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The highest mountain in the world, the established Everest in the Himalayas, Mount Hercules, in New Guinea, shrunk a good deal after it was measured.

The New York World prints a list of 100 New Yorkers who will have to pay an income tax of \$1000 and upwards. W. W. Astor's tax is set at \$175,000. Mrs. Hettie Green pays more than any other woman.

The despised rabbit of Australia is being anxiously inquired for by the British army contractor, records the American Agriculturist, who sees a possible supply of cheap and wholesome food for the army in that direction.

The stock of the Pullman Company, of \$36,000,000, fell for \$174 to \$172 a share (par value being \$100). The company pays on this \$36,000,000 of stock a dividend of two per cent., payable quarterly, or eight per cent. per annum.

Three hundred Japanese reside in New York City. They do not live together in a colony like many other foreigners, because they are divided by their interests into distinct classes, and, in addition, they are wealthy enough to be able to live wherever they please.

Alaska's mail service has heretofore been dependent upon Eskimo dogs. Reindeers, however, are so much better for the purpose that the Government has imported several families of Laplanders to teach the natives of Alaska how to train and use this animal.

A promoter in California proposes to build an electric railway through the mountains sixty-two miles to the Yosemite Valley, and, by utilizing the water power, furnish electric light and motors for all that region. About 4000 tourists visit the Yosemite every year, paying \$35 each for the stage ride.

French statesmen, notably M. Leveillé, are endeavoring to extend to France the benefits of the American homestead, and as there is no word in the French tongue which is a proper equivalent for it, the word "homestead" is retained in a bill that has been introduced in the Chamber of Deputies.

Poor old Handel is to be stripped of his honors, laments the New Orleans Picayune. The critics call him a plagiarist, and Dr. Chrysanter is about to issue a learned series of volumes called "The Sources of Handel's Works." The great musician is in good company, however. Critics long ago demonstrated that there was nothing original about Shakespeare's works, except his genius.

A scientist employed by the State of Indiana reports that the supply of natural gas in Hoosierdom will soon be exhausted, and that the same fate awaits gas fields wherever they may exist. He does not rest this upon his bare assertion, adds the Detroit Free Press, but gives reasons at length which admonish the holders of natural gas stock to let go if they can.

One of the tricks of trade is for the shopkeepers in London to include the weight of the paper in which articles sold are enveloped. It has been shown that a huge profit is made in this way. For instance, the report of the Public Control Department of the County Council states that in a recent case it was shown that a firm of tea dealers sold as quarter-pounds of tea packets which contained four drachms weight of paper, and that on this the firm profited to the extent of some thousands a year. The result of the investigation in London was that out of 583 bags of flour weighed ready for delivery 427 were found of deficient weight, the deficiency amounting to over two per cent.; in 499 packages of sugar 377 were found to be short weight, while out of 232 packages of tea ninety-nine were short weight to the extent of over two per cent. In addition to the loss by weight of the wrapper, it was found that in a number of cases the gross weight of the packets was short.

BY THE WAVES.
Crisp and curling, soft unfurling
Caps of silvery foam,
Haste the breakers, frolic makers,
Chasing playmates home,
Tripping, skipping, slipping, dripping,
Fast the children fly
Up the shingle, toes a-dangle—
So the day goes by.
Wavelets screaming, sunshine gleaming,
In the shining sands,
Gay and merry, bold and cheery,
Delve the small brown hands,
Drifting, lifting, rifting, sifting,
'Neath the smiling sky
On the shingle pleasures mingle,
And the day goes by.
Great clouds glowing, wild winds blowing,
Night draws on apace;
Eyes deep yearning see the burning
Lamps in starry space,
Flying, sighing, low replying,
Thoughts salute the sky
Home we gather, O' Our Father,
And the day goes by.
Merry Ruth Rogers, in Harper's Bazar.

