WAS IT MADNESS?

[A sketch, written by Alfred F. Potts and read before the Century Club of Indianapolis.]

He was known as the "ex-millionaire," because, ten years before, he had turned over his large business concerns to his sons, richly endowed his daughters with the balance of his wealth, and then suddenly disappeared from the active stage of affairs. It was supposed that he was in his last sickness, when I was surprised by a summons to wait upon him at his residence on the following day. "What service could he require of a lawyer?" I asked myself. Certainly not to prepare a will, as the old man was supposed to have already distributed everything he possessed. Whatever the summons meant, I felt that I would probably learn some of the secrets of an eccentric life, and it was, therefore, with a lively interest that, at the hour appointed, I stood before the palatial house which he now occupied with some of his children. On my arrival I was at once ushered into the silent chamber of the dying man. A dim light brought into shadowy outline the rich furnishings of the apartment and revealed a white and emaciated face against a mass of pillows.

"Papa seems in a strange humor to-night," whispered a daughter who stood beside me, "and has asked us all to leave you alone with him for an hour or two. He has been talking so much of the past and sighing over what he calls a 'wasted life.' Poor papa! When everybody knows that he was one of the most successful men in the State."

The eyes of the sick man falling upon me he waved the other occupants of the room to retire and motioned me to a chair beside his bed. Something in his look or manner restrained me from breaking the silence. He seemed to be struggling to master his own mind. For one instant a shadow of dullness and vacancy crept over his face and darkened the light in his eye; and then followed an almost imperceptible muscular twitching, a lightening of the lines of the face and a quick flash of consciousness. As though to hold the victory won over the forces of death and darkness he began at once to speak. "I sent for you," he said, "to counsel with me in regard to the disposition of the remainder of my estate; but since yesterday my mind and memory seem to have been suddenly awakened, and I wish you first to listen to the story of my life and then advise me. My story is that of a man whose life has been a failure."

"Surely, sir," I interruped, with an attempt at cheerfulness, "you exaggerate the situation. You are melancholy, and forget the success you have achieved."

"No," he replied, "that is the secret of it all. My life has been lived so entirely for success that everything else has been forgotten."

"But your children," I said hopefully, "they remain to bless and cheer you."

A long and painful silence showed me all too plainly that I had touched the wrong key. A look of pain and protest shot across his pallid face and then softened into an expression of pathos and regret.

"Yes," he replied with an infinite sadness, "I have my children, but what they do is more from a sense of duty than from any real affection. And why should they love me?" he asked hopelessly. "I have been nothing to them all these years more than a machine producing gold, a certain portion of which has overflown into their hands. When they were prattling babies, and their young lives reached out instinctively to me for love, I shook them off because their cries annoyed me, or their prattle disturbed the succession of the thoughts which I was forming for the morrow's action. As they grew on to school-day age I found no time to waste upon their trifling problems. While they worked them at their mother's knee, I shut myself up and became absorbed in the long columns of my daily growing gains. They had their childish parties and their days of sport and recreation, but I only knew of it as I caught snatches of their conversation. It soon came that they ceased to speak to me of themselves or the affairs that concerned them. I was not conscious at the time how completely their lives were drifting away from mine. I was most pleased with the one who spoke least to me. I was fighting a great battle for them, as I said to myself, in self-justification, and must not be distracted by their childish lives. There would be time, after while, when I had won the victory, to come home, and take them on my knees; time to tell them of the battle I had fought for them and the victory won. There would be time then to romp with them and to tell them all the stories of my boyhood days and to rock the little one to sleep before the mellow fire. But the battle never ended and the children never heard from me a childish story, and my heart never throbbed with the sweet pleasure of that pure love which a parent knows who watches the prattling baby in his arms fall into sweet slumbers."

"But the aim of your life was reached," I remonstrated, hoping to dispel his morbid humor. "You amassed great wealth and became a figure in the business world. Surely your life has not been a failure."

The suggestion as to the aim of his life seemed to open a sealed book of memory to him. He lay for a moment with staring eyes beaming with the strange light of memory.

"How surprising," he muttered to himself, "is the difference in the point of view. It is as though a cloud were suddenly lifted;" and again he lapsed into utter silence, while his fixed eyes seemed to be looking down the long vista of years upon a procession of events seen in a new light. As he lay absorbed in his review of the past my own memory was refreshed with the recollection of theories holding that impending death not only brushes away the mist from the windows of memory, but sheds upon all human action an eternal light of truth which leaves no doubt as to the good or evil nature of a deed.

