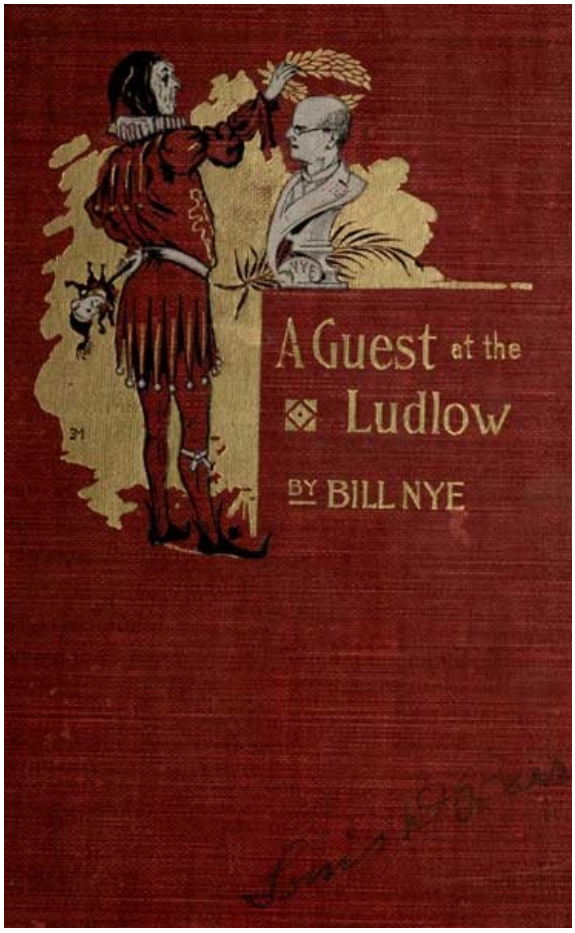
Title: A Guest at the Ludlow, and Other Stories

Author: Bill Nye

Release Date: April 4, 2010 [EBook #31884]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by D Alexander and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net



A GUEST AT THE LUDLOW

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

EDGAR WILSON NYE

[BILL NYE]

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

LOUIS BRAUNHOLD

INDIANAPOLIS AND KANSAS CITY
THE BOWEN-MERRILL COMPANY
M DCCC XCVII

A GUEST AT THE LUDLOW

You can pay five cents to the Elevated Railroad and get here, or you can put some other man's nickel in your own slot and come here with an attendant (Page 2)

This volume was prepared for publication by the author a few months before his death, and is now published by arrangement with Mrs. Edgar Wilson Nye.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

the bell-boy, relieving him also of a portion
of his burdensome salary at the same time

A GUEST AT THE LUDLOW

[Pg 1]

I

We are stopping quietly here, taking our meals in our rooms mostly, and going out very little indeed. When I say we, I use the term editorially.

We notice first of all the great contrast between this and other hotels, and in several instances this one is superior. In the first place, there is a sense of absolute security when one goes to sleep here that can not be felt at a popular hotel, where burglars secrete themselves in the wardrobe during the day and steal one's pantaloons and contents at night. This is one of the compensations of life in prison.

Here the burglars go to bed at the hour that the rest of us do. We all retire at the same time, and a murderer can not sit up any later at night than the smaller or unknown criminal can. [Pg 2]

You can get to Ludlow Street Jail by taking the Second avenue Elevated train to Grand street, and then going east two blocks, or you can fire a shotgun into a Sabbath-school.

You can pay five cents to the Elevated Railroad and get here, or you can put some other man's nickel in your own slot and come here with an attendant.

William Marcy Tweed was the contractor of Ludlow Street Jail, and here also he died. He was the son of a poor chair-maker, and was born April 3, 1823. From the chair business in 1853 to congress was the first false step. Exhilarated by the delirium of official life, and the false joys of franking his linen home every week, and having cake and preserves franked back to him at Washington, he resolved to still further taste the delights of office, and in 1857 we find him as a school commissioner.

In 1860 he became Grand Sachem of the Tammany Society, an association at that time more purely political than politically pure. As president of the board of supervisors, head of the department of public works, state senator, and Grand Sachem of Tammany, Tweed had a large and seductive influence over the city and state. The story of how he earned a scanty livelihood by stealing a million of dollars at a pop, and thus, with the most rigid economy, scraped together $20,000,000 in a few years by patient industry and smoking plug tobacco, has been frequently told. [Pg 3]

Tweed was once placed here in Ludlow Street Jail in default of $3,000,000 bail. How few there are of us who could slap up that amount of bail if rudely gobbled on the street by the hand of the law. While riding out with the sheriff, in 1875, Tweed asked to see his wife, and said he would be back in a minute.

He came back by way of Spain, in the fall of '76, looking much improved. But the malaria and dissipation of Blackwell's Island afterwards impaired his health, and having done time there, and having been arrested afterwards and placed in Ludlow Street Jail, he died here April 12, 1878, leaving behind him a large, vain world, and an equally vain judgment for $6,537,117.38, to which he said he would give his attention as soon as he could get a paving contract in the sweet ultimately. [Pg 4]

From the exterior Ludlow Street Jail looks somewhat like a conservatory of music, but as soon as one enters he readily discovers his mistake. The structure has 100 feet frontage, and a court, which is sometimes called the court of last resort. The guest can climb out of this court by ascending a polished brick wall about 100 feet high, and then letting himself down in a similar way on the Ludlow street side.

That one thing is doing a great deal towards keeping quite a number of people here who would otherwise, I think, go away.

James D. Fish and Ferdinand Ward both remained here prior to their escape to Sing Sing. Red Leary, also, made his escape from this point, but did not succeed in reaching the penitentiary. Forty thousand prisoners have been confined in Ludlow Street Jail, mostly for civil offenses. A man in New York runs a very short career if he tries to be offensively civil. [Pg 5]

As you enter Ludlow Street Jail the door is carefully closed after you, and locked by means of an iron lock about the size of a pictorial family Bible. You then remain on the inside for quite a spell. You do not hear the prattle of soiled children any more. All the glad sunlight, and stench-condensing pavements, and the dark-haired inhabitants of Rivington street, are seen no longer, and the heavy iron storm-door shuts out the wail of the combat from the alley near by. Ludlow Street Jail may be surrounded by a very miserable and dirty quarter of the city, but when you get inside all is changed.

You register first. There is a good pen there that you can write with, and the clerk does not chew tolu and read a sporting paper while you wait for a room. He is there to attend to business, and

he attends to it. He does not seem to care whether you have any baggage or not. You can stay here for days, even if you don't have any baggage. All you need is a kind word and a mittimus from the court. [Pg 6]

One enters this sanitarium either as a boarder or a felon. If you decide to come in as a boarder, you pay the warden $15 a week for the privilege of sitting at his table and eating the luxuries of the market. You also get a better room than at many hotels, and you have a good strong door, with a padlock on it, which enables you to prevent the sudden and unlooked-for entrance of the chambermaid. It is a good-sized room, with a wonderful amount of seclusion, a plain bed, table, chairs, carpet and so forth. After a few weeks at the seaside, at $19 per day, I think the room in which I am writing is not unreasonable at $2.

Still, of course, we miss the sea breeze.

You can pay $50 to $100 per week here if you wish, and get your money's worth, too. For the latter sum one may live in the bridal chamber, so to speak, and eat the very best food all the time.

Heavy iron bars keep the mosquitoes out, and at night the house is brilliantly lighted by incandescent lights of one-candle power each. Neat snuffers, consisting of the thumb and forefinger polished on the hair, are to be found in each occupied room. [Pg 7]

Bread is served to the Freshmen and Juniors in rectangular wads. It is such bread as convicts' tears have moistened many thousand years. In that way it gets quite moist.

The most painful feature about life in Ludlow Street Jail is the confinement. One can not avoid a feeling of being constantly hampered and hemmed in.

One more disagreeable thing is the great social distinction here. The poor man who sleeps in a stone niche near the roof, and who is constantly elbowed and hustled out of his bed by earnest and restless vermin with a tendency toward insomnia, is harassed by meeting in the court-yard and corridors the paying boarders who wear good clothes, live well, have their cigars, brandy and Kentucky Sec all the time.

The McAllister crowd here is just as exclusive as it is on the outside. [Pg 8]

But, great Scott! what a comfort it is to a man like me, who has been nearly killed by a cyclone, to feel the firm, secure walls and solid time lock when he goes to bed at night! Even if I can not belong to the 400, I am almost happy.

We retire at 7:30 o'clock at night and arise at 6:30 in the morning, so as to get an early start. A man who has five or ten years to stay in a place like this naturally likes to get at it as soon as possible each day, and so he gets up at 6:30.

We dress by the gaudy light of the candle, and while we do so, we remember far away at home our wife and the little boy asleep in her arms. They do not get up at 6:30. It is at this hour we remember the fragrant drawer in the dresser at home where our clean shirts, and collars and cuffs, and socks and handkerchiefs, are put every week by our wife. We also recall as we go about our stone den, with its odor of former corned beef, and the ghost of some bloody-handed predecessor's snore still moaning in the walls, the picture of green grass by our own doorway, and the apples that were just ripening, when the bench warrant came. [Pg 9]

The time from 6:30 to breakfast is occupied by the average, or non-paying inmate, in doing the chamberwork and tidying up his state-room. I do not know how others feel about it, but I dislike chamberwork most heartily, especially when I am in jail. Nothing has done more to keep me out of jail, I guess, than the fact that while there I have to make up my bed and dust the piano.

Breakfast is generally table d'hôte and consists of bread. A tin-cup of coffee takes the taste of the bread out of your mouth, and then if you have some Limburger cheese in your pocket you can with that remove the taste of the coffee.

Dinner is served at 12 o'clock, and consists of more bread with soup. This soup has everything in it except nourishment. The bead on this soup is noticeable for quite a distance. It is disagreeable. Several days ago I heard that the Mayor was in the soup, but I didn't realize it before. I thought it was a newspaper yarn. There is everything in this soup, from shop-worn rice up to neat's-foot oil. Once I thought I detected cuisine in it. [Pg 10]

The dinner menu is changed on Fridays, Sundays and Thursdays, on which days you get the soup first and the bread afterwards. In this way the bread is saved.

Three days in a week each man gets at dinner a potato containing a thousand-legged worm. At 6 o'clock comes supper with toast and responses. Bread is served at supper time, together with a cup of tea. To those who dislike bread and never eat soup, or do not drink tea or coffee, life at Ludlow Street Jail is indeed irksome.

I asked for kumiss and a pony of Benedictine, as my stone boudoir made me feel rocky, but it has not yet been sent up.

Somehow, while here, I can not forget poor old man Dorrit, the Master of the Marshalsea, and how the Debtors' Prison preyed upon his mind till he didn't enjoy anything except to stand off and admire himself. Ludlow Street Jail is a good deal like it in many ways, and I can see how in time the canker of unrest and the bitter memories of those who did us wrong but who are basking in [Pg 11]

the bright and bracing air, while we, to meet their obligations, sacrifice our money, our health and at last our minds, would kill hope and ambition.

In a few weeks I believe I should also get a preying on my mind. That is about the last thing I would think of preying on, but a man must eat something.

Before closing this brief and incomplete account as a guest at Ludlow Street Jail I ought, in justice to my family, to say, perhaps, that I came down this morning to see a friend of mine who is here because he refuses to pay alimony to his recreant and morbidly sociable wife. He says he is quite content to stay here, so long as his wife is on the outside. He is writing a small ready-reference book on his side of the great problem, "Is Marriage a Failure?"

With this I shake him by the hand and in a moment the big iron storm-door clangs behind me, the [Pg 12]
big lock clicks in its hoarse, black throat and I welcome even the air of Ludlow street so long as [Pg 13]
the blue sky is above it.

OLD POLKA DOT'S DAUGHTER

II

I once decided to visit an acquaintance who had named his country place "The Elms." I went partly to punish him because his invitation was so evidently hollow and insincere.

He had "The Elms" worked on his clothes, and embossed on his stationery and blown in his glass, and it pained him to eat his food from table linen that didn't have "The Elms" emblazoned on it. He told me to come and surprise him any time, and shoot in his preserves, and stay until business compelled me to return to town again. He had no doubt heard that I never surprise any one, and never go away from home very much, and so thought it would be safe. Therefore I went. I went
just to teach him a valuable lesson. When I go to visit a man for a week, he is certainly [Pg 14]
thenceforth going to be a better man, or else punishment is of no avail and the chastening rod entirely useless in his case.

"The Elms" was a misnomer. It should have been called "The Shagbark" or "The Doodle Bug's Lair." It was supposed to mean a wide sweep of meadow, a vine covered lodge, a broad velvet lawn, and a carriage way, where the drowsy locust, in the sensuous shadow of magnanimous elms, gnawed a file at intervals through the day, while back of all this the mossy and gray-whiskered front and corrugated brow of the venerable architectural pile stood off and admired itself in the deep and glassy pool at its base.

In the first place none of the yeomanry for eight miles around knew that he called his old malarial tank "The Elms," so it was hard to find. But when I described the looks of the lord of The Elms they wink at each other and wagged their heads and said, "Oh, yes, we know him," also interjecting well known one syllable words that are not euphonious enough to print.

... "His old look of apprehensive cordiality did not leave him until he had seen me climb on a load of hay with my trunk and start for home" (Page 15)

When I got there he was down cellar sprouting potatoes, and his wife was hanging out upon the clothes line a pair of gathered summer trousers that evidently were made for a man who had been badly mangled in a saw-mill. [Pg 15]

The Elms was not even picturesque, and the preserves were out of order. I was received with the same cordiality which you detect on the face of any other kind of detected liar. He wanted to be regarded as a remarkable host and landed proprietor, without being really hospitable. I remained there at The Elms a few days, rubbing rock salt and Cayenne pepper into the wounds of my host, and suggesting different names for his home, such as "The Tom Tit's Eyrie," "The Weeping Willow," "The Crook Neck Squash" and "The Muskrat's Retreat." Then I came away. His old look of apprehensive cordiality did not leave him until he had seen me climb on a load of hay with my trunk and start for home.

During my brief sojourn I noticed that the surrounding country was full of people, and I presume there was a larger population of "boarders," as we were called indiscriminately, than ever before. [Pg 16] The number of available points to which the victims of humidity and poor plumbing may retreat in summer time is constantly on the increase, while, so far as I know, all the private and public boarding places are filled to their utmost capacity. Everywhere, the gaudy boarder in flannels and ecru shoes looms upon the green lawn or the brown dirt road, or scales the mountain one day and stays in bed the following week, rubbing James B. Pond's Extract on his swollen joints.

I scaled Mount Utsa-yantha in company with others. We picked out a nice hot day, and, selecting the most erect wall of the mountain, facing west, we scaled it in such a way that it will not have to be done again till new scales grow on it.

