

MY LADY'S WATCH.

From the Louisville Courier-Journal.
 A tiny disk of precious gold,
 Glimmering in fair and graceful mold,
 On to my lady I have laid
 The time of day.
 On clouds of lace, so soft and light,
 Upon her bosom, so warm and white,
 Hidden away from out of sight,
 I lie securely.
 Some days I quite forgotten lie,
 And scarcely meet her questioning eye,
 Her hand to my watch, she brings,
 The moments chiding.
 Oft when the twilight shades appear,
 Her little heart seems wild with fear,
 And tapering fingers stealing near,
 In haste withdraw me.
 Her eyes of soft and liquid brown,
 (I had been round white face look down,
 And then once more within her gown,
 She quickly slips me.
 I know her well, her heart reveals
 The fear and trouble that she feels,
 The sight that 'er her red lips steals
 Is for her lover.
 He comes and to his heart at last
 (My lady's dreamy moments past,
 Her happy ones eyes are flying fast),
 He fondly clasps her.
 At such a time I trembling lie,
 And could I utter gasp or cry,
 I'd beg him with a pleading sigh
 To spare my crystal.
 And then upon my dial white,
 I mark with slender hands the flight
 Of happy moments, short and bright,
 So quickly passing.
 When darkness steals away the light,
 When falls the curtain of the night,
 Beneath her pillow, soft and white,
 She gently lays me.
 I am her constant friend and guide,
 And in her breast or at her side,
 A happy little watch I bide,
 Forever near her.—Zella May Hauke.

THE DUNGEON STRAW.

He had passed his first ten years in prison without doing anything, settling himself and fitting himself to the habits of the place. Then, as there were yet 20 years of prison life before him, he said one fine morning that he would create for himself some occupation worthy, not of a freeman, since he was a prisoner, but worthy simply of a man.
 He devoted a year to reflection, to weighing the different ideas which presented themselves, to seeking a definite aim for his existence. To create a spider? An old story, too well known. To copy Pico, indeed! A pure bit of plagiarism. To count with his fingers the rough places on the wall? A ridiculous amusement, useless and without appreciable results.
 "I must," said he, "find something at the same time novel, useful, and defying. I must invent a task which shall occupy my time, which shall be productive of some good, and which shall have the value of a protest." Another year was employed in this search, and at last success crowned his efforts.
 It was a luncheon, that in which the prisoner lived, which the sun entered but for one short half-hour daily, and then by a single ray which was a mere thread of light. The bed on which the unhappy man stretched, his aching limbs was a pile of wet straw.
 "The very thing," he cried with energy. "Now I shall defy my jailers and cheat the courts."
 First he counted the separate straws that made up his bundle. There were 1,307 straws. A meager bundle! Then he made an experiment to find out how long it would take to dry a single straw. Three-quarters of an hour. It would require for them all—for the 1,307 straws—a total of 380 hours, or 15 minutes with a half-hour of sunshine a day, 1,361 days. Calculating that the sun would shine at least one day out of the three, it would require 16 years, 1 month, 1 week, and 6 days. That was within six months of the time of his sentence. He set to work at once.
 Every day that the sun shone the prisoner carried a straw and put it in the sun, shining, busy himself thus whenever there was sun. For the rest of the time he kept warm under his clothes the straw he had been able to dry.
 Thus ten years passed. The prisoner slept on only a third of the damp straw, and he had stuffed in the bosom of his blouse the other two-thirds, which, one by one, he had dried.
 Fifteen years passed. Happiness unobtainable! Only 126 damp straws remained.
 Eighty-four days more, and the prisoner scarcely could contain himself. Proud of his work, victor over circumstances, he cried with the voice of an avenger, with a mocking, rebellious laugh:
 "Ah! ah! You condemned me to the wet straw of a dungeon. Well, weep with rage! I sleep on dry straw."
 "Alas! A cruel destiny was watching for its prey.
 One night while the prisoner dreamed of the happiness in store for him in his wild joy he threw out his hands in speechless exultation, upset the water-jug, and the water ran trickling down his breast.
 All of the straws were wet.
 What to do now? To begin again the toil of Sisyphus? To pass fifteen years more putting straws to dry in the slender ray?
 Oh, the discouragement of it! You, the fortunate ones of the world, who give up a pleasure if it costs you an hour, an hour necessary for its acquisition, dare you cast at him the first stone?
 But you say he had only a year and a half more in prison.
 And do you count as nothing wounded pride, fallen hope? Think! This man would have worked fifteen years to sleep on a bundle of dry straw, and should he consent to quit his prison with wet straws clinging to his hair? Never! One is either worthy or unworthy.
 Eight days and nights he writhed in agony, wrestling with despair, striving for a foothold in the ruin which overwhelmed him.
 He finished by losing his hold, and by acknowledging defeat. He had lost the battle.
 One evening he fell on his knees, despairing, broken.
 "O God!" he cried in his tears, "pardon me that I have lost courage to-day. I have suffered for thirty years. I have felt my limbs waste, my skin mortify, and my eyes grow dim, and my hair and teeth fall out. I have resisted hunger, thirst, cold and solitude. I had a hope which sustained my efforts. I had an aim in my life. Now it is impossible to satisfy my hope. Now the aim is gone forever. Pardon me that I desert my post, that I quit the field of battle, that I flee like a coward. I can bear it no longer." Then, in a sudden access of indignation, he cried:
 "No, no, a thousand times no! It shall not be said that I have lost my life for nothing. I will not desert. I am not a coward. No, I will not sleep for a minute more on the damp straw of the dungeon. No, they shall not defeat me.
 And the prisoner died during the night, conquered like Brutus, grand like Cato. He died of an heroic indigestion. He had eaten all his straw.—From the French of Jean Richepin.

