BIRTHDAYS.

I am content
To let the added years
That come to me
Roll back in the past so far
That memory
Can only find along the shore
Some perfect shells, and nothing more.

I am content
That seaweed, bits of wreck
And pebbles gray,
Drift out of sight into the sea;
For them to stay
Would be to cherish grief and pain
I would not, must not feel again.

I am content
That none of life
Can ever be
Lived o'er with the self same throb and thrill;
No more to me
Will former song, or book, or toy,
Fill the new measure of my joy.

I am content
To live all of to-day;
And when I dream
Let fancy revel in the light
That hope hath seen
Beyond the present, and afar—
A steadfast, sweetly beck'ning star.

I am content—
For age upon the heart
Can never creep;
And when, at last, in stillest night
I seem to sleep,
A birthday comes to me in truth;
The gift it brings—immortal youth.

TUCKERTOWN TROUBLES.

There was a great church bother in Tuckertown last year, but our folks were not in it. The trouble began in the choir, who couldn't agree about the tunes. On some Sundays the organist wouldn't play, and on others the singers wouldn't sing. Once, they all stopped short in the middle of "Greenland's Icy Mountains," and it was real exciting at church, for you never knew what might happen before you came out; but folks said it was disgraceful, and I suppose it was. They complained of the minister because he didn't put a stop to it; so at last he took sides with the organist, and dismissed the choir, and declared we would have congregational singing in the future. 'Most everybody thought that would be the end of the trouble; but, mercy! it was hardly the beginning! Things grew worse and worse. To begin with, the congregation wouldn't sing. You see; they had had a choir so long people were sort of afraid to let out their voices; and besides, there was Elvira Tucker, who had studied music in Boston, just ready to make fun of them, if they did. For she was one of the choir, and they were all as mad as hornets.

In fact, the whole Tucker family were offended. They said folks didn't appreciate Elvira, nor what she had done, since she returned from Boston, to raise the standard in Tuckertown. And of course they were real mad with the minister, and lots of people took their side and called 'emselves "Tuckerites."

You see the Tuckers stand very high in Tuckertown, and other people try to be just as like them as they can. They were first settlers, for one thing, and have the most money, for another; and they lay down the law generally. The postoffice and the station are at their end of the village. They decide when the sewing-societies shall meet, and the fairs take place, and the strawberry festivals come off. If there is to be a picnic, they decide when we shall go and where we shall go, and just who shall sit in each wagon. If anybody is sick, Mrs. Tucker visits 'em just as regularly as the doctor, and she brings grapes and jelly, and is very kind, though she always scolds the sick person for not dieting, or for going without her rubbers, or something of that sort. If mother had a hand in this story, not a word of all this would go down. She says they are very high-spirited people, and they do a great deal for Tuckertown. I suppose they do; but I've heard other people say that domineer much more than is agreeable.

The people on the minister's side were called "Anti-Tuckerites;" but, as I said, our folks weren't in the quarrel at all. The consequence of being on the fence was, that I could not join in the fun on either side, and I think it was real mean. Every now and then, the Tuckerites would plan some lovely picnic or party, just so as not to invite the Anti-Tuckerites. Then, in turn, they would get up an excursion, and not invite any of the Tuckerites. Of course, I wasn't invited to either, and it was just as provoking as it could be.

One day, when I went to school, I found that Elvira Tucker was going to train a choir of children to take the place of the old choir.

"I went over to call on Elvira last evening," I heard Miss Green tell our school teacher, "and I found her at the piano playing for little Nell to sing. It was just at dusk, and they did not see me; so I stood and listened, and wondered why we couldn't have a choir of children instead of the congregational singing. Elvira said she thought it would be lovely."

Now, I had been to singing school for two winters; so I thought I ought to belong to the choir.

"You can't, 'cause only Tuckerites are going to belong, said 'Melia Stone. "And your folks aren't one thing or another."

I couldn't stand being left out of all the fun any longer, so I said: "I'm as much a Tuckerite as anybody, only our folks don't approve of making so much trouble about a small affair."

"I want to know!" said Abby Ann Curtiss. "Well, I'll ask Miss Elvira if you can belong there."

Mercy me! I had jumped from the fence and found myself a Tuckerite? I was sure mother would be real mad if she knew what I had said, for I suspected in my heart of hearts that, if she had jumped from the fence, she would have landed on the minister's side. I made up my mind that I would not tell her what had passed, for maybe, after all, Miss Elvira would decide that I was no real Tuckerite. But the very next day she sent word to me that she would like to have me join the choir.

I told mother that I was wanted in the children's choir because I had a good voice, and I never said a word about being a Tuckerite.

"A children's choir," said she. "That's a real good idea—a beautiful idea."

"She never suspected how I was deceiving her.

Well, we had real fun practicing. That week we learned a chant and two hymns.

