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## St. Valentine.

The street was blowing; where was any sign  
Of greenish valley, call of mating bird?  
Yet, close beside my ear, a voice I heard—  
A whisper—"Sweet, choose now your valentine!"  
"Nay, wait till skies are softer, air more fine."  
But still, impatient, felt that whispered word,  
"Choose, choose your valentine!"  
What was it stirred,  
Like breath of June, this yielding heart of mine?  
Sudden, the bleak earth blossomed in bowers  
Of bridal beauty—for its wedding snow—  
Wide banks of creamy jasmine and rose—  
While, on the plain, bloomed out great passion  
flowers:  
And I—so subtle love's whispers are—  
Be sure for choice I did not wander far.  
—Caroline A. Mason, in Scribner.

## THE WHITE CHEST.

It was just the house I wanted. In  
sine and situation it suited me exactly,  
as the phrase goes, literally down to the  
ground. Its rent, too, was extremely  
moderate. Why, then, did I hesitate to  
take it? Why did everybody hesitate to  
take it? For the last seven years or  
more it had never been let. All the  
house agents at the West End had had  
it in hand one after another. The terms  
had been reduced each season that it  
came into the market, and still there  
was no finding a tenant for it. Every-  
body who went over the house was  
charmed with it. Nevertheless, every-  
body having reached the roof, and hav-  
ing looked round for a minute or two;  
descended with a firm determination  
not to take the house. Now, what was  
the reason? It was not haunted; no  
ghosts had ever been seen, or mysterious  
noises heard—such things were never  
even hinted at. I had heard the rumors  
about the house often, and my curiosity  
had always been piqued, so that now,  
when I wanted just such a house for the  
season, I determined to go and look at  
it for myself.

Finding all satisfactory, and just as I  
expected from top to bottom, I was step-  
ping out on to the roof with Mr. Crum-  
ble, agent, and was saying to him:  
"Well, I can't conceive why people  
won't live here," when my eye fell upon a  
curious object erected upon the ledge  
at the rear, and surrounded by a high  
railing. It looked like a huge sky-  
light or glass lantern, about ten feet  
long, three high, and three broad. But  
instead of forming a light for a stair-  
case or room beneath, it seemed to have  
been built for the purpose of covering  
another curious object, which, occupy-  
ing nearly the whole of the space under  
the glass, was plainly visible through it.  
This was a plain white box, resembling  
a seaman's chest more than anything,  
only much larger. It rested upon four  
legs or feet, which raised it about a foot  
from the flat surface of the roof. It  
was a creamy white and varnished, and  
apparently not being intended to open,  
any more than its glass covering, had  
no hinges or lock to its top or lid.

"What the deuce is that?" said I to  
Mr. Crumble.

"Ah!" replied that functionary, with  
an odd expression in his face, "that's it,  
sir!"

"What is it, pray?"

"Why, the secret, sir."

"The secret? how is it a secret? what  
do you mean?"

"Well, sir, what it is, what it's meant  
for, what's inside of it."

"No, sir."

"Doesn't anyone know?"

"I suppose somebody does, but we  
don't; we are forbidden to inquire, or  
attempt to find out; if we knew, we  
should be able to let the house, per-  
haps."

"How long has it been there?"

"A long while, I believe, sir—ten or  
fifteen years. Before my time."

"But who put it up?"

"Well, Mr. Gayling, we suppose;  
nobody seems to know exactly when it  
appeared there."

"But the servants," I protested,  
"they must know."

"Oh! I have heard there were none  
in the house at the time; they were all  
dismissed just before it was put up."

Mr. Gayling never keeps many servants;  
sometimes he has only one, sometimes  
none. Nobody lives in the house when  
he's away; but he always leaves the  
keys with us. He is always changing  
his servants, Mr. Gayling is. I have  
often heard him say that he likes new  
brooms."

"What is he, or what was he?"

"A gentleman in the naval line, I  
believe, sir. They are rather run 'uns,  
I'm told."

"Humph!" I said, "very odd. But  
do you mean to tell me that nobody will  
live here because they don't know what's  
in that box?"

"That is partly the reason, sir."

