THE DARKEST HOUR.

'Tis always the darkest hour
Before the dawn doth shine,
Ever the moment of fear and gloom,
In that troubled heart of thine:
Heavy the spirit and sad thy sigh,
While brightness and lightness are drawing nigh!

Look to the shafts of morning
As they play in the moving clouds;
Their arrows must cleave the darkness dense
Which now like a veil enshrouds;
Mountain and valley, village and stream,
Shall smile in the glow of the sunrise gleam.

But, O, in the vigil of waiting,
Before that dawn appears,
Worn with the night of watching,
Thou art filled with doubts and fears.
Doubt not, true soul! Faint not, brave heart!
In the joy of the dawn thou shalt have thy part!

I know thou art weary, so weary;
I know thy hopes seem dead;
Rouse! for thy cares and sorrows
With the night and the gloom are fled.
They are fled! And thy faith, like the lark to the skies,
Rise up with a song in thy glad surprise.

HIS FIRST OFFICIAL NIGHT.

BY W. P. CHAMBERS.

Years ago, when the ambitious city of Weston was simply a village, there lived on the hill beyond the creek a man who divided his time about equally between deer hunting and tilling the few rocky, sterile acres that constituted his farm. This man—George Bently, by name—was a prominent figure in that sparsely-settled region. He was a giant in strength, daring in danger, cool in emergencies and fertile in expedients. Though illiterate, he was by no means uneducated so far as the love of forest and stream was concerned, and his skill in deciphering the volume of human nature was of no mean order. So at thirty-five he was an acknowledged leader among his fellows.

About this time a general election occurred, and during the day somebody suggested that George Bently be voted for Justice of the Peace for Weston Beat. The suggestion being acted on, that individual returned home about sunset, and with pardonable elation informed his wife that he had been elected a magistrate without opposition.

Without giving the matter any consideration, either as to the duties appertaining to the office or his own qualifications for their performance, he made the necessary bond, and in due time his commission, bearing the great seal of the State, was received, together with a copy of the Code. Now our new official had never used a law book in his hands before, and he felt somewhat dismayed, but rather important withal, as he surveyed the bulky volume, bound in legal calf. Thrusting his commission into the pocket of his pantaloons, for he had no coat, and taking the huge volume under his arm, he wended his homeward way. If his gait was more staid and his bearing more dignified than usual it was simply because he felt himself an exponent, if not a part, of the State, in her sovereign capacity of making and administering laws.

As soon as supper was dispatchd he, with the aid of his wife, spelled out the commission, and then taking up the Code he began at the title page. He had got nearly to the end of the report of the Codifying Committee when drowsiness overpowered him, and he began to disrobe for the night. As he was in the act of lying down a loud "hello!" was heard at the yard gate. When the door was opened a voice in the darkness called out:

"Does 'Squire Bently live here?"

"I'm the man," was the rather pompous reply.

"I want a warrant for Jake Jones."

"What's he done?"

"Him and Pete Brown got into a row at old man Hall's house-raising this evenin' and he knocked Pete down with a handspike, and it looks like he's goin' to die."

"All right—come in."

By the time the officer had donned his clothes and replenished the fire the other man—one John Graham—had entered.

Had 'Squire Bently been required to make an astronomical calculation he would not have been more completely at a loss how to proceed. But he felt that his official honor was at stake and so, after a hasty but fruitless search in the Code for a "form," he proceeded to bring forth from his inner consciousness the momentous document.

The first difficulty to be surmounted was the fact that there was not a scrap of writing paper in the house. Not anticipating emergencies wherein it would be required, no stationery had been provided for official purposes. Unwilling to be balked, he tore a blank leaf from the back of the Code, and borrowing a pencil—for it was developed that no pen, ink or even a lead pencil belonged to the Bently household—he sat down, and, after infinite pains, produced the following warrant:

"taik jaik joans
G. BENTLY, esq., j. p."

As Mr. Graham received this document, he asked:

"Who will serve this warrant?"

"You can do it as well as anybody else, can't you?"

"I guess so! Where must I take him to?"

"Bring him here, of course."

