

AT THE TOMB OF KING ARTHUR.

BY AUBREY DE VERE.

Through Glastonbury's cloister dim
The midnight winds were sighing;
Chanting a low funeral hymn
For those in silence lying,
Death's gentle flock, 'mid shadows grim
Fast bound, and unreplying.

Hard by the monks their mass were saying;
The organ evermore
Its wave in alteration swaying
On that smooth swell upbore
The voice of their melodious praying
Toward heaven's eternal shore.

Ere long a princely multitude
Moved on through arches grey,
Which yet, though shattered, stood where stood
(God grant they stand for aye!)
St. Joseph's Church of woven wood
On England's baptism day.

The grave they found; their swift strokes fell,
Piercing dull earth and stone.
They reached ere long an oaken cell,
And cross of oak, whereon
Was graved, "Here sleeps King Arthur well,
In the Isle of Avalon."

The mail on every knightly breast,
The steel at each man's side,
Sent forth a sudden gleam; each crest
Bowed low its plumed pride;
Down o'er the coffin stooped a priest—
But first the monarch cried:

"Great king! in youth I made a vow,
Earth's mightiest son to greet;
His hand to worship; on his brow
To gaze; his grace entreat
Therefore, though dead, till noontide none
Shall fill any royal seat!"

Away the massive lid they roll'd—
Alas! what found they there?
No kingly brow, no shapely mould;
But dust where such things were,
Ashes o'er ashes, fold on fold—
And one bright wreath of hair.

Genevra's hair! like gold it lay;
For Time, though stern, is just,
And humbler things feel last his sway,
And Death reveres his trust—
They touched that wreath; it sank away
From sunshine into dust!

Then Henry lifted from his head
The Conqueror's iron crown;
That crown upon that dust he laid,
And knelt in reverence down,
And raised both hands to heaven, and said,
"Thou God, art King alone!"

FRUIT OF THE SEA.

The storm had spent its fury and all that remained of the tempest was the low long swell that rose and fell so noiselessly. Along the waterway between the rocky guardians of the bay of Naples the islands of Capri and Ischia, a fishing boat, containing two occupants, was pursuing its course, the small sails just filled, and no more, by the slight breeze that swept landward from the Mediterranean. So clear was the sky that plainly revealed was the promontory bearing Castellamare, Vico and many clustering villages nestling in the vineyards and orange groves. Shoreward was, indeed, a view of the Phlegrean field, "clothed in the delicate atmosphere of spring." One of the occupants of the boat was an old man, and the other a boy.

"You shall see how we take this fruit of the sea," said the old man, "for it is a calling you must follow when I am gone."

"Gone! I do not understand."

"Little idiot! There are storms and shipwrecks. A fisherman's time must come. Even last night they say lives were lost in the storm. Why not my boat as well as others?"

"Was not an altar raised here, and did not a priest bless it?"

"Yes, boy," said the old man who, like all Neapolitan fishermen, was extremely superstitious, "but there are black spirits which infest the coast, and which may not always be exorcised."

"Then you have your amulet." With veneration for that indispensable charm.

"True," remarked the other glancing at the "cavallo marino" which he wore. This amulet was shaped like the sea-horse with the fish tail; the sea-horse that is so numerous on the coast of Baia. "And yet Pietro, who was drowned wore a beautiful amulet of a 'sirene' seated on two winged horses. He was lost."

"When may I have a beautiful amulet? I saw one where the 'sirene' was so lovely. Her face was that of a Madonna. There was a ball in the mouth of each horse and another at the bottom. Such a lovely 'sirene'!"

"A 'sirene' is not a Madonna," replied the old man. "I knew of a boat that bore a carved head of the Siren Parthenope who should protect one from evil. She is the patron saint of the fisherman. What became of the boat? It was lost on the coast; it was shattered on the rocks. The head of the siren was floating seaward when it was found."

"What is the best amulet to wear when I become a fisherman?" anxiously asked the boy.

"The rue with the serpent is good as any; the half moon, too, is for luck."

Slowly the boat moved to its destination. Followers of the sea are generally superstitious, for much passes before their eyes and senses which seems beyond comprehension so far as natural cause and effect are concerned. But the Neapolitan fisherman has an implicit and inborn belief in all manner of supernatural agencies. The evil eye or "jettatura," is to him a fearful realization and when turned upon him, voluntarily or otherwise, dire misfortune must follow. And so the amulet is a magnet for those glances, and by use of it calamity is averted. Now the boat was motionless; the old man furling the sail, followed by the interested glances of the boy, who presently asked, as the other was getting out his implements for taking the "fruit of the sea."

"What must I do to become a prosperous fisherman, father?"

"Rise early in the morning and avoid all family troubles."

"What are family troubles?"

