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THE SEASONS

When comes spring?
When blithest the robins sing,
And the violet has her hour?
Not till the heart's in flower
Is it spring.

When comes June?
At the time of the thrush's tune,
Of all beauties below and above?
When reddens the rose of love,
Then comes June.

Autumn's when?
When grasses rasp in the fen,
And the face of the field is wan!
When joys are faded, gone,
Autumn's then.

Winter hoar,
Comes he with the storm-wind's roar
And all lorn Nature's ruth?
'T is winter when love and youth
Are no more.

—John Vance Cheney, in the Century.

THE TELLTALE COLLAR BUTTON

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By WILLIAM COMSTOCK.

SOME years ago, while on a journey in the South, I put up at a boarding house in Chestnut street, Philadelphia. As it was the time of anniversaries, the house was full, and among the guests were two or three individuals who have since risen to distinction.

It was early in the winter, and the weather was quite cold. Accordingly we formed a half circle before the blazing wood fire in the evening, and passed the time in such desultory conversation as generally occurs where people are but slightly acquainted with each other—all save two lawyers, who retired to their rooms upstairs to improve the time in study.

As the evenings were long, conversation would have dropped but for a young girl in her seventeenth year, the niece of our host, who introduced conundrums. Therefore, under her auspices, we spent an hour or two every evening in guessing at enigmas and solving puzzles.

Among the company was a Scotchman, some thirty years of age, of a saturnine complexion, who had boarded at the house several weeks, but who seldom joined in the conversation that was going on around him. He generally sat with his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, legs extended, head down and staring from under his black eyebrows into the fire, so that one seldom saw anything of his eyes except two glittering sparks, which shone between his half-closed eyelids as if they reflected the fire on the hearth.

If some seem to try to attract attention by engrossing the conversation, this gentleman appeared to aim at the same object by maintaining a somber silence, as if in deep thought.

I could not perceive, however, that this maneuvre served his purpose, if such it was, until young Anna L—— ventured, in her girlish innocence, to startle him from his dreams by calling him by name and giving him a conundrum to solve.

He scarcely looked up, shook his head and grumbled out that he never amused himself in that manner.

"But why? I hope you don't think there's any harm in it!" returned the young girl, respectfully.

"There might be no harm if there was nothing better," answered the Scotchman, shifting his legs, and staring more intently into the fire than ever.

It was evident that the gentleman had found "something better;" he was watching the forestick; and when it burned through and fell apart, he, of all men in the house, would be the first to take note of that interesting event.

Anna L—— was a young lady of very attractive appearance. It was something more than ordinary beauty that caused the eyes of intelligent people to linger upon her countenance. Her manner, her voice, and every motion was fraught with occult meaning, which may be explained in higher states of being, but which is beyond the reach of human intelligence. The power of her presence could be felt, and the only explanation at hand is that she held us all in some magnetic thrall which lies outside of philosophical research. All, did I say? What, the ascetic Scotchman, too? Yes, him most of all.

We were shocked at his rudeness; and yet, the story soon got about that McFarlane was pious. He was rigidly so, and frowned upon all amusements, however innocent they might be regarded by the children of this world. His incivility was excused on the score of his religion! One would have thought that he might have spoken gently, and refused the young lady with a smile; but no; it was necessary to be crusty, to show that he was offended by this attempt to drag him from his safe moorings.

Therefore it was that he spoke roughly, almost savagely, to the young girl, and, resolutely folding his arms, stared into the fire with concentrated vigor and unswerving determination.

Such was the view taken of the affair by nearly everyone present; therefore they respected his religious prejudices; but, being at the same time annoyed by his incivility, but little notice was taken of him from that time forward, until a strange whisper went around—a report that McFarlane and the witching Anna L—— were under a marriage engagement.

Now, if the silent gentleman was under a marriage engagement to the daughter of our hostess—to the peerless Anna L——, the conclusion was jumped at that there must be some rich ore beneath the top soil of this unprepossessing individual. Also, his harsh replies to Anna seemed to be explained—he did not care to see her 'showing off" before other men. It was thought that jealousy should excuse his bluntness. No doubt that Anna understood him.