Mount Utsa-yantha is 3,365 feet above sea level, and has a brow which reminds me of mine. It is broad, massive and bleak. The foot of the mountain is more massive, however. From the top of the mountain one gets, with a good glass, a view of six or seven states, I was told. Possibly there were that many in sight, though at that season of the year states look so much alike that it takes [Pg 17] an expert to pick them out readily. When states are moulting, it is all I can do to tell Vermont from Massachusetts. On this mountain one gets a nice view and highly exhilarating birch beer.

Albany can be distinctly seen with a glass—a field glass, I mean, not a glass of birch beer. Some claim that the nub of a political boom may be seen protruding from the Capitol with the nude vision. Others say they can see the Green mountains, and as far south as the eye can reach. We took two hours and a half for the ascent of the mountain, and came down in about twenty

minutes. We descended ungracefully—the way the Irishman claimed that the toad walked, viz.: "git up and sit down."

Mount Utsa-yantha—I use the accepted orthography as found in the Blackhawk dictionary—has a legend also. Many centuries ago this beautiful valley was infested by the red brother and his bronze progeny. Where now the red and blue blazer goes shimmering through the swaying [Pg 18] maples, and the girl with her other dress on and her straw colored canvas cinch knocketh the croquet ball galley west, once there dwelt an old chief whom we will call Polka Dot, the pride of his people. He looked somewhat like William Maxwell Evarts, but was a heavier set man. Places where old Polka Dot sat down and accumulated rest for himself are still shown to city people whose faith was not overworked while young.

Old Polka Dot was a firm man, with double teeth all around, and his prowess got into the personal columns of the papers every little while. He had a daughter named Utsa-yantha, which means "a messenger sent hastily for treasure," so I am told, or possibly old Polka Dot meant to imply "one sent off for cash."

Anyhow Utsa-yantha grew to be quite comely, as Indian women go. I never yet saw one that couldn't stop an ordinary planet by looking at it steadily for two minutes. She dressed simply, wearing the same clothes while tooling cross-country before breakfast that she wore at the scalp [Pg 19] dance the evening before. In summer time she shellacked herself and visited the poor. Taking a little box of water colors in a shawl strap, so that she could change her clothes whenever she felt like it, she would go away and be gone for a fortnight at a time, visiting the ultra fashionable people of her tribe.

Finally a white man penetrated this region. He did it by asking a brakeman on the West Shore road how to get here and then doing differently. In that way he had no trouble at all. He saw Utsa-yantha and loved her almost instantly. She was skinning a muskrat at the time, and he could not but admire her deftness and skill. From that moment he was not able to drive her image from his heart. He sought her again and again to tell her of his passion, but she would jump the fence and flee like a frightened fawn with a split stick on its tail, if such a comparison may be permitted. At last he won her, and married her quietly in his working clothes. The nearest justice of the peace was then in England, and so rather than wait he was married informally to Utsa- [Pg 20] yantha, and she went home very much impressed indeed. That fall a little russet baby came to bless their union. The blessing was all he had with him when he arrived.

Then the old chief Polka Dot arose in his wrath, to which he added a pair of moose hide moccasins, and he upbraided his daughter for her conduct. He upbraided her with a piazza pole from his wigwam. He was very much agitated. So was the pole.

Then he cursed her for being the mother of a 1/2 breed child, and stalking 1/4 he slew the white man by cutting open his trunk and disarranging his most valuable possessions. He then wiped the stab knife on his tossing mane, and grabbing his grandson by his swaddling clothes he hurled the surprised little stranger into Lake Utsa-yantha. By pouring another pailful of water into the lake the child was successfully drowned.

Then the widowed and childless Utsa-yantha came forth as night settled down upon the beautiful valley and the day died peacefully on the mountain tops. Her eyes were red with weeping and her [Pg 21] breath was punctuated with sobs. Putting on a pair of high rubber boots she waded out into the middle of the lake, where there is quite a deep place, and drowned herself.

When the old man found the body of his daughter he was considerably mortified. He took her to the top of the mountain and buried her there, and ever afterward, it is said, whenever any one spoke of the death of his daughter and her family, he would color up and change the subject.

This should teach us never to kill a son-in-law without getting his wife's consent. [Pg 22]

A GREAT CEREBRATOR

III

Being at large in Virginia, along in the latter part of last season, I visited Monticello, the former home of Thomas Jefferson, also his grave. Monticello is about an hour's ride from Charlottesville, by diligence. One rides over a road constructed of rip-raps and broken stone. It is called a macadamized road, and twenty miles of it will make the pelvis of a long-waisted man chafe against his ears. I have decided that the site for my grave shall be at the end of a trunk line somewhere, and I will endow a droska to carry passengers to and from said grave.

Whatever my life may have been, and however short I may have fallen in my great struggle for a generous recognition by the American people, I propose to place my grave within reach of all. [Pg 23]

Monticello is reached by a circuitous route to the top of a beautiful hill, on the crest of which rests the brick house where Mr. Jefferson lived. You enter a lodge gate in charge of a venerable negro, to whom you pay two bits apiece for admission. This sum goes towards repairing the roads, according to the ticket which you get. It just goes toward it, however; it don't quite get

there, I judge, for the roads are still appealing for aid. Perhaps the negro can tell how far it gets. Up through a neglected thicket of Virginia shrubs and ill-kempt trees you drive to the house. It is a house that would readily command $750, with queer porches to it, and large, airy windows. The top of the whole hill was graded level, or terraced, and an enormous quantity of work must have been required to do it, but Jefferson did not care. He did not care for fatigue. With two hundred slaves of his own, and a dowry of three hundred more which was poured into his coffers by his marriage, Jeff did not care how much toil it took to polish off the top of a bluff or how much the sweat stood out on the brow of a hill. [Pg 24]

Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. He sent it to one of the magazines, but it was returned as not available, so he used it in Congress and afterward got it printed in the *Record*.

I saw the chair he wrote it in. It is a plain, old-fashioned wooden chair, with a kind of bosom-board on the right arm, upon which Jefferson used to rest his Declaration of Independence whenever he wanted to write it.

There is also an old gig stored in the house. In this gig Jefferson used to ride from Monticello to Washington in a day. This is untrue, but it goes with the place. It takes from 8:30 A. M. until noon to ride this distance on a fast train, and in a much more direct line than the old wagon road ran.

Mr. Jefferson was the father of the University of Virginia, one of the most historic piles I have ever clapped eyes on. It is now under the management of a classical janitor, who has a tinge of negro blood in his veins, mixed with the rich Castilian blood of somebody else. [Pg 25]

He has been at the head of the University of Virginia for over forty years, bringing in the coals and exercising a general oversight over the curriculum and other furniture. He is a modest man, with a tendency toward the classical in his researches. He took us up on the roof, showed us the outlying country, and jarred our ear-drums with the big bell. Mr. Estes, who has general charge of Monticello—called Montechello—said that Mr. Jefferson used to sit on his front porch with a powerful glass, and watch the progress of the work on the University, and if the workmen undertook to smuggle in a soft brick, Mr. Jefferson, five or six miles away, detected it, and bounding lightly into his saddle, he rode down there to Charlottesville, and clubbed the bricklayers until they were glad to pull down the wall to that brick and take it out again.

This story is what made me speak of that section a few minutes ago as an outlying country.

The other day Charles L. Seigel told us the Confederate version of an attack on Fort Moultrie during the early days of the war, which has never been printed. Mr. Seigel was a German [Pg 26] Confederate, and early in the fight was quartered, in company with others, at the Moultrie House, a seaside hotel, the guests having deserted the building.

Although large soft beds with curled hair mattresses were in each room, the department issued ticks or sacks to be filled with straw for the use of the soldiers, so that they would not forget that war was a serious matter. Nobody used them, but they were there all the same.

Attached to the Moultrie House, and wandering about the back-yard, there was a small orphan jackass, a sorrowful little light blue mammal, with a tinge of bitter melancholy in his voice. He used to dwell on the past a good deal, and at night he would refer to it in tones that were choked with emotion.

The boys caught him one evening as the gloaming began to arrange itself, and threw him down on the green grass. They next pulled a straw bed over his head, and inserted him in it completely, cutting holes for his legs. Then they tied a string of sleighbells to his tail, and hit him a smart, [Pg 27] stinging blow with a black snake.

Then they tied a string of sleighbells to his tail, and hit him a smart, stinging blow with a black snake (Page 27)

Probably that was what suggested to him the idea of strolling down the beach, past the sentry, and on toward the fort. The darkness of the night, the rattle of hoofs, the clash of the bells, the quick challenge of the guard, the failure to give the countersign, the sharp volley of the sentinels, and the wild cry, "to arms," followed in rapid succession. The tocsin sounded, also the slogan. The culverin, ukase, and door-tender were all fired. Huge beacons of fat pine were lighted along the beach. The whole slumbering host sprang to arms, and the crack of the musket was heard through the intense darkness.

In the morning the enemy was found intrenched in a mud-hole, south of the fort, with his clean new straw tick spattered with clay, and a wildly disheveled tail.

On board the Richmond train not long ago a man lost his hat as we pulled out of Petersburg, and it fell by the side of the track. The train was just moving slowly away from the station, so he had a [Pg 28] chance to jump off and run back after it. He got the hat, but not till we had placed seven or eight miles between us and him. We could not help feeling sorry for him, because very likely his hat had an embroidered hat band in it, presented by one dearer to him than life itself, and so we worked up quite a feeling for him, though of course he was very foolish to lose his train just for a hat, even if it did have the needle-work of his heart's idol in it.

Later I was surprised to see the same man in Columbia, South Carolina, and he then told me this sad story:

"I started out a month ago to take a little trip of a few weeks, and the first day was very, very happily spent in scrutinizing nature and scanning the faces of those I saw. On the second day out, I ran across a young man whom I had known slightly before, and who is engaged in the business of being a companionable fellow and the life of the party. That is about all the business he has. He knows a great many people, and his circle of acquaintances is getting larger all the time. He [Pg 29] is proud of the enormous quantity of friendship he has acquired. He says he can't get on a train or visit any town in the Union that he doesn't find a friend.

"He is full of stories and witticisms, and explains the plays to theater parties. He has seen a great deal of life and is a keen critic. He would have enjoyed criticising the Apostle Paul and his elocutionary style if he had been one of the Ephesians. He would have criticised Paul's gestures, and said, 'Paul, I like your Epistles a heap better than I do your appearance on the platform. You express yourself well enough with your pen, but when you spoke for the Ephesian Y. M. C. A., we were disappointed in you and we lost money on you.'

"Well, he joined me, and finding out where I was going, he decided to go also. He went along to explain things to me, and talk to me when I wanted to sleep or read the newspaper. He introduced me to large numbers of people whom I did not want to meet, took me to see things I didn't want to see, read things to me that I didn't want to hear, and introduced to me people who [Pg 30] didn't want to meet me. He multiplied misery by throwing uncongenial people together and then said: 'Wasn't it lucky that I could go along with you and make it pleasant for you?'

"Everywhere he met more new people with whom he had an acquaintance. He shook hands with them, and called them by their first names, and felt in their pockets for cigars. He was just bubbling over with mirth, and laughed all the time, being so offensively joyous, in fact, that when he went into a car, he attracted general attention, which suited him first-rate. He regarded himself as a universal favorite and all-round sunbeam.

"When we got to Washington, he took me up to see the President. He knew the President well—claimed to know lots of things about the President that made him more or less feared by the administration. He was acquainted with a thousand little vices of all our public men, which virtually placed them in his power. He knew how the President conducted himself at home, and [Pg 31] was 'on to everything' in public life.

"Well, he shook hands with the President, and introduced me. I could see that the President was thinking about something else, though, and so I came away without really feeling that I knew him very well.

"Then we visited the departments, and I can see now that I hurt myself by being towed around by this man. He was so free, and so joyous, and so bubbling, that wherever we went I could hear the key grate in the lock after we passed out of the door.

"He started south with me. He was going to show me all the battle-fields, and introduce me into society. I bought some strychnine in Washington, and put it in his buckwheat cakes; but they got cold, and he sent them back. I did not know what to do, and was almost wild, for I was traveling entirely for pleasure, and not especially for his pleasure either.

"At Petersburg I was told that the train going the other way would meet us. As we started out, I dropped my hat from the window while looking at something. It was a desperate move, but I did [Pg 32] it. Then I jumped off the train, and went back after it. As soon as I got around the curve I ran for Petersburg, where I took the other train. I presume you all felt sorry for me, but if you'd seen me fold myself in a long, passionate embrace after I had climbed on the other train, you would have changed your minds."

He then passed gently from my sight. [Pg 33]

HINTS FOR THE HOUSEHOLD

IV

There are a great many pleasures to which we may treat ourselves very economically if we go at it right. In this way we can, at a slight expense, have those comforts, and even luxuries, for which we should otherwise pay a great price.

Costly rugs and carpets, though beautiful and rich in appearance, involve such an outlay of money that many hesitate about buying them; but a very tasty method of treating floors inexpensively consists in staining the edge for several feet in width, leaving the center of the room to be covered by a large rug. Staining for the floor maybe easily made, by boiling maple bark, twenty parts; pokeberry juice, twenty-five parts; hazel brush, thirty parts, and sour milk, twenty-five parts, until it becomes about the consistency of the theory of infant damnation. Let it [Pg 34] stand a few weeks, until the rich flavor has died down, so that you can look at it for quite a while without nausea; then add vinegar and copperas to suit the taste, and apply by means of a whisk broom. When dry, help yourself to some more of it. This gives the floor a rich pauper's coffin shade, over which shellac or cod liver oil should be applied.

Rugs may be made of coffee sacking or Turkish gunny-rest sacks, inlaid with rich designs in red yarn, and a handsome fringe can be added by raveling the edges.

A beautiful receptacle for soiled collars and cuffs may be made by putting a cardboard bottom in a discarded and shattered coal scuttle, gilding the whole and tying a pale blue ribbon on the bail.

A cheap and very handsome easy-chair can be constructed by sawing into a flour barrel and removing less than half the length of staves for one-third the distance around, then fasten inside a canvas or duck seat, below which the barrel is filled with bran.

A neat little mackerel tub makes a most appropriate foot-stool for this chair, and looks so [Pg 35] unconventional and rustic that it wins every one at once. Such a chair should also have a limited number of tidies on its surface. Otherwise it might give too much satisfaction. A good style of inexpensive tidy is made by poking holes in some heavy, strong goods, and then darning up these holes with something else. The darned tidy holds its place better, I think, and is more frequently worn away on the back of the last guest than any other.

This list might be prolonged almost indefinitely, and I should be glad to write my own experience in the line of experiment, if it were not for the danger of appearing egotistical. For instance, I once economized in the matter of paper-hanging, deciding that I would save the paper-hanger's bill and put the money into preferred trotting stock.

