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JAS. H. COSGROVE, - - EDITOR.

AROUND THE YEAR.

Love came to me in the Spring-time,
With the soft, sweet April showers;
Her breath was the breath of the woodland,
And her lap was filled with flowers.

Her step was a song in the silence;
Its melody rose and fell
As she danced through the fragrant twilight
To the bower we knew so well.

And the Spring glided on to the Summer
With the flame of its fervent darts,
And the noon of the fleeting season
Was the noon of our beating hearts.

But the Autumn came with its shadows,
And noon was no longer hot;
And the frost crept into our pulses,
And Summer and Spring were not.

And Love was alive with the Winter,
But her beauty and grace had fled;
'Mid the snows of March I left her,
With a cypress wreath at her head.

—*Hart Lyman, in Harper's Magazine.*

THAT LETTER.

At thirty-five Farrell Bainbridge had engaged himself to marry Grace Harrison. She was ten years younger than he, which according to his theory was quite as it ought to be, for he had always had a notion that he would like to be the head of his household, and he had observed among his friends that those who had married ladies decidedly their juniors seemed to command a deference from their mates which husbands matched more equally in respect of age did not secure without considerable effort, if at all. In these leveling days, when a husband could no longer count on the prestige of sex which stood his forefathers in such good stead, it behooved him, according to Farrell, to avail himself of such assistance toward the maintenance of marital authority as the principle of seniority, itself also somewhat in decay, could lend.

I would not convey the idea that any unromantic degree of common-sense had entered into Farrell's engagement. It had been a real love-affair, and doubtless if the young lady had turned out to be some years older instead of younger than himself, he would have had no difficulty in discovering some theory equally plausible for reconciling that fact with his ideal of the marriage relation.

From the lady's point of view, on the other hand, there are disadvantages as well as advantages connected with marrying a husband decidedly maturer than herself. A disadvantage is that he has probably sown more or less wild oats; an advantage is that he has probably got done sowing them. Now Farrell had never had a bad name for fast living and had never deserved one, but there had been passages in his life which he would have been excessively panic-stricken to have had come to the knowledge of Grace. Nor would the panic have been merely an unworthy cowardice. He had done with his past. He was about to begin with her a new life. He wanted to feel this new life separate and distinct from the other. To have had any painful mutual consciousness between them regarding the past would have taken away much of the inspiration for a new departure in living which her unsuspecting confidence gave him.

The engagement had been a short one. A certain morning about a month previous to the time fixed for the wedding. Farrell sat writing a letter to his betrothed—for he lived and did his work in a large city some hundreds of miles from the New England village where she resided with her parents.

As he was finishing his letter to Grace an errand boy brought him in a note. He tore it open, glanced it over quickly, and then frowningly read it again, as many as three times. Then, muttering between his teeth, "It's the last time, any how," he wrote a few words on a piece of paper and folding it up with the communication he had received put them together into an envelope. Then, putting his letter to Grace in an envelope, he directed both and went out to the Post-office. The office was busy and crowded with coming and going people, for it was near time for closing the noon mails. Farrell took his two letters from his pocket and dropped one of them through the narrow slit into the letter box. It was the one addressed to Miss Grace Harrison.

He was about to drop the other after it when it struck him that it was heavier than he had thought, and at the same moment he recalled that the letter to Grace as he dropped it in had seemed rather light. He felt of the letter in his hand more carefully; he raised it against the light, then quickly tore it open. It contained his letter to Grace. The envelope directed to Grace which he had just dropped into the box contained the other letter. Yes, by peering into the slit through which he had dropped it he could see it lying there. It had fallen face up. He could see the direction. It was very plainly written. He always took particular pains in writing to Grace to write very plainly, for she had scolded him for his illegible hand. It was very sure, confoundedly sure, to go straight to her. The stupidest clerk, the blindest letter-carrier, could make no mistake about that.

As he stood stupidly peering through the slit at the letter lying at the bottom of the box within, he was jostled by a man with a letter to drop. When the man had gone away Farrell looked through the slit again, and saw that his letter was partly covered with the other. As he observed this he was again jostled by a boy with a handful of letters. The boy looked sharply at him. It occurred to Farrell that the boy suspected him of wanting to rob the mail. Well, he did. That was just what he wanted to do. He would have done it in a moment if he could have got his arm through that slit.

He stood aside out of the rush of people and leaned against the wall, trying to think what he should do. He holds still in his hand the misdirected envelope containing the letter to Grace. Let us glance at the address:

MR. ROBERT FREEMAN,
Steward ——— *Club,*
——— *St.*,

The communication which he had intended for the steward of his club had then gone to Grace. Well, what of it? Doubtless it was a mere business communication. She would laugh, and at once comprehending the mistake would re-mail it to him with some merry comment. That would be all. Yes, but how then explain the chagrin and consternation with which Farrell recognized the mistake, and how account for the painful agitation which his face and manner betray as he stands with his hand to his forehead debating desperate means for the recovery of the epistle? Evidently there is something we don't know about, nor yet even guess, connected with that letter to the steward. Young men sometimes have queer secrets and queer confidants.

Farrell glances up at the clock. The New England mail closes in ten minutes. Whatever he does he must do quickly. Of course! Why hadn't he thought of it before? He must go to the Postmaster and tell him his predicament. No doubt he would return him the letter at once on its being pointed out.

Farrell was pointed to where a gentleman sat with a stove-pipe hat on the back of his head writing at a desk. He did not so much as look up from his work as Farrell stood over him, and the latter, recognizing that it was no time for ceremony, began at once.

