

GOOD TIMES!

When the good times come, they needn't beat the drum.
For the weary world will know it when the good times come.
There'll be music on the hilltops and music on the plains,
And music in the tinkle and the twinkle of the rains!

When the good times come, then the right shall trample wrong.
The world shall move forever to a ballad song.
And joy will bless and brighten, and sorrow will be dumb,
In that mad and merry season when the good times come!
—F. L. Stanton, in Atlantic Constitution.

Beyond the Green-Baize Door.

There was a mystery beyond the green-baize door; tangible or intangible nobody knew, since no one but Mr. Blakely ever saw the inside of the door which shut his private room at Messrs. Blakely and Stephen's bank from the narrow passage connecting it with the general offices. We were so accustomed to the green-baize door, and to the rule that no one was to approach it, that we did not often give the mystery much thought. Even Mr. Shansley, the head cashier, was not permitted access. Clients and callers of all kinds Mr. Blakely invariably interviewed in another room, where he was summoned by an electric bell connected with the green room, as we used to call it.

There was nothing strange in the baize door itself; a plain green door, with a brass handle, which in no way influenced the secret springs by which the door opened and closed. Brass-headed nails marked the outlines of the door's panels. A less suggestive door never swung on hinges. Yet for ten years (the length of time I had been at the bank) that door had possessed the most melancholy and uncanny influence over the bank's staff, from cashier to charwoman. But no one knew why.

Mr. Blakely was sole proprietor of the bank, which was the only one in town and showed every semblance of the soundest financial basis; and the magnificence of his income was clearly displayed at Somers Towers, his splendid residence two miles out, where, at the time of this story, he lavished the luxuries of life upon his second wife, a very lovely and proud young lady half his own age—or 25.

Mr. Blakely was a man strangely devoid of eccentricities, considering his conduct concerning the baize door; the chief faults the bank staff found with him were his indefatigability, and that whenever there was business to be done in London—selling or buying stock, buying cash, etc.—he invariably attended to it himself.

I was seated at the desk of the head cashier, who was away on a short holiday, one morning in September, when one of our clients entered the counting house.

"Mr. Boyton, look here," he said, slipping a crown-piece upon the counter. "Where did you get it?"

I took up the coin and rang it. It rang unmistakably true.

"What's wrong with it?" I inquired, examining it closely without noticing any defect. "Did I give it to you?"

"Yes. Look at the edge; the letters are missing—it's quite smooth."

He was right; the edge was as smooth as that of a four-shilling piece. I weighed it and found it true weight, and it properly resisted the other tests.

"It's perfectly good," I said. "No doubt it is of an experimental mint, and got into circulation by mistake. How will you have it?"

"I don't care; half-crowns."

I passed him the money, and, as he went away, I slipped the crown into my pocket, intending to keep it as a curiosity. But, later in the day, when Mr. Blakely was in the office, I showed it to him.

His handsome dark face clouded as he took it and examined the edge.

"How did we come by it, Mr. Boyton?" he asked. He immediately resumed his natural easy manner when I explained that I had passed it out and had it returned.

"Curious!" he muttered. "One of an experimental mint, for it's dated 1896. Do you think we've any others similar?"

"No; I have been through them." "Strange! Well, I'll keep it. It is probably unique."

I was disappointed with his decision, as I wanted the coin myself. It was against my principles, however, to protest. I went back to my desk, repaid myself the five shillings I tilted for the coin, and forgot the matter—forgot it entirely until some weeks later, when Mrs. Blakely, to the utter astonishment of the bank's staff, turned up an hour or so before luncheon time.

"Nonsense!" she ejaculated. "Such rules do not refer to Mr. Blakely's wife. The room is at the end of the passage, is it not?"

"You are putting me in an awkward position," I replied. "I am not allowed to let visitors approach the green-baize door."

"Ah! Her proud eyes flashed. 'So there is a green-baize door which no one approaches?' I interrupted you, sir."

"I was saying, madam, that if I let you pass, I offend Mr. Blakely by neglecting an old-established rule. On the other hand, I offend you. Pray step into the waiting room, where Mr. Blakely will join you in less than half the time we have spent in argument."

When Mr. Blakely came, he did so in his habitual leisurely manner, and he walked into the waiting room, leaving the door ajar.

"Mr. Blakely," she said, haughtily, "I have been insulted by one of your clerks. He refused to admit me to your room, although he knew me."

She paused in a way that seemed to tell me she was looking at him searchingly.

"My dear girl," he replied, tenderly, "what has come over you? You're not like yourself, Mary. What is it? And what has brought you here so unexpectedly?"

