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CALVERT, NEBRASKA.

THE FLEMISH BELLS.

[The bells cast by the famous molder, Van den Geyn, of Louvain, are said to have lost all the sweetness they had if hundred years ago.]

Sadly he shook his frosted head, Listening and leaning on his cane; "Nay—I am like the bells," he said, "Cast by the molder of Louvain. "Often you've read of their mystic powers, Floating o'er Flanders' dull lagoons; How they would hold the lazy hours Meshed in a net of golden tunes. "Never such bells as those were heard, Echoing over the sluggish tide; Now like a storm-crash—now like a bird, Flinging their carillons far and wide. "There in Louvain they swing to-day, Up in the turrets where long they've swung; But the rare cunning of yore, they say, Somehow has dropped from the brazen tongue. "Over them shines the same pale sky, Under them stretch the same lagoons; Out from the beffries, bird-like fly, As from a nest, the same sweet tunes; "Ever the same—and yet we know None are entranced these later times, Just as the listeners long ago Were, with the wonder of their chimes. "Something elusive as viewless air, Something we cannot understand, Strongly has vanished of the rare Skill of the molder's master hand. "So—when you plead that life is still Full, as of old, with tingling joy— That I may hear its music thrill, Just as I heard it when a boy— "All I can say, is: Youth has passed— Master of magic falls and swells— Bearing away the cunning cast Into the moulding of the bells!" —Margaret J. Preston, in Century Magazine.

THE DUEL ABOUT MISS IMOGENE.

Miss Imogene De Forest was eighteen years old, a beauty and a belle. Girls of all kinds, if they live, can be eighteen years old; but to be a beauty and a belle needs a concurrence of favorable circumstances. In Miss Imogene these favorable circumstances were of a decided order. She had a lovely face, a graceful figure, and she was the only child of the Hon. Lysander De Forest, an ex-Governor, an ex-Senator, and a probable foreign minister.

Besides, she had a very respectable private fortune, though young Jefferson Duval and Captain Milton Fontaine both averred that was the very least point in her charms, and not worthy to be named with her dark eyes and her bewitching smile. Girls of eighteen are not all wise, and perhaps Miss Imogene believed this; at any rate she looked as if she believed it; and both Duval and Fontaine had many hours in which they certainly firmly believed it. When wandering in the moonlight under the orange-trees, or when whirling through the waltz in some splendid feast, they were both quite certain that nothing but Miss Imogene's personal loveliness entered into their dreams concerning her.

Hitherto, though both pretenders to Imogene's favor, they had preserved the semblance of friendship. Duval rather wished to do so; it gave him an honorable opportunity of watching his rival's chances; and Fontaine was of that order of men who like a little opposition. He intended at some favorable opportunity to make a coup d'etat and at once and forever put poor Duval out of the painful uncertainties of love. For somehow he regarded his own success as certain, and if the confident heart wins the fair lady, and the faint one loses her, he had some reason for his blissful security.

One lovely evening in the charming May—for May is charming in Central Texas—Imogene was slowly riding across a prairie that was one billowy sea of grass and flowers. Duval was by her side, reciting Byron in a very touching manner. Imogene had casually noticed that two horsemen had emerged from a little wood, and were slowly following them; and she had also noticed that they had passed, at rather closer quarters than she liked, a herd of cattle feeding. Whether the magnificent bull leading them was irritated by Duval's floating scarlet necktie, or by the poetry, or by motives beyond human comprehension, is uncertain, but his anger was positive enough. Bellowing and tearing up the ground, he came furiously after the lovers. Poetry and sentiment collapsed, and the first law of nature promptly asserted itself.

Both put their horses to their utmost speed, but the prospect was not cheering. In fact, the question was this: Would the bull or the horses have the best of it in a race over two miles of open prairie?

"He is gaining on us, Duval, and I am turning sick and faint. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Let us separate. He cannot follow both, and perhaps he will select me."

Suddenly the shouts of the men behind attracted their attention. Imogene glanced fearfully around. The two horsemen she had noticed were coming on at a thundering pace, and before she could check or turn her horse, one of them had risen in his stirrups, and thrown a lasso around the furious animal. It was now evident that Governor De Forest was one of these horsemen; the other, who still held the rope, was quite unknown both to Duval and Imogene.

The Governor quickly dispatched the bull with his rifle, and then, as the herd were evidently growing uneasy, the whole party rode rapidly home. Thanks and introductions were practically delayed, although the stranger knew that Duval's and no introduction would ever be more satisfactory to him than the glance and smile he had received in the swiftest moment from Imogene.

