BESIDE A LITTLE GRAVE.

"Call no one happy till he dies," the old
Athenian saying has the stamp of truth;
And oh! how many a bright and glowing
youth,
Lit with the morning's sunshine and its gold,
As years swept on has darkened with the mold
Of vice and bitterness and sin-brought care!
How many a fond and tearful mother's prayer
Had been muttered if she could have told
His future life whom she sought God to spare!
Nay, rather she had prayed he should lie cold
In all the purity of childhood drest;
And standing o'er my first-born's little grave
I can but humbly murmur God knew best.
Stainless He took the precious flower He gave.
—*Good Words.*

A LEGEND OF HARVEST.

So long ago that history pays
No heed nor record of how long,
Back in the lovely dreamy days,
The days of story and of song,

Before the world had crowded grown,
While wrong on earth was hard to find,
And half the earth had never known
The forms and faces of mankind,

When fat as now the years would keep
Their terms of snows and suns and showers,
It chanced that Summer dropt asleep,
One morning, in a field of flowers.

And while the warm weeks came and fled,
In all their wonder wealth of charm,
She slept, with bounteous golden head
Laid softly on her weary arm.

She did not hear the waving trees,
The warbling brook she did not hear,
Nor yet the velvet-coated bees
That boomed about her rosy ear.

In many a yellow breezy mass,
The rich wheat ripened far away,
And glittering on the fragrant grass,
Her silver sickly lily lay.

But then at last, one nootide hour,
A gorgeous moth, while hovering by,
Mistook her sweet mouth for a flower,
And summer waked with startled cry.

She rose, in anxious wonder, now,
To gaze upon the ripened wheat,
And saw its plenteous tassels bow
Dead-ripe below the sultry heat.

Half crazed, she wandered East and West
Amid the peaceful spacious clime,
Until at length with panting breast,
She stood before old Father Time.

With tears of shame she told him all,
While pointing to the wheat unmown,
And said, "What power shall made it fall
Ere Autumn's bitter winds have blown?"

Then Father Time, with laughter gay,
Bowed all his frame, and crooked his knees,
And tossed his white beard like the spray
That crowns the crests of wintry seas.

"Oh, daughter, cheer your heart!" he cried;
"The wheat shall fall ere falls the night.
We two shall mow it, side by side,
And reap it in the stars' pale light!"

So Summer cleared her brow of gloom,
And forth with Father Time she went,
And, haggard Age by Youth in bloom,
Above the tawny wheat they bent.

Ere fall of night the harvest fell;
But since that season, fair and blithe,
As ancient annals love to tell,
Old Father Time has borne a scythe!
—*Edgar Fawcett, in St. Nicholas for November.*

THE CAPTAIN'S WIFE.

A Faithful Narrative from the Life of Mr. Doldrum.

"No sir, it ain't no uncommon thing," said Mr. Doldrum, "for a whaling skipper to take his wife off on a four or five years' voyage; and some of them right whalers, who poke their figure-heads as near the North Pole as they can without touching it, stay away as long as seven years.

"Just think of it, I knew a skipper once who got married two weeks before he got orders to sail, and his wife couldn't go, because she was so galled and frightened of salt water. I tell you there was weeping and wailing on board the old Osprey before she cast off; and when she got back, four years later, that skipper retired to private life."

"His wife must have suffered a great deal during his absence," replied I.

"Of course she did, but then she was true blue and full of grit; in fact, she was born within toss of a biscuit from Howland's wharf in New Bedford, and she learned the smell of oil when she was a baby.

"But that ain't the woman I was going to tell you about. Heaven rest her soul, she's dead now—though if ever there was an angel in petticoats, she was one. I always remember poor Joe in Bleak House, when I think of her. 'She was mighty good to me, she was.'"

"I should really like to hear about her, Mr. Doldrum."

"That's her picture," said he, taking out a photograph well worn by constant carrying in his pocket.

"It's all I've got to remember her by, except the memory of her which goes out only when I shuffle off my coil and douse the glim.

"You see I had just signed ship's articles as Second Mate for four years on the barque George and Susan; made two voyages before with the same skipper. As I was leaving the owner's office I met the Captain coming up the gangway with a woman holding on to his arm.

"'Mr. Doldrum, let me introduce you to my wife. You will be shipmates together and might as well know each other beforehand.'

"I doffed my head gear when she held out her hand and gave me a regular sailor's grip.

"I kinder saw that she took a liking to me, and that made me feel easy, for it won't do to have a woman down on you board a ship, and that woman the skipper's wife.

