The Ellicott City Times.

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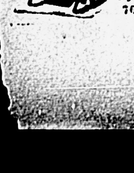

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"THE RIDDLE OF THINGS THAT ARE."

We walk in a world where no man reads
The riddle of things that are,—
From a tiny fern in the valley's heart
To the light of the largest star,—
Yet we know that the pressure of Life is hard
And the silence of Death is deep,
As we fall and rise on the tangled way
That leads to the gate of Sleep.

We know that the problems of Sin and Pain,
And the passions that lead to crime,
Are the mysteries locked from age to age
In the awful vault of Time;—
Yet we lift our weary feet and strive
Through the mire and mist to grope
An I find a ledge on the mount of Faith
In the morning land of Hope.

—Harper's Weekly.

THE CRUMPLED ROSELEAF.

STORY OF A HONEYMOON.

LOUDLESS skies and balmy breezes combined to make the day an ideal one. The well-known bay at Algiers was most delightfully still. The sun glinted down on the white sails of a yacht lying a mile or two out, making the brasswork glitter and the pretty little breakfast table, set under the awning, look most inviting. It was most charmingly arranged a deux, and everything, from the delicate eggshell china to the little rat-tailed spoons, was of the daintiest description. Everything around looked so calm and quiet; it seemed almost as though a spell lay over it all, and the ship were about to sail into an enchanted city—the brilliant blue of the Mediterranean, and the cloudless Southern sky, with the white roofs and orange groves of Algiers in the distance, making up a picture worthy of a fairy-story! At least, so thought the man and woman who were leaning against the rail watching a tiny boat which was slowly making its way out to them. The woman held a big scarlet sunshade over her, to shelter her fair curly head and sweet mobile face from the sun.

"Fancy, Harry," she was laughing, "just a month to-day since we were married! What a charming remembrance! and what a lovely idea of yours to have all those lovely flowers brought over to decorate the ship with for to night!" The sun beat down on the little white hands holding the parasol, and made the brilliant rings upon them glitter again. "We'll begin at once, as soon as he comes," she went on. "I think a festoon of big yellow flowers would look splendid over the saloon door."

"Oh, no," answered her husband, laughing; "we won't begin at once, we'll have breakfast first, and a look at the papers; in fact, don't you think it will be too hot for us to do anything, little woman? I meant to let Williams do it all, and we could sit in our deck-chairs and direct him."

"You lazy old thing!" she cried. "I do believe you get worse and worse every day, and the idea of wanting to look at papers when you're on your honeymoon! I never heard of such a thing."

"Well, I am sure you were as eager as I was for the letters this morning, he laughed; "it would serve you right if there were none, keeping me waiting all this time for my breakfast, too," and he cast a longing and smiling look towards the little table under the awning.

"Don't go yet, Harry," she said, "he's just coming now," and even as she spoke the boat drew up at the yacht's side. It was, indeed, a goodly cargo that she carried, baskets of oranges, bananas, and purple grapes, whilst the other end of the boat was a mass of brilliant blossoms, and on the seat beside the tall swarthy African lay a packet of letters and newspapers.

"Oh," gasped Molly, who was an artist in a small way; "oh, what a glorious mass of color, what lovely flowers!"

Meanwhile the men carried the baskets on board, and Mr. Ashley with his letters, walked over to the table and sat down in a low deck-chair.

"Now, sweetheart," he said, "you'll give me a cup of tea, won't you? Here are two letters for you, do come and sit down!"

But Molly was kneeling beside the flowers, burying her face first in one basket, then in another; and had to be coaxed away and comfortably installed in her Chinois wicker chair by Harry himself before she would settle down to breakfast and her letters! Such a pretty picture as she made! her white dress and scarlet parasol standing out against the deep blue of the sea, and behind her the large baskets of flour and fruits.

They were both engrossed in their posts; she, reading her first letters from home since her trip, he, looking over the latest town news and reading eagerly all that had happened in his beloved city during the three weeks he had been away. Sometimes he looked up with a smile, and read her out a bit of news, and asked how her mother was, and the boys, and at last finishing off his tea with a sigh of satisfaction, he handed her his cup to refill.

"How perfectly delightful it is here!" he said, looking around on the beautiful scene, and then letting his eyes rest lovingly on his wife; "and I think you look charming pouring out tea," he added, with a laugh.

"Fancy paying your wife compliments after having been married a month!" she smiled; "you are not keeping up your role of old married man."

"I can't do that at the expense of truth," he answered; "and you know I always had to say out what I thought. But you have a tiny frown, sweetheart; what's the matter? no bad news, I hope?" he said quickly.

