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The Speaker of the Japanese Parliament and the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole are Christians.

To the death of Baron Haussmann, Paris loses the architect who, with the assistance of Napoleon III, made her so beautiful. It cost a great deal of money, remarks the Cincinnati Enquirer, but in the long run it paid.

Montana claims by analysis that her sugar beets are the sweetest in the wide, wide world," observes the Washington Star, "and that enterprising young State proposes to go into the sugar industry and eclipse creation."

Statistics show that at the present time in the United States there are engaged in different employments twenty-two women to every 100 men. In Philadelphia the proportion is fifty to 100. Half a century ago there were in Massachusetts only seven occupations open to women. Now there are 284. Twenty-two leading cities in the country show 312 occupations in which women find employment.

America is credited with many labor-saving devices, but there are some of English origin, acknowledges the Boston Transcript, that throw our best into the shade. One of these—for the benefit of authors—is described in an English contemporary. There are persons, it says, "gifted with no faculty of writing, who for a small sum are prepared to contrive you all the involutions and evolutions of a story, with a full complement of heroes, villains, lovers, heavy fathers, scheming mothers, and all the rest of it."

According to the Philadelphia Record in 1888 there were 4,000,000 bushels of oysters received at Baltimore from the Chesapeake Bay beds, but this season the receipts to the same date have fallen below 2,000,000 bushels, while packing-houses throughout the State are closed, and from all parts of the bay comes the story of exhausted beds. The violation of the calling law, and the consequent destruction of the young oyster, is responsible for this condition of things. The law is a dead letter, and a great industry is being ruined. Nearly ten years ago Professor Brooks, of Johns Hopkins University, uttered a warning against the wholesale depletion of the oyster beds; but the work has continued, and even now the oystermen do not seem to realize the gravity of the situation.

Germany will yet regret, predicts the Chicago Post, that it ever showed a disquieting spirit toward the American hog. This want of civility to our graceful pucker will hardly plunge the two nations into a bloody strife. But it may strain the diplomatic relations for a time, because the hog is a universal favorite in the land of the free and the home of the brave. The Swedish hog, the Norwegian hog and the Denmark hog all enjoy the freedom of the Kaiser Empire. The prohibitions against them have been raised and they can come and go according to their pleasure. The American hog alone has been singled out for this gentlemanly treatment. But time vents all things, and the day will come when the now despised hog will make a triumphal entry in Berlin amidst the ruzzes of the German artillery and the buzzes of the German populace.

J. Scott Keltie, Librarian of the Royal Geographical Society, London, in his article "About Africa," in Scribner, says: "In the final scramble for Africa, Great Britain has managed to appropriate a very satisfactory share. South of the Zambesi she has obtained nearly all that is worth having, and here we see in the making what in the future may probably become a great English-speaking nation or confederation. In the center of the continent, again, thanks to the public spirit of Sir William Mackinnon, her dominion extends over those great lakes which give origin to the Nile, and the magnificent plateaus with their splendid populations around them. On the other side she has command of the Niger and the thickly populated and half-civilized countries to which that river gives access. England is supreme in Egypt, and will probably let no other gain a footing in these upper Nile countries which are at present terrorized over by the Mahdi. The history of Central Africa may only now be said to have begun. The problem here is very different from that which has had to be faced in America, in Australia, and even in Asia, what will be the final outcome of it all, who can tell!"

IF WE HAD THE TIME.

If I had the time to find a place,
And sit me down full face to face
With my better self that stands no show
In my daily life that rushes so;
It might be then I would see my soul
Was stumbling still toward the shining goal;
I might be nerved by the thought sublime,
If I had the time!

If I had the time to let my heart
Speak out and take in my life apart,
To look about and to stretch a hand
To a comrade quartered in no-luck land;
Ah, God! if I might but just sit still
And hear the note of the whip-poor-will.
I think that my wish with God's would rhyme—
If I had the time!

ALMIRA'S VALENTINE.

BY HELEN FORREST GRAVES.

Down in the valley, the clock of Osborne Church had just struck twelve, the sounds coming in muffled throbs through the waves of feathery, fast falling snow, and Miss Almira Brown, making her way across the deserted churchyard, stopped to listen, with one hand behind her ear.

