

THE GOOD OLD EARTH.

I want to be a singer,
But I'm no great singer.
To sing away, I'd rather stay
Right here with you, my dear.
Give me the world's glad laughter
And hearts of sterling worth;
Away with the harp and fiddle,
I love the good old earth.

Oh, Earth! A tender mother
You've been to me and mine.
I'm blest with friend and brother,
With meat and bread and wine,
I will not say I'm yearning
To try another sphere;
Such gracious things your goodness brings
I love to linger here.

My neighbor Deacon Watkins,
Keeps singing for to go
"Cross Jordan's strand to that fair land
Where healing waters flow."
But just the other day he said
Some truck that made him sick
And he told his folks to rush and get
The doctor, double-quick.

—Nixon Waterman.

A COWBOY VIRTUOSO.

The persistence of Mr. Rime Jenks at length received its due reward—he was asked to fiddle for a dance.

You may remember that this gentleman, who was second to none when it came to close quarters in the branding-pen, or following a wild calf through the sage-bush, had not one ounce of musical capacity in his make-up, yet had a particular ambition and an unflagging zeal to become a fiddler. The object of this writing is to show that he received ample returns upon the zeal invested, but never attained to the ambition.

For as many years that the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, he had packed a violin in his bed-roll on the annual round-up, and at every opportunity, when the day's work was done, he resined his bow. Throughout the winter months, when work was light and evenings long, he had practiced faithfully, if not intelligently, in the bunk-house until banished by a plebeian to a near-by dug-out, where he found sacks of onions and bins of potatoes more patient sufferers than the general sitting-room afforded.

In some former year the outfit had boasted a man who could "play any instrument," and Jenks, seeing how easy it was, decided to become equally accomplished. The violin was not his first choice, but his first opportunity, and having accepted it, his code of ethics bound him to break the critic or break the clench.

On the twenty-ninth of February there was a leap-year dance at Richmond's. This place was on a hill in the border-land between the open range and the settlements, and however much cowboys might despise farmers, and farmers detest cowboys, the social amenities were rarely disturbed, and the country dance was a popular institution. My friend Rice voiced the general sentiment thus: "I like 'em because everybody is a-leaping and a skipping, and if anybody falls down he gets up again." The plain inference from Mr. Rice's statement is that at any other than a country dance if one falls down he stays down—which might embarrass and endanger his betters. When I called Rice's attention to this, he explained that he meant "in your mind." "It's like getting on to a bucking horse any morning after breakfast and being dumped," said he. "You don't mind it much, but just tighten your cinch another hole and climb on again. But suppose you are doing some fancy riding or roping at the county fair, and your saddle gets emptied, why, you feel so low down you don't get over it for a week."

Our boys all went over to the dance at Richmond's, and some one evidently told the committee that Mr. Jenks was a competent fiddler, for soon after his arrival he was approached by a bright-eyed young woman, who asked if he had brought his violin.

"No, I did not," replied the startled Jenks, nervously fingering a large piece of resin which he produced from a pocket; "but if you want to use it, I'll be very glad to go back to the ranch and fetch it. It is only about twenty miles."

"I was told," said the girl, just slightly showing several white teeth, "that you carry your violin with you wherever you go, and I'm sorry to find that it's not true. Our music has disappointed us; the house is full of people, and nobody here to play for them but a cello and a mouth-organ. But I think we can get a violin within less than twenty miles, and—here she showed him the full set—"will you kindly play for us until Mr. Smith arrives?"

"Miss, I should be delighted," said Jenks.

"Oh, thank you so much—" interposed the girl.

"If I knew how," he continued, "but I don't. You see, I'm only learning. I can just start a few."

"Oh, I am sure you will do it well," she replied; "and I will go right out and send for an instrument;" and she hurried away.

Mr. Jenks was astonished and perplexed. Of course he had hoped to play in public at some time, but this was so sudden. He was not in a hurry. Some other leap year would be soon enough.

Should he bolt, or face his own music? "What a very pretty girl when she laughs," thought he; "I'll stay. Wish I had practiced more. Wonder if I'll break up the party."

In what seemed to him an incredibly short time in which to summon a fiddle from the adjacent valley, the girl reappeared with one in her hand, and escorted the reluctant and protesting Jenks to the head of the room, introducing him to the cello, the mouth-organ, and the floor manager.

"Now, boys," said he, when the committee had turned away, leaving him with his fellow-musicians, who regarded him doubtfully, "let's have an understanding. I ain't in this like you for a dollar a head and free drinks, but I'm doing it to oblige a lady. I expect to make some pretty bad breaks, and the first one of you that snickers will eat his instrument right here. Are you ready?"

manager, "and play slowly." With a sigh of relief and a thought of "What I do when they demand fast music!" Mr. Jenks began that classical strain, which fits the words "Where, oh, where is my little dog gone," the cello and mouth-organ struck in, the girls chose the best waltzers, the floor filled up, feet shuffled, boards creaked, and the ball was opened.