Duval was very unhappy. He wondered if he had behaved in a cowardly manner. The whole affair had been so

sudden and rapid he could neither analyze his feelings nor his actions. Imogene had only said that she "quite excused him." Had there been anything to excuse? And then this stranger! He was quite as inexplicable. Governor De Forest had simply introduced him as "Mr. John Winthrop." He was a young man, with a plain, positive face. His skin was tanned, his hair light, and his eyes of that steely blue which always annoys weak and incapable persons.

Mr. Winthrop made very light of the adventure, and gave all the credit of the rescue to the Governor, except perhaps for one moment, in which Imogene and he once more charged eyes. The news soon spread through the little town, and Fontaine was very indignant at fate. "If only he had been with Miss Imogene! Managing wild cattle was a trifle to him. He would rather have enjoyed such an encounter than otherwise. He had half a dozen plans always ready for such emergencies," etc. And really he did look so gallant and so handsome that most girls would have been willing to face a herd of wild buffaloes under his protection.

Duval felt Fontaine's bravado a personal slight, but he did not wish Imogene the subject of a quarrel, and after a rather unsatisfactory visit the two men went home together.

However, next morning Captain Fontaine had the most graceful little note from Miss Imogene, asking him to bring his guitar and assist her in entertaining a few guests that evening. Duval had also one, equally flattering; for it touchingly referred to their mutual danger and escape, and hoped he would come prepared to finish the exquisite poem which had been so terribly interrupted.

The evening was a remarkable one in many respects. Scarcely ever had the ex-Governor's mansion been so profusely decorated and so brilliantly illuminated, and to the magnificent feast prepared all the principal magnates of the neighborhood had been invited.

Imogene had never looked so bewitchingly unreal and poetic. Her oval face, with its creamy color and soft dark eyes, was crowned with great waves of black hair and snowy flowers, and her long drapery of some soft silky tissue seemed to shimmer and glance like a fairy robe, as with winning smiles and gracious, graceful manners she flitted to and fro among the guests.

John Winthrop was among them: He did not dance, and he did not sing, and he smiled queerly at the very idea of his reciting poetry; consequently neither Duval nor Fontaine felt uneasy about his influence. Indeed, he seemed only to be able to converse on two subjects—property and politics.

Still, he had one great advantage—he staid in the same house with Imogene, and could see her in many favorable moments forbidden to less happy mortals. But Duval, who watched him closely, was soon convinced he was indifferent to this immense favor; for Duval had found opportunities of putting very clever leading questions to Mr. Winthrop, and that gentleman had answered them with the greatest candor.

Indeed, he was so much more polite and sympathetic than he expected that Duval, who really longed for a confidant, poured out his whole soul to him, and asked John candidly what was his opinion about his own and Fontaine's chances. Did he really think that Fontaine would win Imogene?

John said he knew very little of women, but he thought Fontaine would not win Miss Imogene.

It is a comfort to have a confidant, and Duval brightened so much under the process of pouring out his hopes to John that Fontaine noticed the change, and began to fear that his rival had comfort and encouragement of which he did not know.

He was pondering this question very gloomily one night when he met John Winthrop. How it happened he never could tell, but in five minutes the two men were talking of Imogene, and Fontaine had told John all his hopes and fears with regard to her. John listened with interest, and even encouraged the conversation, though he tried to moderate Fontaine's complaints of Duval.

"For," said he, "it is only right to tell you that I am also Duval's confidant. I must say the affair is full of interest to me, and I can partly understand how it fills and colors all the hours of your two lives. For me, things are different. If I should fall in love, I could not afford to lose either an hour's time or an hour's sleep about any woman."

In this way matters went on for some weeks. John was the known confidant of both men, a post not half as difficult as it appears at first sight. For Fontaine often wanted to say something about Duval he did not care to say to Duval's face. He therefore made the remark to John, hoping that he would be his mouth-piece; and it is needless to say that Duval followed the same plan.

John smiled, and smoked, and listened, and kept very quiet—a thing easy enough to do, for both lovers only cared to hear themselves complain. That they kept up so long an appearance of friendship was entirely due to John's wise reticence, and his charitable rendering of such scraps of conversation as he felt obliged to report.

But smouldering fire cannot always be controlled, and one night, when Imogene had been very haughty and cross to both Duval and Fontaine, they unfortunately met on the piazza of their hotel. Duval was despondent and prostrate, Fontaine angry and scornful, and Duval's air unconsciously irritated him.

"How ill-tempered Miss Imogene was to-night!" he said, fretfully, flinging his half-smoked cigar into the street.