"How passing strange are the sudden and unexpected revelations of my mind," he at last began as in a reverie, still gazing through me as though my face and not the past was a shadow. "I see to-night not only all that has occurred, but I see myself as though I stood aside to judge myself. Is this a foretaste of the hereafter? If so, God keep me, for even now I see the darkness of the shadow which my life has thrown upon my soul. I realize how I have misspent the best years of my life. My youth comes back, and I recall its high aims and aspirations. I had a purpose then to make a name in literature, and with the making of it to help my fellows and to keep about me the warm friends of my youth. I began the work which I had set out to do, and some success came with it, but so slowly as to disappoint me. In the meantime, though very young, I had married a beautiful girl to whom I gave my whole soul, and for whose sake I longed, not only for honor, but profit from my work, that I might provide amply for her. Soon a child came, and, unhappily, before I was established. I despised hack-work, and sought to make my way by literary effort. It was the old story of disappointment, and long delays, and vexation, and poor returns. Matters grew worse from day to day, and culminated when, returning to our little home one night, I found my child had taken a malignant fever from exposure without sufficient clothing. I watched by its bedside day and night, hoping and praying for its life, and cursing God in the depth of my own bitterness, for the poverty which had made this possible; and when the end came and I watched that sweet life go out, it seemed to me that it had been the fearful price of my own selfish ambition. With that thought I laid a resolution at the grave that I would abandon the aim of my youth, engage in commerce, struggle for a fortune, and, not until it was gained, would I take up the work in which my soul took part. I turned my back upon my boyhood home and friends and moved to this city, where I was unknown. I thought I foresaw the opportunity to make a fortune. My first ventures were in the smallest way, but were successful and gave me the experience necessary for larger effort. I soon developed a talent of which I had been unconscious—what the world calls foresight—which is no more than to make correct estimates upon the shifting balances of trade; to watch with such care the fierce struggle between supply and demand as never to fall between them. I saw early in my career that the great opportunities lay in the fluctuations of the necessaries of life. Before many years I learned the mighty leverage of a 'corner,' and saw the price of breadstuff go up and the size of the loaf of bread go down, because I, with others, refused to unlock the doors of our elevators, which were groaning beneath the weight of grain. At first I had but one ambition, that was to win a competence, and but one pleasure, that of anticipation of the day when I might lay down the work which I had taken up as a necessity. I had begun my business career with a half-formed opinion that a certain sum was a competence, and that when I had reached that limit I would be content. But in reaching it, as every man of large affairs well knows, it became necessary to reach out and form ties and connections which could not be severed. And so I never saw the day when I could close my books, wind up my affairs and draw out the real value of my investments. But beyond all that the truth is that money-making became a fascinating occupation to me. To set a stake at a certain figure and see it reached and overlapped, and then to set another and push forward to it; to note the growth of a fortune as one does a tree—its ever-increasing height and strength, its new and vigorous branches pushing forth and leafing out, its constant accessions from air, and earth, and sun. How the storm bursts upon it and shakes it to its very roots and yet carries away nothing more than a few dried leaves. And with success comes a reputation to sustain. A man becomes a figure and a factor in the public life of the time. His slightest opinion is eagerly caught up and acted upon. A certain respect from some and much fawning from many falls to his share. One enterprise reaches out and into and overlaps another, and is dependent upon it, and there never comes the hour of conclusion. Something of moment is yet unfinished, results are perpetually at stake, losses are forever threatened. And so the long columns grow longer and the hours of recreation and pleasure shorter. And so the mind gradually hardens as the hand with toil, until it can no longer touch the strings of life which give forth harmony and rouse the better nature."

A pause ensued, as though, having read to the end of a chapter, he had laid down his book to review the preceding pages. Then I wondered again at his remarkable mental strength, but more at the strange judicial turn of mind which caused him to pass so severe a sentence on the conduct of his life. Was this, as he hinted, a foresight of the condition of his mind after death? Would the hereafter mean that the soul would stand like a surgeon and strip every fact to the bone of truth to reveal its disease and deformity? The reflection was interrupted by his continuance:

"I do not understand myself. I have been lying here for hours as a silent spectator, watching and wondering and often trembling at the new colors in which I see my own life and its results. I must put a test upon myself to know whether I am dreaming."

At this the old man drew out from his breast a key hanging upon a silver chain, and handed it to me, remarking:

"My children, as well as the world, think me penniless, and have no knowledge of the existence in this room of the wealth which I have hoarded, and which I now wish to distribute by my will. You will find a safe behind the side panel of that writing-desk," he explained, as I looked in bewilderment about the room. Feeling along the paneling of the desk I found at last an opening for the key. A door swung back and revealed a small modern safe, which I readily opened after the combination had been given me. I drew out and laid on the bed the iron box which the safe contained. To my astonishment it seemed full of packages of bonds and money of great value, which the old man at once began to count, adding the contents of one package to another, as I could see from the motions of his lips. He had gone over perhaps half the papers in the box, when a tired and disappointed expression came over his face. He laid back on his pillow and turned his face away, remarking pathetically:

"Even that pleasure is lost to me. For years I have found a solitary comfort in the possession of that wealth and its daily increase, but the lightest package seems like lead to me now, and the heaviest as worthless as so much of that base metal. And this is all my later life has brought me."

"But, after your retirement," I suggested, "you surely had time in which to cultivate your early tastes and mingle with your family."

Another silence preceded his reply, which came with a sob.

"Ten years ago," he said, "my wife came down in her last and lingering sickness. As she grew worse, and I began to realize that she must die, my conscience at last awoke, and I sought, by an increasing attention to her, to make some amends for the years of neglect which she had borne so uncomplainingly. The day before she died she reminded me of the aims and ambitions of my early manhood, and pleaded with me to give up the struggle for more wealth, and to turn again to the literary pursuits in which we had both taken such interest, and from which we had expected to reap a rich harvest of credit and honor. Stirred by the recollections of my early aspirations, I promised her to divide all my property among our children and to settle down to a quiet, peaceful life, in which I should resume my studies and cultivate the talent of which she, as a young wife, had been so proud and hopeful.

"She died, and while my promise was still fresh and the inspiration was strong upon me, I turned my mercantile business and affairs over to my sons and settled a competence upon my daughters, at the last moment, however, retaining for myself more than a quarter of my fortune, which I carefully concealed even from my children. It was my whim that they should suppose me dependent upon them."

"Ah! I see," I remarked, "you wished to enjoy the affectionate care of your children in your declining years, untroubled by the thought that there was any selfish motive behind their filial kindness."