Accomplished speakers have recorded the difficulty experienced in learning to think upon their feet, but Jenks, facing an audience for the first time, and sawing away desperately at the first bars and repeat of a slow waltz, had no such trouble. He told me afterwards that his thoughts "thunk themselves and came a-running," and that he was conscious of three distinct trains of thought running on parallel tracks. The first concerned Mr. Smith, the delinquent musician; the second subject was "what a very pretty girl when she laughs;" and the third, accented to waltz-time, ran: "Oh, I never can play them that second strain, I know I'll break down if I try."

To anticipate difficulty is to insure it. After repeating the first strain some twenty times, Jenks made a desperate effort to strike the second movement, failed, and collapsed. The cello and mouth-organ hammered along uncertainly for a time and ceased. The stranded waltzers dotted the floor like boats becalmed on a miniature lake.

The waltzers had been so engrossed in their own efforts, and the rest of us in looking on, that the quality of the music had apparently received little attention. When the player broke down, there was only a general movement of impatience at the interruption, and I looked to see the persistent Jenks start up again on the same eight measures. But he had entirely recovered his self-possession. Laying the fiddle aside, he advanced to meet the girl at whose request he had made the effort.

"Don't you think," he asked, "that I have proved that I cannot play?"

"Well it does come pretty close to a demonstration," she answered; "but I thank you very much for helping us out. Mr. Smith has come, and will relieve you."

So Mr. Smith took the fiddle and Jenks took the girl's hand for the first dance, and perhaps for others, and the evening was a success.

Many hours afterward, as we rode sleepily homeward in the gray light of morning, Jenks said to me, "What a very pretty girl when she laughs."

"What did she say about your playing?" I asked.

"Said that I must play at the next leap-year dance; 1900 is not a leap year, you know—would give me eight years to practice."

"Did you promise?"

"I promised not to, told her I had something better to work for now."

Rime Jenks is a rather taciturn fellow and I am not in his confidence, but I know that he goes pretty often to Richmond's Hill, and he has traded his fiddle for a cow. I have also noticed him studying a book entitled "Comfortable Cottages for Six Hundred Dollars."—Argonaut.

The Ocean's Saltiness.

Do you realize there was once a time when the ocean, although not fresh, was merely brackish, and not as it is now. This was when the earth was in its first youth, and before there was any land showing at all, or any animal life in the water. At this time the water was gradually cooling from its original state of steam, and the salts were slowly undergoing the change from gases into solids. Then came the appearance of land, and later on rivers, which gradually washed down more and more salts, whilst at the bottom of the ocean itself chemical action was constantly adding more brine to the waters. At present it is estimated there are in the world's oceans seven million cubic miles of salt, and the most astonishing thing about it is that, if all this salt could be taken out in a moment, the level of the water would not drop one single inch.

Is This True.

The Buffalo Express says: "It is true in some quarters that the continual display of the American flag on schoolhouses and other public buildings has had an effect exactly the reverse of that hoped for. The intent was to make children love the flag more, to increase their patriotism. In certain school districts of Buffalo, where faded, tattered flags fly, the children appear to have less respect for their nation's emblem than ever before. Familiarity breeds contempt."

THEY WILL FIND A PARADISE IN CUBA.

Wild Game and Fish of All Kinds in Great Abundance to be Found There—Wild Bear Plentiful and Sometimes Dangerous to His Pursuers.

While Cuba offers such a haven to the invalid, it is a paradise for the sportsman, wild game and fish of all kinds being abundant.

Parties of gentlemen on horseback, with their packs of hounds, hunt the deer-footed deer. When they arrive in the locality which the game frequents, the hunters, as with us, station themselves in the paths where the deer are likely to pass and the dogs are turned loose. It is a common thing for a small party to kill eight or ten deer in a day. When night falls and the men are through with the chase, surrounded by their trophies of the day's sport, they spend the evening with pipes and tales at the campfire, later to swing their hammocks from the neighboring boughs, and, free from care and troubles and amidst the moonlight and shadows and scent of luxuriant flowers, to sleep that sleep which gives health and life.

The wild bear is plentiful, and sometimes if cornered, dangerous, especially the old master of the herd called "unsolitary," which will tear a dog to pieces or make a green hunter climb a tree, but a Cuban kills him with a machete. The island bear sometimes weighs 300 or 400 pounds, and has huge tusks, often five or six inches in length. The meat of the female is much relished by the natives. Wild dogs and cats, wild cattle, horses and jackasses abound. But the jute, peculiar only in Cuba, which looks like a cross between a squirrel with a rat's tail and a rabbit and which lives in the trees and feeds on nuts and leaves, is the great delight of the Cuban.

