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APPLE BLOSSOMS.

Sittin putty old, both on us, old tree!
Guess we're glad it's spring agin, ye an me.
Winter's hard on old folks. Well, I swow!
Ye don't look old. Them blossoms, now,
Kind o' kiver up the scars 'at time has made.
Wouldn't no one guess quite how long ye've staid
Growin right out thar seein ye today.
Thought ye'd git a spring suit, now it's May?
Jes' like yo goin to git a pitcher took.
Can't fool me, old chest, braggin how ye look.
I see ye 'long in March de olate an bare,
Hollow down one side, a-showin of me where
Ye lost that big limb back in seventy-five.
Guess I remember! Then—she—was—alive.
Ah, me! They's storms fer men well's trees.
That storm nigh killed me. Guess he who sees
Wut's in all hearts knows mine is hollow, too,
Scarred an tore like yourn from that awful blow.
Well, well, russet, don't min the old man.
This is May, so b'oom away 'slong as ye can.
My! Ain't yo fine! Wisht she c'd see ye now—
Thousands o' peurty petals tremblin on every bough,
Fallin when the breeze blows, flutterin sof' an slow,
Spreadin a snowy carpet on the groun below.
An all them pink buds peepin through the green.
A flow'rin apple tree's the purtiest thing I ever seen.
An they ain't no parfeme in the shops 'at'll compare
Ith the smell of them blossoms swayin up there.
They's nothin half so purty as an apple tree in May,
When the blossoms scent the air agin an spring has come to stay.

—J. L. Heaton in "The Quilting Bee."

A QUEER INTERVIEW.

The story I was reading had a ghastly attempt at murder. Lady Forrester heard the figure creeping toward her in the dark. She saw it pass in front of one window, and then in agony waited for it to reach the other. She tried to cry out, but was powerless, as in a nightmare. Then the cloth, saturated in chloroform, was pressed over her face, and—well, I could stand it no longer, and went to bed.

When the bedclothes were tucked tight about my chin, I felt better. In my hand I held a 32 caliber Smith & Wesson, and I tried not to think of the choloform saturated cloth and the sinking feeling of Lady Forrester. A revolver is a comfort against ghosts, imaginary robbers and mice in the walls.

For awhile I only had the last to guard against. Then the imaginary robber came pattering up the tin roof of the old shed under my window. I rose up in bed, ready to be a hero. Looking out, I saw, by the moonlight, that it was only the icicles melting and dropping down.

After that I grew sleepy. I turned over on my side, resting my temple against the barrel of my revolver. Through the window I looked up toward the barn where slept Virginia of Virginia, a three-quarter bred filly, of which I had hopes.

The trees were all thickly incrusted with ice, shining in the moonlight with a summery effect of silver leaves. The thaw kept on tinkling down the icicles in the most engaging way, and altogether I completely forgot about Lady Forrester and the chloroform saturated cloth.

Just as I was dozing off my window was darkened, the sash rose and a man put one foot into the room. My heart gave one big jump, and then I became quite calm. The man looked 60 years old and cold and wet, and my pistol, as it lay on my pillow, pointed directly at him. I quite pitied him; I was so warm under two down comforters, and I knew he would presently be so disappointed.

When he had got his second leg inside and was sitting on the window sill, peering into the shadow of the room, I spoke:

"To what, may I ask, do I owe the honor of this visit?" I have often wished I could be as polite to my friends and relations as I am to the blacklegs I meet.

The robber gasped and then in the approved way hissed to me to hold my peace as I valued my existence.

"For your sake," I replied with unabated politeness, "I regret to say that I've got the drop on you."

"That air a fish story," he returned snappishly. In his experience men did not get the drop on any one without swift action.

I moved my hand about four inches into the bar of moonshine that fell across the edge of the pillow.

"Do you believe now?" I asked. The pistol was in plain sight.

The burglar looked crestfallen. "I see that my incognito can no longer be preserved," he said, speaking in an entirely different voice—that of a cultivated gentleman. He crossed his legs comfortably. "I must confess to you that I am no burglar at all, but a ghost."

"You may tell that," said I, "to the marines."

"I did not expect you to believe me," he said patiently. "If you will kindly take that tennis racket at the head of your bed, you will find that you can wave it through me, or you may throw a pillow at me and I shall be no hindrance to its passing out of the window."

