HER THIRTIETH BIRTHDAY

By F. FOX

The young woman who prided herself on being "different" paused a moment at the door and looked in at the snug little dining room. All was ready. The light from the candles came softly through the red tulip shades, sparkling here and there in ruby high lights from the glass and china. The round table in its appointments suggested rather a masculine than a feminine gathering. The favors beside each plate were diminutive briar pipes in little red plush cases, the centerpiece, in the form of a masculine slipper, was filled with yellow bachelor buttons and fern. There was a cluster of glasses, also, beside each guest's plate that called out an expression of rather shocked surprise as the guests filed through into the room. And, to cap the climax, by the side of the hostess's chair was a receptacle for cracked ice, from which protruded the necks of sundry bottles.

The hostess enjoyed the reputation of being a very up-to-date young woman, but this at first blush seemed to be a little ahead of time. The first awkwardness dispelled, fun was soon going fast and furious. The guests were, one and all, friends of long standing, and entered into this new freak of the girl who was "different" with zest.

In the midst of the buzz and laughter the hostess arose, all eyes instantly centering on her tall figure. Her fine shoulders and head shone to advantage against the dark mahogany panels behind her, and her grey eyes sparkled with fun and with the manifest spirit of mischief. She cleared her throat ostentatiously.

"Friends and fellow-maidens," she began, her fingers playing about the stem of her gold-inlaid wine-glass. "Probably you are all wondering inwardly where the hidden 'motif' of this curiously appointed luncheon lies. More properly, what, in the name of goodness, I wanted to risk what folks-will-say, by following out an idea suggested by my brother. You all heard of Jim's dinner last week? Jolly affair. So jolly that I made up my mind that there could be no more harm in my giving one of the kind than there was for him. Now you perceive at once that this is nothing more or less than the feminine of 'stag dinner.' Given in honor of that all-important Birthday that marks for us women the parting of the ways."

Here there was general excitement among the guests and interruptions of "What birthday! What ways?"

The speaker straightened, raising a slender hand impressively for silence, "Mine—mine, my dears. Certainly."

A remarkably handsome girl, with a fluff of bright hair around her delicately turned cheeks, smiled rather maliciously, but the hostess went on calmly.

"The great geodistic ridge of woman's life that shunts girlhood off on one side and middle age on the other—the Thirtieth, my dears!"

Here she raised her glass in a buzz of comments. After the toast was drunk she went on with mock seriousness:

"I wanted very much to fill my table with thirty young women of my own age in honor of the day. But," she looked at the daintily appointed but tiny round table, "but obviously, with my facilities for entertaining, it would be impossible. Instead of filling, I should have been heaping it up. But there! The real point at issue was that it was impossible to dig out that preposterous number of young ladies with unanimous birthdays from my calling list. You understand, of course, that whoever was to come, the first point was that they should be of the same age."

Here several faces took on a startled expression. The owner of the one framed in bright fluff exclaimed indignantly, "Age! What age, Lizzy?"

"There, Adelaide," continued the tall girl calmly, "keep your powder on. Thirty! I am thirty, Adelaide Van Burden, and you are, too. You needn't take the trouble to tell this select assembly that you are not, because we all know that you are. We are friends here, and from this dinner you may return to the world 'twenty-two.' But, Adelaide, if you will just shake your memory box up you will recall a certain secret and strictly forbidden occurrence in the room of Alice Willibert here, that took place twelve years ago by the calendar, with a slumber robe over the keyhole and cream puffs, caramels and peaches on a sheet on the floor, reinforced by chocolate made in a tin cup over the gas jet."

Here shouts of laughter interrupted her. She went on:

"I make no pretense that the present refreshments can compare with that delectable feast, because you know as well as I that they do not. Still, I think my point is proved. Adelaide Van-Burden stand up. Are you—or are you not thirty?"

The girl of the golden pompadour took her defeat good naturedly and motioned for the speaker to proceed. The tall girl glanced about on the one or two faces whose expression was still not quite loving. Perhaps, after all, this was carrying originality a little beyond the stretching point of friendship. But she went on:

"Is there any other young woman here who claims 'twenty-two?' No? Then we are unanimously thirty. Naturally, as that other event took place in celebration of the startling discovery that we all had the same number of birthdays to our credit—seemingly to our discredit now. Such, you see, is the magic two-step of time. You will notice, then, that the only material difference between us is, that for my part I am thirty and frank about it, while some of you are thirty and not frank about it. Jim says a man is as old as he feels; a woman as old as she looks! You will notice, then, that not one of us is past twenty-five to the world. Age sitteth not heavily upon us yet. But we have passed beyond the boundaries of giggles; we have reached the outskirts of toffee; we have passed thence into the realms of——"

"Cleopatra, Madam Recamier, Helen——"

Each new name was greeted with clapping and enthusiasm, but the hostess broke in sotto voce:

"Cosmetics, steam baths, beauty doctors, the realm of"—

"Wrinkles!" vociferated the tableful loudly and indignantly. "She's going to say—wrinkles! Down—down with the—"

Here a self-contained young woman arose. "Sit down, Lizzy," she said. "Next thing you know you will be making some of us huffy. You never had the knack of treading lightly upon delicate subjects. This is our thirtieth year. You have run us into the corner there is no ducking out of, and forced us to admit the terrible truth by underhanded statistics from boarding school annals. Now let us smoke the pipe of peace. Let this be our emblem," and she lifted the tiny red case beside her plate. "Each give her own experience—the woes, the compensations, if any, of leaping this great hurdle from girlhood over into—into the next third."

