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THE GLEANER.

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POETRY.

SING TO THE SEAM.

BY MRS. S. L. OBERHOLZER.

The girl who sits in the porchway low
Sings to her needle as to and fro
It weaves the seam with its glittering glow,
Close in the garment she holds to sew,
Sing to the seam;
Sing to your dream;
Lodge in each stitch
Part of its gleam.

No "song of the shirt" sings she, oh no,
Her words are gleeful, happy and low;
While the shining needle, fast or slow,
Tosses the thread that it shorter grow.
Sing to the seam;
Sing to your dream;
Lodge in each stitch
Part of its gleam.

A song's good company while you sew;
It helps the needle to onward go
And trace its work in a dainty row
O'er the downy, drifted, cambric snow.
Sing to the seam;
Sing to your dream;
Lodge in each stitch
Part of its gleam.

A simple song with no work below
Is lost on the empty air, you know;
But tune and labor, together glow,
The richest blessings of time bestow.
Sing to the seam;
Sing to your dream;
Lodge in each stitch
Part of its gleam.

MISCELLANY.

French Astronomical Investigations.

One of the Marseilles astronomers has devised a method of determining the apparent diameter of the stars, which he claims to be of peculiar merit. If, through a first-class telescope, a star, whose angular diameter is really nothing, be viewed through a sufficiently high magnifying power, the image is seen to be a bright spot surrounded by the concentric rings of light and shade which are called diffraction rings. Now, it has been shown that these rings, if of extreme faintness and distance from the central spot can only be formed when the angular diameter of the source of light is nearly insensible; and, following out this very unique suggestion, M. Frizeau has applied to the Marseilles telescope a diaphragm having two apertures, for the observation, in a suitable manner, of the fringes produced by the interference.

Now, according to this arrangement, it is found that if a star has a certain diameter, the fringes will disappear altogether, and if the diameter is zero the distances of the fringes will vary with the distances of the two apertures in the diaphragm. Among the results of the investigations in this direction is the interesting fact that Sirius appears to have a measurable diameter.

The Strength of Wood and the Efficiency of the Ax.

In a recent volume of the annals of the Forest Academy, at Mariabrunn, near Vienna, Prof. W. F. Exner gives a novel and highly instructive analysis of the elasticity and strength of wood, its resistance to splitting, and the importance of these matters he shows to be very great, because great industries depend upon the facility with which wood can be split, and upon the applicability of certain kinds of wood. Having deduced a few simple formulae to express the strength of woods and the power of the wedge, he develops a formula for the force with which an ax is handled, and shows that curve should be given to the face or cheek of the ax, in order to secure, under certain conditions the last waste of power. By these formulae he is able to demonstrate that the splitting efficiency of the best axes made in Vienna, Prague and America, are to each other as 13.3, 9.2, and 4.9, respectively; and, applying his formulae to the elaborate experiments of Nordlingen, he is able to deduce the absolute ease with which various woods can be split.

A smashing business—Running railroads.

THE UNKNOWN DEATH.

A DETECTIVE'S STORY.

Murder had been done in Philadelphia—or, at least, so it was supposed—and the papers were full of it. The journals were divided in opinion about the matter, some maintaining that it was a case of simple suicide, others inclining to the belief that there had been foul play, and still others arguing in favor of death from natural though unknown causes. Indeed, it would appear, at first sight, as if the latter were the true supposition, and the majority of superficial readers and thinkers who talked over the affair at home or in the streets the next day, seemed to have very little trouble in arriving at a like conclusion.

All that was known was this: an esteemed citizen—a man of wealth and high standing—had retired to rest the night before apparently in sound health and good spirits, and at two o'clock the following morning had been found dead in bed, without any visible mark of violence upon his person. His son, who had returned home from a pleasure party at that hour, had entered his father's chamber to deposit the front door key there, and had made the horrible discovery. This young man, a steady, reliable and devout church member and Sabbath school teacher, had then aroused the house, and had communicated the ill-tidings to the terror-stricken family.

