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Of Man's Mortality.

Like as the damask rose you see,
Or like the blossom on the tree,
Or like the dainty flower of May,
Or like the morning to the day,
Or like the sun, or like the shade,
Or like the gourd which Jonas had;
Even such is man, whose thread is spun,
Drawn out and cut, and so is done:
The rose withers, the blossom blasteth;
The flower fades, the morning hasteth;
The sun sets, the shadow flies,
The gourd consumes—and man, he dies!

Like to the grass that's newly sprung,
Or like a tale that's new begun,
Or like the bird that's here to-day,
Or like the pearled dew of May,
Or like an hour, or like a span,
Or like the singing of a swan;
Even such is man, who lives by breath,
Is here, now there, in life and death;
The grass withers, the tale is ended,
The bird is flown, the dew's ascended,
The hour is short, the span not long;
The swan's near death—man's life is done.

Like to the bubble in the brook,
Or in a glass much like a look,
Or like a shuttle in weaver's hand,
Or like the writing on the sand,
Or like a thought, or like a dream,
Or like the gliding of the stream:
Even such is man, who lives by breath,
Is here, now there, in life and death:
The bubble's cut, the look's forgot,
The shuttle's flung, the writing's blot;
The thought is past, the dream is gone,
The water glides—man's life is done.

Like to an arrow from the bow,
Or like swift course of watery flow;
Or like the time between flood and ebb,
Or like the spider's tender web,
Or like a race, or like a goal,
Or like the dealing of a dole:
Even such is man, whose brittle state
Is always subject unto fate:
The arrow's shot, the flood soon spent,
The time no time, the web soon rent;
The race soon run, the goal soon won,
The dole soon dealt—man's life first done.

Like to the lightning from the sky,
Or like a post that quick doth hie,
Or like a quaver in short song,
Or like a journey three days long;
Or like the snow when summer's come,
Or like the pear, or like the plum:
Even such is man who heaps up sorrow:
Lives but to is day, and dies to-morrow:
The lightning's past, the post must go,
The song is short, the journey's so;
The pear doth rot, the plum doth fall,
The snow dissolves—and so must all.

CAUGHT IN A STEEL TRAP.

The following story was told to me by my old friend, the venerable Dr. L——g:

I sat one evening on the verandah of the principal hotel of a city on the N. Y. and E. R. R., smoking and watching the persons loitering about the entrance.

Among these was a strange-looking man who had excited my curiosity at dinner by his peculiar dress and appearance.

He was very tall and strongly built, had large, fierce, black eyes, a dark, pale complexion, a huge, carefully-waxed, jetty mustache, and he wore his thick, coarse, black hair, somewhat long. His dress was striking, although of fine black material and fashionable make. But, doubtlessly, the "loud" effect was produced by the long cape, the flaunting red necktie and the broad-brimmed, picturesque hat he always wore. He exhibited also his prodigious diamonds too profusely for good taste. The cane he carried was unique, its gold head being shaped precisely like a small pistol.

Altogether, the *tout ensemble* of this pretentious person was decidedly "stagey."

As I watched him, one of the under waiters of the hotel came whistling into the small reception room behind me. This waiter was called Matthew Sparks, and I especially disliked him. He was as cunning as an Indian, talkative and grotesquely polite, and loved money like a miser, while he was as full of pranks and funny jests as a court fool or the clown of a circus.

"Matthew!" I called to this under sized buffoon of sixteen.

He reared his heels in the air, attempted a waltz on his hands, turned a somersault and landed on his feet by my side,

"What can I do for you, sir?" he inquired, with a courtesy that was laughably like that of a trained monkey.

"Who is the gentleman yonder, with the red necktie and the broad-brimmed hat?"

"Where, sir," he asked, innocently, looking everywhere except in the direction I indicated vainly, until I had cleared his vision by the magical touch of silver, when he became as communicative as I could wish.

"O, that fellar?—looks like one of the pictures on the bill-post yonder, don't he?" and my comic and sordid informant grinned and looked wise.

"Is he an actor?" I demanded impatiently.

"Bless me, no. He's the Count—Count Pedro Columbo. He's a fellar who does nuthin' but travel and spend money. And his diamonds! O, lor! worth thirty thousand dollars—I heard him say so."

This was all the information I could obtain from the promising young waiter, and it seemed without a doubt correct, as I soon discovered that the Count's magnificent diamonds, his apparent extravagance with money, and his evident ignorance of American customs, made the gossip of the hotel.