"I am sorry to inconvenience you, but the fact is I've just this moment made a rather awkward mistake in inclosing a letter to one person in an envelope directed to another, and should like to get the letter back out of the Connecticut mail."

"Very sorry, sir," said the Postmaster without looking up. "Can't do anything for you. Such mistakes are constantly being made. If we undertook to rectify them couldn't attend to anything else."

"But sir," exclaimed Farrell, "I am a respectable person. There is my card."

"That won't do, sir," said the Postmaster. "No offense, sir, but if I'd seen you drop that letter in the box with your own hand I should have no business to give it back to you. The law makes the mailing of a letter legal evidence of its receipt, and it would make a pretty mess if a man after mailing a letter could get it back again. Excuse me, sir. You see I'm busy. Good-day;" and the Postmaster, tilting forward his chair, dipped his pen in the ink and recommenced writing, as oblivious of Farrell from that moment as if he were in Tartary.

That same afternoon, about two hours and a half afterward, allowing for the difference in time, the bell rang at the front door of the residence of Mr. Abel Harrison on one of the finest streets of a little city in the ancient State of Connecticut. Mr. Harrison was at his business. Mrs. Harrison was out shopping. Miss Grace Harrison was out of town staying with a friend over night. Lucy, Grace's elder sister, was at home alone.

"A telegram, Miss Harrison," said the servant, bringing her up the fateful yellow missive. It was directed to Miss Grace Harrison, but in most families telegrams are considered common property, and Lucy opened it without hesitation. It was signed "Farrell Bainbridge," and read as follows:

You will receive a letter from me to-morrow. It was sent you by mistake. Please burn without opening.

Miss Lucy Harrison was extremely devoted to her sister. Her engagement had been a great trial to her, not more on her own account than by reason of her anxiety on Grace's behalf. She had been convinced from the first that Farrell was not the thousandth part good enough for her sister. This was not that she knew anything specific against him. She would think the same about any young man who had presumed to claim her darling little sister.

Lucy was however a discreet young woman, and not a word did she breathe that evening to her father or mother of the telegram. Next morning at nine with the rest of the mail came a letter addressed in Farrell's hand to Grace, and with the post-mark of his city. An hour later Grace herself came home. The first thing she asked, after the kisses and greetings, was if there was a letter for her.

"Yes," said Lucy, "it's on your bureau."

Grace ran upstairs. There was the letter. Never had she thought her name so pretty as since she saw it in her lover's handwriting. Lucy had followed her. She saw her catch it up, look fondly at it, and then with a quick gesture press it to her lips. She looked around and saw her sister.

"Just wait till you are in love, Lucy," she said, blushing and gayly laughing as she began to open the letter.

"Stop," said Lucy, extending to her sister the telegram in its yellow envelope. "This came for you yesterday, and that is no doubt what it refers to. You'd better read it first. I don't know what to make of it."

Grace took the telegram and read it. Then she looked at the letter and read the telegram again.

"I'm not to read it," she said in a puzzled tone. "A mistake? Why what does he mean? Why did he write it to me if he doesn't want me to read it?" and she regarded Lucy out of violet eyes round with bewilderment, as if she were bound to explain the mystery. But the latter answered, shrugging her shoulders.

"I'm sure I don't know. I don't pretend to explain such a curious transaction. One thing is pretty plain though. Mr. Farrell Bainbridge would never have stultified himself by sending such an extraordinary telegram unless he had some very strong reason for desiring to prevent you from seeing what is in that letter."

"But how could he write me something one minute and then the next be so anxious to prevent my reading it?" said Grace, ready to cry with perplexity. "That's not natural. It's not a bit like Farrell."

"Perhaps not," said Lucy. "You ought to be fully acquainted with his character. You've known him the whole of six months, I believe;"—she could not refrain from this sarcasm—"I suppose," she continued, "we have all of us torn up a good many letters which we had written to send to people, and have sent some which we wish we had torn up. I don't pretend to guess the riddle, but perhaps Mr. Bainbridge had an impulse of frankness and wrote you some things which upon sober second thought, after the mail had gone out, he concluded he would rather you did not know."

"Oh, I can't think of it that way, Lucy," exclaimed Grace, now crying outright. "It is as if there were two Farrells, one who trusted me and one who didn't. Which of them is my lover?"

"Grace," said her sister, "if I were engaged to marry a man and received a letter under such circumstances as these I should read it. You can't tell what may be in it. There may be something in it that will and indeed ought to make a difference in your feelings toward him. You must forgive me, my darling little sister, if I talk plainly, but there may be something in that letter which if you knew it would make you unwilling to marry him."

"Lucy!"

"You may cry out as you please," said the elder sister, compassionately but firmly, "but your own sense will tell you I am right. You love him, but how little after all you know about him."

"But I have no right to open it when he tells me not to," sobbed Grace.

"Yes you have. The letter is as much directed to you as the telegram. He sent it to you of his own free will, intending you to read it. He changed his mind afterward, it is true, but that doesn't make it less your right to read what he wrote meaning it for your eye. If he had spoken to you instead of writing to you and said something which he afterward asked you to ignore, you would not feel bound to do so even if you could. You would have a right to whatever he had once told you, however sorry he might be afterward that he had revealed it. That would be just like this. He has told you something in this letter. He tells you in the telegram to ignore it. The only difference is that, thanks to the quickness of the telegraph, you have his first and second thoughts before you at once, and you can choose which you will regard. I can't see that his second thought has any more claim on your respect than his first thought."

