THE OLD LETTER.

Crouching over the fire with wan cheek and whitened hair,
And sad sunk eyes, on the embers fixed with a dull unseeing stare;
Crouching over the fire, the woman, worn and old,
With the flickering flame on the letter that trembles in her hold.

Outside, the sleet beats fast and thick on the uncurtained pane,
The wind sobs round the lonely house, as it sweeps the snow-clad plain;
Inside, the ghosts of joy, and hope, and fearless household mirth
Flit and whisper round the woman who sits beside the hearth.

Yet the magic spell of thI letter has sent her fancies back,
Flying fast past all the graves that mark the past's long track,
Flying past change and sorrow, flying past wrong and ruth,
Till the heart beats fast, and the pulses thrill, to the passionate glow of youth.

Ah, duller still her life will show, harder the task-work seem,
For that weak hour by fancy snatched for memory's golden dream!
Put by the letter, let it share thy slow and sure decay;
Patient and meek take up again the burden of the day.

WIDOW APPLEDORE'S ROMANCE

[Elizabeth Cumings in "Our Continent."]

"A man that thinks of nothing but pep'mint oil an' the price of wheat! No! Emma Jane; my life has been humdrum enough without my ending it with Deacon Bliss. I shan't have him!"

"Well, well, Rosetta, if you won't I don't know's anybody's goin' ter try an' make you," chirped plump, rosy Mrs. Phlox, looking up from the stout blue woolen sock she was knitting. "I s'pose the Deacon thought he'd a right to ask you, seein' it's a free country. Caleb Appledore was a awful nice man, but so's the Deacon. Lone wimmen are put on. Job Whittamore neglects your garding, an' just see what work you have with your fires winters an' keepin' roads broke out."

"I'm not going to marry just to have some one to tend the garden and do the chores," said Mrs. Appledore. "I've never found fault with them that's dead and gone, but I know what it is to live with a person who does not care two pins for the things I do, and if I ever do marry again it will be some one who can sympathize with me. I can't say I swallow all 'Lias Bradshaw says about the marryin' of souls and affinities, but there's some truth in it you may depend. Besides, I'd like a little romance in my life before I die."

Romance is all well 'nuff," said Mrs. Phlox, but you're thirty-nine next March, Bosetta, an' seeh a man as Deacon Bliss don't grow on every bush. Bein' a good provider, an' a splendid farmer, an' a deacon, an' a piller in the church may not be romantic, but they're good recommends in a man you're thinkin' of marryin'. I hope you'll think twice."

"I have thought, and I shan't marry the deacon," said Mrs. Appledore, decisively; "an' if that's being romantic, I'm not ashamed of it."

The little widow did not look romantic. Her complexion was a dull white and her hair a dull brown. Dull, too, were her large gray eyes that blinked behind short-sighted glasses, but her form, though meagre and devoid of curve, was not without grace, and she had a clear, sweet soprano voice which, though it was untrained, she could use with taste and feeling. The Harmonicum, the Dixville musical association, made her the head of all their committees, and relied upon her to sing all the solos. Indeed, without her it could not have existed. The wheezy melodeon which was a dozen years old before it became the property of the society had at last collapsed under the energetic fingers of Professor Jackson Jones, who did the accompanying, and they were trying to buy a piano. They had given concerts, and had oyster suppers till Dixville was tired, when Dr. Ollipod suggested a lecture. It was whispered that the doctor had expected the committee to invite him to read one of his papers on the Semitic tongues; but if he did he was disappointed. They corresponded with many popular lecturers, who all declined to visit Dixville on the plea of engagements, and the committee at last invited a certain Professor St. Clair Smith, about whom they knew nothing save that he had lectured in the neighboring villages with acceptance, to address them. The Professor had suddenly appeared in Dixville mounted on a fine gray horse. The next day he was seen to enter the post office with a green bag on his arm, and the gossips immediately reported that he was wealth and had come from Boston. He at once accepted the invitation of the Harmonicum Committee, and announced that his lecture would be on the "Philosophy of Art." The meeting-house was hired, and Mrs. Appledore with a select few began practicing some music for the occasion.

It was the afternoon before the lecture, and Mrs. Appledore had invited her sister to spend the day with her. Domestic duties seemed to be just what Mrs. Phlox was made for. Her husband and sister usually did all her thinking. In return she served them with her hands; but the few notions that did creep into her round head she clung to pertinaciously.

"The worst kind of a fool is a beetle-headed one," she said, after a long pause, "an' puttin' this an' that together, Rosetta, I think you're preparin' with your romancin' to be just that kind of a one."

"I don't see how sisters can be so unlike," and Mrs. Appledore drummed a harsh accompaniment to her words on the middle C of her piano. "To be sure, you are the oldest; but age need not make one's soul a clod."

"It would be well for you to remember that all the advantages are not on your side," cried Mrs. Phlox, rising with dignity. "There are bodies, yes, and dispositions, that are clods," and Mrs. Phlox jerked on her calash and went home.

