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An Air-Castle.

I built a house in my youthful dreams,
In a sunny and pleasant nook,
Where I might listen, the whole day long,
To the voice of the gurgling brook;
A cottage, with wide and airy rooms
And broad and shining floors—
A house with the hidden charms of home
And the freedom of out-of-doors.

Fair morning-glories climb and bloom
At will by the eastern eaves,
And on the doorstep and window-sill
The roses shake their leaves;
And fair old-fashioned lilacs toss
Their purple plumage high,
While honeysuckles drop their sweets
On every passer-by.

Down at the end of a pleasant path
Is a group of evergreen trees—
Pine and hemlock, and spruce and fir,
With their spicy fragrances;
And, sweetest picture of calm content
That mortal ever saw,
Under a low-boughed apple tree
Is a bee-hive made of straw.

I have pictured it all a hundred times—
I shall do it a hundred more;
But I never shall own the pleasant home,
With the roses over the door.
Never a dream of mine came true—
It is fate's unbending law;
I never shall see the apple tree,
Nor the bee-hive made of straw.

But yet in the airy realms of dreams,
Where all my riches be,
I enter into the heritage
Which is else denied to me.
I have but to close my eyes to find
My Eden without a flaw—
The home, the garden, the apple tree,
And the bee-hive made of straw.

—*Elizabeth Akers Allen.*

How our Bank was Robbed.

One bright morning, a few years ago, great excitement prevailed in the London office of the City and Provincial bank (limited). Yet the bank had just declared a fat dividend of fifteen per cent. for the half year. Shareholders were contented, and god Mammon seemed to cast a favorable eye on the welfare of the old and thriving corporation. However, a mutinous feeling of discontent was plainly visible upon the faces of the thirty odd employees, who swarmed like bees into the hive every week-day morning for the purpose of manufacturing the golden produce that delights the souls of distributing directors and radiant proprietors. The shoe pinched somewhere. Where was it?

The following notice, circulated for the perusal of each clerk, contained the secret of the unwonted gloom:

"Every gentleman will be required to remain at the banking-house two Sundays in the year, to assist in guarding the premises.

"By order, J. SPOFFORTH, Secretary."

Here was a revolution—a *coup d' etat* indeed! Six days we should labor, but the seventh certainly did not belong to the City and Provincial bank. The gilding of a little extra pay might have made the pill easier to swallow, but on this point the notice was discreetly reticent. In the end, after a few days of conjecture and excitement, every one quietly resigned himself to his fate, as black and white slaves are bound to do all the world over.

I had been ten years in the bank, and received a salary which, though not magnificent, was sufficient to support in comfort a young wife; and very happy we were in our snug retreat at Wood Green. Of course, we both thought it extremely hard to be separated even for two Sundays in a year, still we soon saw there was nothing for it but submission.

Now, though I, in common with others, rebelled against the forcible seizure of Sunday's rest, yet it must be owned there was some reason for the extraordinary innovation. The strong-rooms of two neighboring establishments had been attempted within a fortnight, and a boy carrying bonds on Broad street had been decoyed away and the securities stolen. But, worst of all, some pilfering had been going on for months in our own bank. Stamps had disappeared to an alarming extent. Clerks had missed money from their coats, and now and then the garments themselves were spirited away. Traps had been carefully laid, and a detective spoken with; but as yet the rogue was not discovered, and an uneasy feeling was rife among us all.

The bank boasted of four porters or messengers, one of whom—the chief—lived rent-free in premises that nearly adjoined the building. He was a long, lean man named Bennett, with a parchment face and a goatee beard. Some people said he was civil, others servile; at all events he was quiet, well up to his work, and high in favor with the authorities. Of the remaining three, one had been a grocer's boy, and the other was a lout put into a green coat and brass buttons, both honest creatures, but of no importance in this narrative. The fourth was an ex-policeman named Lance, a blunt, pleasant man.

After eight weeks had passed since the official notification, it came round to my turn to keep guard. During the week preceding the mystery had become still more intensified by the unaccountable disappearance of a £20 note, and matters began to assume a very grave aspect.

On arriving at the bank, the door was opened by the night-watchman, an old pensioned soldier, who, for one pound a week, remained in the building all night, and vanished with the early morning on the arrival of the porters to open the doors. A few minutes afterward Bennett walked in, accompanied, to my joy, by honest old Lance, whose wonderful stories I fondly hoped would help to relieve the tedium of a long, dull day; then, without more ado, I proceeded to make my first round.

