

THE STAMP BOX.

You have heard, of course, that a stamp box is a dangerous present to receive. You haven't? But you know, of course, why it is a dangerous piece of property. You don't? Why, yes you do, if you will but think a moment.

You have only to think a moment in order to recall the fact of a certain letter that you once wrote yourself. You have tried and tried to forget that letter. You have said over and over to yourself that what was to be is, that it is all better as it is. You bear the reputation among your acquaintances, and sometimes with yourself, of being very stoical, very much of a philosopher. And yet, somehow, you don't forget that letter.

It was written to somebody that you loved, and yet every syllable of that letter was a dart sent sure and sharp into a human heart, and you meant that it should be so. If you could, you would have made those arrows sharper, you would have aimed them straighter, you would have sent them deeper. Because, when you wrote that letter, you were chafing under a wrong or a slight, of a fancied wrong or slight; your pride, forsooth, was wounded, and you told yourself your wrath was righteous.

You didn't stop to read that letter over when it was finished. No, indeed. You sealed it, you stamped it, you dropped it into the very nearest mail box. And then you went home to await the answer. But those poisoned arrows of yours went too surely into their mark. And you are waiting for that answer yet. Yes, whatever you may seem to others, whatever you may say to yourself, you are waiting yet. Now, aren't you? And aren't these times, when you have thrown aside the mask you wear for men to see, and the other mask you wear for yourself to see, and at those times, those rare times, when you look yourself squarely in the face, when you read your life correctly, wouldn't you give years and years of this life to unwrite that letter?

Suppose, now, that when you wrote that letter, you hadn't had a stamp, that you couldn't have bought or begged or borrowed one—say for twenty-four hours. Do you think that letter would ever have been mailed? And if that letter had never been mailed, why then, wouldn't that wrong or slight, real or fancied, have receded and receded as the days went by, until when you looked back at it, it would have seemed the speck that it really was? And at last when you looked again to find it, wouldn't it have faded away into the invisible and forgettable and forgivable? And then, why then, a certain chapter of your life would have read how differently, and how differently, too, the whole book. Ah, me! Ah, me! I wouldn't give you a stamp box.

Once upon a time there was a girl—not any girl that I know or that you know, of course. She went—this girl did—to the establishment of a certain milliner whose fame had gone out both near and far. With various other girls and various other women of various ages and degrees, she spent there two blissful hours, or three, or four, it may be.

Wonderful to relate, she went out without having paid or promised one cent of her percentage of the price of the fame of the establishment of the milliner. I do not know how it happened, but it did, it really and truly came to pass that that girl got safely out and safely home. But then it all came to pass that wherever she went, wherever she saw, whatever she did, before her mental eyes there was ever present, standing out apart from all its fellow-marvels, a certain marvel in the shop of the famous milliner from which she had so wonderfully escaped.

She became a haunted creature. Look at what she would, that millinery wonder intervened to shut out all other sights; think of what she would, under and over, around and among her other thoughts was the thought of that go where she would, it drew her always back to it. She went to give it a farewell look, and because it was a farewell look, and the thing she coveted was never to be hers, and was to be worn by another and more fortunate woman, her sorrow for losing it was deeper than before. And so that night she wrote an order for it, in an order which she thought would make it hers. And then, because she had a stamp at hand, she mailed the order before she slept, the order with which she signed away her own freedom for a year and a day. In prompt obedience to the order which the stamp had carried all too surely, there came next morning the wonder, and with it its wonder of a price-mark. And the millinery marvel was so much more of a marvel now that the girl who was, of course not any girl that you know or that I know, saw at once that there was nothing among her possessions that could bear comparison with it. And before she could use it she must order gowns and gloves and wraps and many other things worthy to appear with it. And how many a genuine pleasure for herself, how many an engagement for others she had to renounce in the months which followed, and all because of that order which the stamp had carried too surely

ly, she could never bear to think, and I would never dare to tell. If only her stamp box had been empty, just that once.

