

## FORTUNES BY ACCIDENT.

How Fortune Smiles on Many who do not Deserve Her Smiles.

There is at any time something particularly fascinating about the thought of fortunes made by accident. They are so amazingly hard to acquire nowadays. The world is full of people who, having schemed and sweated for years to grasp the golden key to the problem, could tell pathetic tales of failure; while the few who succeed invariably attribute such success to dogged persistency and hard work. Altogether it would really appear as if the Fates were purposely ironical when, as now and then occurs, a person stumbles upon a solid fortune by mere accident—especially where that person happens to be one whose thoughts were not feverishly absorbed in pursuit of wealth.

Perhaps it is not often that a person has a fortune come, it might be said, voluntarily to his very door and stay there. This, however, was the staggering experience of an easy-going Kentish laborer, who went out to Oregon three years ago, more intent upon staving off the wolf than upon becoming actually rich. To this end he worked steadily for a year; then he purchased a small fruit farm, and because the water supply in the locality was meagre, spent the first six months of his occupation in digging a channel from his farm to a stream in the hill. He shrewdly reckoned that by doing so he would eventually score, to the disadvantage of his less thoughtful neighbors in the trade.

He certainly did. Down this narrow channel presently came an alluvial deposit of rich mud and sand, threatening to choke the mouth. All the farmer could do was simply to dig out the deposit until he had a small mountain of it, and when one day he examined his sand more closely, he saw something that made his heart beat faster. Specks of gold!

He had the sense to keep his mouth tightly shut, and sent for his brother in the old country. Then they worked the treasure, and it yielded over an ounce of pure gold to every ton of the deposit. He had stumbled upon a splendid fortune, that hundreds of men would have given years of their lifetime to obtain.

Fat fortunes are made by fiction-characters at times, but streaks of luck calculated to make the mouth water occasionally happen that rival anything imagined by romancers. In one of his books Charles Reade makes a man discover an island and a buried treasure-ship worth a huge fortune. The romantic element here has been quite capped in sober reality by the "find" of a Yankee prospector not so long ago.

While prospecting for guano in the South Pacific, his crew mutinied and cast him adrift on a small inhabited island. It was months before any of his countrymen came that way and rescued him; but the mishap had not been unprofitable. He quitted the island in possession of specimen pieces of what looked like milky glass, but which were actually pure opals, and which the natives as beads because of their iridescent qualities. Nor did he fail to take the latitude and longitude and return for more of the precious stuff. Sheer accident had put him in the way of making a fortune that he would certainly never have acquired by the sale of guano.

Very pleasurable must have been the sensations of a master carpenter, living in the north of London fifteen years ago, whose unexpected leap into affluence the writer personally remembers. The house he occupied was one of the old-fashioned sort, large, quaint, full of passages and garrets, and dating back to the time of Elizabeth. He believed he knew every nook and corner of it, but it was not until a portion of the wall-paper came away that there was found a passage leading underground to a circular well in the garden, which the occupier himself had bricked over. This passage was too narrow to admit a man's body; a boy was sent along it.

He found, half-way along, a skeleton lying across an iron box, the contents of which represented a fortune even when the Government claim had been reckoned with; gold coins, gold crucifixes, gold ornaments of all kinds. The supposition was that a Spanish grandee of the period, creeping with his treasure into the passage in a time of jeopardy, had been stifled there; but, of course, there could be no verification of the surmise. The substantial fact remained that the master carpenter had accidentally stumbled upon wealth, and wealth beyond all ordinary dreams.

One very singular instance of a fortune accidentally acquired was the subject of a leader in one of the daily papers not long back. It appeared that the fortunate man, a vendor of rags and bones, had, ten years previously, fished out of some waste stock an old diary, in the pocket of which were a number of shares in connection with a Canadian timber company, made payable to the holder. The owner was advertised for, but did not appear, and so the finder retained possession. However, as it proved on inquiry that the shares were worth next to nothing, and the timber company was in a moribund condition, he stowed away his "find" and completely forgot the matter.

Ten years later he happened to see an announcement to the starting effect that the "So-and-so" timber company was paying high dividends. He ran for his forgotten shares, and then straight to a premium for years past, and the accumulated dividends alone constituted a snug sum. This he claimed immediately, and, in due course, obtained. What with that and the subsequent sale of his interests in the company, the ex-vendor of unconsidered odds and ends found himself a rich man.

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## HOW ALMANACS ARE MADE.

An Amusing Confession Taken from an English Paper.

