

THE CAGE MAKER.



IN the town of the ancient kingdom of Castile there lived, in former ages, a youth called Bartolo, who tried to eke out a living by making cages for birds, and taking them around to sell at the neighboring villages. But his trade was a poor one, and he judged himself in luck if he sold one cage in the day, and, as may be supposed, he knew what sorrow and privation were.

One day as he was proceeding to a village he heard the sounds of revelry, the buzz of many people, and the strains of a band of music. This merry-making was a procession of children dressed in white, carrying in their midst a beautiful child crowned with roses, in a chariot covered with white satin, and ornamented with acacia and myrtle.

This procession was in honor of Maya, the personification of spring, and took place to announce the entry of spring. In front of the little chariot some children danced and held in their hands tin platters for contributions, and, as may be imagined, all, or nearly all, the spectators dropped their coins into them.

Bartolo moved away in a desponding mood, saying to himself as he walked on: "Is this the justice of the world? There they are, flinging their money into these platters just because these children come in procession to announce to them that it is the month of May, as though they could not know it by looking at the almanac. They barter and grind me down to the lowest price for my cages, even when I chance to sell one!"

Full of these bitter thoughts, he walked on sadly, for the voices of two importunate enemies were making themselves heard within him—these were hunger and thirst; the one clamored for food and the other for drink. Bartolo had nothing in his wallet but his clasp knife, and had had naught for his breakfast but hopes, and these made him sharp and active.

He had reached a plantation, when he perceived a well-dressed individual coming toward him. Pressed by hunger, Bartolo, taking his cap off respectfully, approached and said: "Excuse me, sir, but could you kindly give me a trifle? I promise I will return it as soon as I earn some money."

"Don't you think that it is a shameful thing for a man like you, young and with a good, healthy appearance, to be



A BREAKFAST FIT FOR A KING. demanding charity of people? Does it not strike you that you have a duty to earn your living by working at your trade?"

"Yes, sir, certainly, but my trade does not fulfill its own duty. Most people like to see the birds flying about free rather than in cages, and therefore, day by day, I find myself poorer than before."

At first the stranger doubted what he heard, but the bird-cage maker gave him so detailed an account of his work and the small profits he derived that he became interested and sympathized with his ill-fortune. Bartolo was a man who always knew how to excite great interest in himself.

"Come, come," the stranger said, smiling, "I will do something for you. As I cannot find customers for your cages, I will afford you a powerful means by which you shall never more be in want."

He then blew a whistle, and Bartolo saw flying before him a bird blue as the sky, which came and perched on one of his cages.

"See here," added the stranger, "what will compensate for all your past misery. From this day forward you have only to formulate a wish and say slowly and distinctly: 'Bluest of blue birds, do your duty' and your wish will be granted to you."

"By my faith!" cried the bird-cage maker, "but I will try it at once. For the last twenty years I have wished to kill hunger: 'Bluest of blue birds, do your duty!'"

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth than he saw suddenly spread before him on the grass a breakfast fit for

a prince, laid on a service of exquisite silver and glass and the whitest of cloths. Bartolo, astonished, flung himself on his knees before his benefactor to thank him, but he raised him up, saying:

"I am the good genius of the honest workmen of Castile. Sit down and eat without fear. Take advantage of your lucky star," and then suddenly disappeared.

Bartolo reverently bent down and kissed the spot on which he had stood, unable to find adequate expression of his gratitude. He then sat down and ate his breakfast.

After his meal, Bartolo judged that a man who had feasted in such an elegant manner ought to have better clothing than his well-worn suit; and, lifting his staff, he cried to the bird:

"Bluest of blue birds, do your duty!" In an instant his old suit became transformed into one of richest velvet, embroidered in gold and silver, and his rough staff into a splendid horse fully caparisoned, and having around his neck a collar of silver bells.

More astonished than ever, Bartolo suspended to the saddle the cage with the blue bird, leaped on the horse and went his way as proud of his dress as a donkey of its ears.