The fellow was very plausible. I have cut my eyeteeth, however, and a moment's reflection showed me that the burglar hoped by this stratagem either to wrench the tennis racket from my hand and brain me, or to escape under cover of the pillow, so I neither acted upon

an awkward predicament, in a cloud.

The burglar seemed to read my thoughts. With quiet courtesy he continued, "Or I will simply fade away, if that will convince you better."

"If you can fade away before I get a shot at you, it certainly will convince me," I said with some asperity.

"Would you rather have me disappear suddenly, or, with a lingering smile, gradually, like the Cheshire cat?" he asked.

I laughed. The follow's assurance amused me. "You may leave your smile as a memento," I answered, humoring him and cocking my pistol. It was a self cocking revolver, so that this was unnecessary, but I thought the moral effect would be good.

The burglar smiled in a superior way, which nettled me. I went on: "Not that your smile strikes me as anything remarkable"— I was going to add more had not a wonderful thing happened, which if I had not seen it myself I could hardly believe. The room grew lighter, and I, still looking at the burglar, found myself seeing, instead, the rows of ice covered trees and the barn, while the moonlight again flooded the floor.

Dazed, I clutched my brow, thinking sudden blindness had stricken me. Then remembering that blindness would shut out the moonlight and the barn as well as the burglar, I drew a breath of relief. Still staring at the window, I presently made out a faint ironical smile where the burglar's head had been, and cold beads of sweat stood on my brow as I comprehended that the words of the burglar must be true.

I sat up in bed and would have fled from the room, had I dared turn my back on that cold, clammy smile. Its having no eyes or ears gave it a ghastly growsomeness which a man can hardly picture to himself within whose experience no such smile has ever come. The smile as I gazed grew more mocking.

"I thoroughly believe you now," I cried, writhing under its amusement, and moreover impelled by a polite desire to make the amende honorable for having doubted the word of my guest.

The smile vouchsafed no response, and I became uneasy.

"Won't you please come back?" I pleaded nervously—"the rest of you, I mean." Still there came no sign.

"It was very embarrassing, your disappearing so suddenly, when you had promised to disappear gradually," I continued, my uneasiness changing to irritation: "I can't talk to a smile by itself. Let me at least have your ears, to be sure that you can hear me."

The words were hardly out of my mouth before the whole burglar sat again on the window sill.

"Thank you," I said, relieved.

"Don't mention it," said the burglar, "I hope I didn't make the smile too weak. I forgot that you were not used to the night like me."

"Not at all," I answered, "I only wish that I could smile as well at afternoon teas when I want to disappear."

The burglar—or rather the ghost, as it would now be polite to call him—seemed pleased. He smiled again that smile which I knew so well, as the story books say.

"You flatter me," he replied. "It's an accomplishment that any ghost can learn, though most of them neglect it—not but that they have time enough." A pained look swept across his features.

I felt the delicacy of the situation and changed the subject.

"Would you mind telling me why you pretended to be a burglar?" I asked.

He laughed. "It was just for fun. People latterly had taken to receiving me coldly and skeptically as a ghost, and it hurt my feelings. Burglars are always believed in."

"Then you are not the ghost of a burglar?" I queried.

"No. I was a lawyer—a distinguished lawyer, I may say, of some time ago. My name is Symonds, and you probably remember that I was counsel for the plaintiff in the celebrated Mifflin-Scarborough divorce trial, shortly before my death. Now that I am found out, I suppose I ought to appear in my proper clothes." He glanced down at his suit in a shamefaced way. "The truth is I have become so accustomed to these old burglar duds that I wear them most of the time."

"I am no stickler for etiquette at this time of night," I said, waving my hand in a deprecating way. I had become strangely interested in the gentleman and reached down to the chair at my bedside for my notebook and pencil, which always lie there for ideas that may come during the night. Holding the notebook in the bar of moonshine at the edge of my pillow, I began to jot down a few incidents of our conversation.

"What are you doing?" asked the ghost.

"Just taking down a few of your remarks," I answered.

"May I inquire what for?"

"I'm a reporter," I said, laying down my pencil, for it occurred to me that he might not know of all our modern innovations. "It is true that I am at home, temporarily out of a job, but I should like to work up a special article, if you don't mind, of an interview with you."

The ghost looked puzzled and a little alarmed, yet not altogether displeased. He uncrossed his legs and sat up straight, preening himself, as a man of fashion does, smoothing his hair and putting his hand to his cravat. And when I looked at him again he was no longer dressed in his burglar clothes, but in the most picturesque old velvet suit, embroidered in white, with knee breeches, silk stockings on his well turned legs and a powdered wig.

