

JACK MOORE'S TEMPTATION.

CHAPTER II.

One day Jack made up his mind to pay a visit to Russell Square and beg his uncle's forgiveness for his past folly. After a few hours he turned his face towards Bloomsbury with a lighter heart than he had known for many a day. But when he reached the familiar house, a board stared him in the face on which was inscribed, "To Let."

Jack's heart sunk like lead. He was so utterly nonplussed by this unexpected rebuff that he turned away without the idea occurring to him that it would be quite easy to go down to the office of Treddinick & Morgan and ascertain his uncle's present address. The sight of the deserted house had bewildered him.

As he walked down Oxford Street, as ill-luck would have it, he met Harcourt, who greeted him with apparent heartiness, and invited him to dine with him at his club. Jack accepted the invitation mechanically; and the two friends jumped into a hansom, and were driven off to the delectable resort known as "The Revellers." It is unnecessary to record how the evening was spent. It resulted for Jack next morning in a racking headache, a dull feeling of remorse, and empty pockets. Worse still, he had given Harcourt his note of hand for fifty pounds, in order to pay his losses at cards to sundry "Revellers" who demanded payment in cash.

Then the old dissipated life began again. Jack had the sense to keep his post at the Three Kingdoms Assurance Office, and to do his work there in a satisfactory manner. But his evenings were spent with Harcourt, who seemed to have regained all his former influence over him. Sometimes Jack thought of seeking out his uncle and confessing everything; but he always put off doing so until one pretext or other. Every quarter he received a cheque for twelve pounds ten, enclosed without a letter, though the envelope was always addressed in his uncle's small precise writing. And that was the only communication he had had from him for nearly two years.

Jack was rapidly growing morose and discontented. Harcourt got tired of his frequent fits of temper, and more than once showed him pretty plainly that he no longer cared for his society. Jack Moore, a humble clerk in the Three Kingdoms Assurance Office, was not quite so desirable an acquaintance as Jack Moore, the reputed heir of old Edward Treddinick, the wealthy merchant. And so, without any compunctions visitings of conscience as to his own share in Jack's misfortunes, Harcourt gradually dropped his former ally and pupil.

The process of being dropped is never a pleasant one, especially when the person undergoing it is conscious that, by rights, their relative positions should be reversed. Jack soon saw what Harcourt was at; and there realising what a fool he had been to quarrel with his kind old uncle for the sake of such a broken reed as his quondam mentor.

By the exercise of a great deal of self-denial, he contrived to pay Harcourt the money he owed him. But he shrank from making any appeal for pecuniary assistance to his uncle, or from taking any steps to bring about a more satisfactory state of things between them. He bitterly resented the apparent harshness with which he had been treated, and the callous indifference which had condemned him to complete banishment from his old home.

Jack's character was undergoing a hardening process, which might have had most unfortunate results, but for a seemingly trivial incident that brought a new interest into his life. In fine weather he usually walked down to his office; but on wet days he indulged in the luxury of an omnibus. One cold and rainy morning in October, Jack started for the City in a mood as dismal as the weather; the omnibuses were crowded, but after some difficulty he secured a seat.

Hurrying into the vehicle, he squeezed himself into one of the farther corners; next to him was a prettily dressed stout woman, burdened with a big parcel, baby, and an umbrella that would not have disgraced Mrs. Gamp herself. Facing him was a young girl, with a pale oval face, a great deal of ruddy-brown hair, and a pair of the loveliest grey eyes he had ever seen.

She was very neatly and simply dressed; her manner was characterized by a certain quiet self-reliance and self-possession, though she was apparently quite young, certainly not more than twenty. Somehow, the sight of the girl's gentle, serene countenance made Jack forget the soaking rain, and the uncomfortable propinquity of his neighbor's Brobdignagian umbrella.

He was probably a governess or a lady-clerk, he decided, forced to brave all weathers. For the first time in his life, Jack thoroughly appreciated the excellence of an omnibus as a place for the study of the human face divine. It is not an easy thing to watch one's *vis-a-vis* without seeming to stare rudely, and perhaps Jack would not have accomplished the feat had not the young lady produced a book from the black bag she carried, and immersed herself in it so deeply that she seemed quite oblivious of his scrutiny.