"She asked me lots of questions: how many voyages I had made, and if I had saved any money? I finally hauled off and luffed up till I reached an outfitter's shop, where I overhauled their slop chest and picked out what duds I needed for the voyage, stowed 'm away in my donkey, or chest, as you landsmen call it, and had it sent down to the vessel.

"In three or four days we had the customary good wishes and Chaplain's prayers for good luck and safe return, cast off moorings, and ere long we were standing mast-head off the Western Islands.

"We raised a school one morning, and after a hard day's work, caught three which stowed down 98 barrels. They were all cow-whales, and did not try out only a little more than 30 barrels each. But it was good to start on, and would make ballast, doubling the Cape.

"Off the Horn we had a lively time of it; got into a fog and nearly run ashore on a sheer coast before we knew what was the matter.

"The skipper's wife was on deck most of the time, and though that was her first voyage, her quick ear caught the sound of breakers on our lee some ten minutes ere we heard 'em.

"I tell you, we had to tack and tack to get away from those rocks; a little longer and we would have all gone to Davy Jones in 600 fathoms of water.

"We kinder looked up to the skipper's wife after that, for if it had not been for her I would not be telling you about her. After we rounded the Cape, the Old Man squared away for the Marquesas Islands, where we had a run ashore, and brought off two or three boat-loads of oranges, bananas and cocoanuts, to keep away the scurvy. Somehow or other the atmosphere did not agree with me, and 'fore I knew it I was down in my bunk with a scorching fever. The Captain got out his big book, unlocked the medicine chest, and was going to prescribe a big dose of Epsom salts—they always give 'em board of ship. If a man falls from the mast-head, it's salts. If he has the toothache, same medicine. But the skipper's wife took me in tow and stopped that nonsense pretty quick. Her father was a land doctor and she had picked up something better for fevers than salts. She dived into the medicine-chest and brought out number seven; that's the only name I knew it by; gave me some of seven; opened a can of mustard, got a tub of hot water from the cook's galley, and made me take a mustard bath, until you could wring water enough out of the sheets I had around me to float a whale-boat. She didn't stop there, however, but toasted and tea'd me just like a mother. The Captain hadn't a word to say, but just let her have things her own way; and what with doctoring, nursing and watching me o' nights, she fetched me through until I was entered on the log-book cured—but we had to get number seven filled up when we got into Valparaiso.

"The cabin-boy he also had a touch of something—might have been homesickness much as any thing—but she took him in tow and in four or five days set him right side up with care.

"We had been out going on nigh to three years, with 700 barrels in the hold and 500 that we had sent home by the Hector, when I noticed that the skipper wore a troubled look. Besides, his wife didn't come on deck so often. One evening, just as the dog-watch was on, he comes up to me, and says, 'Ben'—he always called me Ben when none of the men were around—'Ben,' says he, 'my wife's sick.'

"'What's the matter with her, Captain?' says I.

"'Why, blame it, man'—that's the only cuss word he ever used—'can't you guess what's the matter? And here we are 400 miles away from main land.'

"'Don't get low-spirited, Captain,' says I; 'perhaps we can run in before she needs a doctor.'

"'No, we can't; and I'm a fool," says he.

"'Whatever you do, don't finger once that big book and medicine-chest.' I said; for I had Epsom salts in my mind, do you see?

"'No, I won't, Ben; but what is to be done?'

"'Well, we'll square away, any how, and do the best we can.'

"But it was no use: she grew worse. The George and Susan pitched and rolled so heavily that it made her suffer all the more. We broke two casks of oil and lashed them over the rail, knocked out the bungs and let the oil adrift. It smoothed down the water a little, but it did not last long. If the skipper thought it would have done any good he would have emptied every cask on board to save his wife.

"The next night, while I was on watch, the old man came bouncing out of his cabin. 'Ben, for heaven's sake, come down! Rouse out Mr. Kedge to stand your watch,' he sung out.

"I roused out the Third Mate and followed the Captain. When I reached the cabin I could hear his poor wife crying, and I tell you it went all over me.

"'Captain,' says I, 'my good mother has told me some things that might be of service, and I'll give it to you straight as I can.' So I told him how to proceed, bade him God speed, and he went in, while I stood sentry at the scuttle.

"The crew by this time had got wind that something was up, seeing as Mr. Kedge had changed places with me, and they mustered aft, anxiously waiting to hear the good or bad news.

"Pretty soon a little low, wailing cry came drifting up the cabin gangway, and then we knew that another hand had been added to our crew.

"The men noiselessly went for'ard whispering among themselves, for they all liked the skipper's wife and remembered the extra socks and tobacco she brought out of the cabin, which were not put down again 'em on the bill book. But perhaps you don't want to hear any more."