"Hear! Hear!" went up softly around the table, rather faintly from one or two, it must be confessed.

"Lizzy's first," cried the golden-haired Beauty maliciously.

"Not on your life—if you will pardon the expression," answer the serious-minded young woman. "Lizzy's last. Let Caroline proceed," and she indicated a bright little brunette on the left of the hostess. The young lady arose in obvious trepidation.

"Now girls," she said, "that's mean. You know I can't speak extem."

"Oh, yes, you can," cried the others, reprovingly. "All you've got to do is to just get hold of the end and pull."

The speaker paused, confused. "If you girls will stop jollying me, I'll try. You want to know how this all-important birthday affected me? I pased it on the second of last month, and to be quite frank about it I don't remember anything in particular about it. The reason may have been that Agnes's baby had the whooping cough, and kept her mother, the nurse and me on a hot griddle the previous night in her efforts to choke her little life out. Consequently, on this all-important day I was verging on nervous prostration. At least, I did not recall the day's significance till evening, when I was undressing. I remember I did take up my mirror and examine the course of the crows closely, but was relieved to discover no legitimate tracks."

"Certainly not. Absurd!" came from the listeners.

"Sit down, Caroline," commanded the serious-minded young woman, "before you harrow us up by getting on the subject of gray hairs. Whom shall we have next?"

"You, Clara, dear," answered the Beauty, and she was instantly reinforced by the rest.

The sensible-minded young woman blushed at the trap she had walked into, but she spoke up promptly:

"Certainly, my dears. It's a poor doctor that will not take his own medicine. Perhaps the birthday did not mean as much to me as it did to some of you girls. I am plain—oh, yes I am! Thank you just the same. My mirror has always been quite brutal about it.

"I am an old maid. Quite as distinctly an old maid as I was ten years ago. Not one of the made, or left-overs—but the born. I have never had what Bridget calls 'gentleman company.' No man would ever look at me twice, unless my hat was on crooked or there was a smudge on my nose. I am a home body, and my masculine acquaintance is limited to my three brothers and one male cousin, and birthdays are not inclined to make any difference to brothers and cousins.

"A plain person, if you have ever had any chance to notice, is always plainest in the morning. And I notice as I do my hair and get the benefit of the reflection from the marble top of my washstand that my face is beginning to settle into its next stage. It is mapped out, so to speak. I am, ladies—I own it—I am no longer young. Next!"

The hostess nudged the girl on the other side of her. "Get up, Willy," she said, "and give us your 'experience.'"

At the command a rather delicate young woman, with large, rapt blue eyes, arose.

"I cannot say, as Caroline did," she began, "that the birthday came and passed me by without sharp recognition on my part. It is what our hostess would call 'an awful jolt to girlhood.' But as it was synonymous with my betrothal—"

Here a whirlwind of excitement swept down the table. "What!" cried the Beauty, "announced after seven years? How did it happen? What gown did you have on, Willy?"

The chaff passing back and forth caused a deeper wave of red to suffuse the cheeks of the standing girl than the ruddy candle shades had brought. Her engagement to Bert Willibert had been momentarily expected for more years than she cared to remember. In fact, so long that its announcement had become actually awkward. She was sorry it had slipped unwittingly off her tongue, for in the effervescent atmosphere of the present gathering she knew nothing was sacred, not even the King's X on Love's sleeve. Chaff was the atmosphere of the moment.

"Willy," said Agnes Willibert, "I'm going straight home and pat Bert on the back and tell him what a good little boy it is. To be frank with you, Willy, I had given up all hopes of having you for a sister. Why, honest, I told Bert ages ago that I would go and pop the question myself if he couldn't find the courage."

She was drowned out in a buzz of, "It must have been the gown, Willy," "Or the arrangement of the lights," "Or, hold!" cried the Beauty; "Girls, I have it. It was the birthday!" Instantly shouts went up: "The birthday!" "Of course it was!" "The birthday did it. It got on his conscience."

Here the serious-minded young woman arose wrathfully. "Girls," she cried, "you shan't! Leave Willy alone. Isn't it punishment enough unwittingly to have made the announcement first in such an assembly of young idiots?"