But by the time the Strand was reached the young lady's self-possession was completely upset. When the conductor called out "All Fares," she put her hand in her pocket, then searched hurriedly in her bag. The colour flooded her cheeks, and her hands shook nervously as she again turned over the contents of her bag. Then she looked up at met Jack's eyes.

"You have left your purse at home?" he said with a smile.

"Yes—I am afraid so."

Instantly the necessary pence were handed by Jack to the conductor. Waterloo Station was the young lady's destination.

"Fortunately, I always carry my season ticket in my bag, or I should be obliged to go back home, and then I should miss my train," she said naively when she had thanked Jack for his courtesy.

In her hurried search for her purse the book she had been reading had slipped from her lap and fallen face downwards on the floor of the omnibus. Jack stooped to pick it up; at which she could not refrain from glancing quickly. "Mirah Lester," then followed a date, which he had not time to read.

Just then the omnibus stopped at the corner of Wellington Street. Jack handed the volume to its owner, who, with a bright smile and a hasty "Thank you," got out. The whole affair in the crowd.

Five minutes; but as the omnibus unrolled on Chancery Street and up Ludgate Hill, Jack's thoughts were turned into new and delightful channels, and he blessed the happy chance which had caused him to enter that particular vehicle.

"Mirah Lester—what a pretty name! It suits the owner. Wonder who she is and where the season ticket carries her?" he soliloquized mentally. "I suppose she travels down from Waterloo every day. Wonder if I shall ever meet her again?"

Several weeks passed, but Jack did not see the young lady with the grey eyes, though he never failed to look out for her on his way down to the City. He purposely traveled daily by omnibus in the hope of having her for a fellow-traveller. On one occasion he fancied he caught a glimpse of her at Oxford Circus; but the slight figure vanished before he could ascertain its identity.

Had he not been obliged to beat his office punctually at ten o'clock, it is possible that he might have hung about the Waterloo terminus, and ascertained for what station on the South-western line Mirah Lester was daily bound. He did so after office hours; but his quest was vain. In all probability she returned to town earlier or much later in the afternoon. The difficulties he experienced only added to the interest he felt in her; and the constant watching for a glimpse of the sweet face that had so deeply impressed him with a certainty of the goodness and innocence of its owner, diverted his thoughts from brooding over his own grievances and wrongs.

There was still, however, a latent smouldering of anger in his breast when he thought of his uncle. He considered that he had been treated badly, and he was as determined as ever not to make any advances towards him.

"He bade me leave his house. If he wishes to see me, he will send for me," he thought sullenly.

One morning he found a letter on his breakfast table, at sight of which his smaller wrath momentarily blazed up. "The quarterly cheque sent without a word—flung at me, like a bone to a dog!" he said, taking up the letter and scrutinizing the superscription.

On looking at it more closely, he fancied the handwriting was less clear and distinct than formerly. Keeping the letter still unopened in his hand, he continued to scan the address with knitted brows. "The old fellow is as hard as flint," he muttered. "In two years he has not made a single attempt to see me or to make any effort to win me back. I wonder how he can reconcile to his conscience to treat me with such contemptuous indifference." Then he glanced moodily at the letter in his hand. "I have half a mind to throw this in the fire," he said aloud.

"Wonder if he would take any notice if the cheque was never presented for payment? Wonder if he would think me dead? Wonder if he would care to hear of me?" He moved a step or two nearer the fire, burning dully in the narrow grate. Just then a German band in the street below struck up a merry Volkslied. Jack paused to listen. The gay, lilting air was surely very familiar to him. He began to seek in his memory for the association connected with it. And then there suddenly flashed on his mind a scene of his early childhood—his young mother, with a smile on her pretty, winsome face, bringing him with the promise of a song to be good and not cry when Uncle Treddinick asked him to kiss him. The song she had sung had been that very Volkslied—the street band was then playing under his window. The sullen look died out of Jack's eyes.

