A Georgia editor described a defaulter as "six feet tall and $10,000 short."

Germany has a bit of a quarrel with Haiti; she sends a war-vessel and threatens to blow up the capital if her demands for reparation are not granted in twelve hours. The United States has a worse grievance with Siam; she makes a claim, and instead of seizing a port, she accepts arbitration, and wins her case.

Necessity no longer exists for American heiresses to marry titled foreigners to secure a title. All they have to do now is to send their American "laddie" to Italy, where he can become anything from a baron to a prince at prices ranging from $1000 to $8000. Thanks to Italy, there is no further reason for American fortunes going to decayed foreign nobles for an empty title.

Boston continues to hold its position of the third largest of Atlantic grain-exporting points. Exports 1897 and 1896 are: New York, wheat and flour, 46,235,000 bushels and 40,150,000; corn, 33,206,000 and 19,100,000; oats, 34,171,000 and 15,880,000. Baltimore, wheat and flour, 25,770,000 and 20,386,000; corn, 43,018,000 and 26,382,000; oats, 5,270,000 and 6,920,000. Boston, wheat and flour, 15,030,000 and 16,398,000; corn, 9,425,000 and 5,893,000; oats, 4,582,000 and 1,919,000. We here find totals in bushels of all grains the past two years: New York, 114,155,000 and 75,130,000; Baltimore, 74,088,000 and 53,688,000; Boston, 29,037,000 and 24,210,000; the three ports showing respective increases of 52, 38 and 20 per cent., the bulk of which is corn and oats.

The French Government, in order to gratify the curiosity of the literary class, who have doubted whether the bodies of Voltaire and Rousseau are really buried in the Pantheon, has ordered their graves and coffins to be opened. This was done on December 18 in the presence of a crowd so pushingly inquisitive that the officials were nearly jostled out, and the skeletons were found intact. The skull of Voltaire indeed still sneered, and was recognized at once. That of Rousseau also corresponded with his bust, and was not shattered, as a legend had it, by any pistol-bullet. One wonders, if Voltaire and Rousseau were looking on, what they thought of the proceeding. If they are unchanged in their present world they are delighted, for nothing could be more gratifying to their intellectual vanity.

The great powers of Europe, actuated chiefly by commercial ideas, are still dividing among themselves the territories of non-progressive and non-Christian potentates. Commercial privileges are the modern incentive to empire, not land hunger, or glory, as in former ages. Africa, at the door of Europe, has already been pretty completely appropriated. There remain for division Turkey, Persia, Siam, China and Corea. As to what is left of Turkey the division proceeds but slowly, owing to the inability of the powers to agree upon their respective shares. Siam has recently lost largely to France. Corea is in dispute between Russia, and Japan. China is in the process of distribution. Japan, Russia, France and England have all recently had "whacks" at its vast area, and Germany is now seeking, it seems, to get even with its rivals. China is the coming Africa. Its distribution among the powers is to be the next great problem of European politics.

A writer in the Nashville American warns the cotton planters of the South not to place too much confidence in the so-called "African limbless cotton," which is described as growing twenty feet high and as being prolific enough so work a revolution commercially. Its height is no wonder, the writer says, even in parts of the South. Cotton grows high enough in the Red River country to hide a man riding through it on horseback, and its yield is so large that much of it is left in the fields when frost catches it late in December. But the Red River cotton plants, when transported to Georgia, Alabama or Mississippi, produce only the class or kind of cotton raised in those States. It is entirely a question of soil and climate, the correspondent says. The finely-flavored tobacco of Cuba degenerates when raised in this country. California trees and fruit will not grow in the Southern States, and Sea Island cotton planted on the mainland disappoints the planter. Nature is not likely to reverse her laws, and the correspondent advises the planter who wishes to experiment with twenty-foot cotton to buy Red River seed at thirty cents a bushel, instead of the "limbless" at $500.

LIFE.

Life is like the ocean,
Broad and deep;
Billows of emotion
O'er it sweep;
We must battle boldly
With the tide,
Lest it waft us coldly
Far and wide.

Life is bright or dreary
Where we dwell;
Though our feet are weary,
All is well;
Ever bravely pressing
On our way,
Fairer is the blessing
Day by day.

Life is like a jewel
In the rough;
Cut it, be not cruel,
Just enough;
Polish, till its glory,
Full, divine,
Tells a noble story,
Even thine.

