

# AT THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH. BY HELEN ARSTOW.



WITH a firm hand Millicent drew back a stubborn apron of laurel and pushed into a pretty glass that was certainly a haunt of fairies if there were any fairies in the vicinity. She stepped timidly through the long grasses. She paused a moment when the flowers and ferns began to give way to water plants. The lines around her eyes and mouth spelled snakes if ever an expression did. But with a look of determination creeping over her features, she set out again with a resolute step that told of a preconceived project, which she intended to carry through. A sudden rustling in a patch of short rushes evoked from her a very shrill feminine squeal and brought her to an abrupt halt. The snake, if indeed it were a serpent, hastened away quietly without any further disturbance; for snakes, notwithstanding the bad reputation they enjoy, especially in the feminine mind, are a very great sort, and can never be accused of intentionally frightening a lady. But the mysterious movement in the rushes had aroused Millicent's timidity, and shaken her resolution to the very roots and foundations.

"'Twas only a frog, young lady," she heard some one at her elbow say softly in a thoroughly southern drawl. "'Twas nothing but a bullfrog for' soah and I'll bet he was a heap more frightened than ye' all."

Millicent, relieved either on account of the established identity of the reptile or assured by the presence of another person in the lonely spot, turned to inspect the speaker. Her assurance grew greater when instead of a young man, before whom she would have been forced to show a certain amount of reserve, she confronted a bronzed old southerner with snowy hair and a white mustache which, in spite of its rakish military demeanor, told of age and discretion. It was in a year not long after the close of the great rebellion that this old man had been in the general aspect told of a campaigner through and through.

"He's a colonel at least," said Millicent to herself. Millicent was from the north and did not know that her mental estimate was little better than dubbing him a corporal.

The old soldier had left the trees on the edge of the glade, and with a courteous smile on his face was making his way toward her.

"I am very much relieved to hear it," replied Millicent.

The southerner scrutinized her with eyes that sparkled beneath the shaggy white eyebrows.

"Ye' look like a stranger in these heah parts," he said, as though thinking out loud. "Ye aren't lost?"

"Well, not exactly," replied Millicent, with some hesitation. "I don't know just where I am, but I am not lost yet. You see, I am one of the guests up at the Spring house. As things were somewhat tiresome up there, I have found it better to find the fountain of youth. They say it's around here somewhere."

"Why?" said the old man with a smile, as he looked into her young face. "It is, I suppose, for ye' all would be looking for that for many years to come."

"I was in the neighborhood, so I thought it would do as well now as any other time to look into the matter," said Millicent. "Anyhow, that's just what I am hunting for. It seems to me that it ought to be around here somewhere. It is pretty enough."

"And there are at least a dozen such fountains of youth in my knowledge heah in the vicinity. If old Ponce de Leon had come up to Virginia he would have found 'em all, for I know of 'em. It has always been the marvel of mah life that Ponce was such a poor huntah."

"This is very encouraging," returned Millicent. "Would ye' tell me where is the best fountain of youth?"

"I have nevah dabbled in such things myself," returned the old man, "but just about 20 paces ovah yond is a spring that all the niggahs round tell is a swimmin' hole of the fairies and dwarfs. That ought to fix it some. But I wouldn't advise you to put too much dependence in what the niggahs say."

"The landlord said it was out here somewhere."

"Huh," replied the old man, with a shrug. "I can't say that that's any bettah authority than the niggahs."

"But I won't hurt to try," said Millicent, and she produced a very unimpressive looking tin cup that she had brought with a manifest purpose of capturing the waters of the fountain of youth.

"My deah young lady, said the old man with a look of mock horror, "ye' would not think of dipping the watahs of eternal youth with a tin cup now, would ye'?"

"Fancy old Ponce rambling around Florida with a tin cup tied to his belt. Why, young lady, wheet's yoah poetry? Wouldn't Horace, Virgil, Homer have shivered with horrah at the thought of dipping the fountain of youth with an ordinary 10-cent tin cup?"

"It really is shameful, sir," said Millicent, in an apologetic tone, "but one really must drink somehow. It was the only thing I could bring. What would you have me drink from?"