"Poor old boy!" he muttered, looking at the unopened envelope. "I won't burn the cheque; perhaps he has written a line or two this time."

As the music floated up through the murky air, he at last tore open the envelope. It contained, a letter, but no cheque. The letter began "DEAR JACK," but when he had read it through, a look of perplexity came into his face; then the blood rushed to his cheeks and the hand holding the letter began to shake violently. He read it a second and a third time, and then he thoroughly understood what had happened. The letter ran as follows:

THE BAY TREES, WIMBLEDON, Nov. 17, 1888.

DEAR JACK—The change of residence, necessitated by my weakened health, has not had the beneficial result I anticipated. During the last few days I have had various unfavorable symptoms, which makes me feel that my time in this world will be short. I therefore think it is my duty to set my house in order.

Please draw up a Will as follows: £1000 each to the various London Hospitals; a annuity of £500 to my faithful servant Jeddiah Thrupp; £1000 to be invested in Consols in the name of my nephew, John Treddinick; Moore, the interest to be paid to him, by you, quarterly. The residue of my property, real and personal, to be left in trust to my friends, James Heritage, clerk in Holy Orders; and Philip Morgan of Armit Hall, Beckenham, Kent. This trust-money I desire them to employ in founding a College for the Higher Education of deserving Young Men of the Working-classes, who shall be nominated by the various School Boards of the United Kingdom. The candidates will be required to pass a competitive examination, conducted by eight Professors of the London University.

Kindly follow these instructions, and bring the Will to my house to-morrow afternoon. I am anxious that it should not have accomplished the feat had not the young lady produced a book from the black bag she carried, and immersed herself in it so deeply that she seemed quite oblivious of his scrutiny.

EDWARD TREDDINICK.

JOHN POUNCEMORE, Esq.,
Lincoln's Inn Fields.

For at least five minutes Jack sat motionless, his hands interlaced and resting on his knees, his eyes staring at the line of gray sky visible above the tops of the opposite houses. "So that is what it means," he said at last under his breath; "I am to be practically disinherited. Then he held out the sheet of paper at arm's length and read it slowly through again from beginning to end.

"Higher Education of deserving Young Men of the Working-classes—indeed, he claimed indignantly, "and I am out of it with a paltry thousand! A nice way to treat your sole surviving relation, Uncle Treddinick, upon my word! A thousand pounds! The old skink! Even Thrupp, the butler, comes off better than I. Too bad! Yes, I'm shot if it isn't too bad!"

He rose from his chair, took two or three turns up and down the room, gazed aversely out at the leaden clouds, through which a pale sun tried to force its way, made an irritable snatch at the blind with a grumbling remark about the "glare," and dragged it half-way down the sash. Then he glanced with disgust at the fried bacon, the rolls and coffee, his landlady had set on the table.

The perusal of his uncle's letter had effectively destroyed his appetite. He threw himself again into his chair with the open letter in his hand. The envelope had fallen to the ground; he picked it up and read the address. "Put the letter into the wrong cover—he wouldn't have made such a mistake two years ago," he meditated. "Hints in his letter that he is breaking up. Shouldn't wonder if he is—and serve him right for treating me so badly."

Then Jack's face grew very pale; he clenched his teeth, and a sudden light came into

his eyes. An evil thought had that moment darted into his brain. Why should he send on the letter to old Pouncemore? If his uncle misdirected his envelopes, that was no business of his!

Underlying this thought was another, embodying a most subtle temptation. His uncle was ill, so ill, perhaps, that by the time it was discovered that the letter to Pouncemore had miscarried, he might be incapable of giving instructions for drawing up a will. If he died intestate, Jack, as his next of kin, would succeed to the whole of his uncle's fortune. And, argued the temptation, was not the only son of old Treddinick's only sister, had he not been a better right to his uncle's estate than a set of unknown deserving young men of the working-class.

