ON THE EDGE OF THINGS

A STORY OF ADVENTURE IN THE LIGHTHOUSE SERVICE

BY GEIK TURNER.

As you reel down our great Atlantic shore on the slow coast steamers from Newfoundland to Florida, nothing of all you see so stimulates your imagination, or stamps itself upon your memory, as the lights along the land. For 2000 miles they stand in an unbroken line, marking the bounds of a continent, and every 24 hours, when the revolving world trundles the dim coast line around again into the dark, they all come forth—red lights and white lights—as certainly as the fixed stars, and stare and blink solemnly over the formless sea. One white stare means one shoal, and one red stare, perhaps a reef, and one and two and three winks, still other shoals and reefs, according to the kind of stare or the manner of the winking. By these signalings and the story of his lead line, translated by his dirty coast chart, the most blundering captain of a coal schooner can tell, in the blackest midnight he ever out across, the color of the bottom underneath his ship.

With the advent of the morning these wonderful demonstrations fade out of existence, and in the broad glare of the day you can seldom see their sources. Yet occasionally, upon the distant sky line, you may distinguish a black speck, which indicates a lighthouse, and still more rarely you may see, floating like some great, strange orange sea-fowl on the vacant face of the waters, a lightship itself far out of sight of land, moored to the outer edge of some persistent shoal—a universe by itself, set out and established by the flat of the government and populated by six lonely men.

Now, all this marvelous system was not created without a struggle. It has cost the lives of many hundred men and many thousands of dollars, offered up to an angry sea—a vicarious sacrifice for the thousands of souls and millions of dollars that were saved. And whenever you see a lightship or a lighthouse standing out waist deep in the sea upon some hidden shoal, you may be sure it forms the only monument to many a good stout martyr who has gone down, fighting and swearing, manfully into the sea.

Thirty and 40 years ago they were performing what might be called experiments in higher biology with the service. They put fewer men in the stations—often only one in a lighthouse, and two upon a lightship. Then they observed them. They found, after long experience, that in some places men lost their lives and in some their minds, and gradually they strengthened those places. You can reason confidently from statistics gathered over a long series of years. But it is rather hard on those who furnish the statistics.

This is a modest tale of one of the experiments.

When Mat Osgood first went out to take charge of the ship on Buttermilk shoals, in the vacancy left by The Other Man, he was discouraged. It was a melancholy, mouse-colored day on the water, and the ship did not present a particularly homelike appearance. The assistant of The Other Man leaned over the rail of the ship like an orphaned kitten hanging over the edge of a basket. Inside everything was in distraction; the cabins were filthy and most of the provisions were gone. The Other Man had amused himself in his last hours by throwing them out. There was also no stove. When The Other Man had decided to go, he made up his mind to take that with him. He had tied it to a rope around his neck, and they had gone off together. As far as was known, they were still together somewhere underneath the bottom of the ship.

The Assistant was a tall, dark man, with restless eyes and cold hands. He was reticent himself, but he asked questions continually. He seemed to want to hear Osgood talk. He stayed around close to him all day, while they were cleaning up and arranging the new provisions and putting up the new stove, and when he was sent off he came back again as soon as possible. When they ate supper together, Osgood felt him pressing his foot furtively under the table. He had something to say about himself at the meal.

"It's mighty discouragin' bein' alone here; sittin' around all day and thinkin', and walkin' up and down and up and down the deck at night. You see things sometimes you wouldn't suppose you would."

He stopped without saying what he saw.

It was plain to see that the death of Osgood's predecessor had unnerved him. "Another thing that kept wearin' on me," he said, "was The Other Man." (He always called him that, and jerked his thumb downward in explanation.) "You couldn't help thinkin' about him down underneath there hitched to that stove, floatin' and wavin' around like a bunch of seaweed. Nice feller he was, too; but I wished to God I'd never seen him."