Once upon another time, centuries and centuries ago, and in another part of the world from any that we have seen, and of another race and kind, there was a woman. And this woman wrote a letter, but because it was before the days of stamps, behold! her stamp box was empty. And because her stamp-box was empty she did not mail her letter at once. And she was a lucky, lucky woman not to have done so, for, let me tell you what it is said that letter would have done if it had been stamped and mailed. Because of one sentence in it, one tiny sentence, which contained the merest innuendo about another woman, that letter, if stamped and mailed and delivered, would have blasted the reputation and the earthly happiness of that other woman. That little innuendo, as most innuendos do began "with the words 'they say,' and it was founded upon the truth, and thus was, of all its kind, the most deadly, for you know—"a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies."

So the writer of that letter was a lucky, lucky woman to have lived before the days of stamps. And she was more lucky still when her good fairy—no, her good angel, her guardian spirit—whispered to her next day to burn that letter, every word, to take the ashes of that serpent-like sentence, beginning with the little words, the dangerous little words, "they say," to bury those ashes deep away in a lonesome spot where foot of man would never tread, where she herself would never go again. And that she heeded the whisper of her ministering angel she is more fortunate than she perhaps will ever know this side of heaven.

There is yet another woman, a young one, and I use the present tense advisedly, for she is living yet, and moving among us daily. She is one of the foolish maidens who thinks herself very wise and very superior, and the tense of that last verb I have used unadvisedly, for I should speak more correctly if I said she thought herself very wise and very superior. She doesn't think so now.

And this young woman, who thought herself so wise and so superior, was one of the foolish maidens, because she kept too wide open the eyes and ears which had been given her to use. And with those too-wide-open eyes of hers she saw some things which were not and which had never been. And with those too-wide-open ears of hers she listened, when she shouldn't, and when she pretended not to, to a certain malicious and confidential whisper or two. And then she gathered together in that wise and superior head of hers the things which she had seen with her too-wide-open eyes, and the malicious and confidential whispers which, if she had not been of the foolish maidens, she would have treated with the scorn they merited. And when she got them all together she—wrote a letter? No, not she. For all the world she would not have written a word. She was far too wise and superior for that. She wrote never a word of what she had seen, of what she had heard, but she took from her hand a ring, and because she had plenty of stamps in her box, she sent that ring posting back to its original owner. And then, why, then, she sat and wept alone, this foolishness of foolish maidens, who, because she lived in the days of stamps, had broken her own heart. And those stamps, those stamps which have so many sins and mistakes to answer for, what did they do? They flew fast and straight to their destination. They carried back the ring to its original owner. And its original owner—what did he do?

What did he do? Why, as it happened, he was a wise man, who had learned to read his fellow-man. And if he could not read so readily a more difficult and uncertain volume, his fellow-woman, he had been taught of a teacher, said to be blind himself, much of one chapter, a certain young woman's heart and mind. And because he did not think it quite worth while to wreck his happiness and hers for a foolish maiden's freak, he reached out for his stamp box. He put the ring back then in its box, and readdressed it, and this is what he wrote for all time by me, who loved you. And you are mine. Nothing can alter that, for you gave yourself to me for all time, because you loved me. And because I love you, and you love me, I restore to you what is yours, and refuse to give up what is mine." And the stamps? The stamps carried the ring and the letter to the foolish maiden who, because she lived in the days of stamps, had broken her own heart—the stamps carried to her the ring and the letter and a lesson in wisdom which she will never forget. And you may safely give that man a stamp box. He will do to trust with stamps.

VACCINATION IN JAPAN.

In Japan vaccination is compulsory, and the Government makes its own lymph, and issues it free of charge. Revaccination at stated periods is also rigidly enforced. Only calf lymph is used.

VIENNA POLICE.

A policeman in Vienna must be able to swim, to row a boat and to understand telegraphy.

A SHREWD DOCTOR.

Ah, said the man who is sometimes morose and visionary, "If I only had the wings of an eagle and the heart of a lion."