Preceded by Bennett, with a lighted taper, I marched up stairs, through every room and office, across perilous planks and up dangerous ladders, till we gained the trapdoor which opened on to the roof; then down again to the lowest abysses of coal-cellar and strong-room, looking in vain for some concealed Guy Fawkes, who, however, was conspicuous for his absence.

Very minutely did I examine and try the drawer, which had already been tampered with, as I knew it contained, beside stamps, a large sum of gold and notes. No—it seemed firm and safe, and would take "a deal o' work," as Bennett remarked, holding his taper close to the lock. Lance, too, had a good look at it, and expressed the same sagacious opinion as his colleague.

Our first visit ended—and I was expected to patrol at least three times in the day—the two porters went down to breakfast, and I adjourned to the manager's room, leaving the door partly open, so as to be able to see all round the bank. I lit a cigar, and ensconcing myself comfortably in the managerial arm-chair, prepared to stay the two hours which intervened between the cessation of the church-bells and luncheon-time. Suddenly old Lance appeared again at the half-opened door, and spoke in this wise:

"'Scuse me, sir, but I've been a pleaceman, and I don't think that lock's all right."

"Which lock, Lance?" said I.

"That there drawer with the stamps, sir."

"Well, let us look again."

So saying, we both went to the counter which contained the drawer, and Lance pointed out some small scratches on the lock, and a light indentation in the woodwork surrounding it.

"That's a chisel, if I die for it!" said the ex-policeman.

"By Jove! You don't mean it?"

"Sure of it, sir."

"Well, let's have Bennett up stairs and hear what he thinks of it."

Angry at being disturbed at his breakfast, the head porter came grumbling to the place when I stood, and, bending down to the lock, impatiently inquired if it was not a deal more likely the cashier had scratched it in the course of business. After a few minutes' further inspection, he looked up with a knowing smile.

"I believe Lance is right now; it looks so fresh, I shouldn't wonder if the watchman knew something about this."

"Perhaps so," said I; "what do you think, Lance?"

"Well, he looks honest enough—but looks ain't always a guide," said the man, quietly.

"Then I'll stop in the bank to-night, and see if I can trap my gentleman," exclaimed Bennett, "if you'll leave me the key."

"I can't do that," I replied, but I shall report the fact to the manager the first thing in the morning."

"As you like, sir," he assented reluctantly, and they both returned to their long-neglected meal.

Again I retreated into my den, this time with the proud consciousness of having something important to relate when Monday morning should see the stream of busy workers once more settling with books and papers and filthy lucre generally. One—nay, two cigars did I consume down to the last half inch, read *Byles on Bills* nearly through, in default of more cheerful literature, and I am afraid a tiny doze must have ensued, as I was awakened by Bennett's voice close to me asking what I would take for luncheon. Mechanically I fixed upon the hackneyed chop, with a cup of coffee, to be fetched from the only eating-house that deigned to open for a couple of hours on Sunday. While he was gone I took the opportunity of making my second round, and found nothing but peace everywhere, with the slight exception of being startled by the sudden appearance of the bank cat from the cavernous depths of the enormous coal cellar. Eventually I returned to my room and found a succulent chop smoking upon the table, flanked by a cup of coffee, which, on tasting, I found rather peculiar—indeed I fancied I could detect a peculiar aroma in the beverage which seemed to make it more than ordinarily palatable; anyhow I thoroughly enjoyed the repast, and when an intensely slumberous sensation crept through all my veins, my strongest effort of will proved insufficient to keep me awake. While I was still struggling against the impulse, Lance came to inform me that he was going out to dine at his home close by, while Bennett was left on guard below. As he closed the door behind him, my eyes shut, and I fell asleep, but only in a few moments to be awakened by his voice again addressing me.

"I don't think I'll go out to dinner, sir," said he, gazing at me with a strange expression.

"Why not?" quoth I drowsily.

"Well, sir, I don't feel very bright to-day, and I'd rather stop indoors; and if you'd be so kind as not to mention to Bennett as I've come back. But you don't look very well yourself, sir, just now."

"Lance, that stout has made me most confoundedly sleepy!"

"Well, have a bit of nap, sir. I'll see the place is all right—only I don't want Bennett to know I'm here."

"All right, all right," I replied, rather shortly, for I wanted to be left to myself; yet I was somewhat surprised at his wish for concealment in so trivial a matter.