At the coroner's inquest I was present, and there the son after repeating substantially what has been said above, called the attention of the jury to the following additional and important facts: that on entering the chamber he had found everything undisturbed and as usual, that the bed-clothes even were not rumpled, and that the position of the deceased, as he lay, was so natural and easy that it was not until he had noticed the absence of the deep and regular breathing of the sleeper that he suspected, for an instant, that anything was wrong.

I was not on the jury, but was there at the request of the family, in my official capacity of murder-detective, and it is needless to say that I subjected the body and its surroundings to the closest scrutiny. I could discover nothing, however, that appeared in the least suspicious, or to warrant a supposition of foul play. The post-mortem examination failed equally to satisfy, and developed no indication of poison in the system; but one thing it did develop; and that was, that up to the time of death the internal organs of the deceased had all been in a state of healthy and vigorous action.

For once in my life I was at fault, and must confess that I did not know how to proceed; but still, for all the absence of proof, and the seeming regularity of things, I felt in me a deep mistrust that murder had been done in the premises and by no unskillful hand.

Whilst I was deliberating how to act, the son came over and began a conversation. He talked on the all-absorbing topic of the moment, and was as nervous, restless and agitated as man could be. We were walking rapidly up and down the chamber where lay the corpse, still fresh from the searching hands of the coroner's physician, and as we paused now and then to gaze in at the pale, inanimate face, I remarked that my companion shook with a slight and well-defined tremor. I made a mental note of this, but at the same time did not attach much importance to it, as I considered it but the natural effect of the trying and painful scenes through which the son so recently passed, and whose recollection was refreshed by these momentary views of the dead. I did not, of course, for a moment imagine that the man at my elbow was a patricide; but a murder detective, from habit, is always on the alert, and as I had no clue whatever to follow in this matter, I was merely searching for one everywhere—that was all.

We continued our walk about the room.

"This affair passes my comprehension," said I.

"And mine also," said the son.

I was about taking my leave when a small piece of red rag on the floor, just under the edge of the bed, attracted my attention, and I stooped to pick it up.

The son observed my motion, and said:

"I wonder how that got there? I have the rest of that article in my drawer—it belongs to me!"

"Do you want the piece?" I asked.

"Not at all," he replied; but if you would like to have the remainder, I will get it for you."

He left me without waiting for any reply, and quickly returned with the rest of the handkerchief. He handed it to me and said as he did so:

"I am at a loss to conjecture who could have torn that handkerchief, for I thought it was safe in my apartment when I went out early in the evening."

I put the piece he gave me with the other I already had, and took my leave.

Once at home and in the solitude of my chamber, I sat down at my table and, with my face buried in both hands, fell to thinking and reasoning. I thought of the scene I had just left, and could not doubt that the verdict of the coroner's jury would be "death from causes unknown." I thought of the son and of his torn handkerchief, and I spread out the latter before me on the table, and fitted it to the portion I had found wet and limp under the bed of the deceased. Then I took the wet piece in my fingers and felt and looked at it. It did not seem to have been steeped in water, and to the touch it was just in the slightest way sticky.

I further remarked that it had a very faint white tinge in spots, as if some kind of foam had recently been upon it. Just at that instant I caught sight of a paragraph in a daily paper lying in front of me, and mechanically read it.

The paragraph was as follows: "A ghastly scientific discovery is reported from Turin, where Professor Casturini, the celebrated oculist, has found a way of killing animals by forcing air into their eyes a few seconds, and almost without causing pain. Experiments were recently made at the Royal Veterinary School, and it is said that they have fully proved the truth of the Professor's invention. Within the space of a few minutes four rabbits, three dogs and a goat were killed in this manner. The most remarkable fact is that the operation leaves absolutely no outward trace."

I started up instantly after having read this, and began rapidly to walk the room. I was flushed and agitated. Perhaps I had the key to the mystery I was searching to solve!