"Yes," he replied meditatively, "it was that thought which I pretended to myself was the reason for my whim, but as I see it now I know that it was more because I still loved the possession and control of money. I made secret investments in bonds and stocks, and in the solitude of this chamber have night after night counted up the daily gains, figured in advance the probable results of years, and groaned in regret at the impulse which had led me to give away the bulk of my fortune. Worse than all, I have received from my sons, and hoarded, a monthly income bestowed to meet my personal needs."

"But," I said, "I should have thought when you resumed your studies and literary effort that you would have found contentment and happiness in that direction."

"No," he answered with a sigh which filled my heart with pity. "It was too late. At last, when, after years of strife and struggle, I sat quietly in my easy chair with a book in hand, I found myself mechanically repeating the words of the printed page while my hand was busy figuring out the plans which, had I been upon the market, would, according to the day's quotations, have brought me gains. I would at times take up a pen and endeavor to write, but after a few lines had been, with painful effort, scrawled upon the page, I grew utterly weary and fell back in my chair to sleep away the hour. And so my effort came to naught, and nothing was left to me but memory. I recalled the intense pleasure which I had taken in my books, but I could no longer apply myself to study or composition. The faculty was gone: my mind, aside from memory, was a great blank, and my pen limped and staggered over the page until it finally fell in sheer exhaustion. You have spoken of my children," he continued. "As I see myself to-night, I do not blame them for not loving me. I have been nothing to them, and am nothing now but a tiresome old man, who falls asleep in his chair, and is always in the way. I was plainly out of place in the society which surrounded them. Social customs change in thirty years, and I was awkward and ill at ease, and resented it by boorishness, as they complained. Yet this was the day of rest and competence to which I had been struggling through the best years of my life. I had reached it only to find myself a decrepit, embittered old man, whose talent had deserted him, who had no social graces, and whose presence even was unwelcome. Every day I felt myself being pushed, like an old portrait, further into the background and out of sight. My sons had usurped my place. It was they who were now interviewed by the papers, called to preside at public meetings and shown the deference which had been paid to me. My opinion was never sought on any subject, and I could notice as I stopped to pass a word with some old business acquaintance that he hurried away as soon as possible, as though he feared that I was about to tell him a story for the second or third time. I had no friends, and had not had for thirty years. I had been too busy for that. So no one came to see me, and my children, full of their own plans and pleasures, left me to myself, and I sat in my room or walked the street as desolate as though I had been cast upon an uninhabited island.

"I made one attempt to interest myself by going to the office in which my sons now ruled. I had to wait in the ante-room while they concluded an important deal. The clerks and porters passed. Some nodded half insolently, while others gave worse offense by stopping to shake hands, with a kind of pity which was intolerable. I could not forget that it had been my kingdom, and that all these had been by abject subjects. While there I gave a direction, in the presence of one of my sons, as to how a matter should be conducted. He smiled in a patronizing way, and assured me that my ideas were out of date, and would never do under the system which had been established since he took control. I stole out of the establishment with a sense of impotent bitterness, realizing that there was nothing left for me to do but to sit in a corner blinking at the fire, while the world moved on without me. My isolation grew more and more complete, and it seemed after while that this money, these hidden trophies or former victories, alone remained to comfort me. It seemed to me that my children encroached upon me inch by inch, until I was at last imprisoned in this room. I grew resentful, and felt that I would take a savage pleasure in making a will disposing of this wealth to strangers. It was for that purpose that I sent for you yesterday. Since then my mind has been busy reviewing all my life. All things have taken on a different coloring. I see myself as I am and have been; heartless, unsympathetic, selfish, and inspired only with an insatiable greed. I see the utter failure of my life, my early dreams unrealized. I see the sordidness of my own motives and despise myself for the deception which I have practiced these later years upon my children in hoarding and concealing this wealth. I realize how my children will blush with shame over the memory of a father's miserly motives. I begin to contrast the noble aspirations of my early manhood with the baseness and greed of my later life, and long for nothing so much as a means of commanding, after death, the love and respect of my children. If they needed this wealth they might be grateful to me for having hoarded it these years, but to add it to their plenty or dispose of it elsewhere is only to discover to them a father who deserves their contempt as a miser."

After another pause he resumed:

"Before I make a final decision what course to take I wish to ask you, as a man whose mind is fresh and whose judgment may be fair and critical, to read a manuscript which I have kept all these years. It is here beneath this mass of bonds."

The old man fumbled among the papers in the iron box before him, and finally produced a small roll which had been wrapped in many folds of paper and sealed with the sealing-wax and ribbons of a former generation. He handed it to me with the further explanation:

"I wrote it in the night after the death of my dear child, and sealed it with the resolution that it should never be opened until I should resume the work my soul took pleasure in. I have told you how, since this packet was sealed, the whole direction of my life has changed. How the pursuit of wealth has occupied my life and buried every other thought and desire, until, worn out and enfeebled, I find it now forever too late to turn into the pleasant, peaceful paths of literature. This is all that is left as the record of my better life and nobler purposes, and I wish you to read it to me now."