The meeting-house was full, and the next day the Dixville *Times* declared the lecture to have been a most soulful and eloquent dissertation, but Mrs. Appledore's attention wandered, and she only knew that the entertainment was about to be concluded by Dr. Ollipod's sonorous call for "moosic."

"I am delighted," said Professor St. Clair Smith, bowing low before her as soon as possible after the "moosic." "I never heard such a delicious voice."

Mrs. Appledore coughed behind her hand to conceal her flattered embarrassment, and turned a questioning look on Professor Jackson Jones, who stood near.

"You always sing splendid," said that gentleman, drawing himself up. "I dare say I put you out. That flute obligato is a deuced hard thing to do. I didn't do myself justice to-night."

"You've always dragged," said Karl Leopold, who took every opportunity to criticise the Harmonicum doings.

Professor Jackson Jones pulled at his cravat, and Mrs. Appledore's face was full of resentment.

"I never heard anything finer in Boston," said Professor St. Clair Smith, coming to the rescue, "and I suppose you know what that implies."

The night after the lecture was a very stormy one, and Mrs. Appledore was slowly twisting her hair in crimping-pins, when the door-bell rang.

"I could not endure the loneliness of the hotel, dear Mrs. Appledore," said Professor St. Clair Smith, making a courtly bow, "and have come to beg for just one song."

The Professor was, so far as outline and coloring go, a handsome man. His head was what is commonly called dome-shaped. His wavy hair and silky beard were a bright velvet red, and his rather large eyes were blue. He sat down in a big rocking-chair, and taking a twin on each knee, "I renew my youth in children," he cried, giving them a squeeze. "Do you know the song, 'The old times were the best times when you and I were young?'"

"Oh, yes," said the widow, nervously turning over her music, "but I can't say that I feel so very old."

"Dear me," what a blunderer I am," cried the Professor. "I was thinking of my boyhood. I've always hated being grown up. A man has so much to fetter his imagination. You must have lost your husband in the first flush of your youth."

"I did," murmured the widow, forgetting that she was 35 when the event occurred. "The twins were babes."

Song succeeded song till the Professor proposed duets, and Mrs. Appledore enjoyed the music so much that it was midnight before she knew it.

Two months passed away. The Professor came almost every evening. He had hired a small house a little out of town that he might be undisturbed he explained, and a relative had come to keep house for him. He did not know how long he should remain in Dixville. He was preparing a book for publication and writing several new lectures. When his literary labors were over he was going to take a trip somewhere and rest, though friends of his, influential at Washington, were anxious to have him accept a consulship at an important point.

The widow's neat white cottage stood by itself on the confines of the village. Beacon Bliss's fields of dark green peppermint and nodding wheat stretching along the country road for nearly a mile joined the garden. Before her abrupt refusal of him, the Deacon had been accustomed to drop in for a little visit or to bring a neighborly offering of apples or fresh vegetables. But these calls had ceased, and cut off from all her sources of news and pleasure, Mrs. Appledore stayed closer at home practiced her music and entertained the Professor.

But one sunshiny afternoon Mrs. Phlox came bustling up the prim graveled walk.

"Rosetta Appledore," she chirped like an angry blue-jay as she opened the door, "though a clod, which there are folks that think different, I've come to ask you if you know you're the town talk?"

"The town talk?" echoed her astonished sister.

"Yes; the town talk," repeated Mrs. Phlox, with wonderful emphasis. "Anybody would be who has spent two blessed months philanderin' with a married man."

"Who is married?"

"Your Professor Smith,"

"I don't believe it."

"I s'posed you wouldn't, but I've seen his wife," said Mrs. Phlox with evident satisfaction. "Miss Merrills, she 'twas Pearly Ann Truesdale, wouldn't miss a findin' out anything if she had to walk ten miles, an' she called on her, an' told me. That night I sez to John, 'John,' sez I, 'a sister's a sister, 'specially if she's younger an' a widder, an' if I be a clod I'm goin' to the bottom of this;' an', sez he, 'Emma Jane, I think you'd better,' an' the first thing he did the next mornin' was to hitch up an' take me over on the mile-strip where that fellow lives, in Tony Allerton's cottage. He wa'n't in, but she was, an' she was washin'.

"'I'm Mi s Phlox,' sez I, 'an' I come to call.' 'Thank you,' sez she, 'I'm Miss Smith,' an' she set out the only chair there was in the room for me an' set down herself on the wash bench.

"'Air you Miss St. Clair Smith, the wife of the Professor,' sez I.

"A sort of smile twinkled over her mouth an' she sez, 'Yes, Miss St. Clair Smith, though I didn't know Mr. Smith had adopted the St. Clair name. That's my family name.' An' then she went on an' spoke of her husband, an' of how ambitious he is, an' how he feels his spear in public life, an' how she is willin' to do anything to help him. An' then she inquired if I thought she could git sewin' in Dixville when she feels a little better an' is able to do it."

Tears of shame and anger gathered in Mrs. Appledore's eyes as her sister spoke! "Is Mrs. Smith good looking? Is she an interesting woman?" she asked.

