THE MYSTERY OF BENITA

BY L. FRANK BAUM.

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I.—THE PERFORATED BOOK.

As I laid my hand on his arm the man started and glanced swiftly at my face. He was a fine-looking young fellow, and I found myself pitying him for his misdeeds, while I resolved to do my duty by my employers. For I was the night watchman at the great jewelry establishment of Forsythe & Co., and, having arrived that evening earlier than usual, I had chanced to detect one of the clerks in the commission of a crime that warranted my taking a bold measure to expose him. And yet I hesitated to act upon my own authority; so that when, after the first guilty start, my man asked sharply, "Well, Andrews, what is it?" I replied, deferentially:

"Mr. Forsythe wished to speak to you, sir, before you left."

He nodded and started to walk back to the office, but I begged him to be seated while I inquired if Mr. Forsythe was ready for the interview.

He sat down upon one of the cushioned stools with a rather sulky air, while I went to the private office and knocked gently upon the door.

"Come in."

The head of the firm was busily engaged at his desk as I entered, but he presently turned to me and nodded permission to address him.

"Mr. Mathews is outside, sir," I began.

"Well?"

"I was standing in a corner a bit ago, watching the clerks stow away the jewelry and gems in their cases preparatory to locking them up for the night, and, glancing at one whose back was toward me, I saw his elbow go up and his hand made a

For the Sake of His Mother.

swift motion toward his vest pocket. He was bending over a tray of unset diamonds, arranging them in their pouches, and presently I saw the motion repeated. It was enough to convince me, sir, that you are being robbed, but I waited quietly until the man was going out, and then asked him to remain a few moments, as you wished to speak to him. It was Mr. Mathews, sir."

During this speech Mr. Forsythe was watching me intently, and I was rather surprised to observe at its conclusion that although my tale had doubtless interested him, he appeared to be thinking of something else. I stood for a few moments watching the preoccupied look upon his face. He was a handsomely dressed, portly gentleman of about sixty years, with a nearly bald head, whiskers of pure white, a ruddy complexion, and large, keen gray eyes.

"Shall I show him in, sir?" I ventured to ask, after a somewhat lengthy pause.

He roused himself, nodded gravely and replied:

"Certainly! Ask him to step in. And remain within call."

I returned to Mathews. He was looking a bit anxious and uneasy, but he walked into the office without a word. The last clerk but him had left the store. I bolted and locked all the doors.

In about five minutes Mr. Forsythe appeared at his office door, flushed and angry.

"Andrews, you have been unjust and foolish. I have searched this poor boy at his own request and there is no stolen property upon him. He declared he is wholly innocent. Now, sir, what have you to say for yourself?"

"Here is his hat, sir," I answered, quietly.

"His hat? Well, sir?"

"He left it on the showcase where he was sitting. The diamonds are inside the band."

Mathews gave a cry and fell on his knees begging for mercy. He sobbed and wept, declared it was his first theft, and asked to be spared for his mother's sake.

Mr. Forsythe looked down upon him with a fine scorn upon his handsome face, and then, removing the gems, he handed the fellow his hat, saying:

"You may go. You are dismissed, but I shall not prosecute you. Remember that mother when you are next tempted to become a thief."

As soon as Mathews had gone he took his own coat and hat from the wardrobe.

"Come to me at 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon, Andrews," he said, and hurried away, evidently put out by the occurrence.

It was a little adventure in my dull life, and feeling a trifle proud of my talent as an amateur detective, I resolved to call upon Josephine the next day at noon, and tell her my story. Josephine was my sweetheart. Her father, M. Jules Croneau, was ostensibly a seller of French books and publications on West 14th street. He was a quiet, scholarly appearing man, evidently a gentleman, and conveying the impression that his birth was better than his calling. My room was in an upper story of the same building occupied by M. Croneau, and as I seldom slept later than

She Tended the Store.

noon, albeit my work occupied me all the night, I had formed the acquaintance of father and daughter by dropping in at the shop, and soon becoming desperately in love with Josephine, I had come to spend nearly every afternoon in her society. I often wondered how M. Croneau managed to live, for people in search of French publications are not numerous in New York, and the few customers who dropped in, though mostly compatriots, were treated so coolly by the proprietor of the somewhat dingy little shop that they seldom came again, and the business seemed to languish while M. Croneau grew apparently more prosperous day by day.

Josephine was a real beauty—no need to avow that—and sweet and modest and womanly.

She tended the store—a duty her father seemed rather averse to—and I fancied my visits were welcome as a relief from the ennui of her position, even if she did not regard me in a still better light.

We were seldom interrupted in our tete-a-tetes, as M. Croneau spent his time while at home in a back store room, partitioned off from the front; but very often he passed the entire day elsewhere, whether on business or pleasure I did not know.