"When?"

"At once—or sooner, if you can find him."

"All right!" and the Special Constable took his leave.

Our officer soon retired, but the incident of the warrant had unsettled him somewhat and he vainly courted sleep. After an hour or two of restless tumbling he was about entering dreamland when there was another call at the gate. Going to the door he was again met by the inquiry:

"Does 'Squire Bently live here?"

"Yes; what do you want?"

"We want to get married!" was the rather hesitating and huskily spoken reply.

"Come in!" and again the official hauled on his pantaloons, and out of deference to the occasion a coat was also donned. By this time a very young man and a shrinking maiden had reached the door-step.

"Come right in! Take chairs and sit down," came from the hearth, where our officer was trying to fan the smoking embers into a flame by blowing on them with his breath. When this was accomplished he arose, brushed the dust and ashes off his knees, and, reaching for his law book, demanded:

"Are you runaways?"

"Yes, sir."

"What's your names?"

"Mine is William Wright, this young lady's is Mary Banks."

"Are you a son of John Wright?"

"I am, sir."

"And is that one of old Tom Banks' gals?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you run away for?"

"'Cause her folks were not willin' for us to marry."

"Have you got airy pair of license?"

"Yes, sir, I have the license. We expected Preacher Gray to marry us, but he wasn't at home, so we came to you. Here, sir, is the license."

"Keep 'em, young man, keep 'em. I don't want 'em! I only axed to see if you had 'em; for it's agin the laws of the United States to marry in this State without a pair of license. The law only axes if you paid for 'em, and how much."

As he said this, 'Squire Bentley opened his book very wide and assumed a stern, judicial air.

"Yes, sir, the license is paid for, and cost one dollar."

"Where did you get 'em?"

"At the courthouse, of course. If you please, sir, will you proceed?"

"You bet I will! Hold up your right hands!"

The young couple exchanged glances. If the truth must be told, the requirements of etiquette during the performance of the ceremony had formed an important factor in their conversation since leaving the paternal roof. After a little hesitation both hands went up.

"You solemnly swear that you will live together as man and wife, sick or well, and that you will tell the truth, the whole truth and nothin' but the truth, so help you God! Answer, 'I do.'"

"I do," was the faint response.

"I pronounce you husband and wife, and may the Lord have mercy on your souls!"

The astonished couple still sat with uplifted hands, gazing at the Magistrate with open-mouthed wonder.

"That'll do!" said he in a less severe tone.

"Is it over?" asked the bride, with a sigh of relief, as she lowered her hand.

"I reckon so!" was the rather doubtful response of the groom.

"Yes, certainly. You're hitched as hard and as fast as if the Guv'nor had done it."

"How much do I owe you?"

"Not a cent, young man, not a cent," and then he added, in a semi-confidential tone, "You see, I'm a sorter new beginner, and I hain't sot my prices yet. Where are ye goin' to stay till mornin'?"

"We expected to go from Mr. Gray's back to Uncle Bill Wright's, on Cane Creek; but that's ten or twelve miles from here. Isn't there a tavern in town?"

"Yes—but why not stay here? It won't cost you a cent, and I 'drother you'd stay."

With a little more urging, they consented; and while the groom and the 'Squire were out stabling the horses, Mrs. Bently had arisen and prepared a room for the bride and groom. After a slight repast which the young people really needed (though both stoutly protested against the extra trouble), they were left in possession of the spare room, which had twice served as a law office that night.

An hour had passed, and most of the inmates had fallen asleep, when there was another loud "hello!" at the gate.

"Who is it now?" asked the master of the house, as he opened the door.

"It's me—here's your prisoner," sang out a voice in reply, that evidently belonged to Special Constable Graham.

"Who else is with you?"

"Jim Hall, and brother Tom."

"All right—come in!"

While our hard-worked Magistrate was again dressing himself, his wife suddenly inquired,

"Where will you take 'em, George?"

This was a poser. The spare room was already occupied, and, worse than all, his lawbook was in there too!

Meeting the Constable in the yard he brifly explained the situation.

