

### A Curious Business.

Do the boys who for fun have climbed the highest trees they could find, and whenever chances offered, all kinds of poles and scaffolds and roofs and windmills (the higher the better, know that there are men who make a business of climbing? Very few American boys, probably, have seen any of these men; but in Europe, especially; where there are so many cathedrals with their lofty domes and spires, and great manufacturing cities with their peak-like chimneys, they are quite common.

These men are called "steeple-jacks," because a larger part of their business is to scale the steeples of the churches, and perhaps repair a weather-vane, or reset a broken slate, or do some other small work which would be very expensive if a scaffolding had to be built up every time such work needed to be done. Not many men enter this business, for the work is so dangerous that only those with very clear heads and strong nerves care to risk their life hundreds of feet above the earth on very narrow footings. Sailors are said to make the best men for this work, being so used to turling sails and running about on the tall masts of their ships.

Once in a while we hear of a steeple-jack in America, as we did the other day at the time of a singular accident in New Jersey. A factory there has a great chimney 335 feet high, the largest in the United States, and higher than Bunker Hill Monument. During a thunder-storm the lightning twice struck the top of this chimney, tearing off many wagon-loads of bricks. No means had been provided for reaching the top of the chimney, yet it was necessary to reach and repair the break before the work could go on. A steeple-jack was called for, and a man was found in Newark who had once been engaged in this business in England. Think of what he had to do—to climb a wall of brick 335 feet high, without a projection of any kind to take hold of!

He did it in this way: taking a ladder, he fastened it to the side of the chimney by driving in long iron hooks, which held it. Another ladder was then passed up, which he lashed to the top of the first ladder with ropes; and then went out to drive in hooks and fasten this second ladder firmly. Thus he slowly crept up the side of the great chimney, adding ladder after ladder, and working as coolly when over 300 feet from the ground as when only three feet. It did not seem to trouble him to look down from the dizzy height or to venture up higher on his frail and only half-fastened ladder. At the top he had to build out over the projecting bell by which the chimney was crowned, and on the third day stood on the top and waved his hat to the people.

Thousands of people had gathered to watch this daring climber. On hills around the city he was watched with breathless anxiety, looking, as was said, like a fly on the top of a broomstick. As he hung over the edge of the bell, between heaven and earth, he was watched with tears and prayers and cries; and, when he descended safely to the ground, one brave steeple-jack had achieved a deed and gained a name which people will not soon forget.—Selected.

### He Painted the Furniture.

An ingenious New Yorker with a wife who insisted upon wicker rockers with dainty head rests, and small tables with blue china, and who frequently had to get up nights for the paragon, went out one morning after a night's groping for the match box and brought home a pot of phosphorescent paint, which he daubed on all corners, points and edges of those darling little rockers and sweet tables, decorating the match box, the bed posts, the gas bracket and the door knobs, determined upon avoiding the shoals and wrecks of the midnight cruise. And now at night the room looks like the ghost scenes from "The Flying Dutchman." The phosphorescence gathers light all day and lets it loose at night.

### A Strange Coincidence.

A curious coincidence is said to have occurred in one of the London chess resorts. A gentleman was looking on for some time at a game being played between two excellent chessists. He left them still playing. The next day he started for a long sojourn abroad. He was away nearly five years, during which time he had been round the world. On his return to London he went to the same chess resort that he had formerly visited, and there at the same table as before were the same two players whom he had five years before left at the game.—London Tit-Bits.

### Both Went Out.

An Irishman, in addition to his duties as gardener, had the care of the furnace which heated the house. To the irritation of the household there came a morning gave forth no heat, for the very good reason that an investigation showed there remained not one spark or ember in the grate. "Mike," cried the angry paterfamilias, "the furnace fire went out last night." "So did I, sorr," returned the culprit serenely.—Dominion Illustrated.

### AFTER.

After the rain the sunshine,  
Smiles after bitter tears,  
Peace in the heart at nightfall  
After a day of fears.