Again I saw the man pass out and partly close the door, and once more I drifted into a heavy but pleasant slumber. Soon I was a denizen of dreamland, and a sharer in its grotesque and fantastic imaginings. I thought I was clinging to the telegraph wires that stretch like webs over London, and performing thereon athletic feats in impossible positions; then I flew through the air toward my home at Wood Green, spinning as I went a thread of wire by which to return—a useless precaution, as I was at once transported to the desert of Sahara, where I found myself on a camel's back careening across the burning plain. But in my dreams the face of the camel was the face of the ex-policeman Lance, and ever and anon strange grating noises seemed to be borne past us on the wind. The pace began to slacken; and, as I spurred on my steed to fresh exertions, I seemed to feel the prick of the rowel in my own flesh. It became sharper and more painful; and gradually camel, desert, chase, faded from my vision, and the bank once again dawned on my awakening senses. But, though my aerial steed and his surroundings had all disappeared, the spur unaccountably enough remained, as my nether limbs were painfully reminding me.

It was no dream this time—I was wide awake. Quickly glancing around, I discovered Lance crouching down beside my chair, and vigorously applying a pin to the calf of my leg. To this proceeding I was about to enter an indignant protest, when a significant gesture warned me to remain mute. His face was white with unwonted excitement, as he rose noiselessly to his feet, and beckoning me to a small aperture in the wall used for the transmission of books and papers between manager and clerks, bade me look upon a spectacle that made each individual hair upon my head to stand erect. The drawer containing the stamps and gold was being tampered with before my very eyes in broad daylight. Stooping down with his back toward us was a man softly but swiftly forcing the lock with a chisel. But the man—the thief—who was he? I knew at a glance that long, lean form. It was Bennett. We both shrank back.

"Take off your boots, sir," he whispered in a low voice. I noticed that his own feet were shoeless. "Creep round outside the counter, and wait till I give the word—then over and help me."

I nodded assent; and then I saw Lance crawl out upon his hands and knees into the office, behind the shelter of a long, high desk, at the end of which he would be within a few feet of Bennett. I crept away to the other entrance of the manager's room, which led into a large space appropriated to the public, and, gliding noiselessly along, I arrived where I knew I must be opposite the thief at his work. Click, click, went the chisel against the brass lock. It was apparently a work of time and difficulty, though the sound of crushing woodwork betokened the near accomplishment of the deed. How long the time seemed! Had Lance been able to get close to him undiscovered?

I judged so, as the chisel still continued its grating work. Sometimes it stopped for a moment, and then I knew that the man was watching the door of the manager's room, to see that I was safe under the influence of the narcotic administered in my cup of coffee. Click, click, crunch! and the whole lock appeared to come away, the drawer being at the same time drawn softly open.

"Now," thought I, "here goes."

Not yet! I could hear the mellow chink of the small bags of gold as they were hurriedly transferred to the man's pockets; then the stiff rustle of many sheets of stamps told of a like destination. I listened breathlessly. Suddenly there was a yell of mingled fright and rage, and vaulting at one bound across the counter, I saw Bennett falling backward, his throat clutched by the practiced hands of the ex-policeman, who held on with a will, having sprung upon him silently from behind. The half-strangled man struggled like a fiend, dealing me several ugly kicks with his long legs as I attacked him from the front. But the odds were too many, and furthermore he had been taken by surprise. In a few moments he was overpowered, and his hands and feet were securely fastened. Not a word had been uttered since the commencement of the conflict, but now Lance looked up and said, in a stern voice:

"Got the scoundrel at last—next thing's a pleaceman. Will you go, sir, or shall I?"

Here there was a fierce attempt to free himself by the prostrate thief.

"Perhaps I'd better stop with him," continued Lance; you'll get a constable in a minute or two at the station in Old Jury."

Seizing my hat, I was off in a twinkling, and returned in double-quick time to the bank, accompanied by a stalwart member of the city police. A few moments saw the policeman, myself and our chopfallen prisoner marching quietly to the station, where I made the charge and left him to the solitude of a cell till Monday morning. On my return to the bank, the night watchman had arrived, and I prepared to go home.

"Why, Lance, you must have suspected the beggar before this!" I exclaimed.

"I've thought it sometimes, sir," he laughed. "Knew I should cop him some day." Then, with a frown: "Mean, sneaking skunk! I believe he meant to try to put it on to me or the watchman here."

"Well, all's well that ends well, Lance, and it was a clever catch of yours. We have a nice story for Mr. Spofforth to-morrow. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir."