So I read a recipe in a household hint, which went on to state how one should make and apply

paste to wall paper, how to begin, how to apply the paper, and all that. The paste was made by uniting flour, water and glue in such a way as to secure the paper to the wall and yet leave it smooth, according to the recipe. First the walls had to be "sized," however. [Pg 36]

My idea was to apply it to the wall mostly, but the chair tipped, and so I papered the piano and my wife on the way down (Page 36)

I took a tape-measure and sized the walls.

Next I began to prepare the paste and cook some in a large milk-pan. It looked very repulsive indeed, but it looked so much better than it smelled, that I did not mind. Then I put about five cents' worth of it on one roll of paper, and got up on a chair to begin. My idea was to apply it to the wall mostly, but the chair tipped, and so I papered the piano and my wife on the way down. My wife gasped for breath, but soon tore a hole through the paper so she could breathe, and then she laughed at me. That is the reason I took another end of the paper and repapered her face. I can not bear to have any one laugh at me when I am myself unhappy.

It was good paste, if you merely desired to disfigure a piano or a wife, but otherwise it would not stick at all. I did not like it. I was mad about it. But my wife seemed quite stuck on it. She hasn't got it all out of her hair yet. [Pg 37]

Then a man dropped in to see me about some money that I had hoped to pay him that morning, and he said the paste needed more glue and a quart of molasses. I put in some more glue and the last drop of molasses we had in the house. It made a mass which looked like unbaked ginger snaps, and smelled as I imagine the deluge did at low tide.

I next proceeded to paper the room. Sometimes the paper would adhere, and then again it would refrain from adhering. When I got around the room I had gained ground so fast at the top and lost so much time at the bottom of the walls, that I had to put in a wedge of paper two feet wide at the bottom, and tapering to a point at the top, in order to cover the space. This gave the room the appearance of having been toyed with by an impatient cyclone, or an air of inebriety not in keeping with my poor but honest character.

I went to bed very weary, and abraded in places. I had paste in my pockets, and bronze up my nose. In the night I could hear the paper crack. Just as I would get almost to sleep, it would pop. That was because the paper was contracting and trying to bring the dimensions of the room I own to fit it. [Pg 38]

In the morning the room had shrunken so that the carpet did not fit, and the paper hung in large molasses-covered welts on the walls. It looked real grotesque. I got a paper-hanger to come and look at it. He did so.

"And what would you advise me to do with it, sir?" I asked, with a degree of deference which I had never before shown to a paper-hanger.

"Well, I can hardly say at first. It is a very bad case. You see, the glue and stuff have made the

paper and wrinkles so hard now, that it would cost a great deal to blast it off. Do you own the house?"

"Yes, sir. That is, I have paid one-half the purchase-price, and there is a mortgage for the balance." [Pg 39]

"Oh. Well, then you are all right," said the paper-hanger, with a gleam of hope in his eye. "Let it go on the mortgage."

Then I had to economize again, so I next resorted to the home method of administering the Turkish bath. You can get a Turkish bath in that way at a cost of four and one-half to five cents, which is fully as good as one that will cost you a dollar or more in some places.

I read the directions in a paper. There are two methods of administering the low-price Turkish bath at home. One consists in placing the person to be treated in a cane-seat chair, and then putting a pan of hot water beneath this chair. Ever and anon a hot stone or hot flat-iron is dropped into the water by means of tongs, and thus the water is kept boiling, the steam rising in thick masses about the person in the chair, who is carefully concealed in a large blanket. Every time a hot flat-iron or stone is dropped into the pan it spatters the boiling water on the bare limbs of the person who is being operated upon, and if you are living in the same country with him, you [Pg 40] will hear him loudly wrecking his chances beyond the grave by stating things that are really wrong.

The other method, and the one I adopted, is better than this. You apply the heat by means of a spirit lamp, and no one, to look at a little fifteen cent spirit lamp, would believe that it had so much heat in it till he has had one under him as he sits in a wicker chair.

A wicker chair does not interfere with the lamp at all, or cut off the heat, and one is so swathed in blankets and rubber overcoats that he can't help himself.

I seated myself in that way, and then the torch was applied. Did the reader ever get out of a bath and sit down on a wire brush in order to put on his shoes, and feel a sort of startled thrill pervade his whole being? Well, that is good enough as far as it goes, but it does not really count as a sensation, when you have been through the Home Treatment Turkish Bath.

My wife was in another room reading a new book in which she was greatly interested. While she [Pg 41] was thus storing her mind with information, she thought she smelled something burning. She went all around over the house trying to find out what it was. Finally she found out.

It was her husband. I called to her, of course, but she wanted me to wait until she had discovered what was on fire. I tried to tell her to come and search my neighborhood, but I presume I did not make myself understood, because I was excited, and my personal epidermis was being singed off in a way that may seem funny to others, but was not so to one who had to pass through it.

It bored me quite a deal. Once the wicker seat of the chair caught fire.

"Oh, heavens," I cried, with a sudden pang of horror, "am I to be thus devoured by the fire fiend? And is there no one to help? Help! Help! Help!"

I also made use of other expressions but they did not add to the sense of the above.

I perspired very much, indeed, and so the bath was, in a measure, a success, but oh, what doth it profit a man to gain a bath if he lose his own soul? [Pg 42]

A JOURNEY WESTWARD

V

I once visited my old haunts in Colorado and Wyoming after about seven years of absence. I also went to Utah, where spring had come in the rich valley of the Jordan and the glossy blackbird, with wing of flame, scooted gaily from bough to bough, deftly declaring his affections right and left, and acquiring more wives than he could support, then clearing his record by claiming to have had a revelation which made it all right.

One could not shut his eyes to the fact that there was great real estate activity in the West that spring. It took the place of mining and stock, I judge, and everywhere you heard and saw men with their heads together plotting against the poor rich man. In Salt Lake I saw the sign, "Drugs and Real Estate."

I presume it meant medicine and a small residence lot in the cemetery. [Pg 43]

In early days in Denver, Henry C. Brown, then in the full flush and vigor of manhood, opened negotiations with the agent of the Atchison stage line for a ticket back to Atchison, as he was heart-broken and homesick. He owned a quarter-section of land, with a heavy growth of prairie dogs on it, and he had almost persuaded the agent to swap him a ticket for this sage brush conservatory, when the ticket seller backed gently out of the trade. Mr. Brown then sat him down on the sidewalk and cried bitterly.

I just tell this to show how easily some men weep. Atchison is at present so dead that a good cowboy, with an able mule, could tie his rope to its tail, and, putting his spurs to the mule, jerk loose the entire pelt at any time, while Brown's addition to Denver is worth anywhere from one and a half to two millions of dollars. When Mr. Brown weeps now it is because his food is too rich and gives him the gout. He sold prairie dogs enough to fence the land in so that it could not blow into Cherry Creek vale, and then he set to work earnestly to wait for the property to advance. [Pg 44] Finding that he could not sell the property at any price, he, with great foresight, concluded to retain it. Some men, with no special ability in other directions, have the greatest genius for doing such things, while others, with superior talent in other ways, do not make money in this way.

A report once got around that I had made a misguess on some property. This is partly true, only it was my wife who speculated. She had never speculated much before, though she had tried other open air amusements. So she swapped a cottage and lots in Hudson, Wisconsin, for city lots in Minneapolis, employing a man named Flinton Pansley to work up the trade, look into the title, and do the square thing for her. He was a real good man, with heavenly aspirations and a true sorrow in his heart for the prevalence of sin. Still this sorrow did not break in on his business. Well, the business was done by correspondence and Mr. Pansley only charged a reasonable amount, she giving him her new carriage to remunerate him for his brain fag. What the other man paid him for disposing of the lots I do not know. I was away at the time, and having no insect [Pg 45] powder with which to take his life I regretfully spared him to his Bible class.

Frogs build their nests there in the spring and rear their young, but people never go there (Page 45)

I did send a man over the lots, however, when I returned. They were not really in the city of Minneapolis, that is, they were not near enough to worry anybody by the tumult of the town. In fact, they were in another county. You may think I am untruthful about this, but the lots are there, if you have any curiosity to see them. They are not where they were represented to be, however, and the machine shops and gas works and court-house are quite a long distance away.

You could cut some hay on these lots, but not enough to pay the interest on the mortgage. Frogs build their nests there in the spring and rear their young, but people never go there. Two years ago Senator Washburn killed a bear on one of these lots, but that is all they have ever produced, except a slight coldness on our part toward Mr. Pansley. He says he likes the carriage real well, [Pg 46] and anything he can do for us in the future in dickering for city property will be done with an alacrity that would almost make one's head swim. I must add that I have permission to use this information, as the victim seems to think there is something kind of amusing about it. Some people think a thing funny which others can hardly get any amusement out of. What I wonder at is that Pansley did not ask for the team when he got the carriage.

Possibly he did not like the team.

I just learned recently that he and the Benders used to be very thick in an early day, but after awhile the Benders said they guessed they would have to be excused. Even the Benders had to draw the line somewhere.

Later I bought property in Salt Lake. Not a heavy venture, you understand. Just the box-office receipts for one evening. I saw it stated in the papers at $10,000. Anyway, I will let that go. That is near enough. When I see anything in the papers I ask no more questions. I do not think it is right. Patti and I have both made it a rule to put in at least one evening as an investment where [Pg 47] we happen to be. We are almost sure to do well out of it, and we also get better notices in the papers.

Patti is not looking so well as she did when my father took me to see her in the prime of her life. Though getting quite plain, it costs as much to see her as ever it did. Her voice has a metallic, or rather bi-metallic, ring to it nowadays, and she misses it by not working in more topical songs and bright Italian gags.

I asked her about an old singer who used to be with her. She said: "He was remova to ze ocean, where he keepa ze lighthouse. He learn to himself how to manage ze lighthouse one seasong; then he try by himself to star."

Now, if she would do some of those things on the stage it would pay her first rate.

When I was in Wyoming on that trip I met many old friends, all of whom shook me warmly by the hand as soon as they saw me. I visited the Capitol, and both houses adjourned for an hour out of [Pg 48] respect to my memory. I will never again say anything mean of a member of the legislature. A speech of welcome was made by the gentleman from Crook county, Mr. Kellogg, the Demosthenes of the coming state. He made statements about me that day which in the paper read almost as good and truthful as an epitaph.

Going over the hill, at Crow Creek, whose perfumed waters kiss the livery stables and abattoirs at Camp Carlin, three slender Sarah Bernhardt coyotes came towards the train, looking wistfully at me as if to say: "Why, partner, how you have fleshed up!" Answering them from the platform of the car, I said: "Go East, young men, and flesh up with the country." Honestly and seriously, I do think that if the coyote would change off and try the soft-shell crab diet for a while, he would pick right up.

When I got to Laramie City the welcome was so warm that it almost wiped out the memory of my shabby reception in New York harbor last summer, on my return from Europe, when even my [Pg 49] band went back on me and got drunk at Coney Island on the very money I had given them to use in welcoming me home again.

Winter had been a little severe along the cattle ranges, and deceased cattle might be seen extending their swollen carcasses into the bright, crisp air as the train whirled one along at the rate of seven to eight miles per hour. The skinning of a frozen steer is a diverting and unusual proceeding. Col. Buffalo Bill, who served under Washington and killed buffalo and baby elephants at Valley Forge, according to an Italian paper, should put this feature into his show. Maybe he will when he reads this. The cow gentleman first selects a quick yet steady-going mule; then he looks for a dead steer. He does not have to look very far. He now fastens one end of the deceased to some permanent object. This is harder to find than the steer, however. He then attaches his rope to the hide of the remains, having cut it with his knife first. He next starts the mule off, and [Pg 50] a mile or so away he discovers that the hide is entirely free from the cold and pulseless corps.

Sometimes a cowboy tries to skin a steer before the animal is entirely dead, and when the former gets back to the place from which he was kicked, he finds that he has a brand new set of whiskers with which to surprise his friends.

The Pacific roads have greatly improved in recent years, and though they do not dazzle one with their speed, they are much more comfortable to pass a few weeks on than they were when the eating-houses, or many of them, were in the hands of people who could not cook very well, but who made a great deal of money. Now you can eat in a good buffet-car, or a first-class dining-car, at your leisure, or you can stop off and get a good meal, or you can carry a few hens and eat hard-boiled eggs all over your neighbors.

I do not think people on the cars ought to keep hens. It disturbs the other passengers and is [Pg 51] anything but agreeable to the hens. Close confinement is never good for a hen that is advanced in years, and the cigar smoke from the rear of the car hurts her voice, I think. [Pg 52]

A PROPHET AND A PIUTE

VI

I have bought some more real estate. It occurred in Oakland, California. In making the purchase I had the assistance of a prophet, and I hope the prophet will not be overbalanced by the loss. It came about in this way: A prophet on a bicycle came to Oakland suddenly very hard up a few weeks ago, and began to ride up and down on his two-wheeler, warning the people to flee to the high ground, and thus escape the wrath to come, for, he said, the waters of the great deep would arise at about the middle of the month and smite the people of Oakland and slay them, and float the pork barrels out of their cellars, and fill their cisterns with people who had sneered at his prophecy.

This gentleman was an industrious prophet and did a good business in his line. He attracted much notice, and had all he could do at his trade for several weeks. Many Oakland people were [Pg 53] frightened, especially as Wiggins, the great intellectual Sahara of the prophet industry, also prophesied a high wave which would rise at least above the bills at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. With the aid of these two gifted middle-weight prophets, I was enabled to secure some good bargains in corner lots and improved property in Oakland at ten per cent. of the estimated value. In other words, I put my limited powers as a prophet against those of Professor Wiggins, the painstaking and conscientious seer of Canada, and the bicycle prophet of the Pacific slope. I am willing to stand or fall by the result.

As a prophet I have never attracted attention in this country, mostly because I have been too busy with other things. Also because there was so little prophesying to be done in these degenerate days that I did not care to take hold of the industry; but I have ever been ready to purchase at a great discount the desirable residences of those contemplating a general collapse of the universe, or a tidal wave which would wipe out the general government and cover with a [Pg 54] placid sea the mighty republic which God has heretofore, for some reason, smiled upon. Moreover, I can hardly believe that the Deity would commission a man to go out over California on a bicycle to warn people, when a few red messages and a standing notice in the newspapers would do the work in less time. Reasoning in this manner with a sturdy logic worthy of my rich and unctious past, I have secured some good trades in down-town property, and shall await the coming devastation with a calm and entirely unruffled breast.

California, at any season of the year, is a miracle of beauty, as almost every one knows. Nature heightens the effect for the tenderfoot by compelling him to cross the Alpine heights of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and freeze approximately to death in the cold heart of a snow blockade. Thus, weather-beaten and sore, he reaches the rolling green hills and is greeted with the rich odor of violets. I submitted to the insults of a tottering monopoly for a week, in the heart of the winter, and, tired and sick at soul, with chilblains on my feet and liniment on my other lineaments, I [Pg 55] burst forth one bright morning into the realm of eternal summer. The birds sang in my frozen bosom. I shed the gunnysack wraps from my tender feet even as a butterfly or a tramp bursts his hull in the spring time, and I laughed two or three coarse, outdoor laughs, which shook the balmy branches of the tall pomegranate trees and twittered in the dense foliage of the magnolia.