ASTREA.
BY HELEN FORREST GRAVES.
HE big clock in the City Hall cupola pointed to the hour of twelve, the chimes of Old Trinity had just cast their mantle of music to the winds, and the roar and tumult of Broadway rose to the open windows of room No. 19 in the Nutley buildings like the hum of a monster beehive.

Old Jethro Black sat patiently, with his hands on his pepper-and-salt knees, and the sultry wind lifting the few straggly hairs from his bald head, his eyes fixed dreamily on the floor.

"If Keturah Jones were here, them boards would be scoured whiter'n they are now, I guess," he thought. Astrea, his grand-daughter, was coiled up in a big leather office-chair, her scared eyes flitting restlessly from one object to another, while the rows of dusty law books kept an unwinking watch from their shelves above and the little office boy played marbles in the hall beyond.

"Grandfather," murmured Astrea, "I—I think I'm just a little hungry. Is there one of those chicken sandwiches left?"

The old man slowly unfolded a thrifty brown paper package that reposed in one of his coat pockets.

"Just one," said he, "and cherries, but they're sort o' crushed up."

"But, grandfather, what will you eat?"

"Me? I ain't hungry, child. I ate lots o' breakfast."

Are there not some pious fictions which the recording angel will slur over when he makes up the debit and the credit of us poor mortals?

Astrea crept close to the old man's knee, and nibbled eagerly at the remains of the luncheon.

"Grandfather," she whispered, "New York's an awful big place. I'm almost sorry we came here. I—I'm afraid of New York, ain't you?"

Just then the sound of brisk footsteps echoed on the stairs, the door flew open, and a tall, well-dressed man entered.

"Hal!" he ejaculated. "Why," with a penetrating glance, "it's Cousin Jethro Black, isn't it? And little Star Eyes, grown into a big girl! The office boy told me some one had been waiting here for me; but I never thought of you!"

"We went to your house on Madison avenue," explained Mr. Black, in a subdued way, "but there wasn't no one to home but a cleanin' woman, with her head tied up in a red handkerchief, and she said the folks was gone to Bar—Bar—some barbarous place or other. I can't rightly recall the name."

The gentleman laughed. "Oh, Bar Harbor!" said he. "Well, she spoke truth. They are gone!"—for in Cousin Jethro's wrinkled face he traced some lineaments of doubt.

"I've only come back to town for a day or two myself. Going back this afternoon. Well, what can I do for you?" sitting down with a genial smile.

the summer, your wife took considerable notice of Astrea."

"Yes, I remember that year," said Mr. Eldon. "You were very kind to us. You refused to accept any compensation, and Mrs. Black nursed little Barbe back to health very tenderly."

"Betsey's dead and gone now," said the old man, swallowing a lump in his throat. "And we never expected to charge our relations nothin' for breathin' in God's fresh air and eatin' the berries that grew on every bush. But about Astrea. I've got to go West to live with my sister's husband—a poor paralytic creature. I dunno—I've explained to you that things have sort o' run down in Kidd's Valley. We've had to part with the farm, and now that Hezekiah Hall needs care, it makes a sort of home for me. But they hain't no room for Astrea, so I've brought her here. I thought maybe your wife could think up some way for her to earn a living. She's a tall, strong gal, you see, and nice-lookin', too—Astrea lung down her head and blushed—

"and she might help your gals with the housework, or mebbe get a place somewhere where she'd be treated well and not put to too hard work."

Mr. Eldon screwed his mouth into a whistling shape.

Help his girls—Elaine and Barbara—with the housework!

As he thought of those radiant young belles at Bar Harbor, he had difficulty in repressing a laugh.

Then, with the recollection of the numerous peculiarities of his lady wife, a look of perplexity overspread his face as Cousin Jethro Black mandered on.

"So I guess I'll leave Astrea with you, Cousin Wallace, for my train leaves at 2 o'clock."

A sudden burst of tears from Astrea—a feeble wail of "Grandfather! grandfather!"—a whispered "Good-bye!"—and the old man was gone, leaving Astrea looking piteously into Mr. Eldon's face.

"What will Mrs. Eldon say?" thought the lawyer.