"Oh, no," she returned. "This is a letter from Olga, and she always rubs me up the wrong way, somehow. She says: 'I presume you are having a perfect time; now tell me what is the crumpled roseleaf in all this happiness?—for there must be one!' And I thought for a moment, if ever one should come, if it could go on like this always without changing. It seems too good to be true," she added in a low tone; "but there is absolutely not even a crumpled roseleaf so far."

"No, dear," he said quietly, bending down and kissing her hands; "there is no serpent in our Eden!"

It was only afterwards he remembered the bitter irony of Fate that prompted those words, and they were soon absorbed again in their letters and themselves. The men were downstairs in the cabin, and no one noticed the tiny black adder which had crept from the basket of flowers, and now lay sunning himself on the deck just behind Molly's chair. The warmth of the sun made him quite lively, and he began creeping about, and gradually disappeared under the chair.

Suddenly she sat up with a sharp cry: "Oh! Harry, something has hurt my foot," she said; and, looking down, there lay across her instep the little snake, its head firmly fixed into the silk stocking. With a muffled exclamation of horror Harry tore it off, and flung it into the sea; the pretty white foot lay bare, and seen through the rent in the stocking were three tiny red punctures. Mr. Astley rushed down the cabin steps in a mad hurry: "Williams, Williams," he called; "you must go on shore at once, at once—do your hear? Mrs. Astley has been stung by a snake, go and bring a doctor as quickly as ever you can." Coming back he took up the huge basket of flowers, and pitched them overboard; then, taking poor Molly in his arms, he carried her to her cabin, where her maid bathed her poor little foot. It was swelling already, but there was no pain.

"I'll sit on the deck until the doctor comes, Harry," she laughed. "Please don't worry, I don't believe it was anything but a common adder."

But when the boat brought the doctor, in about an hour, he looked very grave.

"I cannot say anything for sometime yet;" he said, after examining the sting. "I don't like the entire absence of pain. Can you not describe to me what the snake or adder looked like?"

But poor Harry had flung it away without looking, and was in such a state that he could absolutely remember nothing. Gradually poor Molly got worse, the swelling increased, and a terrible numbness, which crept slowly right over the body, set in. The doctor stayed on, but more for the sake of Mr. Astley, who was beside himself with grief, than for Molly, who lay quite still and quiet in a kind of stupor from which nothing could rouse her. About six in the evening she awoke, and faintly asked for her husband.

"Dear love," she said, putting her arms around his neck, "try not to take it too hardly if I——" but Harry left her and rushed on deck.

"Good God, Wilson," he cried, to the doctor, "can't you do anything? Let's have someone else, let's——" his eye fell on the native who had brought over the flowers in the morning, standing talking to Williams, and in his frenzy, he turned on him.

"You scoundrel," he said, going up to him, "do you know your carelessness has killed my wife? If she dies, I'll have you thrown into the sea!"

"Master Harry," said the staid Williams, who had been his master since he was a boy, "don't hurt the man; he's a native, and these natives are sometimes very clever with medicines, perhaps he can do something for my mistress!"

"God bless you for thinking of it, Williams," he said in a broken voice; "you tell him, you can understand his jargon," and he went down again to Molly.

Williams explained as well as he could what had happened, and the man with a glimmer of understanding, thought he could see what kind of a snake it was from the wound it had inflicted. He was accordingly shown into Mrs. Astley's cabin, and after looking at the punctures, at once hurried away, saying he would bring something, but he was afraid, he confided to Williams, that it was too late.

Most of us can call to memory some time in our lives, some special hour when every moment seems a year, and though a suppressed excitement fills us, yet we seem unnaturally quiet, waiting—waiting—we know not whether for life or death, for happiness or misery to fall to our lot.

If Harry Astley had been asked which was the supreme hour of his life he would without hesitation have said this one—when he sat beside his wife's bed in dumb agony awaiting the return of the man, wondering if he would be in time, for poor Molly seemed to be losing strength with every breath, and wondering, too, if he could do any good when he did come!

At last, after what seemed to the worn-out man a perfect eternity of waiting, the native returned. His method seemed to Harry alarmingly simple for such an extreme case, as it merely consisted in putting a few drops of a particular juice into the three punctures the adder had made, but to his delighted astonishment, as well as the doctor's, in half an hour Molly was sleeping quietly, and the swelling was already greatly decreased, while Mahomed Nani, the African medicine-man left the yacht considerably richer than when he came on to it!

It was a very pale little Molly who was sitting a week later at the same breakfast table, opening a little package her husband had just given her. It was a bracelet in the form of a tiny gold adder, with gleaming eyes of emeralds; and on its quivering tongue lay a crumpled roseleaf of rosy enamel.