This reasoning was not substantially founded on facts. At this time Anna scarcely realized that she was McFarlane's betrothed. It had been almost wholly an affair between the gentleman and Anna's parents. They had discovered that McFarlane was a man of cultivated mind, and religious to the verge of fanaticism; therefore they gave full credence to his stories of real estate in Scotland, unencumbered lands and flawless title deeds. Yes, Mr. and Mrs. L. believed that the stranger would be able to make their daughter happy in spite of his habitual gloom and somewhat savage zeal for morality and religion. Of course there would be no play books, no comic annuals, no music or dancing in his house. But what of that? Anna was a good girl, and she would esteem the substantial realities of life above all trifles. So judged Anna's parents, who thought themselves capable of deciding what was best for her. And, in fact, Anna yielded to her parents, and certainly she tried to love the egotistical Scotchman. He believed that she was enchanted with him, and all the boarders now watched his lips closely for the pearls that should drop from them whenever they opened. But they did not open—nor his eyes either. He continued, evening after evening, to peer into the fire with half-shut eyes, his whole stock in trade appearing to be deep reflection—"thoughts to big for utterance."

Yet no one felt disposed to laugh; there was something singular about the man. He was evidently unhappy, and the presence of Anna appeared to add to his melancholy. How anyone could be miserable when about to become the possessor of that bewitching young creature was a mystery.

Some imagined they had found a clew to McFarlane's sadness in the fact that an aged uncle of the young lady, who lived in the house, but who generally remained in his room above stairs, and who was reported wealthy, had never yet deigned to speak to the Scotchman, though he sometimes met him in the hall or on the stairs. On this account it is supposed the old gentleman was not favorable to the approaching union. If so, it might be deemed an unfortunate circumstance, as he had declared his intention of making Anna his heir.

It was about three weeks after we had made the discovery of Anna's betrothal, that we were gathered around the fire as usual, on a cold, blustering night, when a Mr. Edwards, who was telling us about some of his experiences in Europe, suddenly clapped his hand upon a bald spot on the top of his head. Not much notice was taken of that, until he took his hand from his scalp, looked at it, suddenly ceased speaking, and betrayed considerable agitation. In a moment he put up his hand again, and became very pale.

"Are you ill, Mr. Edwards?" demanded Anna, in tones of sympathy that thrilled and enchanted every listener.

"I, really, I—can't say," answered Mr. Edwards; "can I have burst a blood vessel?"

Anna rose instantly and left the room, but soon returned with a doctor, who lived opposite. The doctor examined the head of the patient, and immediately looked up at the ceiling. As he did so a drop of blood fell upon his hand.

"Who is above there?" asked the doctor.

"My uncle occupies the room above," answered Anna, trembling as she spoke.

The doctor shook his head. Anna ran upstairs, saying, as she went, "I'll go and see if uncle is well."

In a moment we heard a loud scream overhead, and the fall of a heavy body on the floor.

"She has fainted!" cried the doctor, leaving the room with hasty strides, followed by all the company.

On entering the uncle's chamber, we saw the old man lying upon his bed with his throat cut from ear to ear, while the beautiful Anna L—— lay senseless on a rug by the side of the bed, her dress soaked in the blood of her uncle, which, indeed, covered a great part of the floor. It was this blood that had leaked through the ceiling and fallen, drop by drop, upon the head of Mr. Edwards, who, little suspecting the truth, imagined that it came from one of his own veins.

"Oh! who has done this?" burst from every tongue except that of the doctor, who gave orders that every door in the house should be locked and the windows watched.

"There must be a general search of the house," cried he, "as the assassin may not yet have escaped."

McFarlane now exhibited unusual activity, and talked loud and fast, proposing first one thing and then another, but ending with an expression of sympathy for Anna, whose inanimate form he took in his arms, heedless of the blood with which her dress was saturated.

No trace—nothing even to guess at—was discovered of the perpetrator of this atrocious murder. The investigation of the coroner was thorough, but it amounted in the result to no more than a multitude of answers to fruitless questions that threw no light whatever upon the subject of the murder, though they exposed to public view the most private affairs of the whole neighborhood.

The body of the old gentleman was consigned to the grave; the will was opened and read, and Anna found herself the heiress to about a hundred thousand dollars.

McFarlane delivered her a solemn lecture; he hoped this fortune would not make her proud or incline her heart to earthly vanities. As he turned away from his patient listener, his eyes met those of a tall, stern man, in a long brown ulster, who had entered the room softly while he was speaking.

"Is your name Alexander McFarlane?" demanded the stranger, fixing his hard, stony gaze upon the countenance of the moralist.

"Well—yes—it is," was the answer.

"Then you must go with me," added the stranger.

"You're an officer?"

"I am."

"What is it? I don't owe a cent in the world!" cried the Scotchman.

The officer hurried McFarlane away, and put him in a prison cell.