Here she was interrupted by cries of "Thanks for the 'young,'" and "Generously include yourself among the idiots, my dear." The serious-minded young woman went on hurriedly, "We will herewith excuse Willy and let Fluff, our own Beauty, take up the thread," and she sat down vanquished.

At her bidding the golden-haired girl arose with a soft swish of chiffon and silk, the soft light bringing her beautiful hazel eyes out startlingly from the clear, peachy oval of her face. She tapped on the top of her wine glass, more obviously to secure the attention they always gave her.

"Ladies and g— ladies. It ends there, doesn't it? I am twenty-two! I defy any of you to prove it otherwise by the family Bible, because that book is at the bottom of a barrel in the attic. I am twenty-two! I defy any one here to say I look older. Jim is right. A woman is as old as she looks. Girls, confidentially, Bob is only twenty-six. See my point? I am here at your mercy. I can only trust you to shield me by due prevarication if you are asked about my presence at this particular gathering."

The serious-minded young person sniffed audibly. "Fluff, why don't you make Bob grow a Vandyke—and be honest."

The Beauty looked at her mournfully. "You don't know Bob," she said. "Bob's—ah—strength of character is twenty years in advance of his age. My real consolation is, girls, that I am of the 'Professional Beauty' type—genus Pattius, you know. It shows only the odd birthday in the three or four. It wears well. And, besides, a wise woman's age lies one-half in her power. I think, therefore, in summing up that I am safe in taking Bob.

"Now, a plain woman, knowing she is plain, is bound to grow plainer. Why? Because, knowing she is plain, she will take no pains to preserve herself. Knows—or, rather, thinks—it's of no use."

"Like me," soliloquized the sensible young person.

"Clara," said the Beauty, "you will observe just here that the floor is mine at present. To proceed—a plain woman hasn't usually the wisdom to refuse to acknowledge her lack of beauty. She forgets that there are supplements to beauty that even the most beautiful must, in the course of time, fall back on if they would continue fascinating. This, my dears, is what we call 'personality.' Cultivating a 'charming personality,' the years will find her only growing more and more attractive.

"Now, this is what I call a sensible life 'motif.' When my cheval shows me these eyes, this skin, this hair, beginning to fade, to lose the freshness of youth in middle age, I shall begin—or, rather, I shall cultivate more assiduously than ever—the twin sister to beauty—charm. That subtle, evanescent something, that shuns sharp works like cucumbers in hot weather, and jealous thoughts like other people's poor relations. In place of face lotions I shall cultivate 'sympathy'; in place of vivacity, expressive repose.

"And, my dears," continued the Beauty blandly, "When you are spoken of as 'old'; when you are set back in comfortable Morris chairs, while your daughters are taken into the conservatory to see the night blooming 'serious,' as Aunt Dinah says, I shall be right on the floor with the daughters. Of course I shall no longer be The Beauty, but I shall be preserved to the best of my abilities and purse, I shall be something nearly as good. My dears—I shall be 'charming.'"

The speaker looked back upon her back breadths of chiffon and silk to see if they were in right condition to be sat upon. But the hostess started to her feet with sparkling eyes.

"Here's to Adelaide!" she cried excitedly. "Three cheers for Adelaide, girls! Hasn't she said the last word upon the subject? How has it come that we have lived these many years and never knew that the wisdom of the sphynx lay within the pretty head of our Beauty? Here's to Adelaide!" She raised her white arm and the little sparkling glass aloft, waving it around the table, and at its signal each guest arose and lifted her glass high.

"Here's to Adelaide, girls, and our receding birthdays. Here's to our next, girls! Our twenty-ninth!"

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL.

[The Journal is in frequent receipt of inquiries of a personal character, the responses to which seem hardly suited for insertion in its regular column of "Questions and Answers." Replies have commonly been made by mail where addresses were furnished, but have now been placed in the hands of a special editor, well qualified as a general adviser, and answered in a separate department. Correspondents wishing to communicate with this department will please address "Fidelia," care of the Journal.]

Which do you consider the better month in which to be married, June or October? —Hattie.

The argument in favor of June is that you have your sewing done before hot weather; on the other hand, if you marry in October you escape beginning housekeeping in midsummer. Neither of these arguments is very weighty, however. In your case, if you have your young man engaged, October is probably better because it comes sooner.

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My husband thinks I ought to let him read all the letters I receive from my friends, whether he knows those friends or not. I should like to know your opinion. —E. L. M.

He has no right to demand such a privilege. If he has not confidence that the correspondence is harmless, something is wrong with you or him that a reading of the letters will not mend. Even if you were willing that he should see them, the rights of the writers of the letters should be considered. How would they like it?

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Please tell me if peroxide of hydrogen hurts the hair when it is used often enough to keep the hair yellow. My complexion is fair, but my hair is a shade of brown not at all pretty, and I should like to have it lighter.—Grace.