Josephine taught me French from the books in that language that lined her shelves, and I caught the accent from her own sweet lips. It stood me in good stead upon one occasion, as you shall see.

So I came to Josephine the next day full of my adventure; but as soon as she saw me she clapped her hands and exclaimed that she had been wishing me to come for the last hour.

"Father is away, and I must positively run over to the dressmaker's and try on my new gown. So tend the store a few moments, like a good boy. You need not fear any customers will molest you."

So away she ran, and I, deprived of the comfort of confiding to her my story, began to look about for a book. I had read most of those upon the shelves.

Suddenly I remembered that a new box had arrived from France the day before, and as M. Croneau always unpacked these himself in the back room, I resolved to look there for some newer work. I had never been in this back room before. It was M. Croneau's sanctum and no one was ever invited to enter it.

I pushed open the door and stepped in. It was lighted by a small back window and contained a desk, guarded by a screen, a few old boxes in which consignments of books were received, a shelf or two and a fireplace. The newly arrived packing box stood in the center of the floor, but it was empty. Nor were any books, new or old, to be seen anywhere. I was about to withdraw, feeling a trifle guilty, when my eye was caught by an object in the fireplace. It was the back of a burned book, and examining more closely I discovered a very large quantity of burned paper in the grate. This was singular—that a man should receive a box of new publications and at once burn them. I scented a mystery, and examined further. My search was rewarded by finding a brand new volume by Du Boisgobey reclining on the floor between the desk and the screen. This was what I had come to find, so I retired to the store, and, seating myself, began its perusal. The story started off finely, and, as is my habit, I turned half the pages and skimmed through to catch the drift of the plot.

My surprise and disappointment were great when I discovered that near the center of the book there were fully fifty leaves perforated by a round hole near their inner edge. This hole was about an inch in diameter, and was cleanly cut, as with a die. I stared at it, bothering my head for a solution of this mystery. Why was this perforation made? If you opened the pages at where the hole began it seemed like a tiny pocket, the bottom being formed by the pages that had been left intact. It could scarcely be an accident. Then this pocket had been made for a purpose. But what purpose? A dry cough aroused me, and I looked up.

M. Croneau was standing before me, regarding my face with a strange intensity. We stared at one another a full minute, and during that time the expression of his eyes denoted dismay, anger, doubt and fear—but his features never moved a muscle. Then he reached out his hand, took the book from my unresisting fingers, walked back to his room and closed the door behind him, without so much as a word or a backward look.

Josephine came in, and thanked me prettily for relieving her. But it was time for my engagement with Mr. Forsythe, so I contented myself with a few tender words and a pressure of her little hand, and started on my mission.

On the way I pondered the events of the morning and came to the conclusion that M. Croneau was a strange man—a stranger man than I had thought; and that strange things were taking place under cover of that book business. But was it any affair of mine? I was in love with this man's daughter; she encouraged me in the belief that she reciprocated my passion, and undoubtedly my best policy was to say nothing and see no more than I could help seeing.

Resolving thus I came to the store and was ushered into Mr. Forsythe's office. He was writing when I entered, and motioned me to a seat.

Presently he faced about and regarded me almost as attentively as had M. Croneau so shortly before. But the expression of his eyes was first questioning, then cautious, and finally trustful.

"How long have you been in our employ, Mr. Andrews?" was his first question.

"Nearly two years, sir."

"You were recommended to us by Mr. Ransom, the lawyer?"

"Yes, sir; he was my father's friend, and signed my bond."

"Also vouching for your good character. Is the position you occupy a satisfactory one?"

"I have nothing to complain of, sir, excepting that I believe myself capable of doing better things."

"Exactly." He seemed to think deeply for a moment and then asked:

"Have you any ties that would prevent you accepting a mission that will take you across the ocean—on a long and probably perilous journey to a half civilized land?"

I own I was startled. That some commendation, or even preferment, might be offered me I had imagined, but such a proposition as this took my breath away.

Still I realized that this was not my time to present difficulties to any proposition that would serve to advance my interests, so I replied, as calmly as I could:

"There is nothing to prevent my going, sir, except—"

I was going to say Josephine, but he misunderstood me, and added:

"You mean the remuneration. I shall take care that it is liberal. Now listen to me. The delicacy with which you acted in that affair of last evening, your evident good sense and calm judgment, attracted my attention. If you are discreet as well, you will be exactly the man I have wished to perform my difficult errand to Benita."

(To be continued in Monday's Star.)

LIGHTNING AND RUBBERS.

Goloshes May Be Depended Upon as a Means of Safety for Timid People.

From the New York Press.

The one thing which a woman most dreads—barring, of course, a mouse and being out of style—is a thunder shower. Many most estimable women, of character and force, who can lead great crusades and revolutionize society, go all to pieces at a clap of thunder—and a good many men, too, for that matter.