"Sounds dreadful natural," said she. "Seems like only yesterday I was here instead of eighteen good years. I wish it wouldn't snow so! It's sort o' bewildering. I believe I'm off the true path again. I don't really know if I'm close to the north wall by Deacon Linsley's grave, or down under the hill where Squire Dewey's two daughters are buried. I wonder, with a little shiver, 'if there is really such a thing as a ghost? And if there was, wouldn't it be strange and sort o' creepy-like to meet one, spookin' 'round here in the snow on Saint Valentine's Eve? Most folks would say that was a sign of speedy death; and the Browns never were a long-lived family. Oh, here I be!" as she perceived, through the glimmering veil of white, the black outlines of a rude stone stile. "I guess I'll find my way all right now."

Carrying her carpet-bag in her hand, Miss Almira made a plunge for the high road, and presently stood under the porch of a pretty, old-fashioned house, a story and a half high, with brooding eaves that came nearly to the ground, and windows barred with wooden shutters, painted red.

"Hump!" continued Almira, stamping the snow from her substantial calfskin boots, and changing the carpet-bag from one hand to the other. "Zenas has had the fence repaired and a new gate put in." She knocked vigorously at the door. No reply came. She knocked again, still with no better success.

"Just like Zenas," muttered she. "The most absent-mindedest creature that ever lived—to go off the very night he expected his only sister to come home. I never'd ha' left Canaan Centre to come back here and keep house for him if I'd a suspected such treatment as this. However, doctors have got excuses that other folks hain't, especially country doctors. I dare say Zenas had a sudden call, and I guess likely I'll find the door-key in the old place."

She stooped down, and lifting the corner of the door-mat fished out a big brass key, wherewith she proceeded to open the door and admit herself into a little carpeted entry, where a kerosene lamp burned low on the table.

"I do declare," said Almira, "he's fixed up things real nice. A carpet on the floor, and new paper on the walls. I guess he meant to give me a surprise. Here's the teapot on the kitchen stove. Zenas always was partial to a cup o' tea—and a good fire, too. I'll jist set down and dry myself a spell before I look around. Zenas'll be back directly, I hain't no doubt."

The warmth and quiet of the cozy little kitchen acted as a soporific on the chilled and weary traveler, and the first thing she knew the clock in the corner was striking one, and turning with a sudden start, she saw a short, stout man on the threshold staring at her.

"What do you want?" she demanded, curtly, remembering, with a pang of terror, that she had forgotten to relock the door, in her amazement at the new paper and the striped carpet in the hall.

"The doctor ain't at home, and I don't know when he'll be back."

"I don't want the doctor," said the short man.

"Then," said Almira, rising to the emergency, "you're a burglar, and you'd better clear out o' this!"

She seized the poker and advanced resolutely toward him.

"Look here, ma'am," said the stranger.

"I won't look," shrilly uttered Miss Almira. "I'm in charge here, and—"

At this moment she caught the heel of the calfskin boot in the thrifty ragrug that lay in front of the fire and stumbled, and as she did so, the poker flew out of her hand and went hurtling through the air, hitting the strange man on the side of the head.

Miss Almira was appalled, as she scrambled to her feet, to see him stagger backward to a chair, with a dull red stream trickling down his face.

"Good land!" she ejaculated. "I've killed the burglar! I'm a murderer, and never meant it, neither!"

"It's your own fault," she added.

"Why did you come burgling here? Be you much hurt? Oh, dear! Oh, dear! why don't he speak to me? Why don't Zenas come? Where's my camphor bottle? Oh, my goodness! I do hope, he ain't gon' to die right here on the kitchen hearth!"

The sound of sleigh-bells outside chimed joyfully upon her ears. She laid the strong man's head carefully down on a pillow improvised out of her own carpet-bag, and rushed wildly out, holding the kerosene lamp high above her head.

"Come in, whoever you be!" she screamed. "Help! help!"

The passer-by drew rein.

"Hullo!" said he. "Ain't this my sister Almira Brown?"

"Why," cried the bewildered spinster, "it's Zenas. Where have you been so long?"

"I've been to see a sick patient," the country doctor made answer. "What's the matter, Almira? When did you come?"