When I walked into the bank next morning, I found the story was already known. Little knots of men were eagerly discussing the event, and I as well as Lance soon became the center of an animated crowd. At eleven o'clock I was summoned to the board room, to the committee of directors, who complimented me upon the capture, as if I, and not Lance, had been the hero of the day. In the morning newspapers there was a graphic account of the "Great bank robbery," concocted by some ubiquitious penny-a-liner, which my wife read and re-read with mingled pleasure and alarm. Bennett was eventually sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment, which we all considered far too lenient a judgment. The ex-policeman came in for the head-messenger's berth, with a house rent-free and a present of fifty pounds. In addition to much very unmerited praise, I received a bonus of a hundred pounds, which, as my domestic circle was shortly to be increased, contributed in no small degree to the satisfaction of the household at Wood Green.

The Benefit of Laughing.

Dr. Greene, in his "Problem of Health," says there is not the remotest corner or little inlet of the minute blood vessels of the human body that does not feel some wavelet from the convulsion occasioned by good, hearty laughter. The life principle, or the central man, if taken to its innermost depths, sending new tides of life and strength to the surface, thus materially tending to insure good health to the persons who indulge therein. The blood moves more rapidly, and conveys a different impression to all the organs of the body, as it visits them on that particular mystic journey when the man is laughing, from what it does at other times. For this reason every good, hearty laugh in which a person indulges tends to lengthen his life, conveying, as it does, new and distinct stimulus to the vital forces. Doubtless the time will come when physicians, conceding more importance than they now do to influence of the mind upon the vital forces of the body, will make their prescriptions more with reference to the mind and less to drugs for the body; and will, in so doing, find the best and most effective method of producing the required effects upon the patient.

The bigger the dog the more fuss he will make when you tread on his tail. There may be philosophy in this, and there may be nothing but dog.

TIMELY TOPICS.

Yellow fever in the South carried off fifty-six clergymen. Twenty-four were Roman Catholics, thirty-one Protestants, and one a Jewish rabbi.

There are fewer blind people in Switzerland, in proportion to population, than in any other European country, and more deaf-mutes, idiots and lunatics.

Robert Brenson owned property worth a half million twelve years ago. Lately he was buried in the potter's field of Terre Haute, Ind. Disastrous speculation led him to poverty and despondency.

A few months ago the city of Cers, Venezuela, was destroyed by an earthquake. It is now about to be rebuilt, but upon an entirely new site in the plain below, where several villages escaped unscathed, while every town on the hillside was overthrown.

Mr. Martin was on his way from Madison to Janesville, Wis., to marry Miss Foster, but he chanced to meet Miss Cobbe, whom he had once known and loved, and straightway married her, leaving Miss Foster and her wedding guests to wait in vain for his coming.

A miner was riding up on an elevator in a Nevada shaft. One of his hands caught in the framework of the side, and he was left dangling 1,000 feet from the bottom. His plight was not discovered until the elevator reached the surface without him. He was so weak, after being rescued, that he could not stand.

A resident of Melbourne, Australia, recently received from a friend in the British museum a package of peas which were taken from the folds in the clothing of an Egyptian mummy, 3,000 years old. On receiving them he placed them in a tumbler of water, where in twenty-four hours they had swelled considerably, and then planted them in pots, where they are now growing vigorously.

Well-dressed and semi-inebriated man goes into shop of Ypsilanti druggist and and sticks his elbow through glass case. Druggist collars him and demands $3. Man says: "Thash allri," and refuses to understand what is wanted of him. Druggist searches man's pockets, finds $50 bill, puts $47 change in man's pocket-book, and expels him, the inebriate staggering away, blandly remarking, "Ish allri—no offensh." Next day druggist finds that the $50 is counterfeit.

Ferdinand Randall, although only sixteen years old, is a remarkable desperado. He escaped from the jail in Zanesville, Ohio, and hid in a cellar. The police soon found him and ordered him to come out; but he barricaded himself behind the grated door instead, and defied them. He had four loaded revolvers, and these he laid out for handy use. During half a day the siege was maintained, and at the end of that time Randall had fired off all his ammunition, wounded two officers, and been hit twice. Then he was taken.

Terrible Fight of Enraged Bears.