It is not agreeable to be struck by lightning; nor is it at all necessary. There is a sure preventive—as sure as it is simple, inexpensive and always accessible—a pair of rubbers. If a woman will simply put on a pair of rubbers when the lightning begins to flash and the thunder to roar, and will stand on the floor so that she touches nothing else, she will be as safe as if she were sealed in a glass cage.

Rubber is a non-conductor of electricity, and if the lightning has to go through a sheet of rubber to get at you it will leave you alone and take something else. In other words, when you have on a pair of rubbers, and not in contact with anything, you are perfectly insulated.

It might be well to add that a pair of rubbers to be effective against lightning must be sound and whole. Do not put on an old pair with a crack in the toe, because electricity will get out of a very small hole when it is cornered, and a pair of defective rubbers will do you no good.

When It Was Proper.

From Harper's Bazar.

Mrs. Cumso (severely)—"Johnny, I heard you use that expression, 'those kind,' after I told you it was wrong."

Johnny Cumso—"But, mamma, it was right this time, I'm sure."

Mrs. Cumso—"It is never right to say 'those kind,' Johnny."

Johnny Cumso—"But, mamma," persisted Johnny, "I was speaking of those kind girls who helped me up when I fell off my bicycle."

MASONIC MYSTERIES

Pauline Pry Interviews Grand Recorder Nickerson in Boston.

THE OLDEST LODGE IN AMERICA

How a Woman Came to Be a Lodge Member.

EVENTS OF HISTORY

Special Correspondence of The Evening Star.

BOSTON, Mass., August 22, 1895.

I, A WOMAN, HAVE learned the secret of Free Masonry. Naturally, being a woman and having a secret, I must tell it.

That I should be plagued with curiosity concerning Free Masonry at this particular time is an inevitable consequence of being in Boston, where on all sides preparations, extensive to the point of being aggressive, are going on in anticipation of the coming conclave of Knights Templar. Being thus plagued to appeal for relief to Grand Recorder Severio D. Nickerson of the Massachusetts Grand Lodge, was to apply at the fountain-head of authority in America, inasmuch as Free Masonry in this county had its inception in Boston. Here the first lodge was organized; here the first Grand Lodge was organized, and here the national character of the institution was established when, after the battle of Bunker Hill, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts declared independence of British jurisdiction. Grand Recorder Nickerson has held his present office in this historic lodge since 1882, having been grand master more than twenty years previous. Thus the authority of the lodge which established, preserved and extended Free Masonry over the western hemisphere has become, so to speak, incarnated in this venerable official, who is popularly known in New England as the Nestor of the fraternity.

The Masonic Temple on Tremont street, always impressive because of its imposing architecture, inspired me not alone with awe, but with fear as I approached it, because of the likelihood of receiving on my presumptuous head a hammer, or a plank, or even the whole of the immense Knights Templar design that was in process of construction over the door. Braving this, however, as well as a large placard in the hall upstairs, "No Visitors Admitted," I pushed cautiously in through the door of the grand recorder's office, and, by no means certain of the consequences, informed the Nestor of Free Masonry that I had come to him to learn all a woman may know of the secrets of his ancient and united order.

Some Questions Answered.

The smile with which this statement was received instantly embodied in the kindly old man before me the ideal Free Mason of a woman whose father is a member of the fraternity. In extenuation of my curiosity, I pointed out to Grand Recorder Nickerson that while the newspapers all over the country are full of Masonic references, consequent upon the general movement of Knights Templar toward Boston, not one person in a hundred has any intelligent grasp of the significance of the most frequently recurring terms. "For instance," I said, "what is Knight Templarism—a post-graduate course in Free Masonry?"

"The Knights Templar have this sole connection with Free Masons," answered Mr. Nickerson; "to become a knight a man must have taken the first three degrees of Masonry, and have been admitted to a chapter which covers four additional degrees. Beyond this and essentially, the knights are a wholly independent order, in which men who have sufficient means and corresponding tastes may enjoy the 'pomp and circumstance of war' with all the unpleasant features eliminated. The bond of union is a social one."

"Nevertheless," I replied, "it has its base in Free Masonry. Will you not tell me by what means a man procures the degrees you mentioned?"

"Money, commonly."

"Are there not educational qualifications necessary?" I asked. "Does not advance in Free Masonry mean a man's advance in occult lore and the wisdom that was Solomon's?"

It is Respectable.

"Nominally, yes," answered the grand recorder, "but I regret to say, few, few, very few Masons nowadays make a serious study of the principles of their order. Integrity of character is made a condition of a man's entrance into the fraternity. Afterwards, he advances as he pays his dues and satisfies the formalities of the institution. It is popular and altogether respectable to be a Free Mason, and for these reasons chiefly a man prefers this to other fraternal organizations."