"From yoah own pretty hands," said the old man, with a bow of a cavalier. "I am certainly suah that the watahs of the fountain of eternal youth would then feel no reproach. But a tin cup, my deah young lady, is certainly not the valuable medical watahs as those of the fountain of

youth in the palm of my hand," said Millicent very severely. "I have heard somewhere that to gain the best effects a person should take one draught of the water and no more. A second drink counteracts the first. According to my reasoning I thought that I should get more out of a tin cup than anything else. In a matter so important as eternal youth one should not run any chances."

"Ah, me!" said the old man with a sigh. "Such a calculating spirit has sprung up in the minds and hearts of young people. It is the spirit of the times in which theah is a gauge for everything. But who would evah think that romantic youth and beauty should come to the point wheet it measured eternal by the pint!"

Millicent looked at the speaker curiously, for he was certainly a whimsical old fellow. She studied him all the more carefully because into his kindly bantering there had crept a note of sadness.

"You are becoming serious, sir," she said. "You will end by making me doubt the value of the spring over there."

"Try it and see," said the old man. "Ye should hurry, for they are gurgling away so riotously that one almost fears that they will not last long."

"And who is materialistic now?" asked Millicent, with a teasing laugh. The old southerner shrugged his shoulders and led the way to the spring.

"It is certainly bubbling away as fast as the minutes," he said, half meditatingly. "It does not seem as if anything so unstable and quick to run away as this watah could bring eternal youth."

The man's half-serious spirit affected Millicent strangely and she was about half-convinced as she stood by the little fountain that this was near some mysterious power.

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mountain," she exclaimed. "I might have known it from the beginning."

"I?" cried the old man with a deprecatory wave of the hand. "Do I look like an anchorite? I am only an ancient warrior beaten in battle, who has crept off to his haunt to live out his days."

"But you are the hermit of the mountains," replied Millicent with conviction. "And you are quite a personage in the neighborhood. You are the most talked about personage about the Spring house. Every one has been wanting to catch sight of you, and here I am stumbling right across you. I shall be considered a very lucky person."

"I am suah it is not such a difficult matter to catch sight of me," said the old man coldly. "I am much more suah it is hadly worth while. I have nevah had any offahs to go with the circus, or to catch that matiah any overtures from the landlord of the hotel as a drawing cahd."

Millicent saw that she had hurt the old man's pride and she looked at him quickly with an apologetic expression.

"You misunderstand them," she said. "The young girls, I mean. They say down at the Spring house that you have had such a romantic life, and are in fact the most romantic person in the whole state."

"An astounding mistake," replied the old man, with a smile. "Whoevah head tell of romantic and gray hair? Rheumatics would be more like it."

"But all hermits must have a love affair," an unfortunate love affair," said Millicent, banteringly.

"All love affairs are unfortunate," retorted the old man. "But it is a great mistake to look upon me as a hermit. Listen while I teah you all this romantic life. This mysterious recluse lives up theah yond."

The old man paused and waved his hand upward, where, among the clustered foliage of the mountain could be seen the roof and part of the white facade of a stately southern mansion.

"Theah ah, to my recollection," he went on, with a sort of sad pride, "almost 35 rooms in that theah house. That's wheet this recluse lives. And whoevah head of a hermit wanders about 35 rooms. An' theah ah, three old niggahs up theah who look after the wants of this romantic old anchorite. It certainly is not propah for a hermit to be pampered by servants."

"That's theah where the hermit lives," said Millicent, catching her breath with surprise. "I wonder that I did not know. You are Mr. John Randolph Shelby, then?"

The old man startled at the sound of the name, as though a sound once familiar but forgotten for a long time. Then he bowed his acquiescence. They had come to a stop at a place whence the hotel of the springs was in full view.

"I reckon you won't have any trouble reaching the hotel," said the old man, "and I shall leave you heah if you will pardon me."

"Won't you come down to the Spring house?" she asked Millicent. "It will take you a long time to get up to your home, and I should like to have you take dinner with me. It would be such a triumph to have captured the hermit of the mountain and to have borne him into the Spring house. I should be the envy of all the guests."