The change did not surprise me, though I was a little amazed to find so much vanity still residing in one who could hardly expect our fin de siecle to take him seriously, at least by daylight. I made a note, however, of his distinguished appearance, for I have noticed in my profession that that is the most important part of an interview, as far as the person interviewed is concerned. Then I came to my leading question:

"Will you please tell the readers of the ——— (I will fill in the name when I have sold the article) why you do not rest in your grave, but haunt?"

"Sir!" he shouted indignantly. "You have no right to ask such a question. It is no affair of yours."

"Mr. Symonds," I answered respectfully, but with dignity, "I am not asking this to satisfy my own curiosity. For me it suffices that you do haunt and do come here at an hour which for any one not in your condition of life, or—or—or death, would be unseemly. It is solely in my professional capacity as reporter, to satisfy the craving for information of the great American people, as exemplified in the readers of the—whatever paper buys my story—that I ask you this question."

"It is nevertheless a question no gentleman would ask," he answered hotly.

Still preserving my calm, in spite of his language, I replied, "Mr. Symonds, in the celebrated divorce trial, in which you were counsel for the plaintiff, you asked infinitely more impertinent questions in the discharge of your duties than I am now asked in the discharge of mine."

The ghost winced. I had known nothing of this particular Mifflin-Scarborough case, yet of divorce trials in general I knew enough to make the assertion confidently. For a minute the ghost sat silent, pondering, abashed.

"Are all your questions as searching?" he asked at length, humbly.

"All," I answered firmly, to dispel any lingering erroneous hopes he might entertain. I smiled at his dismay, a smile perhaps as irritating to him as his detached or disembodied smile had been to me. It was my triumph, and I showed it, perhaps too plainly, forgetting one resource of a ghost for extricating himself from unpleasant predicaments.

Not another word was spoken, but all at once I found myself again looking through the window, the view, this time, not even obstructed by a smile.

I never saw Mr. Symonds again. Evidently the complications of our fin de siecle civilization were too much for him.—Kenneth Brown in Magpie.

Duly Corrected.

One of the first things that a child learns in a family where there are smaller children is to be very efficient in the management of those other children. One small boy, aged 3, has a sister, aged nearly 2, who has a propensity for upsetting her mother's spool basket. For this offense she has had to be corrected several times, and her brother has become aware of the enormity of the offense. Recently the mother heard a terrible uproar in her room, where the children were together, and, going in to see what was the matter, found the little girl weeping, while the boy, looking very conscious of virtue and radiant with efficiency, said, "She tipped over the 'pool basket, mamma—but she's all 'pank-ed!"—Boston Transcript.

Wonders of the Voice.

It is not generally known that in the human voice, though generally but of nine perfect tones, there are actually no less than 17,592,186,044,415 different sounds. These effects are produced by 14 direct muscles, which give about 16,383 different sounds and 30 indirect muscles, which produce 73,741,823 sounds.

Try This.

A good test of a man's symmetry may be made if he stands with his face to the wall. The chest of a perfectly formed man will touch the wall, his nose will be four inches away, his thighs five and the tips of his toes three.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

CONSUMPTIVE SHEPHERDS.

Many Weak Lunged Men Follow the Occupation In California.

The California shepherd is an individual almost entirely unknown to the rest of the world. Even the residents of the state hardly know of his existence, while the cowboy has a world wide fame. The reason for it is not hard to find. It is because the men are different in almost every way, particularly in disposition. And, after all, the difference is to a large extent caused by the animals they care for.

The villainous cowboy who would rather fight than eat and thinks that the noblest things in the world are forms of dissipation can get no satisfaction for his nature in caring for such gentle creatures as sheep. He wants something that he can swear at, like a vicious steer, that would be only too glad to gore him to death if he would let it. He wants to dash wildly over the range on a pony as vicious as the steer—or himself, for that matter—and ride through small settlements like a demon. The beasts in his care are not easily hurt, and he can abuse them as much as he feels like by lassoing them, throwing them down and branding them. There is nothing that gives a cowboy as much pleasure as branding a bull that has given him considerable trouble. He likes to see the creature squirm in agony as he presses the hot iron into its flesh. To kill one that is demoralizing to the herd is the height of his delight.