AN OLD-TIME JESTER.

Anecdote of an Italian Doctor of the Fifteenth Century.
 Entertaining are some anecdotes told of Gonella, jester to Borsse, duke of Ferrara, in the fifteenth century, says the *Cornhill Magazine*. As Gonella was on his way to mass three blind beggars implored an alms of him. "Here is a florin for you," said the jester; "divide it among you." He gave nothing and passed on. The beggars invoked blessings on him, each supposing that one of his fellows was in possession of the coin. When they wished to divide the gift not one of them would allow that he held it, and they mutually accused each other of cheating, and from words proceeded to blows. Gonella watched the fray with great complacency, and when the beggars were all bruised and bleeding he went on to church with a clear and calm conscience.
 The duke of Ferrara fell ill, and the doctor declared that only a sudden fright would restore him to health. He was too great a man for any one to play tricks on except his fool. Gonella was with him in a box, and cleverly pushed the duke into the water. Aid had been previously provided, and the prince was drawn ashore and put to bed. The fright, and the bath, cured the duke, but he was so enraged with Gonella that he exiled the man who was both a fool and a physician. Gonella returned in a car filled with Paduan soil, an evader of the edict of banishment said to have been practiced by many a jester. The duke ordered him to be beheaded, but saying privately he would only repay the duke with fright he directed the executioner not to use the axe, but to let fall a single drop of water on the culprit's neck. Gonella was led to the scaffold, all the usual gloomy preparations were made. He was blindfolded and made to lay his head on the block. The executioner, from a vial, let fall a drop of water on Gonella's neck. For some time of laughter, the jester, silent now, was bidden to rise and thank the duke for his clemency. But Gonella never moved; he was dead—killed by his master's jest.

Mr. Blaine's Old Coachman.

