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TALES OF THE TOWN.

*"I must have liberty
Withal, as large a charter as the wind
To blow on whom I please."*

THERE are many queer ways of making a living, and these hard times bring out every bit of ingenuity in a man in order to survive. The other morning I saw a tramp going through a backyard picking up old bottles, which, I suppose, he washes up and sells to some bottling establishment in the city. In large cities, where the struggle for existence is greater, poor people are compelled to resort to all manner of tricks in order to keep body and soul together. Some years ago while I was in Spain I purchased a suit of clothes from a Spanish tailor. I cannot tell just now whether it was the beauty of the cloth or the peculiarity of the buttons on the coat that commanded my admiration most. However, within a year afterwards, I arrived in St. Louis, Missouri, and one morning discovered that a button had been torn from my coat. I was really perplexed, as I believed that I would not be able to get a button like the one lost. I took a tailor into my confidence, and he informed me that he would direct me to a little establishment in one of the big blocks up town, where I would likely be able to secure a button similar to the ones remaining upon my coat. Sure enough he was right. Now, in the absence of a much of a gossip character, I propose to tell my friends something of the peculiar occupation of the old man who conducts this queer establishment.

The business of this old man and his granddaughter (she is a partner in the firm) is to supply missing buttons. He has regular places where he collects these odd buttons. He visits dressmakers, clothing shops, tailors and junkmen, and they all save the buttons from cast-off garments for him. They are glad to get an exceedingly small price for them, because it is all clear gain. The old man takes them to his shop, sorts them out, and he and his granddaughter supply them to people needing odd buttons. He has buttons of all shapes, styles, colors, and sizes. There are buttons of gold, silver, pearl, agate, glass, bone, jet, shell, gilt, nickel, brass, silk, onyx, ivory, steel, horn, porcelain, and, in fact, of almost every conceivable substance. Sometimes the old man gets a good price for a rare button, but the usual price is 10 cents for the button and for sewing it on. The old man fishes out the button from one of the innumerable boxes on the shelves of his little shop, and the young woman sews it on. He has sorted them over so many times that that he knows almost exactly where to find any sort of

a button which is required. The people from whom he buys the buttons send him many customers, and the peculiarity of the business is in itself an advertisement. Those who go there once usually tell some of their friends about the place, and the next time Mrs. Prudent loses a button from her dress she does not spend several hours in unsuccessful search among the dry goods stores and dressmaking establishments, but goes at once to the old man's shop, where the missing button is invariably supplied.

Last week I had a paragraph on the peculiarities of the perpetual kicker. Laura Sheldon, who writes the following, has evidently had some experience with the nuisance:

There's a man I often think of when the lights are burning low,

A man that half my lifetime it has been my lot to know.

He is full of faults and failings, and not handsome, I confess,

But if you wish to know him you will be obliged to guess.

In all my new spring bonnets that strange man sees dreadful flaws,

And he d-s his collar button when it isn't where it was.

He hangs his spare clean nightshirt every morning on the floor,

And when he goes to business he is sure to bang the door.

He scolds me when I ask him for a "little change," and then

He turns around and gives me not one dollar bill, but ten.

He says the house is dirty, but he nearly has a fit

If he finds his wife a-scrubbing just a tiny, little bit.

He buys the evening paper and then reads it half the night

And wants to stop and argue if I say it is not right.

He bemoans our large expenses and lays plans to cut them down

While he's busy buying tickets to almost every show in town.

He says that pride and vanity in a woman is a crime,

But he's curling up the corners of his moustache all the time.

And when he comes home hungry, goodness gracious, what a bear!

There are cyclones and torpedoes scattered thickly through the air.

He reasons and advises and says that "I don't know,"

But he gives in like an angel when the tears begin to flow.

And for every silly blunder he just holds me on his knee

And scolds between the kisses, so I can't "talk back," you see.

He says that all the babies are a nuisance and a bore,

And yet, you will believe me? he is always wanting more.

And now that I've described him I had better "change the scene,"
For ten to one you've met him and know just the man I mean.

It is believed by ladies like Miss Fenwick that women who take really good care of themselves stand the wear and tear of life quite as well as men. I really believe that it is a fallacy to imagine that wives break earlier than husbands. As a correspondent says, the trouble all arises from gross carelessness. From early girlhood till marriage they think no details too elaborate, no lengths too far to go in setting forth the fresh loveliness that is theirs by right. But when the honeymoon and first year have slipped by, it requires some courage to keep up the high standard set by love's young enthusiasm. After the lover is lost in the devoted helpmeet, she must then maintain a perfect physical condition from a sense of duty to herself. In the humdrum severity of the best married lives, most women come to believe that John has ceased to notice the sheen of her hair, the smoothness of her lips, or her figure's symmetrical proportions; as long as she is sweet, serene and sympathetic, keeps the house well and brings up fine sons and daughters, he cares for nothing more. Never was a greater mistake indulged in to the future woe of hundreds of excellent wives. During the period when women are busy in the nursery and filling the office of mother, men are engaged in earning bread and butter and solidifying their financial positions. These years are absorbing and full of activity. They admit of little reflection, and flash by so quickly that half their life is gone before the fact is realized. Then comes the day of reckoning, when the sons and daughters have flown the parent nest, the house-keeping goes by clockwork, and John's office regulates itself and needs merely perfunctory supervision.

It is at this critical period that, with leisure and money to command, John finds time to contemplate the lady by his side. He no longer rushes off from a hasty breakfast and returns too tired for aught but food and sleep. Now the thrifty money maker is ready to enjoy the store he has been at such pains to lay up, and is very observant of his partner. Naturally, he objects to a fat, lumbering, round shouldered, coarse skinned companion. All the sentiment of his youth rises up to protest against this rough haired, red handed person identifying herself with the pretty girl he married 25 years ago. She is his wife, and a good one, therefore he does love and respect her; but pride and tenderness are put to the test when she waddles, pants, develops a triple chin, and screws her dull, grizzled locks into an uncompromising twist. His brother

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