"How beautiful! Harry," she said. "Thank you a thousand times, and are they actually clever enough to make such a thing in that bazaar in Algiers?"

"These Eastern people are consummate masters in the art of jewelry, dearest," he answered; "and now, when my little wife wears this, may it always be the only crumpled roseleaf in our Eden!"—McC.'s Monthly.

Common Mistakes.

It is a mistake to work when you are not in a fit condition to do so; to take off heavy underclothing because you have become over-heated; to think that the more a person eats the healthier and stronger he will become; to believe that children can do as much work as grown people, and that the more they study the more they learn; to go to bed late at night and rise at daybreak and imagine that every hour taken from sleep is an hour gained; to imagine that if a little work or exercise is good, violent or prolonged exercise is better; to conclude that the smallest room in the house is large enough to sleep in; to sleep exposed to a direct draught at any season; to imagine that whatever remedy causes one to feel immediately better—as alcoholic stimulants, for example—is good for the system, without regard to the after effects; to eat as if you had only one minute to finish the meal, or to eat without an appetite, or continue after it has been satisfied, to gratify the taste; to give unnecessary time to a certain established routine of housekeeping when it could be much more profitably spent in rest or recreation. We trust that these little mistakes, which are so apt to be made, will in future be avoided.—London Family Doctor.

A Woman as Saw Mill Hand.

"A brawny woman clad in blue cottonade waist and skirt, who is able to run a saw-mill engine as well as any man in the business, is rather an unusual sight," said Walter Wade, "but that is just what I saw in a Tennessee wood a few weeks ago. The female engineer's name is Annie Fables, and she told me she had been doing a 'full hand's' work at the mill for six years. Five years ago she decided she could run the engine, and the mill boss told me she had been one of the most careful, as well as one of the most competent, he had ever seen. Mrs. Fables lost her husband six years and a half ago, and a few months afterward she asked for a place in the mill where her liege lord has been employed. She began working as an 'off-bearer,' and in a year and a half was put in charge of the monster piece of machinery which furnished motive power for the large circular and straight saws. She has all along earned a man's wages and has been able to support and give her seven fatherless little ones a good common school education. She is fond of the hard labor, and has lost but five days during her connection with the mill, and then she was ministering to a sick child."—Louisville Post.

Revolutionary Scholars.

Rev. George Canning wrote an account of the school of his youth, which he attended just after the Revolution. Girls and boys attended together the primary school, and sat on seats made of round blocks of wood of various heights, which were furnished by the parents. Children bowed and kissed the teacher's hand on leaving the room. The teaching of spelling was peculiar. It was the last lesson of the day.

The master gave out a long word, say multiplication, with a blow of his strap on the desk as a signal for all to start together, and in chorus the whole class spelled out the word in syllables. The teacher's ear was so trained and acute that he at once detected any misspelling. If this happened he demanded the name of the scholar who made the mistake. If there was any hesitancy or refusal in acknowledgment he kept the whole class until, by repeated trials of long words, accuracy was obtained. The roar of the many voices of the large school, all pitched in different keys, could be heard on summer days for a long distance.—The Chautauquan.

Brain Weight and Genius.

Some interesting facts bearing on the size and weight of the brain were given recently by Sir William Turner. In the case of Europeans the average brain weight is from forty-nine to fifty ounces in man and from forty-four to forty-five ounces in woman. It is interesting to note that even in new-born children the boys have bigger heads and heavier brains than the girls. The brains of a number of men of ability and intellectual distinction have been weighed and ascertained to be from fifty-five to sixty ounces. In a few exceptional cases, as in the brains of Cuvier and Dr. Abercrombie, the weight has been more than sixty ounces, but it should also be stated that brains weighing sixty ounces and upward have occasionally been obtained from persons who had shown no sign of intellectual eminence. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that if the brain falls below a certain weight it cannot properly discharge its functions. This minimum weight for civilized people experts have placed at thirty-seven ounces for men and thirty-two ounces for women.

Color Blindness.

It has been scientifically proved that a woman's color perception much exceeds that of a man, while men, as a rule, have a keener sense of smell. Women's training in the details of dress doubtless accounts for much of this superiority. Men, however, who were almost color blind have yet shown surprisingly good taste in the selection of dress goods for their women folks.

While on this subject of color, one may mention that a popular lecturer on dress advised women to wear "street gowns the color of their hair, house gowns the color of their eyes, evening toilets the tint of their complexions."—Housewife.

Believes in the Curfew.

A Portland ship broker is responsible for this story: A farmer had secured an appointment as lightkeeper in a Maine coast lighthouse. The first night he went on duty he lighted up promptly at dusk and at 11 o'clock carefully extinguished the lamp. The next day, of course, there was trouble, and when he was taken to task he replied that he supposed 10 o'clock was late enough to keep the light going, as he thought that all honest men should be in bed at that hour.—Lewiston (Me.) Journal.

