

HER EXPLANATION.

So you have wondered at me—guessed in vain... What the real woman is you know so well?

THE SILENT GUEST.

Past 9 o'clock, and a bitter night. It was raining as it had rained all day; a gathering storm had lashed the hedge-

For his own reasons, Mr. George Masters was avoiding the highway, preferring instead to plunge in the darkness across the fields, falling again, and again in the ruts of sandy mud ridged with last week's snow, gray and sodden.

Chilled to the soul, with no dry thread on him, he had waited faithfully till "Squire Hales' horse-hoofs splashed the mud over the horse bushes, and then the numbed finger-tips crept under the flannel waistcoat. He half rose among the furze as the red roqueleau went past him, to the splash of the hoofs and the jangle of the bridle-reins.

The horses went on toward Shooter's Hill, and a dripping figure stood in the way they had come, shaking a helpless hat and cursing all things below the beetling sky. Then George Masters tramped across the strip of furze-clad common and flung himself through a gap in the hedge of the turnip-field.

"Gone by," said Mr. Masters, bitterly, "gone by—to Greenwich by this time, likely—with his two bloody-minded serving-men behind him—a cowardly, white-livered, gold-laced hound."

"You're wet, George," said the landlord; "come you in under a roof. I'll be glad to see you, and I'll be glad to see your horse."

"The dog will be in his chair, then," returned the hostler. "There's a man above us now, in the bed, a real gentleman he is, with his sword and his ruyal—come in when you was out, and when the heavy rain come on, I showed him up to the bedroom and kindled the fire, and he lies there, burning two of the big wax candles; and if he don't drink the bottle of claret, it's opened, and will have to be paid for, too. Terry don't like him, Terry don't; hear to him howling—he'll whine like that ever since the old gentleman come. Hark to 'em again, now the wind's quiet."

The mongrel fastened by the front door was baying howl upon howl. A kick at the panel, and a commotion, and "be down" from the landlord, appeared to soothe him for the moment, but the long whines son broke out again. The dog wailed to the wind, which answered with fierce gusts of passion, and hurrying of sleet against the lattice panes.

"A good tame to a house of entertainment is better than rubies." Having delivered himself of this sentiment, he spread his hands over the arms of his Windsor chair and leaned forward with an air of awaiting suggestions. But none came.

"He had all he ordered, and more," said the landlord, slowly, "but he went on that night, after all." He looked at his companion; appreciated the reminiscence in the eye of George, the child-like admiration for superior achievement in that of Bill, and pursued: "Yes," he went on, "an' when he went, he left his gold watch and squeezy-box, and nineteen guineas in a red silk bag. He didn't want 'em where he was going."

"Don't I tell you? Depford!" They all laughed gayly, and the landlord looked out a stone bottle and thick glass rummers from the corner cupboard.

"His Majesty, King George, wot you're so fond of—here's his health, and our gracious Queen Charlotte, and long to reign over us!" George gave the toast, and they drained their glasses.

"Giniver!" said the hostler, and added tentatively, "a man could do anything wot's drunk, Giniver." Assented George; "but it's nothing short o' murder would do for that dog o' yours, Tom."

Indeed, the dog's long-drawn howls still disturbed their Christmas festivities. Moved by this incongruity, the landlord went out and kicked it. A gust of wind and rain found way into the room, and Mr. Masters coughed again violently, and shivered and swore.

"Can't you shut the door?" he asked; "this ain't no weather for a poor man with his living to get, and his pockets as empty as they lay here to be born."

"Well," said the landlord, "our pockets was empty enough last Christmas here, afore that ole gentleman called." And still no sound from the room upstairs.

"There's another purse up there this night," remarked the footpad, "waiting for them as is sportsmen enough to take it, as two bold lads did last Christmas eve."

The chill wind must have made its entry still felt in the room, for the landlord shivered again, and the footpad wiped the palms of his hands upon his knees.