"Did you not hear what I said, Richard? Surely, the fact that I have been insulted is reason enough for the change you remark."

"But not reason for your advent, since you must have been insulted through coming here," he responded, with his usual promptness.

"Since when has your wife been denied the right to enter your private room?" she demanded.

"Ever since she wrongly assumed that she had such a right, Mary. My clerks have their orders; they obey them. You cannot blame them for upholding rules I myself have framed. Come, dear, be reasonable. What do you want? I am very busy this morning. The market is very unsteady just now."

At this juncture it struck me that it was incumbent upon me to let them know in some way that they could be overheard, or else to get out of earshot. While undecided which course to take, I heard what aggravated my indecision.

"Tell me, Richard; had you known I was coming, would you have allowed your clerk to deny me access to your private room?" Mrs. Blakely inquired, somewhat sternly it seemed to me.

"Did you come here to ask me that?"

"Answer me, yes or no!" she insisted.

"The rule is of many years' standing, Mary," he said, deliberately. "If it were set aside for you it would be the thin end of the wedge; my room would no longer be private."

"You endorse your clerk's insult?"

"I uphold my clerk who upholds the bank's rules."

She was evidently nonplussed for the moment by the fine fencing, for she paused.

"If you have any shopping to do in town," he said, "you might come back in an hour, when I shall be free to drive home with you."

"Richard," she said, quietly, "I married you, not for your money, but because I loved you. I loved you before a younger man because I believed I could trust my whole soul to you. We have been married—how long?—ten months; and until within a few hours my confidence in you has been unshaken. You let me into all your secret hopes and fears; you kept nothing from me. Suddenly I hear a strange story about a mysterious green-baize door, which no one but yourself is allowed to approach. I call the carriage and drive here to fathom the depths of the mystery which I fancied was only imaginary. But I am more than amused now; I am piqued; my confidence in you is at stake. Let me see into the room which no other person but you has ever entered, and I'll go home."

"You are the first person to suggest that any mystery attaches itself to the room, dear," he replied, with a good-natured laugh. "It is simply a humble room, where I work too hard to admit of being disturbed at all hours of the day."

"Will you let me see? I don't doubt you—why should I? But I am determinedly inquisitive. Will you show me the room?"

"Not today, dear, I am very busy." I felt her brush past me as she came out of the room, and saw her walk round the desks, her lips tightly compressed and her head very high.

The following morning when I turned up at the bank the porter met me with the inquiry, Had I seen anything of Mr. Blakely? No? Strange! No one had seen him since the bank closed the night before. He was not in the bank—had not been home—indeed, it was Mrs. Blakely who had driven down the first thing to inquire about him; and no one had seen him.

"Was he on the premises when you locked up?" I asked.

"Can't say; shouldn't think so," the porter replied. "I left the side door on the latch until seven, as usual, and then bolted up, expecting he must have gone—generally goes before that, you know, sir. He must have gone, for I rung his bell again and again this morning."

Mrs. Blakely came up to me at this moment, looking pale and anxious.

"Mr. Boyton," she asked, "have you seen my husband? You were the last to leave, I believe?"

"Yes, madam; but I have not seen Mr. Blakely since he put you into your carriage yesterday."

"That decides it," she muttered. "Something has happened to him in his room. The door must be forced. Porter, go for a carpenter!"

"You take the whole responsibility of forcing the green-baize door?" I suggested.

"The whole responsibility," she replied, and turned away impatiently.

When the carpenter arrived Mrs. Blakely led him to the door and ordered him to force it. He smiled grimly, as he looked the door up and down. He sounded it with a mallet, and his jaw fell.

"Iron!" he said, laconically. "Tisn't my job; you want a blacksmith."

The porter was sent off in the carriage to fetch a smith. When the man arrived, he eyed the door critically and looked dubious.

"A long job!" he said.

"Break it down then!" cried Mrs. Blakely. "But waste no time."

The smith bared his arms, and, ordering Mrs. Blakely, the porter and myself to give him space, picked up a heavy hammer. He tapped the door gently in various places until it rang thinner than elsewhere. Then he swung his hammer and struck the door heavily, just in the exact spot, again and again. For five minutes he dealt a rapid fire of blows, and then the door began to tremble, then to shake. Finally, after ten or twelve minutes, it gave a shudder and came forward, swinging on its hinges.

Mrs. Blakely darted forward and stopped. Six feet farther down the narrow passage another door obstructed the way. She signed impetuously to the smith, who stepped forward and shivered the lock of the second door, which was only light wood. All was darkness beyond the door.

I turned to Mrs. Blakely, who stood gazing in wonderment into chaos.