In marked contrast to this individual is the sheep herder—that is, the majority of sheep herders. To be sure, there are some almost as bad as the cowboys, but they are for the most part men who are employed by ranchers for so much a month and are delegated to the work as they might be to any other work on the ranch. But they don't like it. The real sheep herder, and he is largely in the majority, is the man who follows it in preference to anything else. A man who is attached to the work would rather watch sheep on the hills than be the president of a bank.

Another class of men who watch sheep are those who do it for their health. Dozens of men claim to have been cured of consumption simply by putting in several months at watching sheep. The work gives what is most required in the deadly disease—plenty of fresh air, moderate exercise and employment that is not wearing on the brain, but is still enough to keep it occupied and prevent nervousness. Of course, if a man has plenty of money he can get these things without herding sheep, but there are many men who need them badly who have no money, and all who have taken advantage of this knowledge have surely been benefited. A number of men who have taken up sheep herding have become so fascinated with it that they stuck to it long after they got over the trouble.

Of course it is not an easy matter to get employment of this kind, but if the owner of the range knows the applicant he will be almost sure to give him work, as he knows he is likely to get good service. The pay is small, about $25 a month and provisions, which the man must cook himself, except when the sheep are close to the ranchhouse. But this does not happen often. It is no matter whether the sheep herder is an old or a new hand, the work expected of him will be the same under any circumstances.

Sheep ranges in California are scattered all over the state, but the greater number of them can be found in the foothills of the Sierras all the way from Siskiyou to Tehachapi and on the other side of the mountains. The work of looking after them lasts all year, although more must be done at one time than another.—San Francisco Call.

Prize Record For Stealing.

An old man in England was sent to prison for four months for petty stealing whose record, the judge who sentenced him said, "is one of the most awful pieces of reading that have ever come to my notice."

In 1863 he was sent to jail for three years for stealing two tame rabbits. He then got seven years for stealing 5 shillings and a shawl; then ten years, with seven years' police supervision, for stealing three ducks, and finally consecutive sentences for five years each on three charges of stealing a coat, a pair of reins and a shovel, with another seven years' police supervision.

In all 35 years of penal servitude for six thefts of objects whose value amounted to a few dollars!—Boston Journal.

Horsepower.

A modern engineering work states that a horse can draw on the worst earthen road 3 times as much as he can carry on his back; on a macadamized road, 9 times as much; on a plank road well laid and in good order, 25 times as much; on a smooth stone pavement, 33 times as much, and on a steel railroad 54 times as much.

Too Eager to Vote.

Mr. J. K. Fowler, in his "Recollections of Old Country Life," tells a very curious story about a parliamentary election in England in 1784. The rival candidates in a certain borough were Sir John Aubrey and Lord Verney. The poll lasted 14 days, and up to the very last day it was uncertain how the Ashridge tenantry would vote. Then it became known that they would vote against Lord Verney. Mr. Fowler says:

My readers must understand that at that time, when the constituency of any borough or county could not poll one vote an hour, the poll was considered closed.

On the last day Lord Verney was somewhere about 30 votes ahead of Aubrey, and the roads were so bad from the Ashridge district that the voters could not make their way to the polling place without great difficulty. At 11 o'clock in the forenoon the Verney committee, sitting at the Bull's Head inn, found that their man was safe.

No vote had been thrown for three-quarters of an hour. A quarter of an hour more, therefore, and the poll would close, and they had discovered that the Ashridge contingent could not arrive before 12 o'clock.

They were congratulating each other on their certain success, when a violent supporter of their party galloped into the town, rushed to the hustings, recorded his vote for Verney and hurrying at once to the committee room announced in a self satisfied tone that he had just "given a plumper" for his lordship.

"You have!" exclaimed the chairman, "Then you have lost our election."

And sure enough he had. The poll had then to be kept open an hour longer, the Ashridge tenantry arrived, and Sir John Aubrey was elected by 24 votes.

A Cannon Ball's Flight to the Moon.

Astronomers may use long strings of figures, but there is nothing that gives us a more graphic idea of the immense distances which separate us from the celestial bodies than the old illustration in which the flight of the cannon ball is made the basis of calculation. It has been shown by the mathematicians that a ball fired from a modern "great gun" would, if it could keep up its initial velocity, reach the moon, which is 240,000 miles away, in 12 days. That is a long time, indeed, especially when we consider the fact of the wonderful rate of speed with which the iron messenger would travel. But, when we come to make comparison between the time which it would take such a missile to cross the space which separates us from the goddess of night and the fixed stars, or even the planets, we are simply amazed. If it would take such a missile 12 days to reach the moon, it would take it 6½ years to reach the planet Mars, and yet some "speculative" astronomers talk about communicating with that planet. It would take 54 years for the ball to travel to Jupiter, 108 for it to cover the distance between us and Saturn, 300 years would elapse before it would reach Neptune and 3,000,000 years would go by before it could reach Alpha Centauri, the nearest fixed star.—St. Louis Republic.

