The Roanoke Beacon.

$1.00 a Year, in Advance. "FOR GOD, FOR COUNTRY, AND FOR TRUTH." Single Copy, 5 Cents.

VOL. XIII. PLYMOUTH, N. C., FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 1902. NO. 2.

FOLLY'S FOOL.

BY LAWRENCE PORCHER HEXT.

Love a-calling went one day,
Loitered at a lassie's heart;
Begged to be allowed to stay,
But was told he must depart;
"For," said she, "I'm childish yet;
Come back in a year or two."
Truth to tell, her heart was let—
Tenanted by folly's crew.

In a fleeting year or two
She became a winsome maid.
Love came back again to woo,
But, this time, she sweetly said:
"Call again some other day,
I am yet a debutante;
Call when life is not so gay,
Then your wishes I will grant."

In another year or two
She had grown to womanhood;
Love came not again to woo,
As she thought he surely would.
Folly whispered, "Do not weep,
Love will find thee out some day;
He will come thy heart to keep,
Nevermore to go away."

Years have past; love comes no more,
She is wrinkled, bent and gray,
Folly sometimes nears the door
Of her heart, but turns away.
Beauty long has left her face;
She is withered now, and old;
In her heart there is a place
Empty, desolate and cold.

—Frank Leslie's Monthly.

A SINGULAR EPISODE.

By Edgar Fawcett.

THE steamer had already started when I first saw her. It was a lovely June day, and we were skipping along through silky blue water, below a sky frescoed here and there with little fantastic pearly clouds, like flocks of vagrant swans.

There were not many passengers and none of them I knew.

But all seemd as gay as the weather—all save her. She sat on deck, having chosen one of the rear wooden seats.

Her dress was very simple; sometimes white gleamed at her throat, and browns and blacks vested her slender frame.

She might have been five and twenty, but you had to scan well the wan delicacy of her face before you quite decided that suffering alone must have made her seem older.

Both dark-gloved hands rested in her lap. She appeared perfectly heedless of everything about her.

She had the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen—large and gray and fathomless; they glorified her face, and they were infinitely pensive.

It shot through my mind: "How many tears they must have wept! They looked straight ahead, too, plainly seeing nothing of the jocund and scintillant sea that fronted them.

I wondered if other people would notice their hopeless and helpless gaze. Unconsciously and with a simplicity that pierced my soul, she appealed to me in terms of absolute despair.

Every line of her figure, too, accorded, by some mysterious sympathy, with this rapid impression of her wretchedness.

Till nightfall she sat there, immovable. The faultless weather continued. There was no moon, but the starlight shone almost vivid enough to mimic one, and I kept getting glimpses of her fixed, colorless face, which now haunted me more and more.

Often since that night I have been at sea, and never do I hear the peculiar harmonious hissing and rushing sound which a vessel gives when it sails through placid stretches of ocean, without memories of those desolated features, that plaintless yet woe-begone air.

Meanwhile I had got to know a certain table companion, and had told him of how this lady's evident misery had touched me. He was a Frenchman, who gave his name as Guijean, a dapper little person, with florid cheeks, big curvilinear mustaches and teeth sparkling white.

He spoke English with great fluency and I could readily believe him when he informed me that he had mastered several other tongues.

"She is evidently a most unhappy woman," he had told me, after having glanced, during the afternoon, at this forlorn object of my sudden and acute sympathy.

Something in his tone made me start and clasp his arm. I felt certain, just from his few words, that she was now the object of his sympathy, no less than mine.

In a rich, intuitive flash, I felt more—that he, whoever he was, had a nature amply receptive to compassion.

"I have crossed before on this line," he said, after the tragic stranger, who had equally concerned us both, had departed from her shadowy lodge below the huge smokestacks and their concomitant masses of iron equipment, and while the bland marine June stars seemed to drop lower like mellowing fruit from invisible boughs. "Frankly, I have grown to dislike our captain very much; he is a man of hard, harsh disposition; he is capable of cruel acts.

"I know that on this same ship he has committed several which have made him unpopular both among his fellow officials and the common sailors besides. But the second officer, Mr. Gladwyn, is of a widely different type. Of him I will make certain inquiries and join you later."

And later, that same evening, Monsieur Guijean did join me, in the smoking room.