"Miss Imogene is never ill-tempered," answered Duval, warmly. "I will not allow you to say such a thing."

"You won't allow me? Understand I shall say what I choose about that lad. I do not recognize your right to defend her."

"Nor I yours to blame her."

"Perhaps I have more right than you know of."

"That is a lying insinuation; you are no gentleman to make it."

"Do you dare to say it is a lie?"

"Yes, I don't mind saying it is a solid lie."

"You know the consequences of that speech, I suppose?"

"I know them very well. I am not afraid of you."

"Duval! Duval! I'll—"

"Oh, keep cool, Fontaine! Send your second to me at midnight. If your valor holds till morning, I'll give you a chance to prove it."

"Very well, sir. Understand this goes to the bitter end. I will receive no apology—not the most abject one."

"No apology will be offered you."

Then Duval flung his hat on his head, untied his horse, and rode rapidly up the street. He went, in fact, to John Winthrop to ask him to make the proper arrangements for a meeting between Fontaine and himself the next day.

After a little persuasion, John agreed to do so; but ere Duval left, Fontaine tapped smartly at John's door, and made the same request. The two opponents bowed to each other, but left all speech to John, who, in truth, seemed admirably adapted for the part he found himself almost obliged to play.

He tried first to effect a reconciliation, but finding that impossible, made the strange proposition that he should act as second for both. "Gentlemen," he said, with a winning courtesy, "you are both equally my friends, and I am honestly disposed to do equal justice to each. Fix on some place and hour, and I will bring my friend Dr. Allen, and see everything as pleasantly and honorably settled as possible."

Both Duval and Fontaine bowed to this proposal. Perhaps neither of them was in heart as blood-thirsty as he pretended, and a peaceably inclined second has a great deal in his power. So a little wood about two miles out of town was fixed upon, and sunset the following day was the fated hour. John had insisted on this delay, partly he said, because he still hoped the principals might change their minds, and partly because it would allay any suspicion which their quarrel and late visit to himself might arouse.

So both Duval and Fontaine were at their usual desks in the morning, and their evening horseback ride was so common and natural that no one attached any unusual meaning to it. Both men arrived at the designated spot by different roads, but within two minutes of each other. Duval bowed, leaned against a tree and smoked what might be his last cigar. Fontaine paced nervously up and down, waiting with great impatience John's arrival with the appointed weapons, which both men had entrusted to him. The sun set. The little wood got darker and darker—so dark at last that Duval's cigar made a distinct glow. Still, John did not come.

Neither liked to make the first remark, yet it was evident that for some cause or other their wounded honor would have to endure another twelve hours' wrong. Yet Duval was just lighting another cigar, when a little negro boy came running through the wood.

"Done found you at last, Mas'r Jeff. Thought you'd done shoted each other for sure. I's been a-lookin' all round yar since sundown."

"What have you come here for?"

"Mas'r John Winthrop send dese two letters—for sure he did, now."

"Where is he?"

"Done gone."

"Fontaine," said Duval, "will you have a match to read yours by?"

"Thank you, Duval, I will."

So by the light of a succession of lucifers both gentlemen read the following words:

"My friend, I am opposed to duels on principle; so is my dear bride, who hopes you will both remember her too kindly to stain her name with your blood. Your little foolish quarrel hurried our arrangements, which had been made for a month later. You will see how the wisdom of the advice I have always given you both. JOHN WINTHROP."

There was a moment's dead silence, then Duval said: "Fontaine, we have no quarrel now; and if we have, we have no weapons. Suppose we go back to the hotel and have supper?" —Harper's Weekly.

The Testimony of Daniel Webster.

In all that has been revived of the life and words of Daniel Webster in this centenary of his birth nothing has greater value, or better shows the clearness and grasp of his intellect, than a sentence out of his early confession of religious belief, wherein he says of the doctrine of the Trinity, as he finds it in the Bible, but is unable to comprehend it: "I hold it my duty to believe, not what I can comprehend, or account for, but what my Master teaches me." The man who refuses to accept anything from the Scripture which is beyond the scope of his reasoning faculties might as well be without the Bible as with it. If he insists on conforming God to his ideas of what God ought to be, he is on the inclined plane toward the grossest Paganism—bringing down God to man's image and standards. If he tries to conform his ideas of God to God's revelation of Himself he is at the foot of the ladder which reaches from the earth to the seventh heaven. There is no hope of any gain to a man who has no higher standard than his unaided reasoning faculties. —S. S. Times.

—If we were to follow the absurd rule never to speak until we have something to say many of us might just as well have been born dumb.

Youths' Department.