The clouds of the early morning,  
Dissolved in the midday sun,  
Flow glowing edges of silver  
After the day is done.

The heaviest burden of sorrow  
Laid by grief in the heart  
May lighter become on the morrow  
And, so-tended by time, depart.  
—Marie M. Pursel.

### THE CHAINED HAND.



CIRCLE had formed around Judge Bermutier, who was giving his opinion of the mysterious affair of St. Cloud, that unaccountable crime which for a month had agitated all Paris. He reviewed evidences, discussed theories, but arrived at nothing definite. He stood with his back to the fireplace, and several ladies, who had arisen to approach him, remained standing, with their eyes fixed upon those shaven lips from which fell such impressive remarks. They shivered, though impelled to listen by their curiosity and by their eager and insatiable desire for the sensational, which tortured them like hunger.

During a pause one of them said: "It is awful. It approaches the supernatural. We shall never know the truth."

The magistrate turned toward her. "Yes, madame, the truth probably never will be known. But as to the word 'supernatural' that you have just used, it has no place here. We are in the presence of a crime very skillfully conceived, very skillfully executed, so well enveloped in mystery that we can not extricate it from the unusual circumstances that surround it. But I was once interested in a crime with which something of the supernatural really seemed to be mingled. We were obliged to give it up."

Several of the ladies exclaimed at once: "Oh, tell us about it!" M. Bermutier smiled gravely as a judge should smile, and replied: "Do not think that I have, even for an instant, believed that anything supernatural did occur. I have faith in natural causes only and if we would use the word 'inexplicable' instead of 'supernatural' for that which we do not understand it would be much better. At any rate, the crime of which I am to speak baffled me chiefly by the circumstances that preceded and surrounded it. These are the facts:

### II.

"I was at the time judge in Ajaccio, a little village lying on the shore of a beautiful gulf and encircled by high mountains. It was my duty to inquire into the 'affaires de venettes.' They were full of dramatic possibilities, both ferocious and heroic. I found in these family feuds the greatest motives for revenge—age-long hatreds, subdued for a time but never extinct, unpardonable treacheries, assassinations growing into massacres, and almost into glorious actions. For two years I heard no conversation save that of the 'price of blood,' that terrible Corsican duty that obliges one to avenge an injury, not only upon the person of the injurer but upon his descendants and relations. I have seen old men and innocent children murdered at the price of blood. My head is full of such stories.

"Well, one day I learned that an Englishman had leased for a term of years a villa by the border of the gulf. He had brought with him a French servant whom he had hired while passing through Marseilles. Soon every one was interested in this singular personage, who lived alone, never going out except to hunt or fish. He spoke to no one, never came to the village, and every morning he practiced for an hour or two with his pistols or carbine.

"Soon numerous rumors about him were afloat. It was said that he was a man of high station who had fled from his country for political reasons; then it was affirmed that, having committed an atrocious crime, he was concealing himself. I wished as judge to make some inquiries concerning this man, but it was impossible to learn anything. He was called Sir John Rowell.

"Meanwhile, as the rumors in regard to his character continued and became general, I resolved to try to see the stranger myself, and so I began to hunt regularly in the neighborhood of his grounds.

"For a long time I waited an opportunity. It presented itself at last in the form of a partridge that I killed before the Englishman's nose. My dog brought it to me, but taking the bird I went to Sir John and excusing my impertinence begged him to accept the game. He was a tall, large man, with red hair and beard—a sort of placid and polished Hercules. He had none of the so-called 'English stiffness,' but thanked me cordially in French, with a slight English accent. At the end of a month we had conversed together five or six times. One evening as I passed his door I saw him astride a chair, smoking his pipe in his garden. I saluted him, and he invited me to enter and drink a glass of beer. He received me with the scrupulous English politeness, and spoke highly of France and Corsica.

"Then, with great precaution and

with a profession of sincere interest, I asked him a few questions concerning his life and his projects. He responded freely, and told me that he had traveled a great deal in Africa, in India, and in America. He added laughingly: 'Oh, yes; I have had many adventures.'