"Why," said the clerk to me one morning, "the Count is probably the richest man in the country. He has a large estate in Mexico and mines in South America. He lives high, too. He has the best rooms, the best wines, and most costly dinners. He makes odd mistakes occasionally, gets on the wrong floors and into the wrong rooms, and scarcely can speak nor understand a word of English. He came on from New York, and by some mistake his trunks were sent the wrong way. He is kept here waiting for them."

Just then the subject of his remarks came into the office.

His hair was in disorder, he wore neither coat nor vest, and his suspenders were flying behind his heels.

"I have been robbed. See!" he cried in his broken English, exhibiting his wristband and shirt-front, from which his studs and buttons had seemingly been roughly torn away.

And then gesticulating violently and muttering Spanish curses, he demanded to see the proprietor, who at once come in to hear the complaint of the distinguished and unfortunate guest.

The count's complaint was something like this: He was sure he was in a land of thieves; his trunks probably had been stolen, and all the money he had in them, as well as the letters of credit. He was in a strange place and he couldn't pay his board, and now he was robbed of all he had that was worth security, and he would be put in the street or perhaps in prison. But he would go to Washington, he would see the Minister of Spain or somebody, and the scoundrels who had taken advantage of his ignorance should hang—very high indeed!

In vain the landlord assured him that he should be kindly treated until his missing property should be recovered, which likely would be soon—the count only rolled out big Spanish oaths, and frantically waved his arms and pointed to the places his lost diamonds had adorned, and groaned, and muttered that "they would kill him if he stayed in this diabolical country—the beasts, the villains, the assassins."

The proprietor was greatly disturbed, and finally persuaded the high-minded count to accept fifty dollars as a loan and not to hesitate to ask for more if he should need it, and somewhat appeased, the guest went out of the office."

"I am sorry for the count," observed the landlord to me; "and doubt if he ever recovers anything he has lost. For some time a gang of thieves has been working between here and New York and scarcely a hotel has escaped. In several instances checks for baggage have been taken with other things, and of course when the checks were presented at the proper place the baggage has been given up to the thief. And, doctor, I don't mind telling you, that the count was not the only loser last night. At least five of my transient guests were robbed of money and jewelry."

"A detective would be a good fellow to have around," I ventured to say.

"I shall telegraph to New York for one immediately," he answered.

For hours in succession that day Count Pedro Columbo sat close near the telegraph operator's desk, now watching the instrument with his fierce black eyes, and the people who passed constantly to and fro past him into the hotel office.

But no news came of his missing trunks, and his pale face seemed to grow paler than ever.

"I shall be killed if I stay here," was his constant prediction.

The next morning the landlord came to me. He looked grave and troubled.

"Doctor," he said, "a half dozen more of my guests were robbed last night. If this thing goes on I shall be ruined. What shall I do?"

I could not advise him. It was impossible to always escape misfortunes of this kind in a hotel situated at the junction of several great railroads, where hundreds of guests were coming and going every day.

"It is a case for a shrewd detective," I answered, and went up to the reading-room.

This room was on the second floor, close to the ladies' parlor, and directly across the hall was a very small apartment fitted up with immovable desks, inkstands, etc., for the accommodation of those who wished to write in quiet.

My footsteps made no sound on the thick velvet carpet of the hall, and I reached the reading-room door unseen by two persons whose voices I heard in the apartment opposite.

"A doctor, eh?" it was the count's tones, and it was Matthew Sparks who answered.

"A doctor and a good fellar," Matthew said. "Come out here to a fun'ral of an old aunt with greenbacks this ere place wouldn't hold. She give 'um all to him, and he's got 'um in his pill bags—and suthin' else, too."

"What do you tell me for?" asked the count in his queer English.

The boy shuffled his feet and winked to keep time.

"We are paid for givin' gents information in this country," was his reply.

The distinguished guest grumbled something about "robbers," "murder," his "trunks," and "jewels," and then tossed the young clown a coin.

I disliked Matthew Sparks then more than I had before. All he had told the count about my visit to that place was utterly false. I had been to no funeral, and I never had an aunt in that part of the country. I never had carried "pills bags" in my life, nor did I ever carry greenbacks in my valise, nor very many in my pocket.

"The miserable idiot! What did he want to lie like that for?" I mused.

And then I turned to my paper and thought no more about it.

That evening when I went up to my room what was my surprise when I unlocked the door and entered to see Matthew Sparks sitting unconcernedly on the floor in the middle of the chamber with my valise between his knees and in his hands a curious looking implement of rusty steel.