Setting spurs to his horse, he soon reached the gates of a splendid castle. Some feast was taking place within. The guests were all seated under a shady bower, deploring that they had been disappointed of the minstrels who were to have played.

Bartolo, on learning this, advanced to the bower, and, after elegantly saluting the lord and lady of the castle, in a most refined way said:

"If it be right for a simple knight to offer his services in such a distinguished company of rank and beauty, I think I could promise to provide what you are requiring."

"Oh, do! at once, please!" cried all the ladies, who were longing for a dance.

"Bluest of blue birds, do your duty!" said Bartolo.

Suddenly, in the distance, was heard the noise of many feet, and a troop of musicians with their instruments appeared, to the great delight of the company.

The lord of the castle, who knew how all this had been done through the agency of the bird, and being himself of an inordinately avaricious nature, thought he might do a fine stroke of business were he to purchase the bird. Hence, calling his unknown guest away to his study, he proposed to him to purchase the bird for what price he should quote.

"You would never give me my price," replied Bartolo.

"For it I would give my castle, with its nine forests," said the lord of the castle.

"It is not enough!"

"Very well, I will add my olive plantations and vineyards."

"That is still insufficient," cried Bartolo.

"I will add the orchards, gardens and houses."

"I want something else!"

"What! still more? Why, man, you must want Paradise itself!"

"Not so; I want what you can give me this very moment. I want your daughter with whom I danced just now! Let her be my bride."

"What! my daughter?" cried the old miser, in an ecstasy of joy; "by my faith, we shall soon conclude the bargain. Why did you not say so before?"

He went to seek the girl, and told her of the engagement he had entered into. But his daughter, in utter amazement, cried out:

"But what if he is a wicked elf, and all he does be witchcraft?"

"You have an amulet of coral hanging from your neck; it is an antidote against all witchery."

"And what if he be Satan himself?"

"I will give you a piece of blessed candle, and he will have no power over you," replied the unrelenting father.

Taking her hand, he led her to the stranger, who was already on his horse, and assisted her to mount behind her future husband. Taking the cage with the bluest of the birds, he watched the retreating forms of the pair as the horse carried them swifter than the wind, and when out of sight, he proceeded to join his guests. The company were all gathered in knots discussing the extraordinary powers of the bird, and all the events which had taken place.

"Peace! peace!" cried the lord of the castle, as he entered; "I will perform more marvelous things than ever he did. I have given him my daughter to wed in exchange for the bird, and this blue bird will render me more wealthy than the King of Aragon. Approach, and see the wonders I will work with it."

He took the cage, and lifting it up to look at the bird, was astonished to find that it was not a blue bird at all, but a large gray bird, which turned to stare at him in an insolent manner, gave a fierce peck at the door of the cage with its beak, flung it open and flew out of the window, uttering a terrible screech. The lord of the castle stood with open mouth, not knowing what to do or say. His guests broke out in peals of laughter at his discomfiture and the well-deserved punishment for his unseemly

avarice of exchanging his beautiful daughter for a worthless bird.

Meanwhile, Bartolo was galloping on with his bride to the nearest town to be married, and when he arrived at the first hostelry he wished to dismount and engage the most splendid suite of apartments for his intended bride, but he found himself utterly penniless. He had not calculated that in parting with the bird he had parted with his luck, and therefore, as soon as he dismounted the horse disappeared, and his elegant dress became changed for the shabby one he had worn before he met the kind individual who had wished to befriend him. When the beautiful daughter of the lord of the castle beheld the transformation which had taken place, she ran back to her father as fast as she could, fright lending wings to her feet.

Bartolo had to return to his old life of making cages and to his miserable existence.

HERE IS REALISM.

The Remarkable Performance of a Chinese Ventriloquist.