"I can't say how interesting she is. She seemed kind of trod on, so to speak. As for looks, she ain't any pretti'er n you'd be if you worked as hard and didn't have half enough to eat," said Mrs. Phlox, calmly.

Mrs. Appledore sobbed alond. "What do people say about me? What shall I do?" she cried.

"They don't say nothia' yet, on'y that you're dreadful foolish," chirped her sister, rising and putting on her calash, for it was almost supper time. "I can't say as I know of anything for you to do except to tell Mr. Smith to stay t'home. 'Tain't likely Deacon Bliss will give you a chance to say yes a second time."

There had been a good deal of pleasurable excitement in receiving the visits of the professor. To dress herself in her best mourning and to sing her favorite songs to an appreciative listener, had been something to look forward to during the humdrum work of the day. The thought, however, of what her acquaintances were saying about her, embittered her life, and when the professor again called, one glance at her face told him that she knew all.

"Dear Mrs. Appledore," he began, but she checked him.

"You had better go home to your wife Mr. Smith," she said coldly.

Tears, real tears, came into the professor's big blue eyes. "But I love you," he cried, "and she has always been an incubus upon my soul."

"But she's your wife," persisted Mrs. Appledore.

"I know it," moaned the professor, distractedly. "It eats out my very vitals when I think of it. She don't feel as I feel. There's no wings for me as long as I am tied to her. We've no affinity."

Mrs. Appledore gazed at him in dull wonder. These were almost the words she had used to her sister, but they did not sound pleasantly now.

"I love you, Rosetta," went on the little man approaching her, "and I want to ask you just one question. Were I a single man would you marry me?"

"I might," admitted the widow, smoothing down a fold in her overskirt with a trembling hand.

"Enough," and the professor flung his arms about her and pressed a rapturous kiss on her forehead. "Bless you, my darling!" and before she could answer him he was gone.

The next evening when Mrs. Appledore was taking down her washing from the line she was suddenly clasped from behind by a pair of strong arms. "You will soon be mine," said the voice of the professor. "I've offered my wife $50 to leave me and she has accepted."

"Accepted!" the widow cried, wrenching herself free.

"Yes, and as soon as I can sell my book she shall go. I've lived in soul isolation long enough. My heart has found its mate."

All the men that Mrs. Appledore knew were quaint of speech and somewhat rustic in manner, but what they considered duty controlled them. "You wretch!" she cried, dashing the clothes-pin basket at him. "Fifty dollars! You ain't worth fifty cents. Go home and never dare to speak to me again!"

"Hear me," he pleaded, catching hold of her gown.

"I can't stay out hear and listen to philandering talk," she answered, and twitching her dress from his grasp she entered the house. But the professor's hand was upon the latch. Like most little women, the widow was a curious mixture of timidity and courage. She flung the door open. "Don't you dare come in!" she cried. "I'll throw hot water on you! I'll—I'll kill you!" Then slamming the door in his face bolted it securely.

All the evening the professor paced up and down Mrs. Appledore's back veranda. The next evening he again appeared, and the next, and the widow thoroughly alarmed sent the bravest twin out the front way with a note to her brother-in-law.

Mr. Phlox delighted in anything that could be called proceedings, and in a few minutes he had the Deputy Sheriff and two constables and went marching down the principal street with them to the great delight of all the small boys of the village. It was impossible for the Professor to escape. The officers crept round the house noiselessly. The Sheriff collared him, the constables pinioned his arms, Mr. Phlox grabbed him by the coat-tails and away he was walked to the village lock-up.

Mrs. Appledore passed a sleepless night, she imagined the whole town was wide awake and discussing her, and long before daybreak she had resolved to sell her home and Dixville Bank stock and move West. "I've got my comeupance," she groaned. "I've always been romantic and wanted a romance such as I've read about, an' I've had one. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

About eight o'clock in the morning there came a lively rap at the kitchen door, and, unstrung by excitement and loss of sleep, she shrieked aloud.

"On'y me; on'y Deacon Bliss," cried a pleasant voice through the keyhole.

Mrs. Appledore slid back the bolt with trembling fingers. "How thankful I am," she said holding out her hand; "I feel so in need of somebody."

"'Twas fortinet I come along jes' as I did, then," said the Deacon, taking off his straw hat and slowly rubbing his face with his ample bandana. It was a shrewd though benevolent face, framed in waves of iron-gray hair. "I see ye look kinder peaked. The weather has been tryin'. I've felt it myself an' ached in my jints the wust way."

"It's my soul, deacon," wailed the widow, dropping into a chair and covering her face with her apron. "I have always hankered after a romance, an I've had one, and I wish I was dead an' laid beside Caleb."

"Oh, no, ye don't, Miss Appledore," said the deacon, in the caressing tone in which he would address a sobbing child. "This world's a pooty good place, an' with a few exceptions, folks are pretty good. I come over to fetch a few of my sweetin's an' to tell ye thet thet there offer I made ye a spell ago holds good yet. I rally wish ye'd consider it agin."

