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ILL-STARRED.

Oh, prayers and sympathetic tears,
For each and every ill-starred night,
For whom ring no victorious cheers;
For those who, early in the fight,
Saw daylight turning into night
And yield up to Fate their spears.

The dented shield, the pierced cuirass,
Sad story is it that they tell
Of brave young knights whose hopes alas!
Bore meagre fruit, who fighting fell
Before the foes they could not quell;
Who found no wine within the glass.

For some there are but ill-quipped
To face the world; some weak of will
And some faint-hearted, feeble-lipped.
Fit but the lowest posts to fill
Soon shivering with the coward's chill,
And of the armor courage stripped.

O've trainst whom the fates are set,
E'en though you've failed on every field
To gain fair honor's bannered crest,
Let high above be held each shield,
Each one with purpose strong annealed,
And each shall win a victory yet.

THE GIPSY'S PREDICTION.

Ezra Alden was in love with Clara Scudder, and, sometimes in moments of exultation—for he was a modest youth, as every true lover should be—he had dared to think that she did not frown upon his passion.

But Clara was the Squire's daughter, and an heiress, while Ezra was but a small farmer, and so far from successful in that pursuit, that it seemed absurd, as well as impossible, that he should aspire to the hand of the lovely Miss Scudder who had been courted in vain by five London gentlemen.

So he had sighed and cast longing looks from his place in the choir (where he sang in a fine tenor voice on Sunday) into the Squire's pew; and more than once he thought pretty Clara blushed brightly, and he knew well enough that she always smiled sweetly, and her voice when she spoke to him, had a caressing sound, and altogether her manner towards him was not discouraging. But Ezra would not be discouraged.

He felt it was useless for him to ask the squire for his daughter's hand unless he had a good pot of money in his own hand with which to back his proposal.

So instead of trying to compass the desired end by increased industry, he neglected his farm more than before, and spent his whole time in wishing that he could find a pot of money somehow, in the manner of old-fashioned stories—at the foot of a tree; under the foundation of his house.

I believe he would even have sought for it at the end of the rainbow, like the boy in the nursery rhyme, if he had been told there was a good chance of finding it there.

Suddenly a rumour spread abroad that a wonderful gipsy had appeared, who was telling people's fortunes that came true in the most remarkable manner and all the country-side was in a state of excitement on the subject.

She was of somewhat exclusive character, the madam gipsy, and could only be consulted at a certain place,

in the shadow of a wych-elm, in the open air, and during certain hours—these hours being between the last ray of the declining sun, and the first shadow of coming night.

Of course the rumour of the gipsy's marvelous fortune-telling reached Ezra Alden, and equally, of course, he was much exercised in mind concerning it.

He found out the place where the fortune teller divined these fair fortunes.

One evening, after watching the sun slowly disappear behind the western hills, he repaired thither, stealthily, and a little afraid of meeting Clara Scudder somewhere in the vicinity; for the wych-elm was just on the futher side of the Squire's park.

However, he met no one, except a hurried squirrel, fast speeding to its home, and it was even more scared at being met than he was, so he hastened to the wych-elm, and there, sure enough, was madam gipsy, sitting up against the trunk, and looking precisely as if she were waiting for him.

She was a very old woman, bent almost double.

Her lined and wrinkled face was the color of butternuts, and the tangles of her hair hung in elf-like grizzled locks about her brow and over her cheeks.

But her black eyes had a wonderful brilliancy and such a keen look that they seemed to see right through him.

She was wrapped in a tattered old scarlet cloak, and a hood of the same was drawn well over her head.

She gave a quick nod to Ezra, and motioned him to take a seat at her feet, which he did with his heart thumping as if he were before the Delphic oracle.

And when she spoke, he had to bend his head and listen very attentively, for not only did she utter her words in a very toothless fashion, but she spoke in so low a tone that he had some difficulty in hearing her.

But he made out what she said—I was expecting you, my son, and I know what you come for,

And then she held out a hand more brown, a shaking, tremulous hand.

Then Ezra made haste to cross the palm with silver, this being, as he well knew the time honored custom.

Ezra had in his pocket a half crown piece, with a hole in it, and a cross drawn on its face, which he had kept many years for luck.

So, as there could be no more auspicious occasion than the present, for using it, he timidly placed it in the gipsy's hand, and again bent his ear attentively to listen to her intelligence, mumbling.

I know the desire of your heart, my pretty gentleman, said the gipsy. It is a certain maiden, not a hundred miles away, only you have the faint heart that seldom wins a fair lady. But if you could find a pot of money, your spirit would be bolder. Listen to me, and obey me, and you shall have your wish.

Ezra did listen, with all his ears, and as you may suppose, they were just then pretty long and wide, and capable of taking in a large amount.