It is claimed for peroxide that it does not injure the hair, but don't you believe this. It stands to reason that anything powerful enough to change the color of the hair must, in the long run at least, be injurious. And whether it hurts the hair or not it will hurt you. Anybody with half an eye can tell instantly that you have peroxide hair. Most of them will think you are silly, and some will think worse. Don't use it. Nature can be improved on in many ways where women are concerned, but "blondining" the hair is not one of these ways.

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I am invited to a wedding reception to take place next week, and feel that I shall have to go, though, frankly, I dread it, as I go out very little and am not accustomed to the ways of such gatherings. One thing I don't know and wish to ask is, whether it is necessary to say good-bye to the hostess.—Mrs. B.

At a large reception this is not considered necessary, though it is always proper enough.

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A young man I know is going away to college. He is very bashful and will not be likely to say anything about my writing to him, though I am sure he would like to hear from me. Do you think it would be all right, under the circumstances, for me to speak of it?—Jennie.

Don't do it, Jennie. If the young man is afraid to say anything on the subject, he is probably not so timid but that he can pluck up courage to write and ask for the privilege after he gets away. If he doesn't ask it will be for other reasons than bashfulness. As you go along through life, you will find that few men are really backward in asking for what they want if they want it very much.

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My husband has two hired men on the farm and does not have to work so very hard himself, so I have taught him to make bread and he is very good about taking this part of the housework off my hands, but the neighbors think this is no sort of work for a man and laugh at both me and him. What do you think about it?—Farmer's Wife.

Never mind the neighbors. To relieve his wife of any sort of hard work about the house when he has opportunity is not beneath the dignity of any man. Encourage him to continue the breadmaking, but see to it that his hands are clean and that he does not smoke while he is engaged in the task.

HOSS AND HOSS.

Court Bailiff—Your Honor, the jury is hung.

Judge Knox—It don't make much difference; the prisoner has been lynched.

CASUAL COMMENT

By A CLUB WOMAN

The boys in blue, the rows of tents and Old Glory waving over all! Who that can remember the early sixties, or even the year '98, can see them without a constriction of the throat and a moisture in the eyes? And in these jolly boys from farm and shop, from desk and college, bearing the hardships of their week's encampment so gayly, relieving the tedium by pranks and practical jokes, lie the same possibilities of heroism, the same capacity for "Venturing life and love and youth for the great prize of death in battle" that animated the heroes of those wars.

For that men are indeed the sons of God and brothers of the Lord Jesus Christ is shown in this—that the prize for which they will give most, bear most, endure suffering, danger, injustice, the tyranny of military rule, loneliness and semi-starvation—is not wealth or fame or worldly success, but the joy of uttermost sacrifice, the chance to die for a great cause.

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The sight of the National Guard recalls a little story. A crack company, the pride of a neighboring town, enlisted in a body when war was declared in '98. But alas! all they were allowed to do for their country was to fall victims to typhoid fever in Florida, while more fortunate comrades were fighting in Cuba. The mother of one of the boys, symphthizing with their disappointment, wrote these verses by way of consolation:

Here's to Admiral Dewey,
Sampson, Watson and Schley!
He smashed them at Manila,
They caught them on the fly,
As they fled from the leaguered harbor
Across the blue expanse—
And here's to the other heroes
Who didn't get a chance!

Here's to the dauntless cruiser
That sailed around the Horn;
Here's to the ships that crossed the sea
To where the day is born;
Here's to "Fighting Bob" and Hobson,
Those paladins of romance—
And here's to the other heroes
Who didn't get a chance!

To the men that stormed the trenches
On Santiago's heights,
Young volunteers and veterans
Of bloody Indian fights;
To the Riders Rough, as knightly
As those of spear and lance—
And, then, to the other heroes
Who didn't get a chance!

Here's to the men that fed the fire,
To the men that served the gun;
To those who fought, and those who fell
Ere the fight was well begun;
Oh! straight they shot and fierce they struck,
And led the Dons a dance—
And here's to the other heroes
Who didn't get a chance!

They gave themselves as freely,
They bore the life of camps,
They faced the deadly fever,
The tropic heat and damps;
For all their truth and courage,
The fools of circumstance—
Our boys, as brave as any,
Who never had a chance!

The little poem was published in Leslie's Weekly, signed with the author's full name—call it Helen Everett Brown—and her place of residence. It pleased the boys for whom it was written, it even won the momentary attention of the public, and then dropped into the great limbo of oblivion, where it joined the "innumerable caravan" of forgotten newspaper verses.

But a year or so after the war was over came a sequel in the shape of a letter from a Texas cowboy, addressed to "Miss Helen Everett Brown, Dear Miss."