The incredulity of the general public with regard to weather predictions which are scientifically made—being based on actual observations over a great extent of country, transmitted by telegraph—and the common credulity as to almanac predictions and those made by charlatans and ignorant persons from the stars or the moon, suggest that, from a mercenary point of view, the "almanac prophet" may be justified in sticking to his "system."

Some idea of what this "system" is may be gathered from the private confession made by a man whose duty it was to prepare the weather prognostication for a certain almanac of wide circulation.

"In a general way," he said, "I always used to consult my wife as to what she thought the weather ought to be at a certain date."

"Sixteenth of March—sixteenth of March," I said to her once; "what shall I put down for that day?"

"Dry and clear," she answered promptly. "That's Aunt Anne's birthday and I always walk over to see her."

"So I put down 'dry and clear'; but knowing the uncertainty of the weather at that time of year, and remembering the proverbial ill luck of Irishmen on their holidays, I put down for the seventeenth of March, 'St. Patrick's Day, look out for rain or snow.'"

The prognosticator always went to London on the first Monday in each month, and he invariably put down good weather for that day. During June, July and August he put in an enormous preponderance of fine weather. The farmers, he declared, ought to have good weather then in order to get in hay or grain.

The farmers who looked over the almanac were delighted with this promise, and bought it in great numbers.

"And in the end," said this sage prognosticator, "I got the weather right as often as anybody else did."

Nevertheless, scientific predictions, made for two or three days in advance, will be preferred by persons of discretion, even if such forecasts do sometimes turn out wrong.

## The Pig was Comfortable.

The late Father Thomas Burke in one of his lectures told the following story:—A peasant in a remote part of Galway was one day standing at the door of his cabin. He did not look particularly well off, poor fellow, and an English tourist passing stopped to speak to him. As he did so he saw the children inside the house playing with a pig. The Englishman was shocked.

"My good fellow," he said, "why have you that pig in the house? It does not seem right."

"Why not, sir?" answered Pat promptly; "why not? Sure an' hasn't the house every accommodation that any reasonable pig would require?"

## The Language of Signs.

A young provincial, newly arrived in Paris, got into a dispute with a Boulevardier who prided himself on his fine manners. The Parisian, wishing to carry off the thing with a high hand, pulled a glove out of his pocket and threw it at the stranger. The latter, astonished, inquired the meaning of the action. When it was explained to him that throwing a glove was equivalent to a slap in the face, the young provincial sat down, gravely drew off one of his boots, and threw it at the back of his opponent.

## Where the Ocean is Deepest.

A little more than thirty miles from the coast of Japan the Pacific Ocean has been found to be more than 4,613 fathoms deep. Some officers who were surveying for a telegraph cable found their wire broke at its depth without reaching the bottom. This is said to be the deepest sounding ever made, and is so deep that the two highest mountains in Japan, placed one over the other, in this abyss would leave the summit of the upper one two-thirds of a mile below the surface of the water.

## How Not to Handle Books.

The authorities among the circulating libraries at Dresden have been conducting a series of experiments to determine if books in general use become a medium for the communication of infection. Soiled leaves were rubbed first with dry fingers and then with wet ones, and the results microscopically examined. No microbes, or few, were found on the dry fingers, but many on the others.

## Wonders of the Telegraph.

By means of improved telegraphic machinery 600 words a minute can be transmitted over a single wire, while a speed of about 400 words a minute can be conveniently and safely used in practical working—a very satisfactory result compared with the moderate rate of 60 or 70 words a minute, which was the average speed in the year 1870.

## After-Dinner Speech.

Master of the house (on his fiftieth birthday) to his guests: "Ladies and gentlemen, this day fifty years ago, when I first saw the light of this world—um, um—I did not for a moment anticipate—er—anticipate that I should see so numerous and—um—so distinguished a company gathered around me."

## Dissipation.

"I don't know what I am going to do about my husband," said the owl, with a sob.

"What's the matter?" asked the sympathetic nightingale.

"His habits are getting to be something dreadful. This is the second time this week that he has been up all day."

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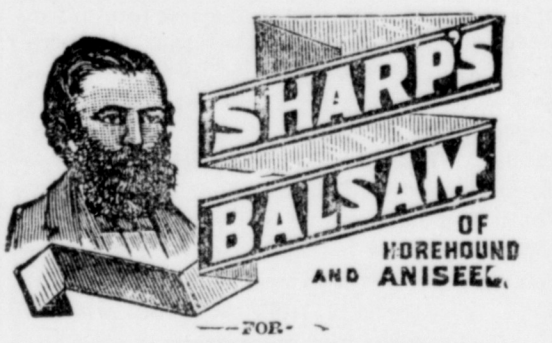
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## AN "IMPLOSION."