"Oh, yes, go on; let me hear the whole of it. I'm all ears."

"Well, the baby lived, and the mother died just one hundred and eighty miles from Valdivia, Chili, by the quadrant. What the mother did for me I did my best to do for the baby. I got out two or three cans of condensed milk, mixed some in warm water and fed it as carefully as if I were feeding a humming-bird. When we ran into Valdivia, the broken-hearted skipper got a couple of Portuguese doctors to embalm the body of his wife, after which he had it put into a metallic case and placed in his cabin, so he could have her near him even in death."

"What about the baby?"

"Oh, she got along, and weathered the remainder of the voyage. Took her condensed milk regular and clung to me just as if she was my own.

"I saw her a few weeks ago, but she ain't much of a baby now. I went down to Nantucket, where the old man lives—he don't go to sea any more; has enough to live on and to spare.

"When I called at the house I saw a young man about your age, who seemed to be paying his attentions around that domicile. But that didn't hinder her from throwing her arms around my neck, if she is 16 years of age.

"No, sir; if I was a young man myself I think my chances would be as good as the next one, for she don't forget old Ben and the many times he has carried her in his arms. Only a cable's length from the house, is her mother's grave, and it looks as fresh, green and blooming—all done by her hands—as a regular garden. I hope whoever marries the baby, as I took care of, will think as much of her as I do. God bless her for the sake of her mother."

Mr. Doldrum wiped his sleeve across his eyes as if the sun troubled them, and said he must be moving on.—*Boston Courier.*

Swearing a Chinese Witness.

The San Francisco *Post* contains the following report of a curious Chinese trial:

The Ah Pak Chinese habeas corpus case, on application to release Sing Fung, a young China woman, from the clutches of a hag known as Si Que, in whose custody she was alleged to be, was resumed in the County Court this morning. The announcement made several days ago, that the ceremony of swearing the witnesses would be performed in the Chinese fashion, attracted quite a crowd to the Court. P. Cummings appeared for the respondent, and W. H. Chambelain for the petitioner. Mr. Cummings argued at length against the barbarous method of swearing witnesses proposed by counsel, and quoted extensively from "Chambers's Encyclopedia" to show that almost every nation, modern and ancient, invariably insisted upon people of other nationalities conforming to their mode of administering oaths. Although frequently requested to confine himself to the text, the counsel could not be got to do it. Finally the Judge said: "Mr. Clerk, enter a fine of $30 against the counsel for contempt of Court." Mr. Cummings closed his encyclopedia and sat down without uttering a word. Judge Wright then directed Counselor Chamberlain to bring on his oath or something to that effect, and in response the attorney made a dive for the rear of the court room, and in a moment returned with a bucket, a huge butcher knife and a sack made of matting, from which emanated a decidedly lively cackling.

"Your Honor," said Mr. Chamberlain, "we don't want to spatter the blood around. How'll we prevent that?"

"I don't know," responded the Court, drawing away out of range.

A lively colloquy ensued between the Chinese interpreter, the witness, and the Chinaman, who insisted upon being sworn in the Oriental fashion. What it was all about was wholly incomprehensible to the Court and the other barbarians present, but the manner of holding the pullet about to be sacrificed in the interests of truth appeared to have something to do with it. The woman, who at first did not want to be sworn in the genuine heathen style at all, finally concluded to decapitate the rooster, provided one of the Chinamen held it. This modification of the orthodox method, which requires the person affirming to touch the chicken before the decapitation, was accepted, and after some further discussion and the further concession that the chicken's neck should be held against the rim of the bucket, the woman was sworn, the clerk propounding the following oath, which was translated by the interpreter:

"You do solemnly swear that the evidence you will give in the issue now pending shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and, if I tell a lie, may my life be as this chicken."

The response was a stroke of the knife, which only partially severed the chicken's head, whereupon the woman dropped the knife. The crowd of Chinamen earnestly gesticulated and protested that the oath wasn't properly administered, and the woman was compelled to repeat the stroke, the second time performing the decapitation. The Chinaman who held the chicken rammed it into a bucket, and held it there until its struggle had ceased. The woman then mounted the stand, but a skillful fire of cross-questions failed to elicit any thing more than at the previous examination. She knew nothing of the whereabouts of Sing Fung, the missing maiden. Some of the questions she pretended not to understand, and in such cases she invariably broke out with, "Me no fool! Me take him Melica man's swearee; me cuttee chickee's head off; me tell him lie, me go down stairs, sabbe." The interpreter in the case was accused by the indignant Mr. Cummings of being a sleuth hound. As he did not give satisfaction, it was decided to postpone the case until October 14.