A man, who witnessed the performance, gives the following description of what a ventriloquist in China did: The ventriloquist was seated behind a screen, where there were only a chair, a table, a fan and a ruler. With the ruler he rapped on the table to enforce silence, and when everybody had ceased speaking, there was suddenly heard the barking of a dog. Then we heard the movements of a woman. She had been waked by the dog, and was shaking her husband. We were just expecting to hear the man and wife talking together, when a child began to cry. To pacify it the mother gave it food; we could hear it drinking and crying at the same time. The mother spoke to it soothingly, and then rose to change its clothes. Meanwhile another child had wakened and was beginning to make a noise. The father scolded it, while the baby continued crying. By and by the whole family went back to bed and fell asleep. The patter of a mouse was heard. It climbed up some vase and upset it. We heard the clatter of the vase as it fell. The woman coughed in her sleep. Then cries of "Fire! fire!" were heard. The mouse had upset the lamp; the bed curtains were on fire. The husband and wife waked up, shouted and screamed, the children cried, thousands of people came running and shouting. Children cried, dogs barked, the walls came crashing down, squibs and crackers exploded. The fire brigade came racing up. Water was pumped up in torrents, and hissed in the flames. The representation was so true to life that every one rose to his feet and was starting away, when a second blow of the ruler on the table commanded silence. We rushed behind the screen, but there was nothing there except the ventriloquist, his table, his chair and his ruler.

HUMOROUS PARAGRAPHS.

Chinamen should make good pool players. They all have their own cues.—Philadelphia Record.

Prospective boarder: "Do you have good milk?" Summer landlord: "Do we! Why, this place is only forty minutes from the city."—Life.

Some of the wheat is getting so big that the farmers are using cross-cut saws to get it down. It will be floated to market by the boom company.—Minneapolis Journal.

Ten-year darky boy: "Mammy mammy, I can't reach the roosting nest on my toes." Mammy Johnsing: "Stan' on your heels, chile. Ain't you got no interlectrality?"—Boston Standard.

Prohibition missionary: "You are so poor only because you are intoxicated half your time." The obnoxious one: "Thash not it, gent. I'm only 'toxicated half m' time 'cause I am so poor!"—Puck.

Landlord: "Did you ever taste anything to match this red wine?" Customer: "Oh, yes. Only the other week I stuck the wrong end of a penholder in my mouth by mistake."—Lustige Blaetter.

"Only a shraut? He! He! I go four kings. Shee 'm?" "Eh? What's that? You've got two kings? You're seeing double, my friend." "Tha' sho? Al r! Fill 'em up agin!"—New York Recorder.

Mrs. Higbee: "I think you had better go for the doctor, George; Johnny complains of pains in his head." Higbee: "I guess it's nothing serious. He has had them before." Mrs. Higbee: "Yes, but never on Saturday."—Brooklyn Life.

"Nobody ever hears of him," said one statesman of another. "He is rather obscure." "Obscure is no name for it. Why, that man's so utterly unknown that he hasn't even been mentioned as a presidential possibility."—Washington Star.

St. Peter: "Are they all here?" Gabriel: "All but New York and Philadelphia." St. Peter: "What's the matter with them?" Gabriel: "I couldn't wake Philadelphia and New York had to get the harp out of pawn."—Cincinnati Tribune.

"What do you think you are going to do?" asked the bartender. "Take a bath?" "You said 'er," answered Dismal Dawson. "Feller last night at de Salvation Army told me dat a man was no good less'n he was inwardly washed."—Indianapolis News.

OLDER WOMEN REIGN.

POPULARITY OF YOUNG GIRLS IS WANING.

All Homages Seem to Turn Toward the Woman Who Has Left the Fateful Age of Thirty Far Behind Her—Young Woman of France.