He had been looking through his box of treasures, the letter said, and had come on that poem, which he had cut out of a paper while he lay in hospital. He was himself one of the boys who didn't get a chance and the poem expressed his feelings exactly. He felt convinced that the writer and himself were kindred souls. He had never known any one whose feelings and thoughts corresponded so exactly to his own. He had thought about it ever since and had finally concluded to write, and hoped that Miss Brown would be so kind as to answer. Now, wasn't it a pity to have to spoil such a promising romance? Mrs. Brown did her best, wrote a grateful note, thanking him for his appreciation, mentioning, incidentally, that she felt so strongly about it because her own son was one of the boys; and signed her name with its proper prefix of Mrs. She heard no more from her admiring cowboy. But if she had been Miss Brown, and sweet-and-twenty instead of gray-haired and fifty, and the cowboy had been one of those younger sons of noble English families whom we read about, or even one of Owen Wister's superb diamonds in the rough, what a pretty story it might have made!

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There is a small boy in the city whose dreams by night and thoughts by day are haunted by an apprehension that probably never troubled any small boy before. When he was about four or five he extracted from his family, by much severe cross-questioning on the subject of courtship and weddings, the appalling fact that it is the prerogative of his sex to "pop the question." Ever since his mind has been distracted by the problem of how he can ever get up the courage to do it. Several times the terror of it has driven him to resolve to be an old bachelor. But nobody is more appreciative of the charms of the fair sex than he, and this resolution is abandoned every time it is made. Once he had a gleam of hope; he heard of the traditional feminine privileges of leap year, and inquired eagerly as to its truth. When he learned it was only a joke, and ladies did not really propose in any year, he was again sunk in despair. There is one hope for him—he has plenty of time to recover from his fears before he can possibly be confronted with a condition rather than a theory in regard to the matter.

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Let any woman—even a club woman—talk long enough, and she is sure to get around to the servant-girl question at last. If good advice could solve the problem certainly the newspaper men would have had it settled long ago. But somehow their advice seems singularly irrelevant to the cases where the problem is most acute. It always seems to be based on the supposition of wealth, or, at least, moderate wealth, on the part of the employers. But the rich are not those who suffer most from the problem, for the prestige of living in immediate connection with such splendor and the pleasure of having several companion servants insures them service of some kind.

It is in that very large number of families—usually families of young professional or business men—which must live on an income of from $1,000 to $3,000 a year, and where even one domestic is a serious expense, that the difficulty of securing that one is most severe. Now, the newspaper man's suggestions seem to be founded on the assumption that the domestic has grievances which her employer can remove. These grievances are lack of social consideration, long hours of labor, insufficient pay. As to the first, it is not superior airs on the part of her employer that vex the girl—she would admire more of these than she sees in most cases. It is because the young men and women of her own grade regard the factory girl as her social superior that she is displeased, and has a right to be, but how can the girl's employer prevent that? As for the long hours of labor, since a principal part of her work is to prepare and clear away the meals which precede and follow the working day of the man of the house, how can they be avoided? The adviser probably has no idea of dispensing with either his breakfast or his dinner in order that the girl may work only eight hours a day. As a matter of fact, she generally has some hours of leisure in the afternoon, and her long day of labor is more apparent than real. As to the matter of wages, she is paid more than her employers can afford, and more than most other working girls. There are few occupations that can be filled by uneducated girls, in which they have three or four or five dollars a week, after their board and lodging are paid for. Many of the nicely-dressed girls who sell goods in the stores get less wages by the week than domestics and have to "find themselves" out of it.

Is her work too hard? If she abandons it the young mistress of the house has to do it, besides all the other work which she has been in the habit of doing when the girl was there. Where only one girl is kept the mistress of the house almost invariably does much of the work herself. If the family is small, without young children or invalids, so that the housework is within the possibilities of one woman's time and strength, the lady of the house usually prefers to dispense with "hired help;" no one is more competent to do the work of a house beautifully than are most American wives, and, happily, they can do it without the least loss of self-respect or social standing. An American lady was visiting friends in Ireland—people of more pretensions to gentility than money. At 11 the guest proposed to retire, being fatigued with her journey, but the hostess said, "Oh, please sit and visit a little longer. I want to wait until it's a little later, so as to be sure all the neighbors are in bed, and then clean the front steps."

If an American lady, of whatever station, had occasion to clean her front steps she would do it in the eye of day, and glory in her own spunk, and her neighbors would admire her for it. But where the domestic is a necessity, she very frequently does less work, has more leisure and very much more spending money than her so-called "mistress." Thus it happens that if the girls have grievances, they do not seem to be grievances that the employer can remove. "But what are you going to do about it?" I am sure I do not know. The only practical suggestion I know is the example of Thoreau, who, when he found that the two pieces of calc spar he had picked up in Walden woods and laid on his study table had to be dusted every day, threw them out of the window. And that does not seem very practical, either. There are too many things that have to be dusted every day. If we threw them all out of the window we should be arrested for obstructing the street. Besides, wherewithal should we keep house when they were gone?