"So, young lady, you will insist that I am a hermit? I ask you, then, would it be at all fitting for a hermit to descend to an unromantic hotel?"

"Even if I insist?" asked Millicent.

The old man shook his head with decision.

"To be frank, my young friend," he said firmly. "I do not care much for that hotel, and I have taken a vow that I'd nevah have anything to do with it. You see, my fatnah stated that place and I grew up around it. I reckon, I know about every board and nail in its infernal makeup. There was a time when I thought a heap of that hotel, but that was long ago. Right after the war I sold that place, and a mighty good ridance it was."

"That was all before the war," continued the old warrior in a reminiscent tone. "In those days the girls came down from the north in droves, and that's wheet my wife came from, and that's wheet she went in the end. Now, I ain't a-blamin' her, 'cause things wheet might have done heah during the war, and they cleared out most of us. But somehow I thought she had no' grit. Of course, heh people were wealthy, and she was used to fine things all heh life, and the unpromising aspect round this place was enough to trouble most pretty young girls, but it wheet not brave in heh, and no southern girl would have done it. Why, it was almost like running under fire. That's what my wife did. Little girl, right when I was off at the war. Appontah was looming up neah and neah all the time. Then she picks up and goes off up noth just 'cause she

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"So you did come," she called to him in order to make known her presence, and for answer the old man bowed before her.

"I am a spectah amidst all this heah youth and gayety," he said with a slight quiver.

"Not for one who has drunk so often from the fountain of youth," answered Millicent smilingly.

She moved up into the full light from the ballroom. As the old man looked at her he started. Like a flash he must have been taken back to the days before the war when, as a rare gallant, he had rambled through the recesses of that same veranda.

"I have much to tell you," she said, "of heh."

The old man was silent, but his eager gaze told her he wished to listen.

"It was not that she deserted Dixie in the dark days," said Millicent softly. "She left after one and night when there came a dispatch from Richmond that said that you had fallen at Petersburg, and in the turmoil that followed, when all seemed chaos in the south, when Dixie lay at the feet of the victor, she fled to her old home in the north, which alone could afford her protection. Even then she did not feel content among the conquerors of her adopted land, and she soon left for Europe. She died in Paris among expatriates of Dixie."

The old southerner was silent for a long time.

"I nevah knew," he said in a broken voice, "I had no way of knowing, but it all looked the worst. And the little girl?"

For answer Millicent laid her hand over the trembling fingers of the old southerner and looked in his face. With a flash of intelligence the old man's eyes lit up and he caught Millicent's hands.

"She looked 20 years ago," he said, softly, scanning Millicent's upturned face. "She sat wheet you sit now. Yes, they ah genuine—the watahs of the fountain of youth."

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For answer Millicent laid her hand over the trembling fingers of the old southerner and looked in his face. With a flash of intelligence the old man's eyes lit up and he caught Millicent's hands.

"She looked 20 years ago," he said, softly, scanning Millicent's upturned face. "She sat wheet you sit now. Yes, they ah genuine—the watahs of the fountain of youth."

ing dance she sat aloof from the gayety in a sequestered corner of the veranda. It was from this retreat that she heard a soft southern voice going about in the darkness as the watahs and asking for a young lady with golden hair, much to the amusement of many of the guests. In a moment the old southerner stood near her as she sat in the pathway of light from the dance-room.

"So you did come," she called to him in order to make known her presence, and for answer the old man bowed before her.

"I am a spectah amidst all this heah youth and gayety," he said with a slight quiver.

"Not for one who has drunk so often from the fountain of youth," answered Millicent smilingly.

She moved up into the full light from the ballroom. As the old man looked at her he started. Like a flash he must have been taken back to the days before the war when, as a rare gallant, he had rambled through the recesses of that same veranda.

"I have much to tell you," she said, "of heh."

The old man was silent, but his eager gaze told her he wished to listen.

"It was not that she deserted Dixie in the dark days," said Millicent softly. "She left after one and night when there came a dispatch from Richmond that said that you had fallen at Petersburg, and in the turmoil that followed, when all seemed chaos in the south, when Dixie lay at the feet of the victor, she fled to her old home in the north, which alone could afford her protection. Even then she did not feel content among the conquerors of her adopted land, and she soon left for Europe. She died in Paris among expatriates of Dixie."

