

A SONG.

Oh, what is better than this, my dear,
What is better than this?
The thought of a night which has lost its way
Between tomorrow and yesterday;
The full of the tide and the gray of the sea,
And a gull that dolefully endlessly
The breath from a wind which bloweth well;
A sail that hatches new ports to tell,
If aught is better than this, my dear,
I find it not here, I find it not here.
—Blanche Trask in "The Land of Sunshine."

JUST A CURTAIN FIRE.

It Was in a Girls' Boarding School and Did Complicated Damage.

A fire in a skyscraper may be thrilling, but for dramatic episodes and unexpected complications a fire in a girls' boarding school surpasses it. The boarding school fire is usually what is known among insurance men as a curtain fire, but a curtain fire in a girls' school is more exciting and causes more casualties than an ordinary blaze anywhere else.

One evening last week two girls, who occupy a microscopic hall bedroom in a swell up town school, took the globes off the gas fixtures for hair curling purposes and left them off because it was easier to do that than to put them on again. Then the girls raised the window a trifle in order to cool the room and dutifully sat down to write home letters. The inevitable happened, and when girl number one poised her pen in the air and glanced around the room in search of inspiration she saw the curtains in a blaze. She screamed. Girl number two looked around and echoed the scream. Then, with promptitude and discretion, both girls fainted. The screams had attracted the attention of the other girls, who rushed to the scene and then did various and sundry stunts, according to their several dispositions. One fainted, several wept, a few ran out of the house, and the rest shouted for the one man on the premises.

When he arrived, things looked rather hopeless. Curtains and woodwork were blazing finely. The floor was littered with prostrate forms, and when three girls have fainted on the floor of a hall bedroom there isn't much space in the room for promenading. The man picked his way across the prostrate forms and ordered all the girls who were not in a dead faint to leave the room, but they didn't go until he lost his temper and spoke with a force which isn't common in boarding school circles. Then they fled; but, unluckily, there was an enemy in the rear. A vigorous and practical woman from Texas had been inspired to go after some water. Returning in mad haste with a large pitcherful of water borne triumphantly aloft, she collided with the retreating forces at the door. The pitcher struck the leader of the retreat squarely in the face and knocked out two of her front teeth, whereupon the injured girl made the fainting trio a quartet and the water carrier dropped her pitcher and went into violent hysterics.

Hysteria, as boarding school teachers know to their sorrow, is contagious, and the one case touched off the crowd. By the time teachers arrived upon the scene the fire was out, but the survivors were in a bad way. It was necessary to put nine-tenths of the school to bed and order wholesale doses of bromide. Even now the girls insist that they haven't recovered from the shock sufficiently to do hard studying, and the victims of the water pitcher are both under the care of trained nurses. As for the man, he gave up his place the next day and confided to the cook that he was going to look for a job in a lunatic asylum, where his boarding school experience would be of value to him. —New York Sun.

English Penny Novels.

Penny novelettes differ from one another in externals rather than in internals. The get up of the better sort is neat and attractive. The type is clear, and the covers might even be called "artistic" in the catholic sense of the term. The inferior kinds are indifferently printed "on gray paper with blunt type," and there are many degrees of excellence between the two extremes. All except one have illustrations ranging from the rudest of woodcuts to the snuggest of "process" plates. Of course the artist selects the most sensational incidents for his pencil to adorn. The stabbing of the heroine's father by the villain disguised as the hero, the kidnapping of the heroine by Black Tom and his gang of gypsies at the instigation of her jealous rival, the horse-whipping of the villain by the hero in "faultless" evening dress—these and their like naturally present themselves as thoroughly suitable and congenial subjects. —Blackwood's Magazine.

Malicious Interference.

"I'll get even with that printer," said the editor of the Plunkville Bugle, "if it takes me the rest of my life."
"What printer?" asked his friend.
"That tramp I took on while my wife was visiting her mother. I got a \$10 write up out of old Hiker, who is laying his pipes for the senatorship, and I said that some day his little son would make as big a mark as his father, and that villain fixed it that the young 'un would 'be' as big a mark, etc." —Indianapolis Journal.

A Useless Wish.

"Oh," sighed the poetic lady, "had I the wings of a bird!"
"Don't!" protested her husband.
"Don't wish for the wings of a bird. If you had them, some other woman would probably be wearing them on her hat before the season is over." —Washington Star.

A well known professor says that over a large area of central Russia the magnetic needle does not point north or south. It is in one part deflected to the west, and at another part to the east, and at one place it points due east and west.