One day Miss Green came in.

"How does she happen to be here?" I heard her ask Miss Elvira, with a significant look at me.

"Oh, she has a real good voice," answered Miss Elvira, laughing. "Most of the children who can sing are on the Tuckerite side. Besides, from something she said to Abby Ann, I think at heart the Halls sympathize with us."

What would my folks have said to that? I felt half sick of the whole affair, and went home and teased mother to let me go and visit Mary Jane.

I never shall forget the Sunday I sang in the choir. Miss Elvira played for us on the organ, for when the real organist heard that only the Tuckerite children were to belong to it she refused to play. Everybody seemed surprised to see me in it, and even Dr. Scott looked at me in a mournful sort of way, as if he thought the Halls had gone over to the enemy. What troubled me most, though, was the look mother gave me when she first realized that the choir was formed only of the Tuckerite children, and that she had not found it out before.

But, in spite of all this, I enjoyed the singing. We sat, a long row of us, in the singers' seats up in the gallery. After the hymn was given out and we stood up, Miss Elvira nodded to me and whispered: "Now, don't be afraid, girls. Sing as loud as you can."

Mercy! how we did sing! Twice as loud as the grown-up choir. Luella Howe said, afterward, that we looked as if we were trying to swallow a meeting-house.

But I never sang but just once in the choir.—[From "A story of a Very Naughty Girl," by A. G. Plympton, in St Nicholas for October.

A Bird Idyl.

As they stood together, looking out into the garden, she raised her eyes softly to his, and, while an expression of sweet suspense crept softly over her pretty face, murmured:

"Don't the little birds have a nice time?'

"O, yes," he answered, "they do that. They have political sinecures without voting or having to get congressmen to back them. And they are in for life, and they can't write letters that will expose them ten years later, and they haven't got war records to be sprung on them at the wrong moment, and they know nothing about finance to get them into trouble. O, yes, darling, the birds have a pretty nice time of it."

"But their lives seem to be made up of love," she whispered faintly.

"Yes; but you mustn't bet too heavily on love. I have seen human beings whose lives seemed to be made up of love; but, when there was no one around their home assumed the character of a political caucus, with a good sized tornado emptied into the free fight. You mustn't judge the feelings of a married couple for each other by the way they act at a kettle-drum. But then, the birds have the advantage over a man in making love——"

"No jokes on 'bills' and 'notes?'" she broke in.

"No," he replied, "but because they have a sure thing. They don't have to go down town and write poetry and put in coal all day for four dollars per week, and they never have to save up money to pay for ice cream and theater parties. They never have to buy clothes, and when they do fall in love they are not talked about all over creation, and they don't have to meander up to the girl's father and tell him a lot of lies, and prime their references to do likewise. O, yes, the bird in love has a pretty soft thing."

"Do you think they understand each other when they twitter?"

"I don't think there can be any doubt about that, because the male seems to wax mad when the female gets in all the talk. Now that female over there seems to be in the act of nailing her lord for a new dress, or commanding him not to be looking at that other bird over there in the polonaise. Of course they understand each other, or else they would keep still."

"Would you like to be a bird?"

"Not much," he replied, with great emphasis, "I wouldn't like the idea of getting up at five in the morning, and washing in dew on a soggy flower-bed, and squawking off a lot of rapture over a breakfast of raw worms. O, no, I don't want any bird in mine. I would rather sell suspenders on commission!"

"But, suppose we were both birds?" she said, with a slight tremor in her voice.

"Then we should have to dodge the cat, and boys with guns, and we'd have to live in trees and have a dull time, and no lemonade through straws. And I shouldn't have to call on you in tight shoes and swallow-tail coat. And we'd sit on a currant bush, and kiss with our bills—cold, hard, solidified bone kisses—just think of it. And I shouldn't have any shirt front for you to lay your head on. And, if I reached out for a handful of waist I wouldn't run the risk of having a yard of my palm torn off on a pin which—"

"What becomes of the birds?" she broke in, while an early-dawn tint suffused her features.

"Go south for their health, generally; but if we were birds we might be knocked down with sticks and stuffed to ornament a mantel-piece or a lady's hat. How would you like to be filled with a lot of sawdust and chemicals?"

"Not much. I'd rather be stuffed with ice-cream and caramels. But I mean what becomes of the bird at last? We never find them. Now the flowers fade and blow away, and we know what becomes of everything else, but we never find dead birds lying in the garden walk. Do their companions bear them away lovingly beneath the leaves. I always had an idea that a dainty poetic legend could be made of it."

"It could be done, my dear, and it would make a nice ten dollar poem. But don't take any stock in musical valleys and happy spheres millions of miles away when you figure on birds. They don't go to any such place, my dear. They generally go to the dime restaurant, where they are always worked into pies, or cast to play the difficult role of the quail on toast."