"Oh, I can't divide him up that way, Lucy, and think of him as if there were two of him—oh, why did he do it? He has made me so unhappy, and I was so happy before."

Lucy talked some time longer before she left Grace to herself, representing to her that the only course for a self-respecting young lady under the circumstances was either to insist upon and act upon her right to read a letter addressed to her, or, if she preferred out of consideration for her dignity not to read it, to return it to the sender with his former letters and a note briefly stating that she agreed with him that second thoughts were best, and begged him to consider their engagement at an end. But it was easy enough for Lucy to talk; she was not in love. Her words fell for the most part on deaf ears, as Grace, with the letter crunched in her little fist, nervously walked the room or stood holding it before her and fixedly gazing at it with tear-glazed eyes almost like one distraught.

Lucy was right. She had a right to know what it was; she would know. She seized the letter, she made as if she would have torn it open. Then crushing it still unopened in her hand, she burst into tears. How cruel of him! She had loved him so. She had been so happy in thinking how noble and true he was, in trusting herself so gladly to him; and now he had spoiled it all by this terrible letter; it was all spoiled. He had let into the paradise of her happiness a thousand creeping, crawling, biting, clinging doubts and suspicions. What could it be that he had written in that letter? What sort of a tale had he told her, the telling of which to his afterthought had seemed so perilous? She had a right to know it and judge of it. Their happiness was as much her concern as his.

At length she rose up and taking the letter went to the window, and holding it up to the light with hard, hungry eyes tried to pierce the envelope and read at least a word or two of what was within. Finding the light not strong enough, she closed the window-blinds and drew the curtains and, the room being darkened, lit a gas-jet and put the letter close against the flame in the hope that the light shining through might reveal the writing. As she made these preparations she instinctively moved about on tiptoe, as if she were a burglar. The beating of her heart almost suffocated her. As she held the letter against the gas-jet she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror and was horrified at the sight of her hard thievish eyes and white, reckless face. "Oh how bad I am already!" the unhappy girl exclaimed. "I will not doubt him. What will become of me if I do?" and she threw herself on her face upon her bed and lay with the letter pressed to her forehead sobbing and from time to time exclaiming in a husky voice "I will not, I will not," as if by sheer will power she were trying to turn back the rising tide of suspicion.

It was a hard struggle and a long one, with many alternations of fortune. Now her excited fancy framed a hundred dreadful might be's as the contents of the horrid letter, suspicions of things that never before entered her innocent heart. Then she would feel that she could not "stand it." She should not live unless she knew what was in the letter. All the peace and happiness of her life would be gone if these horrid suggestions were to be ever haunting her. And then her love would rise like a giant and thrust out every foe and for the moment hold the door against them, and in a passionate unreasoning trust she would press the letter to her lips.

When at last she rose and washed her eyes, she was quite calm. Sitting down she wrote to Farrell as follows:

I was away last night, and when I came home this morning I received your telegram and the letter to which I suppose it referred, together. If I had disregarded the telegram and read the letter I should perhaps feel more at ease in my mind than I now do. But I did not read it. I don't know but I had a right to in spite of the telegram, and I would like to feel that I have done pretty well not to. But I will trust you, Farrell, I do trust you; if I did not I don't know what would become of me.

P. S.—I hope you will duly consider your next letter before sending it, and be sure you are willing to have me read it. I do not like this new way.

The reader may observe that the above letter, while stating that the writer had regarded the prohibition of the telegram so far as not reading the letter was concerned, omits to say any thing about burning it. There was a good reason for the omission. Grace had not burned it. She had not read it. She did not mean to, but she had kept it. Her course was as if Eve, instead of eating the apple, had put it in her pocket, that is, of course, supposing that she had had any pocket.

Now Farrell, as may be supposed, had been decidedly uneasy as to the manner in which his telegram might be received by Grace, and when he read her letter he was mightily relieved. Some girls would have made such a fuss over such a thing, for it must have seemed a little odd to her; they would have made a row, but Grace had only seemed a little annoyed and quite good-natured about it. To be sure, he noticed that she omitted to mention having burned the letter. Probably though she had done so. He would like to assure himself on this point, but he felt that he had rather imposed on her already and was hardly in a position to hold her to a strict account. Accordingly when he wrote in reply he said nothing about the matter of the burning, and indeed barely alluded to the missent letter. He said that he had made a very laughably stupid blunder and was no end obliged to her for not being vexed at the trouble he had made her, and then without further words about the business passed on to talk love in such a fervid strain that it is no wonder Grace forgot to criticise the suddenness of the transition from explanation to protestation. He had never written her such a letter before. Lucy came out as Grace sat reading Farrell's letter the second time over.

"I suppose he explains all about that mysterious letter?" she said as she saw the hand-writing, and glanced sharply into Grace's face.

"I am perfectly satisfied," said Grace, and as she raised her happy glowing face to her sister's Lucy could but conclude the explanation had been most unexpectedly complete. Nor did she ever afterward think of doubting it. She said to herself, "He is coming in a day or two, I will wait till I see him, and then I will tell him how badly I feel and he will explain it all."

A couple of days later he did come, for a mere flying visit of a single evening. Grace was just enough afraid of her big lover to add an exquisite thrill to her love for him. Nevertheless she went down stairs to the parlor quite intending to broach the subject of the letter at the first good opportunity she found in the course of their conversation. But there came no opportunity. She was very much in love, poor thing, and when she entered the room and saw him standing there, so big and so handsome, and saw his eyes rest on her so full of glad proud fondness, she felt just one spasm of shame for all the suspicions she had cherished concerning him, and then forgot them wholly for the rest of the evening, giving herself quite up to her happiness.