"Why then," I exclaimed in disappointment, "you are no different from any other secret society. There is no real mystery about your secret—nothing different from anything else that somebody will not tell me."

I wish I might put on paper the occult smile with which the venerable Mason received this assertion.

"Oh, yes, there is a difference," he answered, and, keyed to the highest pitch of curiosity, I blurted, "What is it?"

"A great many Masons would find it impossible to answer you, if they tried to," he said.

Still, this assurance that knowing nothing at all, I would nevertheless know as much as some Masons, did not satisfy me, and I tried another road to the coveted knowledge. "What is the real purpose of Free Masonry?" I asked. "Where, when and how did it originate? Does Bulwer's story of Zanoni and George Sand's 'Consuelo' contain the essence of your lore?"

"No one knows the origin of the order. There are numberless theories explaining it, but in truth its history is without a beginning, and all history contains its principles under different forms directed to different ends. On the continent of Europe it has played conspicuously and powerfully in politics, and the rise and development of Free Masonry in this country, was largely due to political causes.

The Bond of Union.

"Naturally the colonists plotting independence of the mother country, in danger of their lives, were glad to have the protection of the bond that unites the brotherhood of Masons. No religious sect nor other non-sectarian organization exhibits such a bond. It saved many lives in colonial times, and I know personally of it bridging the difference between rebel and Yankee during the rebellion. One case in particular I recall—a man whom I made a Mason in 1861 at the attack on Fort Fisher was wounded, and making himself known as a Mason, firing was suspended and he was taken care of until his subsequent exchange was arranged."

"In what does this marvelous bond of union inhere?" I asked, oh, so eagerly, but once more the grand recorder's occult smile tantalized my curiosity to the point of bursting, and for momentary relief, I shifted to plain history. "Then, tell me, please," I said, "of the first Free Masons in this country."

"A provincial Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was formed on the 1st of July, 1733, with Henry Price as provincial grand master, his jurisdiction extending through New England and over a portion of the British province. The first warranted lodge was St. John's Lodge, which was instituted in Boston in 1733, and exists in substantially its original form to the present day. The original authority for the institution was received from Lord Montagu, grand master of the Masons of England. In 1756 Joseph Warren organized in Boston St. Andrew's Lodge, authority being granted him by the Grand Lodge of Scotland. This organization took place at the famous old inn, called the Green Dragon, which Daniel Webster styled—and it undoubtedly was so—headquarters of the revolution. Here is a picture of the historic hostelry."

Green Dragon Hotel.

"I looked at it—a great square old-fashioned building of two stories, with dormer windows in the slanting roof. The monotony of its flat front was broken only by the windows and door, from a crane over the latter of which was suspended a huge green dragon, that characterized the whole.

"The charter of St. Andrew's Lodge was not received from Scotland till 1760, when, according to records, it was laid before the lodge, and in the same evening work was commenced under it by receiving Paul Revere, a goldsmith and engraver, as an entered apprentice. Revere afterward became secretary and later grand master of this lodge.

"The Massachusetts Grand Lodge was organized also in the Green Dragon in 1769, by its grand master, Joseph Warren, who was commissioned by the grand master of Masons of Scotland 'to be the grand master of Masons in Boston, New England, and within 100 miles of the same.' Paul Revere was made the senior grand deacon of the lodge. After the grand master, Joseph Warren, was killed at the battle of Bunker Hill, independence of British jurisdiction was declared, it being deemed incongruous to accord Masonic allegiance to a country while fighting to sunder political allegiance with the same. The principle of international jurisdiction was not so denied, however. The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts now exercises such over four lodges in Chile and one in China.

Prominent in History.

"The Masons of Massachusetts have been unusually distinguished in many ways. One hundred years ago the corner stone of the state house was laid with Masonic ceremonies, Paul Revere being at the time grand master. When George Washington as President stood on the old state house balcony and gave his last salutation to the people of Boston, his fellow Masons entertained him, and the Masons participated with Lafayette in laying the corner stone of the Bunker Hill monument. On receipt of news of the death of George Washington, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts forwarded resolutions of condolence to his widow and requested a lock of his hair. The request was promptly granted, and this lock of hair is still in possession of our lodge, incased in a gold urn, made and engraved for it by Paul Revere."

"May I see it?" I asked, whereupon the grand recorder went into a vault, unlocked a repository there, and brought forth a small, odd black walnut case, which he opened with a rusty key, and from within disclosed this rare relic of two colonial heroes. The urn is of plain gold, about six inches in height, and when the top is unscrewed, reposing on satin under glass is a lock of human hair that has been thus preserved almost a century. Quite as remarkable is the work of the hand of the engraver, Paul Revere, which, while worn, is still clearly legible in the inscription:

"This urn incloses a lock of hair of the immortal Washington. Presented to the Massachusetts Grand Lodge by his amiable widow. Born February 11, 1732. Obt. December 14, 1799."