Mrs. Appledore remained silent behind her apron.

"Ef ye'd hev me," repeated the deacon in a low voice. "I know I ain't half good 'nuff an' thet I'm kind uv an old fellow, but I've got a comf'able place an' comf'able things in it, and I've been sot on ye this long spell, as ye know. I dare say I was 'tached to Lucy more n I shall ever be to anybody agin. We sort uv growed together like, but so did you and Caleb, an' I'm sure I'll try ter make ye happy, an' yer two little gals' as sweet as two pinks, 'll be to me jes, like the little gals I lost."

Mrs. Appledore did not remove her apron, and after a pause the deacon falteringly continued:

"I s'pose 'taint no use ter argy. Folks hez their own idees of such things; but anyways, I'll stand yer friend."

The widow rubbed her eyes and slowly let fall her apron.

"I've always had the greatest esteem for you," she said, with a little shake in her voice, "but I never knew how good—how much I think of you. I will—I——"

The Deacon started up, "Will ye?"

Mrs. Appledore had taken refuge in her apron.

"Will ye really, Rosetta?" he repeated.

The bowed head covered in the blue gingham nodded.

"Ye shan't regret it," said the Deacon solemnly and awkwardly laying his big hand, coarsened by labor, on her shoulder. "Lord bless the little woman—an' our home. Our home," he spoke softly as if to himself.

"P'raps now," he continued after a minute, "I'd better drop in and see him, an' in tellin' the news I might mention casual like we're goin' ter be married soon. An' thet nobody'll trouble anybody that stays t' hum, an' that I'm able to help an eddicated man to a good place, real neighborly, 'cause my brother Eben out in Kansas wants a clerk."

Mrs. Appledore said nothing, but the Deacon seemed satisfied with her silence, for he did just as had he proposed. Professor St. Clair Smith was discharged from jail, and in three days he and his pale little wife had left Tony Allerton's cottage on the mile strip to return no more.

In about a fortnight Dr. Ollapod attended a quiet wedding. "You had a romance at last, Rosetta. I might better say two of 'em," whispered Mrs. Phlox as she gave the bride a sisterly kiss. "The adoration of the Professor was like things in a novel book, but marryin' a man whose goodness an' farm can't be paralleled in the county is romance that has sense in it, an' I wish you joy."

PAPER.—We must not be surprised to hear of a paper furniture factory starting into existence before long. Paper can now be made of strong fibres and compressed into a substance so hard that only a diamond can scratch it. A foreign journal says that wood will be superceded by paper.

INCIDENT OF THE NEW DELUGE.

How Some Wicked Boys Disturbed Brother Jones and Spoiled Aunt Sukey's Hoe-cake.

"How does you all feel in yer bones? How does you gashuate?" asked Aunt Sukey, as she turned the fragrant hoe-cakes she was baking for the floating population of her own people that the flood had brought to her doors.

"Passumly! Passumly!" answered Uncle Goliah, turning a broad back with very little on it to the bright fat-wood fire; "I'se mity dry, Aunt Sukey!"

"Dry, ole man," chuckled his hostess; "well, you had a-plenty wattah in de company, yah! yah! I spect you're up ter yer ole tricks, G'li! Yer ain't done got 'ligion like I hev?"

"Hes yer got 'ligion, mammy?" asked little Pete, the youngest pickaniny. "I 'ants a slice 'ligion, too, mammy."

"You go 'long," said Aunt Sukey, fetchng him a vigorous slap on one side of his woolly head. "You tink 'ligion like wattahmellyon, maybe! Yes, brudder, I done got 'ligion, and now I'se not afeard of enything. I'se a diff'rent woman, I is:—

"'Dem golden slippers I'se gwine to wear,
La de dah, lah de dah!
Dem angel songs I'se gwine to hear,
La de dah, lah de dah!'

"I disyemembah de words perzactly, but dat's de chune."

There was a chorus of "tank de Lawd," amid which Aunt Sukey bowed her turbaned head over the hot coals and "flopped" the hoe-cakes again, at the same time that she conveyed a live coal into the little squat black pipe in her mouth on which she drew vigorously.

"I declar to grachious! when I see you a comin' a sailin' down de bayou in de rush of de wattahs, I sed it's de a'k ob de Lawd dat's comin' dis berry night; et does seem as if yer was ruzed from de dead."

The company that was hung up to dry in various attitudes around the little cabin, groaned louder at this, and rolled the whites of their eyes toward the hoe cakes.

"It wuz heartrenderin' to hear de cries ob de mules," said old Uncle Goliah. "Dey dy like chillun, and dey's wuth a heap mo'. I done lost my ole mule what wuz in de Mexikean wah. You tink I gets I penshyun fur her?" he asked, anxiously.

"Ob course, ef you pay a rite smart lawyah to reproach de govemment, propperly you gits a penshyun fur anything. Yah! yah! Money'll shove dat mule frog," said one of the party. "Wat you tinks, Uncle 'Siah?"