It wanted but a week of the wedding. During the ensuing days the bustle of preparation, the multitude of things that must be done and must be thought of, necessarily diverted her mind; and then when, the day before the great day, Farrell came and was so hand-some, so devoted, so glad, how could she help quite forgetting all else in a flutter of pride and happiness? But when that night, the night before the wedding, she was at last alone in her room, then she was nearer than ever to opening that dreadful letter. How could she, how could she, go through the morrow's solemn lifelong consecration to her lover with this vague, unformed, awful doubt of him hid in her heart? Nay, in justice to him if not to herself she was bound to clear her mind of it. She had no right to come to him with that between them. Never had the temptation taken a guise so specious. She caught up the letter in a nervous grasp. Half way she tore the envelope in two. Then her strength failed. She had never done a mean thing in her life. Was this mean? Had she a right to open the letter or not? Was it his or hers? Her head was in a whirl. She cried—but did not open the letter.

Next day came the wedding. It is treason to as true a heart as every beat, but I must own it, even when she was making the responses to the minister she could not quite forget the letter. It was the grain of sand under the eyelid that could not be forgotten. If she had been less in love with him, if she had been ready to take a philosophical view of the matter, and to realize that her lover, while an immensely good fellow as men went, was not perfect, no doubt she would have forgotten it quite. But to that she could not descend. She must love him wholly, must give herself to him with enthusiasm or with an anguish of conflicting emotions.

Many a time the words trembled on her lips, "That letter—oh, Farrell! Tell me about that letter. Tell me the worst, that I may forgive you."

But she could not summon strength to utter them. How could she let him know at this late day that all along she had suspected him? And then, too—for she must also think of that—though she felt she could be happier after forgiving him the worst thing than she was now, what if he should meet her questions with the anger of guilt, should falter and try to deceive her? Then she would be worse off than ever. And so the "worm in the bud" gnawed at her damask cheek, and her husband said to her after the first week of their honeymoon trip:

"Grace, dear, we are traveling too fast. You are not well. We will stay here awhile."

But she insisted that she was well and would rather be moving.

They came home at last and set up housekeeping in the most charming of little houses. Never was a more devoted husband or, in spite of her happiness, a more unhappy wife. Perhaps her temperament was rather morbid. It was one of those which are only fitted for complete emotions. They can not halve and quarter their emotions or console themselves with averages. It seems scarcely fair to call them morbid on that account, though I admit it certainly is hard to see what business such people have in this imperfect world. Grace began to think she at least had none. She began to be concerned about her state of mind. She was growing worse and worse. She must in some way put an end to this situation. That letter, now hid away in the bottom of her bureau drawer, was withering her away as if it had the maleficent power of a witch's candle.

One evening Farrell came home in an unusually affectionate frame of mind—and unusual affection on the part of a six weeks' bridegroom implies a good deal. After dinner, as they were sitting alone in their cosy little parlor before the glowing grate fire, he fell to talking, really in a very pretty way, about how much she was to him, how by her the pride of all he did was doubled, and how the thought of her was to him a hundred times a day like a draught of generous wine, filling his veins with fire and imparting a fresh zest to all his duties; and how in short he did every way contritely own himself the most undeservedly, greedily, graspingly, happy man whom a woman ever tempted to forget in herself the Supreme Author of good.

To his amazement, she interrupted this pretty speech with a burst of tears, and, thrusting away his comforting arms, cried:

"Oh, I am a bad woman! I don't deserve to make you happy."

Then, while astonishment yet held him mute, she sprang up, crying, "Wait a minute," and ran out of the room. He heard her flying upstairs to their room and it was not ten seconds before she came running down again and entered the parlor with a letter in her hand. Her face was pale, wet with tears and set with resolve.

"I have been false to you, Farrell," she exclaimed. "You remember that letter you telegraphed me not to open but to burn. I did not open it but I never burned it. I kept it, I doubted you, Farrell. I am a faithless bad wife. Can you ever forgive me?" and, throwing the letter upon the burning coals in the grate, she cast herself into her husband's arms and buried her face upon his shoulder.

I am not quite sure what it was that Farrell exclaimed. I'm not positive that it was not some ejaculation of vexation which it is quite as well not to put on paper. But before the flames had more than browned the letter, he had sprung up, setting his wife rather unceremoniously on her feet, and snatched it from the coals. He tore it open.

"Look here, you little goose," he exclaimed, turning up the gas with the hand that held the letter while with the other he caught the shrinking figure of his wife about the waist. "Look here and see what it is."

"Oh no, no," she said, "I don't want to see it. I don't want to. I am ashamed enough of myself now."

"I insist that you shall see it," he said.

She looked on as he spread out the contents of the charred envelope that had been wet with so many tears. It was a bill from Robert Freeman, the steward of the —Club, to Farrell Bainbridge, Esq., for sundry bottles of wine and other potables and kindred vanities, with a check in liquidation of the same inclosed.

"You see," exclaimed Farrell, "when I was going to marry you I dropped the club, and so had no end of a bill to pay. You are such a fearful little teetotaler that when I found I had sent the bill to you I was in a terrible state of mind. It might dish me entirely. And so I telegraphed. And when you didn't seem to mind it and didn't speak of it, of course I wasn't going to speak of it. And that's been the matter with you all this time! God bless my soul! You darling little goose!"