But there seemed to be no alternative but to obey the pointing finger of fate, and the evening train bore Astrea Black toward the haven of fashion on the far Maine coast, with the distant relative by her side.

She was only seventeen, and she had never been out of Kidd's Valley in her life, so that all the surrounding world was full of the indescribable flavor of freshness.

She exclaimed aloud with delight at sight of the scenery.

She was not at all seasick on the boat, but bought peanuts and munched apples, ate green peas with her knife and questioned Mr. Eldon in a very audible whisper as to the use of the finger bowls at the steamer dinner table.

"What a wild girl of the woods!" said the New York lawyer to himself; and again he thought of his wife's probable verdict. "But she has got eyes like a young deer, and those straying curls make me think of a wild grapevine, and I do not like to hear her laugh!"

John Eldon was at the pier to meet the Portland boat on which his father was expected.

Astrea ran up the gang-plank like a kitten and stood on tip-toe to kiss him.

"It's Jack!" she cried, breathlessly; "and Jack don't know me! Oh, Jack, don't you remember that awful day when me and you threw eggs at the old minister's chase? Don't you remember—"

And Jack, an elegant young gentleman in a white duck suit and eyeglasses, stood appalled. But he immediately recovered himself.

"Why it's little Astrea!" said he. "Of course I remember you—only you've grown so tall."

"Mother will be surprised," said Mr. Eldon, with a queer shrug of the shoulders.

"Yes," said Jack, hurriedly, "I think she will."

Mrs. Eldon viewed the new arrival with consternation. Barbara, a graceful girl of nineteen, dressed in the extreme of esthetic fashion, stared at Astrea's pink gingham frock and country boots.

Elaine kissed her cordially.

"What red cheeks you've got!" said she. "And, oh, what do you put on your eyelashes to make them grow so long?"

"Wallace," said Mrs. Eldon, "what are we to do with this human panther who jumps over the lower half of the colonial door instead of opening it, and laughs so loud, and chews gum like a cash-girl?"

"The best we can," Mr. Eldon promptly answered. "She's an orphan, Cleo, and she's alone in the world."

"But couldn't we get her some sort of a place?"

"An untamed creature like this? Why, it would be as cruel as caging a thrush! What could she do in a place?"

"Mamma," whispered Barbara, "it's dreadful! With our garden party to-night, and Mr. De Ravelle coming, and the Biltervans, and all those people. Astrea is determined to bethere. It's impossible to put her off!"

"But she has nothing to wear!" gasped Mrs. Eldon.

"Elaine's maid is fixing her that old heliotrope tulle with the crystal bead trimming," said Barbara. "Elaine is so very peculiar about it. She declares that Astrea is our cousin, and should have everything just the same as ourselves."

"Elaine is a goose!" petulantly uttered the matron. "She don't know that business is getting worse and worse every year, and that our only hope is in this summer's campaign. I wish to goodness this girl had stayed in the country, raising turkeys and straining buttermilk—if that's the way they do it! But your father is different from any one else, and when he once gets his head set in any one direction, sixteen yoke of oxen wouldn't turn it!"

So Astrea stayed at Bar Harbor, petted by one and all, when once the shock was over. Elaine and her maid improvised toilettes for her, and she began to feel at home.

Some people called her original; others scorned her as a mere dairymaid. But she was happy, in a wild, spirit-like sort of way, until one day suddenly changed the aspect of everything.

"I can't help it," said Jack—"I love her! And I must have her for my wife!"

"John," remonstrated his mother, "you ought to know—"

"I only know one thing," persisted Jack, the impetuous—"I love Astrea!"

The girl herself looked piteously up in Mrs. Eldon's face.

"I'll go away from here," said she, "if Jack will really be ruined by marrying me. I—I don't want to ruin Jack—not if I draw myself first!"

And she burst out sobbing.

"You're the sweetest little darling in the world," said Jack, "and I'd like no better fun than to go out West with you and settle on a ranch."

"But ranches cost money," said Barbara.

