

State Library

The Chatham Record.

The Impossible. Men cannot draw water from an empty well, or trace the stories that gossips tell, or gather the sounds of a pealing bell. Men never can stop the billows' roar, nor chain the winds till they blow no more, nor drive true love from a maiden's door. Men never can break a fleeting lie, or change his wheat to a field of rye, or call back years that have long gone by. Men never can bribe old Father Time, or give the light of a lamp that hath been put out, or give the hand that hath done a crime. Men cannot a cruel word recall, or have a thought, be it great or small, or any extract from a drop of gall. Men never backward turn the tide, or count the stars that are scattered wide, or find in a fool a trusty guide. Men cannot reap fruit from worthless seed, rely for strength on the broken reed, or gain a heart he hath caused to bleed. Men never can hope true peace to win, pleasure without and joy within, living a thoughtless life of sin.

BEYOND HIS INCOME.

"Five pounds of grapes," said old Mrs. Millday, in astonishment. "Are you quite sure that you understood your mistress' order, Hester? White grapes are sixty cents a pound, and surely for so small a dinner-party as this—" "There's no mistake, ma'am," said Hester, pertly. "Servants will soon learn the spirit of their superiors, and Hester knew that young Mrs. Millday was not particularly partial to her husband's stepmother. "I took the order myself, and it ain't likely that I should be mistaken."

"Hester is quite right," said Mrs. Millday, who came in at that moment a handsome brunette, in a pink cashmere morning-dress, trimmed with bands, a la militaire, of black velvet—rather a contrast to the neat, calico gown which her mother-in-law was accustomed to wear about her morning avocations at home. "And I do wish mamma, you wouldn't interfere!" The old lady's serene brow flushed. "My dear," she remonstrated, "I do not wish to meddle with your concerns; but I really fear that Rufus' income—" "Rufus' income is his own, to spend as he pleases," interrupted the young lady. "And you seem to forget, mamma, that people don't live nowadays as they did when you were a girl."

as he studied over the list of weekly bills a short time subsequently, "I believe my mother was right. We are outrunning our income." "Pshaw!" said Rosamond, who was sewing a frill of point lace on to the neck of a rose-colored satin reception dress; "what has put that ridiculous idea into your head, Rufus?" "Facts and figures," answered Rufus. "Just look here, Rosie."

"But I don't want to look!" said Rosamond, impatiently turning her head away, "and I won't—so there! Of course one can't live without money, especially if one goes into society." Rufus whistled under his breath. "But, Rosamond," said he, "if a man's income is a hundred dollars a month, and he spends two hundred, how are the accounts to balance at the year's end?" "I don't know anything about balances and accounts," said Rosamond, with a sweet, sportive laugh. "How do you like this dress, Rufus?" holding up the gleaming folds of the pink satin. "I shall wear it on Thursday evening."

"Do you think, Rosie," said the young man, gently, "that it is wise for us to go so much into society on our slender income?" "That arrow came from your mother's quiver, Rufus!" said Rosamond, with another laugh. "She was always preaching about your 'income.'" "And, after all," said Rufus, "what do we care for the fashionable people to whose houses we go, and whom we invite to our parties? They wouldn't of one them regret if we were to go to the Rocky Mountains to-morrow."

So he told her all—of the reckless expenditure on Rosamond's part—his own, also, he confessed—which had woven itself like a fatal web about his feet—of the unpaid bills, the clamoring tradesfolk, the threats of public exposure, which had driven him at last to the forgery of his employer's signature, in order to free himself from one or two of the most pressing of these demands.

"And if my investment in Erie bonds had proved a success," he said, eagerly, "I could have taken up every one of the notes before they came due. But there was a change in the market, and now—now the bills will be presented next week, and my villainy will be patent to all the world! Oh, mother, mother! why did you not let me fling myself into the Black Pool?" "Rufus," said his stepmother, "what is the amount of these—these forged bills?" "Ten thousand dollars," he answered, staring gloomily into the fire. "Exactly the amount of the Government bonds which your father left me," said Mrs. Millday. "They would have been yours at my death. They are yours now, Rufus."

"Mother, you don't mean—" "Take them," said Mrs. Millday, tenderly pressing her lips to his forehead. "Go to New York the first thing to-morrow morning and wipe this stain from your life as you would wipe a few blurred figures from a slate. And then begin the record of existence anew."