"I dunno! I dunno!" answered the old man in a disconsolate tone. "Ise done wid mules and tings yearthly! Ise had my tree warnin's. One was when I done fell asleep on de Silver Creek sho' and forgot to shet my mouf, and a allygator crawled down my froat and most choked me; de second was when I was a-borryin' one of de preacher's chickens and fell off de roost back over heels; and dis yer flood is de last. I neber gits ober dis—I feels it in my bones!"

"Sho," said Aunt Sukey, "how you do perambulate, ole man! I shan't believe in no warnin's till I see de chawriot of Ishmael and de hossmen derof. Oh, de good Lawd hab mercy on us! What's dat?"

It was a wet stone that some wicked boys on the roof had sent hissing down into the hot fire.

"It's annuder warnin'!" said Uncle 'Siah with a deep groan.

"Its waz a black cat and it looked like dis," said Pete twisting his face and crawling close to his mammy.

"Will Brudder Jones lead us in prar?" asked Aunt Sukey; "de hoe cakes can wait, I reckon!"

The little company got down on their knees. Some were too wet, some too dry—all were hungry, and the hoe cakes sent out a mighty fragrance, and amid a perfect label of groans Brother Jones began:

"Lar-a-mitey, we has ex-pe-rienced anuder deluge in de wilderness, and now ain't defraid of no yealthy power comin' to harm us uns; we kin look de lyins in de face in de den of Daniels, or shake han's wid de fiery chilluns in de free furnaces; we haz not bin 'fraid to lib, and we're not 'fraid to die"——

But at that moment a terrific explosion occurred that shook the old cabin to its foundation, followed by such an awful silence that the wicked boys who had dropped gunpowder down the chimney ran off in a hurry. After a little, one head, and then another came in sight, and "You dere!" "You's alibe?" sounded from among them, and finally Aunt Sukey crawled out, and looking wistfully at the scraps of hoe-cake stuccoed on the walls, said, piously:

"It's all rite, chillun; tank de Lawd de ole debil cawn't go any furder dan de length ob his chain."—M. QUAD.

Oleomargarine and Butter.

A sub-committee of the Committee on Ways and Means of Congress reported to the full committee a bill providing for the imposition of a tax upon oleomargarine, and requiring that packages of this product shall be plainly and durably stamped with its name, so that no one can be deceived in buying it. The report was not a unanimous one, and the bill will be opposed in the full committee, on the ground that the regulation of the manufacture and sale of such an article is the duty of the State and not of the general Government. The tax proposed is ten cents a pound. Some time ago a very interesting statement in relation to the dairy industry and the manufacture of oleomargarine was made before the committee by Congressman Jacobs, of New York. He declared that the capital invested in dairy lands, cows, etc., is from $4,000,000,000 to $6,000,000,000, and that the money value of the product was greater than that of the wheat crop, or than the cotton and wool crop combined. The growth of the manufacture of oleomargarine, he said, threatened to extinguish the dairy industry in New York State. The oleomargarine factories of that State already produced 20,000,000 pounds a year. The product, costing only nine cents a pound, was sold for from twenty-five to forty cents. Declaring that the State laws enacted had been ineffectual, he invoked the taxing power of Congress to protect the dairy industry, maintaining that a Government stamp would bring the spurious article into fair competition with the genuine, and would prevent the retail dealer from selling oleomargarine for butter.

FOR THIRTY YEARS.—Mr. Macdougall, the famous tartan manufacturer of Inverness, died recently. It was owing to him that Lord Brougham always wore trousers of shepherd's plaid. His lordship sent an order to Inverness for "two pieces" of the cloth, and this being interpreted in a wholesale sense Macdougall dispatched two large webs, which afforded an ample supply of trousers for the purchaser during the last thirty years of his life.

"Mebbe" Joe's True Feesh Story.

Is "Old Joe the postman" still alive and able?—Old Joe, familiar to visitors on the Canadian side of the Thousand Islands, a mighty teller of mighty stories, in a tedious manner and with a French accent which lent them a charm of their own.

"Well," said Joe, on one occasion, when his fares had been telling anecdotes of singular recoveries of things lost, "once there was an American young couple came here on their honeymoon—ah, she was a beauty that, sixteen years—mebbe seventeen—mebbe eighteen years old, and he was devoted to her like nothing. Well, and so those young couple hired me to take them out in my boat one evening, and that young woman she had on a diamond ring—ah, that was a beautiful ring, worth a thousand dollars—mebbe two thousand dollars, mebbe three thousand dollars. Well, and so that young woman was playing with her hand in the water—so!—mebbe five minutes, mebbe six, mebbe seven—and all at once she scrrreams, 'My ring! My r-r-ring!' Well, and so that rings had slipped off her finger and gone down into the lake. The water was deep—thirty feet deep, mebbe forty, mebbe fifty—and she was deestracted. My, I was sorry; I could 'ave cry. And that young fellow, her husband, but he was sorry, too! And he says he will give me five hundred dollars—mebbe six hundred, mebbe seven hundred—if I find him that rings. But what was the use, eh? Well, and so we turned the boat about, and I was rowing home—my, it would have made you sorry to see that young womans!—when z-z-zing goes the fishing line I had over the stern of the boat. Well, and so I pulled in the feesh. My, that was the biggest feesh I ever caught—two feet long, mebbe two and a half, mebbe three—and when I hauled him into the boat there was a great, g-great big lump on his side, like as mebbe if he had swallowed somethings. And that young womans,—my, how oxcited she was! she just scr-r-reams out, 'O, do open those feesh—I am sure it must have swallowed my rings.' And her husband, he tried to make fun of her; but no, sare, that young womans—hello, was that a feesh jumped there?" (Pauses in his rowing and gazes eagerly in the distance.).