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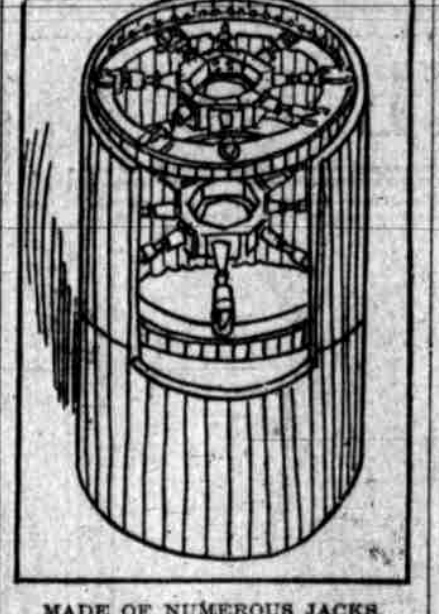
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## SOME OF THE RECENT AND NOVEL INVENTIONS

### NEW EXCAVATION SYSTEM

Prevents the Surrounding Earth and Rock From Caving In.

A new method for bracing the walls of a caisson excavation, to prevent settlement of the surrounding earth or rock, is shown in the accompanying illustration. The inventor is a civil engineer of Chicago. The essential portion of the device



MADE OF NUMEROUS JACKS.

vice consists of a system of adjustable jacks and ribs. These ribs are made of wooden "lagging," which may be left in position, if desired, when the concrete is set. By means of the jacks the earth surrounding the shaft can be kept constantly compressed and held back firmly in place, thus preventing the adjacent building sinking or tipping on its floating foundation, which is a frequent source of trouble. With this improved system, it is claimed, a larger number of caissons can be started at one time than under the old method, without increasing the danger of a cave-in.

**Curious Chinese Medicines.**  
Harriet Quimby in Leslie's Weekly. There are few places more interesting in Chinatown than the oriental laboratories and drug stores. Quaint and mysterious are some of the prescribed remedies, although many of them are composed of herbs and are excellent for some maladies. This fact is pretty generally recognized, for the

### UP-TO-DATE SPRINKLER

Tiny Streams Gush From Hole in Tubing in the Curb.

A novel method of solving the problem of street cleaning has been devised by an inventor of New Orleans. By his invention each property-owner can settle the question for himself. He can have the street in front of his property as wet or as dry as he pleases. In addition, the expense to the city of providing the old-fashioned watercart will be eliminated. This device is in the form of a curb attachment, which will sprinkle one side of the street whenever the water is turned on by the individual household. A metal tube, perforated



STREAMS GUSH FROM CURB.

on the outer side, is embedded in the concrete curb. This tube is connected to a street hydrant, and when the water is turned on numerous tiny streams gush from the holes in the tubing and sprinkle the street as long as is necessary. The upper part of the illustration shows a section of the curb with the sprinkling attachment in place, the lower part shows how it looks from the street.

average Chinese doctor who can speak English counts among his patients Americans as well as orientals. It is a well known fact that the late Leland Stanford pinned his faith to Chinese herb treatment, and was a regular and unashamed patron of Dr. Wong Woo, a prominent Chinese physician of San Francisco. In one of the large drug stores of New York

### SUPPORT FOR FLOWERS

A Dozen or More Can Be Arranged One Above the Other.

Amateur gardeners and floriculturists will find the flower supporter illustrated below of interest. The inventor, an Indiana florist, designed it for maintaining carnations and other flowers in an upright position during the period of their



FLOWERS ON EACH SIDE.

growth or at any time. It is made up of a series of horizontal rings adjustable on a standard in the center. The rings can be formed either singly or in pairs, the latter being preferable, as it gives extended use of the support. The rings can also be made of different sizes, and the support utilized for either large or small plants. The supporter is constructed entirely of wire, bent and twisted in the shape required. The standard is inserted in the soil of the flowerbed, with the flowers on each side. The rings can be adjusted in different positions of elevation on the standard, according to the height of the flowers.