"Then I'd hire out as a hand," said Jack, rebelliously. "I'm good at breaking horses."

"And I'd make the butter and feed the chickens," said Astrea, joyfully.

"You are two silly children," said Mrs. Eldon.

Yet all of a sudden something seemed to bring back to her the lost sweetness of departed youth, and her eyes were momentarily dimmed with tears.

"Mamma," pleaded Elaine, "it will hurt Jack if you oppose this thing—and Astrea loves him so dearly!"

"But there's Gwendoline Ballersby, with that great East Indian fortune!" sobbed Mrs. Eldon, torn by conflicting emotions.

"What's a fortune," cried Elaine, "if love don't go with it?"

"Well," said Mr. Eldon, "when the matter is settled, if Jack goes West, we all go West together. For since Jennifer & Goldie's banking house has failed, we're all equally penniless."

"Hurray!" said Jack, flinging up his polo cap. "Then it don't make any difference whether I marry an heiress or not!"

"Please, my lady," said the solemn footman, "there's a gentleman below; and when I asked him for his card, he said he never had one in his house—his principles was ag'in it."

Old Jethro Black came smiling into the group, leaning on a gold-headed cane and wearing a suit of black clothes in which he seemed to feel excessively uncomfortable.

"Yes," said he, "I've come back. My brother, he's been took away at last, and he's left me enough to keep me in comfort the rest of my days. He was a savin' creature, Hezekiah was, and there'll be a nice little sum for Astrea. It won't be necessary for Astrea to take no situation now. Don't squeeze me so tight round the neck, child; don't you s'pose a fellow's got to hev breathin' room? You've been very good to Astrea, Wallace Eldon, and— What! goin' to be married to Jack? Why, twa'nt but yesterday Jack was robbin' Deacon Peck's melon patch an' gittin' me into trouble chasin' Squire Olney's young colts round the meadows!"

"We're glad to see you, Mr. Black," said Jack, cordially wringing his hand. "Have you got a farm out West for Astrea and me to run?"

The old man smiled.

"I shouldn't a bit wonder," said he. "Meanwhile there was a buzz of gossip all through the Bar Harbor circles. Out on the decks of white-winged yachts, in the gay streets and on the rocky slopes of Green Mountain, people were asking one another:

"Have you seen the Western millionaire?"

"Have you heard how many gold mines he owns and what those new city lots are selling for?"

Everywhere people stopped to shake hands with Eldon and congratulate him on the great match his son was about to make. The very Biltervans themselves condescended to inquire as to the mine shares. Claude de Ravelle bemoaned his ill-luck in that he had not "made eyes" at fair Astrea Black. And Mrs. Eldon declared that she could not believe her ears.

"Little Astrea an heiress!" said she. "It's like a dream!"

Again old Jethro smiled.

"Astrea is a fortune in herself," said he. "All the same, that's no reason there shouldn't go a fortune with her, too. I kind o' suspicious this when first Hezekiah sent for me. But I wa'nt goin' to let on. I wanted to see how she'd be treated here. An' I'm suited, down to the ground."

While Astrea's soft eyes sparkled.

"Money is all very well," said she. "But what I think most of is that Jack loves me."—Saturday Night.

A Chameleon Spider.

"It has always been a hobby of mine," said T. L. Grimshaw, of Raleigh, N. C., yesterday, "to collect strange bugs and insects during my travels, and I think I have succeeded in getting together a pretty choice collection. Of the whole assortment I think the chameleon spider which I got last summer on the coast of Africa is the most valuable. The capture of this insect was highly interesting to me. One afternoon, while tramping along a dusty road, I noticed in the bushes which grew along the side what appeared to be a singular-looking white flower with a blue center. Stopping to examine it I found to my astonishment that it was not a flower at all, but a spider's web, and that the supposed light blue heart of the flower was the spider itself lying in wait for its prey."