Powls are in great numbers. Wild guinea hens and turkeys are found in flocks of from 25 to 100. The whistle of the quail and the flutter of the pheasant and perdiz are heard on all sides in the rural and mountainous regions. Ducks in abundance come over from Florida in the winter and return with the spring. Wild pigeons, with their white tops and bodies of blue, larger somewhat than the domestic bird, offer, in hunting, the greatest sport to gentlemen who will be restrained within season. In the early mornings the pigeons generally go to feed on the mangrove berries when ripe, and which grow by the sea or near some swampy place. I have known of a party of three persons to kill 1,500 of the pigeons within a few hours. Robothes, tojoses and guanaros are found in the thick woods.

Mocking and blue birds, orioles, turkeys, negritos, parrots and a thousand kind of songsters and birds of brilliant plumage fit from tree to tree.

The waters about Cuba, at night strangely phosphorescent, are marvelous in their transparency. Objects can be seen at a depth of 80 or 90 feet, and the endless variety of botanical and animal life in the depths afford great pleasure for those who love the realm of nature's mysterious lore. Brown lobes, great white coral trees help and numberless shells, with fish whose bright colors smulating the tints of precious stones and the hues of the rainbow, darting hither and thither, combine to form a most enchanting aquarium of nature.

The naturalist, Poey, says there are 41 distinct species of fish in the Cuban waters. Among those that delight the sportsman are the red snapper, lista, manta, gallego, cubera, surela and gar fish. The sierra, which weighs from 40 to 60 pounds, is extremely game, as is the runco, so-called because it snores when brought out of the water. For heavy sport, fishing for sharks, which are good for nothing, or the gues, which weighs from 400 to 800 pounds and is excellent eating, offer abundant exercise. It is a daily occurrence to see schools of fish, numbering from hundreds to many thousands, each fish weighing from one to four pounds, swimming around the bays and harbors waiting for a bait. Any American who enjoys good fishing can find his fondest dreams more than satisfied in Cuba.

Delicious shrimps, crabs and lobsters have no claws and weigh from two to eight pounds. They are caught at night in shallow places along the sandy beach, a throw, harpoon and net being the necessary outfit. Some of the rivers abound in alligators, but few hunt them.

Said of Corn 3,000 Years Old.

Three or four years since an Indian mound in Arkansas was being excavated when an earthen jar was found, hermetically sealed, that contained a small quantity of grains of Indian corn. Some of the grains were the next year planted in Missouri and several bushels raised. On the top of the mound from which the jar was dug out a large tree four feet in diameter was growing and it is thought the corn lay buried many years. Squire James L. Neil, one of our most prosperous farmers, sent and procured a small quantity of the corn, paying over two cents a grain. This he planted last year, but the yield was small on account of the drought. He saved enough, however, to get in a good patch this year. He has used it for roasting ears, and says it is the best he ever had. The ears are not large, but grow two to three on a single stalk. The one thing peculiar about this corn is its color, or rather colors. On the same cob are grains of different colors, and in the row you can find an ear that is white, another blood red, one salmon colored, and another perfectly black.

A Constant Enemy.

Above all things, be on your guard against your temper. It is an enemy that will accompany you everywhere, to the last hour of your life. If you listen to it, it will frustrate all your schemes. It will make you lose the most important opportunities and will inspire you with inclinations and aversions, to the prejudice of your greatest interests. Temper causes the greatest affairs to be decided by the most paltry reasons. It obscures every talent, paralyzes every energy and renders its victims unequal, weak, vile and insupportable.

Imitating Songs of Birds.

According to La Nature, with any glass tube whatever it is possible to easily reproduce the song of a bird. It suffices to rub the tube lengthwise with a piece of wet cork. In order to imitate the song of a bird, the cork must be moved with a varying rapidly, now slowly, now rapidly, and abrupt stoppages must intervene. The experiment can be made more simply by rubbing an ordinary bottle with a piece of cork.

The Toughest Seas.

The China Sea and the Bay of Funda are said to be the two roughest seas in the world.

FOR THE SPORTSMEN.

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FRANKS IN PATENT.

Some remarkable things have been among the inventions in building materials recorded at the patent office. One genius proposes to make bricks out of pressed paper pulp, which is declared to be admirably adapted for the purpose, being very durable, non-absorbent of water and a non-conductor of heat. Glass bricks are the invention of a Swede named Gustave Palmcrantz. They are hollow, being blown in any desired shape and colored to suit the taste. They may be made very ornamental and may even be engraved with designs by means of the sand-blast. Cost need not prevent anyone from indulging in the luxury of a glass house, inasmuch as these bricks are quite cheap. Being hollow, and airtight they serve as non-conductors of heat by confining air that is in a state of rest. For obvious reasons they are not made transparent.