"I know of two fishermen who had difficulty about a small matter. The boat of one had been blessed and was prosperous. The boat of the other was followed by an evil spirit, and though the priest was called, it still clung there. Early and late, it was always there. One prospered and the other did not. Envy is the root of all human evil, nearly. The

one who prospered was forbearing; the other had an evil tongue; he hated his neighbor. For years this grew; they became separated and detested each other. The prosperous fisherman had a daughter, and she was such a handsome girl that the envious one hated her for her beauty. He looked after so maliciously one day that she became frightened and fell upon the hard stones.

"Jettatura? the evil eye!" cried the neighbors.

"But at that moment a boy ran up and lifted the little girl to her feet; it was the son of the envious one. The evil eyes blazed and the envious one boxed and cuffed the boy. The girl looked back with pity, but he took his beating bravely. Another time, to show his power and hatred he looked at the child when she was carrying a pitcher of goats' milk. The pitcher dropped and was broken, and she went home crying.

"The boy grew up, but he did not prosper. Something was always happening to his boat, or his sails, or nets. Though he was industrious, nothing went well—except that he was loved. The little girl for whom he had taken the cuffing when a boy, was now a handsome woman and looked with favor upon the tall, bronzed young fellow, who in turn wore her image in his heart like one of the medals of saints and madonnas which we lace on our bosoms. She gained her father's consent to their marriage, for though he hated his neighbor much, he loved his daughter more, and liked the son for his manliness. But when they went to his father he turned upon them fiercely and refused. The feud of years was not to be appeased.

"You dare not disobey me," he said, "because—jettatura—something terrible would happen. You fear me—all fear me."

"For a time the young man pursued his calling, but the black spirits infested his boat and the priests could do nothing. One day he was arranging his nets with despair in his heart when he heard a step. She had sought him—so rumor says—and was standing there gazing at him tenderly.

"You have caught nothing?" she asked.

"Nothing to speak of. There is a spell upon the boat; nothing comes. I am always unlucky. It is well you do not share my fortunes."

"See," she said, "there is my amulet. It is for you to wear. Here is the serpent for wisdom and the half moon for luck. The key and the heart are for duty and affection."

"You will obey every command," exclaimed the unlucky one.

"She gazed at him steadily."

"Yes."

"Without question?"

"Without question."

"Meet me here tonight at dusk."

"I will be here."

"We will leave here together and forever." She gave an exclamation, out restrained herself. Words of protest arose to her lips, but were not uttered. Motionless as a statue she stood, gazing seaward with the waves caressingly lapping the sand at her feet. "We will flee to one of the further islands," he continued, "and there we will be married. Only I fear the evil which hangs over the boat."

"So much the prying neighbors tell. This was last night. This morning before setting sail we met the evil one at the beach."

"How he glared, father; I was afraid!" whispered the boy.

"Anyone fears the jettatura."

"Did you hear what he was muttering, father?"

"I was too busy with our boat."

"He would look out over the water and say, 'There was a storm last night—a storm—the boat is gone—gone for good.' And then he laughed and shook his fist over the water."

"A terrible man! Did he say anything about them?"

"No; only, 'The boat is lost—it won't come back—it's gone for good.'"

"I fear it's so," remarked the old man.

"Perhaps they reached the beautiful island," said the boy, looking at the lovely outlines of a distant isle that lay like a gem upon the flashing surface of the sea.

"The boat was under a spell, and last night was a storm," answered the old man.

"I think they are happy," returned the boy.

"It cannot be. But here we are. Some day you will work as I am."

"And bring up pretty shells?"

"Bring up the fruits of the waters for the market. What have we here? Something very heavy. It must be a bit of wreckage."

"Then some boat may have gone down here."

"Perhaps; it was a terrible storm."

"But now it is so bright."

"A treacherous sea, as you will find when you have followed it as long as I have—Santa Maria!"

He gave a cry of awe. The boy bent over and gazed with wonder at the pale, beautiful face of a young woman, whose dark hair floated on the waves which rocked the figure to and fro, tenderly, caressingly; the same waves had whispered so softly at her feet the night before, as she stood listening to her lover's command, and had invited them, like Palinurus, to "fly with winged sails." The pallor of her countenance was like marble that was flawless, and she seemed sleeping, so peaceful was the expression; the calmness of her features was the more marked because of the dark hair that stirred restlessly around her. Such was the vision upon which the lad looked with wonderment.

"The 'sirena'—a lovely siren," he whispered.

"A siren," said the man. "It is she who fled last night. Upon your knees, boy, and pray."

The boy dropped on his knees and it seemed the beautiful island, as a mist arose from the sea, partly obscuring the outlines, until they seemed vague and unreal. Unreached the earthly isle, but the soul had fled to one of Pindar's "islands of the blessed dead, by ocean breezes blown, where the flowers of gold burn, some on the land from radiant trees, and some fed by the glancing waves, with which the good may twine their brows with necklaces."—F. S. I. in Detroit Free Press.