A St. Louis paper describes a fatal and terrific combat which occurred at the zoological gardens in the fair grounds between two of the bears confined in the bear-pits. The cause of the quarrel is not known. It began with growls and whines, and reproachful cries, and imprecations, followed by blows and heavy sparring. At length both bears became thoroughly enraged, and, standing on their hind legs, they prepared for the deadly duel. Several rounds were fought, and at the fifth the big bear seized the little one around the waist and throwing him over his head, fell heavily upon him. The little one now got the big one's ear in his mouth and tore away nearly the whole of it. This so exasperated the giant that he fastened his teeth upon his adversary's left paw and whirled him around with the velocity of a whirligig. When he released his hold both bears were pretty nearly exhausted. After a few minutes' rest the fight was renewed, but it was soon ended. The little one was blind and bleeding at the mouth, and was evidently on his last legs. As he lay on his back, panting and whining, the other bear approached to make a finish, and received a heavy slap on the mouth, which drew blood. The big one then sprang upon him, and seizing him by the throat with his teeth, while he clasped him tightly in his embrace, held on until life was extinct. The survivor was fearfully punished, being lame in two legs, with enough hair missing from his back to stuff a cushion.

Unending.

There is an end to kissing and to sighs,
There is an end to laughter and to tears;
An end to fair things that delight our eyes,
An end to pleasant sounds that charm our ears;
And end to enmity's foul libeling,
And to the gracious praise of tender friends;
There is an end to all but one sweet thing—
To love there is no end.

That warrior carved an empire with his sword;
The empire now is but like him—a name;
That statesmen spoke, and by a burning word
Kindled a nation's heart into a flame;
Now naught is left but ashes, and we bring
Our homage to new men, to them we bend;
There is an end to all but one sweet thing—
To love there is no end.

All beauty fades away, or else, alas!
Men's eyes grow dim, and they no beauty see;
The glorious shows of nature pass and pass,
Quickly they come as quickly do they flee;
And he who bears the voice of welcoming
Hears next the slow, sad farewell of his friend;
There is an end to all but one sweet thing—
To love there is no end.

And for ourselves—our father, where is he?
Gone, and a memory alone remains;
There is no refuge on a mother's knee
For us, grown old and sad with cares and pains;
Brotherless, sisterless, our way we wend
To death's dark house from which we shall not rove;
And so we cease; yet one thing hath no end—
There is no end to love.

Items of Interest

Some men are bred bakers.

In driving a hen a woman is slow but shoo-her.

A son-net—Your neighbor's pretty daughter.

Bulgaria asks for a ruler. The schoolmaster should go abroad.

Like the dog, the mosquito caresses the hand that strikes it.

What aria is full of shakes, quavers and tremolos? The malaria.

Doting mother—"Yes, I shall be happy to give you the wages you ask; but I shall expect you to love the dear children." Nurse—"I shall be very happy to do so, madam, but of course—that would be an extra."

The Duke de Richelieu invented the fashion of powdering the hair to hide the fact of his grey hairs. It was a most odious custom, but prevailed for nearly fifty years, young and charming women being compelled to adopt it.

Half a dozen onions planted in the cellar, where they can get a little light, will do much toward absorbing and correcting the atmospheric impurities that are so apt to lurk in such places.—*Dr. Foote's Health Monthly.*

At Des Moines, a kitten had caught and was playing with a mouse when the frightened captive sprang into pussy's open mouth and ran down her throat. The kitten went into spasms, which did not subside till the mouse had been suffocated.

Chinese Ingenuity.

The skill displayed by the Chinese in carving ivory balls within each other has excited the wonder and admiration of Europeans. Nothing can afford a greater proof of the patience and perseverance, as well as of the taste of a Chinese handicraftsman, than one of these elegant baubles, each ball being exquisitely carved, and no two alike in pattern. Each of these balls rolls freely within that which incloses it, and is visible through apertures; so that however many there may be, the beauties of each can be examined, and the number of the whole counted. Much time is spent upon the carving of these toys; for the cleverest artist will employ a whole month in the execution of each separate ball; consequently the labor of two years is not unfrequently bestowed on the production of a single toy, which is formed out of a solid globe of ivory and has no junction in any part. The outside of this globe is first carved in some very open pattern, and is then carefully cut with a sharp, fine instrument, through the openings, till a complete coating is detached from the solid part inside, as the peel of an orange might be loosened with a scoop from the fruit without being taken off. Or a hollow ball is thus formed, with a solid one inside of it. The surface of the inner ball is then carved through the interstices of the outer one, and when finished is subjected to the same operation as the first, and thus a second hollow ball is produced, still with a solid one of smaller dimensions inside. The process is repeated again and again, the difficulties increasing as the work proceeds, till at length only a small ball of the size of a marble, is left in the center, which is also ornamented with figures cut upon it, and then the ingenious but useless bauble is complete. This process is said to be performed under water.

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