"I've killed a burglar!" faltered the woman. "Do come in quick, Zenas, and see if you can do anything! I don't s'pose they'll hang me, do you, if it was done in self-defense? And I didn't do it, either—it done itself."

"Here—in this house?"

"Why, certainly! Where should it be?"

"But what was you doing here, Almira?" as he slowly unwound himself from fur robes and buffalo-skin cushions, and dismounted from the little red cutter with slow, cramped movements.

"Do in here! Why, waitin' for you."

"For me, Almira?"

"Good gracious, Zenas, I hope you ain't gettin' hard o' hearin' in your old age! For you, of course."

"But, Almira, I don't live here!"

Miss Almira had nearly dropped the kerosene lamp into a snowdrift in her consternation.

"Not live here?" she echoed.

"Why, no. I live in the old house a quarter-mile further on—don't ye remember?—under the old buttonball tree."

"I thought the old buttonball tree had been cut down!" gasped Almira. "And this is just the same sort o' house."

"It's one that Silas Safford built, after the same g'nal pattern," said Zenas. "A reg'lar old bachelor. And he lives here by himself. Do you mean to say, Almira, that he is hurt?"

By way of an answer, Almira energetically pushed her brother into the kitchen, where by this time the injured man was sitting upon the hearth, looking vaguely around him.

"Eh?" said Zenas Brown, cheerfully. "What's the matter? Just a little skin cut—that's all. And you're weak with loss of blood. I'll soon fix you up. A pretty Saint Valentine's Day you'll have, and all the mails to be sorted out!"

"For he's the postmaster, Almira," he added, to his sister. "Been here two years now. Fetch in a bowl of warm water, and just hand over your pocket-handkerchief, Almira."

"Oh, dear, can't I sort the mails, Zenas?" faltered Miss Almira. "I used often to do it Canaan Centre, when the postmaster was busy invoicing railroad freight."

"I guess you've done about enough already, Almira," said Zenas, with a sly chuckle.

All night long Almira sat up, changing the bandages on poor Silas Safford's temples, feeding the fire and attending to various little household cares, and

when Zenas came around, at about ten o'clock, he announced that the invalid no longer needed her care.

"He's all right now," said the country doctor. "Ain't you, sir?"

Silas Safford nodded, cheerfully.

"She's been proper good to me," said he, with a glance at Almira. "It wasn't no fault o' hers. She s'posed this was your house and that I was a burglar. She did quite right."

"It warn't me!" almost sobbed Almira. "The poker flew right outen my hands like it was bewitched."

"And," added Zenas, "Abiah Crook he's took charge o' the postoffice, and distributed the mail, and sent out the bags, and all that. And here's a Valentine for you, Si, all lace paper an' roses; an' I'll bet it's from your old sweetheart, Sally Dawson, at Lum's Settlement!"

But Silas made no attempt to open it.

"Nonsense!" said he, ungraciously pushing the missive away. "I don't care nothing about no valentine. And, besides—"

"Eh?"

"Your sister—she was the first woman I caught sight of on Saint Valentine's Day," sheepishly remarked Silas.

"Well, if we come to the rights of the thing, the poker was your valentine, I guess," chuckled Zenas.

And Almira, choking with rage and mortification, hurried out of the room, caught up her bonnet and shawl and went home.

"I never shall dare to look him in the face again!" she sobbed, as she went to work to get dinner for her brother.

But she did. She took him a bowl toothsome chicken soup that very noon, and by common consent they avoided the question of the poker.

A month passed by—six weeks. The April wild flowers began to peep out from under the layers of dead leaves in the woods, and Almira had a pink and fragrant cluster of trailing arbutur in her hand one day when she met Silas Safford coming home with the key of the postoffice dangling over his finger.

"You're fretting about something, Almira," said he, pausing to greet her.

"Yes," said she, frankly, "I am. Zenas he's going to be married to Widow Parlet, and he ain't no more use for me. I've got to go back to Canaan Centre, and—"

Silas deliberately put the key in his pocket, so as to leave both hands free, and took Almira, trailing arbutus and all, into his capacious grasp.

"Stay!" said he. "Don't go. If Zenas can get married, so can you. I meant it, Almira, that day when I said you were my valentine. I mean it now. Don't go back to Canaan Centre. Stay here with me!"