Mat Osgood knew a few songs, and after supper he sang one or two at The Assistant's earnest request. He got a continuous encore. The Assistant said

"DIDN'T YOU HEAR THAT KNOCKING? HE'S COMING UP PRETTY QUICK!"

he wasn't much on music, but sometimes a man got kind of hungry for a human voice. When Osgood finished he sighed like a man getting up from a good meal.

Osgood knew some tricks with cards, with which he amused his companion after this. They also played cards together considerably. John Knox would have played cards if he had been shut up in a lightship a week. But The Assistant wanted mostly to hear the singing. Osgood sung for him the first night, and the second night, and the third night. The fourth night he was feeling used up and ugly, and he refused.

"I've made a fool of myself for you long enough," he said crossly.

The Assistant looked at him for a minute and then began to talk to himself and went up on the deck, and tramped around for a couple of hours singing. He only knew one tune, apparently, "The Girl I Left Behind Me." At least he didn't sing anything else, and every time he brought down his right foot on the deck, he stamped it. After a time it grew monotonous.

Next morning he had recovered from his little temper and was more communicative than before.

"You know," he said at breakfast, pointing downward, "he's comin' up again pretty soon."

When Osgood said he didn't know wheather he would or not, The Assistant got excited.

"I tell you he is," he said. "It's time; you see now."

He wanted Osgood to sing again that night, but he refused again. They played cards awhile instead. The next night they went over the same thing again. Only The Assistant was ugly. Osgood beat him continually at cards, which made him worse. Finally, The Assistant jumped up. "I saw you," he said; "you're cheatin' me." Then he gathered together what cards he could and tore them up. He ended by running up on deck and throwing the fragments overboard. Then he marched around the deck singing again. Osgood went up and forced him to stop his foolishness and go to bed. Osgood was boiling by this time. The loss of the only pack of3 cards on a lightship assumes the proportions of a catastrophe.

In the morning The Assistant was still ugly. He sat around for a time singing and beating on a chair, and then he marched about.

Finally Osgood made him stop. "Oh, shut up," he said, "and give somebody a chance to think."

The Assistant protested. "The Other Man was decent," he said. "He wouldn't take away a feller's rights like this."

Osgood told him that he didn't care for The Other Man.

"I'll tell you one thing," The Assistant shouted, "and you can believe it or not. He's comin' up pretty soon. I heard him no longer ago than last night knockin' along the bottom of the ship."

"What are you talking about?" asked Osgood, gruffly.

"Oh, that's all right," said The Assistant, with the air of a man who has inside information. Then he went off, conversing with himself.

Osgood sat down that afternoon and reasoned about his assistant and himself and their relations to each other. That man had just been through things that no man should go through alone; he was worn out and ugly and needed to have somebody turn in and help him get a grip on himself again. He was going the wrong direction now. Osgood knew that; he had seen such things before. And there were possibilities in that line not pleasant for either party. The possibility of a necessity of putting into action, for instance, that great principle of the survival of the fittest. He decided to humor The Assistant and talk things over with him to find out just where he was.

He asked him at supper if he really believed in ghosts.

The Assistant had very clearly defined views on the matter. Why shouldn't he believe in ghosts? "I don't know about the land," said he; "I've spent most of my years at sea. And when you do that, there ain't no doubt of it. Things happen at sea, and numbers mean somethin', and there are signals for good and bad luck. Any sailor'll tell you that. Now, what makes them signals and them laws? Somethin' does, that's certain; and it's just one thing. It's ghosts, I tell you.

"It's my opinion they don't like to stay around shore where there's houses and men and all that. They come right out here, where they won't be disturbed and can rattle around as free as they please. And when a man knows about them he can't help tellin' when they are around. When it's foggy, they hang off a little as if they was watchin' you, and in rough weather they just go sizzlin' by and howlin'.

"There! what's that?" said The Assistant in a loud voice, jumping up and turning over his chair.

"That's one of them, you see," said he.

"Oh, damn it, sit down," said Osgood, jumping up himself; "that's the wind."