"Gladwyn tells me," he said, "that she has registered simply as a Mrs. Verschoyl. She has a cabin all to herself, and neither he nor any one else knows the faintest item concerning her. As we have observed, she has not yet appeared in the dining room, and since her retirement into lower quarters, she has given no order whatever to any of the servants."

This information reached me at about 9 o'clock.

Before 10, while I sat with a novel in one of the upper saloons, Guijean appeared at my side. all his galliard jauntiness had gone; he still looked like the Frenchman he was, and yet like that most mournful of things, a Frenchman who has lost his gayety.

"It is terrible," he stammered, leaning down and brushing my cheek with one still curve of his mustache. "Do you—can you—dream what that poor woman has done to herself?"

I rose. I can now hear the soft rattling thud of my novel as it fell upon the floor.

"Not—suicide?"

"Yes. Cyanide of potassium. She must have rung for the stewardess just before she drank it. They found her dead, and the bottle—a dose to kill an ox—was clutched in one hand."

I felt my blood freeze.

"It was in her face," I faltered. "That is what I saw there. She was not alone on the wooden bench. Death, all the while, crouched beside her, tempting her."

"The captain," my new acquaintance went on, "is furious. Our voyage to Glasgow will not be a brief one, and he has determined to bury her at once—to-night—before the passengers get wind of her death."

"Bury her!" I gasped.

"Don't you understand? Throw her into the sea, cased in a pine box, with some stone or leaden weights that will instantly sink it."

"But her friends in Glasgow?" I hurried. "Might not such an act prove to them the severest of trials?"

"No evidence has been found that she possesses any friends either in Glasgow or elsewhere. She came on board with only two small portmanteaus and a steamer trunk. In these not a trace of her identity has been gained."

"But still——" I began.

Monsieur Guijean cut me short.

"I know what you would say. To fling her into the sea like this is a horror. My friend, the second officer is grinding his teeth. But he can do nothing. The captain—you've seen him, with his red whiskers and burly frame, and his arrogant Scotch scowl—is imperious and also impervious. The funeral (if one may dignify it by such a name) will take place at midnight. I am sworn to secrecy by the second officer, though I told him I might break my word to you, because of the interest that poor creature has roused in you."

"Interest!" I groaned. "Say, rather, immeasurable pity! Think," I went on, "what an anguish this brutal burial may cause to parents, sisters, brothers—possibly to some one of nearer and dearer relation—who may now be awaiting her arrival in Scotland!"

Monsieur Guijean nodded.

"The second officer has pleaded with the captain in just those terms. But he is not only a boor of vulgarity. He is also a bigot of grossest superstition."

"Superstition?"

"Yes, in this way: He believes that to carry a corpse on the ship will bring it ill luck."

"And he cannot be reasoned out of this folly?"

"Can the despotism of a cyclone be reasoned out of its savagery? He will have it so; that is all. If you are on the lower deck at midnight you will see the burial. I shall be there. The captain may not like it, but he will not presume to oppose your presence otherwise than by one of his grim scowls."

Within a few minutes of 12 the preparations had begun. My heart thumped against my side, as I stole, in the company of Monsieur Guijean to a certain dim lighted portion of the lower deck. Six or seven sailors were standing about a long pine box. A few passengers, all men, had already gathered here, having learned the grisly news, Heaven knew how. The second officer stood near the captain, his head bowed. The captain with suppressed wrath and disgust, was murmuring to him certain gruff words which I wholly failed to catch. In another instant he gave the sailors a commanding gesture. Three of them went nimbly forward and loosed a broad segment of the taffrail. Soon between ourselves and the vast starlit ocean there spread an open space across which the least chance stumble might have tossed you into eternity.

Then came silence. All was ready.

"Horrible!" I heard Guijean whisper in my ear. The swash and rustle of the tranquil water, plowed by our speeding ship, gave to the stillness an accent of awe.

The captain raised his hand. A man near me turned away with an audible sob. Four sailors lifted the box. As they did so a long, soft, voluminous groan issued from it. The men, about to tumble it into the sea, dropped it with a sudden crash.

"I will not be cast overboard like this. Carry me to the friends who wait for me! I implore it—I command it!"

These words, clear and infinitely plaintive, came from the box on which all our eyes were fixed. From two or three of those assembled broke a horrified cry. For myself, I clutched the arm of Guijean in an agony of affright. But he almost shook my grasp away and hurried to the captain.