Two red spots began to burn in Jack's pale cheeks, and his eyes shone feverishly as he thus dallied with the specious temptation. Then he tried to make terms with his better self. If he did evil by suppressing the letter, he would do good by bestowing certain gifts to the charities enumerated by his uncle. He would use his wealth worthily. He would turn his back forever on Harcourt and his dissipated friends. He would begin life over again.

Then he pictured what sort of existence would be his if that unjust will were made revoking or destroying it. He would have the interest of one thousand pounds, and the one pound a week he earned at the office of the Three Kingdoms Life Assurance to live on, with little prospect of bettering his position. What a life of sordid drudgery awaited him! Surely it was not right that his uncle should be so ungrateful as to carry his spite beyond the grave!

And, reasoned beyond the grave! direct interposition of Providence that the letter had come into his hands? Why should he interfere with its decrees? He had only to remain passive and things would right themselves. But for a sentimental man city invoked by a gay strain of music, he would have thrown in the towel long since. He wished he had. His conscience would not let him. He wished he had destroyed the letter unread.

Then he thought of his mother, of her hatred of untruth, of the prayers she had taught him, of the songs she had sung and lullabies in winter nights and summer gloomings. What would she have thought of this contemplated baseness of his? And yet—was he not her only son—was he not old Treddinick's nephew! Who could have a better right to his fortune! He looked at the letter and then at the fire. One move as if it had never been written.

Just then the clock on the mantel-piece struck half-past nine. He would be late at his office; he must take an omnibus though the morning was fine. He smiled bitterly as he thought of the small economies and cheese-parings of his life. His uncle's fortune amounted to fully sixty thousand pounds! All that money might be his if he just omitted to send on a misdirected letter!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

PRICES OF PRECIOUS STONES.

Mr. Arthur Bloch on Famous Pearls and Rubies.

An interesting question was asked the other day by a French lady. She wished to know "which are the largest turquoises, the largest pearls, and the finest chain of pearls. I should like to know their value and the names of their owners." An expert—to wit, Mr. Arthur Bloch, the valuer of the French crown diamonds—was able and ready to supply this information, and chatted of pearls and jewels as glibly as the Arabian Nights stories.

The most curious among famous pearls, it appears, is that which, three centuries ago, the French traveler Tavernier sold to the Shah of Persia for £135,000. It is still in the possession of the sovereigns of Persia. Another Eastern potentate owns a pearl of 12½ carats, which is quite transparent. It is to be had for the sum of £40,000.

Princess Youssouf has an Oriental pearl which is unique for the beauty of its color. In 1620 this pearl was sold by Georgeibus of Calais to Philip IV. of Spain at the price of 80,000 ducats. To-day it is valued at £45,000. Pope Leo XIII., again, owns a pearl, left to him by his predecessor on the throne of St. Peter, which is worth £20,000, and the chain of thirty-two pearls owned by the Empress Frederick is estimated at £35,000.

Two hundred thousand pounds is the price of the five chains of pearls forming the collar of the Baroness Gustav de Rothschild, and that of the Baroness Adele de Rothschild is almost as valuable. Both these ladies are enthusiastic collectors of pearls, and their jewellers have instructions to buy for them any pearls of unusual size or beauty which they may happen to come across. The sister of Mme. Thiers, Mile. Dose, is also owner of a very valuable chain of pearls, which she has collected during the last thirty years of her life. Of so-called black pearls the Empress of Austria possesses the most valuable collection.

A story is told of the actress Mile. Maria Magnier and her pearls. One day, as she was about to appear on the scene, somebody made the remark that her pearls were really of an enormous size. "It is true," she replied. "The lady who I represent on the stage can't doubt wear smaller pearls in real life. But what can I do? I have no small pearls."

In France, pearls and rubies are, at the present time, far more fashionable than any other precious stone. Diamonds are chiefly worn sewn all over a velvet or silk ribbon, which is tied loosely round the neck. Really beautiful turquoises are very rare. The Maharajah of Ulep Singh, former King of Lahore, owned one of the finest and a son of Abd-el-Kader has in his possession the fetich turquoise on which are engraved the legends dictated by Mohammed.

Great Expectations.