Another touch of dyspepsia murmured the family physician, in tones of sympathy. My dear fellow, what you ought to wish for is the stomach of a goat.

THE END OF THE WORLD.

IT HAS BEEN PREDICTED TIME AND AGAIN BUT IN VAIN.

Story From Russia of the Peasants Expecting Gabriel's Trumpet Many Times Repeated in History—Some of the Reasons for the Prediction.

It was bound to come. Not a quarter of a century passes that some part of some country is not affected by the wild rumor that the end of the world is near at hand, and for this reason there is little cause for surprise at the news that a rumor of this kind is at present causing a panic among the uneducated classes in southern Russia. At the city of Kharkov, it is said, the dread of the impending catastrophe is especially great, the result being that workmen are leaving the city in large numbers, wishing to spend what they believe will be their last days at their village homes, and the factory owners have asked the police to stop the emigration on the ground that otherwise their business will be ruined.

Now, senseless as this panic may seem, there is some cause for it, though this cause will undoubtedly appear altogether insufficient to intelligent persons. And this cause is the appearance at the close of this year of several planets in a single sign of the Zodiac. Not for centuries has there been such a planetary combination as this, and it is no wonder that for the last few years star readers and other soothsayers have been drawing attention to it, and have been predicting more or less universal ill luck as a consequence. Indian astrologers maintain that their country is bound to suffer some unparalleled disasters within the next six months, and certain French and English prophets claim that the United States will also surely be scourged in some manner during the same time, apparently because the planets, when clustered together in Sagittarius, will at the same time be opposed by Neptune in Gemini, and according to all the text books Gemini is the sign which rules the United States.

JEAN STOFFLER'S BLUNDER.

Now, it is worth noting that there was a similar panic nearly four hundred years ago and for precisely the same reason. In 1521 Jean Stoffler, a German, terrified Europe by predicting a universal deluge in 1524 "owing to the conjunction of several planets in a watery sign"—the watery signs are Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces. At his ominous words thousands fled to the mountains and others took refuge in boats. Awinol, a doctor of law and Canon of Toulouse, even built a sort of ark on four pillars as a haven of refuge. There was no need of such excitement. No flood came. On the contrary, the season was even calmer and drier than usual. Stoffler had, indeed, made a serious blunder, and one for which many of his fellow astrologers, including Cardan, never pardoned him.

Stoffler, however, is only one in a long list of prophets whose predictions in regard to the end of the world have proved utterly false. As far back as the year 1000 many communities in Europe were driven half distracted by rumors that the day of judgment was close at hand, and again in 1186 whole cities were paralyzed with fright for the same reason. Now and again during the latter part of the Middle Ages the same extraordinary phenomenon was witnessed, though in a lesser degree, and ever since the modern revival of occultism there have not been wanting erratic prophets of the Jean Stoffler type.

A few years ago a Mr. Bixter created a sensation in England by his prediction that the world would certainly

COME TO AN END IN 1887.

Thousands believed in him, and great was their surprise when they discovered that he was mistaken. Yet such is the credulity of human nature unshaken, and no matter what year he selected as the final one of the world's existence, they accepted his prediction as gospel truth.

Equally bold, though doubtless not as popular as Bixter, is the Abbe Dupin, cure of the village of Dion in France, and author of a book with the following extraordinary title:—"The grand coup or universal cataclysm will ravage the world between the 19th and 21st of September, 1896, according to the Scriptures. The prophecies of the Old and New Testaments compare with those of the Fathers and with the secrets of La Salette, in which is foretold the great war which will destroy nine-tenths of the human race, the coming of Antichrist and his reign, after which the Church will triumph over her enemies and the reign of Christ begin on earth." The author fixed September, 1896, as the time when the great "coup," as he called it, would take place; but he added that, if it did not take place then, it would certainly occur before the close of 1899, and, lest some of his readers may fancy him to be the irresponsible victim of an unbridled imagination, he takes care to point out that his work has been issued with the sanction of the Church authorities, a statement which many are inclined to accept cum grano salis, as it is well known that Rome does not encourage her priests to pose as prophets.