"Porter," she said, in a hushed voice, suddenly turning her ashly face towards the light which crept down the passage from the farther door, "get me a lantern. Then you can both leave us. Mr. Boyton's will be all the help I need."

When the porter returned she took the lantern from him, and watched him retreat down the passage into the counting house.

"Prop the door so that it won't fall," she said.

I did so, and, returning to her side, took the lantern from her.

"You had better not come, madam," I said.

"I am coming," she replied, calmly. We passed through the doorway and into a small, dark room, poorly furnished with a little office furniture and littered with papers. There was no sign of Mr. Blakely. The one window in the wall was high up; its glass was fastened, and the blinds were pulled.

"Look!" cried Mrs. Blakely. "Look! A trap-door!"

I crossed to her, and glancing down saw a square had been cut out of the carpet, in the centre of which was a ring by which I raised a trap.

Looking through we saw a ladder leading down to darkness.

"Go on, sir; go on," said Mrs. Blakely, in a hollow voice. "We must go on."

Going carefully down four rungs of the ladder I held the lantern out at arm's length and surveyed the scene. A stone-walled chamber stretched before me like a large vault. In one wall was a low, barred door; in a corner was a small furnace. A peculiar-looking machine stood in the middle of the vault, and upon a ledge of its frame rested a row of silver coins.

"Go on," said a voice above me. I went down, and, stepping as I thought to the ground, my foot encountered something soft. I sprang aside, avoiding it, and saw the body of Mr. Blakely huddled up in a broken bundle.

"Don't come; for pity's sake don't come!" I cried to Mrs. Blakely. But already she was half-way down the ladder. In another moment she had stepped upon her husband's body and had shrieked.

"Ah, me; ah, me!" she moaned, propping the nodding head upon her knees with frenzied tenderness.

"Richard, husband! You did not merely dream—you lived your crimes that night—and now! Oh, Mr. Boyton, do you understand all this? My husband is a felon! Dead, my heart is

dead. This is his secret! Last night—the night before he was restless in his sleep, he talked of coining, yes of coining—coining silver coins and reaping profit—profit. 'You're a liar,' he cried once in his sleep, 'the coins are good—equal to the Mint's. The Mint makes profit on its silver coins, and why not I?' He said that, and as I lay awake, I hoped he merely dreamed—I knew he dreamed. But now I know the truth! Dead, dead! Yes, yes, and if you lived these hands should kill you for the ignominy and shame! Richard, oh! Richard, Richard!"

Little beyond evidence of identification and as to the cause of death was given at the public inquest held upon the body of Richard Blakely, but the police pursued the matter to some length in the hope of discovering the men who must have helped the banker in his secret silver mint.

The police found the door in the vault opened upon a narrow subterranean passage, running to a cottage hard by. But when the police raided the cottage they found it completely deserted. Their theory is that the banker's assistants went to the vault, found their employer lying at the foot of the ladder with his neck broken; and realizing that exposure must follow, they took flight without delay.

Beyond the police, only Mrs. Blakely and myself know the true secret that hid beyond the green-baize door—Tid-Bits.

BREAKING THE SAD NEWS.

Railroad Men on Special Duty to Notify Wives When Accidents Occur.

"We formerly left it to some of the employees to inform wives that their husbands had been killed," said a railroad boss, "but now regular men do it—men who know how to break the sad news to widows and orphans at home. I did it myself for thirteen years. The company chose me because I was fatherly looking, and I stuck to the job as long as I could, but it's wearing work. To go into a home and hear the wife singing about her work and be compelled to tell her that her Jack's just been killed down in the freight yard takes nerve."

"Of course, I had different ways of breaking news. Sometimes I asked what time Jim would be home, or where he was going that night, anything to get started, especially if I never knew the woman. Strange to say, whenever I came near to the fact, saying I'd heard that Jim was hurt, the women would scream out that they were sure he was killed. Then I let them cry awhile, until they'd get ready to ask further about it. It was not so hard after that. I often thought that the women saw so much sorrow in my face from my long service in the business that they knew what I came for. I tried to look cheerful, but there was a weight in my heart that I couldn't throw off."

"I once called at the home of a young wife. Her husband, an engineer, was killed at a bridge that morning. When she opened the door and looked at me she dropped in a dead faint without a word. Afterward she told me that she had taken a nap after breakfast that morning and had seen me in her dream standing in front of her, telling her that Harry was killed. Once the wife I came to warn was making bread. She was up to her elbows in dough. I asked where Mr. Jones lived, walked off and waited for half an hour until she got her bread in the pans, and then I went back and told her the sad story of her husband's death by a cave-in at a culvert. At another house the mother and two children, neatly dressed, were ready to go to a Sunday school picnic. It took nerve to stop them and break the news. I began by saying that there might be rain. It was cloudy. Then I said to the wife she had better not go as Tom might be back from work pretty soon. Then she knew."