The railroad was very kind to me at first. That was when I was buying my ticket. Later on it became more harsh and even reproached me at times. Conductors woke me up two or three times in the night to gaze fondly on my ticket and look as if they were sorry they ever parted with it. On the Central Pacific passengers are not permitted to give their tickets to the porter on retiring. You must wake up and converse with the conductor at all hours of the night, and hold a lantern for him while he slowly spells out the hard words on your ticket. I did not like this, and several times I murmured in a querulous tone to the conductor. But he did not mind it. He went [Pg 56] on doing the behests of his employer, and in that way endearing himself to the great adversary of souls.

I said to an official of the road: "Do you not think this is the worst managed road in the United States—always excepting the Western North Carolina Railroad, which is an incorporated insult to humanity?"

"Well," he replied, "that depends, of course, on the standpoint from which you view it. If we were trying to divert travel to the Southern Pacific, also the rolling stock, the good-will, the culverts, the dividends, the frogs, the snowsheds, the right of way and the new-laid train figs, everything except the first, second and third mortgages, which would naturally revert to the government, would you not think we were managing the business with a steady hand and a watchful eye?"

I said I certainly should. I then wrung his hand softly and stole away, as he also began to do the same thing.

At Reno we had a day or two in which to observe the city from the car platform, while waiting for [Pg 57] the blockade to be raised. We could not go away from the train further than five hundred feet, for it might start at any moment. That is one beauty about a snow blockade. It entitles you to a stop-over, but you must be ready to hop on when the train starts. I improved the time by cultivating the acquaintance of the beautiful and picturesque outcasts known as the Piute Indians. They are a quiet, reserved set of people, who, by saying nothing, sometimes obtain a reputation for deep thought. I always envy anybody who can do that. Such men make good presidential candidates. Candidates, I say, mind you. The time has come in this country when it is hard to unite good qualifications as a candidate with the necessary qualities for a successful official.

I improved the time by cultivating the acquaintance of the beautiful and picturesque outcasts known as the Piute Indians (Page 57)

The Piute, in March or April, does not go down cellar and bring up his gladiolus, or remove the banking from the side of his villa. He does not mulch the asparagus bed, or prune the pie-plant, or rake the front yard, or salt the hens. He does not even wipe his heartbroken and neglected [Pg 58] nose. He makes no especial change in his great life-work because spring has come. He still looks serious, and like a man who is laboring under the impression that he is about to become the parent of a thought. These children of the Piute brave never mature. They do not take their places in the histories or the school readers of our common country. The Piute wears a bright red lap-robe over his person, and generally a stiff Quaker hat, with a leather band. His hair is very thick, black and coarse, and is mostly cut off square in the neck, by means of an adz, I judge, or possibly it is eaten off by moths. The Piute is never bald during life. After he is dead he becomes bald and beloved.

Johnson Sides is a well-known Piute who had the pleasure of meeting me at Reno. He said he was a great admirer of mine and had all my writings in a scrap-book at home. He also said that he wished I would come and lecture for his tribe. I afterward learned that he was an earnest and hopeful liar from Truckee. He had no scrap-book at all. Also no home. [Pg 59]

Mr. Sides at one time became quite civilized, distinguishing himself from his tribe by reading the Bible and imprisoning the lower drapery of his linen garment in the narrow confines of a pair of cavalry trousers, instead of giving it to the irresponsible breeze, as other Piutes did. He then established a hotel up the valley in the Sierras, and decided to lead a life of industry. He built a hostelry called the Shack-de-Poker-Huntus, and advertised in the *Carson Appeal*, a paper which even the editor, Sam Davis, says fills him with wonder and amazement when he knows that people actually subscribe for it. Very soon Piutes began to go to the shack to spend the heated term. Every Piute who took the *Appeal* saw the advertisement, which went on to state that hot and cold water could be got into every room in the house, and that electric bells, baths, silver-voiced chambermaids, over-charges, and everything else connected with a first-class hotel, could be found at that place. So the Piute people locked up their own homes, and, ejecting the cat, they [Pg 60] spat on the fire, and moved to the new summer hotel. They took their friends with them. They had no money, but they knew Johnson Sides, and they visited him all summer.

In the fall Mr. Sides closed the house, and resuming his blanket he went back to live with his tribe. When the butcher wagon called the next day the driver found a notice of sale, and in the language of Sol Smith Russell, "Good reasons given for selling."

Mr. Sides had been a temperance man now for a year, at least externally, but with the humiliation of this great financial wreck came a wild desire to flee to the maddening bowl, having been monkeying with the madding crowd all summer. So, silently, he obtained a bottle of Reno embalming fluid and secreted himself behind a tree, where he was asked to join himself in a social nip. He had hardly wiped away an idle tear with the corner of his blanket and replaced the stopper in his tear jug when the local representative of the U. G. J. E. T. A. of Reno came upon him. He was reported to the lodge, and his character bade fair to be smirched so badly that [Pg 61] nothing but saltpeter and a consistent life could save it. At this critical stage Mr. Davis, of the

Appeal, came to his aid, and not only gave him the support and encouragement of his columns, but told Mr. Sides that he would see that the legislature took speedy action in removing his alcoholic disabilities. Through the untiring efforts of Mr. Davis, therefore, a bill was framed "whereby the drink taken by Johnson Sides, of Nevada, be and is hereby declared null and void."

On a certain day Mr. Davis told him that the bill would come up for final passage and no doubt pass without opposition, but a purse would have to be raised to defray the expenses. The tribe began to collect what money they had and to sell their grasshoppers in order to raise more.

Johnson Sides and his people gathered on the day named, and seated themselves in the galleries. Slim old warriors with firm faces and beetling brows, to say nothing of having their hair roached, [Pg 62] but yet with no flies on them to speak of, sat in the front seats. Large, corpulent squaws, wearing health costumes, secured by telegraph wire, listened to the proceedings, knowing no more of what was going on than other people do who go to watch the legislature. Finally, however, Sam Davis came and told Mr. Sides that he was now pure as the driven snow. I saw him last week, but it seemed to me it was about time to get some more special legislation for him.

Once Mr. Davis met Mr. Sides on the street and was so glad to see him that he said: "Johnson, I like you first-rate, and should always be glad to see you. Whenever you can, let me know where you are."

The next week Sam got quite a lot of telegrams from along the railroad—for the Indians ride free on account of their sympathies with the road. These telegrams were dated at different stations. They were hopeful and even cheery, and were all marked "collect." They read about as follows: [Pg 63]

Sam Davis, Carson, Nev.:

WINNEMUCCA, NEV., March 31.

I am here.

JOHNSON SIDES.

Every little while for quite a long time Mr. Davis would get a bright, reassuring telegram, sometimes in the middle of the night, when he was asleep, informing him that Johnson Sides was "there," and he then would go back to bed cheered and soothed and sustained. [Pg 64]

THE SABBATH OF A GREAT AUTHOR

VII

I awake at an unearthly hour on Sunday morning, after which I turn over and go to sleep again. This second, or beauty sleep, I find to be almost invaluable. I do it also with much more earnestness and expression than that in the earlier part of the night. All the other people in the house gradually wake up as I begin to get in my more fancy strokes.

By eight o'clock everybody is stirring, and so I get up and glide about in my pajamas, which makes me look almost like the "Clémenceau Case" in search of an engagement.

Mr. Rogers is going to have me sit to him in my pajamas for a group of statuary. He also wishes to model an iron hitching post from me. [Pg 65]

On waking I at once take to me tub and give myself a good cold bath.

I then put in my teeth.

After doing some little studies in chiropody I throw a silk-velvet dressing gown over my shoulders and look at my bright and girlish beauty in a full-length mirror, comparing the dimpling curves, as I see them reflected, with those shown in the morning paper.

After reading a little from the chess column of some good author, I descend to the *salon* and greet my family smilingly in order to open the day auspiciously. We all then sing around the parlor organ a little pean entitled, "It's Funny When You Feel That Way."

We now go to the breakfast room, where the children are taught to set aside the daintiest bits for papa, because he might die some time and then it would be a life-long regret to those who are spared that they did not give him the tender part of the steer or the second joint of the hen.

After breakfast, which consists of chops, hashed brown potatoes, muffins and coffee, preceded by [Pg 66] canteloupe or baked beans, we proceed to quarrel over who shall go to church and who shall remain at home to keep the cattle out of the corn.

We then go to church, those who can, at least, whilst the others remain and read something that is improving. Sometimes I shave myself on Sunday mornings. Then it takes me quite a while to get back into a religious frame of mind. I do not manage very well in shaving myself, and people

who go by the house are often attracted by my yells.

I go to church quite regularly and enjoy the sermon unless it is too firm or personal. If it goes into doctrine too much I am apt to be quite fatigued at its end on account of the mental reservations I have made along through it.

I like to go and hear about God's love, but I am rarely benefited by a discourse which enlarges upon his jealousy. When I am told also that God spares no pains in getting even with people, I not only do not enjoy the information, but I would sit up till a late hour at night to doubt it.

[Pg 67]

He sometimes succeeds in getting himself disliked by some other dog and then I can observe the fight (Page 67)

I shake hands with the pastor, and after suggesting something for him to preach about on the following Sabbath, I go home.

In the afternoon I go walking if no one calls. We have dinner at 2 o'clock on Sunday, consisting of jerked beef smothered in milk gravy. This is the remove. For side dishes we have squash or meat pie. We sometimes open with soup and then have clean plates all around, with fowl and greens, tapering off with some kind of rich pie.

After dinner I sometimes nap a little and then fool with the colt. This is done quietly, however, so as not to break in upon the devotional spirit of the day. After this I go for a walk or converse intelligently with any foreign powers who may be visiting our shores.

When I walk I am generally accompanied by a restless Queen Anne dog, which precedes me about a mile. He sometimes succeeds in getting himself disliked by some other dog and then I can observe the fight when I catch up with him.

As the twilight gathers all seem ready again for more food and we begin to clamor for pabulum, keeping it up until either square or round crackers and smearcase are produced. These are washed down with foaming beakers of sarsaparilla. [Pg 68]

As the evening lamp is now lighted, I produce some good book or pamphlet like "The Greatest Thing in the World," and read from it, occasionally cuffing a child in order to keep everything calm and reposeful. At 9 o'clock the cat is expelled and the eight-day clock is wound up for the week. Gazing up at the bright cold stars after kicking forth the cat, I realize that another Sabbath has been filed away in the great big brawny bosom of the past, and with a little remorseful sigh and an incipient sob when I think that I am not making a better record, I drive a fence nail in over the door latch and seek my library which, on being properly approached, opens and becomes a beautiful couch. [Pg 69]

A FLYER IN DIRT

VIII

I have just returned from a visit to my property at Minneapolis, and can not refrain from referring to its marvelous growth. The distance between it and the business center of the city has also grown a good deal since I last saw it. This is the property which I purchased some three years ago of a real good man. His name is Pansley—Flinton Pansley. He has done business in most all the towns of the Northwest. Perhaps a further word or two about this pious gentleman will not be amiss. Entering a place quietly and even meekly, with a letter to the local pastor, he would begin reaching out his little social tendrils by sighing over the lost and undone condition of mankind. After regretting the state in which he had found God's vineyard, he would rent a store and sell [Pg 70] goods at a sacrifice, but when the sacrifice was being offered up, a close observer would discover that Mr. Pansley was not in it.

In this way he would build up quite a trade, only sparing a little time each day in which to retire to his closet and sob over the altogether godless condition in which he had found man. He would then make an assignment.

Pardon me for again referring to the matter, but I do so utterly without malice, and in connection with the unparalleled growth of my property here. So if the gentle and rather attractive reader will excuse a bad pen, and some plain stationery, as my own crested writing-paper is in my trunk, which is now in the possession of a well-known hotel man whose name is suppressed on account of his family, I shall refer again briefly to the property and the circumstances surrounding its purchase. I had intended to put a good fence around it ere this, but with these peculiar circumstances surrounding it, I feel that it is safe from intrusion. [Pg 71]

The property was sold to my wife by Mr. Pansley at a sacrifice, but when the burnt offering had ascended, and the atmosphere had cleared, and the ashes on the altar had been blown aside, the suspender buttons of Mr. Pansley were not there. He had taken his bright red mark-down figures, and a letter to his future pastor, and gone to another town. He is now selling groceries. From town lots to groceries is, to a versatile man, a very small stride. He is in business in St. Paul, and that has given Minneapolis quite a little spurt of prosperity.

We exchanged a cottage for city lots unimproved, as I said in a former article, and got Mr. Pansley to do it for us. My wife gave him her carriage for acting in that capacity. She was sorry she could not do more for him, because he was a man who had found his fellow-men in such an undone condition everywhere, and had been trying ever since to do them up.

The property lies about half-way between the West Hotel and the open Polar Sea, and is in a good neighborhood, looking south; at least it was the other day when I left it. It lies all over the [Pg 72] northwest, resembling in that respect the man we bought it of.

Mr. Pansley took the carriage, also the wrench with which I was wont to take off the nuts thereof when I greased it on Sabbath mornings. We still go to church, but we walk. Occasionally Mr. Pansley whirls by us, and his dust and debris fall upon my freshly ironed and neat linen coat as he passes by us with a sigh.

He said once that he did not care for money if he only could let in the glad sunlight of the gospel upon the heathen.

"Why," I exclaimed, "why do you wish to let in the glad sunlight of the gospel upon the heathen?"

"Alas!" he said, brushing away a tear with the corner of a gray shawl which he wore, and wiping his bright, piercing nose on the top rail of my fence, "so that they would not go to hell, Mr. Nye!"

"And do you think that the heathen who knows nothing of God will go to hell, or has been going to hell for, say, ten thousand years, without having seen a daily paper or a Testament?" [Pg 73]

"I do. Millions of ignorant people in yet undiscovered lands are going to hell daily without the knowledge of God." With that he turned away, and concealed his emotion in his shawl, while his whole frame shook.

"But, even if he should escape by reason of his ignorance, we can not escape the responsibility of shedding the light of the gospel upon his opaque soul," said he.

So I gave him $2 to assist the poor heathen to a place where he may share the welcome of a cordial and eternal damnation along with the more educated and refined classes. Whether the heathen will ever appreciate it or not, I can not tell at this moment. Lately I have had a little ray of fear that he might not, and with that fear, like a beam of sunshine, comes the blessed hope that possibly something may have happened to the $2, and that mayhap it did not get there.

I went up to see the property with which my wife had been endowed by the generous foresight of [Pg 74] Mr. Pansley, the heathen's friend. I had seen the place before, but not in the autumn.