European Study For Vocalists.

"For the average singer America offers most excellent teachers. She can find all she needs at home," writes Mme. Melba in an article on "The Vocal Student" in The Ladies' Home Journal. "For operatic singers some foreign training is practically necessary so long as impresarios consider Europe their market and retired artists make it their home. * * * But no girl," she adds, "unless she has money to throw away—I mean by this a large fortune to spend—should go abroad for vocal instruction until she has been passed upon musically by at least two or three artists—people who value the glory and fair name of their art and the life and perhaps the honor of the would be singer too highly to advise her to enter upon a career of privation and hardship where there is for her by nature's decree no possibility of success. If possible, these artists should be strangers to the singers—people who will not be moved nor swayed by any personal interest and will therefore speak only truth. But only those so passed upon and those others who can afford to indulge a hobby should ever go abroad for instruction."

In the treatment of nervous cases he is the best physician who is the most ingenious inspirer of hope.

QUAKER MARRIAGES.

How Members of the Society of Friends Wed Each Other.

A young man and woman in this city belonging to the Society of Friends, who have certified their intention of marriage at the city hall, are having to undergo the regular form which the society imposes by waiting for the approval of the monthly meeting before they can be married. The first stage in the proceedings is for them both to appear at the monthly meeting of the society, which is the only time that any business is done, and make known their intention. They both stand up before the meeting, and the man says: "With divine permission and Friends' approbation, I declare my intention to take this woman (and he calls her name) to be my wife," and then they sit down. But the sanction of the society for the marriage requires more than this formality. It is never granted unless both parties are Friends, and so, if one of the young people is out of the fold, they have to be married without the formal approval of the society.

When the approval is secured, the couple marry themselves. The ceremony is appointed by the society to take place at some regular meeting, or else at one specially appointed. In the latter case it may be at a house where any one of the society has the right to be present.

But the most interesting ceremony is that which takes place in a regularly assembly of the society at the meeting house. Any one who has been to a Quaker service knows the fashion of the meeting house, with its high seats in front, facing the rest of the meeting. The elders usually sit there, but when a couple of young people are going to get married they have to occupy this conspicuous place, and have to stand up bravely, without minister or elder, and marry themselves.

An old Quaker minister who said he had seen six couples stand up in this way before the congregation was asked why the young people had to do it alone, and he said it was a matter that did not concern an intermediate person, but rested between themselves and God. Then he described how the young man would stand up in that high perched place in the meeting house along with his bride, and, taking her hand, say, "In the presence of God and this assembly, I take thee, A. B., to be my wife, promising to be unto thee an affectionate and loving husband until the hand of the Lord by death shall separate us." The bride then speaks in a similar fashion.

At the end of this ceremony a minister prays or speaks, and then, when there is a pause and the spirit moves no one else, the meeting is adjourned. At the close of the meeting the marriage certificate, which is made of parchment, is brought forward, and any one can sign it. A special law sanctions this marriage ceremony. This document, which amounts to the legal sanction of the marriage, is greatly prized among the descendants of Friends, so much so that the children often have similar marriage certificates made for themselves though they may have been married outside of the society.—Worcester (Mass.) Gazette.

Different Here.

"In Japan," she said, "the shopper is considered the merchant's guest and is treated as such."

"That's all right where it's necessary," he replied, "but it isn't necessary here."

"Why not?"

"Why, I gather from what I have seen of shoppers in this country that they own any store they happen to be in. They don't have to have courtesies extended to them either; they can reach for them."—Chicago Post.

If the Earth and Moon Should Meet.

The scientists have been discussing the question, What would be the result if the earth and the moon should come in collision? The general opinion seems to be that it would result in the temperature of the earth rising several thousands of degrees and its whole surface being converted into a boiling ocean by the waters being thrown out of place.—St. Louis Republic.

A Great Deal to Know.

A rather fine looking young man once applied to Disraeli for a position.

"I know, sir," said the applicant wistfully, "how little I know."

"Dear me," said the great statesman, "as much as that? I haven't got half that distance yet!"

But he secured him a position then and there.—London Answers.