With significant gravity he put his finger on his lip and motioned for me to lock the door. I did so.

"Now tell me," I said, sternly; "why are you in here, and what are you doing?"

"You'll be mad, mister," he answered, audaciously.

"If you do not tell me I will send for the police and have you locked up, Matthew."

"Whew," he whistled softly, still wearing that provokingly grave expression that I saw for once was not assumed. "Dew you know what this be?"

He held up that queer thing of rusty steel.

"Well, it is a steel trap," he went on; "you jest let me fix this 'ere thing in your pill bags, and when that ar thief comes to get the greenbacks to-night it will hold him tight. See."

He opened the sharp teeth of the steel jaws and suggested to illustrate his proposed experiment if I would put my hand inside.

I declined the offer of this voluntary detective, and wondered if he were fool, knave, or a very cunning and keen-witted boy.

"What makes you think the thief will come in here to-night?" I asked him.

"Well, you see, I told a fellar you had lots of money and other things in 'ere."

"And you knew I did not."

"I reckon;" he returned with a grin, "we'll fix your thief-trap."

I said: "I only hope you may catch him."

And he did fix it in a way I could not comprehend and cannot explain; and then he turned to me for what, as he had informed the count, "gents always give for infermation."

I gave it cheerfully.

"You shall have more than that, Matthew," I said, "if you trap the thief."

"I told him—the fellar, you know—that you would be out to-night," he said.

"You did? For what?"

"So you could wait in the closet here and watch him," answered Matthew, jingling his coin, appealingly.

And Matthew got another ten cents.

"I shall act on the boy's suggestion," I thought to myself. "There may be something in his suspicions, and his absurd plan may not be so bad after all."

So I turned the gas very low, prepared everything carefully, and made myself comfortable in my hiding place.

I had not long to wait—not more than an hour—when I fancied that my room had an occupant.

Cautiously I peered through the crack I had left as I closed the closet door, and I distinctly saw a dark form between me and the gaslight.

Still, for a moment, I fancied that I might be the dupe of one of Matthew Sparks's practical jokes, but as the intruder bent over the valise, I saw from his movements that he meant robbery and nothing else.

Breathlessly I waited for the result of Matthew's stratagem.

The tiny key clicked in the small locks. The man thrust in his hand.

There was a snap of steel, the crunching of flesh and bone, and then a full, round curse in unmistakable English followed by a long-drawn gasp of pain.

I sprang into the room and turned up the gas, and the bright light streamed upon our foreign count.

Count Pedro Colombo, dressed as if he had just come in from the street, wearing the cape, flaunting red necktie and broad-brimmed hat, and carrying his cane with its pistol-shaped golden head, stood before me, fierce and desperate.

"You are caught, impostor," I cried, springing for the bell beside the door.

As I did so, he lifted his cane in his left hand, twirled it suddenly, and I saw that that which I had supposed to be the semblance of a pistol was a real weapon, ingeniously serving as a walking-stick.

Like lightning he flashed the gilded muzzle towards me.

"Touch that bell and you are a dead man. Release me from this accursed trap."

I faced him cooly.

"Fire if you like," I said; "if you do you will be convicted of murder as well as robbery, for you can't get away unless you leave your hand behind you or take the steel trap with you."

That speech threw him off his guard, and I darted through the door into the hall, locking it behind me.

In five minutes more the room was filled with strong men, and although the thief resisted desperately, he was soon overpowered and taken to prison.

He proved to be an old offender, and was born in New York and had never been out of the United States.

The story of his trunks was of course false, and his wonderful diamonds, that were found in his room with much of the property stolen from the guests, were not worth the gold plate of the setting.

"If you suspected the fellow, Matthew," said the landlord, "why did you not tell us before?"

"Well, you see," answered that honest youth, jingling his nickles, "I thought I could cotch him myself and p'raps I would git more fur my information."

"You are quite smart enough, Matthew, and quite honest enough to deserve and get a good share of prosperity as long as you live," answered his employer; "but I do not approve of your being paid for information."

But Matthew got his reward and was highly satisfied therewith, and he thinks he made his best practical joke when he caught a thief in a steel trap.

Memories of Mount Vernon.