Mother—My daughter you should decide in favor of one of your admirers, or you may lose both.

Daughter—Ma, I can't make up my mind which to accept, Henry or George.

Mother—Then I am to understand that you love them both?

Daughter—Yes I love them both most devotedly.

Mother—Which of them has the largest income?

Daughter—Henry has £75 a month and George has \$50.

Mother—Then I don't see why you hesitate. Accept Henry, of course, and tell George to go about his business.

Daughter—Yes, but George has great prospects.

Mother—Humbly! Prospects don't count. Everybody has great prospects, and \$25 a month is very handsome interest on such a capital as 'great prospects.' Next time George calls tell him that you can never be more than a sister to him, and get rid of him.

LATE FOREIGN NEWS.

The French still fight an average of four thousand duels a year.

The world's annual consumption of vanilla is said to be about 230,000 pounds.

It is proposed attempting to stamp out tuberculosis in cattle in Denmark by vaccination.

Hardwood in Wisconsin is being rapidly cut up to be made into charcoal for the iron furnaces in that State.

The Austrian Government has taken hold of the matter of improving all races of horses in Austria-Hungary.

The amount paid in salaries to teachers and School Superintendents in the United States every year is \$80,000,000.

A bill is to be introduced into the next session of the Pennsylvania Legislature for the creation of forest reservations at the headwaters of principal rivers.

Admirable results have attended the artesian borings in the Sahara, and this has led to a demand being made by the inhabitants in other portions of the desert.

The cartridges of Germany, Austria, and Belgium have a groove at the end instead of an enlargement at the base, the advantage of which is that the cartridge is packed more easily.

France's last torpedo boat, No. 149, ran for two knots at an average speed of 24½ knots and a maximum speed of over 26 knots, with 342 revolutions.

The rose crops in Bulgaria and France have been so severely damaged by frosts and cold rains that there is scarcely enough to supply the demands of the pomade manufacturers.

A new combination washer and nut lock for railroad use has recently proved itself very useful. The nut can be released or tightened up with the greatest ease, and the washer can be rinsed frequently.

The Governor of St. Helena reports affairs there as being in a wretched state. Work is scarce, revenue is short of expenditure, business is declining, and there is great poverty and suffering among the inhabitants.

The fifteen-inch aerial torpedo thrower, now introduced as a British service weapon for coast defense, resembles in appearance a powder gun, having the axis of its trunnions at or near the centre of gravity of the barrel.

The official report from Japan of the firing of guns made for that country by Canon emphasizes the fact that the accuracy of firing was superior to that of any gun that had been previously bought by the Japanese Government.

A woman has offered to bequeath a very large sum to the French Theatre if she be allowed to place a statue to Mounet-Sully opposite the monument to Talma, near the entrance to the theatre.

A strange double suicide has just occurred at Stuttgart. A boy fifteen years old and a girl thirteen, belonging to respectable families, took it into their heads to fall in love. It didn't agree with them, so they drowned themselves.

There are at present in the Gobelins manufacture two large state carpets valued at \$50,000 and \$40,000 respectively at the time they were made during the empire, one being ordered by the Italian Government and the other being intended for the Palace of Fontainebleau.

Plans are being examined for the construction of a railroad across the main chain of the Caucasus Mountains. The line will have a length of 100 miles, and will present great engineering difficulties. There are to be two tunnels one four and a third and the other 4 and three quarters miles long.

A report is current in Teheran that the little boy who accompanied the Shah on his last visit to Europe was playing with a revolver in the Royal camp, to the south of Baku, when the weapon accidentally went off. His father, who was nearby, narrowly escaped being shot. The little boy has been sent away.

A few days ago the strollers on the Boulevard Bonaparte, in Paris, were startled by the shouts of a newspaper hawk, who rushed along the thoroughfare waving copies of an evening paper and shrieking out "Suicide of M. Carnot!" He was promptly arrested, and, on being tried on the charge of libel, was sentenced to six days' imprisonment.