Brought to This City.

An impressive feature of the institution of each succeeding grand master of the Massachusetts lodge is the transmission of the custody of this urn, with its precious contents. On the occasion of the laying of the corner stone of the Washington monument this urn was carried from Boston to figure in the ceremony.

The archives of the Massachusetts Grand Lodge are replete with historic interest. The walls of the rooms within the temple are covered with portraits of the heroes conspicuous no less in the history of the nation than in that of Free Masonry. Here and there, fifteen in all, are queer, old-fashioned ale mugs, decorated with Masonic figures, and brought to this country in colonial days. The library here is the largest exclusively Masonic library in the country.

"In addition to all the other history of Free Masonry that has been made in and about Boston," said Grand Recorder Nickerson, "New England witnessed the most rancorous outbreak of the anti-Masonic movement that began in 1826, and continued till the revival of Free Masonry in 1842. This arose from a good-for-nothing in New York state contriving to gain admission into our fraternity, and, after passing the first degrees, he published what he paraded as an exposure of Free Masonry. Ill-advised brethren, deeply stirred by his treachery, kidnaped this man and spirited him away to Canada, where he was dropped. On the whole body of Masons throughout the country straightway fell the onus of a general belief that the man had been murdered by the Masons. This was never proved; still, as a result of this episode, politicians seized upon the opportunity to make capital, and here in New England the matter divided father and son, arrayed brother against brother, and wife against husband. The matter died a natural death in the course of ten or fifteen years, and during the political events of 1840 Free Masonry was restored to its former esteem among men, and has steadily advanced ever since."

The One Woman Mason.

"Is there any truth in the oft-repeated story that George Sand was initiated a Free Mason," I asked.

"Not any more than in the story that Mary Ellen Lease was, I think. There is just one authenticated instance of a woman becoming a Free Mason. There is the lady's picture on the wall and the story underneath."

"I saw the likeness of a woman of commanding presence, her face betokening a strong mind, firm will and noble impulses. Her dress of an early day was distinguished by the Masonic jewel she wore. Her hand rested on an open book, bearing the familiar square and compass of the Masonic order.

Her name was Honorable Mrs. Aldworth of Newmarket, County Cork. She was the youngest child of Right Honorable Arthur St. Leger, created first Viscount of Doneraille in 1703, and she was initiated in Doneraille House in Lodge 44 of Ireland. The story of her initiation is told by a relative, to whom she related it.

"Lodge was being held in a room of Doneraille House, which, as was common in those days, was separated from an adjoining room by stud and brick work. The young lady, being giddy and thoughtless, determined to gratify her curiosity, and made her arrangements accordingly. With a pair of scissors she removed a portion of brick from the wall, and was thus enabled to behold everything that passed in the room. Thus she witnessed the first two degrees of Masonry, which was the extent of the proceedings of the lodge for that night.

The Discovery.

"Becoming aware, from the words of the brothers, that they were about to separate, the embarrassment and danger of her position overwhelmed her, and she was near to fainting. Overcoming her fears with a great effort, she attempted to flee from the room, but in so doing ran against a piece of furniture, which fell with a loud crash. Instantly the tyler, who was stationed on the landing outside to which opened the doors of both the rooms where the lodge and the young lady were, rushed in upon her, a candle in one hand and a drawn sword in the other. The brothers followed, and but for the immediate appearance of the young lady's brother, her life would doubtless then and there have paid the penalty of what was esteemed a crime. Her brother having resuscitated her from the fainting condition into which terror precipitated her, she was placed under charge of the tyler in a room where, for two hours, she listened to angry discussions and calm debate, her death being proposed and seconded. Finally she was given the choice of submitting to the ordeal she had witnessed of the two degrees, and if she refused, the brothers were again to consult. Notwithstanding all she had seen and heard, the young woman, with secret pleasure, gladly and unhesitatingly accepted the offer, and was accordingly initiated. Her subsequent career, characterized by sound wisdom and good works, caused her to be an honorable acquisition of the order into which, by an odd combination of woman's curiosity and man's charity, she forced an entrance."

This story gave my own curiosity new life, and I asked Grand Recorder Nickerson whether by becoming a member of the Eastern Star organization I might not obtain possession of the secrets of Free Masonry.

The Eastern Star.

"The order of the Eastern Star is not a degree of Free Masonry generally recognized," he said. "The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, for instance, does not recognize it. It is an organization of the female relatives of Master Masons, which dates back but thirty or forty years, and was then a revival of what one hundred years ago was known in France as the Adoptive Rite. Like many other so-called degrees of Free Masonry, it contains nothing of the essential order."

"Does the essential order correspond at all with the principles and practices of the Adepts of the Orient?" I asked, and again received an occult smile in reply.

"Does it refer to religion?" I then asked.