"Absurd," I was going on, when the  
man continued:

"But there's a clause in the agree-  
ment about it: that's what does it, sir."

"Explain," I said.

"Well, sir, here is the clause," and  
he produced the document; "perhaps  
you would like to read it yourself?"

Thus it ran:

"And in taking the house, at the  
rental, and for the term specified as  
above, I hereby solemnly pledge my  
oath never directly, or indirectly,  
through my own agency, or that of  
others, to attempt to meddle with, to  
disturb the white chest under the glass  
case on the roof, or to seek in any way  
to discover for what purpose it has been  
placed there, or what it contains; and  
I further guarantee that no person in  
my employ, nor any one entering the  
house during my tenancy thereof, shall  
make any such attempt, and I hereby  
undertake that in the event of their  
being detected in doing so, or of my  
doing so, to forfeit the sum of five thou-  
sand dollars, and in accordance with  
this agreement have, in proper legal  
form, lodged the said sum with the  
bankers of Thomas Gayling, Esq., the  
lessor, as a guarantee of my good faith."

"But for that clause," went on the  
agent, as I finished reading it, with some  
surprise, "we should have no difficulty  
in letting the house."

This strange prohibition excited my  
curiosity and set me to thinking; and  
the result of my thinking was, that I  
signed the agreement two days after-  
wards, having conformed to the peculiar  
stipulation regarding the deposit. I had  
no fear of losing my five thousand dol-  
lars; the interest on it was a mere addi-  
tion to the rent, and the house was so  
exactly what I wanted, that I would  
even then be cheap to me, with my large  
family of motherless children.

I had, on taken the house, determined  
on not bothering myself about the chest,  
but before I had been there a month, it  
began to act as a nightmare on me, an  
incubus I could not shake off. These  
feelings at last reached such a pitch that  
I finally changed my bedroom, I would  
not sleep any longer directly underneath  
this accursed mysterious fabric.

About a week after this a lengthy de-  
bate kept me late at the house of com-  
mons, and walking home for the sake of  
fresh air, I found the midsummer dawn  
breaking as I struck into Park lane, and  
at that moment I was startled by observ-  
ing in the western sky a strong light,  
not due to reflected sunrise, and ere I  
had walked another two hundred yards,  
I saw, yes, merciful powers! it was my  
house that was on fire!

I can scarcely record what followed; I  
only know that somehow I found myself  
in the midst of the police and firemen;  
that I explained to the chief who I was,  
and that under his escort I soon ascer-  
tained that all the inmates of my house  
—my children, their governess and the  
servants—were in safety, and had been  
taken into a neighbor's at the rear; that,  
as soon as I found this to be the case, I,  
accompanied still by the superintendent,  
mounted to the top of an adjacent resi-  
dence, whence the firemen were direct-  
ing the hose upon the flames.

Once on this vantage point, my mind  
reverted to the white chest. Was it still  
there? Yes; the flames, though burst-  
ing out from all the windows of the  
upper stories, back and front, had not  
yet done more than wrench and crack  
portions of the glass case. But pre-  
sently, amidst the roar of the flames,  
there came a dull, heavy rumble for a  
moment, and then, with a tremendous  
crash, the roof fell in. With it went the  
glass case and the now charred and  
blackened chest itself.

But, good heavens! what was it that  
I looked down upon? I turned my face  
away for a moment with a shudder, for  
there, protruding through the splintered  
fragments of its once creamy-white  
wooden case, was a huge leaden coffin,  
which, in its turn, melting and bursting  
with the heat, displayed within the un-  
mistakable form of a shrouded corpse!  
I was in the act of drawing my com-  
panion's attention to it in horror, when  
suddenly there flew up around it with  
redoubled fury, such a mass of flame  
and smoke, that it was entirely hidden,  
and soon the fire had so spread and  
burst out again, that the horrible spec-  
tacle of this unintentional cremation was  
shut from sight, and the house was  
finally burned to the ground.

I pass over what immediately followed  
after I had made my way back to the  
friendly abode where the members of  
my family were sheltered. In a few days  
they were snugly settled again in another  
house, fortunately not very much the  
worse for the terrible score. In due  
course the time arrived for looking into  
my losses, and while I was doing so I  
received a letter from Mr. Gayling, who  
had come to town, requesting an inter-  
view. I was glad of this, for I foresaw  
it must lead to some explanation of the  
strange circumstances surrounding the  
agreement I had signed. Unexpectedly,

Mr. Gayling disclosed it to me immedi-  
ately after we met.