THE reign of the young girl, and even that of the young matron, is, to all intents and purposes at an end, for today all homages seem to turn toward the woman who has left the fateful age of 30 behind her! Heroines, both on the stage and in novels, are recruited from the ranks of veteran mondaines, and in society we can daily witness the amazing successes of the "ripe" coquette. Mme. la Comtesse de Martel, the witty novelist, better known under the pen name of Gyp, is responsible for this rather unexpected turn of affairs in a great measure. The vogue of her delightful novelettes is undeniable, and so is the influence created by them on all classes of society and, considering that the exquisite type of Parisienne which she so cleverly describes in every one of her books is invariably that of a woman between 30 and 40, one can hardly be surprised that we who have unfortunately, lost the first bloom of youth should have found in her works an incentive to maintain our supremacy on the social battlefield. I may add—and this without an atom of sarcastic intention—that Gyp is herself one of these charming instances of a "grande dame" who, although the mother of grownup sons, is still, both in appearance, in manner, and also in thought and deed, thoroughly young and "seduisante." Moreover, she is by no means the only writer who adopts as the principal "character" of her books that of a woman past 30. Henry Greville, in "Un Vieux Menage," depicts admirably the extreme fascination which can be exercised by a woman of 36, even after twenty years of the wear and tear of married life. All this is very consoling to a number of us, and, for one, do not see—perhaps for the very same motive as Gyp does—why it is absolutely necessary to be an ingenue in order to be a pleasure to the eye and mind of the world in general.

Here in Paris the example of the emancipated English maiden and that of the pretty independent American "Miss" has for some time past been feebly followed by some of our young girls, much to the indignation of staid old matrons, and greatly to the delight of the masculine element; hence the importation into our midst of the bicycling young lady, the tennis-playing young lady, the amateur-actress young lady, and even the cricketing young lady, but either our "demoiselles" do not know yet how to make the best of this relaxation of the cast iron rules which have held them bound for so many centuries past, or then it is because it takes more than a few years to so completely change the views and habits of a whole population, for the fact remains that the "too modernized young lady" did not take in France, and that even the men soon became tired of this fin-de-siecle innovation. The healthful sports remain for both young and old, but the preference accorded to very youthful unmarried women is, as I remarked before, decidedly on the wane.—Paris Letter in Vogue.

A Knowing Mare.

The instinct of animals sometimes approaches as closely the processes of reasoning as to puzzle a person greatly to tell why it shouldn't be called reason. A blooded mare belonging to Mr. Murray Hickson, of Cookman, N. J., has a gangling, long-legged colt that is always in mischief. Not long ago some acid used by Hickson's daughter in amateur photography was left standing about, and the fool colt drank it all up, to the wild confusion of its internal arrangements. Seeing at a glance what had happened, the sensible old mare pushed and pulled the colt to the wood ash leach and forced it to drink some of the diluted lye in the kettle under the spout. Diluted lye is not a pleasant beverage, but the thoroughly frightened colt obeyed directions and was shortly relieved, the alkali of the lye neutralizing the effect of the acid, according to the familiar chemical rule.

The Senate Carpet.

There is lots of money for the company that secures the contract for making the carpets for the United States senate. It is especially woven from an exclusive design. This design is registered in the patent office, which prevents other manufacturers from making the same thing. The quality is known to the trade as extra super. After supplying the carpeting required for the contract the company is able to make a good thing in selling to wealthy people who are willing to pay a large figure for having the same kind of carpeting in their houses as is used in the United States senate.

NOTES OF THE DAY.

Salt water is slightly heavier than fresh water.
A copperhead snake four feet long was killed in Brooklyn the other day.
In China, if a man loses his temper in public he is liable to five days' imprisonment.
In Peru and Bolivia wheat is cultivated 11,000 feet above the sea; in the Alps 3,600 feet.
There is a one-armed man in Georgia who can plow, jerk and goad a mule, swear and smoke a pipe all at once.
Immigration to this country for the fiscal year, ending with June, was only 276,136, or less by 35,476 than last year.
London has decided to convert into parks and playgrounds for children the 173 disused graveyards in that city.

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