There are women, however, who have no trouble with the servant girl question. Of these is the wife of the old German farmer, who says: "What litle bit of housework a woman does I don't call dot anyding. My wife will do dot and just as much work in the field as I can besides!"

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There were a dozen or more boys in blue on the fair grounds car, going downtownward to spend the evening. The conductor was goodnaturedly trying to get them all off at the right places. At Twelfth street he stopped the car, said to the young soldier beside him: "This is Twelfth street." The young fellow rose and beckoned to a comrade at the front end. Comrade did not notice. "Come on, this is Twelfth street," he said in a suppressed voice, which, however, everyone but his comrade heard. "Corporal McLaughlin! Corporal McLaughlin!" he shouted. By this time every one in the car was smiling except the mortified young soldier and the impatient conductor. Corporal McLaughlin finally awoke to the situation and the two got off. "Fine example of military promptness," said a spectator and the conductor's frown relaxed.

MUSICIANS' BURIED HOPES.

Story Told by One That Is the Experience of Many.

New York Mail and Express.

Knowing something of her talents and curious to learn the reason for her apparently willful abandonment of its cultivation abroad, I have asked of my friend Miss M., and secured from her the following instructive statement. It seems to me that the lesson it conveys is one that should be sown broadcast throughout the United States.

I left New York, she writes, five years ago with my head in the clouds and my family firmly convinced that I should return in two years' time ready and able to eclipse all former stars of the vocal world. I was typical of thousands of girls and young men who sift into New York from the fields of our huge country, and sail away bright with hope and rich with the family savings—the thousands who fail, with all of horror the world holds.

They fail, not because they have been backward in doing their best, but because they mistake the caliber of their best, and are deceived—grossly deceived—until it is too late.

I wanted to be a Calve! I had heard her once when visiting New York. I had studied music at boarding school, sung in a choir at home, and given piano lessons. I worked and saved; my father saved; my mother believed in me and cheerfully stinted herself. We were all happy in working that I might go to Paris, study two years and become great. Then no more economy for any of us. Such was our South Sea bubble!

I started for Paris speaking no French, and began to work with teachers who would admit the existence of but two tongues—French and Italian. I saw no danger in this, for what grand opera is sung in English? So for one year I worked, happy to trudge miles to my lessons to save a few centimes; happy to eat a sausage and a roll at one of the "chaudcouteries" (hot meat shops) that stud the streets of the greatest hand-to-mouth city of the world.

I began by taking two singing lessons, of thirty minutes each, every week, at a cost of twenty-five francs a lesson, and these were special rates. It soon became evident that if I wanted to "get on as the others do" I must pay for at least two hours' weekly practice with a professional accompaniment; charge, eight francs an hour.

My American vowels were not "pure" enough, and I began taking lessons in rudimentary elocution, confining myself to French and Italian. My expenses for study were rolling up; preconceived financial plans tumbled in the dust. I cut down my living expenses until I made twelve francs a week keep body and soul together. It was winter and I froze. I thought of the home table; of my mother eating placidly while I starved. I began to write lies to the old folks; things were all lovely, I said.

By March my voice began to give under the strain, and my teacher became furious, saying his reputation was at stake. I had a "dramatic soprano" and could become great, but must study six years at least and spend au moins four thousand francs a year. I must borrow; he would answer for it that I had a voice.

At the end of twelve months the situation was this: Health gone, economized money gone, hope gone. For while a few good foundation stones were well laid, they were but a part of an impossible structure. I though with a shudder of those saddest of ruins, the gaunt walls of mansions never completed. "Somebody's Folly" they are usually called. So I stood at last open eyed to face my folly, and then for the first time I saw that Paris—the whole Latin Quarter, at least—was filled with such ruins.

I met men from the ateliers, and their faces told that they, too, had found themselves out. Girls working at conservatories, the whole art-seeking student world showed me a fearful percentage of ignorant freshmen, some reckless, some apathetic from despair. We never admitted to one another that we had lost hope, but it was a daily occurrence for some one to drop out. Not by any means always to go home. Think, if you can, of a more tragic homecoming!

I am prosperous now, as you know, but that is because of chance and a certain grit I have. Yet I stood my little five minutes on the Pont Henri Quatre at night and looked down upon the Seine as it is not good to look. Others looked and jumped. Two whom I knew starved. Of course, genius survives and achieves, but only one in a thousand has genius. The other 999 should stay in America and take a practical art education.

I was to have been a Calve, and, instead, I am a thoroughly equipped teacher of the most advanced French method of sight reading of music. I represent a French school, and have already secured pupils enough to pay for my studio and to make a few luxuries possible for the father and mother who have stinted for me, grieved over my baffled ambitions, and who are now content as I am content.