"Only so far as to require of every Mason a belief in the Supreme Being. All sects are represented in the fraternity, as was shown in a recent history of the grand chaplains of the different states of the Union, who, combined, represented almost every known denomination."

"Then is it not theosophy in the true sense of the word?" I persisted, and getting no satisfactory reply to this, I further persisted: "How is the knowledge of Free Masonry transmitted? Are not books always a possible means of its secrets becoming known?"

"The essential body of Free Masonry is not printed; it is handed down to successive members of the order by word of mouth only. So much as is printed, though not in general circulation, I will give you."

Accordingly, the much tried and most kindly grand recorder presented me with a "Trestle Board," which contains the monitorial portions of the three degrees in Free Masonry.

I have read this and found therein knowledge greatest to be had under the head of sacred numbers. I have found therein also outlined the dread "Dweller on the Threshold," and the blessed "Adon Adal," which the disciple Zanoni found seeking to pass from experience of a world of particulars into conscious existence of the supremely ordered universe wherein each separate part lives and operates only in symbolism of the whole, and I have found therein the key to every Masonic secret. It is this: "Add to your faith, virtue; and to virture, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness, charity." Thus you have the whole mystery of Free Masonry in your grasp.

"So mote it be."

PAULINE PRY.

WEDDING DRESS TO HIRE.

East Side Brides Who "Take Back" Their Rented Trousseaus.

From the New York Herald.

Madison street "braces up" a little down near the police station, and thereabout is a nest of curious shops. One of them has in the window, in English and Hebrew, this sign:

"Wedding Dresses to Hire."

I went into this shop the other day, explained after a struggle that I was prompted by curiosity and not by a desire to prepare for approaching nuptials, and asked just what the sign meant.

The proprietor led me into a rear room—a stifling closet that reminded one of a Turkish bath—lifted the lid of a big chest and pointed out a pile of white satin garments, a little faded, but wonderfully befloounced and bedizened.

"There," he said.

"And do women who are to be married come here and hire these dresses and return them after the wedding?"

"Many do."

"Why?"

"Well, most women here can't afford a nice wedding dress, but they all want to look beautiful on their wedding day, so I have these dresses and so they come to me."

"Then one of these dresses has been worn by several women?"

"Maybe a hundred. One dress costs them a dollar, a better one two or three. It is a great risk. They are not always careful. Some, however, are very good, and bring the dress back to me with their own hands the next day. I do not think there is much money in the trade, though. Perhaps not so many get married now. Is the east side getting rich that it can afford wedding dresses of its own, or poor that it cannot afford to marry?"

And I, not knowing, had to leave him struggling with his own problem.

Didn't Remember the Jones Part.

From the Detroit Free Press.

"Don't you remember," he began, as he sat down beside an acquaintance in a Woodward avenue car; "don't you remember of my being in your office some time in March?"

"I distinctly remember it," was the reply.

"You do? That's lucky. Don't you also remember of my telling you that day that a man named Jones had threatened to assault me?"

"No, I do not."

"But wait a bit. When I entered your office you were talking with a man with a red nose about a horse."

"Exactly—wanted to sell me a horse."

"I stood by the window while he talked to you for several minutes."

"Yes, I think you did."

"When the red-nosed man left I mentioned the fact that it was snowing."

"Yes."

"And then I spoke to you about the man Jones—how he had threatened to lick me."

"Must have been in some other office," It is all new to me about Jones."

"But I am sure it was in your office," persisted the other. "I called in the forenoon."

"Yes."

"You had just come back from Chicago?"

"Yes."

"And I said that Jones——"

"No—not a word about Jones."

"Well, then, what did I say?"

"When the red-nosed man went out you asked me if I could lend you ten dollars?"

"And what did you say?"

"I said I couldn't."

"And was that all?"

"That was all, except that you tried three or four other men on the same floor, and all were short. You are surely mistaken about Jones. Your object in coming up into our building was to borrow ten dollars. You must have gone into some other building with your story about Jones. You have certainly gotten the two objects mixed up. Can't you recall whether you—"

But the Jones man was there no longer. He had flushed up like a man hit in the eye with a tomato, and gone out on the rear platform to figure up how the mix-up could have occurred.

Yankee-Made Alaskan Curios.

From the San Francisco Chronicle.

Ex-State Senator E. C. Voorheis of Sutter Creek returned, with his family, from a visit to Alaska yesterday, on the City of Pueblo.

"There is one thing from which the ordinary tourist cannot be weaned," said he. "He will buy curios wherever he goes. That is the way in Alaska. We hear a good deal about the fine carving done by the native Alaskan. Now, the fact is the Alaskan knows mighty little about carving. The crack carver of Sitka came down to San Francisco, I was told, to learn the art of carving, and now he turns out barrels of ingenious contrivances, supposed by his customers to be indigenous to the soil of Alaska only. On a boat which went to Juneau a short time before we arrived there were actually 6,000 pounds of Alaskan curios, manufactured by Americans at Brockton, Mass.