"Gracious!" I thought, "if this paragraph be true, might not the method of destruction be applied as fatally to man as to the inferior animals?"

I hurriedly returned to the house of death and rang the bell.

The son answered the summons in person.

He looked not a little surprised at my sudden return.

"What is the matter?" he demanded.

"Nothing," said I—I was quite cool and collected by this time—"I merely wish to make another examination of the chamber of the deceased."

He led me to it at once.

I again scrutinized the body, this time paying more attention to the face and head of the dead man.

There was absolutely nothing to be seen there that had not been seen before. I then pressed open the mouth slightly with my fingers, and, as I did so, I felt, or fancied I felt, the same slight stickiness I had detected on the limp piece of handkerchief. I looked into the mouth, and nearly trembled for joy to see there the clearly-defined white tinge of dried foam!

For a moment I could hardly maintain myself, and my heart beat so loudly that I was almost afraid my companion would hear it and grow alarmed.

However, I did control myself, and as soon as I could trust my voice, said:

"Is there no way by which this house might be entered except by the first story?"

"Oh, yes," returned the son, as composedly as ever, "there is a door in my apartment opening on an old, unused portico, but this has been locked and double-bolted all winter."

This observation was just what I wanted, for it pointed out to me a way to obtain a view of this man's private room, and that, too, without exciting the least suspicion.

"Will you let me see that door?" I asked.

"With the greatest pleasure," said he; "I have already examined it myself, and found it as secure as of old—but perhaps your more experienced eye may detect some sign there that has escaped me."

I followed him, and without the slightest hesitation he led me to his bed-chamber.

There was the door fastened as he had said, and I made a show of looking at it—but that was not what fascinated me and riveted my attention at once.

The walls were full of shelves, and the shelves were crowded with philosophical instruments.

I left the portico door finally, and as I was going carelessly remarked:

"You seem to take an interest in science?"

"Why, yes," said he, smiling, "I do, and I flatter myself that few men here or elsewhere have a larger or better collection of apparatus than I have."

I had touched him on his particular vanity, and knew now that I might search unmolested, and not only that, but with his own proper aid, for the instrument of death.

I turned back, as I spoke, and picked up a pamphlet from the study-table in the center of the room.

The book was written in the Italian language.

I have some slight knowledge of the tongue of the modern opera, and I read on the title page that the work was one on the various modes of the destruction of animal life, and that it was by Casturini.

And Casturini was the name of the Professor spoken of in the newspaper paragraph.

I felt that I was working on the right track.

I laid down the volume and gradually turned the conversation to the subject of pneumatics, in the course of which I asked if my companion had Casturini's air-pump. He told me no, but that he had his air-syringe.

I asked to look at it.

For the first time the son turned on me a hurried glance of alarm.

But I managed to appear as if I suspected nothing—as if nothing more dangerous than love of science actuated me in my investigations.

And my companion was satisfied, for he at once produced the air-syringe.

It was a strange instrument, in shape it was like an ordinary syringe, and such as is daily employed in medicine, only larger, perhaps twice as large as any of that kind I had ever seen. It was mounted on a stand of polished walnut, like an electric machine, and, indeed, looked like one—that is, a cylindrical one. It was furnished with a crank, by which it was worked, and had two large, funnel-shaped mouth-pieces. These latter were not station-

ary, but could be moved—brought nearer together or more widely separated, as circumstances required.

This, then, was the instrument of death, and it performed its dread work silently and surely and left no external trace.

I touched it with a feeling akin to horror, and asked:

"Has this no other use than to deprive animals of life?"

"None," was the smiling response.

"Can you operate it?"

"Better than any I ever met."

I was standing facing this man as he made this boast.

I laid my hand on his shoulder.

He started and seemed not to know what to make of my conduct.

"Your crime is discovered, sir!" said I, sternly. "You are a patricide, and I arrest you for the murder of the man who lies in the other chamber!"