All three stood together for a moment at the bottom of the stairway. There was a moment's hesitation, while the landlord and Mr. Masters adjusted the position of the window-blind, which had planned his foot on the bottom stair. At this inopportune instant, the tall clock in the corner struck 11, with a shrill metallic stroke, and Bill withdrew his foot suddenly, dropping the bill-book. It fell to the red tiles of the floor, which gave back clang on clang.

Outside the bedroom door they held their breath and listened—not a sound but the ticking of the clock below, the rushing of the window-blind, and the moaning plaint of the dog.

A stealthier man than the hostler, the landlord thrust a sleek hand forward to grasp the latch of the door. It was unsecured, and opened a little way under his gentle pressure. Through the foot of opening they could see the two waxen candles flame in the sockets as they burned by the sleeping man. By their light his legs modeled themselves under the white counterpane. His face and shoulders were in the deep shadows of the faded green curtains of the half-tester.

At the sight of the bed the heart of the hostler became suddenly sick within him. With white lips and shaking knees he vacated his place in the procession, and pushing past the landlord, who was still poised himself at the window, he made his way to the room below. At that moment could their limbs have borne them, his companions would have followed him. They huddled together in the corner of the landing, holding their breath and listening until the taproom door opened and shut; and they knew themselves alone with the sleeper.

For the terror of those strained minutes, it might have been the old man behind the curtains who was the ambushed watcher. The wind had lulled, and the rain, falling ceaselessly and silently, made no sound on the thatched roof. For awhile the dog was silent in the yard.

This was an old man, scant of breath, or surely his breathing could have been heard in the dreadful calmness of the night. The landlord, with his shoulders raised, had strolled on tip-toe into the room. One of the candles was now guttering and flaring preparatory to going out; the fragment of the other burned on with a long, red, smoking wick, lighting up the bright point of the rusty case-knife clenched in his fingers.

He glanced upward at the brutal features of the footpad. Their eyes met with the same thought in each. It was the recollection of that other night, when the hostler had stolen into the room to rob another helpless, sleeping old man of sleep and life.

The great silence was not to be borne. The footpad put out his hand and thrust the landlord forward by the shoulder. He drew back, stumbling heavily. As he recovered himself, they both sprang forward toward the bed and tore back the old green curtains.

Behind these, his poor, white face thrown back over the pillows, lay the old man, his thin hands rigidly grasping the edges of the sheet drawn up close under his chin. They leaned over and pulled it half way back. "By God! 'tis very like him," said the landlord in a whisper.

George had his hands on the sheet and pulled it back roughly. "It is him, by God!" he cried. For, as he pulled back the sheet, the last candle flared up and died down and went out. Its last light shone on the sleeper's throat, gashed across—horribly gaping—red and wet. This was no stranger, but the man they had murdered a year ago; they had left him just so last Christmas morning.



Greek and Roman doors always opened outward, and when a man was passing out of a house he knocked on the door, so as not to open it in the face of a passer-by.

A doctor says that persons who attain their thirtieth year without suffering from any serious disease are likely—all things being equal—to live till they are at least 73 years of age.

One of the most beautiful orchids was recently exhibited in London. It was a white flower, shaped like a sea-shell with outspread wings, and a gold and silver heart. It came from Venezuela, and cost \$5,000.

A tortoise, weighing a quarter of a ton, has been purchased for the Zoo at London, by Mr. Walter Rothschild. It is supposed to be the oldest living creature in the world, and is known to have lived at least 150 years. It was mentioned in a deed in 1810.

Fogs on the ocean or navigable streams may be dispersed for some distance ahead of a vessel by means of an invention, consisting of an arched distributing pipe with jet tubes set in one side to discharge water or other liquid in spray against the fog.

Combinations of linseed, peanut, rape or mustard oil with sulphur form rubber-like substances which are said to be largely used in the manufacture of India rubber compounds. Pure, unvulcanized India rubber will float, nearly submerged, in water, while the oil substitutes, being slightly heavier in proportion to their bulk, sink.

The ivory handles of knives or other ivory articles, when yellowed or discolored from age or other cause, should be thoroughly washed with water and finely powdered pumice stone, and then dried in the sun under glass. According to the condition of the ivory, the washing and exposure to the sun's bleaching influence should be repeated until it is white.

