SHORTUNNS.

I feel the blue, and shadows in the room
And through the curtains I see lonely one
Who passed there that were sweet to me
While life and love and hope were in their bloom
Through all the mist, through all the drapery
Of gloom,
It seems to wind sweetly,
As if to make me gentle as they be
The coming and my feeling to the tomb.

Oh, Memory, let me grasp the hand which yet
Is warm to mine; let me see the lips which kiss,
Yet can I hear a sudden, and shine eyes or not
The tears I weep are tears of joy divine.
I hope at rest, I have no fear of love,
And death seems sweet to me where then are
one.

—Harper Ephelt Harrison in New York Sun.

THE FATAL CARD.

Years ago the Mississippi river was famous for its floating palaces," as the large steamers plying between New Orleans and the ports above were called. For the railroads have driven all the boats off the river. The former class of steamers were, in many respects, decidedly, but they never ceased to be objects of dread to timid people, for if the swing, which was on that river reduced to a system, did not result in the loss of the boat, there was sure to be one or more encounters between the more lawless section of the travelers, to which quiet people would fly rather than think by the comfort of the steady going people.

The cause of such disturbance was generally a quarrel over the gaming table. The regulations of the boats usually required that all such affairs should be conducted in a saloon provided for that purpose in the "Texas" officer's cabin, situated on the hurricane deck, but the sporting gentlemen were by no means excited to observe this rule, and the gaming was most commonly carried on at the dining table in the main saloon of the steamer, to the great annoyance of two-thirds of those on board.

Many professional gamblers used to make these boats their homes, traveling back and forth with them, floating all who were foolish and verdant enough to fall in their clutches.

One of the most remarkable men of this class was named David Stardivant, a Frenchman, the son of a broken down scion of nobility who had settled in New Orleans before the transfer of Louisiana to the United States. Stardivant had been raised a "gentleman" by his wealthy father, but on coming of age and finding his fortune very well, had taken to the life of a professional gambler, and was a master of his profession.

He was in this field was so great that he was induced to continue it, until at the time of which I write he was one of the most notorious gamblers between St. Louis and New Orleans. He was a man of fine personal appearance and of great physical strength. He was also noted for his personal courage. As a gambler he was most expert and successful. There were dark stories of deeds which he had committed while under the influence of gin and liquor, and it was said by some that he had killed half a dozen men in his lifetime. Yet no one dared to speak these stories openly, for no one dared to bring upon himself the anger of such a man.

He had attached himself to one of the magnificent steamers plying between New Orleans and Vicksburg, and had publicly announced his determination to shoot any man who ventured upon his room of operations. Of course this left him undisputed possession of the field, and he reaped a golden harvest during the one brief year he conducted his operations there.

It was my lot at the time to be compelled to make frequent trips between New Orleans and Vicksburg, being heavily engaged in cotton speculations. I preferred the steamer of which Stardivant had taken possession, inasmuch as it was not only the most comfortable, but also the "Wilford, and time was of the utmost importance to me. It was known that I carried large sums of money, and I was also aquainted but Stardivant should ask me to play.

I had fully made up my mind to refuse him, and if he attempted to draw me into a quarrel to blank him without mercy, as I knew that the only chance for my life lay in getting the advantage of him. Strange to say, he did not make any such proposition to me, and I gave him no chance to do so.

One night we had started out from Vicksburg, and were heading merrily down the river, when Stardivant came up to the group which had gathered around the stove. He had been drinking. All made way for him.

"Well, gentlemen," he said in an unusually tone, "you seem to be terribly dull. Who wants to play for twenty dollars aside?"

No one was to reply. All present seemed to know the man, and no one cared to volunteer to place himself in his clutches.

"Umph!" he exclaimed, with an expression of contempt, "afraid to try your luck with Dan Stardivant, eh? Or may be you want a little coaxing. Some of you must play with me. I can't stand such treatment. Come, let's see who it shall be."

He glanced around the crowd as if to secure his victim. For the first time I noticed the gaze of one of the group fixed steadily upon him. He was a stranger to me and was dressed in a plain suit of homespun, and his face was partially concealed by a broad brimmed sombrero, which was drawn down nearly.

"Are you David Stardivant, the gambler?" he asked in a calm tone without rising.

Stardivant fixed darkly and gave the stranger a long glance.

"Some persons call me so behind my back," he said insolently, "but no one would care to apply that term to me before my face."

"Nevertheless," said the stranger quietly, "I want an answer—yes or no."

"Well, then, I am," said the gambler. "What of it?"

"Simply this," replied the stranger, "I have heard it said that you claim to be the best card player in the southwest. I challenge you to a game of poker."

Stardivant stepped forward a step or two, and threw his hand into his bosom, as if to grasp a weapon.

"Stop," said the stranger. "If you shoot me you will simply prove yourself afraid of me. Take your seat at the table, and I will make my words good."