In the Alpine Country.

From the Chicago Record.

Guide—"Zee zhentleman vill pay eet in advance, m'sieur?"

Tourist—"What's that?"

Guide—"Pardon, m'sieur, but so ver' many zhentlemen fall and ees kill't on zee rocks!"

Secluded.

From Harper's Bazar.

Clerk—"Front! Show this gentleman to 188."

Guest—"Is the room quiet?"

Clerk—"Quiet! Rather; a guest got caught in the folding bed the other day, and we never heard his cries for help. Quiet, I should remark."

AUTUMN FASHION HINTS.

What Will and Will Not Be Worn in Cooler Weather.

The early fall season will witness a return to dresses whose bodices and skirts will be twin sisters again. Whether this presages the retirement of the blouse can scarcely be determined just yet. It is such a remarkably becoming and comfortable as well as economical article of attire that it will die hard; but shopkeepers and their strikers wield a great power, and they are determined to get rid of it because it actually prevents the sale of handsome goods in quantity to make it pay to manufacture. When skirts and bodices are made of the same material both are trimmed to the limit. When the bodice is a separate thing it gets all the trimming, and may be made of any light, airy stuff, as it is simply used for a foundation upon which to hang lace and beads and velvet and embroidery, while the skirt is as plain as a pipestem.

Light-weight cheviot, tweed, the everlasting serge and the next best thing to serge, namely, covert cloth, will be worn all during the autumn and pretty well into the winter, unless the season is unusually severe. While crepon has lost a great deal of its popularity, it is principally because of its "pully" weave, which makes it liable to frazzle out all over and suggesting to its wearer the necessity for a "shave," it has yet admirers by the million, and will vie with the heavier materials for midautumn wear. Velvet is promised again, both as trimming and for the whole garment.

A pretty and simple design for a cape of embroidery and insertion can be found in this illustration, and one that will not be hard for a nimble-fingered woman to manufacture. The hat is a beauty, too. It is made of pleated Paris muslin, with a great big bow in front of the crown, to which it is caught up. It is quite poke shaped in front, but narrows to almost nothing in the back.

What will my Lady Overweight say when her dressmaker informs her that long velvet coats in Louis XIV style, with big cuffs and preposterous pockets, are the swell caper? Won't she fume, though! Then she will go right off and invest in dress velvet, only to come out looking like the fat woman in the show, while her sylph-like sister will look like a young goddess in her regal robes.

The last bicycle craze comes painted white. White trousers, white skirts, white boots, white leggins, gloves and cap and a white enamel wheel. A girl gotten up in an ensemble like that, who knows how to sit on a wheel, is a creature to remember always. The material is duck or pique for the hot-weather runs, but white flannel and white serge will take the place of the cotton for early autumn wear. The Princess Laetitia of Paris has ordered six of these all-white bicycle suits. Hers are of white sailcloth, strapped on the seams, and stitched with white silk. The skirts are kilts, which reach to the knees, where they meet white leather leggins, fastened with silver clasps. The high boots are all of unglazed leather, the hat is a glazed oilcloth with a white ribbon band, and the jackets are cute, little short-tailed affairs worn over a stiff shirt.

In this day of "specialties" the very latest fad for a woman is to select some special color and live up to it in every article of clothing that she buys. A woman who elects to do that can dress economically and becomingly as well. When a woman has her slippers and stockings, fans, gloves and frocks all one color, it isn't half the trouble to arrange a perfect toilet. A lady let me into the secret of her always smart appearance the other day. She is no longer young, but some way she keeps herself wonderfully well up as a young woman. She nearly always wears black, supplemented with some color, but the color is a very small part of the toilet.

"I manage it this way," she said. "Of course you know I can't always be buying clothes, but I get me a full stock of black at the beginning of the season, and never lose an opportunity to get an original idea in black. I always have fine pretty black boots and slippers, and good black gloves, a handsome black fan, and quantities of fine black lace. Fine lace always pays for the buying, and it lasts forever. Then if I want some color I get it as occasion requires. But always wearing black nobody thinks very much about my gowns or accessories, until I come out with the last new wrinkle in flowers or ribbons or velvet, when everybody says, 'Oh, Mrs. M. has another new gown, she is always buying new gowns,' when in fact two new gowns a season are all I ever afford myself."

For an evening bodice this simple bertha will effectually modernize an out-of-date bodice. The fold of goods is tulle adjusted about the neck of the waist, and from it falls wide, fine lace. The tulle is tied in one knot in front, then crosses the bust and goes back under the arms to fasten at the waist line in the back, with long ends.