"That's easy to say," said The Assistant, "but what'd you jump for? I tell you, you know and I know there is such things as ghosts. Then, furthermore, most every vessel you ever see has some particular one that belongs to it—even a lightship. Take us and The Other Man down there. You don't suppose when a man is planted and stands there wavin' and wabblin' and rollin' about the bottom underneath you, but what he keeps an eye on you. Yes, sir; and comes up sometimes to see what's goin' on; and, sometimes, he comes to stay. And if you see him, sometimes it blasts the eyes out of your head; and then again he only wants you to do what he tells you; and then you're done for, as far as this earth is concerned."

The Assistant had a ghastly, convincing way of telling a story; there were lights in his eyes and he leaned over and his voice was husky. The time and place also were stimulating to the imagination. There they sat under the yellow cabin lamp, staring at each other across the table, with the wind yelling above, and the water hissing underneath the boat—two lonely men at the edge of things, connected to reality only by two slender chains, with blackness and chaos and confusion trembling over them to devour them.

"Well, anyway," said Osgood, swallowing, "that ain't anything you want to think about. It ain't good nor wholesome for you. Don't do it."

"Supposin' you can't help it?" said The Assistant.

"Damn it, you must help it," said Osgood. Then he offered to sing a little, and suggested that they get together a pack of cards with what The Assistant had left and what The Other Man had scattered around the cabin before he got through. They managed to patch up something, and then they played. Osgood lost. The Assistant beat him; but this wouldn't do, either. The Assistant finally got up mad again. He didn't want to be babied, he said.

He went up on deck and marched again.

The next day Osgood tried to pacify him, but he balked every attempt. Osgood asked him several times in the evening to play cards with him. He refused continually.

"Oh, go to the devil," said Osgood finally.

The Assistant was ugly himself, but he seemed to have the idea that Osgood was the offender. "What have you got against me, anyway?" said he at breakfast.

"Nothing whatever," replied Osgood. "You don't treat me like The Other Man did," complained The Assistant.

"Well, probably you'll have him back again before long," retorted Osgood sneeringly.

"Probably I will," said The Assistant surlily.

At noon Osgood couldn't find the big butcher knife.

"What'd you do with that knife?" he asked.

"None of your business."

"I'll make it my business," exclaimed Osgood, starting for The Assistant. He was a good deal the larger man, and The Assistant wilted.

"Well, here it is, if you really want it," he said, taking it out of the pocket of his coat and putting it on the table. "It's just as handy there as anywhere, as far as I care."

Osgood took charge of the knife himself.

He woke up that night suddenly and found The Assistant staring at him.

"Well," said he, "what is it?"

The Assistant started back.

"Didn't you hear that knocking? He's comin' up pretty quick!"

"Oh, go to sleep, you cursed fool," cried Osgood.

The next night he was waked up in the same way. It was disagreeable business baing waked up from a sound sleep and looking into a man's eyes. The Assistant evidently sat and stared at him.

"If you do that again," said Osgood, "I'll break every bone in your body."

The next evening Osgood sat alone in the cabin with The Assistant up above. All of a sudden he heard him dancing up and down on the deck and yelling.

"I told you he'd come! I told you he'd come!" he was shouting.

Osgood ran up on deck. It was a foggy night and very still, and the yellow glare of the lights shone only in a narrow circle in the water.

"Look at him! look at him!" screamed The Assistant, pointing down into the water.

On the edge of the circle of light, drifting slowly outside, was something—not very plain, but still clear enough to show its general outline—something that looked like a man, only it had no head.

"Where's his head?" said Osgood, wetting his lips.

"He didn't bring it with him; it's down there with the stove," yelled The Assistant.

They stood and watched it a while, and it seesawed back and forth on the

"A UNIVERSE BY ITSELF—AND POPULATED BY SIX LONELY MEN."

swell until it disappeared in the mist.

"Well, he's gone now, anyway," Osgood whispered hoarsely.

"Yes, for now he's gone,' answered The Assistant; "but this is only the first time he's come."