His face turned fairly purple with rage and fear and then grew inkly black. He sat down in the chair without a word.

His courage, and above all things, his incomparable audacity, had altogether abandoned him at this terrible crisis!

I spoke to him again and again several times, but could get no answer.

Then I rang the bell and sent for the coroner's physician.

He came, looked at the man still sitting on the chair, speechless and black in the face, and shook his head.

"This man has lost his reason!" were his fearful words. "What has caused it?"

I told him, and showed him Casturini's air-syringe.

We took our prisoner into custody and conveyed him to the police station.

The ride somewhat restored him, but he was still altogether overwhelmed and crashed.

We left him in a cell and went our various ways.

In the morning I was the first to call to see him.

The officer in charge told me he had been up the greater part of the night, and was then sleeping.

I waited half an hour, and then, in company with the doctor, who had by that time arrived, went to the cell.

The man was there on the bed, lying in his shirt and pantaloons, with his face downward, and motionless.

The doctor touched him—he was cold and stiff. The patricide was dead.

By his side lay a paper, crumpled and rumpled, as if in his last agonies he had endeavored to tear it up.

I took it and read, written in lead pencil, the following:

"The shrewdness of the detective has been too much for me. It was night when I did it, and I fancied the means put it beyond reach of discovery. I was mistaken, and I pay the penalty of that mistake freely now. That doctor is a shrewd practitioner. A man does not counterfeit madness with him with impunity. Had he been as wise in his way as the detective was in his, the law would not have been cheated of its prey. I had my reasons for the deed, fully as potent as those I have for this."

Here followed the signature of the suicide, traced in a full, bold hand.

I turned to the physician and the officer who were with me, and had read the letter over my shoulder.

I must confess that I think my face showed triumph—triumph at having succeeded in tracking and taking a criminal so adroit and calculating—and possibly I had some good ground for being elated.

I did not ask the family of the murdered man for a reward, but I carried away the air-syringe, and I have it to this day. I have made repeated experiments with it since it came in my possession, and each succeeding one but convinces me the more of its deadly and dangerous character.

There is another thing I must say before I close, and that is this: I have solved the mystery of that limp piece of handkerchief I found on the day I undertook the investigation of it: it was employed by the murderer to repress and keep back the slight foam that always flies from the mouth of the subject whenever submitted to the action of the syringe.

I look back upon this adventure now as one of the most important events in my career, and I take pride in telling it over and over again. It shows what science is connected with the detection of crime, and it also shows from what a slight link a massive chain of conclusive evidence may be forged.

I say I look back to it with pride, and I can only hope that an intelligent public will hear and approve my recital—the story of the UNKNOWN DEATH.

I SAID SO.

Here is a domestic drama from Paris. A young girl was about to be married to a journeyman carpenter, whose suit was by no means agreeable to her. She had refused and protested against the match, but her father was inexorable on the subject, and insisted on the marriage, though the mother would willingly have yielded. At length the bride-elect appeared resigned to her fate, and the father, pointing out the happy result of his firmness to his wife, triumphantly exclaimed, "I told you so." Next day, however, the poor girl, having left a letter at home explaining the cause of her action, jumped off the Bridge of Austerlitz into the Seine. She was, however, saved, and carried home by two sailors. The father returned home just as the dripping girl was placed in safety beside the paternal hearth, when the mother, with perhaps more point than discretion, simply observed, "I told you so."