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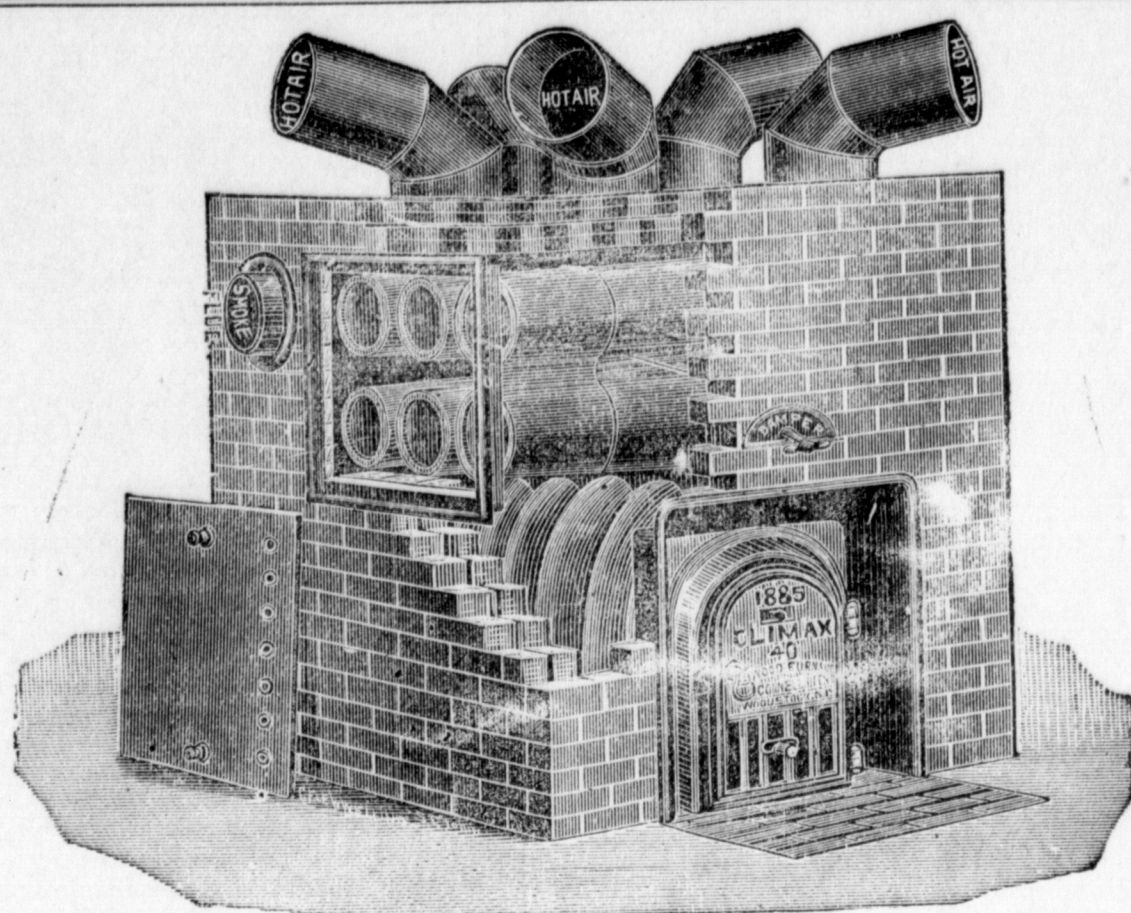
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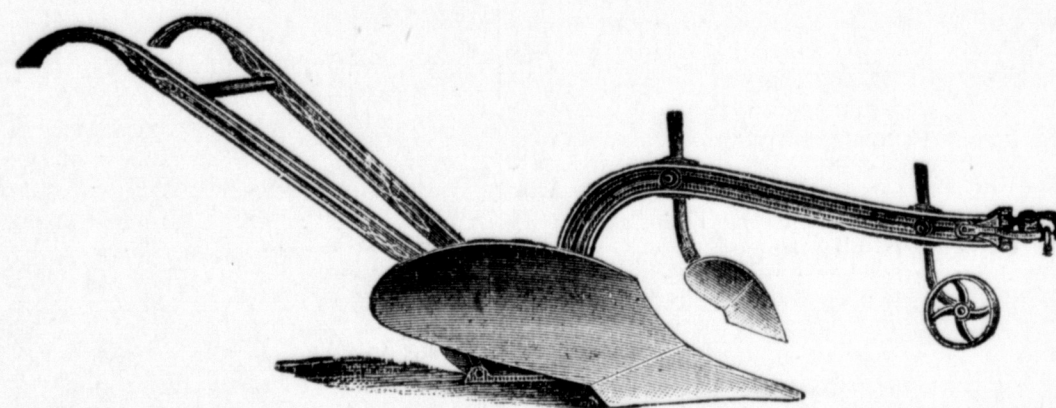
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