"We can build up a fire out here," he suggested at last, and the others assenting, the fire was accordingly kindled, and then 'Squire Bently realized that he could proceed no further without his lawbook. Going to the door of the guest-chamber, he softly knocked.

"What is it?" inquired the groom.

"I want to get my book."

So the young man unfastened the door, and held it open till the officer went inside and "felt around" till he laid hands on the coveted volume. Returning to the yard, he opened court by administering an oath to all present (including the constable and the prisoner) to tell just how it was.

The day had been a warm one. As the night wore on, the clouds began to threaten rain, and before the testimony was all in, a heavy shower came up. This necessitated an adjournment to shelter—and as the smokehouse was the nearest building, thither all hands repaired. While waiting for the shower to cease, another horseman came galloping up.

"Is 'Squire Bently at home?"

"Yes; that's me!" was the reply.

"They want you at Sim's Mill. There's a dead woman there, and they want you to hold an inquest."

Further questioning elicited the fact that a negro woman had died very suddenly, and the physician who had been called, deeming the circumstances suspicious, desired an inquest. It was now past midnight, but our officer, feeling that he ought to act promptly in the matter, decided to go at once. But, unfortunately, the two Grahams and Jim Hall all felt called upon to go, too. What to do with the prisoner was the question. Somebody proposed taking him along with them, but the prisoner himself stoutly opposed that plan, but offered to pledge himself to be on hand whenever wanted.

Our Magistrate, acting on the principle that "one bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," resolved to make sure of Jake Jones. So, after bringing a few bundles of fodder from a stack near by, and two or three quilts from the house, he prepared a bed for his prisoner, and locked him up in the smokehouse till his return, and the five men rode away.

In the matter of the inquest Dr. Smith assumed entire control. He prepared all the necessary papers, and it was only required of G. Bently, Esq., to set "his hand and seal" to various documents.

It was near 10 o'clock when the 'Squire and his party returned from the inquest. They were all very drowsy and very hungry. Our officer found a rather unpleasant state of affairs on his arrival at home. As the meal and flour, as well as the bacon, were kept in the smokehouse, and as the door thereof was securely locked and the key safely stored away in his pocket, none of the family had broken their fast. The bride and groom had gone off hungry, but apparently happy; the children were fretting; their mother was scolding, and Jake Jones, from the inside of his prison, was indulging in some very loud, very profane and very disparaging remarks. In fact, that individual was only brought into a state of respectable quietude by the court's collaring him, giving him a good shaking, and promising to wipe up the ground with him after adjournment.

Before this occurred, or even breakfast was served, Pete Brown rode up. He had concluded not to die; he and Jake made friends and the case was dismissed. After a hearty breakfast and dinner in one, his visitors departed, leaving 'Squire Bently to cogitate over the events of "His First Official Night."—[Louisville-Courier Journal.

Worshipers of Human Beings.

There is a sect in Orissa, in the Benga presidency, who worship Queen Victoria as their chief divinity. Colonel Graham also discovered that her majesty was an object of worship in the temple of Phodongo-Lama, at Tumlong, in Thibet.

A sect in the Punjab worship a deity whom they call Nikkal Sen. This Nikkal Sen was none other than the redoubted General Nicholson, and nothing that the General could say or do dampened the enthusiasm of his adorers. M. du Chaillu tells that some of African savages looked upon him as a superior being, and the South sea islanders worshiped Captain Cook as a deity. Even when they had killed him and cut him up into small pieces the inhabitants of Owyhee fully expected him to reappear and frequently asked what he would do to them on his return.

Lander, in his Niger expedition, says that in most African towns and villages he was treated as a demigod. Lord John Lawrence has been worshipped among the Silks in Northwest India. Three years ago a man named Jurjung Tain, a district commissioner for the Russian government at Garhigivsk, in the northwest point of Siberia, imagined he was a god. Subsequently he declared himself to be the chief divinity in the Yakutskan pantheon. Divine honors were paid to him, and he was carried through the settlement daily. On special occasions he was accompanied by a wonderful procession, when he was carried by eight richly-dressed men, seated in a richly-ornamented chair, which was adorned by the wings of partridges, bells, horses' tails, and ribbons, while before him was a band of dancers. His career, however, was a short one, for he was arrested by the military authorities and sent to Vladivistock, where he is now confined in a lunatic asylum.