And up in the little room which he had occupied as a child, Rufus Millday slept the first peaceful slumbers which had descended upon his weary eyelids for many and many a night. In the midnight train from New York came Rosamond Millday to the Hemlocks, with a pale, terrified face and haggard eyes. "Oh, mother, mother!" she sobbed; "where is he—my husband? He has left me, and the letter on the dressing-table declared that he would never return alive! Oh, mother, it is my fault! I have ruined him! Help me, comfort me, tell me what I shall do!" Mrs. Millday took her daughter-in-law's hand, and led her softly to the little room where her husband lay sweetly sleeping. "Hush!" said the old lady; "do not wake him. He is worn out, both in mind and body. Only be thankful that God has given him back to you, almost from the grave."

CHILDREN'S COLUMN.

"In Mother's Place." If you want to go and see granny, mother dear, you start off by the first train to-morrow morning," said Ted; "I have a holiday, and I'll stay at home and take care of baby and the house."

"Could you manage?" asked his mother, doubtfully. "Manage? Yes, splendidly; why there's nothing to do!" Ted's mother smiled, but she accepted her boy's kind offer, and started off early the following morning. "Now I'm in mother's place," said Ted to himself, "I shall soon get all the work; why, there's baby awake already!" "Yes; master baby was awake and insisted upon being taken up and dressed at once. When that performance was over he screamed with indignation because his breakfast was not ready for him."

"Ah, I remember," said Ted, "mother told me she always had his bread and milk waiting for him; it seems to me there's a lot of things to remember about a house and a baby." A great number of things poor Ted found to attend to; the beds to make; the rooms to sweep and dust; the fire to attend to; the meals to prepare and master baby to amuse. "It's not so easy as I thought, being in mother's place," he said to himself that night, as he sat and listened for his mother's welcome footsteps.

"Ah, there comes mother!" he added, "and very glad I am to see her." "Stop crying, Johnny," said Fanny Dare, "and I'll tell you about a dog I know who won't eat a bit of cake if his master says it isn't paid for."

"O, what a funny dog!" said Johnny, stopping right off. "One day," continued Fanny, "I gave him a bit of cake. He opened his mouth and was just going to take a bite, when his master said, 'Duke, that isn't paid for.' Duke dropped the cake instantly and turned away. He seemed to say, 'Nobly shall persuade me to eat anything that isn't paid for.' I asked his master to go out of the room and then I tried to coax Duke. I held the cake to his nose. But he could not be coaxed. "When his master came back, he broke the cake into seven bits. Then as he put them on the floor, he said, 'Duke, this piece is paid for, this piece is not paid for, till he had scattered all the cake on the floor. "Now," he said, "you can eat all the pieces that are paid for." And Duke just picked out the three pieces his master said were paid for, and he wouldn't touch the others."

HOUSEHOLD SUPERSTITIONS.

Some of the Querer Fancies Entertained by Good People. A favorite superstition, in many parts of this country, says the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, is the one concerning new houses; that it is unlucky to build a new house, since the coffin of the builder will be the first one carried out at the door. Hence, in many parts of the Southern States additions will be made to the old house as long as practicable rather than resort to building an entirely new structure.

The superstition, perhaps, arose from the fact that so many retired merchants erect fine houses only to die in them as soon as they are finished. This is often the case, but no supernatural reason is needed to account for the occurrence. The merchant has up to that time been engaged in active pursuits, has never been idle in his life, and as long as his new house is building he has occupation, even though he may have retired from business. But when the house is done he has nothing to do and nothing to think of but his ailments and infirmities, consequently thinks of them a great deal, soon loses his courage and dies.

Spilling the salt on the table is a particularly bad omen, and, contrary to most of these superstitions, has a definite reason for its own existence. Salt is the emblem of hospitality, of friendship, of good-fellowship, and when salt is spilled on the table the friendship is supposed to be in danger of being broken. Like other superstitions, a sufficient number of instances of the verification of the ill-omen have been found and recorded to inspire popular belief in the reliability of the sign, and it is therefore respected even more than most others of its kind.