"The mottled brown legs of the spider were exposed in such a way as to resemble the divisions between the petals of a flower. The web itself, very delicately woven into a rosette pattern, was white, and the threads that suspended it from the bushes were so fine as to be almost invisible. The whole thing had the appearance of being suspended in the air upon a stem concealed beneath. Upon knocking the spider from his perch into the white gauze net which I carried, my surprise was greatly increased upon seeing my captive instantly turn in color from blue to white. I shook the net, and again the spider changed color, this time its body becoming a dull greenish brown. As often as I would shake the net just so often would the spider change its color, and I kept it up until it had assumed about every hue of the rainbow."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Birds and bees frequently fight pitched battles over honey stored in trees. Sometimes one side and sometimes the other comes out victorious.

Predictable Old Age.

"In my eightieth year," wrote Humboldt in 1849, "I am still enabled to enjoy the satisfaction of completing a third edition of my work, remodelling it entirely to meet the requirements of the present time." Five years later Humboldt was hard at work completing his "Cosmos."

Dr. Johnson, when seventy-three years old, and while staggering under an attack of paralysis sufficiently severe to render him speechless, composed a Latin prayer in order to test the loss or retention of his mental faculties. A few years before his death he applied himself to the study of the Dutch language. In one morning shortly before his death he amused himself by committing to memory 800 lines of Virgil.

Arnold translated Josephus when eighty years old, and at the age of eighty-two was still referred to as "the great Arnold."

Sir Henry Spelman, who passed his early life as a farmer, began his scientific studies at fifty years of age and before his death came to be known as the most learned antiquary and legal authority of his time.

Dante proposed to translate the whole "Iliad" when in his sixty-eighth year, and his most pleasing productions were written in his old age.

Michael Angelo preserved his creative genius to extreme old age. His favorite motto is said to have been, "Yet I am learning."

Sir Christopher Wren, who retired from public life at the age of eighty-six, spent the next five years in literary, astronomical and religious studies.

"The era of three score and ten is an agreeable age for writing," wrote Decker. "Your mind has not lost its vigor and envy leaves you in peace."

The opening of one of La Mothe le Veger's treatises is as follows: "I should but ill return the favors God has granted me in the eightieth year of my age should I allow myself to give way to that shameful want of occupation which I have condemned all my life."—New York Sun.

The Snake Catcher.

The selling of snakes to scientific men, to manufacturers who use the skins, and to museums, is a business which a man and his wife, who live in a Mississippi houseboat, engage in. The strange couple were interviewed the other day by the reporter for a New Orleans paper. The man does most of the snake-catching, and, although he has been bitten several times, he considers the experience only a trifling incident of his trade.

"A rattlesnake, for instance, when pursued," he says, "coils and is ready to defend himself. I flip a stone or small piece of stick at him; he uncoils and starts off, but before he can again coil I have him back of the neck. No, I use no stick—nothing but my bare hands. You may laugh, too, when I tell you that our snake lore teaches us not to hunt when the wind is in the northwest. If we do, we find no snakes. The principal seasons of the year for us are spring and fall; the snakes are then fat and produce lots of oil." Of all the snakes in the United States only three families, he says, can be classed as deadly. "But," he adds, "these families comprise about thirty-two species, distributed as follows: Rattlesnakes, seven; cottonmouths, eight; copperheads, seventeen, the two latter being moccasins and dwellers in the swamps and low places." The snake-catcher's method of treating bites is as follows: "When bitten, I immediately tie a band above the wound, cutting the latter deeply in order to cause it to bleed freely, and to reach below the extremity pierced by the fang. The cut is then sucked, or warm, newly killed flesh is applied, and the remedies are then rubbed into the wound, neutralizing the poison."

An Extraordinary Insect.

The "raft spider," found in Terra del Fuego, is a most extraordinary insect. It derives its name from the fact that it constructs a raft of matted leaves and pieces of wool, which it uses to pursue its prey on the water. Raft spiders travel in fours. They make their oars out of twigs and generally row a thirty-two stroke, although they have been known at times to increase the speed to thirty-six. —Chicago Herald.