The book, of which it is extremely difficult to obtain a copy, is divided into two parts. In the first the author predicts the devastation of the world by wars, earthquakes and plagues, the birth of Antichrist, whose mother, he says, is already here, and

A TERRIBLE CATAclySM.

which will leave few human beings alive; and in the second he sets before us the elaborate calculations by means of which he had been enabled to make his wonderful predictions. He also dwells at length on certain coincidences, which are certainly curious but which nevertheless are not likely to convince sensible people that the end of the world is near at hand.

The appearance of comets has frequently given rise to similar predictions. This was the case when the famous comet of 1680 appeared. Whiston ascribed the deluge to its former appearance, and such an excitement did it cause among all classes of the people that Bayle wrote a treatise to prove the absurdity of belief founded on these portents. Mme. de LeVigne, writing at the same time, said:

"We have a comet of enormous size; its tail is the most beautiful object conceivable. Every person of note is alarmed and believes that Heaven, interested in their fate, sends them a warning in this comet. They say that the courtiers of Cardinal Mazarin, who is despaired of by his physicians, believe this prodigy is in honor of his passing away, and tell him of the terror with which it has inspired them. He had the sense to laugh at them and to reply facetiously that the comet did him too much honor."

WHAT FLAMMARION SAYS.

M. Camille Flammarion, the distinguished French astronomer, says on the same subject:—"In this century predictions concerning the end of the world have several times been associated with comets. It was announced that the comet of B. e. a. for example, would intersect the world's orbit on October 29, 1832, which it did as predicted. There was great excitement. Once more the end of things was declared at hand. Humanity was threatened. What was going to happen? The orbit—that is to say, the path of the earth—had been confounded with the earth itself. The latter was not to reach that point of its orbit traversed by the comet until November 30, more than a month after the comet's passage, and the latter was at no time to be within 20,000,000 leagues of us. Once more we got off with a good fight."

In his entertaining book "La Fin du Monde" M. Flammarion gives a graphic description of a collision between the earth and a comet which is to take place some time in the twenty-fifth century. "These two heavenly bodies, the earth and the comet," he writes, "will meet like two trains rushing headlong upon each other with resistless momentum, as if impelled to mutual destruction by an insatiable rage. But in the present instance, the velocity of shock will be 865 times greater than that of two express trains having each a speed of 100 kilometres per hour."

PROFESSOR FALB'S PROPHECY.

The most extraordinary prediction in regard to the end of the world that has been made in recent years comes from Professor Falb, the eminent Austrian meteorologist. According to him a comet will strike the earth on November 13, 1899, and universal chaos and dissolution will be the inevitable result. To this bold statement equally eminent scientists reply that the chance of the earth being destroyed by a comet is only about one in fifteen millions. They admit, that the night of November 13, 1899, will be remarkable for the reason that the heavens will then be ablaze with a magnificent shower of stars, but they point out that a similar display of celestial fireworks regularly occurs every thirty-three years, and there is no reason for supposing that the spectacle in 1899 will be more glorious or more ominous than it was in 1833 and 1866.

OPALS BRING LUCK.

The opal is no longer considered of evil omen by those who are the best informed. It has become popular to believe that instead of ill luck the opal carries with it the best of luck and happiness in its highest form. Indeed, it is now considered the token of mutual love, bruning brightly in all the colors of the rainbow. It is the gift of lover to sweetheart, the symbol of an eternal devotion, and of so devoted, a character as to show itself in constant and fiery flashes of beautiful color.

To emphasize this romantic idea the opal is now cut in the form of a heart, and the sentiment of a heart on fire with love is one which appeals to all lovers. This heart, when small enough, is set in a ring, but Asturian opals have recently been imported of sufficient size to permit of their being used in a simple gold frame as a pendant for the lorgnette chain. These opal hearts are also used for the centers of brooches.