Omnes- Never mind the fish, go on with the story.

Joe—Well, and so that young womans prevailed upon her husband to buy the feesh and have open it, no matter what it coss—a dollar, mebbe two, mebbe three—and so I take my knife and I open that feesh. Mebbe you think it was a lie, but I have lived here twenty-two years, mebbe twenty-three, mebbe twenty-four, and I never heard anything like it. Well, and so I opened that feesh, and (resting on his oars and lowering his voice to the sub-cellar of solemnity) what you think I find in that fish?

Omnes—The ring! the ring!

Joe, resuming his rowing—No-o; it was a little bit of brick!

There was a dead silence for some moments, and then the old boatman added, deprecatingly:

"Mebbe you think it was a lie? No; that was the truth I was telling you!"

On the Road to Siberia.

A *Herald* correspondent says: You meet only a convoy with shivering prisoners and hear the rattle of the chains about their knees. You see a couple of wayworn tramps with frostbitten cheeks. They plead for a few kopecks, which you give to them. They are convicts endeavoring to escape from Siberia. In the daytime they tramp along the roads; in nearing large towns they take to the marshes or the brushwood, and at night they reach the villages. There they find food; a piece of bread is left outside the peasant's house; it is for the tramps. The peasant does this act of humanity partly from pity, partly from fear, for many villages have been set on fire by those despairing wretches. Thus they tramp on, thousands of versts, hoping at last to cross into European Russia and to be free and criminal again. One man escaped from Sakhalin twice; twice made the long, weary journey on foot to the borders only to be arrested and sent back to the mines. When such a a tramp is caught at any border town or village, he is arrested on suspicion and questioned as to his name and wherefrom he comes. He refuses to know anything about himself and is then kept four months in prison until the list of escaped convicts from the Pacific or other places arrives. If a description fits him he is sent back to the mines; if not, he gets a few years of servitude for being a vagrant, is then released and exults in the years of exile life he has escaped of his original sentence and walks proudly and defiantly into civilization. Much pity would be wasted on the wretches; they are usually criminals of the most desperate type, and only return to their old haunts to vice the outlawry. As a rule Siberia is even too good a place for them. In other countries they would be hanged.

Making a New Sea.

The scheme of Mr. de Lesseps for flooding the salt marshes and the lower portions of the Desert of Sahara, has been approved by the French Cabinet. As the estimated cost is only thirteen million dollars, as it will give a new waterway into northern Africa and cut off Tripoli from Tunis and Algeria, above all, as it is a very striking and sensational thing to do, there is good ground for supposing that the scheme will be carried into effect. In that case it will be watched with an interest hardly less than the severing of Suez, and greater than the tunnelling of Mount Cenis. There is something as strange in turning a great desert, or even a portion of it, into a navigable sea, as in joining two separated oceans. The old engineer has a quick eye and a keen relish for performing vast hydraulic feats, which broadly appeal, first to the imagination, and then, when completed, to the experience of mankind, and which have to do with practical commerce. He is likely enough, also, to live to see this African project accomplished, however it may be with his Panama Canal. Men are beginning to take great liberties with the face of their planet, and these pending alterations may be only trifles compared with those to which they will one day subject the poor old globe.

BURGLARY.—For burglary of an exceedingly flat sort, says the New York *Herald*, the lover of such curiosities must find himself satisfied in the story of what happened at Somers, in Westchester County, on Tuesday night. Seven robbers bound and blindfolded four men and two women, worked a couple of hours at a safe, then blew it open, reaching the receptacle in which were two thousand dollars, which dollars they did not take, but left a little while before daylight with a stolen horse. They were first rate burglars, but poor thieves.

FARM AND GARDEN.

IN THE VEGETABLE GARDEN.