This is How Sir Wyville Thompson Describes a Phenomenon.

Everyone knows what an explosion is, but its opposite, an "implosion," is less familiar. At great depths in the sea the conditions are favorable for its production. At twenty-five hundred fathoms the pressure is, roughly speaking, two and a half tons to the square inch—that is to say, several times greater than the pressure exerted by the steam upon the piston of a powerful engine. A beautiful experiment to illustrate the enormous force of this deep-sea pressure was made during the voyage of H. M. S. Challenger. A thick glass tube several inches in length, full of air, was hermetically sealed at both ends. This sealed tube was wrapped in flannel, and placed in one of the wide copper cylinders used to protect deep sea thermometers when they are sent down with the sounding apparatus.

The copper cylinder had holes bored in it, so that the water had free access inside around the glass.

The copper case containing the sealed glass tube was sent down to a depth of two thousand fathoms, and drawn up again. It was found that the cylinder was bulged and bent inward, just as if it had been crumpled inward by being violently squeezed.

The glass tube itself, within its flannel wrapper, was reduced to a fine powder, almost like snow. The glass tube, it would seem, as it slowly descended, held out long against the pressure, but at last suddenly gave way, and was crushed by the violence of the action to a fine powder.

This process, exactly the reverse of an explosion, is termed by Sir Wyville Thompson an "implosion."

## Hens who got Drunk.

Apropos of the total abstinence habits of hens, I am reminded of a trick played by a small boy on some stately old hens, who stepped haughtily around his father's yard, as if they merely allowed the family to live there for their convenience. He soaked some breadcrumbs in whisky and scattered them liberally in the chicken-yard. Now, I never knew a hen who would refuse to eat anything that was thrown to her, from cold roast to a diamond ring. So very soon the bread crumbs had vanished, and in a time the jolliest party of old hens who ever got a jag on were clucking and cawing around tangled-footed beyond the wildest experience of unfeathered bipeds. For, being by nature a little cross eyed in their toes, they stepped on their own feet, and got in their way, and all the while cackled and jeered at each other for being drunk. One old rooster, in particular, was a sight for gods and men. He leaned with a limp tail and uncertain head, in a suggestively familiar attitude, against the gatepost, blinking his stupid little eyes, and trying in a maundering way to crow, with but indifferent success. He wagger the whole lot got up with a headache next morning, and went right off to sign a pledge.

## The Blue Pencil in Turkey.

A paragraph was published in an Arabic journal referring to the celebrated soprano Mme. Adelina Patti, wherein it was stated that she derived by her singing a yearly income of several thousand pounds. The blue pencil was hastily dashed across the lines, the reason adduced being that such news would "disturb the souls of the moral and loyal female subjects of the finest pearl of the age." What this meant the censor alone could tell, unless it be he feared that some of the paragons of morality and loyalty should take it into their heads to emulate the gifted artiste in amassing by singing, or in any other way by which money may be procured. Another curious whim to elude certain letters from the proper names of individuals that may be published in the press. The name of a certain person as I. Sultan once appeared in a paper. The "n" was crossed out, making the name read as I. Sulta. In justification of this act it was said that there was only Sultan in the world; none other must be called by that name. Yet that particular person's father and grandfather were always known among their friends by the surname of Sultan, in the same manner as there are in England many families known by the name of King.

## "Playing Wives."

How closely children observe the life of their elders one may see who watches their games as they play them in the streets of New York.

On the brown stone steps of a Madison avenue residence were two little girls, with their paper dolls. One small paper lady was evidently calling on another, and their owners were carrying on the conversation for them.

"How lovely your new dress is," said the hostess "how kind of your husband to get you such nice clothes."

"Indeed, he is not kind," answered the guest; "I have my own money, and don't ask him to get me anything. Besides I don't speak to him now. I really think we must have a separation."

## The Kaiser and the Cadet.

The Kaiser William cracked a neat little joke the other day during an inspection of the cadets corps in Berlin. On these occasions the Emperor, as he walks down the line, stops to inspect each cadet, who upon that, at a given signal, the latter calls out his own name. This time, as chance would have it, one of the cadets r joined in the name of Kaiser. When his turn came to call out his name, His Majesty turned down with a smile to the officers forming his suite, and said: "A colleague of mine."

## A Gracious Bride.

The Bavarian peasants are in many respects like the Irish. They drink a great deal, are quite witty, and are never so happy as when they are fighting.

A story is told of two Bavarian peasants meeting in the road and holding the following conversation:—

"Were you at the wedding last night?"

"Yes; it was the nicest wedding this year."

"Why, even the bride took a hand in the fight!"

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