A WONDERFUL DRESS.

Princess Czartoryski has had a wonderful dress made in Paris, on which her coat-of-arms is produced in jewels on a white satin ground. For this purpose the stones had to be pierced, and, though their value was deteriorated, the dress as it stands is valued at \$75,000.

NOT VERY CONSOLING.

Smith—I noticed you didn't speak to Brown when you passed him this morning. What's the trouble?
Jones—He insulted me yesterday—called me an old fool.
Smith—Well, you must remember that you're not as young as you used to be.

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

A Few Paragraphs Which Will Be Found Well Worth Reading.

A cake of ice dropped from a wagon upon the foot of a three-year-old girl in Boston and the foot had to be amputated. Carelessness by an employe of the Boston Ice Company, it is said, caused the accident. The parents of the child brought suit and recovered a verdict of \$10,000.

A British medical paper gravely states that mosquitoes may be kept alive two years by tenderly feeding them with sherry and sugar. But who wants to prolong the existence of mosquitoes? Better give the sherry and sugar to tramps and remorselessly squash the insects.

A bedbug thrives best on a blood diet, but it can live long on air. George O. Smith, a Brooklyn entomologist, confined one in a tin box, where it was forgotten for six months. When he opened the box the bug seemed dried up and lifeless; but when he put it on the back of his hand it at once began to draw blood.

Salted whale meat is considered delicacy by the Japanese. The whale are caught off the coast of Corea, the flesh and blubber are cut up and salted, and sent to Japan for food.

Two babies were in a child's carriage near a railroad track in Rockford, Ill. A fierce wind arose and whirled the carriage onto the track before a passing train, and the babies were killed.

By collusion with expressmen and keepers, Thomas S. Clark, who is serving a five-year sentence in Trenton, N. J., for bank robbery, has been making lots of money by selling canned goods, fruits, liquors and various articles to his fellow convicts. An acquaintance betrayed him. Were it not for the friend's treachery, the prison official says, he might soon be running an independent store within the prison walls.

BRIDE DRESSER BY PROFESSION.

Many unique ideas have been adopted by both men and women to earn a living, but among the oddest occupations followed is that of a professional bride dresser. This idea originated with a western woman, who, during the busy season, is kept busy.

Upon reading carefully the society pages of the newspapers, she learns of the engagements in town and then calls on the bride-to-be. She explains her business, and if engaged she calls on the bride in the morning of the wedding and first investigates the wedding outfit and sees that everything is as it should be. She insists on the bride's remaining quietly in bed until 10 o'clock, the wedding not being until afternoon. About noon she tries on the wedding dress, gloves and slippers. Some alterations, only a few stitches, being necessary, she takes them. Next she turns her attention to packing the trunks, and in less than two hours the task is accomplished, and a little book, containing a complete inventory is put in the bride's travelling bag. This inventory gives not only the list of articles, but tells exactly where they could be found. By this time the bride has finished her luncheon, and is persuaded to take a nap and remain in bed until called.

At 3:30 o'clock a tepid bath is prepared; the bride awakened, and while she is taking it, they straighten up the room and lay out the bridal costume. The dressing of the bride is accomplished without the slightest hurry and in ample time.

Speaking of her occupation, the woman recently said:—"Of course, a well-trained, competent maid could give her mistress much assistance on such an occasion, but my customers as a rule are not the very wealthy girls who can afford to keep such an attendant."

"While they pay me well for my services, they do not feel that they can afford to keep expensive servants. Of course, I am compelled to keep up with the latest styles, and for that purpose I spent two months in Paris last summer. August and September are the poorest months in the year for weddings, while October, February and June are about the most popular. Often during these months I have as many as two brides a day to dress, several times I could have had as many as four, but was obliged to refuse many engagements for want of time."

A DEFICIENCY.

France is the home of modern art, said the young man.

