Little Laughs

Her Extravagance.—Mrs. Smith—"Dear me, I am getting a double chin." Mr. Smith—"You ought to be ashamed to have so much of anything these hard times."—Chicago Record.

Proud Pop (to old bachelor friend)—"I tell you, Dawson, there's no baby like my baby." Dawson—"I'm glad you've waked up to that fact. I knew mighty well there never was a baby like the one described."—Harper's Bazar.

Followed by Wolves.

The gray wolves of the Western plains used to follow the buffalo, in packs of fifty or sixty, ready to pick the bones of the carcasses left by the hunters, or to attack and devour the animals that were wounded. A herd of buffaloes seemed to have little dread of the wolves, and allowed them to come in close company. This fact suggested to an Indian a method of hunting the buffalo. Clothing himself in the skin of a wolf, he crawled on his hands and knees within a few rods of a herd, selected the fattest bull, and shot it down.

As long as buffalo were abundant the wolves were harmless to man, but as the buffalo diminished in numbers, and the food of the wolves became uncertain, they grew ferocious and formidable, and when hungry did not hesitate to attack a man. General Miles, in the North American Review, describes an encounter which Captain Baldwin had with a pack of gray wolves, in 1866, while returning from a buffalo hunt to Fort Harker, Kansas, thirty miles distant.

The captain left the station about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, in a light snow storm, with a strong, spirited horse. He was alone and armed with only a small thirty-six caliber pistol and forty-nine cartridges. He had ridden, at an easy trot, ten miles when it began to grow dark, and noticing that the howling of wolves, which he had heard but not heeded, sounded nearer, he looked back. Two coyotes and one big prairie wolf were following close behind him, and howling loudly. He increased his speed, but they gained on him, and soon their numbers grew to a dozen or more.

Appreciating his danger and the smallness of his weapon, he waited until the wolves were within a short distance, and then fired. One fell. He began to howl, and the pack, smelling the blood as it ran from the wound, tore it to pieces. This delay gave the horseman a start of two hundred yards before the wolves again followed him. He fired again and again, and seldom missed disabling or killing one of the pack.

For twenty miles from fifty to seventy-five wolves followed, cutting the horse in the rear and flanks, and often getting almost in front of him, thus enabling the hunted man to shoot right and left, and at very short range. Fortunately, he ran through a herd of buffalo, which diverted a large portion of the pack from following him. Still some kept after him until he had but four cartridges left and was only five miles from the fort.

The horse, bleeding from his wounds, was nearly exhausted; but he gallantly responded to the rider's spurring. When they reached the bank of the Smoky Hill River, on the opposite side of which was the fort, the horse dropped dead before the saddle could be removed. The rider waded across the river, filled with floating ice, and thus escaped from his pursuers.

Witchcraft in Pennsylvania.

It is the end of the nineteenth century, but the second prosecution within three months for witchcraft is to be chronicled from Pennsylvania. The trouble is in Empire, a suburb of Wilkesbarre, and among ignorant people who probably never heard of Cotton Mather. A miner accuses his mine boss of casting an evil spell over his cow so that she will not give milk, and all because of a refusal to sell the animal to the foreman. The criminating evidence is that after the foreman had milked the cow, in his examination of her with an idea of purchasing, she became "dry," and this was followed by a peculiar illness in the family of the owner of the cow. The neighbors side with the afflicted miner, and so intense is the feeling that the prudent foreman keeps out of the public gaze as much as possible. The most novel part of the affair, however, is the disclosure that, under an old State law, a prosecution is possible on the absurd charge.—New York Evening Post.

Fur Changes Color.

One of the most marvelous provisions of nature for the perpetuation of species in cold countries is that by which a change in the color of fur takes place when the cold weather begins. Arctic regions are covered with snow seven or eight months in the year, and on this sheet of pure white a dark-colored animal would be conspicuously visible for a long distance. In the extreme north all animals are carnivorous, and dark fur on a white background would prevent any animal from watching its prey. As it is, they pass to and fro on the snow almost unobserved. Peary tells of almost stumbling over a very large bear, which, half covered by the snow, would have passed unnoticed at the distance of a few feet, while on another occasion he saw a white fox steal up to within four or five feet of some rabbits before the timorous and watchful creatures became aware of the presence of their mortal foe.

He Was Easily Cured.

A Legiston (Me.) man borrowed a neighbor's battery for treatment of his rheumatism. After he had been cured by application of the battery he discovered that he had never turned on the current once. He had simply taken hold of the handles and faith did the rest.

She Entertains Children.

An enterprising woman in a large city has made a study of entertaining children, and has turned her acquirements in this line to practical account. She assists at children's parties, arranging beforehand an entertainment suitable to the age and tastes of the company.

Mrs. Gummey (with deep curiosity)—Oh, Mrs. Glanders! do tell me about Mrs. Tenspot's scandal, won't you? Mrs. Glanders—My dear, it is not nearly so dreadful as you hope.—Judge.