You must dig up every foot of land you possess, proceeded the gipsy; you must not grow weary in your search, you must dig and dig continuously, and plant and harvest, and dig again if necessary; and, mark my words, sooner or later, you will find the pot of money, and the maiden will be yours.

Ezra listened with faith, and departed with joy in his heart.

He fulfilled the fortune-teller's injunction so well, that all the countryside took to talking of him after the gipsy disappeared. He not only dug, but he plowed, sowed and harrowed.

He seemed taken with a sudden mania for farming and work, which before had been distasteful and monotonous and now that he had an object in view, was full of excitement and interest.

At first he dug and dug, looking for his pot of money; but as it did not turn up, he continued to dig, full of faith, and growing every day more and more interested in his own efforts.

What on earth has got into Ezra Alden? asked the neighbors one of another. Why, he has taken to working like one possessed. He's hired a man, too, and the pair of 'em are at it from the first dawn of daylight till nightfall.

Whatever has got into him, he's going to have the best crop of the year, answered one. Lucky man. Just when there's going to be a rise in flour, too, and he has no end of wheat growing, and in splendid condition.

Why Clara, isn't that Ezra Alden's farm? asked the squire, as his daughter one day drove him past it, in her pretty pony carriage.

Yes sir, returned Clara, with a faint pink stealing into her cheek.

Has someone else farmed it, then? asked the squire. There isn't another

farm around here fit to compare with it.

The pink in Clara's cheek deepened to a lovely crimson.

Oh, no, papa, she said, softly; it seems Ezra—Mr Alden, has just developed a talent for farming.

And a first rate talent. I should say, remarked the old gentleman. A man who can show such a farm as that can hold his head as high as anyone.

Clara's eyes glowed and sparkled. She touched her ponies lightly.

Her happy thoughts rushed off into the future at a pace to rival even their fast trotting.

As the neighbors had foretold, Ezra Alden had particularly fine crops that season. His success at farming also developed his commercial ability. He sold all that he had to sell to excellent advantage.

Well, said Ezra, as he counted up his gains, and tied them securely in his money-bag, I haven't found my pot of money; but this little pile is not to be despised, and I shall keep on. By George! I wonder if this is what the old gipsy meant.

Ezra had some time on his hands now for dreaming.

He took to sighing for Clara once more, but in a much more hopeful spirit.

I will speak to her father, he thought, and if he gives me encouragement, I will ask Clara if she will marry me.

Now some young men would have thought it safer to win the daughter's consent first; but Ezra was too honorable for that.

If the squire won't have me, he said to himself, it is no use to ask Clara. She would never disobey her father. I shouldn't care half as much for her if she would.

So he took his money-bag in his hand and sought the presence of Squire Scudder.

The squire sat reading a volume in his handsome old-fashioned parlor.

Being in a genial mood, he received Ezra with the most encouraging kindness, and listened to all he had to say with a benignant smile.

It is not a great deal, concluded Ezra, holding up his money-bag, but there's plenty more where I found this, sir.

And pray, where did you find it Mr Alden asked the squire, rather taken aback.

At the roots of the wheat and barley, answered Ezra, adding with a laugh—to tell the truth, I consulted a fortune-teller, and she told me to dig and dig, and I would certainly find a pot of money. I haven't found it yet, but I intended to keep on digging, and I don't doubt but I shall find it by-and-by.

Squire Scudder burst into a hearty laugh, and kindly patted Ezra on the shoulder.

I don't doubt but what you will, my lad, he said, cheerily. Honest industry is the best pot of money any young man ever found. As for Clara, you can talk over the matter with herself—she's sitting there by the window, hidden behind the curtains.

Now that was dreadful mean of the squire, not to have given Ezra a hint of Clara's presence before, but he didn't mean it.

It seems quite impossible for those old gentlemen to realize how serious such matters are to boys and girls.

Squire Scudder rose with a nod and a smile, and went away, leaving Ezra in dire confusion, staring at the window-curtain; and wishing the floor would open and swallow him.

But it didn't. Instead, the window curtains opened and a lovely young lady stepped out from them.

So, Mr Alden, she said, coming forward, you consulted the gipsy fortune-teller, too?

Oh, Miss Scudder—Clara—you have heard everything, stammered Ezra, sinking into a chair in from which he had risen in his first consternation. What a terrible fool you must think me.

But I don't—I have great confidence in the gipsy's predictions.

Then you have consulted her, too asked Ezra.

Dozens of times—she positively had all my small silver.

Well she got but a single piece from me, that's one comfort, recovering somewhat, and venturing to laugh slightly.

Was it anything like this? asked Miss Scudder, producing one from her pocket, and held it toward Ezra on the palm of a hand like cream.