A Remarkable Relic.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* says: A bronze fork with two prongs, discovered by Mr. George Smith in the mound of Konyunlik, supplies food for some reflection. If it really is a bona fide relic it is one of the most singular and remarkable relics of antiquity. That "fingers were made before forks" is a proverb the truth of which no one, we presume, is inclined to dispute. But we are apt to forget how very long the people of the west, at any rate, were destitute of forks; and if Mr. George Smith's fork is a fork, as he evidently supposes it to be, another and a very important addition will have been made to the claims of Asia to early superiority over Europe. Neither the Greeks nor the Romans knew anything of forks for eating, although that they had pitch-forks from time immemorial and did not take a hint from them speaks little for their analogical ingenuity. And, notwithstanding that forks were known as rare and exceptional instruments in the middle ages, they were not used either by carvers or eaters of meat even so late as the early part of the sixteenth century among the most advanced in European nations. The Greeks had knives for carving. But when they fed themselves with solid food they did it with their fingers, which they afterward wiped on pieces of bread. When they took soup they used either a spoon or a bit of bread hollowed out. So likewise the Romans fed themselves with their fingers when they ate solid food, and liquid food they took with a spoon (*cochlear*). They had no forks, although they cultivated carving as an art with considerable assiduity.

The carver, scissor or stricker was a person guided by rules, who performed his task to the sound of music, and with appropriate gesticulation. In Wynkin de Worde's *Boke of Keruynges*, too, published in 1513, the author tells the carver he must "Set never on fynde, beest ne towle more than two fyngers and a thombe," clearly showing that forks were not in use; and adds, "Your knife must be fayre, and your handes must be cleane, and passe not two fyngers and a thombe upon your knyfe." Yet the fork was employed for certain purposes among our ancestors at least two centuries before this was written. One fork is mentioned in the wardrobe account of Edward I, for the year 1297, and Edward II's favorite, Piers Gaveston, had (Fodera, year 1346) "Trois furesces d'argent pur mangier poires." Le Grand d'Aussy (*Histoire de la Vie Privee des Francois*, tom. III, page 179) says that forks are enumerated in an inventory of the jewels of Charles V of France for 1370, and this is the only instance he mentions during the middle ages. He also remarks, writing in 1872, that then the knife was commonly employed to convey food to the mouth, "as it still is in England, when for that purpose the blades of knives are made broad and round at the end." So Mr. Thackeray's "Snob" friend Marrowfat had ancient precedent at least, and somewhat modern example, according to Le Grand d'Aussy, to plead in excuse of his memorable delinquency with the peas.

The Mental Attitude of Primitive Man.

Comprehensions of the thoughts generated in the primitive man by his converse with the surrounding world can be had only by looking at the surrounding world from his standpoint. The accumulated knowledge and the mental habits slowly acquired during education must be suppressed, and we must divest ourselves of conceptions which, partly by inheritance and partly by individual culture, have been rendered necessary. None can do this completely, and few can do it even partially. It needs but to observe what unit methods are adopted by educators, to be convinced that even among the disciplined the power to form thoughts which are widely unlike their own is extremely small. When we see the juvenile mind plied with generalities while it has yet none of the concrete facts to which they refer—when we see mathematics introduced under the purely rational form, instead of under the empirical form with which it should be commenced by the child, as it was commenced by the race—when we see a subject so abstract as grammar put among the first instead of among the last, and see it taught analytically instead of synthetically; we have ample evidence of the prevailing inability to conceive the ideas of undeveloped minds. And if, though they have been children themselves, men find it hard to re-think the thoughts of the child, still harder must they find it to rethink the thoughts of the savage. To keep our automorphic interpretations in beyond our power. To look at things with the eyes of absolute ignorance, and observe how their attributes and actions originally grouped themselves in the mind, imply a self-suppression that is impracticable. [Popular Science Monthly.]

The Weak Place.

Home can never be a thoroughly happy place while there are so few subjects of common interest between man and woman. It is owing to this that matrimonial engagements are entered into so rarely on the basis of any broad intellectual sympathy, such as might furnish some security for lasting affection, and so often at the bidding of impulses and fancies that do not outlive the honeymoon; and it is owing to the same cause that so very large a proportion of the lives of most husbands and wives is spent practically apart, with little or no knowledge on the part of either of the objects or aims that engross the greater portion of the other's thoughts and energies. [Popular Science Monthly.]