AN ACTIVE VOLCANO.

Ashes Darkened the Sun and Flashes of Fire Seen Through the Gloom.

All that day the eruption continued, and all the next, the ashes falling lightly at times, as smoke-clouds drifted over the village. On Wednesday the sky was again darkened, so that they had to light candles in the house, and the air was full of ashes. Through the gloom they could see flashes of fire on the mountain. But children get used to anything. Lydia and Ruby played about under the orange-trees, soiling their frocks with the ashes, and only pausing now and then as the fire gleamed brighter or the the hoarse rumbling increased. The plantation negroes had gone back to work, and the morning and noon bells rang as usual.

On Wednesday night Dr. Bell was called to a patient at Wallibou, three miles away, and much nearer the mountain. At first he hesitated to leave his family; but the call was an urgent one, so he went, promising to be back next day.

Early on Thursday morning the children jumped form their beds and ran out, as usual, to see the volcano. "Oh, mother!" cried Lyddy with delight, delight. "Come quick! It's too beautiful!"

It was a wonderful sight. The wind had wafted the smoke clouds from above them; the rising sun shone on that giant mass, and from it turned to silver and purple and gold; even the negroes stopped their work to gaze at it. But as they gazed a lurid yellow crept over it; the rumbling sound increased to a roar, and the smoke-column rose higher; there was more to come yet.

Mrs. Bell was very nervous; the more so when a messenger came from her husband, saying he would be detained all that day. There were explosions like thunder, that frightened the children. Little Ruby began to cry, and would hardly be comforted.

By noon the rumbling noise grew and grew until it was a mighty roar. The ground began to tremble, not with the rocking motion of an earthquake, but vibrating continually, as a railroad bridge does when a heavy train passes over it. The children, clinging to their mother, watched the smoke-column in awe and wonder. It streamed into the sky like molten pitch, fired now and then by a flash of lightning, or a glow of flame from the crater. The roaring was so loud that at a little distance they could hardly hear one another speak.

The negroes forsook their work in terror; people hurried southward for refuge, women screamed, the dogs crept off to hiding-places, and cattle wandered moaning, half-starved because all the grass was covered with ashes. Once Lydia ran to pick up a little bird that fell near them. It had been overpowered by the vapor, or perhaps hit by one of the small stones that began to drop. Most of these stones were very light, like pumice, else they would have done more damage.—St. Nicholas.

The Goodly Sword.

Half a hundred centuries ago the Egyptians gave to the sword its name. Since those old days the history of the trenchant blade, stained with blood and defaced by the scars of battle though it is, holds much of the glory, the poetry, and the chivalry of the cruel game of war.

A friend whose fidelity never wavered and whose power never failed, it is not surprising that men endowed the sword not only with human attributes, but with the might and majesty of the gods themselves. The old legends abound in tales of its magical powers. How the divine armorers strove continually to excel some rival in the forging of a blade of a temper so delicate that it might cut a thread with the same ease with which it struck a head from the body, or hewed through heavy metal armor, was a favorite subject of the old Teutonic and Viking tales.

These legendary blades bore characteristic names, by which they were invariably known: Graysteel, Wader through Sorrow, and Millstone Biter were swords of wide renown; and we all remember how Arthur of the Round Table took "Excalibur * * * the sword that rose from out the bosom of the lake." Cæsar's sword was called "Crocca Mors;" Charlemagne's "Joyeuse" played no small part in the setting up of the great Frankish empire; many a bold captain went down before "El Tizona," wielded by the relentless hand of the Cid.—St. Nicholas.

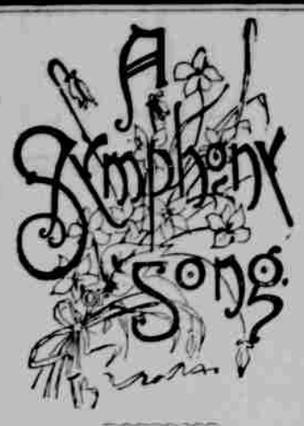
The Farm Laborer of the West.

The Western laborer is his own employer. He is also his own landlord. These two facts constitute ideal independence; but there is also a pretical side in his case. From his ten or tweuty acres, insured against failure by flood or drought, first by aridity and then by irrigation, he can systematically produce almost every item of food which his family consumes. The laborer who works for another expends the greater portion of his wage for these essentials. The laborer who works for himself is surer to have his table supplied; and, moreover, he may enjoy far more variety, and of a better quality.—Century.

Lord Salisbury's Wealth.

Lord Salisbury is a vastly rich man. He receives $1,000,000 from his property in the Strand; he derives an immense income in the shape of untaxed ground rents in London and in the country, and while in office as prime minister he receives the pay attached to the office, and while out of office the pension of an ex-cabinet minister.

He—But of course you will forget me. She—Nonsense; I shall think of you when you are gone. He—Oh, shall you? She—Yes; therefore, the longer you are gone, the longer I shall think of you. Won't that be nice?—Boston Transcript.