—A critic, in noticing a discourse on "The Sayings and Doings of Great Men," remarks: "It is sad to observe how much they said and how little they did."

Picturesque Features of Kansas Farming.

Captain Henry King of Tokeka has in *Scribner's Monthly* for November a graphic sketch of some length under the above caption. The introductory is as follows:

There is no more enticing scene than the Kansas prairies in spring. The eye wanders out over gracefully swerving and unmonotonous lines to what seems the very limit of things; you dare not conjecture where the earth ends and the sky begins. If the grass were a bit more forward, and the atmosphere had only a hint of fog in it, you might liken the vision to a sea; and then those bluish curves would be waves, and that square of newly plowed furrows a shoal of fish, and yonder tall, oblique sycamore a snapped and floating spar, and the one little white house away off there by itself the vague sail of some approaching ship. But the grass is too short, and the air too crisp and dry, for such a simile. Besides, we know this slope of deeper green on our right is early wheat, just high enough for the slight breeze to stir it prettily, as it might stir a baby's hair; and here on our left is a quivering flame of peach-blossoms. There are laughing boys and girls ahead of us, too, on their way to school; and directly we shall be overtaking frequent wagons loaded with lumber, shingles and window-sash; and then will come the elementary in farm-making, and the latest of the arriving settlers. And so the picture goes on, repeating itself for 200 miles or more—and beyond that yet is the surveyor, with his spying and beckoning compass.

The farms are large, you will observe, and growing larger, as if they had caught something of the nature of those infinite skies; and at every turn rises that pervasive and undefinable odor of fresh-cut sod. What miles and miles of black overlapping lines, across the emerald prairie where the plows are going! But there are liberal intervals not yet "filed upon" or "opened up," as they name it out here, and the farmers have a keen eye for convenient "ranges" upon which their stock may graze, and where plenty of hay may be secured in its season at the mere cost of reaping and stacking; it has been asserted that the Kansan would not care to go to heaven unless he could be guaranteed an ample range to the west of it. Indeed, it is only by resorting to figures that one can reach a comprehension of the aggregate extent of these long, narrow, black strips of "prairie-breaking." Not until you take your pencil and run over the footings of the Assessors' returns, and find that in the last year almost a million acres were added to the cultivated area of the State, do you begin to realize what the busy plows are accomplishing; and when you come to supplement this with the fact that during the same period, fully a hundred thousand people came to Kansas to make new farms and homes, you will understand how numerous, after all, must be the buildings which look so sparse to you, and so venturesome.

These buildings, by the way, are sharply characteristic, not to say anomalous—for, really, they seem to belong to a condition of things which it is difficult to reconcile with so much of grass, and wild larks' songs, and clear blue sky. The typical log-cabin of early days on the Wabash and Sangamon is seldom to be seen here, and it is used, when you do see it, as a stable or a cow-shed; the man who made it—he of the butternut garb and the famished aspect—left Kansas when the "keers" came, and went "back to his wife's folks" east of the Mississippi. The dug-out is here, it is true; but the dug-out is an indigenous affair, and an improvement upon the ancient log contrivance in this, that it is only a make-shift, and rapidly gives way to something better. And then it is modest, also (as the swaggering old log-cabin with its clay "chinking" and its obese and ridiculous outside "chimbly" never was), and has a pleasant effect of shying at your approach; for it is simply an opening made into a hill-side or convenient slope, you must know, roofed over with turf several layers thick on a frame-work of poles, and having a front improvised from a few chance boards and scantlings and half a dozen panes of glass. Usually, canvas or brown sheeting (a wagon-cover, perhaps) is nailed to the poles inside for a ceiling, and the walls are rendered dry and smooth with whitewash; the floor is the mere hard earth, in most cases carpeted with gunny-bags or an odd matting of braided corn-husks. They are said to be very comfortable habitations, cool in summer and warm in winter: and often these rude interiors are arranged with ingenious and admirable taste. Sometimes, too, the fronts are set off with canny little porches, to which flowering vines are trained. I once saw one that was a mass of morning glories, through which the sunlight leisurely sought the open door and changed the gunny carpet to cloth of gold—while out upon the sod roof, a child in scant calico frock, and bare-footed, stood gazing with wide eyes at a great flapping hawk overhead.

However, most of the farm dwellings for a hundred miles or farther outward are patterned after the country houses of the better styles in the older States, the predominant type being the snug white frame with green window-shutters and a gracious touch of portico. The Kansans have a phenomenal genius for homes. They reverse the old order of pioneering, and make the home the foundation, instead of the outcome, of their struggle with nature; domestic comfort and convenience are in their plan the means, and not merely the end, of life. Hence, neat and substantial houses are generally built to start with, and judging Kansas by the usual test of farm residences, you would take her to be fifty years old at least, when in truth this test of age and development here contradicts itself; often the household gods are attractively enshrined in advance of the first of the plowing.