VARIETIES.

Poor men and hens are obliged to scratch to get along in this world.

"Here's another doughnestic difficulty," said a Brooklyn woman as she found her bread heavy.

Josh Billings says that in the beds of many hotels "you sleep some, but roll over a good deal."

"A book has been published called 'Half-Hours with Insects.' The author was not a regular boarder."

Switzerland has a cremation society. When the first meeting is held all the members will doubtless be ready to go to Bern.

"I am a broken man," sighed a dilapidated author. "I should think so, for I've seen your pieces," responded a bystander.

An uncle left eleven silver spoons to his nephew in his will, adding, "He knows the reason I have not left him the whole dozen."

"What a contradictory thing a barometer is," said Spriggins. "How so?" asked Wiggins. "Because the higher you take it the lower it gets."

An Ohio man has been snatched from a drunkard's grave eighty-nine times. Since the election he's been going on as if he wanted to be snatched some more.

"George, dear, don't you think it is rather extravagant of you to eat butter with that delicious jam?" "No, love economical! Same piece of bread does for both!"

"Oh! I've loved before," said a Detroit woman to her fourth husband, as she took a handful of hair from his head because he objected to hang out the week's washing.

There is a farm house in Lochgoon, Scotland, over the door of which is an inscription bearing the date of 1178. The present occupant of the farm is the 38th of his name that has held the farm—the family having dwelt there for 38 generations—that is ever since the 8th century.

An English custom of "Afternoon Tea" has been adopted in Paris, and the hour fixed at five p. m. Tea is not served on a silver waiter by a servant, but a neat little table or chagere stands before each guest. On the top is a place for a cup, and under the first shelf is another for biscuits or sandwiches.

A recent writer says that corpulency is not a disease. The founder of the English Church was a fat man. Luther was a corpulent; Napoleon I, though his carriage was erect and soldierly, had much adipose tissue about him; Byron was inclined to corpulency, as were most of the literary worthies of the Elizabethan era. So if corpulency is a disease, it certainly has not a bad effect on the brain.

Friction impedes the progress of the railway train, and yet it is only through friction that it makes any progress. This apparent paradox is explained when we remember that by reason of the frictional "bite" of the drivers upon the track they draw the train.

The bearings of the wheels upon the rails are a mere line where they come in contact, iron and iron, yet this slight and almost imperceptible hold is sufficient to move hundreds of tons dead weight with the speed of the wind.

A very good old book teaches us by parable, that the man who hid his talent in a napkin did not do well. How will those merchants succeed who hide their capital, their business, and themselves from all who do not, by mere chance, enter their stores? It is easy for a business man to speak out for himself in the newspaper; and by means of it he can speak regularly, often, and to the point. Why do so many of us hide our talents away instead of increasing them to ten talents, which we are taught to look upon as the increase we should receive from our good gifts, if we pay them sufficient respect and treat them properly.

The *Scientific American* describes a strange fertilizer. At Stratford, Connecticut, where mosquitoes are as thick as fog, lives an ingenious Yankee, so they say—believe it who may—who puts the insects to profitable use. He has invented a large revolving scoop-net, covered with lace, which is put in motion by a wind-mill, water power or steam. The upper half moves through the atmosphere, and at each rotation draws an immense number of the "squitoes" down into the water, where they drown and sink to the bottom. Every revolution of the net draws in an ounce of mosquitoes, or a ton for thirty thousand turns of the machine. The mosquitoes thus collected make a splendid manure for the land, worth forty-five dollars a ton.

In the days when rouge-et-nour flourished at Baden Baden the Prussian officers were strictly forbidden to play. One of them, however, dressed as a civilian, ventured to place 10 Napoleons on a color. The color came up twice, and the officer was just about to take up the money when his eye fell upon the King of Prussia, who was watching the game with interest. In his fright, the officer did not dare to remove his Napoleons. The play continued, and the same color came up a third, a fourth,