"I then began to talk about hunting, and he gave me many curious details about hunting the hippopotamus, the tiger, the elephant, and even the gorilla.

"I said: 'All of those animals are very formidable.'

"He smiled. 'Oh, no! man is the worst.' He began to laugh with a hearty English laugh, and added: 'I have hunted man also.'

"Then he spoke of arms and invited me into the house to show me the different sorts of fire-arms. His salon was draped with black silk embroidered with gold. Large yellow flowers, grouped on the somber cloth, glowed like fire. He said: 'That is a Japanese flag.'

"In the center of the largest panel a strange thing caught my eye. A black object hung on a red velvet square. I approached it. It was a hand—the hand of a man. Not the white, clean hand of a skeleton, but a dried, black hand, with yellow nails. The muscles were bare and traces of dried blood across the forearm suggested the mark of a hatchet. An enormous chain was riveted about the wrist and attached to the wall by a ring strong enough to hold an elephant.

"I demanded: 'What is that?'

"The Englishman quietly replied: 'That was my best enemy. It came from America. It was cut off by a saber, and it was then dried in the sun for a week.'

"I touched the human remnant, which might have belonged to a colossus. The fingers, immoderately long, were held by enormous tendons. This hand was hideous to look upon, and made one think of the vengeance of a savage. I said: 'He must have been a very strong man.'

"The Englishman grimly replied: 'Oh, yes, but I was stronger than he. I have put on the chain to hold it.'

"I thought he was joking and said: 'The chain is useless now; the hand will not escape.'

"Sir John Rowell gravely responded: 'It is always anxious to get away. The chain has been necessary.'

"With a rapid glance I questioned his countenance, asking myself: 'Is he a fool or is that a bad joke?'

"But his face remained tranquil and impenetrable. I spoke of other things and admired his guns; I also noticed that three loaded revolvers were lying about the room, as though the man lived in constant fear of an attack.

"I visited him several times, and then discontinued my calls. We had become accustomed to his presence, and he became indifferent to all.

### III.

"A year passed by. One morning toward the last of November my servant awoke me with the announcement that Sir John Rowell had been murdered during the night. A half hour later I entered the Englishman's house in company with the general commissioner and the chief of police. The valet was weeping before the door. I suspected this man at first, but he was innocent. The assassin has never been found.

"Upon entering Sir John's saloon I beheld the corpse extended on its back in the middle of the room. The vest was rent and a sleeve torn, and everything indicated that a terrible struggle had taken place. The Englishman had been strangled to death, his black and swollen face bore the expression of terrible fright; something was imprisoned by the set teeth, and the neck, pierced by five holes, was covered with blood.

"A surgeon joined us presently. He examined minutely the finger-marks on the flesh, and uttered these strange words: 'I should say he had been strangled by a skeleton.'

"A shiver ran down my back, and I glanced toward the wall where I had seen the hand. It was not there. The chain, now broken, hung from the ring. Then I bent over the corpse, and found between its set teeth one of the fingers of the missing hand, cut, or rather sawed off, by the teeth at the second joint.

"We proceeded with our investigation, but nothing was discovered; no door had been forced, no window broken, no article of furniture overturned, and the two watch-dogs had not been awakened.

"Here in a few words is the servant's deposition: For a month past his master had appeared agitated. He had received many letters, which he burned as soon as read. He would frequently take a riding whip and in a fit of anger furiously lash the dried hand chained to the wall. He retired at a late hour, carefully locked himself in, and always had arms within reach. Often during the night he could be heard talking loudly as though quarreling with some one. On this night he had been very quiet, and it was not until morning that the servant, on opening the house, had found Sir John assassinated. He suspected no one.

"I communicated all that I knew of the crime to the magistrates and officers of police, and a thorough search was made throughout the island, but nothing was discovered.