Oh, no, I had not saw it in the hectic of the dying year! I had not saw it when the squirrel, the comic lecturer, and the Italian go forth to gather their winter hoard of chestnuts. I had not saw it as the god of day paints the royal mantle of the year's croaking monarch and the crow sinks softly onto the swelling bosom of the dead horse. I had only saw it in the wild, wet spring. I had only saw it when the frost and the bullfrog were heaving out of the ground.

Then rolling my trousers up a yard or two, I struck off into the scrub pine, carrying with me a large board (Page 74)

I strolled out there. I rode on the railroad for a couple of hours first, I think. Then I got off at a tank, where I got a nice, cool, refreshing drink of as good, pure water as I ever flung a lip over. Then rolling my trousers up a yard or two, I struck off into the scrub pine, carrying with me a large board on which I had painted in clear, beautiful characters: [Pg 75]

For Sale.

> The owner finding it necessary to go to Europe for eight or nine years, in order to brush up on the languages of the continent and return a few royal visits there, will sell all this suburban property. Terms reasonable. No restrictions except that street-cars shall not run past these lots at a higher rate of speed than sixty miles per hour without permission of the owner.

I think that the property looks better in the autumn even than it does in spring. The autumn leaves are falling. Also the price on this piece of property. It would be a good time to buy it now. Also a good time to sell. I shall add nothing because it has been associated with me. That will cut no figure, for it has not been associated with me so very long, or so very intimately.

The place, with advertising and the free use of capital, could be made a beautiful rural resort, or it could be fenced off tastefully into a cheap commodious place in which to store bears for market.

But it has grown. It is wider, it seems to me, and there is less to obstruct the view. As soon as commutation or dining trains are put on between Minneapolis and Sitka, a good many pupils will [Pg 76] live on my property and go to school at Sitka.

Trade is quiet in that quarter at present, however, and traffic is practically at a standstill. A good many people have written to me asking about my subdivision and how various branches of industry would thrive there. Having in an unguarded moment used the stamps, I hasten to say that they would be premature in going there now, unless in pursuit of rabbits, which are extremely prevalent.

Trade is very dull, and a first or even a second national bank in my subdivision of the United States would find itself practically out of a job. A good newspaper, if properly conducted, could have some fun and get a good many advertisements by swopping kind words at regular catalogue prices for goods. But a theater would not pay. I write this for the use of a man who has just written to know if a good opera-house with folding seats would pay a fair investment on capital. No, it would not. I will be fair and honest. Smarting as I do yet under the cruel injustice done me [Pg 77] by the meek and gentle groceryman, who, while he wept upon my corrugated bosom with one hand, softly removed my pelt with the other and sprinkled Chili sauce all over me, I will not betray my own friends. Even with my still bleeding carcass quivering under the Halford sauce of Mr. Pansley, the "skin" and hypocrite, the friend of the far-distant savage and the foe of those who are his unfortunate neighbors, I will not betray even a stranger. Though I have used his

postage-stamp I shall not be false to him. An opera-house this fall would be premature. Most everybody's dates are booked, anyhow. We could not get Francis Wilson or Nat C. Goodwin or Lillian Russell or Henry Irving or Mr. Jefferson, for they are all too busy turning people away, and I would hate to open with James Owen O'Connor or any other mechanical appliance.

No. Wait another year at least. At present an opera-house in my subdivision of the solar system would be as useless as a Dull Thud in the state of New York. [Pg 78]

One drawback to the immediate prosperity of the place is that commutation rates are yet in their infancy. Eighty-seven and one-half cents per ride on trains which run only on Tuesdays and Fridays is not sufficient compensation for the long and lonely walk and the paucity of some suitable cottages when one gets there.

So I will sell the dear old place, with all its associations and the good-will of a thriving young frog conservatory, at the buyer's price. As I say, there has been since I was last there a steady growth, which is mostly noticeable on the mortgage that I secured along with the property. It was on there when I bought it, and as it could not be removed without injury to the realty, according to an old and established law of Justinian or Coke or Littleton, Mr. Pansley ruled that it was part of the property and passed with its conveyance. It is looking well, with a nice growth of interest around the edges and its foreclosure clause fully an inch and a half long.

I shall be willing, in case I do not find a cash buyer, to exchange the property for almost anything [Pg 79] I can eat, except Paris green. Nor should I hesitate to swap the whole thing, to a man whom I felt that I could respect, for a good bird dog. I am also willing to trade the lots for a milk route or a cold storage. It would be a good site for some gentleman in New York to build a country cottage.

I should also swap the estate to a man who really means business for a second-hand cellar. Call on or address the undersigned early, and please do not push or rudely jostle those in the line ahead of you.

Cast-off clothing, express prepaid, and free from all contagious diseases, accepted at its full value. Anything left by mistake in the pockets will be taken good care of, and, possibly, returned in the spring.

Gunnysack Oleson, who lives eight miles north of the county line, will show you over the grounds. Please do not hitch horses to the trees. I will not be responsible for horses injured while tied to my trees.

A new railroad track is thinking of getting a right of way next year, which may be nearer by two [Pg 80] miles than the one that I have to take, provided they will let me off at the right place.

I promise to do all that I can conscientiously for the road, to aid any one who may buy the property, and I will call the attention of all railroads to the advisability of a road in that direction. All that I can honorably do, I will do. My honor is as dear to me as my gas bill every year I live.

N. B.—The dead horse on lot 9, block 21, Nye's Addition to the Solar System, is not mine. Mine died before I got there. [Pg 81]

A SINGULAR "HAMLET"

IX

The closing debut of that great Shakespearian humorist and emotional ass, Mr. James Owen O'Connor, at the Star Theater, will never be forgotten. During his extraordinary histrionic career he gave his individual and amazing renditions of Hamlet, Phidias, Shylock, Othello, and Richelieu. I think I liked his Hamlet best, and yet it was a pleasure to see him in anything wherein he killed himself.

Encouraged by the success of beautiful but self-made actresses, and hoping to win a place for himself and his portrait in the great soap and cigarette galaxy, Mr. O'Connor placed himself in the hands of some misguided elocutionist, and then sought to educate the people of New York and elocute them out of their thralldom up into the glorious light of the O'Connor school of [Pg 82] acting.

The first week he was in the hands of the critics, and they spoke quite serenely of his methods. Later, it was deemed best to place his merits in the hands of a man who would be on an equal footing with him. What O'Connor wanted was one of his peers, who would therefore judge him fairly. I was selected because I know nothing whatever about acting and would thus be on an equality with Mr. O'Connor.

After seeing his Hamlet I was of the opinion that he did wisely in choosing New York for debutting purposes, for had he chosen Denver, Colorado, at the end of the third act kind hands would have removed him from the stage by means of benzine and a rag.

I understand that Mr. O'Connor charged Messrs. Henry E. Abbey and Henry Irving with using their influence among the masses in order to prejudice said masses against Mr. O'Connor, thus

making it unpleasant for him to act, and inciting in the audience a feeling of gentle but evident hostility, which Mr. O'Connor deprecated very much whenever he could get a chance to do so. I looked into this matter a little and I do not think it was true. Until almost the end of Mr. O'Connor's career, Messrs. Abbey and Irving were not aware of his great metropolitan success, and it is generally believed among the friends of the two former gentlemen that they did not feel it so keenly as Mr. O'Connor was led to suppose. [Pg 83]

But James Owen O'Connor did one thing which I take the liberty of publicly alluding to. He took that saddest and most melancholy bit of bloody history, trimmed with assassinations down the back and looped up with remorse, insanity, duplicity and unrequited love, and he filled it with silvery laughter and cauliflower and mirth, and various other groceries which the audience throw in from time to time, thus making it more of a spectacular piece than under the conservative management of such old-school men as Booth, who seem to think that Hamlet should be soaked full of sadness.

I went to see Hamlet, thinking that I would be welcome, for my sympathies were with James when I heard that Mr. Irving was picking on him and seeking to injure him. I went to the box office and explained who I was, and stated that I had been detailed to come and see Mr. O'Connor act; also that in what I might say afterwards my instructions were to give it to Abbey and Irving if I found that they had tampered with the audience in any way. [Pg 84]

The man in the box office did not recognize me, but said that Mr. Fox would extend to me the usual courtesies. I asked where Mr. Fox could be found, and he said inside. I then started to go inside, but ran against a total stranger, who was "on the door," as we say. He was feeding red and yellow tickets into a large tin oven, and looking far, far away. I conversed with him in low, passionate tones, and asked him where Mr. Fox could be found. He did not know, but thought he was still in Europe. I went back and told the box office that Mr. Fox was in Europe. He said No, I would find him inside. "Well, but how shall I get inside?" I asked eagerly, for I could already, I fancied, hear the orchestra beginning to twang its lyre. [Pg 85]

"Walk in," said he, taking in $2 and giving back 50 cents in change to a man with a dead cat in his overcoat pocket.

I went back, and springing lightly over the iron railing while the gatekeeper was thinking over his glorious past, I went all around over the theater looking for Mr. Fox. I found him haggling over the price of some vegetables which he was selling at the stage door and which had been contributed by admirers and old subscribers to Mr. O'Connor at a previous performance.

When Mr. Fox got through with that I presented to him my card, which is as good a piece of job work in colors as was ever done west of the Missouri river, and to which I frequently point with pride.

Mr. Fox said he was sorry, but that Mr. O'Connor had instructed him to extend no courtesies whatever to the press. The press, he claimed, had said something derogatory to Mr. O'Connor as a tragedian, and while he personally would be tickled to death to give me two divans and a folding-bed near the large fiddle, he must do as Mr. O'Connor had bid—or bade him, I forget which; and so, restraining his tears with great difficulty, he sent me back to the entrance and although I was already admitted in a general way, I went to the box office and purchased a seat. I believe now that Mr. Fox thought he had virtually excluded me from the house when he told me I should have to pay in order to get in. [Pg 86]

I bought a seat in the parquet and went in. The audience was not large and there were not more than a dozen ladies present.

Pretty soon the orchestra began to ooze in through a little opening under the stage. Then the overture was given. It was called "Egmont." The curtain now arose on a scene in Denmark. I had asked an usher to take a note to Mr. O'Connor requesting an audience, but the boy had returned with the statement that Mr. O'Connor was busy rehearsing his soliloquy and removing a shirred egg from his outer clothing.

He also said he could not promise an audience to any one. It was all he could do to get one for himself. [Pg 87]

So the play went on. Elsinore, where the first act takes place, is in front of a large stone water tank, where two gentlemen armed with long-handled hay knives are on guard.

All at once a ghost who walks with an overstrung Chickering action and stiff, jerky, Waterbury movement, comes in, wearing a dark mosquito net over his head—so that harsh critics can not truly say there are any flies on him, I presume. When the ghost enters most every one enjoys it. Nobody seems to be frightened at all. I knew it was not a ghost as quick as I looked at it. One man in the gallery hit the ghost on the head with a soda cracker, which made him jump and feel of his ear; so I knew then that it was only a man made up to look like a presence.

One of the guards, whose name, I think, was Smith, had a droop to his legs and an instability about the knees which were highly enjoyable. He walked like a frozen-toed hen, and stood first on one foot and then on the other, with almost human intelligence. His support was about as poor as O'Connor's. [Pg 88]

After awhile the ghost vanished with what is called a stately tread, but I would regard it more as a territorial tread. Horatio did quite well, and the audience frequently listened to him. Still, he

was about the only one who did not receive crackers or cheese as a slight testimonial of regard from admirers in the audience.

Finally, Mr. James Owen O'Connor entered. It was fully five minutes before he could be heard, and even then he could not. His mouth moved now and then, and a gesture would suddenly burst forth, but I did not hear what he said. At least I could not hear distinctly what he said. After awhile, as people got tired and went away, I could hear better.

Mr. O'Connor introduced into his Hamlet a set of gestures evidently intended for another play. People who are going to act out on the stage can not be too careful in getting a good assortment of gestures that will fit the play itself. James had provided himself with a set of gestures which [Pg 89] might do for Little Eva, or "Ten Nights in a Bar-room," but they did not fit Hamlet. There is where he makes a mistake. Hamlet is a man whose victuals don't agree with him. He feels depressed and talks about sticking a bodkin into himself, but Mr. O'Connor gives him a light, elastic step, and an air of persiflage, *bonhomie*, and frisk, which do not match the character.

Mr. O'Connor sought in his conception and interpretation of Hamlet to give it a free and jaunty Kokomo flavor—a nameless twang of tansy and dried apples, which Shakespeare himself failed to sock into his great drama.

James did this, and more. He took the wild-eyed and morbid Blackwell's Island Hamlet, and made him a $2 parlor humorist who could be the life of the party, or give lessons in elocution, and take applause or crackers and cheese in return for the same.

There is really a good lesson to be learned from the pitiful and pathetic tale of James Owen O'Connor. Injudicious friends, doubtless, overestimated his value, and unduly praised his Smart [Pg 90] Aleckutionary powers. Loving himself unwisely but too extensively, he was led away into the great, untried purgatory of public scrutiny, and the general indictment followed.

The truth stands out brighter and stronger than ever that there is no cut across lots to fame or success. He who seeks to jump from mediocrity to a glittering triumph over the heads of the patient student, and the earnest, industrious candidate who is willing to bide his time, gets what James Owen O'Connor received—the just condemnation of those who are abundantly able to judge.

In seeking to combine the melancholy beauty of Hamlet's deep and earnest pathos with the gentle humor of "A Hole in the Ground," Mr. O'Connor evidently corked himself, as we say at the Browning Club, and it was but justice after all. Before we curse the condemnation of the people and the press, let us carefully and prayerfully look ourselves over, and see if we have not overestimated ourselves.

There are many men alive to-day who do not dare say anything without first thinking how it will [Pg 91] read in their memoirs—men whom we can not, therefore, thoroughly enjoy until they are dead, and yet whose graves will be kept green only so long as the appropriation lasts. [Pg 92]

MY MATRIMONIAL BUREAU

X

The following matrimonial inquiries are now in my hands awaiting replies, and I take this method of giving them more air. A few months ago I injudiciously stated that I should take great pleasure in booming, or otherwise whooping up, everything in the matrimonial line, if those who needed aid would send me twenty-five cents, with personal description, lock of hair, and general outline of the style of husband or wife they were yearning for. As a result of thus yielding to a blind impulse and giving it currency through the daily press, I now have a huge mass of more or less soiled postage stamps that look as though they had made a bicycle tour around the world, a haymow full of letters breathing love till you can't rest, and a barrel of calico-colored hair. It is a rare treat to look at this assortment of hair of every hue and degree of curl and coarseness. When [Pg 93] I pour it out on the floor it looks like the interior of a western barber shop during a state fair. When I want fun again I shall not undertake to obtain it by starting a matrimonial agency.