—Cora C. Bass, in Boston Transcript.

OCTAVIA'S HOUSEKEEPING.

BY HELEN WHITNEY CLARK.

"THEY are coming, Viney!" Miss Nancy Crowfoot tucked her ball of blue yarn into her apron-pocket, and shading her eyes with one hand, looked down the lane, where tall mulberry-trees threw their long shadows on the velvety grass.

"Coming, Miss Nancy!" echoed a sweet voice.

And pretty Viney Mavis hastily shoved a gooseberry pie into the oven, and came out on the back porch, with its drapery of pink and violet-cupped morning-glory vines.

She, too, gazed eagerly down the long land, and soon the sapphire-blue eyes sparkled and the pink-tinted cheeks broke into dimpling smiles.

"It's them!" she cried. "I could tell old Dapple's jog-trot a mile away."

Viney had been up since peep of day, when the first touch of pink blushed in the eastern sky, and when the thrush and the cat-bird were thrilling their earliest morning peans.

She had milked the sleepy-looking cows, their dew-laps still wet from contact with dripping grass, and had breakfast ready just as the crimson sun was peeping over the cloud-capped bluffs, lining the shores of the great Father of Waters.

It was an extraordinary occasion, as Farmer Mavis was going to the railroad station, twelve miles distant, to bring home his only daughter, Octavia, from boarding school.

"Don't you bother yourself about breakfast, Viney," said the farmer, good-naturedly, as he lighted his cob-pipe at the kitchen fire. "I kin eat a snack, and hev breakfast when we git home."

But Viney would not hear to it, and with her own hands she fried her uncle's favorite pancakes, yellow with eggs, poured his coffee, and set a glass of fresh, sweet milk at his plate.

"Dinner will be all ready when you get back, uncle, so bring a good appetite," she said, kissing him good-by.

It was a happy family that dwelt at the old brown farm-house.

Farmer Mavis was good nature personified, and Miss Nancy, the housekeeper, was a sweet-tempered old maid; not so very old, either, for youthful crinkles still lurked in her soft brown hair, and her cheeks were as rosy as a winter pear-main just touched by the frost. She was a distant connection of Farmer Mavis, and had kept house for him ever since the death of his wife, six years ago.

Viney was his neice, and was as dear to him as an own daughter.

Great were the preparations which were made for Octavia's home-coming. Miss Nancy had secured the windows and make up the plump bed, with fresh, lavender-scented sheets and pillow-slips, and the best homespun coverlet.

And Viney had cooked a substantial dinner—roast chicken and cream biscuit, new potatoes and green peas and cauliflower, with custard and gooseberry pie for dessert.

In the meantime, Octavia was on the cars, speeding along at the rate of a mile a minute. She was a sharp-featured, thin-lipped girl, with light hair, and face as freckled as a turkey's egg.

"I am going home to keep house for my pa," she had said, affectionately, to her girl cronies. "To-be-sure, he has a sort of relative keeping house now--and old maid--but I shall soon set her adrift. I detest old-maids!"

In due time Octavia reached home. She bestowed a cool nod on Miss Nancy and touched Viney's finger-tips frigidly.

"Mercy on this!" she cried, in a thin high voice, as she entered the house. "Dinner at this hour? How horrid! What does make pa keep such old-fashioned hours?"

Miss Nancy and Viney stood aghast at this unlooked-for reception.

"We had it earlier than usual on your account, Octavia," ventured her cousin. "We thought you might need something."

"Need something, indeed!" sniffed Octavia, with a sneer on her thin lips. "Do you s'pose I've been starved where I came from? Besides, I had a lunch on the cars. I'm going up to my room to take a nap now," she added. "It will be soon enough for dinner after that," and she swung out of the room without waiting for a reply.

"Wal, ef that don't beat all!" grumbled Farmer Mavis, his honest blue eyes expanding with surprise. "Ef Octavy thinks we are goin' to wait for her to nap afore we eat dinner, she kin think so, that's all! Fetch along the coffee, Viney."

"I shall take the head of the table myself now, Miss Nancy," declared Octavia, as she came down to breakfast, in a pink morning-dress, not at all suitable to her light complexion and red hair. "Pa can't afford to keep a hired housekeeper, now I'm at home, so you had best look out for another situation. Of course we could give you references for honesty, and so forth," and Octavia jingled the teaspoons in the cups, and took her place at the head of the table with a flourish of trumpets, as it were.