Ezra looked and started and gave a little cry.

It was his own lucky silver piece.

He glanced into the laughing, blushing face; and then for the first time he looked straight into Clara Scudder's eyes.

They were very, very dark, and wonderfully brilliant; but this time they did not seem to look through him—they sank before his glance, and veiled themselves under lovely, long black lashes.

Oh Clara, murmured Ezra, you were the gipsy!

Of course I was.

And you knew I loved you all the time?

Of course I did, you foolish fellow—that's why I had to invent a way of telling you so.

In a year Ezra and Clara were married.

THE CURSEDNESS OF THINGS.—Your new shoes will pinch you with might and main, as though in retaliation or some wrong done them. They will unte themselves when you are in a hurry; they will break the buttons off, run over at the heels to throw you, and finally split open at a time when you don't feel that you can afford another pair; and one will wear completely out, while the other is as good as new.

Your scarf will not stay the way you want it; it will work around until the pin is directly under your ear. Five minutes after you have fixed it, it will be as much out of position as ever. If you put it with the pin under your ear intentionally, it would probably work around to the back of your neck.

Although it is said to be extremely uncomfortable to stand on one's head, it is a matter of fact that a tack will stand on its head on the floor all day to catch you as you walk across the room. The last match you have in your pocket is the one that is sure to go out when you light it indoor to start a cigar.

The train will always make it a point to shake so that it is impossible for you to read the article in which you are interested and have no other time to read. Your ink will always give out when you have got a number of letters to write, or else the bottle will be accidentally knocked off the table and the contents spilled on something that is costly and snow white.

Your clock will get its internals out of kilter and go all wrong, that you may fail to catch a train to keep an important appointment.

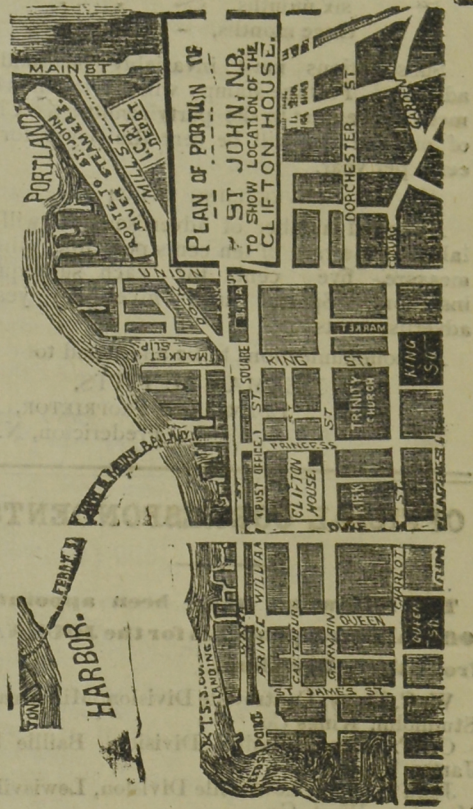
Your night-key will quietly steal down through a small hole in your vest pocket and hide itself in the lining, and fill its aperture with cotton to the muzzle, so that after you find it at midnight—if you do at all—you have the extreme felicity of cleaning it out with a pin, providing you have a pin at this particular time, which, in all probability, you will not. From all of which it would seem that pretty much all the general cursedness we encounter in this life comes from objects not endowed with animal life.

OUR COUNTRY COUSINS.—It is not to be wondered at that farmers and their families utter protests against self-invited guests. City friends or acquaintances who demand hospitality, do not seem to appreciate the fact that their presence keeps the farmer's wife and daughters in the hot kitchen and deprives them of summer rest. The most appalling instance of this sort of visiting is told of Chautauqua, N. Y. A minister's wife, a frail little woman, was found 'just tired out and sick.' She said she had been entertaining for the past two days a woman, who, a perfect stranger, had come to visit her, because she had heard her husband preach once, some years ago. The country cousins should present board bills in emergencies.

It was the policy of the good old gentleman to make his children feel that home was the happiest place in the world; and I value this delicious home feeling as one of the choicest gifts that a parent can bestow.

DRAGGED INTO THE AIR BY THE TEETH.

—At the Parc Leopold, Brussels, on the 11th inst., Leona Dare actually performed the feat of holding on by her teeth to a sling suspended from the car of a balloon as it rose in the air. The balloon of 35,316 cubic feet capacity, carrying in its car the impresario Spelterini and the French aeronaut Lachambre, rose at 6:15 and it was only when Leona Dare could no longer be distinguished except with the aid of glasses that she drew herself up to the trapeze and entered the car by a trap-door in the bottom. The balloon descended safely on the estate of the Comte de Beaufort, at Linden.



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