The maid, who was accustomed to set the long table in the sitting room, had more than once observed a collar button of peculiar appearance fastening the collar of McFarlane. It was very small, and the head had been so much stained as to have become entirely yellow. In cleaning out the room of Anna's uncle, after the murder, she found that collar button on the floor, near the head of the bed; and, since the murder, she had never seen it on the collar of McFarlane. She had carried it to Mr. L——, and given her history of it. This led the latter to watch the Scotchman by stealth, and to apply to a Scotch firm in Philadelphia, who happened to have heard of the man. They said that he had the reputation of being a very sober, well-disposed man, and a strict Christian; but that, to their knowledge, he owned no property in Scotland or elsewhere. This and some other circumstances led to McFarlane's arrest.

The prisoner's conduct was as singular as ever. Finding that he was suspected of the murder, he immediately gave up all for lost. He confessed that he was poor, and said that poverty had been his constant trouble. He knew that Anna's parents were not rich, and he was constantly harrowed by the thought that she would suffer from want after he married her. This had wrought so powerfully upon his mind that, at length, he entered the room of the wealthy uncle, and, finding him asleep, he drew a knife across the old man's throat. He added that he would have been immediately discovered, as there was blood on his shirt bosom and other parts of his dress, had not Anna fallen into the pool of blood. By clasping her form and carrying it downstairs, he besmeared his dress, and thus was able to account for the blood on his person.

Thus the man who was too scrupulous to guess a conundrum was led by all-engrossing love and anxiety for the well-being of her whom he passionately adored, to imbrue his hands in human blood.

He was executed in due course. His last words on the scaffold were: "Misery was mine from infancy, and misery followed me still; but, in ruining my soul forever, I have brought fortune and happiness to Anna. That is enough. I am content."—New York Weekly.

Diversions at the Zoo.

The black squirrel, tired of inaction, had gone into its hollow wheel and was making it whirl at a great rate.

"You seem to be fond of revolutions," commented the bear.

"Yes," said the squirrel, "and if you'll read the papers you will see that you are about to figure in one yourself."

Whirr-r-r-r!—Chicago Tribune.

The first solid train of canned peas ever shipped from an American canning factory went out from a canning company's plant at Longmont, Colo., recently.

HAMBURG CREAM.

Grate the rind and squeeze the juice of one lemon into one and a half cups of sugar; beat the yolks of five eggs, put into a pan, add the sugar and set it in hot water, stirring all the time; when the eggs begin to cook add the five whites, which should be already beaten; then remove and let cool.

USEFULNESS OF CHEESECLOTH.

Cheesecloth dusters will remove all dust and give a polish to wood floors, windows or mirrors, if given the following treatment: After washing, sprinkle them with kerosene and let them dry thoroughly. They will not be greasy, but will do much more effectual work than the ordinary dust cloth.

REPAIRING THE WALL PAPER.

Wall paper that has become bruised or torn off in small patches and cannot be matched may be repaired with ordinary children's paints. Mix the colors till you get as nearly as possible the desired shade, and lightly touch up the broken places, and at the distance of a foot or two the disfigurement will be quite unnoticed.

CLEANING WOODWORK.

Careless people sometimes disfigure woodwork by scratching matches almost anywhere, says the Brooklyn Citizen. To remove these marks, apply lemon juice, rubbing hard—and then use soap and water. Finger marks on polished surfaces may be taken off by rubbing with a flannel dipped in turpentine.

CLEANING THE GILDING.

Fly marks and general griminess may be removed from gilding by dipping a small piece of cotton in gin, and with it rubbing gently over the soiled parts. The cotton wool should be squeezed before being applied to the gilding, for this must not be made really wet, and any damp on it should be dried by the fire as soon as the marks have been removed.

TIMELY HINTS.

This cauliflower salad is recommended: Select a nice looking cauliflower, trim and wash it. Cook it in salted water to which has been added a small spoonful of butter. When tender take it out, throw it into cold water and divide it into flowerets. Then take them from the water and arrange them in a salad bowl, sprinkling them well with chopped parsely, and serve very cold with a castor of salad ingredients.

Maitre D'Hotel Sauce—A heaping tablespoonful of dripping, the same of flour, half a pint of hot water or stock, chopped parsley, a little curry powder and the juice of one lemon. This is for all sorts of roasts and baked fish.