There was something in the calm, stern manner of the stranger that seemed to render the gambler powerless. He hesitated a moment and then said boldly:

"I never play with a man whose face I cannot see."

"Never mind my face, if you are not afraid of losing you shall see it when I am done with you."

"But how do I know that you have money for such sport?" persisted Stardivant. "You look seedy enough, my fellow."

"Theft," said the stranger, "I have $10,000 there. If you can win it you shall do so."

With an oath Stardivant placed himself at the table and bade his challenger do likewise.

None of us who had listened to this singular dialogue now gathered around the table, expecting to see a scene of more than usual interest. The stranger had not raised his hat brim and none of us had seen his face. Not we all felt from his general air and manner that David Stardivant had at last met his match. It did not take long to show us that the stranger was an unusually good player. For an hour or more the playing went on silence. The chairs were high and the cabins inclosed with care with. Stardivant exerted himself as he had never done before, but in spite of all his efforts he lost steadily. By the expiration of the time indicated above he had lost over $2,000. I noticed the flush upon his face deepen and a strange light come into his eyes. At last, with an exclamation of triumph, he drew toward him the heap of money.

"That was well done," said the stranger. "You are an expert at cheating. But go on; I can beat you whether you play openly or dishonestly."

Stardivant said nothing, but dealt the cards again. The hand was played and Stardivant was about to seize the stakes when the stranger laid down a card and checked him.

The gambler uttered a sharp cry and sat motionless, with his eyes fixed on the card, a worn and faded ace of hearts, with a dark stain across the face. Stardivant's face worked convulsively as he gazed at it, and the spectators gathered more closely around the two, wondering at the strange scene.

"In God's name, who are you?" asked Stardivant, with his eyes still fixed on the card.

"Look at me," said the stranger quietly.

As if powerless to resist, Stardivant raised his eyes to the speaker.

The stranger raised his hat and cut looking at the gambler with eyes which blazed with fury. Stardivant uttered a groan and sank back in his chair, with his face white and rigid. The stranger with one sweep gathered up the money from the table and threw it in his pocket.

"The ace of hearts is an unlucky card for you, David Stardivant," he said coolly, "you played it once when you thought it to your advantage. Now, God help you, for that play is returned."

As he ceased he threw down a pistol which we had not seen, and before we could stop him stood deliberately at the twenty-nine and fired. The gambler fell heavily upon the table a corpse, and the bright blood streamed over it, hiding the fatal card from sight.

"Gentlemen," said the stranger, rising to his feet as we stood paralyzed with horror at the dreadful scene, "that man ruined my wife and tried to murder me. I have been hunting for him for ten years."

He walked slowly up and down the stairway to the lower deck. Just as the steamer hauled at the landing to spring ashore and vanished in the words—O. O. in New York News.

Country Boys Make Good Soldiers.

Within a year past the recruiting that has been going on in many of our New England towns and villages by officers of the regular army detailed for the purpose of gathering volunteers to fill up the ranks of Uncle Sam's forty regiments of infantry, cavalry and artillery. Once recruiting stations were maintained only in big cities like New York and Boston, but the material secured there was not of the best. Secretary Proctor had an idea that the country youth were better qualified, morally, mentally and physically, for a soldier's life than the dregs of our floating urban population, and under his direction recruiting parties, each headed by a commissioned officer, were sent into rural New England, New York and some portions of the west.

The experiment is said to be working admirably so far as the officers of the army is concerned, though the officers do not enjoy the necessity of moving from one town to another, drumming up recruits as a commercial traveler drums up trade. The new system of enlistment and the various minor reforms have had a marked and instantaneous effect upon the character of the army. The soldiers are happier and more contented, and desertions are fewer than they have in—for many years.—Boston Journal.

Some Population Statistics.

In 1850 the states and territories west of the Mississippi river had an aggregate population of 1,726,344, and the country west of the Missouri, excluding Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas and Missouri, had a population of only 192,297; in other words the population of the vast region west of the Missouri in 1850 was not as large as the population of Omaha is today.—Edward Rosewater's Omaha Address.

A Deposit of Cold Lead.

Cashier (to tough looking customer)—Do you wish to make a deposit?

Tough Looking Customer (presenting pistol)—If necessary. Out will do handy.—Texas Pedler's Washington.

Oats as Compared with Wheat.

The Bloomington reports make it appear that, contrary to the popular belief, an average crop of oats takes more fertility from the land than an equivalent yield of wheat. Farmers, as a rule, consider wheat the most exacting of all the grains on the soil and believe that oats may be grown on much less fertile land than wheat. The result, says Henry Stevens in the New York Times, is that one very early finds a really good crop of oats, and the quantity as well as the quality of the grain produced per acre is rarely of any profit to the grower. And yet some growers do secure excellent and most profitable crops of this grain by the best method of culture, based on the requirements of the plant. We read of as sometimes one a yield of seventy-five or eighty bushels to the acre of grain weighing nearly twice the average of the ordinary crops, and there are a good many cases in which oats are really the most paying crop grown on the farm. The reason why this is uncommon is, first, that its character is not understood by most generally known; second, that manure is very rarely given to it, and third, that the procuring of the kinds of seed is commonly neglected.