MRS. STRAWBERRY JAM.

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Strawberry Jam, A-growing very red. "What a most unfortunate creature I am: I can scarce hold up my head. To think that I should live to see An insult offered like this to me! That I should be placed on the very same shelf (Oh dear! I hardly know myself) By the side of that odious Blackberry Jam— That vulgar, common, Blackberry Jam!"

So she fumed and fretted, hour by hour, Growing less and less contented, Till her temper became so thoroughly sour That she at last forsook her pot, While Mr. Blackberry Jam kept still, And let her have her say— Kept a quiet heart, as Blackberries will, And grew sweeter every day.

One morn there stopped at Dame Smith's fence The parson—to say that he might, By the kind permission of Providence, Take tea with her that night. And the good old lady, blessing her lot, Hastened to open her strawberry pot. "Oh, what a horrible mess! Dear—dear! Not a berry fit to eat is here. After all," putting it down with a slam, "Nothing will keep like good Blackberry Jam. Honest, reliable, Blackberry Jam."

Mrs. Strawberry J. went into the parl: Oh my—what a dire disgrace! And the pig ate her up, with a twitch of his tail. And a troubled expression of face. While Blackberry J., in a lovely glass dish, Sat along with the bread and honey, And thought, while happy as heart could wish, "Well, things turn out very funny." —St. Nicholas.

THE THREE KNIVES.

A Story of the English North Country.

"So you want me to tell you a story about a ghost, do you, children?" said Parson Goodhart, looking up from his book, with a queer little twinkle in the corner of his dark-gray eyes, as his three nephews and two nieces came trooping around the snug arm-chair in which he was sitting by the fire. "Well, that won't be very easy, because I never saw a ghost myself, and I've never met any one else who had, either. But I once knew a man who thought he had seen one—or felt one, rather—and a very serious matter it was for him, as you shall hear.

"When I first came here as a young curate, long before any of you young folks were born, every man, woman and child in the village believed as firmly in ghosts, witches and all that nonsense, as they believed that the sun shone or that the wind blew.

"I've seen a strapping fellow six feet high, big and strong enough to knock a horse down, go half a mile out of his way rather than pass after dark a spot where a highwayman had been hanged in chains; and more than one old woman was scared into fits by a white cow suddenly getting up from behind a hedge, as she was going home through the fields in the twilight.

"As for the church-yard, all the money in the Cottonborough Bank wouldn't have tempted any of our village folk to go through it after nightfall. And certainly it was a dismal place—there's no denying it.

"Our pretty little new church over the way wasn't built then, and the old church stood right out at the very end of the village just where Farmer Thompson's big barn is now.

"It was a grim old building, all of dark-gray stone turned almost black by the weather, and fast crumbling away. The tower was one mass of dark ivy, and the church-yard itself was full of gloomy firs and cypresses, growing together in thick clumps, which harbored owls and bats without number; and when the moon glimmered through the clouds upon a stormy night, making the white tomb-stones whiter and the black trees blacker than ever, it certainly did look as ghostly a place as I ever saw in my life.

"But as if all this was not enough, the spot had a legend attached to it, and a very grim one, too. Just at the further end of the church-yard, the ground fell steeply away to a dark hollow, through which ran a stream.

"This hollow bore the pleasant name of 'Dead Man's Gully,' and the traditions of the county recorded that a great battle had been fought in this place in the days of King Alfred, and that a number of wounded Danes, who had crawled to the stream to drink, had been cruelly slaughtered by the Saxons, despite the entreaties of a good monk, who tried hard to save them.

"Ever since that day—so ran the legend—on the anniversary of the massacre, any one who passed the spot after nightfall would hear the shouts of the slayers, and shrieks of the slain, mingling with the hoarse rush of the water, and would see—if the moon were bright enough to show it to him—the stream running as red as blood.

"So, what with this nice story (which every soul in the district knew by heart), and what with the gloominess of the place itself, the village people were as shy of it as if it had been a fever hospital.

"Of course, I was very much put out at seeing my parishioners making such goose of themselves; but what was to be done?

"Talking to them would only have made them worse, for they would have told me that they, who had lived in the country all their lives, must know more about it than I, who had only just come there.

"At first I tried to shame them out of their terrors by constantly going about the haunted spots myself, by night as well as by day.

"But it was not a bit of use, for they were accustomed to consider it part of a clergyman's business to deal with ghosts, and held that I ought to be a match for any amount of them, if I did my work properly.

"So the only thing I could do was to leave their beliefs alone, and trust to time to wear them out.