Grace had never cried so much in her life as she did with her face hid in her huband's coat collar during the next hour or so, and was never so utterly happy.—*Edward Bellamy, in Good Company.*

An Interesting Family Romance.

The happiest household in the city of Louisville, says the *Courier-Journal*, is that which nightly gathers about the lamp-light at the residence of Mr. F. P. Baron, the well-known stove merchant, who lives on Green Street, near Wenzel. Mr. Baron's estimable wife and her two sisters, Mrs. Lizzie Cross, of Sacramento, Cal., and Mrs. Hettie Lowe, of Iowa, are reunited after a separation of nearly thirty years, under circumstances so romantic and unusual that few chapters in fiction are as entertaining. The three ladies are of English parentage. About forty years ago their father, Mr. Joseph Powell, of London, England, accompanied by his wife and children, sailed for Trinidad, one of the British West India Islands. Mr. Powell was wealthy, and had made purchases of land in Trinidad from agents. The children were small when the voyage began. It lasted four months in a sailing vessel, and consequently they can still remember it. On reaching Trinidad, Mr. Powell discovered that it was impossible for an unacclimated foreigner to live there. Disease was ravaging the island, and, further, he discovered that in the purchase of the land he had been swindled out of a large sum. They did not disembark, but came on to the United States with the remainder of his shattered fortune. He went to Peoria, Ill., and settled there, investing all his means in property. He was swindled again, and, to crown the misfortunes of the family, the father fell ill and died four months after arriving. The family were left almost penniless in a strange land. Mrs. Powell pined away and died of a broken heart, one month after her husband's death. This great misfortune left four little girls and a boy at the mercy of the world. The oldest was seven years old, who is now Mrs. Baron. The children secured homes with kindly people, and for two or three years saw each other frequently. Then came a separation. Mrs. Baron remained in Illinois, Mrs. Lowe went to Iowa, and Mrs. Cross to California. The other brother and sister died soon afterward in Springfield, Ill. The separation took place in 1852, and Mrs. Cross, then a child of nine or ten years, accompanied her brother to California, where the gold fever was raging. They made the passage of the plains in wagon trains, and were attacked by Indians, narrowly escaping annihilation of the party. Her friends went to the mines, and the little girl grew up in the magic changes and romantic surroundings of the gold mines. The children lost sight of each other, but did not forget. Years passed, and the girls grew up to be intelligent and educated young ladies. They married, and all married well. Then they began to yearn for each other, and after many attempts discovered where each other lived, and a correspondence began. With household duties and their children to occupy them, they could not meet on account of the distance which separated them. Last spring Mrs. Cross's husband died, and some time ago she came East, stopping for some months with her sister, Mrs. Lowe, in Iowa. Then both came to Louisville, and several days ago the three long-separated sisters were reunited happily. A happier group could not well be imagined. They are all respected people, occupying high estimation with their acquaintances. There are romantic threads underlying this brief outline which deserve fuller relation, and Mrs. Cross, it is understood, is going to write the history of the eventful lives of the three sisters.

The Heat Yielded by the Sun.

Since there is every reason to believe that the sun's radiation is equal in all directions, it follows that, if the sun were surrounded by a great shell of ice, one inch thick and 186,000,000 miles in diameter, its rays would just melt the whole in the same time.

If, now, we suppose this shell to shrink in diameter, retaining, however, the same quantity of ice by increasing its thickness, it would still be melted in the same time. Let the shrinkage continue until the inner surface touches the photosphere, and it would constitute an envelope more than a mile in thickness, through which the solar fire would still thaw out its way in the same two hours and thirteen minutes; at the rate, according to Herschel's determinations, of more than forty feet a minute. Herschel continues that, if this ice were formed into a rod 45.3 miles in diameter, and darted toward the sun with the velocity of light, its advancing point would be melted off as fast as it approached, if by any means the whole of the solar rays could be concentrated upon it. Or, to put it differently, if we could build up a solid column of ice from the earth to the sun, two miles and a quarter in diameter, spanning the inconceivable abyss of ninety-three millions of miles, and if then the sun should concentrate his power upon it, it would dissolve and melt, not in an hour nor a minute, but in a single second; one swing of the pendulum, and it would be water; seven more, and it would be dissipated in vapor.

In formulating this last statement we have, however, employed, not Herschel's figures, but those resulting from later observations, which increase the solar radiation about twenty-five per cent., giving fifty feet, and not forty feet, as the thickness of the ice-crust which the sun would melt off of his own surface in a minute. An easy calculation shows that to produce this amount of heat by combustion would require the hourly burning of a layer of anthracite coal sixteen feet (five meters) thick over the entire surface of the sun—four-fifths of a ton per hour on each square foot of surface—at least eight times as much as the most powerful blast furnace known to art. It is equivalent to a continuous evolution of more than seven thousand horse-power on every square foot of the sun's whole area. As Sir William Thompson has shown, the sun, if it were composed of solid coal and produced its heat by combustion, would burn out in less than six thousand years.—*Prof. C. A. Young, in Popular Science Monthly.*

SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY.

From $1,000,000 to $2,000,000 worth of birds' nests are annually imported into Canton, most of them coming from Java. They are very expensive, costing from $30 to $40 per pound. The nests are composed of pure gelatine, secreted by a species of swallow and deposited against a wall.

Like horses, oysters have their points. The points of an oyster are, first, the shape, which, to be perfect, should resemble very much the petal of a rose-leaf. Next, the thickness of the shell: a first-class thoroughbred native should have a shell of the tenuity of a thin china or Japanese teacup. It should also have an almost metallic ring, and a peculiar opalescent luster in the inner side; the hollow for the meat of the oyster should be as much like an egg-cup as possible. Lastly, the meat itself should be white and firm and nut-like in taste.