I staggered backward. Through the bewilderment of the horror I next recall seeing the captain's white face glistening with sweat, while some one, (a sailor, doubtless) rained axe strokes upon the wooden box. Presently I reeled forward again. Everybody was peering into the shattered coffer, and I peered likewise. Some one had brought a lantern, and its rays fell full upon the woman within. The doctor of the ship had stood among us all the time. He raised in his arms the prone shape. Its eyes were closed; its limbs were stiff. The face, if marble sculpture, could not have been deathlier.

And yet—she had spoken! It must have been she, for we had all heard her. The doctor parted from her breast the garments which clothed it, and rested his ear against her heart.

"Dead—absolutely dead," he muttered. "Not a sign of life—not the faintest sign."

The captain now seemed terribly agitated. I saw him wave his hands to the sailors in a certain feeble yet ordering way. Soon the aperture in the taffrail was closed again.

"There will be no burial—they will take her to Glasgow," I heard somebody say.

Giddy and faint, I pased up-stairs, and gained the higher deck. There I sank, as it happened, upon the very seat which she had occupied for so many hours.

"How unutterably strange!" I said to myself. "And we poor mortals dare to scoff at the life beyond death! Shall I ever doubt it again? Shall I ever believe that only here and now lie the limits of spiritual existence?" For a long time, perhaps, I sat there, meditative, appalled.

"Ah," said a voice in the dimness. "I've found you at last." And Monsieur Guijean seated himself beside me.

"The doctor still persists that she is dead?" I questioned.

"Oh, he long ago gave that up. Preparations for embalmment are being made."

For several minutes I did not answer. Then——

"What a frightful thing!" I exclaimed.

In the starlight I saw his genial smile.

"Why so frightful?"

"Its mystery—its ghastly mystery!"

"But an inhuman act was averted by it."

"Yes," I said, with a shiver, "the poor lady saved herself, as it were, in the nick of time."

He drew a little nearer to me.

"Did she save herself?"

I turned and sweepingly glimpsed his profile, in the vagueness.

"Do you mean——?" There I stopped short.

He wheeled upon me with a mellow laugh.

"Can you keep a secret?"

"I—can; yes."

"Will you?"

I hesitated. Like a light seen at the end of a long, straight passageway, crept into my spirit a glimmering premonition of the truth.

"Who are you?" I broke out.

"Not Guijean," he said "There were reasons for my booking to Glasgow en cachette—reasons trivial enough to others, but to me momentous." Then he named another name—his actual own.

I sprang to my feet. That chill fog of the supernatural, which had suffocatingly enwrapped me, vanished in a trice.

He had declared himself a ventriloquist famed in two continents. Everything was explained.—Collier's Weekly.

Queen Victoria.

The Queen, in fact, was not beloved as a typical English mother, says R. Brimley Johnson in the Atlantic—being essentially German in her family life—but for certain human essentials of character which transcend nationalities, and are confined to no particular social status, no special period of time. Unquestionably feminine in action, outlook, and expression, she yet possessed in no small degree the mental breadth and consistency which characterize statesmen, and always comported herself as the mistress of a great principality. Her profound interest in domesticities, so endearing to many thousands of her subjects, never diminished the public significance of her attitude at every emergency. Along the lines on which she wisely elected to exert it, her influence was firm and unmistakable, working always toward a truthful simplicity of goodness. She who held no heroic surprises for her people, yet never disappointed them. On her as surely and significantly as on her ministers rested the cares of state, and the honor of England never suffered at her hands.

Poverty Not a Barrier.

Poverty is not always a barrier to success or to greatness. Often it has contributed to both these ends. It is the fierce fire combined with the cold blast that helps to make iron into steel. Edison was so poor a boy as to be compelled to sell newspapers on a railroad train in order to gain his boyhood sustenance. Poverty made him familiar with work, and work sharpened his mind and afforded suggestion for his inventive genius to work upon. Benjamin Franklin was a poor boy, half-starved, at the printers' trade, but his poverty did not prevent him from rising to the head of his profession, or from becoming one of the ablest statesmen and most successful diplomats of his time. The immortal Lincoln, too, studied and his transcendent genius ripened in poverty's school. Poverty and grit have ever and ever will fashion sterling character into great and successful men.—Northern Christian Advocate.

Curious Frost Screens.

In California, where fruit is frequently damaged by sudden warming at sunrise after being exposed to frost at night, it has been found that a screen of lath, poised like a roof above the trees, serves as an effectual protection by preventing the too precipitate action of the sun's rays. Investigation has shown that "air drainage" plays an important part in the prevention of frost, little damage being caused by the latter in places where the air is in motion. Wherever the air is stagnant the injury from frost is found to be the most marked.