"I have asked for this interview,  
sir," he said abruptly, "because I am  
a ruined man, through your tenancy of  
my house."

"But," I interposed, "I am told you  
were fully insured. I do not understand  
you."

"Listen, sir," he went on, "and you  
will: I was brought up to the sea, and  
followed it till mid life, for I was en-  
tirely dependent on my own earnings.  
My only relative at this time was an  
old uncle, also a sailor, and a most  
eccentric man, as you will presently see."

Fifteen years ago he suddenly came into  
a large sum of money; I never knew  
how, but he retired and took that house.  
He had only been in it three years when  
a mortal sickness overtook him; he sent  
for me.

"Tom," said he, 'I am dying, and I  
don't like it; I am terrified, not so much  
at the thought of death, as at the thought  
of burial; a sailor's grave I would not  
mind, but to be boxed up and thrust  
into the earth, no, Tom, I won't stand  
it. I look to you to see that it doesn't  
happen; and I have taken measures to  
make sure that you do see that it doesn't  
happen. I've made my will, Tom; I've  
left you all I possess, but on one condi-  
tion, and it is, that you are my heir so  
long as I am well above ground, and no  
longer—mark the words, 'well above  
ground.' Directly I am buried, or my  
remains are allowed to mingle with  
mother earth, as she is called, all my  
money, mind, goes straight to the Sea-  
men's hospital, every penny of it.'"

"But what am I to do with you?" I  
asked.

"Oh, run me up aloft, masted  
me, anything you like, but don't bury  
me."

"Well," went on Mr. Gayling, "to  
make a long story short, I found that  
the conditions of the old man's will were  
binding, and his executors and myself  
hit upon the plan of hoisting the coffin  
up to the roof of the house. Under cer-  
tain conditions, we found it was possible  
for us legally to do this. So I dismissed  
my three servants, employed a country  
undertaker, my old ship's carpenter and  
a foreign glazier, in order that the mat-  
ter should not be talked of in the neigh-  
borhood, and personally saw the ar-  
rangements carried out. You can now  
understand my reasons for not having it  
meddled with; yes, sir, and you can now  
understand that the conditions of the  
will must take effect. No sign of the  
coffin or the body even was to be dis-  
covered in the ruins of that house. I  
have had a rigid search made, to no  
purpose; the old gentleman's remains  
have been consumed, and the money passes  
as a matter of course to the Seamen's ho-  
spital. I have not a penny in the world.  
What can you do for me?"

It is not necessary for me to say what  
I did for Mr. Gayling, but finding by  
other evidence, that his story was sub-  
stantially correct, I felt his case was a  
hard one, certainly a strange one, and I  
acted, I hope not ungenerously, toward  
him.

## Words of Wisdom.

Envy is a vice which yields no re-  
turn.

Life is common property; but fame  
belongs to great souls only.

That which the fool does in the end  
the wise man does at the beginning.

Ambition often plays the wrestler's  
trick of raising a man up merely to fling  
him down.

A thousand parties of pleasure do not  
leave a recollection worth that of one  
good action.

Let friendship creep gently to a  
height; if it rushes to it, it may soon  
run itself out of breath.

"What men want is not talent, it is  
purpose; in other words, not the power  
to achieve, but the will to labor."

As to be perfectly just is an attribute  
of the Divine nature, to be so to the  
utmost of our abilities is the glory of man.

Man has created by writing an artifi-  
cial memory, more faithful, more  
durable, more credible than natural  
memory.

It is, after all, the person who stakes  
the least, who loses most. In the affec-  
tions this is wholly true. He who risks  
nothing loses everything.

Beauty, thou art twice blessed; thou  
blesses the gaze and the possessor. A  
sweet disposition, a lovely soul, an af-  
fectionate nature will speak in the eyes,  
the lips, the brow, and become the  
cause of beauty.