Corn Fritters—Stew one can of corn, strain off the juice and press the kernels through a colander. To this meat add one-half pint of milk, one level teaspoonful of salt and a saltspoonful of pepper. Add the yolks of three eggs and one pint of pastry flour sifted with a rounding teaspoonful of baking powder. Mix thoroughly and fold in the beaten whites of the eggs. Drop by teaspoonfuls into extremely hot fat and when sufficiently drained serve with maple sirup.

Orange Fritters—Peel two oranges and slice in thin pieces. Dip in a batter made from one cupful of flour, a rounding teaspoonful of butter, a tablespoonful of sugar, a pinch of salt, the yolk of one egg and a half cupful of milk. Fry in hot fat and serve with powdered sugar or the following sauce: Beat the yolks of two eggs with half a cupful of sugar. Add the grated rind and juice of half a lemon, two teaspoonfuls of vanilla, and cook over hot water. Stir vigorously until it thickens and cover with the whites of the eggs beaten stiff. Serve at once.

Fried Apples and Onions—These form a novel dish, but are delicious if eaten with strips of fried bacon. Do not peel the apples but slice them crosswise, having the slices a half-inch thick. Have the onions parboiled and cold. With a sharp knife slice these rather thinner than the apples. Cook slices of bacon crisp in a pan, and remove them to a hot platter. Fry the onions and apples side by side in the bacon fat, unless there is too little of this, in which case add a little butter. When brown, put the onions and apples on a hot platter and arrange strips of fried bacon about the edge of the platter. Serve very hot, and as free from grease as possible. To attain this end it is well to lay each one of the fried slices on tissue paper for a minute after taking it from the pan.

SOUTHERN FARM NOTES.

TOPICS OF INTEREST TO THE PLANTER, STOCKMAN AND TRUCK GROWER.

Poultry Interesting and Profitable.

The first question to be decided by the would-be poultryman is, What do I want to make a specialty of—eggs, market poultry, or both? The majority of people want to raise fowls for both eggs and market poultry, or eggs and broilers or roosters. If we wish to take up the business merely for the profitable pleasure, then several of the more so-called fancy breeds can be selected, but when dollars and cents count, then I would recommend only one breed, or at most two. Thoroughbred poultry, or first crosses, should alone be used for the laying stock.

By first crosses I mean the progeny from two different breeds of thoroughbreds. The pullets from this cross may be selected for layers, but there the crossing should stop, for it will only result in disaster unless the person making the selection perfectly understands his business and has some definite object in view. The crossing of two similar breeds such as the Leghorn and Minorca will produce nothing better than the parents. If our object is eggs, and a fair sized body is also desired, then we can cross a Leghorn and Plymouth Rock or Langshan. This will give us a good sized body, a good layer, though not quite as good as the Leghorn pure, and a rapid grower. If we desire a fine broiler or rooster, then we should mate an Indian Game cock on a Wyandotte hen and will get just what we want. Nothing will surpass this cross for the purpose. The main gain in crossing two breeds is strong, healthy offspring, but on the whole, we do not recommend it, for eight persons out of ten who commence crossing will end by making scrubs out of their fowls inside of three years.

When thoroughbreds are raised properly they are hardy, and as we have over a hundred varieties to choose from, it will be seen that we can select and breed just what we want in its pure state without resorting to crosses. Of course new blood will have to be procured about every second year, although by judiciously selecting the largest, earliest hatched and strongest cockerels from a large flock, we can fix desireable points and yet sustain our strain. This should never be practiced by the beginner, as it requires somewhat of practice and experience. It must be remembered that the best laying breeds are not the best market breeds, and vice versa; therefore we should select with our object in view.

The most poular breeds now used especially for laying are the several varieties of Leghorns, Minorcas, and Plymouth Rocks. Take things very easy and commence with a few a nd learn how to make they lay winter and summer first. The rest will follow in its natural course. Start with thoroughbreds; if you cannot afford to buy a dozen buy a pair or trio. Commence right and buy the best, then you will not have to in a few years go back and start all over again, as many have had to do who started with inferior or indifferent stock.

One hundred hens will make a farmer as much clear money during the winter as five good cows, and it will not take half as much to keep them as will be required for the cows. This does not mean that any farmer with the required number of any kind of old hens as generally found on most farms will be able to do so, but if he has a good strain of pure-bred chickens and gives them as much care as he does his cows he can make the profit above mentioned. The better care he gives his flock the greater will be the returns.