"It was toward the end of my first year in the village, and the nights were

getting long and dark, when, one evening, as I was coming home in the twilight from visiting an old laborer, who had fallen ill, a man came flying down the lane, full-speed, and ran bump against me so violently that he almost knocked me down.

"Gently, my friend," said I; "I'm not made of iron."

"Be that thee, parson?" answered a shaky voice, which I recognized at once as that of Dick Grimes, the miller. "Stand by me if thee be a Christian man!"

"What's the matter?" asked I, wondering not a little what could have happened to frighten a great sturdy fellow like him—for frightened he evidently was—so badly that he could hardly speak.

"There be a boggart (ghost) after me," panted Grimes, "rattlin' a chain and shroikin'." Try if thee can stop him, for the love of heaven. I cannot!"

"Sure enough, at that very moment I heard a sound of pattering feet approaching, mingled with the clanking of a chain; and through the darkness I could just make out something white coming swiftly toward us. Grimes, who seemed too much scared even to run away, got behind me as if I had been a wall, while the ghost came on.

"And when the terrible hobgoblin got right up to us, what do you think it turned out to be? Why, neither more nor less than the miller's own white donkey, which, having been carelessly tethered, had managed to break loose, and was enjoying a moonlight run by itself, dragging its chain along with it!

"I took care to keep the secret, but the story leaked out somehow, and you may fancy what a hard time of it the poor miller had in the village for a good while after, although many who laughed at him would have been no braver themselves in his place.

"Now it happened that the hardest of all upon him was Sam Barton, the butcher—a great, brawny fellow, with large, red whiskers, and a hand like one of his own shoulders of mutton—who was fond of boasting that he feared nothing above ground or under it.

"One night, when a lot of them were having a sort of holiday-supper at the little inn, yonder, Barton made fun of the miller so unmercifully that at last the poor fellow got quite angry.

"Ah, any man can talk big when there be no danger!" cried he; "but if thee'd been i' my place, the'd ha' done jist as I did!"

"Would I, though?" shouted the butcher, fiercely. "Thee mun get up early to catch Sam Barton playin' crad-dint (coward.) I be't afeared o' nought above ground, nor under it, neither!"

"Well, then," said Grimes, looking him full in the face, "will thee go through the church-yard now?"

"Aye, that I will," cried the butcher, jumping up at once; "and ye may a' coom up with me if ye loike, and see that I do it fair!"

"Well, hark ye to me, lads," put in the landlord, "I se tell ye how we'll do it. Sam shall tak' these three knives, and stick one i' the ground by the stile where he'll go into the church-yard, and another by Squire Hawker's monniment i' the middle, and the third at the gate on t'otherside. Then we'll go round to the gate and meet him, and see that a's fair."

"The plan was at once agreed to, and off started the valiant butcher, whistling defiantly, and clinking the three long knives in his brawny hand.

"But as he began to leave the village lights behind him, and to approach the dark, dreary church-yard, his whistle grew fainter and his step less brisk. It was a chill, gloomy night, and the wind moaned dismally through the leafless trees, while the distant roar of the torrent that ran through Dead Man's Gully sounded unnaturally loud in the grim silence.

"Every ghost story he had ever heard in his life seemed to crowd into the unfortunate butcher's memory at once, and by the time he reached the stile he would gladly have given all the money in his pocket to be well out of the whole business. But it would never do to give in now, so over the stile he scrambled, planted his first knife, and went on.

"The church-yard was dark as pitch, and he got more than one tumble over the graves, which made his nerves none the steadier.

"Just as he was sticking the second knife beside the 'Squire's monniment' (which loomed white and ghostly through the darkness), the church-clock struck twelve.

"The deep, hollow sound, amid that dead silence, started him from a walk into a run. On he went, scratching himself against projecting boughs and bruising his shins upon the tombstones, till at last he came down on his hands and knees, close to the white gate. Just then an old owl overhead gave such a scream that Sam, too scared even to look round, stuck the third knife at random behind him, and tried to rush off. But lo! something seized and held him fast, and poor Sam, frightened out of his wits, howled, shrieked, kicked, struggled, and finally fainted outright.

"Meanwhile, his comrades, who were waiting outside, heard his cries, and fearing that something had gone wrong, ventured in, keeping very close together. And what do you think they found? Why, that he had stuck the knife through the skirt of his own coat, and pinned himself to the ground! And that was all the ghost there was about the matter." —Golden Days.

—A Californian gave a poor family \$300 worth of provisions and fuel, and then, dressing up as a beggar, he went around to the house and asked for a bite to eat. He was promptly kicked off the steps.—Detroit Free Press.