The strike of telegraph operators in Spain is complete. There is not a single line working in the interior of Spain. The only means of communication with foreign countries is by the cables from Bilbao, Barcelona, Vigo, and Lisbon. There seems a probability of the strikers forcing the Government to concede their terms. Nearly 2,800 operators are idle, the majority being present in the telegraph offices, but refusing to touch their instruments or transmit any messages. It will be difficult for the Spanish Administration to fill their places.

A telegram from Bethune reports that a tragedy had taken place there. A miner named Debmache, who had recently been dismissed by his employers, was preparing to leave for Belgium. The woman with whom he lived refused to accompany him, whereupon he became jealous, and, throwing her out in the telegraph office, placed a dynamite cartridge upon her chest, and at once discharged it with fatal results. A horrible spectacle presented itself to the neighbors who entered the room. The two bodies were so mutilated as to be utterly unrecognizable.

Where Dead Bodies in Cemeteries Are Left Above-Ground.

In Peru, in the desert of Atacama, there is a cemetery in which the bodies are left above-ground. Owing to the desiccating influence of the winds, they become naturally embalmed. Six hundred men, women, and children, all in a perfect state of preservation, sit arranged in a semi-circle, gazing on vacancy, in this wonderful cemetery. In Thibet, in the case of the death of ordinary persons, their bodies are treated with various preservatives, and they are left to be devoured by the birds of prey and other carnivorous animals, whilst others are left above-ground in places, surrounded by walls, which have been set apart for the dead. The Canadian Indians hang their dead in large trees, where the bodies become dried by exposure. One of the modes of treating the dead by the Navajo Indians of New Mexico is to leave the body on a rude platform built on a branch of the pine-tree. In Mongolia the dead are not placed in graves, but placed on the surface, when the birds and beasts quickly leave nothing but the bones. The Parsees lay their dead on the Khamas, or "towers of silence," where the vultures clean the bones, which in a month are removed and deposited in deep wells containing the remains of many generations.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

Interesting New Documents Respecting His Life and Character.

The discovery by the Superintendent of the Military Archives at Madrid of documents, probably existing as to the birthplace of Columbus, must have awakened new interest in the history of the most renowned discoverer of the past. It is to be noted, however, that the documents only affirm tradition for Genoa has always been the Admiral's accredited birthplace. But this discovery should lead to nothing but a more careful investigation of the records of his later history, it will have been seen.

The character of Columbus has been greatly misunderstood, and his 600 biographers have in turn invested him with the glory of the religious hero and the contumely of the ill-tempered and crack-brained adventurer. An impartial critic must admit, indeed, that he was something of both, though more of the hero than the adventurer, and that his biographers have erred considerably in what Mr. R. L. Stevenson would call their "point of view."

Educated, as it is supposed in the local schools of Genoa, and for a short period at the University of Pavia, the youthful Columbus must have come in close contact with the scholars of the day. Naturally of a religious temperament, the piety of the learned would early impress him, and to this may possibly be attributed the feeling that he had been divinely selected, which remained with him until his death.

There is little doubt that he began his career as a sailor, at the age of 14, with the sole object of plunder. The Indies were the constant attraction for the natives of Venice and Genoa; the Mediterranean and the Adriatic were filled with treasure ships. In these circumstances it is not to be wondered that the sea possessed a wonderful fascination for the youth of those towns. This opinion was the constant envy of Spain and Portugal, and Columbus was soon attracted to the latter country by the desire of Prince Henry to discover a southern route to the Indies. It was while in Portugal that he began to believe that his mission on earth was to be the discoverer of a new route to the land of gold.

The white man's god. For ten years he resided in Lisbon from time to time making short voyages, but for the most part engaged drawing maps to procure himself a living. Here he married, here his son Diego was born, and here his wife, who died at an early age, was buried.

Toscanello at this time advanced the theory that the earth was round, and Columbus at once entered into correspondence with him on the subject, and was greatly impressed with the views of the Florentine scientist, both as to the sphericity of the world and the wonders of the Asiatic region. Heresy-hunting was then a favorite pastime and Columbus in accepting these theories ran no small risk of losing his life. Portugal and France in turn rejected his offers to add to their dependencies by his discoveries; and though his brother found many English willing to give him the necessary ships to start on his adventures, Spain, after much importuning on the part of the explorer, forestalled our own country.