Great was the surprise of Farmer Mavis when Octavia informed him that Miss Nancy was going away.

"Going away!" he repeated, staring half stupidly at his daughter.

"That's what I said, ain't it?" snapped Octavia, tartly. "Going away. She knows you don't need two housekeepers; and now I'm here, of course it's my place."

So there was no help for it, and Farmer Mavis harnessed up the horse, and helped Miss Nancy into the spring-wagon.

"That's the last of her, thank goodness!" muttered Octavia to herself when old Dapple had trotted out of sight; "and I'd give Viney her walking papers, too, if it wasn't that I really need somebody to do the help of the kitchen work. But I'll teach her to know her place. She's no better than a servant-girl, if she is pa's niece. And when Archie Grey comes to pay the visit he promised I shall keep her out of his sight, or of course she'd be a-setting her cap for him when she knows how rich he is."

The sun had slipped quite out of sight in the crimson west, and night-hawks and bats were flittering about in search of their prey, when the sound of wheels was heard in the lane, and old Dapple came trotting into sight as briskly as if he had been in the pasture all day, instead of traveling twenty-four miles to and from the railroad station.

"Pa's come!" announced Octavia, sailing out to the back porch, where Viney sat, with drooping head and aching heart, sighing over the happy days that were gone forever. "And—good gracious! he's brought Miss Nancy back again!" she cried, snappishly, as two figures came up the walk in the purple gloaming.

"Oh, no, Octavy, I hain't brought Miss Nancy back!" returned her father, good naturedly. "This here's my wife, Mrs. Jeremiah Mavis. I hadn't no use fur two housekeepers, you know," he added with a sly twinkle in his eye, "so I concluded to keep Nancy."

Octavia tossed her head, and flounced off to her own room.

"I won't stand it!" she declared to herself. "I'll marry Archie Grey, and snap my fingers at pa and all the rest of them."

She went sulkily down to breakfast the next morning, without deigning a glance at her stepmother, who sat at the head of the table, pouring out coffee. Her father seemed in high spirits.

"Wal, Octavy, if you can't be the housekeeper, you kin soon hev Viney's place, I reckon," he remarked, with twinkling eyes. "One weddin' makes many, they say; an' she's a-goin' to be married afore long."

"Married!"

Octavia was thunderstruck.

"Yes," said Farmer Mavis, while Viney blushed like a brier-rose. "Archie Grey has been a-comin' to see her off an' on fur a good spell now; an' yesterday we met him nigh the parsonage, an' he asked me plump out for Viney. So I said I reckon I could spare her, seein' you was home now, to take her place."

Viney made a pretty, dimpled, blushing little bride, but Octavia is an old maid still.—Saturday Night.

A Color-Bearer's Medal.

During the war the color-bearer of the Ninety-ninth Illinois Regiment was Thomas I. Higginson, now of Hannibal, Mo. In the assault on Vicksburg, May 22, 1863, the Ninety-ninth Regiment was ordered to charge without looking back. It was confronted by the Second Texas Regiment, and sent back in confusion. But Higginson literally obeyed orders. He did not look back, but bounded forward, his colors held high and bravely flying. When he was within forty yards of the enemy, so great was their admiration for his bravery that word was passed along the line that he was not to be shot, and all firing ceased. When at length Higginson realized his predicament, he turned to retreat, but was ordered inside the Confederate breastworks. He was held by the enemy for several days, and treated more like a guest than a prisoner. A short time ago the Secretary of War granted him a medal on the affidavit of several of the soldiers of the Texan regiment.—Success.

To Build a Thousand Bridges.

The United States capitalists who have taken from the Ecuador Government the contract for building a railroad from Guayaquil to Quito will receive, according to the New York Commercial Advertiser, for the work $17,532,000. At the starting point, Quito, the workmen will be 9350 feet above the sea level; at Santa Rosa, 9986 feet; at Tambillo, 8250 feet; San Miguel, 8304 feet; Ambato, 8100 feet. The height of Chimborazo will be crossed at an altitude of 12,300 feet, and there are other points where 10,460, 11,800 feet are reached. The grades between these points are very steep and abrupt, and 830 bridges, varying from those of 500 feet span downward, will have to be constructed. The road will be about 404 miles in length at an average cost per mile of $43,396 in gold. No other railroad in the world so often approaches such great heights, over ground so difficult or crosses so many streams and rivers.