I took the packet from his hand, and, unrolling it with trembling haste, discovered a sheet on which was written with a quill pen a poem of a dozen stanzas. It had no title-line nor signature, but my eager eyes caught at a glance the scope and meaning of the lines. I did not dare to trust my voice until I had read it again and again, and become somewhat familiar with the touching pathos of the theme. I can never hope to reproduce it, or to convey more than an impression of the profound depth of the sorrow and the tenderness of the affection which the poem breathed. It was the chant of a sorrow-laden soul bidding farewell to the bright face of a child as well as the sweet presence of a muse. He bade her sit beside the grave of his dear child; to plant the earliest violets there; to call the sweetest singing-birds and keep the boy forever happy until he should return to kiss them both again and wander with them over the flower-strewn fields and beside the murmuring brook. As soon as I could control my voice I read aloud the poem, and watched with intensest interest the play of feeling on the old man's face. It kindled with a radiance almost holy, and as the lines rolled on in their sweet cadence, expressive of such depth of love for his child and such reverence for his art, the tears which had been sealed in the man's soul since the sealing of this poem, burst forth and ran down unchecked across the furrows of his cheek.

After a time he dried his eyes and said: "I cannot tell its worth or value; I only know it drops like the rain upon my parched soul. Will you tell me—is it worthy to leave my children?"

I answered him that it would be a heritage more precious than the box of wealth upon his knee; that it seemed faultless to me, and very beautiful.

"I hope they will think so; I shall die happier if by that poem my children may gain a nobler father. Forty years gone—lost forever—and no trace of character or act save that on which to claim their loving and respectful memory. I am so near the end that I see things in their true relations and weigh values as they are. It is almost a loathing I now feel toward this wealth, which I have been hoarding and piling over my soul as it lay buried in that poem."

After a pause in which he seemed lost in a new thought, he continued: "Young man, you and I only, in this world, know of my possession of this wealth. These bonds are registered under an assumed name, such was my craven fear that, in my feebleness, this stuff, which seemed so precious to me, might be taken away. My children do not need it."

"Very good, sir," I suggested; "as your children are amply provided for, there are many noble charities to which you may bequeath the remainder of your fortune."

He did not seem to hear me, and wore an excited, almost delirious expression as he held the poem lovingly against his heart, muttering meanwhile: "My soul was dead and buried, but has risen again. My children shall know me as I was." And then, rousing from his reverie or delirium (for such it almost seemed), he said to me:

"You will sit at that table to prepare my will—there in the corner—but first hand me that alcohol lamp. I sometimes warm my hands over it late at night when I wake up and am sleepless; and this iron box has grown heavy on my knees; remove it to the chair beside my bed."

The arrangements made to suit him, I went to the table in the further corner of the room, and, having provided myself with paper, pen and ink, began at once the preparation of the preliminary clause of a will. When finished, I asked, without turning, for instructions as to the disposition of the property.

"Write that it is my wish and prayer that my children may preserve and cherish the poem that I wrote before I closed the doors of my heart. In it, as in a mirror, they may see their father's soul and learn to love and revere his memory. It is the only property I have on earth to leave them. Tell them——"

I was startled by the sudden flashing of light in the room and the crackling noise of a fire, and, turning, was stupefied by the sight before me. The contents of the iron box were a sheet of flame, and the empty alcohol lamp on the chair beside it explained the sudden conflagration.

As soon as I had recovered my senses I rushed to the bedside, and might have saved some remnants from the fire, but a look in the old man's eye restrained me—a look of sublime intelligence or madness. I could not define it.

"Let them burn to white ashes," he said, gazing at the smoldering bonds. "I have burned away the crust in which my soul has been incased for forty years."

My exclamation and the smell of the smoke had aroused the family, who came running in, alarmed. As they gathered about the bed, waiting an explanation, the old man looked with benignant smiles upon his children; then said as his breath grew short:

"My children, I have given you everything you need but a happy memory of your father. God grant that this little poem may give you that."

The wearied eyes closed and the heavy head fell back upon the arm of the daughter, who had stooped to catch his words.

"What has burned in this box?" she whispered to me, smoothing the pillow under her father's head.

The truth which came to my lips for utterance was checked as the closed eyes opened with a mute but eloquent appeal. I understood, and answered calmly:

"Only a mass of worthless paper in which your father had wrapped the precious poem which he leaves."

The weary eyes closed peacefully in their last sleep, and I brushed the ashes from the iron box into the low-burned fire of the grate.

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

The negroes of the United States now pay taxes on $264,000,000 worth of property.

In the year 1635 a tulip bulb was sold in Holland for $2,200; it weighed but 200 grains.

By a recent legislative enactment, Georgia physicians who indulge in intoxicants are disqualified from practice.

A temperature of 220 degrees below zero has been produced by a bath of carbon bi-sulphide and liquid nitrous acid.

Umbrellas are now made of paper in France. They are made waterproof by gelatined bichromate of potassium.

Clear summer sunlight is said to penetrate the Mediterranean sea to a depth of 1,200 feet; winter sunlight to only 600 feet.

What is thought to be the largest flag in the United States floats over a factory in Chicopee, Mass. It measures 41 by 71 feet.

The accommodations of the Vatican may be imagined when the Pope put 2,200 beds in at the disposal of the Frence pilgrims, free of charge.

There are two bearing apple trees in Indiana county, Pennsylvania, that were planted in 1792. One of them is ten feet in circumference.

Astronomers say a shot fired on the equator of Jupiter would travel with a rotary motion at a speed forty-five times greater than that of a cannon-ball fired at the earth's equator.

Of the sixteen species of trees grown in the United States whose wood will sink in water, the heaviest is the black ironwood of southern California.

The man-faced crab of Japan has a body hardly an inch in length, yet the head is fitted with a face which is the perfect counterpart of that of a Chinese coolie.