Osgood pacified The Assistant the best way he could and then went below and bunked in. He could hear The Assistant pacing the deck and every time he closed his eyes he saw The Other Man drifting out into the mist. So he wallowed about till nearly morning. Then he fell into a heavy sleep.

When he awoke he thought he was paralyzed. He couldn't move a muscle of his body, but simply lay there staring at the top of the bunk. Finally, he found he could move his head a little, and raised it up and looked down. He was tied hand and foot; wrapped round and round with rope like like a bobbin.

He began to yell furiously. Finally The Assistant came down.

"Here! You let me loose," cried Osgood frantically.

If you don't, I'll break your neck when I get out of here."

"You ain't goin' to get out," remarked The Assistant laconically.

Osgood began to swear a stream.

"Here, you shut up," said The Assistant, "you're disturbin' Him."

"What are you talkin' about?"

"I'm talkin' about him," said The Assistant—"The Other Man—that's what I'm talkin' about. You said he wouldn't come back again, you did. But he did—just as I said. He's up there now, and he's come to stay. 'Go down there,' he says, 'and tie that feller up. I've come back to take charge of this thing, just as I ought to.' So I did.

"But I tell you," continued The Assistant confidentially, "it's mighty peculiar; I can't get used to it. You see, he ain't got his head on. He just stands there and talks and waves his arms slowly around. Then the way he talks! He goes everywhere, he does, right up the side of the boat or on the masts, or right out into the air. I saw him first when he came up. He walked straight up the chains right into the boat—all drippin' with water and seaweed. It don't seem quite natural, does it?"

The Assistant's voice had sunk to a whisper and his eyes shone like a cat's.

Suddenly he jumped up. "He's callin' me now," said he, and disappeared hurriedly on deck. It was as silent as the grave.

Osgood lay and thought it over. He reached no other conclusion than a strong appreciation of the fact that he was ten miles from shore and 30 days from the visit of the government tender. He strained again at the ropes; then collapsed, and decided to resort to strategy. He yelled again for The Assistant.

"What you yellin' for?" asked that gentleman, when he appeared.

"Say," said Osgood, "tell him I'm ready to give up to him—and—hold on—ask him if he don't want another man to help him. Because I'd like to first rate, if he will give me a show."

The Assistant went up again and talked to himself on deck. Then he came back to the hatchway. "He says you stay where you are," he yelled down.

Osgood lay thinking over the chances. The weather was still, apparently, and The Assistant could run the thing all right now. If he would only feed him, things might run along till something happened. He was wildly happy when The Assistant brought down his dinner.

"We've been talkin' you over," said The Assistant frankly; "I kind of thought we would have to get rid of you, but he says we'd better keep you a while longer."

He proceeded to feed Osgood.

"You see, we're goin' to get out of here," he continued. "He's gettin' ready for a cruise. He's terribly worked up over it—walkin' back and forth, and flappin' his arms. He wants me to hurry and get away from here. So I've got to file off the chains this afternoon. But you know and I know that it can't be done in one afternoon or one day, either. Then after that, we're headin' away from here.

"Where are you going?" asked Osgood.

"I ain't askin' no questions. The Other Man will be at the helm and me at the masthead. But I kind of suspect," said The Assistant confidentially, "that we're going to the devil."

Osgood argued strongly against the plan, but he didn't make any impression. "I ain't taking orders from you now," said The Assistant.

Then he hunted around and got the file and went on deck.

About the middle of the afternoon he came down again.

"Want anything now?" he asked.

"No," said Osgood, "unless it is to get loose again."

"Well, I didn't know," said The Assistant. "He says to me, 'We want to treat him well while we keep him,' he said, and then he sent me down."

The Assistant started up again. "Oh, say," called Osgood, as he was leaving, "what's it like outside?"

"Quiet and foggy," said The Assistant.

That was fortunate, anyway.

A couple of hours later Osgood called to The Assistant, and finally got him.

"You're goin' to light up pretty soon, ain't you?" said he.