"I asked the company to be relieved of my job three times before they found some one to take my place."—New York Sun.

Thought She Should Keep It.

About the first thing a well-to-do American family does on landing on London soil is to hunt up the American consuls and inquire the points of the town. One of the things most sure to be recommended is the "Little Old Lady in Threadneedle street," as the greatest bank in the world is jocularly called. Ladies like to visit the vaults of the Bank of England. They love to see the tons of shining gold and the piles of "crisp nuns."

The other day a certain New England capitalist was making the rounds with his little daughter, a typical Yankee girl of sweet sixteen. The treasurer, who had reason to be particularly polite to the American, handed the young lady a \$50,000 note to hold for a moment. She demurely said: "Thank you ever so much," and opened her tiny purse preparatory to depositing it snugly therein. She had partly folded it when the genial treasurer started and said:

"I really didn't give it to you to keep."

Miss Innocence opened wide her beautiful eyes, and as she returned it quietly remarked:

"I beg your pardon—I misunderstood you; I thought it was a good note."

Employer—For lunch you will have thirty minutes.

O'Toole—And how will Oi ate them, sor?

Employer—Eat what?

QUAINT AND CURIOUS.

One of the fashions established in Paris in recent years is to leave bicycles in pawn for the winter at the Mont de Piété. Experts estimate their value, and those who bring the wheel are obliged to take the sum offered, though most of them would like to take much less with a view to escaping the charge.

A European government servant was recently married to a native woman in Samarang by the Mohammedan ceremony. It took place in the mesjid, and it was conducted by the pengulu, but the bridegroom was not present. He had given written notice that he would not put in an appearance, but he sent his hat, and that was, according to native custom, quite sufficient. She married the hat.

A mining engineer of Six, Belgium, wrote a little book last year in which he advanced the conclusion that coal mining was first begun in 1113, in the Worm district of Belgium. Now he comes out in a sequel saying that he is convinced that the industry dates from some years earlier than this, according to some ancient records. Coal was first mined in England (or rather Scotland) on the Forth river, and the monks of Holyrood Abbey, Edinburgh, had the right of tithes in these mines, from the king. This was about 1214.

A rat's tail is a wonderful thing. There are more muscles in this curious appendage than are to be found in that part of the human anatomy which is most admirably fitted for its ingenious structure—namely, the hand. To the rat, in fact, its tail serves as a sort of hand, by means of which the animal is enabled to crawl along narrow ledges or other difficult passages, using it to balance with or to gain a hold. It is prehensile, like the tails of some monkeys. By means of it the little beast can jump up heights otherwise inaccessible, employing it as a projecting spring.

The oldest orange tree in France has just died. It was brought to France with several others in 1421, by Queen Leonore, of Castile, the wife of Charles III of Navarre, and in 1684 Louis XIV. ordered that it be transplanted to the orange grove in Versailles, and there it has remained ever since. During the last two centuries the tree has been known as the Grand Bourbon, and for many years every possible care has been taken to preserve it from decay. Now it has passed away at the great age of 478 years, and many Parisians who knew it well are sorry that they will never again see this stately ornament of the Versailles gardens.

A quaint old custom still prevails in the beautiful country on both sides of the Danube, some hundred miles above Vienna, commonly called the Wachman. At the summer solstice fires are lit on all the more prominent heights of the mountains that give the Wachman its peculiar charm. The picturesque towns and villages on both shores are beautifully illuminated, and the bridges across the great river are ablaze with a million lights. The most charming sight of all this year was the illumination of the ruins of Castle Durenstein, above Krems, the legendary castle where Richard Cour de Lion heard Blondel sing outside his prison walls. This festival is now called Johanniseifer, or St. John's fete, by a devout population, but the old people call it by its real Papan name, Sonnenwendfeuer, Solstice Fires.

They Tarrified Not.

The Indians of Mexico know nothing of the laws of contagion. They display an apathy toward certain loathsome diseases which surprises a foreigner.

In a recent hunting trip in the Sierra of Pueblo our party of eight was descending toward Zacapoaxtla. We rode leisurely, for the trail was narrow and hemmed in by Indian huts. At the door of one of these stood a woman and a little girl. We stopped to inquire the way, when the following conversation took place:

"Good morning, senora."

"A very good morning, at your orders, senor."

"This is the road to Zacapoaxtla, is it not?"

"You are quite right, senor."

