, but with the same construction that the landlord of the Golden Angel put upon it. Everybody thought that I had displayed extraordinary coolness and intrepidity. There is one thing, however, to which I have fully made up my mind, and that is, I will never attend another political convention as long as I live, nor sleep with a corpse if I can avoid it.

The treasure house of a man's life is his heart, and he who has nothing there is poverty-stricken, though he roll in gold; while he who has a good deal there is rich, whether he has a roof over his head or not.