

FATTEN ON POVERTY.

Bad Boones at the Sign of the Three Balls.

The Pawnbroker's Shop as a Resource of People in Need of Money—A Business That Prospers in Hard Times.

"How much you want for dat watch?" he asked. I handed him a little silver watch that I paid twenty dollars for, writes Annie Woods, in the New York Recorder. I had no notion of pawning it, but was curious to know what figures I could get on it, if I, like so many others in this sad city, stood face to face with want.

"Oh, I don't know how you do these things here," I said, "for I have never pawned anything before."

"Well, I gif you two thaler und a halluf."

"Mercy on us!" I could not help exclaiming. "I couldn't part with it for that."

I left the place and turned into the next one, for there are plenty of them down there. There are some in the Bowery, and on Grand street, but they are as thick as beehives down on Park row and Chatham square. As I entered the door a woman in black passed me. She walked up to the pawnbroker, held up a beautiful diamond ring, and asked how much he would give her on it. She said she had to have fifty dollars. "My husband lies dead," I heard her say, "and I haven't enough to bury him."

I thought I detected a twinkle in his eye, for he knew she would have to take less money rather than keep the stone, and it was a beauty.

"That stone's not worth much," said the pawnbroker. "You couldn't get more than \$35 for it, and that's all it's worth."

The poor woman was nearly distracted with grief and could stand the strain no longer. "My husband paid \$125 for that ring and gave it to me when we were engaged. I would starve rather than part with it, if it were for myself, but he must be buried."

Poor thing! she was doubtless one among many unfortunates who were wrecked in the last financial storm.

I could bear this pitiful sight no longer, and went on to the next shop. Here I found a lot of women, with all sorts of things. One of them pawned a pretty pair of shoes, worth \$4 or \$5 for 50 cents.

There was a pretty girl there with her hair in a bun. She had it on, and the broker turned her around to examine it.

"How much do you want?" was his first utterance.

"Oh, I don't know, how much will you give?"

"Well how much do you want?" "I think I ought to get \$25 for it—my father paid \$50."

"I'll give you \$5," and she took it. While I stood watching, a man peeped in rather sheepishly, saw the crowd of women, and went out. He had a large grip in his hand, and I wondered what he was after, so I followed him. I didn't have to go far, for, as I expected, he turned into another pawnshop, opened his grip and took out one thing after another.

"Say, uncle, what'll you give me for this coat?"

The pawnbroker took it, laid it down, turned it inside out and felt of it, then said it was out of style and he would give \$1 for it.

"Holy smoke!" cried the man who was down on his luck. "Why, I paid \$50 for that Prince Albert."

"It makes no differ, dot coat was only wort one thaler to me." And he stuck to it.

Then the man offered his watch. It was a perfect beauty. Its works were jeweled all through, and it was solid gold. It must have cost \$250, but he got a loan of \$50.

"Now here's a ring," said the hard-up man, "which once belonged to Roscoe Conkling. He gave it to my father. I guess 'the governor' would feel pretty rocky if he knew I was going to hang this up. How much for it?"

"Tree thaler und a half."

"Oh, well, I'll keep it then, for 'the governor's' sake." And he picked up his treasure and went out.

After he was gone I ventured to ask the pawnbroker how much interest he charged?

"Tree per cent, a mont."

While I was questioning him a woman came in and took out a pawn ticket and a roll of bills. He produced a large diamond earring and they began to dicker about the interest. Their talk was in German, but I managed to remember that "alf monaten" meant eleven months, and gleaned that she had borrowed \$65. She therefore paid \$31.65 interest. If she had kept it a year she would have paid \$34.20, more than one third of what she borrowed.

Hard? Yes; but all the same the pawnshop is the only resource of poor people out of work and out of money.

Never, they tell me, not in recent years, at least, have the pawnbrokers done such a rousing business as for the last few months. They are the banks of the unfortunate. They tide over many a bitter period of stress in the lives of those in sight of whose door the hungry wolf always lingers.

No wonder pawnbrokers never close down.

A Rare Tropical Flower.

A flower lately discovered in the isthmus of Tehuantepec is white in the morning, red at noon and blue at night, and is called the chameleon flower in default of any botanical name. It is probably a species of the hibiscus mutabilis. The colors do not pass abruptly from one shade to the other, but change gradually from the white of the morning to the pink and red and thence to the blue at night. The Tehuantepec tree grows to the size of a guava tree and gives out a slight perfume when the flower is in its prime.

THE NEGRO'S SONG.

It Breathes a Sadness Induced by the Wrong His Race Has Done. No Other Music Can Match It in Melancholy Sweetness, and It Was the Only Thing That Slavery Left Him—Reasons for Its Excellence.

Ninety years ago in a little grass-matted hut beside the Niger river a white traveler lay tossing in the agonies of a tropical fever. Sometimes in his delirium he murmured broken fragments of Scottish songs—sometimes, as the pangs of the fever momentarily abated, the sound of the bagpipes seemed to ring in his ears, and, roused to semi-consciousness by the sweet illusion, the sick man would rise from his couch of reeds and cry: "Play the 'Blue Bells of Scotland,' piper—play the 'Blue Bells.'"