"And is it very far?"

"On the contrary it is a very little ways."

"A thousand thanks for your kindness, senora."

"There is nothing for which to offer them, senor."

"Is the little girl sick, senora?"

"She is a little sick, senor."

"What is the matter with her?"

"She has the smallpox, senor."

"Ah, good day, senora."—Forest and Stream.

Anxious to Know.

Employer—For lunch you will have thirty minutes.

O'Toole—And how will Oi ate them, sor?

Employer—Eat what?

TALKING WISE.

When the daylight fades away And the sunset colors play O'er the mountain in the west— That's the time I like the best. When I've done up every chore, Gath'rin' jest outside the store, With the good old chums; I prize, Settin' 'round an' talkin' wise.

'Lections an' monopolists, Base ball games and fights with fists, Naval victories, war on land, Trusts, Imperialism and All the rest! If you'd come 'round You'd enjoy it, I'll be bound. It 'ud fill you with surprise If you heard us talkin' wise.

Golf is what some people like. Others fish or ride a bike; Some play ball or sail a boat; Some'll sing by ear or note. But us folks our pleasure finds Jes' 'improvin' our minds, When the busy daylight dies, Settin' 'round an' talkin' wise.

'Course, we're amehorsos. That's all. But I've heard big men an' small Meetin' to debate fur pay— Made their daily bread that way. 'Twan't no more convincin' than What'll pass from man to man When we folks extemporize, Settin' 'round an' talkin' wise. —Washington Star.

HUMOROUS.

Tommy—Say, paw. Mr. Figg—Well? "How big is the universe?" "As big as all our doors, of course."

He—I wish I could be a kissing bug a little while. She—Oh, well, there might be a little kissing bee, you know.

Williams—The baseball profession seems to be getting overcrowded. Hopkins—Yes, the colleges are turning out more players than the clubs can use.

"Do you mean to say that you will recognize Aguinaldo as a dictator?" asked the Rebolunso Filipino. "I can't help myself," was the sorrowing reply, "I'm the official stenographer."

Mr. Kiddby—Who is making that infernal jangle on the piano? Mrs. Kiddby—That is Constance at her exercise. Mr. Kiddby—Well, for heaven's sake, tell her to get her exercise some other way.

"When a man pays attention to a woman," says the Manayunk Philosopher, "it's generally a sign that he wishes to marry her, and when he doesn't pay attention to her it's often a sign that he has married her."

"Freddie," said his mother, severely, "didn't I tell you that you shouldn't ride your bicycle today, because you were naughty?" "This isn't my bicycle," said Freddie; "it's Tommy Jones's. We've exchanged just for today."

"Your hair isn't wet, uncle, is it?" asked little Tommy. "No, of course not," replied the amused relative; "what makes you think my hair is wet?" "Because I heard mamma say you had a hard time to keep your head above water."

Little four-year-old Flossie was looking at a picture book and finally said: "Mamma, why do men hunt lions and tigers?" "Because they are cruel and kill sheep and poor little innocent lambs," replied her mother. "Then why don't they hunt the butchers, too?" she asked.

Mrs. Newham—Oh, John, there was such a tender-hearted tramp here today! Mr. Newham—Tender-hearted! Mrs. N.—Yes. I asked him to weed the garden to pay for the dinner I had given him, and he said he was a botanist, and that it hurt his feelings to destroy living plants.

"When I can't sleep at night," said she, "I say to my husband, 'Oh, read me one of my dear minister's sermons!' And he has not read five minutes when I am sound asleep!" The "dear minister" said, of course, that he was delighted to hear it; but although it was not wholly for that purpose the sermons were published.

The Cause of His Modesty.

The cause for the modesty of the school boy who gave the following excuse for being late is obvious. One morning last week he came in about ten minutes late.

"Willie," said the teacher, sternly, "what made you late this morning?" Willie hung his head down and shuffled his boots on the floor.

"Willie, why don't you answer my question?"

"Has I got ter tell?" he whined.

"Certainly," replied the teacher.

"Why will I haf ter tell?" he asked.

"It is one of the rules of the school, and if you want to come to school you must abide with the rules."

"Must wot?"

"Abide with the rules."

"Wot's abide mean?"

"To stand by, that is, you must obey the rules of the school."

"Then I'll haf ter tell or leave the school?"

"Yes."

The tardy lad shuffled his feet, then that. He looked at the teacher to see if she would not relent. Then he gazed at the scholars, who were all listening for his reply.

"I haf ter wash and wipe ther dishes this mornin', because my mudder is sick an' couldn't do it."

He was excused, but he knew that his life would be made miserable the rest of the day by the school.