I have one letter from a man of twenty-seven summers, who pants to bestow himself on some one at as early a date as possible. He tells me on a separate slip of paper, which he wishes destroyed, that he is a little given to "bowling up," a term with which I am not familiar, but he goes on to say that a good, noble woman, with love in her heart and an earnest desire to save a soul, could rush in and gather him in in good shape. He says that he is worthy, and that if he could be snatched from a drunkard's grave in time he believes he would become eminent. He says that several people have already been overheard to say: "What a pity he drinks." From this he is led to believe that a good wife, with some means, could redeem him. He says it is quite a common thing for [Pg 94] young women where he lives to marry young men for the purpose of saving them.

I think myself that some young girl ought to come forward and snatch this brand at an early date.

The great trouble with men who form the bowl habit is that, on the morrow, after they have been so bowling, they awake with a distinct and well-defined sensation of soreness and swollenness

about the head, accompanied by a strong desire to hit some living thing with a stove leg. The married man can always turn to his wife in such an emergency, smite her and then go to sleep again, but to one who is doomed to wander alone through life there is nothing to do but to suffer on, or go out and strike some one who does not belong to his family, and so lay himself liable to arrest.

This letter is accompanied by a tin-type picture of a young man who shaves in such a way as to work in a streak of whiskers by which he fools himself into the notion that he has a long and luxuriant mustache. He looks like a person who, under the influence of liquor, would weep on the [Pg 95] bosom of a total stranger and then knock his wife down because she split her foot open instead of splitting the kindling.

He is not a bad-looking man, and the freckles on his hands do not hurt him as a husband. Any young lady who would like to save him from a drunkard's grave can address him in my care, inclosing twenty-five cents, a small sum which goes toward a little memorial fund I am getting up for myself. My memory has always been very poor, and if I can do it any good with this fund I shall do so. The lock of hair sent with this letter may be seen at any time nailed up on my woodshed door. It is a dull red color, and can be readily cut by means of a pair of tinman's shears.

The two following letters, taken at random from my files, explain themselves:

"Burnt Prairie, near the Junction,
"On the road to the Court House,
"Tennessee, January 2.

"Dear Sir—I am in search of a wife and would be willing to settle down if I could get a [Pg 96] good wife. I was but twenty-six years of age when my mother died and I miss her sadly for she was oh so good and kind to me her caring son.

"I have been wanting for the past year to settle down, but I have not saw a girl that I thought would make me a good, true wife. I know I have saw a good deal of the world, and am inclined to be cynical for I see how hollow everything is, and how much need there is for a great reform. Sometimes I think that if I could express the wild thoughts that surges up and down in my system, I could win a deathless name. When I get two or three drinks aboard I can think of things faster than I can speak them, or draw them off for the paper. What I want is a woman that can economize, and also take the place of my lost mother, who loved me and put a better polish on my boots than any other living man.

"I know I am gay and giddy in my nature, but if I could meet a joyous young girl just emerging upon life's glad morn, and she had means, I would be willing to settle down and make a good, quiet, every-day husband. [Pg 97]

"A. J."

"Ashmead, LeDuc Co., I.T.,
"December 20.

"Dear Sir—I have very little time in which to pencil off a few lines regarding a wife. I am a man of business, and I can't fool around much, but I would be willing to marry the right kind of a young woman. I am just bursting forth on the glorious dawn of my sixty-third year. I have been married before, and as I might almost say, I have been in that line man and boy for over forty years. My pathway has been literally decorated with wives ever since I was twenty years old.

"I ain't had any luck with my wives heretofore, for they have died off like sheep. I've treated all of them as well as I knew how, never asking of them to do any more than I did, and giving of 'em just the same kind of vittles that I had myself, but they are all gone now. There was a year or two that seemed just as if there was a funeral [Pg 98] procession stringing out of my front gate half the time.

"What I want is a young woman that can darn a sock without working two or three tumors into it, cook in a plain economical way without pampering the appetites of hired help, do chores around the barn and assist me in accumulating property.

I. D. P."

This last letter contains a small tress of dark hair that feels like a bunch of barbed wire when drawn through the fingers, and has a tendency to "crock." [Pg 99]

THE HATEFUL HEN

XI

The following inquiries and replies have been awaiting publication and I shall print them here if

the reader has no objections. I do not care to keep correspondents waiting too long for fear they will get tired and fail to write me in the future when they want to know anything. Mr. Earnest Pendergast writes from Puyallup as follows:

"Why do you not try to improve your appearance more? I think you could if you would, and we would all be so glad. You either have a very malicious artist, or else your features must pain you a good deal at times. Why don't you grow a mustache?"

These remarks, of course, are a little bit personal, Earnest, but still they show your goodness of heart. I fear that you are cursed with the fatal gift of beauty yourself and wish to have others go [Pg 100] with you on the downward way. You ask why I do not grow a mustache, and I tell you frankly that it is for the public good that I do not. I used to wear a long, drooping and beautiful mustache, which was well received in society, and, under the quiet stars and opportune circumstances, gave good satisfaction; but at last the hour came when I felt that I must decide between this long, silky mustache and soft-boiled eggs, of which I am passionately fond. I hope that you understand my position, Earnest, and that I am studying the public welfare more than my own at all times.

Sassafras Oleson, of South Deadman, writes to know something of the care of fowls in the spring and summer. "Do you know," he asks, "anything of the best methods for feeding young orphan chickens? Is there any way to prevent hens from stealing their nests and sitting on inanimate objects? Tell us as tersely as possible what your own experience has been with hens."

To speak tersely of the hen and her mission in life seems to me almost sacrilege. It is at least in [Pg 101] poor taste. The hen and her works lie near to every true heart. She does much toward making us better, and she doesn't care who knows it, either. Young chicks who have lost their mothers by death, and whose fathers are of a shiftless and improvident nature, may be fed on kumiss, two parts; moxie, eight parts; distilled water, ten parts. Mix and administer till relief is obtained. Sometimes, however, a guinea hen will provide for the young chicken, and many lives have been saved in this way. Whether or not this plan will influence the voice of the rising hen is a question among henologists of the country which I shall not attempt to answer.

Hens who steal their nests are generally of a secretive nature and are more or less social pariahs. A hen who will do this should be watched at all times and won back by kind words from the step she is about to take. Brute force will accomplish little. Logic also does not avail. You should endeavor to influence her by showing her that it is honorable at all times to lay a good egg, and that as soon as she begins to be secretive and to seek to mislead those who know and love her, [Pg 102] she takes a course which can not end with honor to herself or her descendants.

I have made the hen a study for many years, and love to watch her even yet as she resumes her toils on a falling market year after year, or seeks to hatch out a summer hotel by setting on a door knob. She interests and pleases me. Careful study of the hen convinces me that her low, retreating forehead is a true index to her limited reasoning faculties and lack of memory, ideality, imagination, calculation and spirituality. She is also deficient in her enjoyment of humor.

I once owned a large white draught rooster, who stood about seven hands high, and had feet on him that would readily break down a whole corn-field if he walked through it. Yet he lacked the courage of his convictions, and socially was not a success. Leading hens regarded him as a good-hearted rooster, and seemed to wonder that he did not get on better in a social way. He had a rich baritone voice, and was a good provider, digging up large areas of garden, and giving the [Pg 103] hens what was left after he got through, and yet they gave their smiles to far more dissolute though perhaps brighter minds. So I took him away awhile, and let him see something of the world by allowing him to visit among the neighbors, and go into society a little. Then I brought him home again, and one night colored him with diamond dyes so that he was a beautiful scarlet. His name was Sumner.

I took Sumner the following morning and turned him loose among his old neighbors. Surprise was written on every face. He realized his advantage, and the first thing he did was to greet the astonished crowd with a gutteral remark, which made them jump. He then stepped over to a hated rival, and ate off about fifteen cents' worth of his large, red, pompadour comb. He now remarked in a courteous way to a small Poland-China hen, who seemed to be at the head of all works of social improvement, that we were having rather a backward spring. Then he picked out [Pg 104] the eye of another rival, much to his surprise, and went on with the conversation. By noon the bright scarlet rooster owned the town. Those who had picked on him before had now gone to the hospital, and practically the social world was his. He got so stuck up that he crowed whenever the conversation lagged, and was too proud to eat a worm that was not right off the ice. I never saw prosperity knock the sense out of a rooster so soon. He lost my sympathy at once, and I resolved to let him carve out his own career as best he might.

Gradually his tail feathers grew gray and faded, but he wore his head high. He was arrogant and made the hens go worming for his breakfast by daylight. Then he would get mad at the food and be real hateful and step on the little chickens with his great big feet.

But as his new feathers began to come in folks got on to him, as Matthew Arnold has it, and the other roosters began to brighten up and also blow up their biceps muscles.

He looked up sadly at me with his one eye as who should say, "Have you got any more of that there red paint left?" (Page 105)

One day he was especially mean at breakfast. A large fat worm, brought to him by the flower of his harem, had a slight gamey flavor, he seemed to think, and so he got mad and bit several chickens with his great coarse beak and stepped on some more and made a perfect show of himself. [Pg 105]

At this moment a small bantam wearing one eye still in mourning danced up and kicked Sumner's eye out. Then another rival knocked the stuffing for a whole sofa pillow out of Sumner, and retired. By this time the surprised and gratified hens stepped back and gave the boys a chance. The bantam now put on his trim little telegraph climbers and, going up Mr. Sumner's powerful frame at about four jumps, he put in some repairs on the giant's features, presented his bill, and returned. By nine o'clock Sumner didn't have features enough left for a Sunday paper. He looked as if he had been through the elevated station at City Hall and Brooklyn bridge. He looked up sadly at me with his one eye as who should say, "Have you got any more of that there red paint left?" But I shook my head at him and he went away into a little patch of catnip and stayed there four days. After that you could get that rooster to do anything for you—except lay. He was gentle to a fault. He would run errands for those hens and turn an icecream freezer for them all day on lawn festival days while others were gay. He never murmured nor repined. He was kind to the little chickens and often spoke to them about the general advantages of humility. [Pg 106]

After many years of usefulness Sumner one day thoughtlessly ate the remains of a salt mackerel, and pulling the drapery of his couch about him he lay down to pleasant dreams, and life's fitful fever was over. His remains were given to a poor family in whom I take a great interest, frequently giving them many things for which I have no especial use.

This should teach us that some people can not stand prosperity, but need a little sorrow, ever and anon, to teach them where they belong. And, oh! how the great world smiles when a rooster, who has owned the ranch for a year or so, and made himself odious, gets spread out over the United States by a smaller one with less voice. [Pg 107]

The study of the fowl is filled with interest. Of late years I keep fowls instead of a garden. Formerly my neighbors kept fowls and I kept the garden.

It is better as it is.

Mertie Kersykes, Whatcom, Washington, writes as follows: "Dear Mr. Nye, does pugilists ever reform? They are so much brought into Contax with course natures that I do not see how they can ever, ever become good lives or become professors of religion. Do you know if such is the case to the best of your knowledge, and answeer Soon as convenient, and so no more at Present." [Pg 108]

AS A CANDIDATE

XII

The heat and venom of each political campaign bring back to my mind with wonderful clearness the bitter and acrimonious war, and the savage factional fight, which characterized my own legislative candidacy in what was called the Prairie Dog District of Wyoming, about ten years ago. This district was known far and wide as the battleground of the territory, and generally when the sun went down on the eve of election day the ground had that disheveled and torn-up appearance peculiar to the grave of Brigham Young the next day after his aggregated widow has held her regular annual sob recital and scalding-tear festival.

I hesitated about accepting the nomination because I knew that Vituperation would get up on its hind feet and annoy me greatly, and I had reason to believe that no pains would be spared on the [Pg 109] part of the management of the opposition to make my existence a perfect bore. This turned out to be the case, and although I was nominated in a way that seemed to indicate perfect harmony, it was not a week before the opposition organ, to which I had frequently loaned print paper when it could not get its own C. O. D. paper out of the express office, said as follows in a startled and double-leaded tone of voice:

"HUMILIATING DISCLOSURE.

> "The candidate for assembly in this district, whose trans-Missouri name seems to be Nye, turns out to be the same man who left Penobscot county, Maine, in the dark of the moon four years ago. Mr. Nye's disappearance was so mysterious that prominent Penobscoters, especially the sheriff, offered a large reward for his person. It was afterwards learned that he was kidnapped and taken across the Canadian line by a high-spirited and high-stepping horse valued at $1,300. Mr. Nye's candidacy for the [Pg 110] high office to which he aspires has brought him into such prominence that at the mass meeting held last evening in Jimmy Avery's barber-shop, he was recognized at once by a Maine man while making a telling speech in favor of putting in a stone culvert at the draw above Mandel's ranch. The man from Maine, who is visiting our thriving little town with a view to locating here and establishing an agency for his world-renowned rock-alum axe-helves, says that Mr. Nye, in the hurry and rush incident to his departure for Canada, overlooked his wife and seven little ones. He also says that the candidate's boasted liberality here is different from the kind he was using while in Maine, and quotes the following incident: Two years before he went away from Penobscot county, one of our present candidate's children was playing on the railroad track of the Bangor & Moosehead Lake Railroad, when suddenly there was a wild shriek of the iron-horse, a timid, scared cry of the child, and the rushing train was upon it. Spectators turned [Pg 111] away in horror. The air was heavy, and the sun seemed to stop its shining. Slowly the long freight train, loaded with its rich freight of huckleberries, came to a halt. A glad cry went up from the assembly as the broad-shouldered engineer came out of the tall grass with the crowing child in his arms. Then cheer on cheer rent the air, and in the midst of it all, Mr. Nye appeared. He was told of the circumstance, and, as he wrung the hand of the engineer, tears stood in his eyes. Then, reaching in his pocket, he drew forth a card, and writing his autograph on it, he gave it to the astounded engineer, telling him to use it wisely and not fritter it away. 'But are you not robbing yourself?' exclaimed the astonished and delighted engineer. 'No, oh no,' said the munificent parent, 'I have others left.' And this is the man who asks our suffrages! Will you vote for him or for Alick Meyerdinger, the purest one-legged man that ever rapped with his honest knuckles on top of a bar and asked the boys to put a name to it." [Pg 112]

I was pained to read this, for I had not at that time toyed much with politics, but I went up stairs and practiced an hour or two on a hollow laugh that I thought would hide the pain which seemed to tug at my heart-strings. For the rest of the day I strolled about town bearing a lurid campaign smile that looked about as joyous as the light-hearted gambols of a tin horse.

I visited my groceryman, a man whom I felt that I could trust, and who had honored me in the same way. He said that I ought to be indorsed by my fellow-citizens. "What! All of them?" I exclaimed, with a choking sensation, for I had once tried to be indorsed by one of my fellow-citizens and was not entirely successful. "No," said he, "but you ought to be ratified and indorsed by those who know you best and love you most."

"Well," said I, "will you attend to that?"

"Yes, of course I will. You must not give up hope. Where do you buy your meat?"

I told him the name of my butcher.

"And do you owe him about the same that you do me?" [Pg 113]

I said I didn't think there could be $5 one way or the other.