So far as number is concerned, the most numerous class of superstitions are composed of those which cluster round the family candles. The origin of these probably dates far back in antiquity, when the world was full of superstitious fancies about light in general and candle light in particular. When we come down to the early days of the Christian church however, we find that not a few of the ordinances of religion were accompanied by ceremonies, in which lighted candles played an important part. Candles were lighted at birth to keep off evil spirits, at marriage to prevent the evil eye from affecting the happy pair, and at death to drive away the demons who were thought to be always on the lookout for the soul of the dying man. Naturally then, as candles played so important a part in the ceremonies of religion, men became accustomed to regard them with something of a superstitious eye, and to look to them for signs and wonders which were not to be elsewhere found.

So a peculiar appearance in the candle, for which no reason could be given, was always regarded as indicative of some remarkable event about to happen. A collection of tallow round the wick, is still known as a winding-sheet, and is believed to foretell the death of one of the family, while a bright spark is a sign of the future reception of a letter by the person opposite whom the spark is situated, and the waving of the flame without any apparent cause is supposed to demonstrate the presence of a spirit in the room. In addition to these fanciful notions there are some others which are founded on natural facts too well known to admit of dispute, such as the candle to light readily, which indicates a state of atmosphere favorable to a coming storm.

In Ireland, where household superstitions, and indeed superstitions of almost every other kind, grow as if by magic, the house leek is a lucky plant, which, if planted in the thatch, will preserve the inmates from all dangers brought about by unfriendly fairies, while the four-leaved clover is considered certain to give its possessor success in love, and is consequently much sought after on this account.

THE FEAST OF HUSSEIN.

Horrible Scenes at a Mohammedan Religious Ceremony. A Constantinople letter to the San Francisco Chronicle describes in graphic language the horrible scenes witnessed by the writer at a religious ceremony. Says the correspondent: "There was the sharp stroke of a bell, and the whole band fell on their knees, and bending touched their foreheads three times to the ground. The crowd also bowed their heads. Then the priests in front, rising, commenced a low, monotonous chant, accompanied by a nodding motion of the head. One after another the following files took up the strain and the motion, and the whole body began slowly to advance, keeping perfect time to the music of the chanting. The chant had sunk to a harsh, guttural whisper, and the crowd, which had been gathering almost as much excitement as the acolytes, now began to take a hand in the proceedings. Everywhere in the great court heads and bodies were swaying and bending, and fresh voices were intoning the chant, 'al-lah! al-lah!' throwing the emphasis strongly on the second syllable of the word. As the priest commenced the story of Hussein's prophecy and death the procession suddenly opened its ranks, leaving spaces of several feet between the files. At the same time all the younger priests rolled up the sleeves of their tunics above the elbow on their right arm. The chant changed to 'allah, allah, God and the prophet!' and the rate of speed was quickened. The crowd pressed heavier and closer against the ropes. The faces of the devotees contorted—almost convulsed. There was a shout from the priest, followed by sudden silence, during which time every man raised his sword above his head. Another shout, and with the resumption of the chant and a perfect roar from the crowd, the swords came down, every man striking himself with the sharp edge across the head or forehead, making wounds from which the blood flowed freely. The swords were immediately raised and again came down as before. At first everything was methodical, and the cutting was done together. But, as the acolytes caught the craziness of the spectators, all discipline ceased, and each man slashed and cut himself as he saw fit. In many cases the wounds crossed and re-crossed each other till the whole head was a mere lacework of cuts.

It was a horrible and sickening sight. At one point at the first blood struck by one of the dervishes the blood spouted from the wound and struck one of the soldiers at the ropes directly in the face. He fell as if he had been hit by a bullet. The shock sickened him and he had fainted. Such an exhibition could not last long. The limit to human endurance even where strengthened by religious fanaticism is very narrow. Before the procession had gone the length of the square many of the devotees were reeling and staggering like drunken men. Their faces were ghastly pale, and their long white cloaks were streaked and stained with blood. Then a man stumbled and fell forward and was carried away by the attendants. The strokes of the swords grew feebler and the chanting sunk to a husky whisper. Slower and slower they went, and new men were reeling and dropping at every step. The head of the column reached the steps and turning up then disappeared within the building. But of the actual devotees not half had the strength to go by themselves. The crowd began to disperse before the last victim had been carried away. The servants commenced to extinguish the lights on the altar, the great court gradually emptied itself of people, and the feast of Hussein was over.