Farmers vary in their estimates of the quantity of seed required to plant a given space. In a general way, it may be said that one ounce of asparagus seed will produce 1,000 plants, and requires for sowing a bed of say twelve feet square. Large pole beans require about one quart of seed for 100 hills, while the same amount of small beans will plant about 300 hills. One ounce of beet seed is allowed to 100 feet of row. One ounce of cabbage seed ought to produce 2,500 plants. The same amount of carrot seed plants 150 feet of row. One ounce of celery gives 700 plants. One ounce of cucumber seed is employed for 150 hills. As many as 7,000 plants will spring from an ounce of lettuce, and an equal weight of tomato seed produces 2,500 plants. Upward of 100 hills of muskmelon may be planted with an ounce of seed, which amount in watermelon will give only about 50 hills. One ounce of onion seed will plant 200 feet of row. In sowing vegetable seed it should be borne in mind that small seeds require but a slight covering of finely pulverized soil, while large seeds call for a much deeper one.

Radishes should be sown a small bed at a time, at intervals of ten or twelve days, for a succession, as long as these are wanted. The soil must be light, mellow and well pulverized for best results. Do not apply fresh manure at the time of sowing, as this will destroy the quality of the roots. Sow in drills about one foot apart and thin the plants to three inches. As radishes quickly become corky and tough, only a few at a time should be sown, so as to insure fresh supplies of crisp ones. The turnip-rooted and olive-shaped radishes are considered preferable for sowing in summer. One ounce of radish seed is is required for 100 feet of row.

Farmers of the North who are ambitious for early vegetables force plants in hot-beds and cold frames so as to have these ready as soon as the ground is in fit condition to receive them. Lettuce sown under glass during February is transplanted in April to well-prepared beds in garden or field. The soil for field lettuce must be rich and finely pulverized to insure good results. Early plantings are best made on light sandy soil, well fertilized; later plantings do better on a strong, deep loam, somewhat moist, and well dressed with fine manure. Farmers who grow only small crops for home use, and who have not taken advantage of hot-beds for forcing plants, can sow a few rows of seed at intervals of a fortnight until the end of May in the open ground. This secures a succession of this luxury. Sow in beds of finely pulverized soil and cover the seed lightly. When required for cutting young the seed can be sown thickly, either broadcast or in drills, but to have fine heads it should be sown sparingly in rows and thinned out at a distance of one foot apart. One ounce of seed will produce about 150 hills. An excellent variety for general use is the black-seeded Tennis Ball, a tender kind. A lettuce largely grown by market gardeners in the vicinity of New York—very early, and adapted for forcing—is the Early Curled Simpson; another leading sort is Paris Green Cos'.

EARLY AND LATE CABBAGES.

When very early cabbages are in request, New York gardeners sow in the fall and transplant the plants to cold frames, where they are wintered. In April these plants are set in the open ground about two feet apart each way. Cabbage plants ought always to be transplanted in moist weather, and when practicable, the plants should be shaded for two or three dyos.

If it is desired to economize space, lettuce or radish seed may be sown between the rows, as these will be out of the way before the cabbages require the room.

For late or winter crops cabbage seed can be sown during the month of May and the plants set out, as a second crop in July, following early potatoes, peas or the like. In this case it is advised to set far enough apart to cultivate with a horse and cultivator. To prevent the fly attacking the young plants, sift air-slaked lime over the latter as soon as these appear above ground.

The soil for cabbage should be a rich, heavy loam with good drainage; excellent crops may be grown on soil of this nature when an abundance of stable manure is applied. Lime and bone-dust make excellent fertilizers for this crop, if sown and harrowed in lightly before the plants are set out.

Among leading early sorts the Early York and Early Wakefield take the lead; Little Pixie, noted for its fine flavor, is also early. Early Winningstadt, while later than the kinds mentioned, is recommended as a particularly excellent variety. Drummond Savoy is an excellent cabbage for family use. Early Flat Dwarf is a good sort of dwarf cabbage. Numbered with excellent late varieties may be mentioned Large Bergen, Large Late Drumhead and Large Flat Dutch. For the main crop the sorts often selected are Late Drumhead, Silver-leaf Drumhead and Large Flat Dutch. A good kind for pickling is the Red Dutch.

A Western Divorce Suit.

A dispatch from Denver says that the wife of H. A. W. Tabor, Lieutenant-Governor of Colorado, has brought suit for a separate maintenance. Mr. Tabor, although represented as uneducated and rather uncouth, is reported to be the richest man in Colorado, and he nearly succeeded in being elected United States Senator in place of Mr. Teller, now Secretary of the Interior. Mrs. Tabor asks that she be awarded the fine house on Broadway, which she now lives in, and that it be set apart for her exclusive use. It is the finest residence in Colorado, and is valued at $150,000. She furthermore asks for $50,000 per year for her maintenance, alleging that her husband is worth between $7,000,000 and $8,000,000. The dispatch says that if Mrs. Tabor will sue for absolute divorce the suit will be allowed to go by default, and he will give her the Broadway house and $3,000,000 outright, but she will not consent to a divorce. The case will hardly go to trial, as it would create a great scandal.

The Rodgers.

The steamer Rodgers, burned and sunk in the Arctic Sea while in search of the Jeannette, was originally a whaling vessel—the Mary and Helen—and was purchased early last year by the Government for an expedition to the Arctic regions in search of the Jeannette. The vessel was named the Rodgers, in honor of Rear-Admiral John Rodgers, president of the Jeannette Relief Board, who had in 1855 made a surveying expedition to the North Pacific. After some delay, occasioned by the discovery that some of her provisions were in a damaged condition, the Rodgers sailed from San Francisco early last summer, under the command of Lieutenant R. M. Berry. By September she had gone to the northward of Wrangell Land.