The man who either shuts the door with a bang or leaves it wide open may soon be unable to work havoc with people's nerves. Doors can now be opened and closed automatically by electricity, the circuit being closed and the door opened by the pressure by the visitor's foot on the mat. After the door has passed through, the doors are shut by the same current, and left ready to open with the next visitor.

A corduroy road made of small cedar trees, which were in a perfect state of preservation, was unearthed the other day thirty-eight feet below the surface of the earth, seven miles east of Ashtabula, O. Prof. Carl Wright, teacher of geology in Oberlin College, who has visited the spot and examined the wood, is of the opinion that the wood has been where it was found since the glacial epoch.

The London Lancet reports the remarkable case of the killing of Major Jemason by lightning in a field near Guildford on Aug. 25. There was but a single flash and a clap of thunder. The victim was found lying on his face, dead, with his clothing torn to fragments and scattered widely around him. Even his undergarments were rent to ribbons and scattered over the ground. The soles of his boots were stripped off, brass eyelet holes were torn out, and nails forced in his places.

Ostrich-farming is one of the most interesting of California's varied industries. About twelve years ago Ed. Win. Cawston brought over a cargo of forty-two ostriches from South Africa. They thrived on his Norwalk and Pasadena ranches, and now the proprietor has over three hundred native birds and is increasing his "troop" at the rate of about one hundred chicks yearly.

The bones of a Mastodon. The bones of a prehistoric monster have been discovered on a large farm about a mile south of Batavia, while Philip and George Baker, dairymen, were digging a grave for a dead horse, at a depth of about three feet the shovel struck an obstruction which, on being lifted up with a rail, was broken.

It turned out to be an ivory tusk in a splendid state of preservation. A portion of the tusk is of the consistency of chalk. One end of it, however, was not injured, and was of solid ivory. It is five feet in length, about five inches in diameter at the widest end, and at the point about two and a half inches. A portion of a rib, about 36 inches long, was also found. Dr. E. E. Snow, who has traveled extensively in Africa, pronounced the tusk that of a mastodon.—Scientific American.

Rich Merchant of the Arctic. Up near the arctic circle lives an old man who is very rich, and yet never sees a dollar, or any kind of money, or representative of money. Dr. Sheldon Jackson of the bureau of education for Alaska, on board the Bear, recently

touching at Indian Point, Siberia. There he found the principal native of the village, Koharri by name, a trader noted all along the coast.

Writing of this old trader, Dr. Jackson says: "He has a little frame, stocky, filled from floor to ceiling with tobacco, flour and looking glasses, which he has obtained from the whalers, and from which he supplies the country for hundreds of miles around. This man has been known to have as much as \$75,000 worth of whalebone in his storehouse at one time. He does a business of probably \$100,000 a year, and yet not a single coin of gold, silver, or a single bank note or bank check is used, nor are any books kept. All transactions are by barter, furs and whalebones being exchanged for tobacco, flour and whisky. This wholesale merchant of the north Siberian coast neither reads nor writes, nor can any one associated with him. Although no wealthy, he lives in an ordinary tent and sleeps on the ground on a pile of reindeer skins."—Washington letter to Chicago Tribune.

FASCINATING PAWNSHOP.

Few Persons Can Go By Without a Look In At Its Window.

Few persons can pass a pawnbroker's window without stopping to look in, says the New York Evening Sun. It contains so much suggestive interest, that it speaks of associations and history. No parvost products or things of mushroom growth, such as stare at one from the windows of shops that preach the gospel of the brand-new. Each article of the pawnbroker's stock-in-trade has its reason for being there, its own little tragic significance. The eloquence of the inanimate object is never greater than when in a pawnbroker's window.

Wedding rings, love tokens, medals and badges, how they set one to speculating upon their past, and the why and wherefore for their present! Often one is tempted to himself settle their future. Class pins and fraternity badges in the pawnbroking plight are especially suggestive, and more especially if one be a member of the class or the fraternity. Unconsciously one soon finds the habit of never passing a loan shop in any part of the town without stopping to see if any of his class pins are being held as hostage.