To ruminate upon evils, to make  
critical notes upon injuries, and to be  
too acute in their apprehensions, is to add  
unto our own tortures, to feather the  
arrows of our enemies, to lash ourselves  
with the scorpions of our foes, and to  
resolve to sleep no more.

## TIMELY TOPICS.

Hereafter every loaf of bread sold in  
Cincinnati must have its weight stamp-  
ed upon it.

Both houses of the legislature of Col-  
orado have passed a bill providing pen-  
alties for the defacing of natural scenery  
by the posting of advertisements.

Two years ago a corn speculator at  
Clarinda, Ia., refused sixty cents a  
bushel for 80,000 bushels of corn he had  
bought at thirty cents. He is now vainly  
trying to get ten cents a bushel for it.

Sylvester Scott, a California bear  
hunter, keeps twenty-five hounds; his  
time "out" is usually a fortnight, and  
he follows the dogs afoot. His usual  
huck is a dozen bears. In the summer  
he is a farmer.

At an expense of sixty dollars to the  
paper, besides his own lawyer's fees, a  
farmer of Jones county, Ia., has re-  
covered one cent from a man he sued  
for fourteen fence rails, worth ten  
cents each. Moral: Don't go to law  
about trifles.

"It is not worth much intrinsically,  
but I would not part with it for \$2,000,"  
said Charles Voght, a disabled  
German veteran, when he appeared at a  
London police court to complain of a  
man who had tried to steal his decora-  
tion of the Iron Cross. The prisoner  
was committed, and the lord mayor  
handed the cross to the complainant,  
who kissed it devoutly as he was retir-  
ing from the court.

The hamster is a small rat-like animal  
with a pouch on either side of his  
mouth, which it finds very convenient  
for secreting grain. It abounds in the  
sandy districts between northern Ger-  
many and Siberia, and a single animal  
has been known to stow away 100  
pounds of beans. At Ascheraleben it  
became so serious a pest that early last  
September the town offered a reward for  
the little animals, and over 60,000 were  
killed. The hamster is very game, and  
a savage fighter. Its fur, which is  
variegated, is marketable.

It is becoming common to send chil-  
dren by express, and a number of boys  
and girls in different parts of the coun-  
try have been transferred safely in this  
novel way. The express agents care for  
their human freight, giving them meals  
at hotels along the road and accommo-  
dations in the express car. When a  
transfer is made from one line to  
another, the lad or lassie, properly  
billed, is handed over to the expressman  
of that line. A girl was recently trans-  
ferred from St. Paul, Minn., to a  
village in northern Michigan, and she  
made the trip safely.

The mails from Bagdad and Constan-  
tinople are, we believe, still conveyed  
by a peculiar class of government mes-  
sengers called Tatars, who, formerly  
numerous, have, since postal facilities  
have been extended in the sultan's do-  
minions, been reduced to a very small  
number. Formerly some were attached  
to every pashalik and foreign consulate.  
Their courage and fidelity were pro-  
verbial, and great confidence was re-  
posed in them both by the government  
and mercantile men, who frequently  
confided very large sums to them. They  
were frequently ten or twelve days in  
the saddle without more rest than the  
few minutes required for changing  
horses or waiting for a governor's reply  
to a dispatch. Their costume was rich  
and picturesque, their office gave them  
importance and procured them great  
deference, and they were regarded as  
the chief medium of news.

## Cure for Balking Horses.

A writer in the New York Observer  
says: Having seen in the Observer  
cures for balking horses, I write to give  
an incident showing the success of  
another and very simple remedy. Some  
years ago I was delayed in returning  
home by a break in the railroad, requir-  
ing a detour of some twenty miles. In  
order to make this I hired a buggy and  
driver. But the horse proved a most  
aggravating balker. He balked when  
there was no possible reason or occasion  
for it. While we were at a certain  
point, striving in vain to set the beast  
agoing, either by the argument of per-  
suasion or blows, an Adam's express  
wagon came along. The driver jumped  
from his seat, took the whip and just  
gently touched (not striking with it at  
all) the animal under the belly, back of  
and near the foreleg, and immediately  
the horse went on its way. We tried it  
repeatedly afterward, and always with  
success.