Then followed his four eventful voyages with all their varying fortunes, and his death, when over 70 years of age, in a wretched condition of poverty. The ready consideration of theories, not only dangerous to those who advanced them, but also, shows him to have been a man of intellectual courage. Humility was another trait of his character, and in all his life it cannot be said that he acted in any but an honest and straightforward manner towards his fellow men.

It is true, no doubt, that his recognition of slavery somewhat dims his reputation. He sold many Indians as slaves, but it should be remembered that slavery prevailed at the time, and it was only on his second voyage, when hard pressed for means to reimburse the Spanish treasury for the immense expense of the expedition, that he resorted to the sale of human flesh. Indeed, his friendly relations with the natives show that as a rule he must have treated them in the kindly manner that characterized all his actions.

Throughout the reverses of his long career, whether received with sneers, lauded as a benefactor of his country, put in chains by crafty fellow-subjects, or defrauded by his unscrupulous prince of the profit of his discoveries, he continued a man of an eminent and loving character, kind to his family, his servants, and even his enemies. Americans are to do honor to the Columbian Exhibition to the name of him who, though not the first white man to land on the shores of the new world, was the first to colonize its fertile islands. Not only America, but the whole world, may emulate his virtues with advantage; for, even now, justice and mercy, courage and meekness do not always abide together.

Trains Travel Quicker When the Lines are Dry.

Railway employes appear to be unanimous and unhesitating in their opinion that trains can travel much more quickly and easily when the lines are dry than when they are wet. Rain is not so great a hindrance if it is heavy and clears and sticks to the rails, but drizzling rain or fog waxes the rails, he continues the slippery, and renders it difficult for the wheels to get a fair grip of them. So much is this the case that on starting in such weather sand is dropped on the rails before the engine to give the falling autumn leaves—especially when rain brings them down, and they are damp—make it difficult for the trains to advance if they do not actually sometimes bring them to a standstill. Wind is also a great check on train speed. On more than one occasion what is known as the Highland express on its journey North into Scotland has, while crossing the Gramplians, been brought to a standstill by wind. The highest speed can be attained in dry frosty weather, but in very hard frost when the earth has been frozen to a depth of from six to eight inches it is dangerous to move at too great a speed, as the ground has lost its elasticity, and there is a danger of the rails snapping.

Canary-birds have been known to live twenty-one years.

The reported intention of Carl Hering, the electrician, of a device to prevent caterpillars from crawling up trees is timely. The scheme is simply to run alternate wires of copper and zinc around the trunk of the tree at a distance of about half an inch apart. When Mr. Caterpillar starts in his ascent, he strikes the copper wire, poses his little nose over it, and continues. Half an inch further up his forward feet strike the zinc wire, while his body is still in contact with the copper, and immediately there is an electric current through his body. With a howl of pain Mr. Caterpillar drops to the ground, or—if the current be strong enough—remains a prisoner until he dries up and blows away.

The Mythical Number Three.

Much has been said and written of the "sacred number seven." How about the number three? Surely it may be found in many odd combinations as the "sacred number." First we have the Trinity; Jupiter's lightning had three forks; the trident of Neptune three prongs; Cerberus, Pluto's dog, had three heads, and the Pythian priestess sat on a tripod. There were three Arcus and three Furies. The sun is Sol, Apollo and Liber. The moon, too, is Luna, Diana and Hecate. The Sabines prayed three times a day, and many nations, in performing the act of adoration, bow three times. In olden times diseases were cured by three circumlocutions, eye diseases with water strained three times into three separate vessels and applied three times. Many other odd three combinations could be cited, but the above proves that the seven is not alone as a mythical number.

SKELETON GU.

The Terrible Punishment of a Desperado by Gold Seekers.