I left that bridge of sighs in Paris four years ago and faced my teacher. I defied his rage and renounced opera training. When I had convinced him he turned me over to his brother, who taught "Sol-Fa." I assisted him with his English and American pupils, and so earned a meager living while I fitted myself for the practice of my humble art. And there you are.

There is no need for me to draw the moral of this experience. Surely it is patent enough, and I trust worth while.

"ABANDONED NEW YORK!"

Young Men There Showing a Disposition to Go "Out West."

New York Sun.

It may be that, after all, the farmers will eventually drain the life of the big cities and that we shall then hear of "abandoned warehouses" and "abandoned wharves" instead of "abandoned farms." At any rate, the present demand for farm hands in the West is attracting scores of young men away from the dry goods establishments in this town. Only the other day forty young men gave up their places here and started for the West. Some of them had enough money to pay their fares all the way, some had enough to pay it part of the way and expect to use their wits to carry them the rest of the journey.

Three young men called at the office of the Sun the other day and asked for information about the best part of the farming district to go to. All three had been employed as salesmen in the wholesale dry goods district, and in response to questions as to why they were willing to give up places in New York to take jobs on Western farms at small pay and a limited time of employment, they said that it was because New York was so crowded with young men seeking advancement that there was little or no chance for the average man to get ahead.

"There's a lot of us fellows up in the dry goods district who were born and brought up here in New York and we have made up our minds that there is a better chance for us outside of New York than there is in it," said the leader of the party to the Sun reporter. "Every young man born outside of New York hustles into the city as soon as he gets old enough to take a job.

"We think the thing for us to do, is to go out into the country these fellows have left, and take the chances they have thrown away in their anxiety to break into the metropolis. We may be wrong, but we're going to give it a chance, and we're not going to quit until we have worked every opportunity between the farming district, where we are going first, clear to the coast."

Inquiry in the dry goods district by a Sun reporter revealed the fact that almost all of the big houses have lost young men owing to the present craze to go to the West. The head of one firm told the reporter that because the average of pay in the mercantile lines was small for young men because many big jobbing houses were gradually going out of business on account of the tendency to abolish the middleman, the young men in these houses were particularly susceptible to temptations to try their luck in other places.

"When the Klondike craze came on," he said, "hundreds of young men left the dry goods district and now there is every indication that this demand for farm hands in the West is going to take scores of others.

"I cannot say that I blame the youngsters at all, for the opportunities for young men in the wholesale dry goods lines are not what they used to be. One thing I can say about the youngsters from the dry goods district who are going West, and that is that they are a bright lot of young hustlers and that if there are any chances out there in the West, they will improve them."

A Snake in a Street Car.

W. S. Dunbar, in August Outing.

But the snakes with which I have generally associated have mostly been the little chaps, such as the lively two-foot garter snake that I had in a Kansas City street car one day. I had picked him up in the suburbs of the city, and before taking the car back to the business section of the town I buttoned him in the inside pocket of my coat. Now, anybody who has ridden over the streets of Kansas City knows that in places it seems as though the cars were climbing up the roof of a barn. When I got on the car it was full, and so I had to grab a strap in order to stand up. Presently a seat became vacant beside me, and I sat down. As I did so I glanced up, and there was my poor little snake hanging to the strap I had just left. Various other people noticed him at the same time, and the ensuing exhibition would have enabled any person in the car to secure a job as a circus acrobat at a handsome salary. After they had escaped I put the snake back in my pocket. The conductor was a hero, and stuck to his post, but he put me off the car and kept my nickel.

NATURALLY.

Senator Koyne—No, sir! Rather than let my good right hand sign this bill, I'd cut it off.

Lawyer Wright—Well, senator, can't we fix this up some way?

Senator Koyne—Certainly. I'm left-handed.

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THE FARM IS IT.

A Discovery the College Boys May Make In the West.

St. Paul Dispatch.

Popular imagination has been decidedly stimulated by the reported exodus of young men from Eastern offices and colleges. It is the compensation which the present offers the past. The stream of migration once ran the other way, and the picture was that of the country bumpkin, the "hayseed," in less complimentary and less ancient vernacular, who went up to the city to find his fortune, perhaps even to found it. The truth of the picture was the fear existing behind it. The city had met the country before, and knew what it might become with its fresh vigor operating against the tattered energy of the city. And so revenge was taken in picture because it could not be obtained in fact.

Imagination is working the other way. It is the young man on the high office chair with striped "pants" and gay necktie and the impertinent office noise, or the emaciated college youth with spectacles and Greek exegeses, who goes a-field, seeking his "per diadem" as a celebrated Minnesota solon once said of the reward of less arduous labors than those of the harvest field. And the bucolic imagination of Kansas is making ambuscades for these effete young men and planning to show them a thing or two in the way of strenuous living.