From the New York Tribune.
 For several years Mr. Blaine had a colored coachman in Augusta who was one of the features in the town. He lives in Augusta yet, and his name is "Fred" Brown. "Fred" can neither read nor write, but he always looked after the family's mail, and was never known to make a mistake in distributing it. He was very proud of this accomplishment, and always delivered letters with the greatest flourish. He was a politician from head to foot, and in speaking of the republican party would say "we" and "us." He was so much devoted to the discussion of politics in those days that when he was talking from his regular duties he could generally be found leaning over the side fence, expounding good republican doctrine with much eloquence. Perhaps his interest in politics unfitted him for the labor of a coachman, or perhaps he desired to hold office, but at any rate Mr. Blaine secured a new coachman.
 "Fred," however, was so devoted to Mr. Blaine that he continued to make himself a feature of Mr. Blaine's house and grounds. He secured his place as a night watchman at the state house across the street from Mr. Blaine's home, he spent the hours in the neighborhood of daylight in watering the lawns of the house and in looking after the shrubbery. It was the greatest pleasure of his life to be allowed to do something for Mr. Blaine or one of his family. He had an exceedingly high opinion of his own importance, too. On election days he was abroad bright and early, dressed in his best, and from the opening to the closing of the polls he could be seen driving voters in a buggy from their homes to the polling places when the men were lame or ill or in any way unable to walk. There was such a solemn earnestness about "Fred's" manner at such times that it was as if he were carrying the burden of the election on his shoulders.
 An illustration of "Fred's" sublime confidence in Mr. Blaine is found in the way in which he became a night watchman in the state house. Some of his friends advised him to obtain signatures to a petition. He had the petition drawn up and went to Mr. Blaine for the first signature. Mr. Blaine affixed his name to the paper and "Fred" went away. Several days afterward one of his friends asked him how his petition was getting along. "Oh," said "Fred," cheerfully, "it's all right. The whole thing's fixed. I've got the place and it's safe in my pocket here."
 He pulled out his petition with an unusual show of dignity and showed it. There was Mr. Blaine's name, but no other. "Fred" had not looked for another, nor had he presented his petition. He had gone around with the paper securely buttoned in his pocket, serenely confident that he was the night watchman if ever man was a night watchman. When he was urged to get more names he was grieved and astonished. But he got the names, and he got the place.

An Election Demonstration.

From the New York Star.
 Apropos to the recent demonstration at Gen. Mahone's house John S. Wise tells the following story: "The night after the election between Gen. Lee and myself the democrats came up to my house and buried me with the honors of war. They had a band and played the 'Dead March' and perhaps 'The Rogue's March.' They had torches and waved handkerchiefs, and groaned, and sung for about two hours. Of course there was no violence, while the whole of Richmond was being given a very black eye politically, it is an orderly city, and I believe I had as many personal friends in the democratic party as any man in the city. I listened to the racket and watched them from my bed, rather amused at their tomfoolery, and went to sleep before they left. Next day I went shooting. Instead of moving around with a sick stomach and headache after one of those cyclones I would dress up and walk down-town, smiling and happy, or go shooting. My train returned about 10 p. m. I had no idea I would be honored two nights in succession. The cab containing my dog and myself made a great noise on the street and I did not hear very well. We pulled up suddenly at the front of my house. I threw open the door, jumped out upon the carriage-block with my gun in my hand, and lo and behold! I was in the midst of about 150 men and boys who were singing 'Hang John Wise on a sour apple tree.' It was like a man and a bear meeting at a turn in the road. Before I quite took in the situation the crowd was gone. It melted like snow. Evidently they thought I had come for business. If they had waited a little longer maybe I would have left. As it was their music was cut short as pie crust. They had reached about the syllable ap of the apple tree when I turned up so suddenly, and that ended it."

Pacifying a Youngster.

From the Toronto Grip.
 Small boy: "Say, dad, I wish you would give me a bicycle." Old man: "Can't afford it, my son. Rent too high, cost too dear. Best I can do is want you to break your neck." "Well, then, a tricycle." "Can't do it. But I'll tell you what you can have. When winter comes I'll try and get you a nice long icicle." The youngster is pacified.

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