It is said that the glass bricks do not transmit sound readily. This is a point that seems to be considered as of much importance in architecture, and quite a number of patents relate to what is termed the "deafening" of buildings—i.e., making them sound-proof. One inventor proposes to fill the wall with saw-wood and salt water plants, compressed between sheets of paper and nailed in place. For this purpose he prefers soft grass and flat-leaved algae. These, he asserts, are not at all inflammable even when dry, because they contain a large percentage of silica. Partition walls being prepared in the manner described, sound will not carry from room to room. The same process applied to doors will prevent the occurrence of a non-marked flat from being driven in by the vibrations of piano playing neighbors.

Equally ingenious is the idea of another patentee who proposes to construct floors with rows of tin cans laid between the beams and beneath the planking. The cans are exhausted of air, each of them containing a couple of quarts of vacuum, so to speak. It is explained that, while making the floor lighter, they will prevent the transmission of sound or heat. Not one of the ideas-makers is more original, however, than the Iowa gentleman, who suggests the employment of hay in the building of houses. He would have the hay compressed into large bricks and used like ordinary bricks in the construction of the walls, fastening them together with wire in lieu of mortar. Perhaps equally striking is the notion of a gentleman who has devised a process for making artificial lumber. He takes a lot of cornstalks and pours upon them a mixture of liquid cement, wool, hair, feathers, vitriol and soluble glass. When it hardens, there you are.

If you like, though at the risk of infringement, you may adopt the idea of a Connecticut man who has thought of a way of making doors fire-proof by placing a sheet of asbestos between two layers of board. More interesting, however, is a patent newly granted to a person named Fiskerling, of Richmond, Kan. He suggests that chimneys and smokestacks might be made of wood more economically than of bricks. Coating the inside of the chimney with paint and throwing sand upon the latter while wet, he obtains a surface absolutely proof against fire. The heat paint in a homogeneous, glassy state. This invention is a great boon, inasmuch as brick chimneys are sadly expensive. Incidental to the discussion of Frank patents in the building line, it is worth while to mention a Buffalo inventor who has devised a rat-proof and bug-proof house. Of course, rats make their home in the walls of dwellings, commonly finding free passage wherever they like, and the style of house referred to has walls divided into compartments by partitions that are sealed with cement, so that "vermin" of all sorts are prevented from getting about.

—Buffalo Commercial.

The Nation's Coal Product.

The coal production of the United States for 1896, according to compilation made by E. W. Parker, statistician of the United States Geological Survey, amounted to 180,639,958 short tons (3,000 pounds), valued at the mines at \$195,567,649; against 182,137,630 short tons, valued at \$197,789,048 in 1895. The amount of coal mined in Pennsylvania was 53,771,800 tons anthracite and 49,101,148 tons bituminous. The average price obtained for anthracite at the mines increased from \$1.41 in 1895 to \$1.51 in 1896, while the average price for bituminous decreased from 86 cents to 83 cents. Illinois is second to Pennsylvania with nearly 20,000,000 tons, and Ohio and West Virginia mined each nearly 13,000,000 tons. Alabama comes next with nearly 6,000,000 then Maryland, Indiana and Iowa with 4,000,000 each. Kentucky mined a little over 3,000,000, and Kansas, Tennessee, and Missouri each mined over 2,000,000. Wyoming and Nebraska are taken together and credited with 2,000,000 tons, and Virginia, Montana and Indian Territory and Washington each produce over 1,000,000 tons. The States which produce coal in smaller amounts are Arkansas, New Mexico, California, Oregon, Texas and Utah.

Cost of Trolley Power.

The annual reports of the Railway commissioners of New York and Massachusetts show that the cost of running a trolley car a mile varies remarkably in different cities. Of nineteen companies operating less than 250,000 car miles per annum, four obtained their power at less than two cents per car mile under average conditions of load, tracks, etc.; six, between two and three cents; five between three and four cents; one between four and five cents; and three at more than five cents. Of five companies operating over 5,000,000 car miles per year one obtains its power at less than one cent a car mile; three, between one and two cents; and one between two and three cents. The Brooklyn Heights company have the cheapest power, eighty-six miles per car mile, and the Binghamton next, ninety-four mills. Cheapness of coal at the given point is, of course, a factor in price of power, but the controlling one seems to be good, sound, common sense in electrical engineering. The man who makes two car miles where only one man before him has made a mile is a dynamo engineer.

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