"Well, one night three months after the murder had been committed, I had a horrible nightmare. I seemed to behold the dreadful hand running like a scorpion along the curtains and across the walls. Three times I awoke—three times I fell asleep—three times I saw the hideous object galloping about the room.

"On the morrow it was brought to me, having been found in the cemetery on the grave of Sir John Rowell, for he had been buried in the village, as no trace of his family could be found. The forefinger was missing.

"That, ladies, is my story. I know nothing more."

The women were pale and trembling. One of them cried: 'But that is not an explanation! We shall not be able to sleep if you do not explain it to us.'

The magistrate gravely smiled: 'Oh, ladies, I certainly will prevent your having bad dreams. I think quite likely that the original owner of the hand was not dead, but came to reclaim it with the one that remained to him. But I don't know how he did it. That is a sort of vendetta.'

One of the ladies murmured: 'No, that can't be it.'

And the judge, still smiling, replied: 'I told you that my explanation wouldn't satisfy you.'—From the French of Guy de Maupassant.

### The Cart Before the Horse.

The Atlanta Journal publishes a description of what it describes as "the queerest looking vehicle that ever came from the carriage maker's hand." It is the property of Dr. Thurmond and will cost him about \$500. The doctor believes in having things just like he wants them and he went to a carriage builder, who drew up a plan like a large wheelbarrow with a canopy top, and a gentleman who saw the picture said it was just the thing if the horse could be found to work with his head toward the buggy and tail at the ends of the shaft, so that he could be led by the man sitting inside, thus pushing the buggy instead of pulling it. The plan pleased the doctor and he ordered the vehicle made. It was finished and a wonderful looking affair it was. It was nineteen feet long from the big velocipede wheel front to the end of the shafts in front.

Dr. Thurmond carried it home and gave it a trial. It worked all right, except that there was too much of a twisty motion about it, and the doctor decided to add two little wheels to the front of the vehicle, two very little wheels. They do not work on a pivot like the rollers on a center table. If the horse turns to the right the little wheels will flop quickly to the right, while the big wheel behind turns slowly and majestically in the same direction. The only harness to be used on the horse is the wooden collar and a very wide bellyband, to which the shafts will be fastened.

### Decorating at the Drug Stores.

"There is a new way of doctoring in the city," writes a pharmacist. "I don't mean that there are new remedies and treatments. There are young doctors whose business is not such as warrants an office, and they go about like doctors in the olden times, from pillar to post. Take it in this store, for example. I know of four young doctors who come in here at different hours and meet patients. Then the doctors go from here to other drug stores, so that by the time the day is over they have traveled a good many miles. The patients they see do not pay much, individually they can't afford it. But they are sick and must be healed, and they are not the sort of people who go to hospitals. It is a good thing for the sick who can't afford to have doctors come to the house; it is a good thing for young doctors who are not able to pay office rent, and it is a good thing for the drug stores, for they almost invariably get to sell the medicines that are prescribed."

### An Angel Photographed by Lightning.

From the Atlanta Constitution. A portrait of the late John Taylor, which J. R. Smith of Charlotte, N. C., has on exhibition in his store, attracts many visitors daily, and has caused a great deal of discussion. The portrait formerly rested on the mantelpiece at Mr. Smith's residence, in Mt. Olive. During a heavy storm a lightning flash struck it. The frame was demolished, but the flash left on the portrait a clearly defined picture of an angel, with outstretched wings overshadowing Mr. Taylor's head, the arms encircling his neck and the right hand holding a bunch of flowers. The pose of the angel suggests protection and benediction. The dark line showing the lightning's journey along the cardboard turns abruptly just above the face of Mr. Taylor, giving the spectator the idea that the angel changed the lightning's course.

### A Disagreeable Inheritance.

"What is the matter with that baby?" growled an irascible husband as the little one persisted in howling and kicking to the extent of its might.

"The matter is, sir," calmly replied the wife as she strode up and down the floor, "the matter is that this baby inherits your temper. And the husband turned to his paper with a gloomier face than before.—Boston Courier.

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