Straiv for Fuel. "Yes, I've lived out West ten years," said a traveler, who was bearded like a forty-niner, "I mean on the peraries of Newbraska. Great country, too." "What did the folks do for fuel?" "Well, nowadays we're following after the Rooshuns, the Rooshun Menonites, you know, in the fuel business. They are right smart and ingenious in some things, and this is the way they get over the fuel difficulty: "They build their houses of four rooms, all cornering together in the center. Right there they put up a great brick oven, with thick walls. From the furnace door back to the backyard is a passageway. Every morning, noon and night they lug a jug of straw in from the stack and burn it in the furnace. The thick brick walls get red hot, and stay so for hours, warming every room in the house. Even in the coldest weather three fires a day in the furnace will keep the house warm. For the cooking stoves we burn corstalks to get meals with, and thus our farms raise their fuel as we go along. Pretty good scheme, ain't it?"

Humorous. Rolling stock—Cattle trains pitched down an embankment. "I fear no man!" he said. And about that time his wife came along and led him off by the ear. When you see a counterfeit coin on the sidewalk, pick it up. You are liable to arrest if you try to pass it. "Mother, may I go out to pop?" "Yes, my darling daughter; if you fall this year you must slant up sheep. You've kept longer than you orter."

An exchange speaks of "the leading band of the country." It is a brass band, and it may be first-class; but the hat-band is generally at the head. "Yes," said the boy, "I might just as well be at the head of my class as not. But I don't mind being at the foot, and the other boys do, so I sacrifice myself." "Your father is entirely bald now, isn't he?" said a man to a son of a millionaire. "Yes," replied the youth, sadly, "I'm the only heir he has left."

Mrs. Homespun, who has a terrible time every morning to get her young brood out of their beds, says she cannot understand why children are called the rising generation. There is luck in being the first baby. In England, if of the male sex, it becomes the heir apparent, while in free America it usually escapes more spankings than the second one. "There is a single sentence in the English foreign clintment act which contains 600 words. A longer sentence was that of a New York judge the other day. It contained twenty years. "Is your wife acquainted with the dead languages?" asked the professor of a Newmann man. "Maybe she is," was the reply, "but the language she uses is entirely too warm to have been dead very long."

Do you paint yet? asked an old friend of a feminine artist whom she had not seen before for many years. "Yes," was the answer. "I still paint. I painted the children red and I put it on with my pepper."

Sunken Gold. In dim g-ens depths the rot ingot-laden ships, While gold doubloons that from the drowned heerd fell Lie usefless in the ocean-flower's bell With Le-ops gemmed rings once kissed by now dead lips. And round some wrought-gold cup the sea-grass whips, And hides lost pearls, near pearls still in their shell, Where sea-weed forests fill each ocean dell, And seek dim sunlight with their countless tips. So lie the wasted gifts, the long-lost hopes, Beneath the now hushed surface of myself, In lonelier depths than where the diver gropes. They lie deep, deep; but I at times behold In doubtful glimpses, on some reefy shelf, The gleam of irrecoverable gold. —[Lee Hamilton.

First Sight of the Caspian Sea. One of the most singular mental effects I noticed on myself was that produced whenever I walked on the quay, and saw the large fleet rocking in the port. Shelley's Alastor had from early youth haunted my memory, and given me the impression that the Caspian was a weird, half-ideal sea, with shores tenanted by the ghosts of dead empires; with a coast which was a deadly morass trodden only by the bittern and crane; with waters gray with the haze of perpetual twilight, a vast, mysterious solitude. Such in part it is on the eastern shore, but at Baku the Caspian conveys no such idea. Square-rigged ships ride at anchor by scores; the port is busy with wherries and sail-boats darting hither and thither, and sharp, heavily-spurred steamers of five hundred to one thousand tons are constantly entering and leaving the docks. The only peculiarity that distinguishes these ships from those of other seas is the rig, which carried me back to my boyhood. Two-top-sail schooners with very rakish masts abounded, thoroughly piratical, and altogether like vessels common elsewhere thirty-five years ago, but not longer in use except on the Caspian. Brigantines, with a small topsail, and other obsolete rigs were to be seen on this sea which has fashions of its own; which has no relations with any other sea; which is neither fresh nor salt, and also enjoys the freak of lying over one hundred feet below the level of the ocean.—Man-hattan.