The London *Times* says: "The new and apparently most valuable method of preserving raw meat, discovered by Prof Artimini, of Florence, and patented in this country, promises to have a great effect upon our markets. According to a report by Profs. Barff and Mills, of the Glasgow University, and Dr. Stevenson, of Guy's Hospital, meat six months old, was found to be perfectly sound and good, the muscular fibre unchanged and the nutritive properties' unimpaired. The material employed is said to be less expensive than salt, and not only wholesome but pleasant to the taste."

An ingenious method for obviating the frequent stoppage of trains at stations, and yet accommodating the passengers from these stations, has been devised by M. Hanrez, a Frenchman. A "waiting carriage," comprising a steam engine with special gear and space for passengers and luggage, is placed on a siding at the station, and picked up by the train as it goes past. The latter, by means of a hook on its last carriage, catches a ring supported on a post and connected with a cable wound on a drum in the waiting carriage. Thereupon the drum begins to unwind, and in doing so compresses a system of springs, while the carriage is moved at a rate gradually increasing to that of the train. The engine of the carriage then winds in the cable, the train and carriage are connected, passengers are transferred (the carriages being of the American type) from the joined carriage to the train, and vice versa, then the two are disconnected, and the engine of the carriage working on the wheels brings it back to the station whence it was taken.

Grave-yard Superstitions.

It is seldom that one hears nowadays of the observance of the quaint funeral customs which formerly existed in many an English country village, the old-world notions which gave rise to them having died out, owing perhaps to the introduction of railways and school boards. Thus in the north of England it was customary, only a few years ago, to carry "the dead with the sun" to the grave—a practice corresponding with the Highland usage of making "the deazil" or walking three times round a person according to the course of the sun. On one occasion, in the village of Stranton, near West Hartlepool, the vicar was standing at the church-yard gate, awaiting the arrival of the funeral procession, when, much to his surprise, the entire group, who had come within a few yards of him, suddenly turned back and marched round the church-yard wall, thus traversing its west, north and east boundaries. On inquiring the reason of this extraordinary procedure, one of the mourners quickly replied, "Why, ye wad no hae them carry the dead again the sun; the dead maun ay go wi' the sun." This is not unlike a Welsh custom mentioned by Pennant, who tells us that when a corpse was conveyed to the church-yard from any part of the town great care was always taken that it should be carried the whole distance on the right-hand side of the road. From time immemorial there has been a strong feeling of repugnance among the inhabitants of rural parishes to burial "without the sanctuary." This does not mean in unconsecrated ground, but on the north side of the church, or in a remote corner of the church-yard. The origin of this prejudice is said to have been the notion that the northern part was that which was appropriated to the interment of unbaptized infants, excommunicated persons, or such as had laid violent hands upon themselves. Hence it was popularly known as "the wrong side of the church." In many parishes, therefore, this spot remained unoccupied, while the remaining portion of the church-yard was crowded. White, in his *History of Selborne*, alluding to this superstition, says that as most people wished to be buried on the south side of the church-yard, it became such a mass of mortality that no person could be interred "without disturbing or displacing the bones of his ancestors." Great attention has generally been paid, also, to the position of the grave, the popular one being from east to west, while that from north to south has been considered not only dishonorable, but unlucky.

A curious surviving custom at Welsh funerals is termed the "parson's penny." After reading the burial service in the church, the clergyman stands behind a table while a psalm is being sung. In the mean time each of the mourners places a piece of money on the table for his acceptance. This ceremony is regarded as a token of respect to the deceased, although it was no doubt originally intended to compensate the clergyman for praying for the soul of the departed. In some Welsh parishes, also, a similar custom, called "spade-money," is kept up. After the corpse has been committed to its resting-place, the grave-digger presents his spade as a receptacle for donations, these offerings, which often amount to a goodly sum, being regarded as his perquisite. In Yorkshire, at the funerals of the rich in former days, it was customary to hand "burnt wine" to the company in a silver flagon, out of which every one drank. This beverage seems to have been a heated preparation of port-wine with sugar and spice, and should any remain, it was sent round in the flagon to the houses of friends for distribution. This, of course, was a species of funeral feast, called in the north of England an "arval"—a lingering survival of the offerings that originally were made to the ghost of the deceased.

Among the superstitions that still cling to the church-yard may be mentioned one that has existed from the most remote period, and which has invested it with an atmosphere of dread—it having been generally supposed that they are haunted by specters and apparitions. Indeed, it has been truly pointed out by Mr. Tylor that through all the changes of religious thought from first to last in the course of human history, the hovering ghosts of the dead make the midnight burial-ground a place where men's flesh creeps with terror.

Our Young Folks.

WHAT THE MOTHER-HEN SAID.

Cluckity, *cluckity, cluckity, cluck!*
Had ever a hen such wonderful luck?
Ten little puffity, fluffity things,
Nestling so cosily under my wings.

Hickory, hickory, dickory, dock!
Mrs Grimalkin gave me a shock!
Seeing my Top-knot taking a drink,
She put out her paw as quick as a wink.

But Top-knot is smart, and Top-knot is spry,
She gave puss the slip in the glance of an eye;
Top's a *wonderful* chick! It's easy to see
What a belle, by and by, my Top-knot will be.