The eggs of a bluebottle fly, if placed in the sun, will hatch in two or three hours.

ABSORBED IN WHIST.

A Game That Cost General Doubleday a Fortune.

Not many years ago a famous whist game was played at Sudbury, Vt.: two of the sitters in being General Doubleday and Henry Dater of the well known firm of Dater, Thompson & Co. It was something like 5 or 10 cents a corner, so you see it was easy for a man to lose as much as \$1.90 in an afternoon. Play began after the Sudbury dinner hour, half past 1, and lasted until bedtime. The old roosters became so wrapped up in the game that nothing short of an earthquake could have disturbed them. Brokers in New York could do nothing to shake the interest.

The game was played at the time of the historic Hannibal and St. Joe corner, engineered by Kennedy, Hutchinson & Co., in the interest of their client, John Duff of Boston. Doubleday was selling the stock short through Van Schaick & Co., and at a quarter to 2 on the eventful day he received a telegram from his brokers advising him of the situation. The game was stopped just long enough for him to read it and lay it aside. In 20 minutes a second dispatch arrived, was read and cast aside. Doubleday was winning at the rate of 35 cents an hour. What did he care about Hannibal and St. Joe? Later in the afternoon a third summons came from Van Schaick & Co., and at 5 o'clock a fourth. Then Doubleday arose and remarked: "Gentlemen, I have enjoyed the game. My winnings are exactly \$1.65. I must say good afternoon, as it is necessary for me to take the first train for New York." The next morning his brokers informed him that he could settle for \$100,000. At the time the first telegram was sent he could have settled for \$35,000, at the time of the second for \$50,000, the third for \$75,000. He had ample warning, but in the thick of the Sudbury game of whist he believed the rise was only a threatening flurry. —New York Press.

SCOTCH SIMPLICITY.

The Mason, the Building Architect and a Conscience Stricken Lad.

The Scotch are fond of telling stories which illustrate the peculiar simplicity of mind of their country people. This simplicity at least saves them from wicked guile.

One of these stories relates that an honest mason once had a contract to build a small house of stone. He came early and began from the inside to lay the stone, working very fast. At noon his young son brought him his dinner, peeping over the wall as he handed the basket to his father. With honest pride in his eye, the mason looked over to the boy.

"Weel, Jock, hoo d'ye think I'm gettin on?" he asked.

"Ye're getting on famous, feyther," answered Jock, looking at the solid wall, in which there was no break.

"But hoo d'ye get out?"
The mason looked around. It was true. He had provided the house with no door at all, and he was on the inside. He looked kindly and very admiringly at the boy.

"Mon, Jock, ye've a grand heid on ye!" he exclaimed. "Ye'll be an architect yet, as sure as yer feyther's a mason!"

Another story shows how unsuccessful as a thief the rustic Scot may be. Two young plowmen went into a garden at night to steal gooseberries. The bushes surrounded a plot of potatoes, and as one of the lads groped about he got a handful of potato plums, which he quickly put into his mouth. Then he gasped to his comrade:

"Oh, Jock, I'm poisoned! For my sake, shove me through the hedge, again, for I wanders like to dee 'ie' the auld man's gairden!" —Youth's Companion.

Tobacco in England, 1845.

When I was a lad, fully half the population of both sexes, rich as well as poor, the banker equally with the workman, were snufftakers. My first schoolmaster always carried his snuff loose in his waistcoat pocket, and innumerable were his dips into it with two fingers and a thumb in the course of the day, while the big gauffered frill which protruded from the bosom of his shirt was always thickly sprinkled with it. We used to notice that he never seemed to relish one of his huge pinches so much as immediately after having administered a sound castigation to some recalcitrant pupil.

On the other hand, there was little or no open air smoking, except in the case of laboring men going to or from their work. In this respect lucifer matches have something to answer for; but for them the practice of outdoor smoking would never have grown to its present enormous proportions. —Chambers' Journal.

An Unexpected Call.

"You are just going out, I see."
"Yes, an important engagement. What was it you wanted?"
"It was about that little debt I owe you."

"Ah, yes! Take a seat."
"I was going to ask you for a little delay."
"Oh—excuse me, but I'm already late."

"I say, I was going to ask you for a little delay when I met a fellow who paid up what he owed me, and—"
"Why on earth don't you sit down? Will you take a glass of wine?" —Paris Figaro.

No Faith in Anything.

"Aunt Josephine is a thorough skeptic."

"She is?"
"Yes; she puts mucilage on the back of every postage stamp she uses." —Chicago Record.