The largest dog in the world is the St. Bernard Lord Bute, now at the Menthon kennels at Phœnixville, Pa. He was bought from Thomas Shillcock, of Birmingham, England, for $3,650.

The United States leads the world in the number and extent of its libraries. The public libraries of all Europe put together contain about 21,000,000 volumes; those of this country contain 50,000,000.

The balance of nature has surely been somewhat disturbed. It takes eight hundred expensive roses to make a teaspoonful of perfume, while a pennyworth of cooked onions will scent a whole neighborhood.

An Englishman, who has been traveling in Siberia, says that the life of the Russian exiles there is not so hard as has been depicted. They enjoy society, indulge in fancy dress balls and have a good time generally—but with limitations.

Cremation is very economically conducted in Japan, and in consequence is quite popular. In Tokio there are six crematories, in which one-third of the dead are burned. The highest price for burning a body is £1 and the lowest 5 shillings.

In Raleigh, N. C., two colored prisoners, condemned to receive thirty-nine lashes, were whipped in the presence of spectators, who paid 25 cents each to get in, the gate money going to the prisoners, who took it as the silver lining of their particular cloud.

The museum of postage stamps which has recently been opened at Vienna comprises more than 100,000 examples, arranged in three large rooms, and includes among its greatest rarities the stamps made for and used in the balloon and pigeon dispatches of the Franco-German war of 1870-71.

Mrs. Vannaman, of Bridgeton, N. J., while weeding her garden last year noticed a tall weed of peculiar appearance which she let grow. It has now grown into a tree over twenty feet high and a foot in circumference; it has an enormous leaf. Hundreds of people have seen it, but no one knows what kind of tree it is.

Coal is not what it seems. It is diamonds, and also other color than black. Chemists say the amount of coloring matter stored in coal is such that one pound of the mineral yields magenta sufficient to color 500 yards of flannel, aurine for 120 yards, vermillion for 2,560 yards, and alizarine for 255 yards of turkey-red cloth.

A remarkable example of the enduring qualities of the daguerreotype is to be found in the old grave-yard at Waterford, Conn. In the headstone that marks the grave of a woman who died more than forty years ago her portrait is inlaid, covered with a movable metal shield. The picture is almost as perfect as when it was taken.

A remarkable freak of nature is found among the hills of Delaware county, New York, in a sunken lake covering about three acres of surface, which lies between two parallel ridges not far from the New York, Ontario & Western railroad. The whole surface of the lake is covered with a thick growth of moss, the stems of which extend to an unknown depth.

The Russian nobility are in comparatively as wretched circumstances as the peasantry. In October there will be nearly nine hundred estates belonging to nobles sold by auction at the instance of the State Bank, that has loaned them money on mortgages. The estates will bring far less than their mortgage value, on account of the inability of Jews, foreigners, or foreign syndicates to acquire landed property.

A farmer living at Mazomanie, Wis., made a remarkable discovery recently. He found an old hen and thirteen young chickens occupying a nest in which a cat and five kittens had also taken quarters. They were all nestled up as slick as a bug in a rug. The question naturally arises, which is the mother and which is the offspring. The cat has helped to hatch out the eggs, and the hen has helped the old cat in her trying period.

It is evident that there was no controversy about the source of the Mississippi when the treaty of 1783, confirming the independence of the United States, was signed. It was stipulated in that treaty that the boundry between the two countries should run from the northwest corner of the Lake of the Woods due west to the source of the Mississippi. It was not discovered for many years later that the sources of the Mississippi are far south.

The phrase "worth its weight in gold" no longer expresses the idea which it was intended to convey. For there are at least twenty substances worth more than gold. Berylium, for instance, is worth about ten times its weight in pure gold, and venadium is five times as costly as the precious metal. Iridium, also, is more than twice as costly as gold. The text-books used to say that platinum was the only metal more valuable than gold, but it now costs about the same.

Many Oriental cities, like most Indian villages, have more dogs than human creatures within their limits, and, until a month ago, Singapore was a notable instance, and was infested with a perfect plague of dogs, mostly curs. Several cases of hydrophobia occurred during August, which inaugurated a panic and a wholesale slaughter of the dogs. Up to Aug. 28 over thirteen thousand dogs had been killed and 1,500 registered, and at latest reports the work of extermination was still going vigorously on.

How Men Are Spoiled.

Harper's Bazar.

Did you ever stop to ponder over how this deplorable disease—for dudeism is a disease, a malady—originates in nine cases out of ten? Of course you haven't, and it will give you something to think over when I tell you the mother is generally responsible for it.

You can listen, of course, when men tell you of their dear old mother's training, but they never acknowledge that these same dear old mothers planted seed that it would take another generation of women to deplore and uproot.

If there is one son in the family, though there be five times as many daughters, from the time of his birth he is made to realize that he is idolized and that he has a perfect right to lord it royally over his timid sisters. He must have the best room in the house—to keep him among them, you know; he must have fine clothes, no matter how the girls have to count the pennies to buy remnants to freshen up their old gowns; the best place at the table is reserved for dear brother, and his plate is heaped first and with the first choice of the viands.

Accounting for It.

Philadelphia Record.

"What were you chasing cats for this morning?" asked an up-town teacher of a small boy. A warty hand went up from another small boy, who answered, "I guess I know, teacher; his father has a sign out that he is a cate—."

READING FOR SUNDAY.

Thy Will Be Done.

Not in dumb resignation
We lift our hands on high;
Not like the nerveless fatalist
Content to trust and die.
Our faith springs like the eagle
Who soars to meet the sun,
And cries exulting unto Thee,
O Lord, Thy will be done!