"Well, give me a memorandum of what you can call to mind that you owe around town. I will see all these parties and we will get them together and work up a strong and hearty home indorsement for you, which will enable you to settle with all of us at par in the event of your election."

I gave him a list.

That evening a load of lumber was deposited on my lawn, and a man came in to borrow a few pounds of fence nails. I asked him what he wanted to do, for I thought he was going to nail a campaign lie or something. He said he was the man who was sent up to build a kind of "trussle" in front of my house. "What for?" I asked, with eyes like a startled fawn. "Why, for the speakers to stand on," he said. "It is a kind of a combination racket. Something between a home indorsement and a mass-meeting of creditors. You are to be surprised and gratified to-morrow evening, as near as I can make out." [Pg 114]

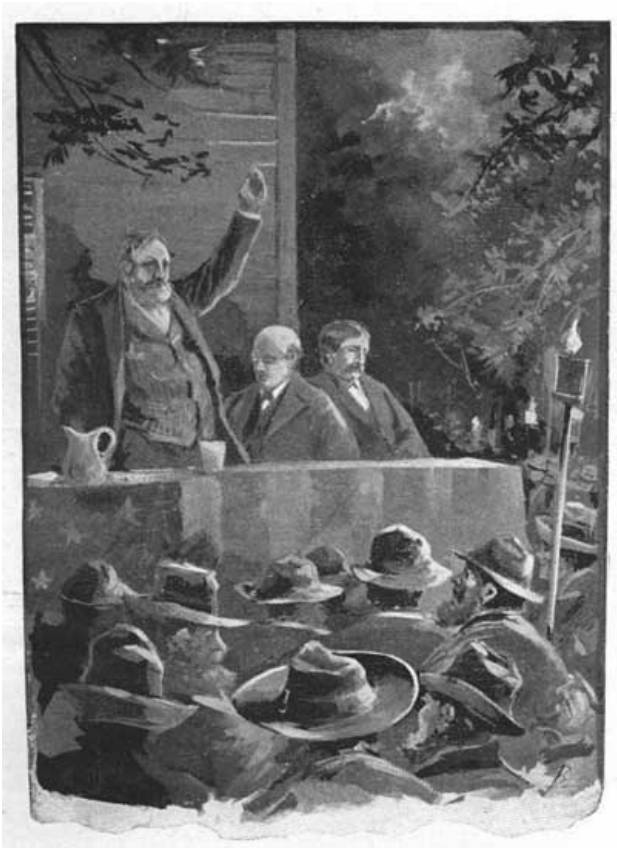
He then built a wobbly scaffold, one end of which was nailed to the bay window of the house.

The next evening my heart swelled when I heard a campaign band coming up the street, trying to see how little it could play and still draw its salary. The band was followed by men with torches, and speakers in carriages. A messenger was sent into the house to tell me that I was about to be waited upon by my old friends and neighbors, who desired to deliver to me their hearty indorsement, and a large willow-covered two-gallon godspeed as a mark of esteem.

The spokesman, as soon as I had stepped out on my veranda, mounted the improvised platform previously erected, and after a short and debilitated solo and chorus by the band, said as follows, as near as I can now recall his words:

"*Mr. Nye*—

"Sir: We have read with pain the open and venomous attacks of the foul and putrid press of our town, and come here to-night to vindicate by our presence your utter innocence *as* a man, *as* a [Pg 115] fellow-citizen, *as* a neighbor, *as* a father, mother, brother or sister.



"Mr. Nye, on behalf of this vast assemblage (tremulo), I thank God that you are POOR!!!" (Page 115)

"No one could look down into your open face, and deep, earnest lungs, and then doubt you *as* a man, *as* a fellow-citizen, *as* a neighbor, *as* a father, mother, brother or sister. You came to us a poor man, and staked your all on the growth of this town. We like you because you are still poor. You can not be too poor to suit us. It shows that you are not corrupt.

"Mr. Nye, on behalf of this vast assemblage (tremulo), I thank God that you are POOR!!!"

He then drew from his pocket a little memorandum, and, holding it up to a torch, so that he could see it better, said that Mr. Limberquid would emit a few desultory remarks.

Mr. Limberquid, to whom I was at that time indebted for past favors in the meat line, or, as you may say, the tenderloin, through no fault of mine, then arose and said, in words and figures as follows, to wit: [Pg 116]

"Sir: I desire to say that we who know Mr. Nye best are here to say that he certainly has one of the most charming wives in this territory. What do we care for the vilifications of the press—a press, hired, venial, corrupt, reeking in filth and oozy with the slime of its own impaired circulation, snapping at the heels of its superiors, and steeped in the reeking poison and pollution of its own shopworn and unmarketable opinions?

"We do not care a cuss! (Applause.) What do we care that homely men grudge our candidate his symmetry of form and graceful upholstered carriage? What do we care that calumny crawls out of its hole, calumniates him a couple of times and then goes back? We are here to-night to show by our presence that we like Mrs. Nye very much. She is a good cook, and she would certainly do honor to this district as a social leader, in case she should go to Cheyenne as the wife of our assemblyman. I propose three cheers for her, fellow-citizens." (Applause, cheers and throbs of base-drum.)

Mr. Sherrod then said: [Pg 117]

"Feller-Citizens: We glory in the fact that Whatshisname—Nye here, is pore. We like him for the poverty he has made. Our idee in runnin' of him fer the legislater, as I take it, is to not only run him along in this here kind of hand-to-mouth poverty, but to kind of give him a chance to accumulate poverty, and have some saved up fer a rainy day.

"I kin call to mind how he looked when he come to this territory a pore boy, and took off his coat and went right to work dealin' faro nights, and earning his bread by the sweat of a sweat-board daytimes, for Tom Dillon, acrost from the express office. And I say he is not a clost man. He gives his money where folks don't git on to it. He don't git out the band when he goes to do a kind act, but kind of sneaks around to people who are in need, and offers to match 'em fer the cigars.

"He's a feller of generous impulses, gentlemen, or at least I so regard him, and I say here to-night, that if his other vitals was as big and warm as his heart, he would live to deckorate the [Pg 118] graves of nations yet unborn."

Several people wept here, and wiped their eyes on their alabaster hands. I then sent my maid around through the audience with a bucketful of Salt Lake cider, and a dishpan full of doughnuts, to restore good feeling. But I can not soon forget how proud I was when I felt the hot tears and doughnut crumbs of my fellow-citizens raining down my back.

The band then played, "See the Conquering Hero Comes," and yielding to the pressing demands of the populi, I made a few irrelevant, but low, passionate remarks, as follows:

"Fellow-Citizens and Members of the Band—We are not here, as I understand it, solely to tickle our palates with the twisted doughnuts of our pampered and sin-cursed civilization, but to unite and give our pledges once more to the support of the best men. In this teacup of foaming and impervious cider from the Valley of the Jordan I drink to the success of the best men. Fellow- [Pg 119] citizens and members of the band, we owe our fealty to the old party. Let us cling to the old party as long as there is any juice in it and vote for its candidates. Let us give our suffrages to men of advanced thought who are loyal to their party but poor. Gentlemen, I am what would be called a poor but brainy man. When I am not otherwise engaged you will always find me engaged in thought. I love the excitement of following an idea and chasing it up a tree. It is a great pleasure for me to pursue the red-hot trail of a thought or the intellectual spoor of an idea. But I do not allow this habit to interfere with politics. Politics and thought are radically different. Why should man think himself weak on these political matters when there are men who have made it their business and life study to do the thinking for the masses?

"This is my platform. I believe that a candidate should be poor; that he should be a thinker on other matters, but leave political matters and nominations to professional political ganglia and molders of primaries who have given their lives and the inner coating of their stomachs to the [Pg 120] advancement of political methods by which the old, cumbersome and dangerous custom of defending our institutions with drawn swords may be superseded by the modern and more attractive method of doing so with overdrawn salaries.

"Fellow-citizens and members of the band, in closing let me say that you have seen me placed in the trying position of postmaster for the past year. For that length of time I have stood between you and the government at Washington. I have assisted in upholding the strong arm of the government, and yet I have not allowed it to crush you. No man here to-night can say that I have ever, by word or deed, revealed outside the office the contents of a postal card addressed to a member of my own party or held back or obstructed the progress of new and startling seeds sent by our representative from the Agricultural Department. I am in favor of a full and free interchange of interstate red-eyed and pale beans, and I favor the early advancement and earnest recognition of the merits of the highly offensive partisan. I thank you, neighbors and band (husky [Pg 121] and pianissimo), for this gratifying little demonstration. Words seem empty and unavailing at this time. Will you not accept the hospitality of my home? Neighbors, you are welcome to these halls. Come in and look at the family album."

The meeting then became informal, and the chairman asked me as he came down from his perch how I would be fixed by the first of the month. I told him that I could not say, but hoped that money matters would show less apathy by that time.

I have already taken up too much space, however, in this simple recital, and I have only room to say that I was not elected, and that of the seventy-five who came up to indorse me and then go home exhilarated by my cheering doughnuts, forty voted for the other man, thereby electing him by a plurality of everybody. Home indorsement, hard-boiled eggs and hot tears of reconciliation can never fool me again. They are as empty as the bass drum by which they are invariably [Pg 122] accompanied. A few years ago a majority of the voters of a newly-fledged city in Wisconsin signed a petition asking a gentleman named Bradshaw to run for the office of mayor. He said he did not want it, but if a majority had signified in writing that they needed him every hour, he would allow

his name to be used. They then turned in and defeated him by a handsome majority, thus showing that the average patriotism of the present day has a string to it.

Who was the first to make the claim
That I would surely win the game,
But now that Dennis is my name?
The Patriot.

Who stated that my chance was best,
And came and wept upon my breast,
Only to knock me galley West?
The Patriot.

Who told me of the joy he felt,
While he upon my merits dwelt?
Who then turned in and took my pelt?
The Patriot.

[Pg 123]

SUMMER BOARDERS AND OTHERS

XIII

"We kep' summer boarders the past season," said Orlando McCusick, of East Kortright, to me as we sat in the springhouse and drank cold milk from a large yellow bowl with white stripes around it; "we kep' boarders from town all summer in the Catskills, and that is why I don't figger on doing of it this year. You fellers that writes the pieces and makes the pictures of us folks what keeps the boarders has got the laugh on us as a general thing, but I would like to be interviewed a little for the press, so's that I can be set right before the American people."

"Well, if you will state the case fairly and honestly, I will try to give you a chance."

"In the first place," said Orlando, taking off his boot and removing his jack-knife which had worked its way through his pocket and down his leg, then squinting along the new "tap" with one eye to see how it was wearing before he put it on, "I did not know how healthy it was here until I read in a railroad pamphlet, I guess you call it, where it says that the relation of temperature to oxygen in a certain quantity of air is of the highest importance. 'In a cubic foot,' it says, 'of air at 3,000 feet elevation, with a temperature of 32 degrees, there is as much oxygen as in a like amount of air at sea level with a temperature of 65 degrees. Another important fact that should not be lost sight of,' this able feller says, 'by those affected by pulmonary diseases, is that three or four times as much oxygen is consumed in activity as in repose.' (Hence the hornet's nests introduced by me last season.) 'Then in climates made stimulating by increased electric tension and cold, activity must be followed by an increased endosmose of oxygen."

[Pg 124]

... 'Three or four times as much oxygen is consumed in activity as in repose.' (Hence the hornet's nests introduced by me last season.) (Page 124)

"So you decided to select and furnish endosmose of oxygen to sufferers?"

"Yes. I went into it with no notions of making a pile of money, but I argued that these folks would [Pg 125] give anything for health. We folks are apt to argy that people from town are all well off and liberal, and that if they can come out and get all the buttermilk and straw rides they want, and a little flush of color and a wood-tick on the back of their necks, they don't reck a pesky reck what it costs. This is only occasionly so. Ask any doctor you know of if the average man won't give anything to save his life, and then when it's saved put his propity into his womern's name. That's human. You know the good book says a pure man from New York is the noblest work of God."

"Well, when did this desire to endosmose your fellow-man first break out on you?"

"About a year and a half ago it began to rankle in my mind. I read up everything I could get hold of regarding the longevity and such things to be had here. In the winter I sent in a fair, honest, advertisement regarding my place, and, Judas H. Priest! before I could say 'scat' in the spring, here came letters by the dozen, mostly from school-teachers at first, that had a good command of [Pg 126] language, but did not come. I afterwards learned that these letters was frequently wrote by folks that was not able to go into the country, so wrote these letters for mental improvement, hoping also that some one in the country might want them for the refinement they would engender in the family.

"I took one young woman from town once, and allowed her 25 per cent. off for her refining influence. Her name was Etiquette McCracken. She knew very little in the first place, and had added to it a good deal by storing up in her mind a lot of membranous theories and damaged facts that ought to ben looked over and disinfected. She was the most hopeless case I ever saw, Mr. Nye. She was a metropolitan ass. You know that a town greenhorn is the greenest greenhorn in the world, because he can't be showed anything. He knows it all. Well, Etiquette McCracken very nigh paralyzed what few manners my children had. She pointed at things at table, and said she wanted some o' that, and she had a sort of a starved way of eating, and short breath, and seemed all the time apprehensive. She probably et off the top of a flour barrel at home. She came [Pg 127] and stayed all summer at our house, with a wardrobe which was in a shawl-strap wrapped up in a programme of one of them big theaters on Bowery street. I guess she led a gay life in the city. She said she did. She said if her set was at our house they would make it ring with laughter. I said if they did I'd wring their cussed necks with laughter. 'Why,' she says, 'don't you like merriment?' 'Yes,' I says, 'I like merriment well enough, but the cackle of a vacant mind rattling around in a big farmhouse makes me a fiend, and unmans me, and I gnaw up two or three people a day till I get over it,' I says."

"Well, what became of Miss McCracken?"

"Oh, she went up to her room in September, dressed herself in a long linen duster, did some laundry work, and the next day, with her little shawl-strap, she lit out for the city, where she was engaged to marry a very wealthy old man whose mind had been crowded out by an intellectual tumor, but who had a kind heart and had pestered her to death for years to marry him and inherit [Pg 128]

his wealth. I afterwards learned that in this matter she had lied."

"Did you meet any other pleasant people last season?"

"Yes. I met some blooded children from Several Hundred and Fifth street. They come here so's they could get a breath of country air and wear out their old cloze. Their mother said the poor things wanted to get out of the mawlstrum of meetropolitan life. She said it was awful where they lived. Just one round of gayety all the while. They come down and salted my hens, and then took and turned in and chased a new milch cow eight miles, with two of 'em holdin' of her by the tail, and another on top of her with a pair of Buffalo Bill spurs and a false face, yelling like a volunteer fire company. Then the old lady kicked because we run short of milk. Said it was great if she couldn't have milk when she come to the wilderness to live and paid her little old $3 a week just as regular as Saturday night come round. [Pg 129]

"These boys picked on mine all summer because my boys was plain little fellers with no underwear, but good impulses and a general desire to lay low and eventually git there, understand. My boys is considerable bleached as regards hair, and freckled as to features, and they are not ready in conversation like a town boy, but they would no more drive a dumb animal through the woods till it was all het up, or take a new milch cow and scare the daylights out of her, and yell at her and pull out her tail, and send her home with her pores all open, than they'd be sent to the legislature without a crime.