A GAME WHERE THE WINNER LOST.

He Won His Case, but He Made Up His Mind That There Was No Fun in It.

It makes the man who would rather go to law than go on a good old time hay ride mad enough to lose a cent, but when he meets one, who takes a little damages and then finds that he is out of pocket a five round case, he can give the ordinary man points and discomfit him besides at the flagrant game of baiting the world. One New Yorker got a taste of a legal fine the other day which he thinks he makes him hesitate about using the easy prescription again.

He wanted damages from a man who he declared had injured his property. He wanted all the damages he could get too. He was sure enough to think that the damages ought to be run up to the thousands. Now if he had been contented to take his case into a district court this story would probably never have been written. But so he contended, he wanted to be single, plump, everyday "court house" dollars, but in bonds of 1,000 each, he was bound to take his suit into the court of common pleas. Everything went enthusiastically for him at first. His lawyer proved beyond a doubt that the defendant had consented damage to the plaintiff's property. The judge believed it, the jury believed it, in fact the defendant himself and the defendant's counsel believed it.

If ever there was a clear case of damages it was right there in the common pleas court. And so our plaintiff got a verdict for forty-nine dollars. But it is one thing to get a verdict and another thing to take what goes with it. It happened in the case that if the defendant realized a verdict for less than fifty dollars he was liable for costs. He did not know much about law, and, though he was disappointed at the amount of the damages, he looked triumphantly at the other side. He was delighted to see the calm smile on the face of the defendant's lawyer. But a moment later there was gnashing of teeth when his counsel told him about the costs.

"I have to pay the costs, do I?" he screamed.

"Yes."

"After I have won my case I have to pay costs for the other side?"

"That is the law."

"Well, it's a mighty nice law that makes the winner lose, isn't it? What do you think I want to spend money for law? Do you think after that fellow has spoiled my property I want to pay him for doing it? What do you think I am, anyway—a lousy lawyer, cross eyed, half hearted lawyer? How much are the costs?"

"Three hundred and sixty dollars."

"Three hundred and sixty dollars! I win a case and get damages and then get fifty-five! I can substract the amount of the damage from the costs and make out a check for the balance, can I? Well, I suppose I can as long as I have to. But I want you to understand that the next time I go before a jury I'm going to get a candidate for a lunatic asylum. The next time I have you for a lawyer it will be when I'm the defendant in a case like this and want to lose.

"Do you hear?" he screamed. "When I want to lose I'll have you. I say, so that I can come out ahead of the game. And the next time a man damages my property I'll make him to come in and knock the roof off the house. I'll have him to use my guns for a target, and my bull pups. I'll invite him to play a game of tenpins in my dining room and will use my great grandmother's tombstone for pins, and if he wants to jump through our 400 Japanese screen like a strong ribbon he will do it.

"The next time he'll want me to sue him, so that I can get stuck for costs again. And I'll sue him, yes, I'll sue him! and be mortified so badly that the court house's afternoon nap was disturbed.—New York Tribune.

Bound to Cut a "U."

There was once in dwelling Tennessee a judge well versed in the law, but entirely self educated, who had the same obstacle of orthography to contend with all his days. In early life he had lived in Knoxville, and for a long time he acted upon spelling the name Noxville. His friends at last educated him up to the point of adding the K, so thoroughly, in fact, that he then thought he knew when a few years afterward he removed to Nashville, nothing could prevent him from spelling the name "Knashville."

After a few years' residence there the judge moved again, this time to Morristown. One day he sat down to write his first letter from this place. He scratched his head in perplexity a moment and finally exclaimed: "Well, I'll give it up! How in the world can they spell the name of this place with a 'Z?'"—San Francisco Argonaut.

Needs of a Physician.

The physician needs more mental culture. It would be well for him to cultivate the art of public address, or some department of history, literature or art, or to take up some mechanical occupation, to which he could turn from time to time for refreshment.

He needs more active exercise. It would be well for him either to substitute the bicycle for the carriage. He needs more sleep, ten—only seven hours—and as his sleep is often broken in upon at night, he should form the habit of sleeping at odd moments, even by day.—Dr. Minot.

Newspapers Have Increased.

The number of newspapers published in the whole United States thirty years ago was less than 5,000. Now the number of newspapers published in the region west of the Mississippi aggregates 5,300, of which number 2,126 are published west of the Missouri river.—Edward Rosewater's Omaha Address.

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