When tyrant feet are trampling
Upon the common weal,
Thou dost not bid us bend and writhe
Beneath the iron heel.
In Thy name we assert our right
By sword, or tongue, or pen,
And even the headsman's ax may flash
Thy message unto men.

Thy will! It bids the weak be strong;
It bids the strong be just;
No lip to fawn, no hand to beg,
No brow to seek the dust.
Wherever man oppresses man
Beneath Thy liberal sun,
O Lord, be there Thine arm made bare;
Thy righteous will be done!

—John Hay, in Harper's Magazine for October.

International Sunday-School Lesson for Oct. 11, 1891.

CHRIST FORETELLING HIS DEATH. (John xii, 20-36.)

Golden Text—And I, if I be lifted from the earth, will draw all men unto me. (John xii, 32.)

HOME READINGS.

M. Christ foretelling his death. John xii, 20-28.
Tu. Christ foretelling his death. John xii, 29-36.
W. Prophecy to be fulfilled.... Luke xviii, 28-34.
Th. Christ's fore-knoledge .... John xvi, 25-31.
Fri. Submission to the Father.. Luke xxii, 39-46.
Sat. The disciples perplexed... John xvi, 16-20.
Sun. A true follower............ Matt. xvi, 21-28.

SUGGESTED BY THE LESSON.

Rev. Lyman Abbot, in Christian Union.

Now is the world judged. Now is the devil conquered. Now is the world drawn to the Christ. These are the three fruits of of the cross.

The day of judgment has begun. It "dates from Good Friday." The cross is Christ's judgment throne; and men are judged now, as on that eventful afternoon, by the effect which the cross has upon them. It begets indifference in the gambling soldiers; vindictive triumph in the scribes and priests; hopeless remorse in Judas; a deep despair in Thomas; a great repentance in Peter; an unfathomable love in Mary and in John. What a test of character is here!

The devil is cast out. The thongs that bound Christ to the cross are the chains that bind Satan. Christ's life-wounds are Satan's death-wounds. Suffering love casts selfishness and malice out of human hearts. No losing battle, ours; no doubtful battle. The victory was assured in the very hour when the devil thought himself victorious. His apparent victory was his real defeat. We are chasing a retreating foe.

The world is drawn Christward. The end of redemption is that the world may know God. God is love; love is self-sacrifice. The last lesson our selfish hearts will learn is that self-sacrifice is the highest blessedness; that to suffer for others who are unworthy of the sacrifice is divine. This is the paradox of the Christian faith: humiliation is exaltation; self-sacrifice is self-preservation; death is life; love-suffering is blessedness; the hour of weakness and shame is the hour of strength and glorification.

The law of spiritual optics. Walk according to the light ye possess, lest darkness take possession of you. For he that walketh in darkness, his future is hidden in awful mystery. Wherefore, as ye have light, have faith in the light, that ye may become the children of light.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Of General Interest.

Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., has decided to add a theological seminary to the departments of study which have already been successfully established. Instruction will be free and the expense of board will be small.

Cardinal Manning, in a pastoral letter recently read in all the Catholich churches of London, points out the necessity of rearing children in the principles and practice of total abstinence, and earnestly calls on parents so to train their children.

There is an argument in these figures: Kansas, with 100,000 more people than Texas, has only one penitentiary, with 906 prisoners, under prohibition. Texas, with less population and a liquor traffic, has two large penitentiaries, with three thousand convicts.

The Rev. William W. Page, D. D., preached a farewell sermon to the New York Presbyterian Church, at Seventh avenue and One-hundred-and-twenty-eighth street, on Sunday last. It is believed that he will take orders in the Protestant Episcopal Church. He has been a Presbyterian minister and pastor of his present charge for twenty-two years.

Mr. Matthew Burnett, now on a visit to England, is known as the Father Mathew of Australia. He has done a work in the latter country which has been surpassed by very few in the history of temperance advocacy. During his career he has taken nearly two hundred thousand pledges, and had the satisfaction of distinctly diminishing the drink traffic where his crusades have been carried on.

Professor Winschied, of Leipsic, Germany, who belongs to one of the most noted Catholic families of that city, has announced his conversion to Protestantism. It is stated that he attributes the change in his religious views to his disbelief in the authenticity of the garment known as the holy coat, which is now on exhibition in the cathedral at Treves, and his conscientious scruples against supporting a church that would lend its sanction to such an exhibition.

The voting on the amendment to the rules of the Methodist Episcopal General Conference, permitting women to become lay delegates, is still in progress. Latest reports show that thirty-one annual conferences have voted on the question, and 1,551 votes have been cast for the change and 1,246 against it. The Japan Conference gave 1 majority against. The German conferences are almost unanimous against the change. The Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish conferences cast 29 for, 70 against. There are 115 conferences in all. The question was submitted too late for the spring conferences to consider it, so that the voting will not be completed until next spring.

Thoughts for the Day.

Suffering is a title to an excellent inheritance.—Jeremy Taylor.

Fear enslaves, courage liberates—and that always.—F. W. Robertson.

Every duty that is bidden to wait comes back with seven fresh duties at its back. —Charles Kingsley.

Cheerfulness is also an excellent wearing quality. It has been called the bright weather of the heart.—Samuel Smiles.

Even the wisest are long in learning that there is no better work for them than the bit God puts into their hands.—Garrett.

Sound, sound the clarion! fill the fife!
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.

—Sir Walter Scott.