THE P. O. DELIVERY CLERK.

How He Appears to a Man in Texas.

[From Texas Siftings.]

The postoffice delivery clerk is an official paid by the government of the United States to make the traveling public, and those who have not got lock boxes paid for quarterly, in advance, feel that there are worse things than not getting the letters they expected. The worse things are the delivery clerk himself and the manner in which he treats the anxious inquirer. There is no impetuous haste about the movements of the delivery clerk, but, instead, there is a calm repose of manner and leisurely disregard of time, as he turns to his pigeon holes to look for a letter for you, and, becoming interested in the reading of a postal card, forgets all about your presence.

We heard a man say, the other day, that the average delivery clerk is of a retiring disposition—he will retire behind a desk for half an hour to finish reading the catastrophe of a "Seaside Library" novel, while the unlettered public howl like foghorns outside, and pound on the sides of the window with their sticks and umbrellas.

The postoffice delivery clerk is really a very mild and inoffensive creature—when he is dead, or discharged. In his official capacity, however, he is not excessively communicative or oppressively polite. He never comes out of his window to chat with a friend, or to point out to a stranger the way to the court house. There are several characteristics and eccentricities of the delivery clerk that may be worth mentioning. He will look at the inquiring one in a preoccupied sort of way, and when the latter states that his name is J. F. Wilson, and asks if there are any letters for him, the clerk will go into a reverie over about forty letters that he will fish out of the W box. After he examines them all and has had ten minutes of a joint discussion with the first assistant mailing clerk, with regard to whether the second throw that Smith made last night was two sixes and a three, or two threes and a six, he will then look over a few more letters, until he comes to one that looks as if it might fit the man outside, and coming to the window says, "You are sure your name isn't J. P. Williams, are you?" as if Wilson might have lost or mislaid his name and unconsciously picked up some other man's name by mistake, as one might exchange a hat or umbrella. When the man assures him that his name, as well as he can remember, is Wilson, the clerk looks disgusted and disappointed because he is again balked in disposing of some of his stale literature.

The most exasperating specimen of delivery clerk is the one who has the reputation of having a remarkable memory. He remembers, or pretends to remember, the names of all the letters in all the pigeon holes, from A. to Z. and we never saw a man yet who wouldn't doubt the accuracy of his statement when, without looking through his stock of letters, he says: "Naw, nothing for that name."

That the delivery clerk should have a gloomy and cheerless disposition is not to be wondered at. He has much to annoy and prejudice him against the people, who seem to have a deplorable and insatiable yearning for a letter or even a one-cent circular. He is worried by all sorts of unreasonable people. There is the drummer who wants any letters that may come for him during the next ten days, forwarded to him at Chicago; the man who wants to know if a letter mailed now will go east on the 4:20; the boy who mailed a letter without a stamp and wants it back; six men who forgot their box keys and want their mail handed to them; the woman who knows there *must* be a letter for her and asks the clerk to "look again;" the countryman who gets angry, and wants the clerk to "come out on the sidewalk for just two minutes," because the clerk wants to charge him six cents on an insufficiently prepaid letter, and the colored female who does not get a letter, on an average, once in two years, but who comes every Monday morning, and inquires, not only for letters for herself, but for all the cook and wash ladies in the ward she lives in.

Taking all this into consideration, the delivery clerk deserves credit for not being more intensely sour and painfully ferocious than he is.

Certainly an elegant remedy for all aches and pains is St. Jacobs Oil, says Dr. J. Turner, of Shirrell's Ford, N. C., in the Ravenswood (W. Va.) *News*.

TAKE your stand by the altar of truth and be not led or driven thence by sophistry or by ridicule.—*Dr. Vincent.*

Hard Lumps in Breast.

DR. R. V. PIERCE, Buffalo, N. Y.: Dear Sir—I wrote you some time ago that I thought I had a cancer. There was a large lump in my breast the size as a walnut, and had been there four months. I commenced taking your "Golden Medical Discovery," "Favorite Prescription" and "Pellets" in June, and the lump is gone. Yours gratefully, MRS. R. R. CLARK, Irvington, Mich.

AS TURNING the logs will make a dull fire burn, so changes of study a dull brain.

GENTLEMEN—Your Hop Bitters have been of great value to me. I was laid up with typhoid fever for over two months and could get no relief until I tried your Hop Bitters. To those suffering from debility or any one in feeble health, I cordially recommend them. J. C. STOETZEL, 683 Fulton st., Chicago, Ill.

MARKET NOTES.

NEW YORK MARKET.

The Wholesale New York market quotations show:

BEANS—Prime, $3.40@$3.45; fair to good, $3.10@$3.35 per bushel.

BUTTER—New York sold at 32@33