She sank on the sofa in a flutter, and he said he would be around on the morrow to take her to see the mat.—[Puck.

There is something exceedingly ludicrous in the coming coronation spectacle at Moscow. The Emperor "of all the Russias"—the most powerful autocrat in Europe—proposes to run in and out of that town like a fox in and out of a hole, and during his rapid entrance and exit he will be crowned. Business will be entirely suspended, railway trains will be stopped, telegraphic wires will be cut, troops will be moved, and absolute secrecy will be maintained in regard to the day and hour of coronation. The orders for police control are the most stringent, and every precaution will be taken to prevent his assassination as he sneaks into his capitol, is crowned, and then runs for his life.

RABBITS IN AUSTRALIA.—The graziers of Australia and New Zealand of late years have reckoned the rabbits as their worst enemy. In many districts these prolific creatures have left so little grass that the sheep have been kept from starvation only by their transfer to other localities. Some idea of the size of this invading army of rabbits may be gained from the fact that two "rabbit preserving" factories, one at Colac and the other at Camperdown, have been known to destroy 60,000 of the pests in a single week.

A farmer in England raises 1200 ducks each year for the London market.

Some Blunders About Breakfast.

The editor of the Philadelphia Times has been having some trouble about his breakfast, and thinks that to a large proportion of the human family it is not a success. There are millions of people who, instead of enjoying a hearty meal at the beginning of the day, make martyrs of themselves on a little toast and some coffee or pick at a chicken bone and a morsel of steak. They do this with a languid air of dissatisfaction, generally accompanied with the lamentation that they do not enjoy their breakfast and that it does them no good. Much of this unsatisfactory way of eating arises from habit, and most of the habit proceeds from dyspepsia, which is acquired in a way so easy that anybody can get it who desires to have it.

Dyspepsia is commonly supposed to have its origin in physical derangement. This supposition is largely correct; yet mental botherations have more to do with it than most people think. The conversation which prevails at many breakfast tables is such as direct thoughts of the eaters into such channels as to disturb the digestive system and to render that much abused organ, the stomach, incapable of performing its proper functions. This may be especially noticed at sanitariums and places where the better class of invalids congregate. When these people appear at the breakfast table it is to salute each other with questions as to the miseries of the night and the woes of the morning. They discuss their symptoms and tell their experience about their ailments until they have effectually taken away each other's appetite. The same evil is seen, only not to such an exaggerated extent, in many boarding houses and private families.

The breakfast table is not a dissecting room where people's interiors can be laid out for mutual examination and comparison. It is not a field for medical discussions or lectures on catarrh, consumption or indigestion. Nor is it the place for conversation on the horrors of the night or the anticipated miseries of the day. Those who want to make the most of their breakfast and have others enjoy it with them make no illusion to the stomach or its functions or to the processes of indigestion in the human system, or to bad dreams, or to decayed teeth. They will talk cheerfully, lightly, joyfully. And thus every breakfast will be to them a bonanza.

A fickle young female of Omaha was willing to marry, but she did not like the Episcopal clergyman who had been chosen to perform the ceremony. She wanted a hard-shell Baptist. Finally she was fully persuaded to let the Episcopal gentleman officiate. Though the hour was late at night, the minister donned his professional habiliments and had the church brilliantly lighted. The bridal party started up the aisle toward the altar, when the bride broke away from her lover and petulantly exclaimed: "I can't stand this. If you don't get another preacher I won't get married." Instead of wringing her neck, as he felt like doing, the patient lover submitted and went after another preacher. He, when found, said that he could not serve, as he was not fully ordained. Determined to seal his fate that night if possible, the groom found still another preacher. Him he got out of bed and persuaded to pronounce the holy ceremony, and the town clock struck 12.

As an instance of the ease with which inventions make their way into the nineteenth century, it may be remembered that nitro-glycerine, discovered in 1846, is now exclusively employed; while gunpowder, invented in the eighth century, did not become a determining element in war until the reign of Henry VII.

NOTICE.

To the Farmers and Mechanics' of Oregon, Washington Territory and Idaho:

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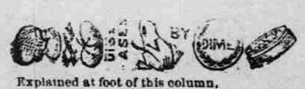

Explained at foot of this column.

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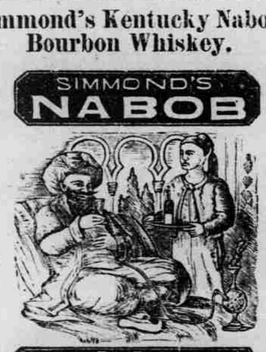

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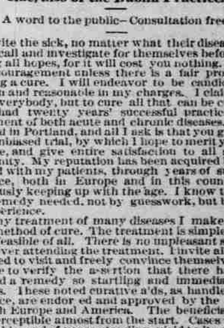

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