Not she with trait'rous kiss her Saviour stung,
Not she denied Him with unholy tongue;
She, while apostles shrank, could danger brave,
Last at His cross, and earliest at His grave.

—Eaton S. Barrett.

Life is too short for any bitter feeling;
Time is the best avenger, if we wait;
The years speed by, and on their wings bring healing.
We have no room for anything like hate.
This solemn truth the low mounds seem revealing
That thick and fast about our feet are stealing.
Life is too short.

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

Educated Men in Siberia.

George Kennan, in the October Century.

It has been said again and again by defenders of the Russian government that the so-called "Nihilists" whom the government banishes to Siberia are nothing but "malchiski" (contemptible striplings), "expelled seminarists," "half-educated schoolboys," "despicable Jews," and "students who have failed in their examinations." Nevertheless, when the directors of the Minsuinsk Museum want the services of men learned enough to discuss the most difficult problems of archæology, and artists skillful enough to draw with minute fidelity the objects found in the burial mounds, they have to go to these very same "Nihilists," these "contemptible striplings" and "half-educated schoolboys" who are so scornfully referred to in the official newspapers of the capital and in the speeches of the Czar's procureurs. Such misrepresentation may for a time influence public opinion abroad, but it no longer deceives anybody in Siberia. Siberians are well aware that if they want integrity, capacity and intelligence they must look for these qualities not among the official representatives of the crown, but among the unfortunate lawyers, doctors, naturalists, authors, newspaper men, statisticians and political economists who have been exiled to Siberia for political untrustworthiness.

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ODDS AND ENDS OF FASHION.

Buckels will be largely used as a garniture for dresses.

The latest styles of ladies' "bangs" are more curly than wavy.

All sorts of odd borders are now used for handkerchiefs, as well as colored centers.

Stitching on the backs of gloves and long mittens now matches the color of the ground-work.

Tinted letter-papers, showing delicate shades as well as those in bright colors, are among the newest productions.

The autumn wraps have nearly all of them wide sleeves shaped to go on comfortably over the full sleeve of the gown.

The rein of every sort of vest is prolonged by permission of the tailors, who still introduce blouse vests beneath loose-fronted coats.

Birds and birds' wings and breast feathers are largely used on autumn toques, turbans and close French bonnets. It seems vain to hope that designers will cease to employ such trimmings.

Fine French flannelette in gray, cream or ecru makes admirable night-gowns for children during the winter; and the combination garment, though not so pretty as muslin trimmed with embroidery, is of greater benefit, and requires little care beyond thorough washing.

To wear over handsome skirts of lace, crepe de Chine, brocade and figured shot satins, in evening dress, are rich overgarments in velvet, made with deep coat fronts, opening over vests matching the skirt. These coats are made with basques at the sides that are only moderately long, and they have sleeves which are slightly full on the shoulders, but fit the arm closely at the elbow, and from thence fall frills of real lace. In the back are long coat-tabs that reach quite to the foot of the dress-skirt.

Many of the new ultra-fashionable waistcoats have bright red grounds, with black or gold stripes, and sometimes all three colors appear. Occasionally the stripes run across the figure. Again young ladies make use of very large silk bandana handkerchiefs brilliantly colored. They are arranged with a point of the kerchief under each arm and one turned under at the belt. The fourth point, at the throat, is cut away in a rounding shape, the edges turned in and shirred to fit the neck with a tiny up-standing ruffle. Worn beneath the loose-fronted jacket, a blouse-like effect is the result.

Many women are ignorant of what constitutes a really beautiful foot. So that it is small, they suppose that there is nothing more to be desired. The new laced shoe has a slightly projecting sole, which is a feature of many of the new models. The wide sole eventually gives the foot a narrower appearance than that which, wanting in width, allows the sides of the foot to crowd over, and very soon the whole shoe loses its original outlines, and the feet look distorted in consequence. It is always well to select a shoe a little longer than the foot; it imparts a look of slenderness and grace, which a short, stubby shoe never does.

Costumes of fancy woolens, with very light grounds, gray, ecru, mastic, mushroom color, amber-brown, etc., crossed with the silkiest of shaggy bars in mixed colorings—often scarlet, green and gold—or in checks, stripes and blurred detached patterns, are made up in jaunty styles, many of them too fanciful for any but youthful wearers. Some have bodices cut on the cross, and shaped to the figure without darts, some with cuirass corselets, the high under-bodice covered with nail-heads or braiding, this portion being of plain unpatterned goods. Some have velvet sleeves and velvet jacket-fronts, the long square basque reaching further back than the side-seams of the bodice and losing themselves among the folds of the skirt in the back.

Lincoln in The White House.

J. G. Nicolay in The Century.

There, as in his father's cabin or New Salem, or Vandalia, or Springfield, the man Lincoln never gave a fraction of thought or moment of care to any question of dress. He followed the ordinary fashion and wore what the tailor, hatter and boot-maker made for him. And so clad, the humblest citizens stood in his presence without awe, and the highest dignitaries with perfect respect. The world has yet to learn that General Scott, or Lord Lyons, or Bishop Simpson, or Prince Napoleon, or Archbishop Hughes, or the Comte de Paris, or Chief-justice Taney ever felt humiliated by the dress or want of dignity of President Lincoln in state ceremonial or private audience. The eyes of these men were not upon the tailor's suit of broadcloth, but upon the President and the man, and in such a scrutiny Lincoln outranked any mortal who ever questioned him eye to eye in his long and strange career from New Salem to the Blue Room of the White House.