Then a woman, dark of face, and clad only in a blue cotton skirt, entered the hut. Sitting down beside the invalid she began to softly croon a song of wondrous melody. In the music of that African song pathos, sympathy and anxiety seemed to blend with hope and confidence, while the sound, ever soft and low, touched gently the ears of the sufferer, and soothed him to rest and sleep, from which he awoke, weak, but free from the fever's grasp.

That traveler, says the Chicago Globe, was Mungo Park. In his memoirs he says: "I am firmly convinced that the soft music of that negro woman's song saved my life and gave me new strength for my undertaking."

How or when the negro acquired his love of music history cannot tell. Herodotus tells of the "sounding bows" of the Ethiopians—black bows whose strings gave out a melody sweeter than the notes of lyre or cithara, and which were in great demand at festivals. In Roman times the Mauritanian blacks were noted for their musical skill, and the chroniclers of the middle ages often speak of the sable musicians who delighted the lordly Saracens with their talent. In the strange, mysterious land of Africa the negro has little to do and abundance wherewith to support life. Doubtless, in the earlier ages, he lounged about his hut day after day, until at last from sheer ennui, he turned to music as a means of employing his idle time. As the centuries rolled on the black became more and more skilled in musical art until, when his race first began to see the shores of America, he was already a vocal and instrumental genius of high merit.

But it was among the negro slaves that the "divine art" reached its perfection. The poor African, torn from his native land, and sent from ease and idleness to hard work, under an exacting master, could not express his thoughts in the ordinary language of common conversation, but all the pathos, all the sorrow of his misfortunes and his surroundings, acting upon his sensitive and romantic nature, combined to produce a type of song which the world has never seen surpassed. Perhaps a wife or child would be sold into servitude, far away from the poor slave who composed the song; perhaps a kindly master would pass beyond death's river; perhaps the slave himself would be sent into a distant state never again to see the home which had become dear to him by countless ties, but, whatever the cause, the negro songs remain matchless in their melancholy sweetness, marvelous in their patient resignation to fate and "massa's" will.

But there were gleams of light and happiness in the life of the slave. In the evening, when the work was over, the darkeys would assemble in the "quarters" and, while the "possum and the hoe cake, the sweet potatoes and the corn were being cooked to perfection by the skillful "aunties," the fiddle and the banjo sounded merrily and the uproarious chorua mingled with the shuffle of the dancing feet.

From these festive occasions sprang the idea of negro minstrelsy, which has since become so distorted that not one person in fifty north of Mason and Dixon's line has any idea of real plantation music or of the real depth and richness of those unique and matchless melodies. Since the war the negro has been free, but he has not forgotten his music, and he, and his descendants, even those in whose veins lingers hardly a drop of negro blood, still sing the songs that once delighted "young massa" and rose sadly around "old massa's" grave. But even among the negroes there was a great variety of music, tinged by locality, of course, and often by the ancestral tribe of the negro. Thus, in New Orleans the blacks had a list of songs much different from the music of Virginia or the Carolinas. The songs of Carolina dwellt upon cotton lands and rice fields; those of Louisiana less upon material surroundings and more upon sentiment and love.

Much French blood ran in the veins of these people and their music showed the combination of races. Even now, in Louisiana, the creole women—women of whom a southerner once said that they were the most beautiful in the world—the quadrilles and octoroons, chant their songs and lullabies in both French and English, and the mellow accent of the negro tongue yet clings to every melody, in either language.

The south may change as the years pass by; the negro may be blended with the white, and lost from view in the millions who will yet people that lovely southern land, but the songs of slavery, the wondrous expressions of all the music of a hapless race, will live forever and be sung in future ages by men and women who can claim no trace of African lineage, and who will remember nothing of the sable composers, save the song.

Wanted a Mustache.

"Paint me like a gentleman," said an American philosopher to an artist; "as for the likeness, that doesn't amount to anything." The king of Spain, now five years old, appears to be of the same turn of mind. When the sculptor, M. Querol, at last hit upon a pose for the youthful sovereign to appear in marble, the youngster said to him: "And, above all things, please make me a great tall fellow with a long mustache!"

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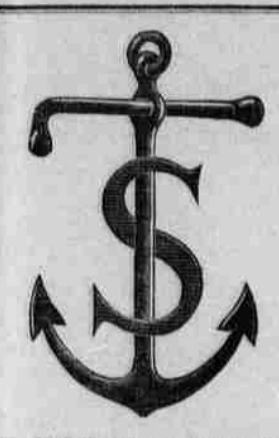
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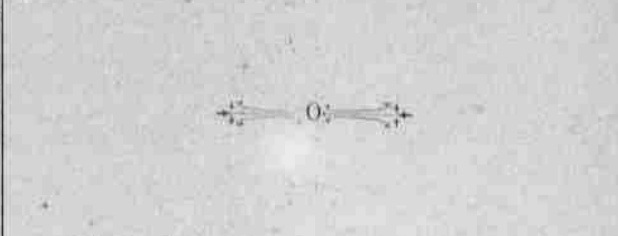
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