Of course, I know that every poultry lover has his or her favorite breed. Every breed has its own peculiar merits and also its defects. In no breed, I suppose, is combined all the good qualities alike. But if one keeps Plymouth Rocks he should make it a point to sell off during the fall, at the time when they are at a good price, all the old hens, and this may usually be done in September or October. It very seldom pays to keep old Plymouth Rock hens and I suppose the same could be said of all the larger breeds. Old Plymouth Rock hens will lay but few eggs and instead of turning the food into eggs will almost invariably turn in into fat. This quality makes them one of the finest market fowls, but if you want to keep Plymouth Rocks and want to keep them for eggs you must have young hens, say from one to two years old. These, if properly fed and sheltered, make splendid winter layers. Still, I contend that the Leghorn is by far the best all-the-year-round layer. A Leghorn under favorable conditions will lay well when she is four, five, and sometimes six years old. Hence the Leghorn is a much cheaper hen, and to the farmer, if he depends on eggs for his profit, is by far the better of the two breeds. Yet, if you are fond of chickens to eat, keep some Plymouth Rocks for your table at least. There can be no better table fowl than the Plymouth Rock. If given a showing it is, either young or old, always nice and fat and sweet and juicy, and the Leghorn can never compare with it there.—Charlotte Observer.

Success in Forcing Bulbs.

Probably next in importance to roses and chrysanthemums are the bulbs which are forced for winter and spring flowering, millions of which are now annually imported by florists. The bulbs, which have been forced in the house, are of little use afterward, and it is best to procure new ones each year. If early flowers are desired, most of the bulbs should be planted in September, but for a succession they can be potted at intervals up to December. The size of pots should depend upon the size of bulbs, or the effect which is desired. It is not unusual to see a single hyacinth or narcissus bulb growing in a pot far too small for successful development.

A single hyacinth should have a five-inch pot, while a tulip only requires a four-inch. Narcissus bulbs require about the same size pot as the hyacinth. Freesias may be placed in shallow boxes, three inches deep, or in pots, two or three inches apart. Hyacinths, grown in glasses, which are made for this purpose, are a beautiful ornament and are grown with little trouble. Fill the glasess with water, so that the base of the bulbs will just touch it, then set away in cellar, which is dark and cool, or a closet, until the roots have reached the bottom of the glass, when they may be brought to the light. They should then be kept in the light, but not exposed to direct rays of the sun, and the temperature should be 50 or 60 degrees. The soil for growing the bulbs should be a light porous one, but rich. A good soil is composed of one-half decomposed turfy loam (or soil from an old pasture is good) and the remainder of well rooted manure and leaf mould well mixed together. It is not always possible for the rotted manure to be obtained by flower growers in towns or cities, so in place of this a mixture may be obtained of dealers in commercial fertilizers, which consists of four ounces each of nitrate of soda, sulphate of ammonia and sulphate of potash and one pound of finely powdered bone, using an even teaspoonful to each six-inch pot. This must be well sifted with the soil. When potting, fill the pots to the rim with soil, press the bulbs into it until they are covered, then press the soil around the sides of the pot; a good watering will further settle the soil. Place the pots immediately in a cool, dark place, that a strong growth of roots may be encouraged before the top starts. If possible, place in a cool cellar and cover with five or six inches of sand, or in a trench dug in the open ground, and the pots placed in it, covering them with six or eight inches of soil. Then a sufficient covering of leaves or coarse manure should be placed over this, to keep out frost, so they may be removed when desired. In six or eight weeks they should have made sufficient root growth to allow them to be brought into the living rooms and to the light, but not direct sunlight. Water freely as they begin to grow, so that the soil to the bottom of the pot may be thoroughly moistened. If care is taken to observe the above directions, one is amply repaid with beautiful blossoms throughout the whole of the dark winter days.—E. A. Season.

Millet Seed.

Millet grows well in the South. Besides being good for hens it is excellent feed for young chicks. Better grow a small patch and try the experiments. The following is from Commercial Poultry:

"Millet seed is relished by the hens, and unless given too freely is one of the best egg producers. A good way to feed it is to throw the unthreshed straw in the shed and let the hens scratch for the seed—but too much must not be given. Millet is almost as fattening as corn, but since the seed is so small there is less danger from feeding it. If corn is given to the hens before being shelled they will work over it, getting a grain at a time, and so far apart that the danger of overfeeding is much less. Cowpeas are highly relished by hens, but, like millet and corn, must be fed with care. All kinds of sound grain are good for hens—and if we exercise care in feeding we will get good results from them."

Rarely seen so far north, a rose flamingo and an Egyptian flamingo were recently shot on the sands near Calais.