As with his dress, so with his manner. Tempered and modified by the gravity of added years, and an ever-widening experience among varied social classes and conditions in many parts of the Union, it nevertheless retained to the last a strong impress of the essential characteristics of the frontier—simplicity, directness and sincere heartiness. He never learned and never used meaningless or misleading conventional phrases. He would say, "I am glad to see you." He would never say, "I am charmed to see you." He always greeted his visitors with a cordial shake of the hand and a winning look or smile, unless, as very rarely happened, his mind was weighed down with a preoccupation of overwhelming care and suspense. He always listened with patience, even when the request of his petitioner might be frivolous or foolish. That he was fond of wit, and jest, and laughter the world already knows. He gave others courtesy, kindness and consideration to the last degree, and never by word or look assumed that he demanded them for himself.

Long-Haired Men Are Weak.

Boston Globe.

The London Lancet denounces as false the doctrine that abundant hair is a sign of bodily or mental strength in man. It says that despite the Samson precedent the Chinese are mostly bald, yet they form the most enduring of races. The average madhouse furnishes proof that long and thick hair is not a sign of intellectuality. The easily-wheedled Esau was hairy, while the mighty Cæsar was bald. "Long-haired men are generally weak and fanatical, and men with scant hair are the philosophers, and statesmen, and soldiers of the world."

Old Dwelling-House.

Milwaukee Sentinel.

It is claimed that the oldest inhabited dwelling house in the United States is Kiliaen Van Rensselaer's house, in Rensselaer county, opposite Albany, N. Y. It is of brick, with a gambrel roof, and was built in 1642.

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

Had a Substitute On.

New York Sun.

"You seem to be taking things easy," said Father Time to the Fool Killer.

"Yes," was the reply, "the parachute jumper is looking after my business."

A Lovers' Fight.

Life.

"I see Jack and Mollie have made up again. Why was the engagement ever broken?"

"They had a quarrel as to which loved the other most."

Mr. Staylaight Is Rejected.

The Epoch.

"Won't you be mine?" he cried, as the clock struck one. "Mine forever!"

"Are you never satisfied?" she said, impatiently. "This one evening has been long enough, in all conscience."

Joy Among the Germs.

The Epoch.

First Tubercular Bacillus—I see by the papers that a new germicide has been discovered.

Second Tubercular Bacillus—Good enough! I hope it will be as nutritious as Dr. Koch's.

Not Available.

Puck.

Proud Father (to editor)—My eldest boy—only six—got off a pretty good thing the other day. I thought you might like to print it.

Editor—I am very sorry, sir; but we employ a man especially for that kind of work.

Suggestion Not Feasible.

New York Sun.

Mrs. Staggers—I don't know what to do with my husband. He just stays around the house all the time and growls.

Mrs. Dimling—Why don't you make him go to work?

Mrs. Staggers—It isn't respectable to work the growler.

She Drew the Line.

Boston Courier.

Miss Hownow—Well, Bridget, you didn't stay long at the Ocean Swell House. Was the work too hard for you?

Mrs. McGinty—Oh, no, mum; it was not the worruk Oi moinded; it is the indacent way they had of making the guris ate the same things as the boarders.

On the Wheel.

Good News.

First Bicyclist—Here comes a woman with a baby carriage. I wonder if she'll turn out enough to let us pass, or whether we'll have to get down and walk.

Second Bicyclist—If it's pushed by a nurse she'll give us room. If it's pushed by the mother, she'll want the whole road.

No Hope.

New York Weekly.

Clergyman (solemnly)—I greatly sympathize with you in your affliction, madam, but you should not abandon yourself to grief. You should know where to turn for consolation.

Young Widow—But who would want to marry a woman with three children?

The Way of It.

American Grocer.

House-hunter (at the seaside)—I thought this was a furnished cottage. You certainly said "furnished cottage" in your advertisement. But I don't see a stick of furniture in the house.

Estate Agent—Of course not. I furnish the cottage and you furnish the furniture.

Enough to Make Him Cross.

New York Sun.

Spatts (to his grocer)—You seem angry, Mr. Peck.

Peck—I am. The inspector of weights and measures has just been in.

"Ha, ha! He caught you giving fifteen ounces to the pound, did he?"

"Worse than that. He said I'd been giving seventeen."

And He Left.

Pilgrim's Progress.

"I wish I were a star," he said, smiling at his own poetic fancy.

"I would rather you were a comet," she said dreamily.

"And why?" he asked tenderly, at the same time taking her unresisting little hand in his own. "And why?" he repeated, imperiously.

"Oh!" she said, with a brooding earnestness that fell freezing upon his soul, "because then you would come round only once every fifteen years."

Strained Relations Avoided.

New York Weekly.

Russian Officer (politely)—Pardon me, I know you are a stranger, but it will save me much trouble and questioning if you will kindly raise your hat as the others do Here comes the Czar.

American (defiantly)—I raise my hat to no potentate on earth. I am an American—freeman, sir, born within the shadow of—"

Russian Officer (struck with a bright idea)—The Czar is very rich.

American (humbly raising his hat)—Why did't you say so before?"

Cornered.

New York Weekly.

Caller—You have been abroad a long time, have you not?

Hostess—Oui, oui, many months.

"Did you go to Italy?"

"Nong—I mean no. We feared ze New Orleans troubles might make Americans unwelcome. Comprondyvoo?"

"Oh, yes. Where did you spend most of the time?"

"In Germany."

"Didn't you go to Paris?"

"Oh, oui, oui. We were thaire a week."

"Only a week? Then how does it happen you speak your native tongue with a French instead of a German accent?"

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