Well, answered the blunt citizen, who had been reading of the Dreyfus case, maybe they can paint artistically and sing artistically and dance artistically. But I'm blest if they can lie artistically.

DISTANT REMORSE.

When Henry goes away every year he always writes me the same old thing.

What's that?
He says it is the last time he ever intends to take a trip without me.

SUSPICIOUS CORDIALITY.

Housekeeper—Poor fellow! You want something to eat. How would a chop suit you?
Dusty Rhodes, suspiciously—Mutton or woodshed, lady?

HIS DIFFICULT POSITION.

Jones is a highly successful man, isn't he?
Oh, I don't know; he makes so much money that people expect him to keep his debts paid up.

HINTS FOR THE FARMER

THE MILKMAN'S BEST AERATOR.

For a long time it has been generally supposed that milk while still from the cow's udder was less susceptible to odors than after it had been cooled, but Dr. H. L. Russell, the bacteriologist, has shown this to be a mistake and that warm milk actually takes on more odor than does cooled similar conditions. Writes Dr. W. Moessman. This is an important discovery, and throws much light on the proper handling of milk.

Clean milking, by clean hands as pure a stable atmosphere as possible, must be supplemented by a thorough cooling of the milk. Cooling at once lessens the odor of the milk to take up odors, the process of fermentation, well stirred during the cooling, cream is kept from rising to the surface and will afterward more remain mixed with the milk being distributed from the can. These are valuable considerations a milkman who desires to give his customers a good service.

For us the simplest and best to accomplish all of these good things is to have a tank of ice water in near or adjoining the milking. As fast as the pails are filled, immediately to the tank and pour the milk into tin cans, which are sealed in the ice water. Have an aerator in the can while being filled, the simplest and best form for this purpose is an old-fashioned churn, which makes the dasher of a piece six or seven inches in diameter, and firmly on to the end of the handle, which had better be galvanized and have a loop in the end to slip up by. Two or three plunges will implement in a can of milk, which is a very effective in agitating, and consequently in cooling the milk.

We much prefer this simple, effective method to any of the elaborate and expensive ones, as our experience that milk so will keep longer than as the milk is cooled in the atmosphere in a tin or a thin sheet, in neither case are any germs removed, reasonably certain that every very favorable conditions, added to the milk. Milk or a fluid will cool much more readily brought in close contact with than in air, even though the water is especially true of milk in aerator or glass jars. If one must aerator, he should choose one in which water is run for cooling.

CORN AND OATS BEST FEED.

If the sheep are to be fed the winter, begin by giving light grain ration while the still good and increase it as gets poorer, so the sheep will right along, says Mr. Jesse. Then, after the grass season give them a dry, well-ventilated barn, which is not subject to drafts. You need not expect to do well if they must sleep in a four-m l n g building. Another I consider essential is a draft-free lot, protected from the cold as much as possible. Sheep can't stand having their feet and I like to let them have access to good water during the mid-day.

Of the common grains grown on farm I have had the best success with corn and oats—about two-thirds and one-third oats. Sheep don't mind with their grain ration I consider it too expensive used in giving a good flock of finish. Clover certainly is the best hay that is grown in this country if it is not mixed with other would rather have an occasional of some other kind. Besides I like to give them one feed of cut fodder. The fodder can be the grain boxes if they are not enough for it. Then if I feed three feeds of grain, I feed feed of it on top of the fodder.

I like to have my sheep and regularly, at least two times for the grain and two for the hay, or three of hay of fodder would do very well I believe as much depends on the and faithfulness of the feeders rations given. Sheep will ly one-fourth more grain on a frothy day than they will on a warm one. So to feed they care for and still have a fresh for the next feed, only experience but a few business. Do not feed out if they will keep their feet and will give them a fair chance.

POULTRY PROFIT.

Mr. Hunter says that it is a constant source of surprise to so many beginners in poultry to think eggs alone the way to profit. Why cannot they stand that with "meat" added salable products they have increased their sales? Eggs right so far as they go, but and meat we have a larger and better profit.