A correspondent of the Louisville (Ky.) *Courier-Journal*, who has been paying a visit to the home of Washington, writes as follows: We wander all through the sad, silent mansion. We looked at the spindle-legged furniture, and a rusty key on the wall, the key of the bastile. We see Washington's vest and small clothes in the glass case, and a lock of his hair, and original letters by his hand and Lafayette's. We see pretty Eleneor Eustis's wedding gift, harpsicord that her stepfather brought from foreign lands for a surprise when she left her girlhood's home. The pretty Eleneor is buried long ago. All traces of her pink and white beauty has left the earth; here stands the dusty harpsicord, brought back by strange hands to her old home. The room that interests me most is the tiny attic chamber where the devoted widow passed her days after her husband's death. The large chamber below was closed after his decease. None entered it from that time on. A rug and single bed Mrs. Washington had moved to the attic room, and here, winter and summer, she watched with longing eyes the tomb that held her dead. There was no place for stove or grate; all day, in the room under the roof, she sat by the small window (her feet in winter on a zinc foot-stove filled with coals), with a shawl wrapped about her bent form, true Martha Washington, first lady of the land! First in elegance in times of peace; in courage in time of war; in faithfulness in time of death. All women look with tenderer eyes at the small marble resting-place than at the grander casket by their side. One bears upon it a draped flag, cut in the stone, a shield and crouching eagle; the other only the words—

MARTHA,
CONSORT OF WASHINGTON.

Yet these words dim the eyes of loving wives; they pierce the eyes of lonely widows, and bind all true and fervent womanhood close to the form that sleeps dreamlessly beside the one she loved truly and long.

"This," said an agricultural implement dealer to an old farmer, expatiating on the merits of a new machine, "this is a patent corn-planter," and in putting it down he planted it on the old man's corn and raised an acher on the spot.

A Wary Editor.

During the Crimean war, again, when the British fleet was lying off Cronstadt, an English manufacturer residing in St. Petersburg asked a number of his countrymen to supper, drank Sir Charles Napier's health, and sang a song of his own composition, reflecting upon the efficiency of the Russian navy and the courage of its officers, in terms that would have driven Admiral Popoff frantic. The next morning to his unbounded amazement—for not a single stranger had been present the night before—he received a summons from the chief of police, a personal friend of his own, who eyeing him with a significant smile, said: "Mr. A——, I find that an English gentleman of this city, of whom you may perhaps know something, has written a song against our navy, and given several copies of it to his friends. Now, I need hardly tell you that this is a dangerous thing for any one to do just now; so, if you should happen to fall in with him, you might just give him a friendly hint to destroy all those copies, and to be more careful in future." It is hardly necessary to add that the hint was taken at once. On one occasion, however, even these masters of cunning fairly met their match. At the time when the famous *Kolokol*, (Bell,) the revolutionary organ of M. Alexander Herzen, was in the zenith of its formidable renown, the Russian government, alarmed at the completeness of the information which laid bare the most secret windings of the imperial system, determined to silence this tell-tale voice by kidnapping the editor himself. An emissary of the secret police presented himself at M. Herzen's house in London, under an assumed name, as a revolutionary propagandist acting against Russia. M. Herzen heard him to the end, and said quietly: "Use no concealment with me, pray, my dear Mr. S——," (calling him by his real name,) "I have been expecting you for some time." The thunderstruck agent attempted to utter a denial. "Pooh, pooh!" quoth Herzen, producing his visitor's likeness from the desk before him, "do you think I don't recognize the original of this portrait?" The crestfallen emissary retired in disgust, and the wary editor was thenceforth suffered to remain unmolested.

A Curious Bird of the Sea.

In the penguins of the Southern Hemisphere, the shortness of wing, and aptitude for swimming and diving, are more conspicuous than in the auks of the northern regions. In the water, the penguin makes use of its small, featherless wing-stumps as paddles; on land, as fore feet, with whose help it scales so rapidly the grass-grown cliffs as to be easily mistaken for a quadruped. When at sea, and fishing, it comes to the surface for the purpose of breathing, with such a spring, and dives again so instaneously, that at first sight no one can be sure that it is not a fish leaping for sport. Other sea-birds generally keep part of their body out of the water while swimming; but this is not the case with the penguin, whose head alone appears upon the surface; and thus it swims with such rapidity and perseverance as almost to defy many of the fishes to equal it. How much it feels at home on the waters may be inferred from the fact that Sir James Ross once saw two penguins paddling away a thousand miles from the nearest land.

On many uninhabited islands in the Southern Hemisphere this strange bird is met with in incredible numbers. On Possession Island, for instance, a desolate rock discovered by Sir James Ross in latitude seventy-one deg., fifty-six min., not the smallest appearance of vegetation could be found; but inconceivable numbers of penguins completely and densely covered the whole surface of the island.