Novel Way to Clear a Common.

In 1808 when Jamestown, N. Y., was first-settled, the inhabitants hit upon a novel plan for clearing off the public common. The plot set apart for that purpose was covered, with trees, which were gradually cut down by the settlers at odd times when not otherwise engaged. But the stumps still remained, and their removal was a problem that caused many discussions among the city fathers. At last they struck a brilliant idea, whereby their object was not only attained, but the intemperate members of the community were taught a salutary lesson. It was duly enacted that the penalty for getting drunk was to dig up a large stump, but if the culprit was only moderately tipsy he was assigned to a smaller one. It was not long before every stump disappeared, much to the credit of the originators of the scheme and to the discomfiture of the tipplers.—[Chicago Herald.

The black diamond is so hard that it cannot be polished.

How an Englishman Lives.

Without being luxurious, the whole globe has played him serving man to spread his table. Russia gave the hemp, or India or South Carolina the cotton, for that cloth which his wife lays upon it. The Eastern islands placed there those condiments and spices which were once the secret relish of the wealthy, writes Sir Edwin Arnold in Longman's Magazine. Australian downs send him frozen mutton or canned beef, the prairies of America meal for his biscuit and pudding, and if he will eat fruit, the orchards of Tasmania and the palm woods of the West Indies proffer delicious gifts, while the orange groves of Florida and of the Hesperides cheapen for his use those "golden apples" which dragons used to guard.

His coffee comes from where jeweled humming birds hang in the bowers of Brazil, or purple butterflies flutter amid Javan mangroves. Great clipper ships, racing by night and day under clouds of canvas, convey to him his tea from China or Assam, or from the green Cingalese hills. The sugar which sweetens it was crushed from canes that waved by the Nile or the Orinoco, and the plating of the spoon with which he stirs it was dug for him from Mexican and Nevadan mines.

The currants in the dumpling are a tribute from classic Greece, and his tinned salmon or kippered herring a token from the seas and rivers of Canada or Norway. He may partake, if he will, of rice that ripened under the hot skies of Patna or Rangoon; of cocoa, that "food of the gods," plucked under the burning blue of the equator. For his rasher of bacon the hog express runs daily with 10,000 grunting victims into Chicago. Dutch or British hens have laid him his eggs, and Danish cows grazed the daisies of Elsinore to produce his cheese and butter.

Pressure Sustained by Divers.

George W. Fuller, the veteran submarine diver, in relating some anecdotes concerning the bottom of the sea and its inhabitants, gives some interesting figures as to the amount of pressure the body of a diver is subjected to. At a depth of only 100 feet the pressure is 44 pounds to each square inch of the diver's body surface. The ordinary human frame has about 12 square feet of surface, which would make the pressure at the depth mentioned above not less than 38 tons! This enormous weight is not all pressing downward, but inwards from all directions.

Professional Football Players.

The members of the British Football League have resolved that $700 shall be the maximum salary for a league player. No club shall pay more than $50 bonus. If a player desires to be transferred, and his club agrees, the management of the league shall fix the amount to be paid for such transfer. For a violation of these rules the guilty club is to be fined $1,000, have six points deducted from its score, and be liable to expulsion.—[Chicago Herald.

An Inference.

The following rather good story is going the rounds, told at the expense of the legal fraternity. In a certain community a lawyer died who was a most worthy and popular man, and, among other virtues, inscribed upon his tombstone, was this: "A lawyer and an honest man." Some years later a convention was held in the town, and one of the delegates, being of a sentimental turn, visited the "silent city," and, in rambling among the tombs, was struck with the inscription, "A lawyer and an honest man." He was lost in thought when a fellow delegate came up, who, noticing his abstraction, asked if he had found the grave of a dear friend or a relative, and he said: No, but I am wondering how they come to bury these two fellows in the same grave."—[Mason City Globe.