Sunshine Land.

They came in sight of a lovely shore,
Yellow as gold in the morning light;
The sun's own color at noon it wore,
And had faded not at the fall of night;
Clear weather or cloudy—'twas all as one,
The happy hills seemed bathed with the sun;
Its secret the sailors could not understand,
But they called the country Sunshine Land.

What was the secret? A simple thing—
It will make you smile when once you know—
Touched by the tender finger of spring,
A million blossoms were all aglow;
So many, so many, so small and bright,
They covered the hills with a mantle of light;
And the wild bee hummed, and the glad breeze fanned
Through the honeyed fields of Sunshine Land.

If over the sea we two were bound,
What port, dear child, would we choose for ours?
We would sail and sail till at last we found
This fairy gold of a million flowers;
Yet, darling, we'd find, if at home we strayed,
Of many and small joys our pleasures are made;
More near than we think—very close at hand,
Lie the golden fields of Sunshine Land.
—Edith Thomas.

The Town of "Used-to-Be."

Grandma lives in a funny place,
The town of "Used-to-be,"
Where streets are "turnpikes," and people are "folks,"
And a nice hot supper a "tea."

"Where is the town of 'Used-to-be?'"
In grandma's memory bright.
"The way?" Upstairs, to grandma's room
(The cosy one on the right).

"When can you go there?" Twilight's best,
For the dreamy glow in the grate
Lights the way to the town of "Used-to-be,"
And nobody needs to wait.

Then ho, for an hour in the dear old town,
And hey, for the husking bee,
And oh, the dancing in stiff brocade,
And ah! the trysting tree.

And ugh! the sermons, two hours long,
And three of them, Sabbath day,
In a "meeting house," so cold and drear,
Where the "foot stove' held its sway.

But if grandma shows you a summer scene,
In a farmhouse and orchard fair,
With rows of cheese on dairy shelves,
And bees in the clover-sweet air.

And there beyond, in the kitchen wide,
Grandma, herself, at the wheel,
Spinning, singing, a fair young bride,
You say, for you can but feel—
"What a dear, dear town of 'Used-to-be!'"
But grandma's voice drops low,
And she says, with a half-sad, half-sweet smile,
"'Twas all so long ago."
—Boston Transcript.

A Country Lane.

Between steep banks it winds along,
O'erhung with leafy hawthorn trees,
From which in spring the thrush's song
Floats softly on the soft south breeze.
There is the earliest primrose found,
And modest purple violets grow,
And trembling wind-flowers star the ground,
And humble ragged-robins blow.

There, too, on golden summer eves,
The old folks like to stroll and talk;
Or slowly, under whispering leaves,
The self-absorbed young lovers walk,
While, fresh as youthful hopes, unfurl
New growths about their lingering feet;
And tender fronds of fern uncurl,
And all the balmy air is sweet.

With mingled scents of thyme and musk,
And wilding-roses, passion-pale,
As trembles through the dewy dusk
The music of the nightingale.
And, stealing from some hidden nook,
Adown the lane and o'er the lea,
By pleasant ways, a silver brook
Runs, singing, to the silver sea.
—E. Matheson, in Chambers' Journal.

Wind and Sea.

The sea is a jovial comrade;
He laughs wherever he goes;
His merriment shines in the dimpling lines
That wrinkle his hale repose;
He lays himself down at the feet of the sun,
And shakes all over with glee,
And the broad-backed billows fall faint on the shore,
In the mirth of the mighty sea!

But the wind is sad and restless
And cursed with an inward pain;
You may hark at will, by valley or hill,
But you hear him still complain.
He wails on the barren mountains
And shrieks on the wintry sea;
He sobs in the cedar and moans in the pine
And shudders all over the aspen tree.

Welcome are both their voices,
And I know not which is the best—
The laughter that slips from ocean's lips
Or the comfortless wind's unrest.
There's a pang in all rejoicing,
A joy in the heart of pain,
And the wind that saddens, the sea that gladdens,
Are singing the self-same strain.
—Bayard Taylor.

The fact is, a great many worthless people are having bad luck in this country.

All Sorts.

Rosa Bonheur has just finished a large canvas representing a combat between two stallions. Rosa Bonheur is now 74 and has to wear glasses when she paints.

Prof Roentgen is the hero of the hour in Germany. Honors are showering upon him in his Wurtzburg home, and the university students organized a grand torchlight possession through the town to his house to congratulate the professor on his wonderful discovery.

Picture frames grow more attractive day by day.

Sons of Mars.

One of Jameson's troopers had an unpleasant landing in England. He was arrested for an embezzlement that had been the cause of his departure to South Africa and sent to jail for three months.

Lieut. Walter Maxwell Scott, the great-great-grandson of Sir Walter Scott and the first male heir of Abbotsford, since Sir Walter's own son, will come to age in April. Queen Victoria, it is said, will then make him a baronet.