## A Chip that Could Talk.

The following anecdote, related by  
John Williams, the missionary to the  
South sea islands, will be new to many  
of our readers. He was engaged one  
day hewing timber for a chapel, sur-  
rounded by many wandering natives. It  
was when thus employed that the inci-  
dent occurred of which he thus tells in  
his "Missionary Enterprise."

"As I had come to the work one morn-  
ing without my square, I took up a chip,  
and with a piece of charcoal wrote upon  
it a request that Mrs. Williams would  
send me that article. I called a chief,  
and said to him:

"Friend, take this; go to our house,  
and give it to Mrs. Williams."

"He was a singular-looking man, re-  
markably quick in his movements, and  
had been a great warrior; but in one  
of his battles he had lost an eye. Giv-  
ing me an inexpressible look with the  
other, he said:

"Take that!—he will call me a  
fool and scold me, if I carry a chip to  
her."

"No," I replied, 'she will not; take  
it and go immediately; I am in haste.'

"He took it from me, and asked,  
'What must I say?' I replied, 'You  
have nothing to say; the chip will say  
all I wish.' With a look of astonish-  
ment and contempt he held up the piece  
of wood, and said:

"How can this speak? has it a  
mouth?"

"I desired him to take it immedi-  
ately, and not spend so much time in talk-  
ing about it."

"On arriving at the house he gave  
the chip to Mrs. Williams, who read it,  
threw it away, and went to the tool-chest,  
whither the chief, resolving to see the  
end of this mysterious business, fol-  
lowed closely. On receiving the square  
from her, he said: 'Stay, daughter; how  
do you know that this is what Mr. Wil-  
liams wants?'

"Why," she replied, 'did you not  
bring me a chip just now?'

"Yes," said the astonished warrior;  
'but I did not hear it say anything.'

"If you did not, I did," was the re-  
ply; 'for it told me what he wanted.  
And all you have to do is to return with  
it as quickly as possible.'

"With this the chief leaped out of  
the house, and catching up the mys-  
terious piece of wood, he ran through  
the settlement with the chip in one hand  
and the square in the other, holding them  
up as high as his arms would reach, and  
shouting as he went, 'See the wisdom  
of these English people! They can  
make chips talk! they can make chips  
talk!'

"On giving me the square, he wished  
to know how it was possible thus to con-  
verse with persons at a distance. I gave  
him all the explanation I could, but it  
was to him such a mystery that he ac-  
tually tied a string to the chip, hung it  
round his neck, and wore it for some  
time. For several days after we fre-  
quently saw him surrounded by a crowd,  
who were listening with intense interest  
while he told them of the wonders which  
this chip had performed."

## Death at the Altar.

The sudden death of Father Pelletier  
at the foot of the altar while in the  
act of administering the sacrament of  
marriage at St. Francis Xavier's church  
was a very sad event. The wedding was  
one which had been postponed for a  
week in consequence of the death of a  
near relative of the bridegroom; but the  
delay had only served to add interest to  
the ceremony and to increase the at-  
tendance of the friends of the happy  
couple. The church was brilliantly  
lighted and lavishly ornamented with  
flowers, and as the organ pealed forth  
its welcome no one dreamed that a cloud  
of sorrow would so soon overshadow the  
scene. The heart of the officiating  
minister was in his work, for he had  
been the groom's preceptor, and affec-  
tion as well as duty prompted the words  
of exhortation and advice which he ad-  
dressed to the young couple as a pre-  
liminary to the sacrament. Scarcely had  
his utterance ceased, when, as he stretch-  
ed forth his hand to pronounce a bene-  
diction, death arrested the act and, sink-  
ing down at the railings of the apse, he  
passed away without a struggle  
and apparently without pain. The fatal  
result was kept from the knowledge of  
the wedding party until the completion  
of the services by another clergyman,  
the belief being that Father Pelletier  
had simply been attacked by a fainting  
fit. The deceased clergyman was ap-  
prehensive of a sudden death, and his  
wish, expressed to his friends, was that,  
should his fears be well founded, his  
last breath might be drawn at the altar's  
foot.—New York Herald.

Three hundred and twenty cubic inches  
is said to be the full capacity of the  
lungs. Our milkman has all that the  
law of nature allows.—New York News.