"No, I ain't," said The Assistant. "He won't have it. 'That's what made me what I am—a poor ghost,' said he, 'that light beatin' down on me. Besides, we ghosts don't like light, anyway.'

"Then it came across me that light was always trying to me. 'Am I a ghost?' said I. 'You and I are both ghosts,' said he, in a solemn kind of way. 'You become one last night, when you saw me comin' up. That other feller below is different,' he said, with a kind of a sigh. 'I suppose we've got to get rid of him. He's too real for a ghost ship.'

"But say," said The Assistant, "don't holler so much. Ghosts don't like so much noise. 'The next time he yells, you go down and hit him with this club,'" said The Other Man.

"But, look here," called Osgood appealingly, "you'd better light up tonight, you know, before you get started on your tour."

The Assistant was obdurate.

"Well, anyway," said Osgood in despair, "just turn me over a little, can't you? I'm half dead lying in this position."

He was changed a little.

"And say, you'll give me something at supper time, won't you?"

The Assistant assented and went up. Then time dragged on till supper. It was getting pretty dark when The Assistant came down again with something to eat.

"How far have you got with the chain?" asked Osgood.

"Only about half way through the first one." He went on to tell his plans. He wasn't going to file any more that night.

"Goin' to bed?" inquired Osgood.

"No," replied The Assistant; "ghosts don't go to bed. I've got new orders from Him. 'I want you,' says he, 'to soak this boat with oil, so if we get caught by any real ship before we get to our port, we'll all go up in smoke and brimstone.'"

"Oh, for God's sake!" cried Osgood, "you must have been mistaken. A ghost don't like smoke and fire. He didn't tell you that, did he?"

"Yes, he did," asserted The Assistant confidentially, "but I ain't to use a light, just the same, till it's necessary. It's goin' to be pretty hard to see pretty soon."

It was already dark in the cabin. But all that evening Osgood heard the maniac fumbling around in the cabins and pouring the oil on the deck and occasionally he got a whiff of it.

At about 10 o'clock he heard The Assistant yell frantically. Then there was a dull, grinding noise, and the sounds of bells and cries, as if a small city had landed next to them. A steamer had come aground, and its nervous system was jangling from the shock.

The lookout saw a black hulk directly before them.

"For God's sake!" exclaimed the first mate, who was in charge, "what's that?"

"It's the Buttermilk light, black as the devil," cried the lookout. Then everybody began to swear.

This interested and stimulated The Assistant, who dropped his matches and danced about the deck, yelling and cursing and jabbering, forgetting everything else.

The captain finally sent a crew across, and they boarded the lightship in spite of the stout resistance of The Assistant, who was overpowered and sat upon four deep by sailors.

By this time Osgood was yelling his wildest below.

"What the devil have we struck," said the second mate, "a floating lunatic asylum?"

"No, sir," answered The Assistant solemnly; "this is a ghost ship, and The Other Man and I are running it. You get out of here; you don't belong here; you're real." He was getting excited, and, the sailors having released him for a moment, he made a dive for his matches.

The sailors promptly suppressed him.

"Never mind," yelled The Assistant, "The Other Man will do it; he'll send you up in fire and brimstone; he won't be caught by you, he won't. He'll—"

The biggest sailor put his hand over his mouth and they carried him to the steamer.

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Ten Minutes With The Funny Men.

SOME OF THE QUIPS AND JESTS FROM PENS OF THE NEWSPAPER HUMORISTS.

Terse Tales From Humorous Pens

MONEY PURSUIT AFTER JUSTICE.

A big, brawny, red-faced sagebrush lawyer lived in one of the Indian reservations in the old days. He wore a drooping mustache, and the Mexicans called him El Toro Blanco, because of his habit of bellowing in court.

He was playing poker with the Indian agent and his clerk one day when a dusty and frightened man came in.

"Be you Mr. Toro Blanco?" asked the visitor.

"Yes," replied the lawyer, pompously, "I am the man. What can I do for you?"

"I just killed a man over there on the white sands, and I want to consult a lawyer before I surrender."

