

ings. One of these was a weakness for stale beer. I suppose he had been brought up on it in the dog-pit. The pure air of Long Island, and the moral environment of his new home, did not wean him from it. He had not been long in our house before he took to absenting himself for days and nights at a time, returning ragged and fagged out, as if from a long spree. We found out, by accident, that he spent those vacations in a low saloon a mile up the plank road, which he had probably located on one of his excursions through the country to extend his doctrine of evolution. It was the conductor on the horse-car that ran past the saloon who told me of it. Mac had found the cars out, too, and rode regularly up and down to the place, surveying the country from the rear platform. The conductor prudently refrained from making any remarks after Mac had once afforded him a look at his jaw. I am sorry to say that I think that Mac got drunk on those trips. I judged, from remarks I overheard once or twice about the «deacon's drunken dog», that the community shared my conviction. It was always quick to jump at conclusions, particularly about deacons.

Sober second thought should have acquitted me of all the allegations against me, except the one matter of the Sunday discussion in the woods—which, however, I had forgotten to mention. But sober second thought, that ought always and specially to attach itself to the deaconry, was apparently at a premium in our town. I had begun to tire of the constant explanations that were required, when the climax came in a manner wholly unforeseen and unexpected. The cashier in the office had run away, or was under suspicion, or something, and it became necessary to overhaul the accounts to find out where the office stood. When that was done, my chief summoned me down-town for a private interview. Upon the table lay my weekly pay-checks for three years back, face down. My employer eyed them and me, by turns, curiously.

«Mr. Riis,» he began stiffly, «I'm not going to judge you unheard; and, for that matter, it is none of my business. I have known you all this time as a sober, steady man; I believe you are a deacon in your church; and I never heard that you gambled or bet money. It seems now that I was never more mistaken in a man in my life. Tell me, how do you do it, anyhow? Do you blow in the whole of your salary every week on policy, or do you run a game of your own up there? Look at those checks.»

He pointed to the lot. I stared at them in bewilderment. They were my own checks, sure enough; and underneath my name, on the back of each one, was the indorsement of the infamous blackleg whose name had been a byword ever since I could remember as that of the chief devil in the policy blackmail conspiracy that had robbed the poor and corrupted the police force to the core.

I went home, and resigned my office as deacon. I did not explain. We were having a little difficulty at the time, about another matter, which made it easy. I did not add this straw, though the explanation was simple enough. My chief grasped it at once; but then, he was not a deacon. I had simply got my check cashed every week in a cigar-store next door that was known to be a policy-shop for the special accommodation of police headquarters in those days, and the check had gone

straight into the «backer's» bank-account. That was how. But, as I said, it was hopeless to try to explain, and I did n't. I simply record here what I said at the beginning—that it is no use for a newspaper man, more particularly a police reporter, to try to be a deacon too. The chances are all against it.

Jacob A. Riis.

Possum.

Er dey 's anyting dat riles me
An' jes gits me out o' hitch,
Twell I want to tek my coat off,
So 's to r'ar an' t'ar an' pitch,
Hit 's to see some ign'ant white man
'Mittin' dat owdacious sin—
W'en he want to cook a possum
Tekin' off de possum's skin.

W'y, dey ain't no use in talkin',
Hit jes hu'ts me to de heat
Fu to see dem foolish people
Th'owin' 'way de fines' pa't.
W'y, dat skin is jes ez tendah
An' ez juicy ez kin be—
I knows all erbout de critter—
Hide an' haih—don't talk to me!

Possum skin is jes lak shoat skin;
Jes you swinge an' scrope it down,
Tek a good sha'p knife an' sco' it,
Den you bake it good an' brown.
Huh-uh! honey, you 's so happy
Dat yo' thoughts is 'mes' a sin
When you 's settin' dah a-chawin'
On dat possum's cracklin' skin.

White folks t'ink dey know 'bout eatin',
An' I reckon dat dey do
Sometimes git a little idee
Of a middlin' dish er two;
But dey ain't a t'ing dey knows of
Dat I reckon cain't be beat
When we set down at de table
To a unskun possum's meat!

Paul Laurence Dunbar.

Is it a Lost Art?

«I WONDER why it is,» he said,
«That women seek to do
The things of which they had a dread
When knights were bold and true.
In ancient days to be a bride
Was held a maiden's aim;
In ancient days a woman's pride
Lay in her husband's fame.

«Where lies the fault that woman's aims
Have turned from home to state?
Far greater virtues man now claims
Than tales revered relate.
He 's better than the knights of old
Who battled for a glove—»
She interrupted, calm and cold:
«Except in making love.»

Elliott Flower.

The Four-masted Cat-boat.

AN ETCHING OF THE SEA. BY A LANDLUBBER.