Higgity, piggity, wigglety, wee!
I've nine other darlings lovely as she;
Floss, like a puff-ball, pretty as silk,
And Snow-drop and Trotty, whiter than milk;

And Puck, who will do me great credit some day
(To hear that chick crow is good as a play);
And Speckle, and Friskie, and Hussey, and Prink,
And Brownie, and Blackie, *now* what do you think?

Was ever a prouder mother than I?
Were ever such chickens under the sky?
Lambs, kittens, babies and other wee things,
Are pretty, but dear me, *they haven't wings!*

—*Wide-Awake.*

CELIA'S COMPOSITION.

Celia was twelve years old; a bright little girl at her lessons, anxious to be at the head of her classes, and a general favorite in school. No matter how long or hard the lesson, the first little face to brighten as the teacher marked it off to the class was sure to be Celia Brown's; hers the first voice to exclaim: "Oh, I reckon we can get it if we try right hard; and I certainly will do *that!*"

Accordingly, Miss Nelson was prepared to receive a bright look of acquiescence from Celia, at least, when she one morning announced to the little class that a composition would be expected from each one on the Friday of the following week, but she was disappointed. To her surprise, Celia's face said as plainly as words could have spoken, "I can't possibly do it, Miss Nelson, and it's of no sort of use to try."

"What are we to write a composition *about*, Miss Nelson?" asked one girl, whose face matched Celia's in expression. "I don't know enough to *tell* of any one single thing in this whole world!"

Miss Nelson smiled.

"Oh, yes, you do, my dear," she replied, pleasantly. "I think you will find you know something worth telling about *salt* when you put on your thinking-cap and make up your mind to try. At any rate, that is what I expect you to do—*try!* And I will let you know afterward how nearly you have succeeded to my satisfaction."

Celia Brown never said a word. She just closed her lips tightly and shook her head in utter despair. It was of no use to talk to her; a composition she could not write. Pages of spelling, half the grammar or geography, miles of arithmetic, would not have daunted her anything like the mere word composition. She could not think of anything else that afternoon, and at the tea table she looked so abstracted and was so unusually silent, that her big brother Tom, just home from college, desired to be told if her tongue had gone out to spend the evening.

"O sister, how you *did* practice your music lesson this afternoon," added little Willie: "you just banged *and* tore! I reckon she didn't count her one, two, three's much, mamma!"

"Mamma, Miss Nelson has told all the girls in my class to write a composition for next Friday," said Celia, disregarding her brothers' personal remarks, and looking anxiously at her mother; "and I know I can't do it. I just couldn't do it if it would save my life; I would rather undertake to recite seventeen chapters of history!"

"Nonsense," said her father, laughing; "it is quite time you learned to use you mind in composition. Seventeen or twenty-seven chapters of history will not do you half the good that six lines of carefully-written composition will do. And you will not find it difficult, Celia, if you do not make up your mind against it. Did Miss Nelson give you a subject?"

"Yes, papa—salt," was the reply, in a disgusted tone. "The idea of such a subject! I can't think how anything interesting could be written upon salt!"

"Oh, write about the 'cat,' exclaimed Willie. "I wouldn't write about salt, either; nasty stuff! Just write on the 'cat.' I'll tell you exactly what to say: *I* can write a composition. Pooh! it's easy. Wait till mamma sends me to school. Now you just write this, 'The cat is a real nice animal. It's got three white feet and one black one. It's got a spot on its breast, too. It has four dear little kittens; and it washes her face every morning with her paws. She *licks* her face—this ain't nice; but what can you expect from a poor silly cat? It don't know any better. And ours is named Thomas Matilda, after nurse's brother and sister!"

"Bravo, Willie!" exclaimed his father, joining in the hearty laughter of the others at the little boy. "So you can write a composition. I'd advise sister to call on you for help, by all means."

"That composition might do for you, Willie, dear," said Celia, still laughing; "but I think it would sound rather queer to Miss Nelson."

"Why, you needn't care *how* it sounds. Need she, papa? She just tells every single bit she knows. That is the way I'm going to do when I write compositions."

"That is tolerably sound advice," said her mother, looking at her, with a smile. "Just put the thought of 'how it will sound' quite out of your mind, and write down all you know about salt."

The next day was Saturday. About ten o'clock Celia sat down at the little table in her bedroom, and made up her mind to *try*.

"Salt!" she wrote at the top of her paper, and then there came an awful pause. "Oh, dear, *what* shall I say about it? 'Salt! Salt—' Well, I'm sure I don't know *what* it is exactly, unless it's *salt!* and here Celia's thoughts were interrupted by a laugh. "I'll get old Webster," she continued, thinking aloud. "Let's see now," and she whirled the leaves rapidly to the S's. "Um! here it is: 'Salt—chloride of sodium—a substance used for seasoning certain kinds of food, and for the preservation of meat, etc. It is found native in the earth, or it is produced by evaporation and crystallization from water impregnated with saline particles.' Well, I do declare! If that's all Mr. Webster has to say about salt, how should I be expected to know any more? The idea! Why, I don't know any more, and I don't *know* that! Well, I do say Miss Nelson is unreasonable." Celia wriggled herself nearly off her chair, sighed, groaned, fanned herself, bit her pen-handle, and finally, at Willie's call, jumped up and ran from the room, leaving the composition still to be written.

She and her little brother mounted the see-saw in the garden, and during this pleasant pastime Celia interrogated him upon what he knew about salt! Wille didn't know much, but what he did know he generously told.

"Salt," he informed her, was very good to make ice-cream with. That cows liked salt," he also told her, "although *he* didn't."