"That's a good idea," said El Toro Blanco; "always resort to the law. How much money you got?"

"Three hundred dollars."

"Gimme it," shouted El Toro Blanco, thrusting out a hairy paw. "That'll be enough if you can furnish the witnesses, but it will cost you $700 cash if I furnish them."—Saturday Evening Post.

LEAVES NO ROOM FOR DOUBT.

The afternoon was warm, and the teacher was almost worn out in trying to drum the elements of grammar into the wooden craniums of her pupils.

"Now, Johnny," she said, wearily, "tell me—would it be proper for you to say: 'You can't learn me nothing?'"

Johnny looked thoughtfully for a moment, and then replied in a tone of conviction:

"Yes, mum."

The teacher sighed.

"Why, Johnny?" she asked. "Tell me why?"

And now the answer came quick and pat:

"'Cause yer can't!" said Johnny, triumphantly.—London Answers.

MEASURING UP THE PENITENTS.

A typical old-time "circuit rider" died recently in Alabama—a man whose godly, unselfish life will long be remembered. Many were the eccentricities of this rugged old man, and many anecdotes are current among the Methodist ministers of the state concerning him. He was noted for two things—his denunciation of sin in no uncertain tones and the familiarity with which he addressed the Lord in prayer.

On one occasion he had been preaching in a long meeting-house in the pine woods of North Alabama. There were several young fellows on hand who had been celebrating by patronizing a still hard by. After a long, fiery sermon, the preacher made a call for mourners, and soon the rude altar was filled mostly by the aforementioned young fellows. The old man looked them over for a moment, and with keen intuition felt that it was perhaps a "lark" on the boys' part, but he knelt to pray.

"Oh, Lord," he began, "here's a crowd of young fellows kneelin' round your altar. They've been cussin' and swearin' and drinkin' their time in riotous livin'; but they've come up here seemingly penitent. They look like penitents, Lord, and I hope they are. They weep like penitents, Lord, and I hope you'll forgive 'em if they are; but, oh, Lord, they don't smell like penitents!"—Philadelphia Record.

THE LIGHT OF HIS HOME.

General Theodore A. Bingham, who resigned the post of chief engineer of New York's bureau of highways because he could get nothing accomplished, said the other day:

"Despite all my efforts in that office there were no results. I reminded myself—though in no individuous sense—of Gobsa Golde.

"Gobsa Golde, the well-known clubman, was found by a police officer, very late one night, in a pitiable state of intoxication. The wretched fellow stood beneath a lamppost, which he was kicking with might and main.

"Slightly amused, the policeman watched him a moment. Then he said:

"'Here, sir, what are you doing there?'

"No reply. Only bang, bang, bang—Gobsa dealt the lamppost three more kicks.

"'What are you doing?' repeated the policeman.

"Gobsa delivered another quick volley of very furious kicks, and then, looking up, he said:

"'Oh, I know she's in all right, 'cause there's h—hic—a light upstairs.'"—Washington (D. C.) Star.

A GOAT'S BIT OF SENTIMENT.

Mrs. Moriarity owns a goat for which she has a warm affection. All the neighbors regard Nanny as quite as much a member of the Moriarity family as is Michael or Katherine.

One fine morning Mrs. Riordan came running across the street with her shawl over her head, and said: "Mrs. Moriarity, what is the matter wid Nanny? Is she sick. I seen her l'anin' agin the corner of the house, and she was lookin' ill!"

"The saints bless you, Mary Ann," replied Mrs. Moriarity, "Nanny ain't sick! She climbed up on the cintertable last night and ate the mistletoe, and it made her sintimental, that's all!"—Youth's Companion.

EPIGRAMATIC.

"The late Edwin A. Abbey, the American painter, who lived in London, was only comfortably off, whereas he might have been rich."

The speaker, a Chicago art dealer, had just returned from Europe. He continued:

"I dined one evening with Abbey in his house, in Chelsea, and after dinner we walked in the blue twilight on the Chelsea embankment.