A Sign of Love.

"Mary Jane," said the father of Estella Montmorenci de St. Claire, the female Hercula, "Mary Jane is unquestionably one of the most drawing attractions billed with any show. That act where while swinging by the toes she lifts the members of the company in succession with her teeth is a marvel of æsthetic grace and culture." "Yes," says the mother, proudly, "but I fear that we must soon give up our darling child." "Why? I have noticed nothing." "Perhaps you have not, but a mother's eye—Mary Jane is in love with Gennario Gonzales, the cataclysm of California. Any one with half an eye can see that at a glance. Every night during her present engagement and at the Saturday matinees I have observed that when she lifts the members of the company with her teeth she keeps him suspended by the nape of the neck twice as long as any of the others. She does not conceal her preference, and thus strives to be in his company as much as possible. Her heart has spoken."

Items of Interest.

A paneful site—A hothouse.

When a dog is muzzled his bark is on the tied.

Tuneful lyre—The music teacher who broke his engagement.

Now is the time to put your hens under bonds with a coop on.

Why is the world like a piano? Because it is full of sharps and flats.

Can a man with a rifled pocket be said to carry concealed weapons?

Why are types like alleged criminals? Because it is not proper to lock them up without proof.

There is an area of forty acres in North Carolina that has yielded over $1,000,000 in gold since the war.

The difference in time between high water on the sea coast averages about forty-nine minutes each day.

Every man must work his own way to success; nothing in the world but a mule's hind led springs up spontaneously.

What's the difference between the Prince of Wales and water in a fountain? One is heir to the throne, and the other is thrown to the air.

Burglars now force the powder into safes with air pumps. No lock will be perfectly secure until a man can put the key-hole in his pocket.

Shops have been engaged in London for the sale of horse-flesh for human food. Hippophagy is likely to become as common there as in Paris.

One of the proprietors of a San Francisco newspaper, it is said, drinks sixty nine glasses of beer on an average every day. So much inside matter gives him a bad form.

The cause of education is lamentably neglected in Russia. Places as large as Blatoust, with 16,400 inhabitants, Orsk, with 5,500, Belbek, with 2,600, are entirely without schools.

It is estimated that during the 300 years since the discovery of the mines of Mexico the total coinage taken thence amounts to $4,450,000,000. At one time 3,000 mines were in operation, and the product of these was $21,000,000 of silver, and $2,000,000 of gold annually.

The year 1769 stands out pre-eminent in modern times for the extraordinary number of remarkable men who were born in it. These included Napoleon, Wellington, Soult, Ney, Cuvier, A. Von Humboldt, Chateaubriand, Lavallette, Mehemet Ali, and John Quincy Adams.

PROMISE.

Men of prayer! be up and stirring
Night and day.
Sow the seed—withdraw the curtain—
Clear the way!
Men of action, aid and cheer them
As ye may!
There's a fount about to stream,
There's a light about to beam,
There's a warmth about to glow,
There's a flower about to blow,
There's a midnight blackness changing
Into gray;
Men of prayer and men of action,
Clear the way.

The Caffres.

The Caffres are a decidedly superior race to many that inhabit the various sections of the African coasts. They are a tall, well-made people, generally handsome, of a dark brown or bronze color. They are brave, and in times of peace kind and hospitable to strangers. The men make affectionate husbands and fathers. Their intellectual attributes are by no means contemptible. An English writer says: "Their minds have a peculiarly acute and logical turn, which in many of our 'palavers' with them often gave them the best of the argument." The Caffres are an honest people, except, perhaps, in the matter of cattle, which they seem to be unable to restrain themselves from appropriating whenever opportunity offers. Although their idea of God appears very indistinct, and their feelings of veneration singularly undeveloped, they are nevertheless exceedingly superstitious, and dread the influence of wizards and sorcerers. Their huts which are built by the women, are of a beehive shape, composed of wattles stretched with grass, and a collection of them is called a "kraal"—a Portuguese word, signifying inclosure. The general rule of the chiefs is patriarchal. Each ruler is assisted, however, by a number of "pakati," or councilors, whose advice is generally followed implicitly. Polygamy is allowed, and wives are generally purchased for cattle. The Caffres are strictly a pastoral people, and the men tend their herds exclusively, even to milking them, and leave to the women the labor of cultivating their gardens, building their huts, and otherwise attending to their comfort. The dress consists usually of a blanket; the former robe of softened ox-hide is now seldom seen. In time of war the Caffre appears in the field naked, and painted with red clay.

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