THE sea lay low in the offing, and as far as the eye could reach, immense white-caps rode upon it as quietly as pond-lilies on the bosom of a lake.

Fleecy clouds dotted the sky, and far off toward the horizon a full-rigged four-masted cat-boat lugged and luffed in the calm evening breezes. Her sails were piped to larboard, starboard, and port; and as she rolled steadily along in the heavy wash and undertow, her companion-light, already kindled, shed a delicate ray across the bay to where the dull red disk of the sun was dipping its colors.

Her cordage lay astern, in the neat coils that seamen know so well how to make. The anchor had been weighed this half-hour, and the figures put down in the log; for Captain Blifton was not a man to put off doing anything that lay in the day's watch.

Away to eastward, two tiny black clouds stole along as if they were diffident strangers in the sky, and were anxious to be gone. Now and again came the report of some sunset gun from the forts that lined the coast, and sea-robins flew with harsh cries athwart the sloop of fishing-boats that were beating to windward with gaffed topsails.

"Davy Jones 'll have a busy day to-morrow," growled Tom Bowsline, the first boatswain's mate.

"Meaning them clouds is windy?" answered the steward, with a glance to leeward.

"The same," answered the other, shaking out a reef, and preparing to batten the tarpaulins. "What dinged fools them fellers on the sloop of fishin'-ships is! They've got their studdin'sails gaffed and the mizzentops aft of the gangway; an' if I know a marlinspike from a martingale, we're goin' to have as pretty a blow as ever came out of the south."

And, indeed, it did look to be flying in the face of Providence, for the mackerel-ships, to the last one, were tugging and straining to catch the slightest zephyr, with their yard-arms close-hauled and their poop-decks flush with the fo'c'sle.

The form of the captain of the cat-boat was now visible on the stairs leading to the upper deck. It needed but one keen glance in the direction of the black clouds—no longer strangers, but now perfectly at home and getting ugly—to determine his course. "Unship the spinnaker-boom, you dogs, and be quick about it! Luff, you idiot, luff!" The boatswain's first mate loved nothing better than to luff, and he luffed; and the good ship, true to her keel, bore away to northward, her back scuppers oozing at every joint.

"That was ez neat a bit of seamanship as I ever see," said Tom Bowsline, taking a huge bite of oakum. "Shiver my timbers! if my rivets don't tremble with joy when I see good work."

"Douse your gab, and man the taffrail?" yelled the captain; and Tom flew to obey him. "Light the top-lights!" A couple of sailors to whom the trick is a mere bagatelle run nimbly out on the stern-sprit and execute his order; and none too soon, for darkness is closing in

over the face of the waters, and the clouds come on apace.

A rumble of thunder, followed by a blinding flash, betokens that the squall is at hand. The captain springs adown the poop, and in a hoarse voice yells out, "Lower the maintop; loosen the shrouds; luff a little—steady! Cut the main-brace, and clear away the halyards. If we don't look alive, we 'll look pretty (durn) dead in two shakes of a capstan-bar. All hands abaft for a glass of grog."

The wild rush of sailors' feet, the creaking of ropes, the curses of those in the rear, together with the hoarse cries of the gulls and the booming of the thunder, made up a scene that beggars description. Every trough of the sea was followed by a crest as formidable, and the salt spray had an indescribable brackish taste like bilgewater and ginger-ale.

After the crew had finished their grog they had time to look to starboard of the port watch, and there they beheld what filled them with pity. The entire sloop of mackerel-ships lay with their keels up.

"I knowed they'd catch it if they gaffed their studdin'sails," said Tom, as he shifted the quid of oakum.

The full moon rose suddenly at the exact spot where the sun had set. The thunder made off, muttering. The cat-boat, close-rigged from hand-rail to taffrail, scudded under bare poles, with the churning motion peculiar to pinnaces, and the crew involuntarily broke into the chorus of that good old sea-song:

The wind blows fresh, and our scuppers are astern.

Charles Battell Loomis.

Cupid's Paint-brush.¹

ROSALINDA, one fine day,
Came to Cupid, so they say,
And she said:
"Cupid, see; my lips are pink;
They'd be more admired, I think,
Richly red."

Cupid nodded, pricked his arm.
Rosalinda, in alarm,
Saw a drop,
Bright and crimson-hued, appear;
Begged of Cupid, with a tear,
Please to stop!

But the little fellow laughed,
Wet the feather of his shaft,—
Just the tips,—
Calmed her with a word or two;
Tinted with the crimson hue
Linda's lips.

Then the stained barb with care
In the sod he planted—where,
Precious dart,
Still it blooms; and maidens come,
Eager still for crimson from
Cupid's heart.

Albert Bigelow Paine.

¹ "Cupid's paint-brush" is a small red flower said to be used sometimes by girls for staining their lips.