"As we passed Old Swan House and Clock House and the other superb residences that front the river, I reproached Abbey for his extravagance.

"'Why,' I said, pointing toward Clock House, 'if you had saved your money you might be living in a palace like that today.'

"But Abbey, with a laugh, rather got the better of me. He rattled off this epigram—and it's an epigram I'll always remember when I'm tempted to be parsimonious:

"'Some' folks,' he said, 'are so busy putting something by for a rainy day that they get little or no good out of pleasant weather.'"—Washington Star.

SLIM SAVING CHANCE GOES.

A missionary who was making his way through a backwoods region came upon an old woman sitting outside the cabin. He entered upon a religious talk, and finally asked her if she didn't know there was a day of judgment coming.

"Why, no," said the old lady. "I hadn't heard o' that. Won't there be mor'n one day?"

"No, my friend; only one day," was the reply.

"Well, then," she mused, "I don't reckon I can get to go, for we've only got one mule, and John always has to go everywhere first."—National Magazine.

HIS SHARE IN CREATION.

"I am inclined to think," said the man who speaks with firmness, though with caution, "that our friend, Grafton Grabb, was created on the Sabbath."

"For what reason?"

"We are told that an honest man is the noblest work of the Creator and also that an the sexenth day the Creator rested."—Exchange.

Quips and Flings

Black Orp, Senior—Ah, my boy, there is nothing stronger than a mother's love.

Young Black Orp—Isn't there, by Jove! Have you ever had a peck at one of these onions?—Tatler.

* * *

"I don't see any sense in referring to the wisdom of Solomon," said the man, smartly. "He had a thousand wives."

"Yes," answered the woman, tartly, "he learned his wisdom from them."—Brooklyn Life.

* * *

Wife—Why did you refuse to give that man the rooms?

Husband—He looked so ill-tempered I was afraid I should never summon up courage to raise his rent later on.—Fliegende Blaetter.

* * *

"Was your love affair romantic?"

"Oh, very! I met Reginald at the seashore. We both pretended to be very rich."

"Yes, yes!"

"And now it turns out that he collects the payments on our piano."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

* * *

Magazine Editor—This is a splendid story, but never heard of the author before, did you

Assistant—Never. Shall I send it back?

Magazine Editor—No. Put it away until he becomes famous.—Boston Transcript.

* * *

"Aha!" exclaimed Hurlock Shotmes, as he entered the apartment. "There was a mouse in the room!"

"Your power of scent, Hurlock," commented Woctor Dotson, "is simply marvelous!"

"Scent nothing!" said the great detective. "See the heelmarks of a woman's shoe in this chair?"—Browning's Magazine.

* * *

"Horse sick?" asked the man in the buggy.

"Yep," replied the man with a spring wagon.

"Hard luck, ain't it?"

"Oh, I dunno. It's gettin' so medicine is cheaper than hay."—Washington Star.

* * *

The prodigal son had returned.

The fatted calf graced the festal board.

"No, thank you," he said, when pressed to accept a second platterful. "When I went away I was 50 pounds overweight and now that I have succeded in wasting my substance in riotious living, I'm not going to take any chances on getting fat again."—Chicago Post.

* * *

"Wouldn't Rip Van Winkle be astonished if he could awake now?"

"I should say so. Just think of it! He never saw a steamship or a railroad train, to say nothing of automobiles and aeroplanes."

"I know; but what would surprise him most would be the way women are able to dress without causing riots or even starting scandals."—Chicago Record-Herald.

* * *

Miss Fullosoul (of a poetical turn)—Which are you of opinion one should say, professor—"Summer files" or Summer flees "

Absent-minded Professor (great on entomology)—The two species, my dear young lady, are entirely distinct. Now, the common house fly——. Then he wondered why she suddenly opened a conversation with the young man on her right.—London Sphere.

* * *

Proprietor of Millinery Shop—Why didn't that lady buy anything?

New Assistant—Because we hadn't got what she wanted.