There is a conscious pride at the discovery that more pins of some other fraternity are in disgrace. The redemption of the pins follows as a matter of course. As many of them are marked with the name of the owner, it is often possible to return them, in which case the finder has all the righteous glow of the good Samaritan.

But whatever the result, this sort of rescue work is always interesting. If impossible to trace the owner the pins make a significant collection on their own account; when unhampered by any stubborn facts the imagination can invent their histories to suit itself. It is worth noting that few badges of women's societies one ever finds at the pawnbrokers'. The times are replete with clubs and classes and fraternities of women, both in college and out, but their insignia, it would appear, are rarely pawned. The contrast with the number of men's badges that are so fated is remarkable. Any one who makes a study of the pawnshop windows and the pawnbrokers themselves, indeed, will assure you of this. The unexpected happens when the badge of a woman finds its way into a loan shop.

Shakespeare's Knowledge.

It is not for a moment to be denied that Shakespeare's plays show an extraordinary wealth of varied knowledge. The writer was one of the keenest observers that ever lived. In the wood-land or on the farm, in the printing shop or the ale house, or up and down the street, not the smallest detail escaped him. Microscopic accuracy, curious interest in all things, unmitigated power of assimilating knowledge, are everywhere shown in the plays. These are some of the marks of what we call genius, something that we are far from comprehending, but which experience has shown that books and universities cannot impart. All the colleges on earth could not by combined effort make the kind of man we call a genius, but such a man may at any moment be born into the world, and it is as likely to be in a peasant's cottage as anywhere.

There is nothing in which men differ more widely than in the capacity for lubbing and assimilating knowledge. The capacity is often exercised unconsciously. When my eldest son, at the age of 6, was in the course of a few weeks of daily instruction taught to read, it was suddenly discovered that his 4-year-old brother also could read. Nobody could tell how it happened. Of course the younger boy must have taken keen notice of what the elder one was doing, but the process went on without attracting attention until the result appeared.—Atlantic.

Where We Are Popular.

"There are two spots on the globe where I found the United States to be the most idolized nation on earth," said Philip Lowden, a traveler from Sydney, N. S. W., to a Washington Post man. "On my way to America I stopped some days at Samoa and also at Honolulu. In both countries the feeling toward the Yankee race is of the warmest character. In Samoa the people hate the Germans with absolute detestation, as they have never forgotten or forgiven their bombardment by the German war vessels. In Honolulu I strongly suspect that the extravagant protestations of affection toward this country are based on the desire for annexation. The controlling element is simply crazy to be annexed to the United States."

I thought that if I lived there I would feel the same way. Undoubtedly it will be a great thing for the Hawaiians to come under the protection of the Stars and Stripes. While it may be a good thing for your country to appropriate the islands, the benefits are 100 to 1 greater on the other side."

On the Safe Side.

Smith—What do you think of that singer's high note? Jones—I can't endure it.

It would be a good idea for some people to hold their tongues occasionally and give their brains a chance to catch up.

A woman can strike a harder blow with her tongue than she can with her fist.

EXPENSIVE HOSPITALITY.

A Host Who Put Up a Sign for the Benefit of Visitors.

"Down in nearly any of the Southern States," remarked the New York drummer Sundaying in Washington, "the oppression of hospitality, if I may so express it, is something the Northern-er has no idea of. I have traveled in New England, as well as all over the South, and I have actual knowledge of what I am talking about. I never heard of a Yankee being eaten out of house and home by his friends, but I know of a dozen families in different parts of the South who have a continual struggle for existence simply because they haven't the courage to put up the bars and shut out their thoughtless visitors, who drop in at any and all times for a meal or a night's lodging, or both, or half-a-dozen of them, for that matter. Of course they are just as ready to extend a similar courtesy, but it isn't every family who can make itself even by boarding it out, and the result is that burdens are thoughtlessly thrust upon many who are kept with their noses to the grindstone as long as they live.