Almira's eyes—bright, cheerful brown orbs (they were—sparkled; a smile dawned around her lips.

A Magnetic Plant.

India, the land of poisonous serpents, immense jungles, fabulous wealth, fevers, cholera and mysticism, has again come to the front through the recent discovery of a strange plant with magic powers equal to a dynamo. To attempt to pull a leaf from this marvellous plant is to invite an electric shock equal to that produced by an induction coil.

If a compass be held within six meters of this lightning-charged vegetable the needle acts as strangely as if it were being held above the true magnetic pole. Its electrical qualities, however, do not cause more amazement than the wonderful variation of its magnetic powers, which are most manifest at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, gradually diminishing until at midnight or between midnight and 2 o'clock A. M., when it can hardly be noticed.

Day after day these wonderful changes take place, the plant gradually losing its magnetism as the darkness becomes most intense only to have the current renewed with seeming increased vigor as the sun mounts the tropical skies. A thunderstorm augments its peculiar qualities a dozen fold, and, even though sheltered, it drops its leaves and branches as if in the last convulsion of death.

Birds and insects shun the plant as do the natives of Java the deadly upas tree. One would naturally suppose that the plant would be found growing in a region abounding in magnetic metals; the contrary is the case. There is neither iron, cobalt or nickel found in the home of the wonderful magnetic plant.

According to the Mail and Express the United States now leads the world in the production of pig iron.

FIJI ISLANDS.

NOBLE SPECIMENS OF MAN
HOOD SEEN THERE.

Extraordinary Hairdressing—A Romantic and Picturesque Land—The People are Fond of Music.

The Fiji Islands are, as far as my experience goes, one of the most romantic and picturesque localities upon the face of the globe, writes a correspondent of the New York Times. Their masses and outlines are rugged and stern; they are volcanic in origin, and show everywhere abrupt precipices and sharp and unexpected peaks inland, and bold promontories where the land touches the sea. The piles of up-heaved earth and rocks which form the main part of the islands are fringed with broad and level beach of coral and sand, outside of which lie the shallow and placid waters of the lagoon enclosed by the bristling reef, against which the heavy swell of the Pacific beats unceasingly with a steady and muffled roar.

The edge of the shore is thickly set with coconut groves which form natural avenues and arcades of surpassing beauty; scarlet and green parrots scream and chatter and iris-hued wild doves coo in the feathery tops of the palms; cranes and egrets, variously garbed in blue, black and ivory-colored plumes, explore the shallows, and graceful tropic birds wheel in the sunlight, while the frigate birds float on motionless wings at enormous heights in the melting sky. Looking inland the prospect extends along a series of natural terraces set with an almost impenetrable jungle of flowering trees, creepers and vines set with blooms of every variety of brilliant hue. Peeping out from the coconut groves are numerous villages, whose houses, made of plaited reeds and thatched with grass, are set in picturesque irregularity along the banks of the streams that flow from hidden fountains in the hills, and surrounding these are plantations of yams, bananas, taro, bread fruit and pineapples, which respond profusely to the scanty cultivation which is bestowed upon them in the rich, red, volcanic soil. The constant sea breeze tempers the heat, and by its soft breath gives the finishing touch to the charm which existence affords in this luxurious country.

The people who inhabit the villages above described are a splendid race—less athletic and finely moulded, perhaps, than the Samoans, but next to them undoubtedly the most interesting inhabitants of the South Seas. They are generally tall, of lithe yet muscular forms, amiable in countenance, and as honestly emotional as children. In their homes they are neat, and show much artistic taste in the manufacture of various utensils of wood and clay. The houses are carpeted with beautifully woven rugs of grass, and their walls hung with mats and with tappa cloth stamped in fanciful patterns. Their beds consist of piles of these mats, which are cool and as pleasant to lie upon as a hair mattress. For pillows they use small logs, or supports made of coconut wood, which are often elaborately carved, or set with beads and shells in fanciful patterns.