Proprietor—You kindly remember in future, miss, that you're here to sell what I keep and not what people want.—London Opinion.

* * *

"You'll be a man like one of us some day," said the patronizing sportsman to a lad who was throwing his line into the same stream.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "I s'pose I will some day, but I b'lieve I'd rather stay small and ketch a few fish."—Tit-Bits.

* * *

Mrs. Wayback—Ye aint' a racing man, are ye?

Summer Boarder—No, madam. Why?

Mrs. Wayback—Because if ye was ye'd have to look for rooms som'ers else. Last sport we had stoppin' here went an' swiped the best part of my newest crazy quilt for a vest!—Puck.

* * *

Mrs. A.—Is your husband all you thought he was?

Mrs. B.—Pretty much; but I've found out that he's a whole lot short of what he thinks himself to be.—Boston Transcript.

* * *

"Poverty is not a crime, you know."

"Say, if you had a wife and lived next door to people who had a larger income than you had, you'd change your mind about that."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Among the Poets of the Daily Press

THE BILLS.

Here's the postman with the bills,
Monthly bills!
At his coming how my solar plexus
thrills!
How it trembles, trembles, trembles
With a kind of quaking fright
As the missives he assembles
(While my tragic face resembles
A storm-threatened starless night)
Seem to climb, climb, climb
To an altitude sublime,
Heaping till they make a ghostly range
frigid-looking bills,
Of the bills, bills, bills, bills,
Bills, bills, bills—
Heart-distressing, soul-depressing, unpaid bills!
Here are yellow wedding bills,
Golden bills!
What a world of weariness their quantity instills!
Though they're reminiscent, quite,
Of a time of pure delight,
Now they make me madly note,
And all in vain,
That I must have been the goat
When those turtledoves were married—do they gloat
O'er my pain?
Oh, these bills are bitter pills;
What a juicy bank account their liquidation kills!
How it chills!
How it spills
Into nothing! How it rills
Into bill collectors' tills,
While those endless checks I'm drawing,
Paying bills, bills, bills,
Paying bills, bills, bills, bills,
Bills, bills, bills—
As the color keeps retreating from my gills!

—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

THE CONFIDING SKEPTIC.

You can't make William Brown believe
There was an Adam or an Eve—
No, sir! He says that's just a myth
To play on people's feelings with.
It's no use to give William tracts,
He says he runs his mind on facts!

Yes, William's baldness has grown chronic.
Although he used the barber's tonic!

And William Brown he says the flood
Is just a myth, as plain as mud,
He says old Noah never made
The ark, but on dry land he stayed.
He's from Missouri, and you know
That sort o' man you've got to show.

Yes, his dyspepsia's nearly killed him,
Although with stummick balm they filled him.

"Humph!" William Brown will say,
"that tale
About old Jonah and the whale
Is all pure legend! Why will you
Believe a thing you know ain't true?
Now I will not believe a bit
O' stuff that isn't definite!"

Yes, Brown's rheumatic pains still hold him,
In spite of what the druggist sold him.

And William Brown will almost fight
If you say his views are not right,
"Don't try to talk to full-grown men,
O' Daniel in the lions' den!"
He'll shout till others stand aloof,
"I won't believe till you bring proof!"

Yes, Brown gulps down without a quiver
Old Doctor Bink's Dope for the Liver.

—Chicago Post.

TO

Thou wast made beautiful exceedingly,
Fashioned to show how human clay may take
Impresses of its Maker's artistry
For Beauty's simple sake.

Some vessels doth the Potter shape, it seems,
For use alone and service, homely ware
Of every day, and then he sudden dreams

Working in color, curve, and line of grace,
Touching with skill supreme, until the whole,
Beautiful body, still more beauteous face,
Shrine woman's saul.

—Pall Mall Gazette.

PUZZLING.

A fool and his money are parted quite soon,
Is as true as a shoe's made of leather;
But the thing that surprises us most is the fact
How the two get so often together.

—Yonkers Statesman.