"I never knew of but one who had the nerve to inaugurate a new order of things, and he, on the other hand, has been at it so shortly that I cannot say how it will turn out, though so far it is a glittering success. This man had a good farm and a raft of friends who seemed to think that his house was theirs free of cost, and used it accordingly. His first wife was a native of the same county, and she couldn't turn people away, though she and her husband both felt and worked to death by being devoured and worked to death for their friends. Four years ago she died, and a year ago he married a Pennsylvania woman of sense and courage, and with no traditions and customs to observe. She said nothing for the first six months, but went ahead keeping a free hotel and listening to compliments on the superior kind of a woman she was, and then she called for a change.

"She had a comfortable competence of her own, and out of that she took enough to paint and enlarge the house and improve the grounds, and in the meantime she announced that she was going to keep a hotel. Of course, while the workmen were tearing things up, the visitors had to stay away, and in this way they quit for a time.

"On the 1st of September last she opened up the place, which she had made very handsome, and began waiting for guests. The only indication of a hotel there is an archway over the big gate on the pike, about a quarter of a mile from the house, and on this is a four-foot square sign reading: Hotel Bountiful.

Best Meals and Beds in the County. Everybody Welcome. Entertainment for Man and Beast. Prices \$5 per Day Up. Single Meals, \$1.50. Lodging, \$2. No Reduction by the Week or Month. Dogs and Children Not Admitted. Come one, Come All. MR. AND MRS. BLANK, Proprietors.

"As I said," concluded the drummer, "I don't know how the scheme will result, but when I was in that neighborhood ten days ago they hadn't done enough business to pay for the sign. In fact, they hadn't had a single guest, and I never saw two hotel proprietors as thoroughly contented and happy over the exceedingly bad business they were doing."

QUEER STORIES.

Counterfeit silver dollars of greater weight and fineness than those turned out from Uncle Sam's mints are the latest in the counterfeiters' art, and St. Louis is the first city to suffer from them. For a week St. Louis bank tellers accepted the counterfeits in question without hesitation. It was only when they reached the St. Louis sub-treasury that the spurious character was detected.

A Winsted (Conn.) man met a girl and was married to her an hour and a half later in order to fulfill the conditions of his uncle's will and come into possession of \$5,000.

A tramp wearing a shiny silk hat was one of the sights in Portland the other day. It is estimated that a single brewery in Munich makes \$34,000 a year extra by selling foam instead of beer on the top of each glass.

It cost the city of Bridgeport, Conn., \$50 the other day when a Hungarian girl tried to mail a letter in a fire-alarm box.

The average price of a cashmere goat or sheep is about \$1,000. About five pounds of wool are needed for an entire Cashmere shawl.

Corrosive water is a common source of trouble in metal mines. Its effect on iron, curiously enough, is greater when it simply drips on the metal than when the iron is immersed in it. A 12-pound iron rail has been cut in two in a few weeks by drops of water falling on it.

The latest charge against electric railroads is that in many places where they run near the coast they disturb the working of sub-marine electric cables. The electric street railway in Cape Town, Africa, says the Electrical Engineer, has affected seriously the efficiency of the siphon recorder of the sub-marine cable of the Eastern and South African Telegraph Company.

More Precious than Gold.

At last, after many dangers, she had braved the terrors of the Chilkoot pass and had rejoined her lover on the Klondike. "Are you glad to see me?" she asked. "Do you still think that I am worth my weight in gold?" "In gold?" he cried contemptuously, as he folded her to his frozen bosom. "My darling, you are worth your weight in lard."

COALING A BIG STEAMER.

Very Crude Methods Yet Prevail—Cost of the Work.

All the ships of the transatlantic lines are coaled by practically the same crude method. Barges of about 350 tons capacity are brought alongside of the ship, booms are rigged, and the tackle controlled by a donkey engine steel buckets are lowered to the barge, filled by four men with shovels, and hoisted to a projecting platform, where two men dump the bucket and shove the coal into the porthole. It is then taken by other men and stowed away in the ship's bunkers. Five and a half of these buckets is equal to a ton, and tally by count of the buckets is the only record to show how much coal the steamer has taken aboard.