This peculiar and seemingly uncomfortable species of headrest is made necessary by the elaborate manner in which the male Fijians arrange their hair. Doing very little in the matter of clothing, and not practicing tattooing, as do the Samoans and many other of the island tribes, they expend upon their head-dresses all the love for display which seems inherent in the barbarous breast. As hairdressers the Fijians are the most expert people in the world and show almost as many styles as there are individuals to display them. The practice of bleaching the hair by coating it with a paste of powdered coral and water is universal, and by changing the naturally black coils to every shade of brown, red, and yellow produces most singular effects. This paste is applied thickly to the head at regular intervals and is allowed to remain for several days. It is then washed out and leaves the hair stiff and wiry and standing straight out from the head in every direction. By manipulation and dressing with coconut oil, it is arranged in various fantastic styles. In one case it may be twisted into hundreds of little wisps, which look like the strands of a mop when that utensil is violently whirled; in another it is arranged to stand up from the forehead, a la pompadour, and to spread abroad like the top of an umbrella; in a third it is

crimped to form a wavy covering which projects boldly in every direction; in a fourth it is combed stiffly out on the sides and top of the head, while behind it is arranged in a series of ringlets which fall below the nape of the neck.

The Fijians are a stately people, sedate and dignified in their movements, never in a hurry, but by their free and untrammelled gait getting over the ground in a manner which would somewhat trouble a white man to keep up with them. Their walk is poetry personified, and I sat for hours under the hotel porch overlooking the road along the shore admiring the ease and grace with which they stride along with the heavy burdens which they carry on their heads or their backs or at either end of a long pole suspended over their shoulders. Every move of the Fijians is graceful and free, their scant attire allow the perfect play of every muscle, and one may see in scores on every street and mountain path models of manly beauty which might stand without alteration for the gods and heroes of antique sculpture. I have not seen in all Fiji a man who was in any way deformed or who seemed to be suffering from disease; even the very aged and white-haired patriarchs who are to be seen in the remote villages will show the visitor in a surprisingly vigorous manner how, in the days of their youth, they hurled the spear and brandished the ponderous war club.

The Fijian women are distinguished for their devotion to their families, many of them are exceedingly pretty, although like the women of most races which live in warm climates and upon a nearly exclusive vegetable diet, they incline to corpulency as they approach middle life, they are in youth very graceful and symmetrical, and by their lively and cheerful manners make an agreeable impression upon the visitor. The young girls are full of fun, and the best-looking among them are as finished coquettes as are produced in Paris, London or New York.

The Fijians, like the natives of nearly all the other South Sea Islands, are a people fond of music and with a remarkable ear for rhythm. Their practice of the art, however, is confined to its vocal branches, for they have no musical instruments whatever, if we except the native drums. When, however, it is an open question whether the civilized drum is an instrument of music or torture, it may well be questioned whether the Fijian substitute of a hollow tree trunk is to be included in the outfit of Polymyopia. The Fijians also have the conch shell, which they pick up on the beach, and by judiciously making a hole in the side and blowing therein produce sounds of great power and lugubriousness. It is their cheerful practice, on a steamer being signaled at night, to parade the town in large bodies, loudly sounding these infernal machines in all sorts of discordant keys, whereby profanity is largely promoted among the white residents. In former times the conch shells were blown as accompaniment to the native drums when a cannibal feast was to be held, and must have done much to promote the hideousness of the orgie.

Quarrying in Winter.

The Vermont marble quarries are worked in winter, although perhaps with less result than in the summer. One would suppose that when the excavations are carried far down below the surface there would be no frost encountered; but, notwithstanding the walls of these quarries are draped with colossal icicles or frozen cataracts, which impart an extraordinary effect to the cavernous gloom.

It is not so pleasant for the workmen, who have to climb the slippery ladders, and are not keenly interested in picturesque effect. What is curious is that the marble itself at those depths become frozen, and needs to be thawed before it can be taken out, otherwise it has the brittleness of glass. This is done by carrying pipes down, and drenching all the channels cut by the machine with steam until the frost is driven out.—Harper's Weekly.

A Belgian gun manufacturer says it is a mystery to him what becomes of all the guns made. They are not perishable or easily destroyed, yet after year the great manufacturers have increased their works until the number of guns and pistols that are made each year is something enormous, and the trade instead of decreasing is constantly growing.

Mrs. William Astor, of New York City, has a gold dinner service valued at \$50,000.