CONTRASTS IN RHYMES.

As sour as a lemon, as sweet as a nut,
As small as an atom, as big as a butt;
As brown as a berry, as fair as a nun,
As fickle as fortune, as sure as a gun;
As cold as a snowball, as hot as a toast,
As red as a turkey, as pale as a ghost;
As sober as judges, as drunk as a prince,
As damp as a dishcloth, as dry as a quince;
As coarse as sackcloth, as fierce as a carrot,
As dull as a mope, as pert as a parrot;
As flat as a flounder, as round as a ball,
As sweet as an orange, as bitter as gall;
As white as a lily, as black as coal,
As cross as Dick's hatband, as straight as a pole;
As merry as topers, as dull as a dolt,
As tame as a lap dog, as wild as a colt;
As rotten as pears, as sound as a roach,
As freezing as winter, as warm as a coach;
As smooth as silk velvet, as rough as a file,
As sour as verjuice, as sweet as a smile;
As sharp-sighted as Scotchmen, as blind as a bat,
As white as a sheet, as black as my hat;
As slow as old ninety, as brisk as a bee;
As shallow as fool's wit, as deep as the sea;
As poor as old Job, as rich as a Jew,
As wrong as it can be, as right as my shoe;
As deaf as a door nail, as tall as a tree,
As stupid as you, and as clever as me.

—St. James Gazette.

IN A FACETIOUS VEIN

"George, dear, what did you ever see in me that made you want to marry me?" "I'm blest if I know, darling."—Chicago Tribune.

The average girl, when's she's engaged,
Is apt to be jocose.
She doesn't like a stingy man,
Yet wants him rather close.

—Philadelphia Record.

He—"I thought you looked charming last night.' She—"Oh, now, did you really?" He—"Yes. Why, I could hardly believe it was you."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

Edith—"I want to tell you something, Bertha. Mr. Sweetser tells me he loves me." Bertha—"Oh, I wouldn't let that trouble me; Fred always was eccentric."—Boston Transcript.

"Some people say 'lunch' and some say 'luncheon,' and yet both mean the same thing." "I don't think so. I fancy 'lunch' is masculine and 'luncheon' feminine."—Philadelphia Press.

"Did the man who wrote the 'Man with the Hoe' write the 'Beautiful Snow?'" "I don't know. But I'll bet it wasn't the man with the snow-shovel."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

This canal across the isthmus;
Its advantage—who can doubt it?
Will it take as long to dig it
As it takes to talk about it?

—Washington Star.

Smith—"Has Brown any capital?" Jones—"No. But he gives employment to a great many men." Smith—"What do they do?" Jones—"Try to collect money due his creditors."—Chicago Daily News.

"It is sad," murmured the musing theorizer, "to think that every man has his price.." "Yes," admitted the intensely practical worker, "and it is a sad fact that half the time he can't get it."—Tit-Bits.

Mrs. Newlywed (weeping)—"A villainous-looking tramp tried to kiss me this afternoon, Jack." Mr. Newlywed—"Heavens! Those wretches will do anything to get into jail for the winter, won't they?"—Judge.

Mrs. de Mover—"Good gracious! This is the noisiest neighborhood I ever got into. Just hear those children screech!" Maid—"They're your own childers, mum." Mrs. de Mover—"Are they? How the little darlings are enjoying themselves?"—Tit-Bits.

Beher—"Is there anything in the paper?" Lyon (who has been holding the only copy for half an hour or more)—"Not a thing; absolutely nothing in it." Beher—"Smart chaps, those newspaper men. To think that it took you so long to find it out."—Boston Transcript.

Mrs. Tompkins—"Mrs. Yabsley has had such an experience! Arrested for shoplifting! All a mistake, of course." Mrs. Jenkins—"I suppose she must have been very much annoyed?" Mrs. Tomkins—"Not at all. The papers all said she was of 'prepossessing appearance.'"—Tit-Bits.

Hindoo Standard of Living.

For 3000 years the Hindoo standard of living has been almost the same for rich and poor. The rajah's floors are poor and the rich man washes in the open air and dries himself in the sun, like his poorer brother, and so simple is the mode of life and so great the fear of robbery that immense amounts of wealth are buried.