One of the quaint pretty fancies that young ladies are carrying to the extreme is the wearing of nun-like white collars and cuffs. The collars are made of linen and cut like a sailor collar, only exaggerated in depth, and the cuffs actually reach to the elbow, being fastened in three places up the opening with linked cuff buttons. Over a dark nun-like gown, under dimpled chins and over dimpled hands this rig is decidedly fetching; but when a grandmother dons it and tries to masquerade as sixteen instead of sixty, it is awful!

Big Leghorn Flats.

As an example of the summer hat beautiful, here is one that is simply perfect. It is broad of brim, of fine black straw loosely woven, with garniture of quantities of black lace, long black plumes and rich yellow roses. It is lifted on the left side by quite a bunch of the roses. For a month or more now, the big leghorn flats will

have their day, with lots of lace and roses billowing over them. Catch them up where you will—make poke bonnets of them with broad, quaintly tied string Napoleons, turned up back and front, or farm-hand hats, spread out with soft plumes drooping coquettishly over the brim—fix them as you will, they are picturesque and pretty.

Miss Jones.

From Life.

You may mention her name, but it never conveys
An idea of the exquisite tones
Of her voice or her sparkling, bewildering ways,
For her name—it is simply "Miss Jones!"

It gives you no hint of her golden-brown hair;
Of her eyes that outshine precious stones;
Of the flesh of her wit, or her highly bred air,
When they merely allude to "Miss Jones."

It leaves you to guess at the men in her train,
And her suitors' expiring groans;
At the charm that proves fatal to many a swain—
Unexpected in every-day "Jones."

But when you have seen the effect of her glance
On raw youth or decrepit old bones,
You'll admit that a knight never shattered a lance
For a "Queen of the Lists" like "Miss Jones."

If her name could be changed what a gain it would be—
A fact which she cheerfully owns;
But at present, you see, she's confided to me,
She prefers to stay simply—"Miss Jones!"

STRICKEN WITH PARALYSIS.

From the Industrial News, Jackson, Mich.

Myron L. Root, a worthy workman, has lived for nearly twenty-five years in the city of Jackson, Mich., at 234 Adrian avenue, where he owns a happy home. His health had failed him for some years back, and the loss of his wife, two years ago, filled his cup of misery to overflowing. Grief and worry soon brought on a stroke of paralysis. A few weeks later he had a second stroke, which totally disabled him. He could neither move a limb nor his head, and had to be fed like a baby. The best medical aid was furnished him, and his friends did all they could for him, but human hands seemed powerless to give him relief.

Both physicians who were treating him told him, after a consultation, that there were no means of helping him. He was then but a mere skeleton, without power to move and scarcely strength enough to express his wishes. Death was truly much preferable to a lingering life of such misery and helplessness.

The marvelous cure, by Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, of a woman afflicted similar to himself, which appeared in the Industrial News, was read to him, and although only a lingering spark of hope existed, he consented to give the medicine a trial, but insisted that another physician be called, in order to lay the matter before him. The physician was summoned, and after a thorough examination of the patient, and learning the history of the case, said that he could promise no relief, and advised him to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, which he had often known to succeed when everything else had failed. The pills were procured, and he took them according to directions, with the most wonderful result. At the end of two weeks he could walk, and at the end of four weeks, although weak, he was perfectly cured, and is now able to do all kinds of light work.

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills contain, in a condensed form, all the elements necessary to give new life and richness to the blood and restore shattered nerves. They are an unfailing specific for such diseases as locomotor ataxia, partial paralysis, St. Vitus' dance, sciatica, neuralgia, rheumatism, nervous headache, the after effect of la grippe, palpitation of the heart, pale and sallow complexions, all forms of weakness, either in male or female. Pink Pills are sold by all dealers, or will be sent, post paid, on receipt of price (50 cents a box, or six boxes for $2.50) by addressing Dr. Williams' Medicine Company, Schenectady, N.Y.

FALL SUGGESTIONS.

Some Styles That Will Be Popular When Cool Weather Comes.

When the cool days come occasionally one wants a gown ready to jump into. One that might easily be used for either warm or cool days, with a little change of the neck garniture, might be made like the illustration. The material is French challie, a light tan ground, with purple asters scattered over it. The foot trimming and puffs are of the aster purple bengaline, and so is the pleated shirt front, finished with a lace collarette and big lace bow under the throat. Leaving this off, the pleated front ends in a self ruffle just a little low in front, and very becoming to

a plump person. The lower part of the sleeves, the sash and the broad bow on the hat are of the bengaline.

A remarkably pretty bodice may be made of the cheap wash silk in bright pink and white stripe, by making a yoke of yellow lace and edging the tucks with narrow Valenciennes. The style would be very trying to any one over twenty. Carry out the color scheme by trimming one of the narrow-brimmed sailor hats with a triple stiff looped bow of the silk.

There are some very good judges of "styles" who say that 1830 will die before the snows melt in March, so those who