GOOD ROADS NOTES.

Prodding Turnpike Companies.

A law has been passed by the Michigan Legislature requiring the turnpike companies in the State "to construct, reconstruct, repair and maintain their roads in good repair, and of the same material and in the same manner as required by their charter, within six months after the passage of the Act." If they fail to comply with the law, the roads are to be considered as abandoned, and no further toll can be charged on them.

How It Helped the Farmers.

"The beauty of good roads was exemplified Saturday," says the Quincy (Ill.) Herald, "when the farmers of Riverside and Ellington townships came to town with loads of hay and straw and produce, and the farmers of other townships had to stay at home. The Riverside and Ellington township farmers came to town via the Locust street telforded boulevard. The farmers of the other townships had to remain at home, because the roads were too muddy. To start meant to be mired, and so no start was made. And all because of lack of enterprise in providing good roads."

Power Required on Grades.

American highways have often closely followed the old Roman model, and run straight ahead regardless of obstacles. It seems not to have occurred to our road-builders that less power is expended in going three miles around a hill than one mile up it, or that it is easier to cut down a hill once than for all travelers to climb it thousands of times, or that no heavier load can be hauled than can be drawn up the steepest part. To attain higher levels the precipitous sides of hills have been scaled, requiring extreme grades, when such could have been avoided, and more circuitous courses, not materially longer, would have arrived at the same spot with less expenditure of energy. Mountain roads can be kept in order only with extreme difficulty. The work on them, the time and unnecessary energy wasted in surmounting them, and the half loads that only can be hauled on them are sources of great and constant loss.

In foreign countries every effort is made to keep grades down to four per cent., that is, a rise of four feet in every hundred, as this has been shown by experience to be the maximum on which loads can be advantageously hauled, and even it necessitates the expenditure of as much energy in one mile as in traveling three on a level, so that but one-third as heavy a load can be drawn. As the grade increases above this percentage the labor involved becomes so excessive that a maximum of ten feet rise in a hundred is used abroad for mountain roads, and on this less than one-half can be hauled of what is possible at four in a hundred, and but one-sixth as much as on the level.

So little attention has been paid to this subject here that a rise of ten in one hundred is often found on main roads which are constantly used by heavy traffic, and even twelve and fifteen in a hundred are by no means uncommon. This is wrong. The courses of old roads could be slightly altered in many cases to their great advantage, and in other cases new roads could be laid out. These points ought to be thoroughly looked into before making hilly roads permanent by macadamizing them.—L. A. W. Bulletin.

Why State Aid Is Necessary.

In addressing the Maryland State Grange recently, General Stone spoke of conditions which may exist in other States as well. He said in part:

"I find that the question of State aid is eliminated in Maryland by a constitutional provision which prohibits the use of State funds for such a purpose. Get up a sentiment strong enough, and amend your Constitution, like other States are doing. It is a vicious system that requires localities to keep up the roads. It is a work that concerns the people of the whole State, and is not a local question. Roads are of vital interest to the cities. Blockade your country roads to-day, and to-morrow your city will begin to scatter. The benefits of good roads are equally shared by the cities, but they must assist in the work of construction before they can reap the advantages.

"About three-fourths of the property interests of the country are to be found in the cities, and held by the corporations. Now, the farmers, representing about one-fourth of the property interests, have been endeavoring to keep up the roads for the whole country. The result is obvious. The burden was too much, and bad roads are to be found everywhere.

"There exist in some places strong objections to employing convicts upon public roads. A happy solution of this difficulty, however, presents itself. Employ your convicts in preparing material for building good roads. This has been tried in a number of States, and has proved to be an economical as well as a healthful way of working convicts. I am satisfied that Maryland could employ its short-term prisoners and House of Correction inmates in this way, and deliver road material at fifty cents a ton in any part of the State.

"You must convince your legislators that the State of Maryland is entitled to just as good legislation as any other State of the Union. You must stir them at home, and follow them to Annapolis. * * * You can tell them what you want in a general way, that is:

"First—A complete reform in the local road administration, so that you will get your money's worth for the money you now pay.

"Second—You want more money for roads, without more taxes on farm property.

"Third—You want an efficient State supervision to make sure that the new money spent on roads shall be spent to the best possible advantage.

"Fourth—You want to make sure for the future that all property, and all the people interested in or benefited by good highways shall contribute their proper share toward building and maintaining those roads."

German and Swiss competition has had a depressing effect on the Calais mechanical lace trade.

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