It is a strange scene here this August morning in the camp on the upper forks of the Big Chyenne River, Dakota, and the Black Hills looming up in the west. There are six emigrant wagons in camp—24 seekers and their families hurrying to the new El Dorado. There are half a dozen horsemen besides, making fourteen men in all. Breakfast has been prepared and eaten, and thirteen of the men are sitting in a circle. The other occupies the centre, tied hand and foot. The women and children look on and speak in whispers.

Is it a trial by jury? No. There is no need of a trial. Last night this man attempted robbery, murder, and flight. Accident aided his capture, and when he found himself baffled he cursed the companion with whom he had travelled for many days and boasted that he had meant to poison them all had not his own admission prevented. He is still cursing the luck which betrayed him. He is to die, but how? That is the point the counsel will decide. Listen! The leader of the party is speaking.

"All in favor of shooting hold up the right hand! Six hands up. All in favor of hanging hold up the same hand! Six. It's a tie. I vote ag'in both. Take him up that ravine!"

The White Hills are right here to the left, and the mouth of a dark and rugged gulch is only fifty rods away. Four stalwart men pick the prisoner up and carry him along. The leader goes to one of the wagons and secures chains and tools and follows on. The prisoner struggles and curses and reviles as he is carried along, but no man replies to him. They have not advanced forty feet into the gulch before they are in twilight. Lanterns are lighted, and they move along for a hundred feet more. Neither sunshine nor the light of day has touched this spot since the creation of the continent. It is doubtful if eyes other than those of serpents and fierce wild beasts have ever rested upon these wet and slimy rocks.

"Halt! Here is the spot!"

The men group about the prisoner, who has suddenly been awed to silence, and the leader passes a stout chain around the man's body, and uses a bladder for an anvil as he rivets it. Then with a clank and hammer he works a hole into a rock projecting from the side, and at the end of half an hour his task is finished. The growl of the grizzly as he made his way up and down and the hiss of the serpent when disturbed by the fall of a stone have been heard down here in the awful darkness, but never before the blow of a hammer or the whisper of human voices.

"For God's sake, take me out and shoot or hang me!"

So cries the prisoner as the men gather below him and are ready to go. No answer. They hold up the lanterns to see that he is safely fastened and then turn their backs on him and disappear.

"Have mercy on me! Come back and shoot me here!"

They hear his voice and the clanking of his chains, but no one turns his head; no one pleads for him. They emerge into the sunshine, hitch up their horses, take their places as on the day before, and in twenty minutes, the rear wagon is out of sight.

Up the gulch the man stands listening. He is hoping that some one will return. There are women and children with the train; they will surely plead for him. The whinny of a horse and the shout of a driver come faintly to his ears through that pitch black darkness, but only once. Then all is quiet. An hour ago his eyes were blazing with fury and his speech was loud and vindictive. His eyes look terror now, and his lips are so dry that not a whisper could pass over them.

Who has voted that he must die, but who will place the muzzle of a revolver to his breast and kill him out of pity? There are soft footsteps—some one is surely coming! No! 'Tis the drip! drip! drip! of the water as it falls off the shelf above and strikes on the rocky bed of the gulch. He groans and curses and cries out. The rock behind him is damp. He turns and licks it to cool his parched tongue and fevered lips. One at the mouth of the gulch could hear him pant as he tugs at his chain—as he tries it link by link—as he sways to the right and left, and puts forth the strength of an ox. The cry of despair he utters when he realizes his utter helplessness reaches the tops of the above as they bathe in the bright sunshine, and he sinks down exhausted and unconscious.

Night has come. Now and then there is a horrible clanking of chains; now and then the sound of a human voice talking and laughing. But for that ceaseless drip of water the solid world would be that of the grave. But for the heavy iron chain, the beast creeping down the gulch to investigate the strange sounds heard at intervals the darkness would be that of the first day of creation. Listen!

"I got away from them in the darkness and they can't find the trail—ha! ha! ha! They had money and I was bound to have it! Did the fool think I was going to dig and delve for gold in the earth! I'd have wipped out the whole lot—every last drop of poison—every last drop of all right, though—ha! ha! ha!"