## The Overflowing Cup.

Into the crystal chalice of the soul  
Is falling, drop by drop, life's blending mead.  
The pleasant waters of our childhood age  
And enter first; and love pours in its whole.  
Deep flood of tenderness and gall. There  
The drops of sweet and bitter that proceed  
From wedded trustfulness, and hearts that  
bleed

For children that entrain us to the goal.  
And later come the calmer joys of age—  
The restful streams of quietude that flow  
Around their fading lives, whose heritage  
Is whitened locks and voice serene and low.  
These added blessings round the vessel up  
Death is the overflowing of the cup.

—A. B. Saxton, in Scribner.

## ITEMS OF INTEREST.

A joint committee—A dinner party.  
The days of the month are numbered.  
One county of Iowa has eleven cheese  
factories.

Look out for the train when you hear  
the bells.

Horses should be well blanketed when  
left to stand.

A cork-stalk never complains of hav-  
ing the ear-ache.

Gold and silver are the finest mint  
meat we know of.

There are 155 convicts now in the  
Oregon penitentiary.

One of the most popular branches of  
education is the birch.

The consumption of foreign liquors  
falling off in this country.

What is it that a man with two eyes  
cannot see with one? 'T'other eye.

The gross debt of Idaho Territory  
\$120,000, and an old trapper offers  
to pay it off in wolf skins.

A youth once loved a lady fair,  
And with her charms was smitten;  
He asked her for a lock of hair,  
But what she gave to him was mitten.

The true poet lacks no incidents for  
inspiration. Robert Burns wrote  
sweet song after turning up a mouse  
with a plow.

The man who got in a barber's chair  
pinned a newspaper round his neck and  
began to read the towel, may justly be  
called absent-minded.

On an average, 686 bodies are annu-  
ally taken to the Paris morgue, and  
some eighty per cent. of these are re-  
cognized by their families.

Guns with umbrella attachments, ac-  
cording to a reliable exchange, are to be  
made for the benefit of the military.  
Umbrellas with gun attachments ought  
to be made for the benefit of the races  
who made off with your umbrella.

"You told me, sir, that the horse was  
entirely without fault, and yet he is  
blind." The dealer looked bland  
into the irritated countenance of the  
loser by the transaction and said, with  
charming naivete, "I do not regret  
blindness as a fault, sir; it is a mis-  
fortune."

## Males and Females.

Summarizing from the census of 1870  
the *Journal of Commerce* answers the  
question of the relative numbers of the  
sexes thus: Of the 38,568,371 persons  
in the United States, according to the  
last national census, (this was in 1870,  
there are over 43,000,000 now) 19,496,  
565 were males and 19,064,806 were  
females, or 983 women to 1,000 men.  
No census of the world has been taken  
but we have the proportion of women  
to men in all countries where an enu-  
meration has been made. The highest  
Europe is in Scotland, which has 1,0  
women to 1,000 men. Ireland has  
1,060, England and Wales 1,054, France  
1,007, Old Prussia 1,080. The lowest  
in Europe is in Greece, which has  
but 940 women to 1,000 men. The total  
of all Europe is 1,031 women to 1,000  
men; the total of America 980 women  
to 1,000 men; the total of Africa, as far  
known, 975 women to 1,000 men;  
Asia (including only Hong Kong and  
China) 940 women to 1,000 men; Aus-  
tralia 985 women to 1,000 men.

"Cranky Bill's" Journalistic Venture.  
Mr. Cranky Bill, late an inmate of the  
Chicago jail, has established a week-  
ly paper "devoted to the interests of dis-  
tressed humanity and the sports  
classes," and called the *Thunderbolt*.  
To raise the money, he sold his body  
advance to a class of medical students  
for fifty dollars, one class in the even-  
ing reading as follows: "And to find  
that the parties of the first part may  
have a reasonable assurance of a spec-  
return from the investment by the  
made, it is agreed by the party of the  
second part, that he shall conduct the  
said journal known as the *Thunderbolt*  
in such a manner, by assaults upon de-  
perate characters, or such other meth-  
ods as may recommend themselves to  
judgment, as to make it probable  
will be assassinated or killed within  
reasonable space of time."