Elephants' Teeth.

Elephants have only eight teeth—two above and two below on each side. All elephants' "baby teeth" fall out when the animal is about 14 years old, and a new set grows.

A TRAPPED BURGLAR.

THE NICELY PREPARED BAIT WAS EAGERLY TAKEN.

It Cost the Ingenious Man Who Devised the Scheme \$400 or \$500, and It Cost the Burglar Four Years' Time.

"Of course," said the retired burglar, "a man in my business is always on the lookout for traps and most of 'em he can circumvent without much trouble. But men go to a lot of trouble and expense to lay traps, and sometimes they get up something that is new and effective. I suppose that any man going into a dwelling house would be sure to look over the bureaus and dressing tables in the sleeping rooms. It was this well known professional habit no doubt that had suggested the idea of a trap I came across once, which a man had had built with a view to catching anybody that might stand in front of the bureau in his room."

"I imagine that this man must have been visited before and been very much irritated by it, because he never could have gone to all the trouble and expense he did just for mere protection—there was clearly some feeling in it. It was a handsome room, promising looking from its richness, and when I turned my light on the bureau, where I went, naturally enough, to begin, I was not disappointed. There was a glitter of glass and silver in the bulseye, and as I swept the light along it struck a pocketbook that didn't glitter much, but that looked fat and comfortable, and a watch that did shine, and take it altogether, it made me think that here was the home of a man that didn't have to work nights to make both ends meet. And so I set my lamp down on one end of the bureau—it made me laugh, actually, to think that there was so much good stuff there that I had to shove something one side to make room for it—and put my bag down on a chair that was there and began cleaning the things off."

"I'd just put the silver hairbrushes in the bag and had turned around to the bureau again to pick up the pocketbook and the watch when I heard, or it seemed as though I felt, a little click, and just the faintest touch of a jarring or yielding under my feet, and the next instant, a long time before I could jump or do anything whatever, a piece of the floor under my feet about three feet square dropped out from under me, and down I went."

"But I didn't give up, by a long shot. I was an able-bodied man, and my hands were free—my lamp being then on the corner of the bureau and my bag on the chair—and I wasn't going to give it up yet, if I was going down a trap. The trapdoor was hung on hinges on the side farthest from the bureau, and I laughed to myself as I put up my hands and thought how easy it was to grab on to the edge of the solid floor running along just in front of the bureau and haul myself up. Truly it seemed like a waste of money, all the expense this man had been to put in the trap without guarding against the chance of escape from it by just this means, and I already imagined myself climbing out as I threw up my hands, which I did before I'd dropped much more'n half of my length below the level of the floor, gripping that firm edge very tightly. I was going to make sure of that."

"And I got it all right, but in about a millisecond part of a second I became conscious of the fact that it wasn't stopping me at all; I was carrying it down with me. It was the front edge of another trap cut in the floor under the bureau, hinged at the back and held up in place by a spring just strong enough to keep it in position. I held on as hard as I could, but if I had had iron fingers and steel muscles I couldn't have held on after the trap had swung down straight. I went down like a ton of lead, and the next minute I found myself sliding through a smooth board tunnel not much bigger'n enough to let me slide comfortably, and the next minute I'd been shot into a box or room about seven feet square through another trap in the top of it that closed flush after I came through."

"Now, there was a situation for you. Me in a square box of hard pine, apparently in the cellar of the house, no opening in it anywhere and my bag with all my tools in it up there on the chair by the bureau and me down there with nothing, not a blessed thing, to work with. But while there's life there's hope, and I never should have thought of such a thing as giving up if I could have had a chance. But I didn't. I hadn't been in the box two minutes before there was a slide pushed back up near the top on one side, and a man looked in. It was the boss of the shanty. And in five minutes the police were there, and then I found they had a door in this box big enough to get a man out of."

"I have seen other traps as elaborate, but none more costly. He had to cut his carpet, to begin with, around the traps in this room. Of course that didn't cost anything much, but it spoiled his carpet, and then the cost of the traps and the time contrivance, whatever it was, that was attached to the main trap that let me stand on it for a minute or two before it dropped, and then the shoot and the box and the whole business couldn't have cost a cent less than \$400 or \$500. It cost me four years' time." —New York Sun.

The Honeymoon.

An early Anglo-Saxon custom, strictly followed by newly married couples, was that of drinking diluted honey for 30 days after marriage. From this custom comes the word honeymoon or honeymoon.

Persons who don't know enough to come in out of the wet are not likely to be the salt of the earth for any length of time. —Detroit Journal.

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