These people, you will readily perceive, are none of your plodding, thick-witted kind, "suckled in a creed outworn." They are a new race, with a new philosophy. Enter one of their homes, and you will find a parlor with three-ply carpet on the floor, lace curtains at the windows, pictures on the walls, a shelf of books, and, not unlikely, a piano in the corner. And they will talk to you—the farmer and his wife—about Emerson and Huxley, "Deronda" and "That Lass o' Lowrie's;" about the Centennial Exhibition, especially the part which Kansas played in it; about the new school-house, the coming election, the last evening's sunset. Then if you stay to tea (as you will be pressed to do), you will discover that the latest tricks of cookery are here also, and some more pictures, and pots of house-plants, and possibly a coy glitter of silverware. But for the big vase of wild flowers in the center of the table—daisies, larkspurs and verbenas—and the wide, ambiguous vista of untenanted prairie from the west window, you might easily convince yourself you were in New England. In fact, this very family may be from New England, since New England invented Kansas, and has sent her thousands of citizens; but, more likely, they are from some State no farther East than Ohio; the chance that they are to the manner born is only one to five. It matters little. Wherever they came from, they are Kansans now; and to be a Kansan is to have an identity at once distinct and conspicuous.

But to return to the sod. The seeding follows hard upon the plowing—goes along with it, I may say—and frequently you will see plows, harrows, wheat-drills and corn-planters all at work together on a single farm, where 24 hours before there was only a green, untrodden waste. The sod-crop being often the settler's main and only reliance for the first year, and requiring but little care, the ruling idea is to get as much planted as possible. Of course, large results are not reasonably to be expected from this initial process; but ordinarily the yield is good, better than you would guess, and in some instances quite astonishing. With timely seeding and a favorable season, it is not uncommon for sod-wheat in Kansas to make 15 bushels to the acre (above the average annual yield of the older States), and sod-corn often reaches 40 bushels per acre; I passed field after field of sod-corn in the Arkansas Valley the last autumn, which I am sure would exceed that—and a considerable proportion of it, they told me, had been planted as late as the fourth week in May. There are cases, not numerous, to be sure, but none the less authentic, where these new-fashioned farmers have actually paid for their farms with the proceeds of their first crop of wheat or corn, not to speak of the three dollars per acre which the mere first plowing adds to the permanent value of the land. Then, after this sod-crop is harvested, winter wheat may be put in these same fields—drilled in between the corn-rows, if you wish; or it may be left until spring again, and planted in corn, and then will come the richest crop that the soil is capable of producing.

Corn is king in Kansas, so far as space is concerned. They plant it by square miles, one might fairly infer, the fields are so incredibly far-reaching; and, if it did not grow very much of its own accord, it could not grow at all, as the sheer abundance of it forbids any thing like thorough cultivation. They aim to plow it twice, though sometimes once has to suffice, and where it has been sod-planted it is left untouched till it ripens; and yet it thrives in a way that makes folly of all rule and precedent; the stalks attain a size and height which give them a resemblance to young forests of hickory, and the men with plows look lost among them; and, as for the ultimate yield in ears and bushels, is it not proclaimed everywhere in those graphic and seductive land advertisements which tell how Kansas was 10 years ago the twenty-fourth State in the production of corn, and is now surpassed by only three of all the 38? The small cost and labor of tilling is doubtless the chief inciting cause of this extensive recourse to a crop which, however bounteous it may be, offers but slender profit unless fed to live stock; but I suspect it is a crop that also has special favor with frontier people—perhaps without their exactly realizing the preference—because of the resolute, imperious, army-with-banners method it has of possessing and holding the country. For corn is by nature aggressive and determined. The smaller grains feel their way timidly in a primitive soil, and the aboriginal verdure disputes every inch of progress with them. But where this autocrat of the cereals takes root it scorns rivalry, and its sway is complete and enduring. And so these leagues upon leagues of Kansas corn, seen in the summer and in their glory of silked and tasseled and sunlit strength, convey a signally striking impression. They do not merely cling to the earth, but they seize it and make it their own; you know that those dense and advancing ranks can never be stayed, never turned back; and somehow the vast expanse of unconquered prairie yet spread out before them and all about them—10 acres to each one acre of theirs—seems overawed and contracted by their masterful influence. It is Birnam wood come to Dunsinane.

—"Whole hug or none," as the young fellow said to his betrothed who was inclined to flirt.