But the facts are that the adjective "effete" has fallen into disrepute even for Eastern young men, and there are no more hayseeds in Kansas or any other part of the commercial West. College athletics have changed that on the one hand, and bumper crops to pay college bills have changed it on the other. The Kansas farmer may not pay the $6 a day, which lies at the end of the transcontinental rainbow railway, but he will pay a better wage than can be obtained in any other field. And the Eastern youth no longer expects the impossible in the dining-room of the West. There has come to be a mutual understanding. College muscle does not all run into cerebrum, and denim is not the only rustic wear.

The Eastern young man will find a few seven-day wonders in the West. He will find out that farm life, instead of being the dead grind it was in his grandfather's day, is the easiest life that a man can live, and the best life, if a man wants to be himself. Hard work is a tradition on the farm—it is no longer a condition. Machinery has lifted the burden, until farming has become a sedentary occupation. There are machines which will cut the hay and dry it and rake it and stow it in the barn all in a day, so that there need be no loss of crop. Wheat is subjected to the same magic; indeed, there seems to be no opportunity left for the inventor of farm machinery but a storage battery for the sun and a rainmaker and rain-dissipator. The hired man, who, once upon a time, worked nineteen hours and milked cows the rest of the time, has found his occupation gone. The cows do not yet milk themselves, but to-morrow is coming, and the creamery has done what it could.

This interchange of amenities should result in opening the eyes of the man of the East to farm possibilities—to the ease of life and the contentment of spirit. The gentleman farmer, who is quite as much a farmer as he is a gentlemtn, is just beyond the turn of the lane. If Miss Daskam's Aurelia had found her Arcady in Kansas, she would never have exclaimed "N'York's the place."

TO WOULD-BE SETTLERS.

A Strip of Land Strewn with Skeletons of Prospectors.

San Francisco Argonaut.

On June 15, 1903, one million acres of land in California was thrown open to entry. This may be taken up either under the desert land act or as homesteads in 160-acre tracts. The strip stretches from Mojave to the Colorado river.

We wish to warn all intending settlers to let this land alone. There is a good deal of talk about "making the desert blossom as the rose." Some deserts blossom, but not this one. Nobody will ever do more for this desert than Mother Nature has done. The only blooming that nature has brought about there is that its freckled bosom blossoms with large alkali pustules, or pimples, punctuated with sagebrush and cactus. This sums up the flora of the new promised land. The fauna includes jackrabbits, horned toads, lizards, Gila monsters and venomous snakes. The soil is coarse and gravel, and on top of the coarse gravel there is a fine alkali powder which, when the wind blows—and the wind blows often—sweeps over this scorching and barren land like the dreaded sandstorms of the Sahara, which, by the way, they much resemble. Even far to the southwest, across the lofty mountain ranges, these desert sandstorms sometimes sweep, reaching the favored dwellers in Southern California in the midst of their orange groves. Even this distant touch of the desert winds causes trees to wither, grass to scorch, and men and animals to suffer keenly. Over this dreadful desert the sun moves like a ball of fire across a sky of brass. Rarely does a cloud break the intensity of its pitiless rays.

Those credulous persons who may believe that this is the kind of desert which, by irrigation, may be turned into a garden are doomed to disappointment. There is no water on this desert strip. The waters of the Colorado may be led on the lands of the Yuma desert, but that is far lower in level than are these. Much of this Mojave strip is at an elevation of two or three thousand feet. As for artesian water, the writer personally knows of one well which was bored for nearly two thousand feet, ending in igneous rock, and producing nothing but profanity.

The last hope for the settler on this barren land would be the discovery of the precious metals. They may exist there. We do not say they cannot be found. But we know that the land has been prospected by experienced miners for half a century. If a tenderfoot can find a gold mine where an old California miner fails, he is a smart tenderfoot. But we doubt his success.

We warn all Eastern people not to be deluded by false, even if well-meaning representations concerning this strip of land between Mojave and the Colorado river. It is strewn with the skeletons of prospectors, the bones of animals. It is a place of skulls.

A Bird Garden.

New York Tribune.

A bird garden is rather a novel idea, but one which is faithfully exploited will prove as real a delight as any garden of blossoms. An enthusiast on the subject has set apart a spot perhaps an acre's extent as forbidden ground for cats and small boys, and the birds have become very tame. Bermuda grass, whose matted tangles are a harbor for bugs or worms, covers the ground. Hydrants are left dripping where the many kinds of feathered folk that this garden has attracted my drink and bathe to their hearts' content. There is an abundance of seeds and fruit, which mature at different seasons, and old logs under which congregate the fat grubs that are a bird's delight. If these natural stores seem to run short at any time, sunflower seed and crisp lettuce hearts are spread on a stand called the "birds' banquet board," that none may want. Strings, threads and fluffy cotton are strewn about for nesting time, and as many as twenty different species have been counted building or rearing their young at one time. Thirty-four varieties frequent this Garden of Eden, and their sweet notes and bright plumage make it as charming as any conservatory of rare blossoms.