Celia laughed so at this that she could not seesaw any longer, and she went back to the house to take her music lesson and afterward she drove out with her mother; and the day went, and she entered her room at night to find the big sheet of blank paper staring up at her in mute surprise as she looked down upon it, before consigning it to the table drawer.

She tried again on Monday, slightly, and on Tuesday. Wednesday she had no time, that being one of her music days, and Thursday was her very last day of grace. She made a very strong effort then, but at her very best she could think of nothing superior to what Mr. Webster's dictionary said; and, in fact, nothing at *all* beyond one simple fact, that "salt was a very exceedingly useful substance."

In despair she laid the matter before her mother.

"My dear," said Mrs. Brown, "if you have honestly tried and cannot write a composition, you may yourself write a letter to Miss Nelson asking to be excused, instead of my doing it. Tell her exactly how hard you have tried, and ask her to give you an easier subject."

Mrs. Brown's eyes twinkled as she gave this advice, and her little daughter went up to her room much comforted. Here is the letter she wrote:

Dear Miss Nelson: Mamma told me that I might write this letter, and say that I *cannot* write a composition on salt. She says, perhaps you will be so kind as to give me an easier subject. I don't know anything about salt—at least, not much, except that it is dug out of the earth, and is then a mineral; and sometimes we get it by letting sea-water evaporate. I am very fond of salt, and for that reason I know I ought to be ashamed of not knowing more about it. Last week, Mary, our cook, made the bread and forgot to salt it, and none of us could eat it. It certainly is a very useful article. Did you know that, to get the the silver away from the rock it is buried in, they roast the pieces with *salt?* I read this in a lovely book called "Nelly's Silver Mine." Of course they do something else, but they do this, too, and I remember, because I felt such an interest in the very word. I didn't know, till I saw it in the dictionary, that an old sailor is called a "salt;" I suppose because he follows the salt water. Are there not a great many different sorts of salt? I was thinking about them this morning, because I happened to see the bottle that has the salt of lemons in it; you take out iron rust from linen with that. And there is saltpeter, and salt of harts horn, and the salts you take for medicine. And mamma says we could scarcely have any food that would be fit to eat without salt. I must tell you what a funny thing Willie said when I was talking about my composition to mamma. He said, "Tell Miss Nelson that salt is the only thing that will catch a pigeon, only I never *can* get near enough to throw it on the tail." Well, my letter is done. I am very sorry to disappoint you, dear Miss Nelson, and I will try *real hard* next time. I tried this time, and I could have done it, only I know of nothing to say.

I am your affectionate scholar,

Celia Brown.

To Celia's great astonishment, Miss Nelson insisted upon considering this letter a "composition"—as, of course, it was; and she read it herself before the whole school. The secret of Celia's ability to write a letter where she could not write a "composition" lay in the fact that she unconsciously followed little Willie's advice and wrote what she *thought* and *felt* without regard to "how it might sound."—*Churchman.*

Tom, the Bootblack.

One day, as I sat at my office-desk writing busily, I heard a knock at the door. "Come in," said I.

The door opened, and there stood a small boy, very ragged and rather dirty. "What do you want?" I asked, sharply; for I was annoyed at the interruption.

"Please, sir," said the boy, will you set me up?"

It was such a queer request that I laughed outright. "Set you up?" said I. "You are not a bowling-pin, are you? What in the world do you mean?"

"Please, sir, I want to be set up in business."

"Oh! you want me to give you some money."

"No, sir, I only want to borrow."

"And how much do you want?"

"Only twenty cents, sir."

"What kind of business will that set you up in?"

"The newspaper business, sir. I want to buy papers."

"And you promise to pay the money back?"

"Yes, sir."

There was something about the boy that pleased me. I handed him two dimes, and he went away. A friend who happened in, just as I was closing the transaction, expressed the opinion that I had been imposed upon. "You will never see that little rogue again," said he.

Day after day passed, and I began to think that my friend was right. The boy had not come back. But, just as I had about given him up, he appeared, and repaid the money honestly. I was so pleased that I made him a present of the amount, and added a trifle to it.

Two years or more afterwards, I stopped one day at a street-corner to have my shoes cleaned. As I placed my foot on the block, the bootblack looked up in my face, and said, "I should like to shine your shoes for nothing, sir."

"Why so?" said I.

"Don't you remember, sir, how you set me up?"

Then I recognized my old acquaintance, though he had grown so that I should hardly have known him. He was thriving, he told me, in his new line of business, and had no occasion now to borrow any more money.

He had improved greatly in his looks, and, what was better, he had been improving himself in many other ways. He had learned to read and write, and, being ready to turn his hand to any honest work, he was trying bravely to make his way in the world.

All this happened a good while ago. I kept watch of that boy, and took great pleasure in finding that my first impression of him was correct. Whatever he undertook to do he did with a will, and he soon found a better employment than blacking shoes.

He is now a prosperous merchant, and, if I were to tell you his name, you would hardly believe that he ever could have been Tom, the bootblack.—*Alfred Selwyn, in Nursery.*

Poverty is, except where there is an actual want of food and raiment, a thing more imaginary than real. The shame of poverty—the shame of being thought poor—is a great and fatal weakness, though arising in this country from the fashion of the times themselves.

Friends are discovered rather than made; they are people who are in their own nature friends; only they don't know each other; but certain things, like poetry, music and paintings, are like the Freemason's sign—they reveal the initiated to each!

If all were as willing to be pleasant and as anxious to please in their own homes as they are in the company of their neighbors they would have the happiest homes in the world.