In coaling the steamship St. Paul of the American Line forty-eight men are employed inside the ship. The average amount of coal bunkered is 3,000 tons, the time required to unload and stow is about forty hours, and the total average cost of the work is \$1,000. These figures, varying only with the coal consumption of the ship, will apply to the vessels of other transatlantic lines.

Efforts to reduce this expense have been productive of many ingenious mechanical devices, and the inquiry is often raised why none of these is in general use. The answer is given in the statement by a representative of one of the transatlantic lines: "I have had a number of devices to deliver coal to our steamers at the rate of anywhere from 50 to 500 tons per hour, but what is the use when we cannot take care of it inside any faster than we do now?" In a modern ship fuel must be stored wherever room can be found that is not required or available for other purposes. Coal cannot be received on board faster than it can be stored away in the bunkers, which are the only line in the Atlantic. In the West Indies coaling is almost exclusively done by negro women, who pour in a ceaseless stream over the gang plank, each carrying about 100 pounds of coal in a basket poised on her head.

In Mediterranean ports the work is done by men instead of women, but for the most part with the same primitive instruments—shovel and basket.

Protected by Their Color.

For years naturalists have been studying the part which color plays in protecting animals from their enemies. Protective coloration is the technical term which is given to such cases of protection. Last November Abbott Thayer, the artist, gave an open-air talk, demonstrating his theory of protective color, to naturalists gathered from all over the country. He placed three objects of about the size and shape of sweet potatoes, horizontally on wires a few inches above the ground. They were covered with a sticky material, and then dry earth from the road where they stood was sprinkled over them to give them the same color as their background. The two end ones were then painted white on the under side, which was protected by the brown of the sides. When viewed from a little distance, these two end ones, which were white below, disappeared from sight, while the middle one stood out in strong relief, and appeared much darker than it really was.

Mr. Thayer explained that terrestrial birds and mammals, which are protected by their color, are in the same way. In the case of the latter, the color of the under parts usually shades gradually into that of the upper parts. This is essential in order to counteract the effect of the shadow side, which otherwise, as shown by the middle potato, makes the object abnormally conspicuous, and causes it to appear much darker than it really is. This device of nature is operative throughout the animal kingdom, the marine world offering scarcely any exception to its universality.

Imitation in Suicide.

The power of example is perpetually being demonstrated. It is a peculiar fact, but one which we all know, that the knowledge of railroad fatalities, that no sooner is one person found killed upon the line than other similar fatalities may be expected at the same spot. More especially does this apply to places where there are found the bodies of persons mysteriously killed. At one place on a certain line no less than four people were found within twelve months—all within ten yards of each other, and all the first person killed there, and all having ended their lives with almost similar injuries, inflicted by the engine of the same express. From instances of this kind railroad officials have arrived at the conclusion that, whenever the first person is killed at any place, it immediately becomes a point of attraction to morbid-minded persons in the locality, who see in it only the purpose of suicide; and now, when any two persons have been found in succession at one place it is a common practice to have the spot watched.

Made Him Faint Heared.

A burglar had entered a house as quietly as possible, but his shoes were not padded, and he made some noise. He had just reached the door of a bedroom when he heard someone moving within, as if about to get up, and he paused. "Don't take your eyes off your boots when you come into the house there's going to be trouble, and a lot of it! Here it's been raining for three hours, and you dare to tramp over my carpets with your muddy boots on! Go downstairs and take them off this minute! Besides, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, leaving your wife alone until this late hour!"

He went downstairs without a word, but he did not take off his boots. Instead, he went straight out into the night again, and the "pal" who was waiting for him saw a tear glisten in his eye.

Where Do the Needles Go?

A German paper calls attention to the extraordinary fact that in Aachen (Aix la Chapelle) alone 800 tons of steel wire is used up annually in the manufacture of needles—4,500,000,000 in number valued at \$1,500,000. And it again asks the old question, "What becomes of all the needles in the world?"