"A neighbor of mine that see these boys when they was scarin' my cow to death said if they'd of been his'n he'd rather foller 'em to their grave than seen 'em do that. That's putting of it rather strong, but I believe I would myself.

"We had a nice old man that come out here to attend church, he said. He belonged to a big church in town, where it cost him so much that he could hardly look his Maker in the face, he said. Last winter, he told us, they sold the pews at auction, and he had an affection for one, [Pg 130] 'specially 'cause he and his wife had set in it all their lives, and now that she was dead he wanted it, as he wanted the roof that had been over them all their married lives. So he went down when they auctioned 'em off, as it seems they do in those big churches, and the bidding started moderate, but run up till they put a premium on his'n that froze him out, and he had to take a cheap one where he couldn't hear very well, and it made him sort of bitter. Then in May, he says, the Palestine rash broke out among the preachers in New York, and most of 'em had to go to the Holy Land to get over it, because that is the only thing you can do with the Palestine rash when it gets a hold on a pastor. So he says to me, 'I come out here mostly to see if I could get any information from the Throne of Grace.'

"He was a rattlin' fine old feller, and told me a good deal about one thing and another. He said he'd seen it stated in the paper that salvation was free, but in New York he said it was pretty well [Pg 131] protected for an old-established industry.

"He knew Deacon Decker pretty well. Deacon Decker was an old playmate of Russell Sage, but didn't do so well as Russ did. He went once to New York after he got along in years, and Sage knew him, but he couldn't seem to place Sage. 'Why, Decker,' says Sage, 'don't you know me?' Decker says, 'That's all right. You bet I know ye. You're one of these fellows that knows everybody. There's another feller around the corner that helps you to remember folks. I know ye. I read the papers. Git out. Scat. Torment ye, I ain't in here to-day buyin' green goods, nor yet to lift a freight bill for ye. So avaunt before I sick the police on ye.'

"Finally Russ identified himself, and shook dice with the deacon to see which should buy the lunch at the dairy kitchen. This is a true story, told me by an old neighbor of Deacon Decker's.

"Deacon Decker once discovered a loose knot in his pew seat in church, and while considering the plan of redemption, thoughtlessly pushed with considerable force on this knot with his [Pg 132] thumb. At first it resisted the pressure, but finally it slipped out and was succeeded by the deacon's thumb. No one saw it, so the deacon, slightly flushed, gave it a stealthy wrench, but the knot-hole had a sharp conical bottom, and the edge soon caught and secured the rapidly swelling thumb of Deacon Decker.

"During the closing prayer he worked at it with great diligence and all the saliva he could spare, but it resisted. It was a sad sight. Finally he gave it up, and said to himself the struggle was useless. He tried to be resigned and wait till all had gone. He shook his head when the plate was passed to him, and only bowed when the brethren passed him on the way out. Some thought that maybe he was cursed with doubts, but reckoned that they would pass away.

"Finally he was missed outside. He was generally so chipper and so cheery. So his wife was asked about him. 'Why, father's inside. I'll go and get him. I never knew him to miss shaking hands with [Pg 133] all the folks.'

"So she went in and found Deacon Decker trying to interest himself with a lesson leaf in one hand, while his other was concealed under his hat. He could fool the neighbors, but he could not fool his wife, and so she hustled around and told one or two, who told their wives, and they all came back to see the deacon and make suggestions to him.

"This little incident is true, and while it does not contain any special moral, it goes to show that an honest man gathers no moss, and also explains a large circular hole, and the tin patch over it, which may still be seen in the pew where Deacon Decker used to sit." [Pg 134]

THREE OPEN LETTERS

XIV

Colonel John L. Sullivan, at large:

Dear Sir—Will you permit me, without wishing to give you the slightest offense, to challenge you to fight in France with bare knuckles and police interference, between this and the close of navigation?

I have had no real good fight with anybody for some time, and should be glad to co-operate with you in that direction, preferring, however, to have it attended to in time so that I can go on with my fall plowing. I should also like to be my own stake holder.

We shall have to fight at 135 pounds, because I can not train above that figure without extra care and good feeding, while you could train down to that, I judge, if you begin to go without food on receipt of this challenge. I should ask that we fight under the rules of the London prize ring, in [Pg 135] the Opera House in Paris. If you decide to accept, I will engage the house at once and put a few good reading notices in the papers.

I should expect a forfeit of $5,000 to be put up, so that in case you are in jail at the time, I may have something to reimburse me for my trip to Paris and the general upheaval of my whole being which arises from ocean travel.

I challenge you as a plain American citizen and an amateur, partially to assert the rights of a simple tax-payer and partly to secure for myself a name. I was, as a boy, the pride of my parents, and they wanted me to amount to something. So far, the results have been different. Will you not aid me, a poor struggler in the great race for supremacy, to obtain that notice which the newspapers now so reluctantly yield? You are said to be generous to a fault, especially your own faults, and I plead with you now to share your great fame by accepting my challenge and appearing with me in a mixed programme for the evening, in which we will jointly amuse and [Pg 136] instruct the people, while at the same time it will give me a chance to become great in one day, even if I am defeated.

I have often admired your scholarly and spiritual expressions, and your modest life, and you will remember that at one time I asked you for your autograph, and you told me to go where the worm dieth not and the fire department is ineffectual. Will you not, I ask, aid a struggler and panter for fame, who desires the eye of the public, even if his own be italicised at the same time?

I must close this challenge, which is in the nature of an appeal to one of America's best-known men. Will you accept my humble challenge, so that I can go into training at once? We can leave the details of the fight to the *Mail and Express*, if you will, and the championship belt we can buy afterward. All I care for is the honor of being mixed up with you in some way, and enough of the gate money to pay for arnica and medical attendance.

Will you do it?

I know the audience would enjoy seeing us dressed for the fray, you so strong and so wide, I so [Pg 137] pensive and so flat busted about the chest. Let us proceed at once, Colonel, to draw up the writings and begin to train. You will never regret it, I am sure, and it will be the making of me.

I do not know your address, but trust that this will reach you through this book, for, as I write, you are on you way toward Canada, with a requisition and the police reaching after you at every town.

I am glad to hear that you are not drinking any more, especially while engaged in sleep. If you only confine your drinking to your waking hours, you may live to be a very old man, and your great, massive brain will continue to expand until your hat will not begin to hold it.

What do you think of Browning? I should like to converse with you on the subject before the fight, and get your soul's best sentiments on his style of intangible thought wave.

I will meet you at Havre or Calais, and agree with you how hard we shall hit each other. I saw, at [Pg 138] a low variety show the other day, two pleasing comedians who welted each other over the stomach with canes, and also pounded each other on the head with sufficient force to explode percussion caps on the top of the skull, and yet without injury. Do you not think that a prize-fight could be thus provided for? I will see these men, if you say so, and learn their methods.

Remember, it is not the punishment of a prize-fight for which I yearn, but the effulgent glory of meeting you in the ring, and having the cables and the press associate my budding name with that of a man who has done so much to make men better—a man whose name will go down to posterity as that of one who sought to ameliorate and mellow and desiccate his fellow-men.

I will now challenge you once more, with great respect, and beg leave to remain, yours very truly,

Bill Nye.

Hon. Ferdinand de Lesseps, Paris, France:

Dear Sir—I have some shares in the canal which you have been working on, and I am compelled [Pg 139]
to hypothecate them this summer, in order to paint my house. You have great faith in the future of the enterprise, and so I will give you the first chance on this stock of mine. You have suffered so much in order to do this work that I want to see the stock get into your hands. You deserve it. You shall have it. Ferdie, if you will send me a post-office money order by return mail, covering the par value of five hundred shares, I will lose the premium, because I am a little pressed for money. The painters will be through next week, and will want their pay.

As I say, I want to see you own the canal, for in fancy I can see you as you toiled down there in the hot sun, floating your wheelbarrow and your bonds down the valley with your perspiration. I can see you in the morning, with hot, red hands and a tin dinner pail, going to your toil, a large red cotton handkerchief sticking out of your hip pocket.

So I have decided that you ought to have control, if possible, of this great water front; besides, [Pg 140]
you have a larger family than I have to support. When I heard that you were the father of fifteen little children, and that you were in the sere and yellow leaf, I said to myself, a man with that many little mouths to feed, at the age of eighty, shall have the first crack at my stock. And so, if you will send the face value as soon as possible, I will say bong jaw, messue.

Yours truly,

Bill Nye.

To the Seven Haired Sisters, 'Steenth Street, New York:

Mesdames, Mamselles and Fellow-Citizens—I write these few lines to say that I am well and hope this will find you all enjoying the same great blessing. How pleasant it is for sisters to dwell together in unity and beloved by mankind. You must indeed have a good time standing in the window day after day, pulling your long hair through your fingers with pride. When I first saw you all thus engaged, for the benefit of the public, I thought it was a candy pull.

I now write to say that the hair promoter which you sold me at the time is not up to its work. It [Pg 141]
was a year ago that I bought it, and I think that in a year something ought to show. It is a great nuisance for a public man who is liable to come home late at night to have to top-dress his head before he can retire. Your directions involve great care and trouble to a man in my position, and still I have tried faithfully to follow them. What is the result? Nothing but disappointment, and not so very much of that.

You said, if you remember, that your father was a bald-headed clergyman, but one day, with a wild shriek of "Eureka!" he discovered this hair encourager, and for the rest of his life filled his high hat with hair every time he put it on. You said that at first a fine growth of down, like the inside of a mouse's ear, would be seen, after that the blade, then the stalk, and the full corn in the ear. In a pig's ear, I am now led to believe.

Fair, but false seven-haired sisters, I now bid you adieu. You have lost in me a good, warm, true-hearted, and powerful friend. Ask me not for my indorsement, or for my before and after taking
pictures to use in your circulars; I give my kind words and photographs hereafter to the soap [Pg 142]
men. They are what they seem. You are not.

When a woman betrays me she must beware. And when seven of them do so, it is that much worse. You fooled me with smiles and false promises, and now it will be just as well for you to look out. I would rather die than be betrayed. It is disagreeable. It sours one, and also embitters one.

Here at this point our ways will diverge. The roads fork at this place. I shall go on upward and onward hairless and cappy, also careless and happy, to my goal in life. I do not know whether each or either of you have provided yourselves with goals or not, but if not you will do well now to select some. The world may smile upon you, and gold pour into your coffers, but the day will come when you will have to wrap the drapery of your hair about you and lie down to pleasant dreams. Then will arise the thought, alas!—Then You'll Remember Me.

I now close this letter, leaving you to the keen pangs of remorse and the cruel jabs of unavailing [Pg 143]
regret. Some people are born bald, others acquire baldness, whilst still others have baldness thrust upon them with a paint brush. Some are bald on the outside of their heads, others on the inside. But oh, girls, beware of baldness on the soul. I ask you, even if you are the daughters of a clergyman, to think seriously of what I have said.

Yours truly,

Bill Nye.

[Pg 144]

THE DUBIOUS FUTURE

XV

Without wishing to alarm the American people, or create a panic, I desire briefly and seriously to

discuss the great question, "Whither are we drifting, and what is to be the condition of the coming man?" We can not shut our eyes to the fact that mankind is passing through a great era of change; even womankind is not built as she was a few brief years ago. And is it not time, fellow citizens, that we pause to consider what is to be the future of the American?

Food itself has been the subject of change both in the matter of material and preparation. This must affect the consumer in such a way as to some day bring about great differences. Take, for instance, the oyster, one of our comparatively modern food and game fishes, and watch the [Pg 145] effects of science upon him. At one time the oyster browsed around and ate what he could find in Neptune's back-yard, and we had to eat him as we found him. Now we take a herd of oysters off the trail, all run down, and feed them artificially till they swell up to a fancy size, and bring a fancy price. Where will this all lead at last, I ask as a careful scientist? Instead of eating apples, as Adam did, we work the fruit up into apple-jack and pie, while even the simple oyster is perverted, and instead of being allowed to fatten up in the fall on acorns and ancient mariners, spurious flesh is put on his bones by the artificial osmose and dialysis of our advanced civilization. How can you make an oyster stout or train him down by making him jerk a health lift so many hours every day, or cultivate his body at the expense of his mind, without ultimately not only impairing the future usefulness of the oyster himself, but at the same time affecting the future of the human race who feed upon him?

I only use the oyster as an illustration, and I do not wish to cause alarm, but I say that if we [Pg 146] stimulate the oyster artificially and swell him up by scientific means, we not only do so at the expense of his better nature and keep him away from his family, but we are making our mark on the future race of men. Oyster-fattening is now, of course, in its infancy. Only a few years ago an effort was made at St. Louis to fatten cove oysters while in the can, but the system was not well understood, and those who had it in charge only succeeded in making the can itself more plump. But now oysters are kept on ground feed and given nothing to do for a few weeks, and even the older and overworked sway-backed and rickety oysters of the dim and murky past are made to fill out, and many of them have to put a gore in the waistband of their shells. I only speak of the oyster incidentally, as one of the objects toward which science has turned its attention, and I assert with the utmost confidence that the time will come, unless science should get a set-back, when the present hunting-case oyster will give place to the open-face oyster, grafted on the [Pg 147] octopus and big enough to feed a hotel. Further than that, the oyster of the future will carry in a hip-pocket a flask of vinegar, half a dozen lemons and two little Japanese bottles, one of which will contain salt and the other pepper, and there will be some way provided by which you can tell which is which. But are we improving the oyster now? That is a question we may well ask ourselves. Is this a healthy fat which we are putting on him, or is it bloat? And what will be the result in the home-life of the oyster? We take him from all domestic influences whatever in order to make a swell of him by our modern methods, but do we improve his condition morally, and what is to be the great final result on man?

The reader will see by the questions I ask that I am a true scientist. Give me an overcoat pocket full of lower-case interrogation marks and a medical report to run to, and I can speak on the matter of science and advancement till Reason totters on her throne.

But food and oysters do not alone affect the great, pregnant future. Our race is being tampered [Pg 148] with not only by means of adulterations, political combinations and climatic changes, but even our methods of relaxation are productive of peculiar physical conditions, malformations and some more things of the same kind.

Cigarette smoking produces a flabby and endogenous condition of the optic nerve, and constant listening at a telephone, always with the same ear, decreases the power of the other ear till it finally just stands around drawing its salary, but actually refusing to hear anything. Carrying an eight-pound cane makes a man lopsided, and the muscular and nervous strain that is necessary to retain a single eyeglass in place and keep it out of the soup, year after year, draws the mental stimulus that should go to the thinker itself, until at last the mind wanders away and forgets to come back, or becomes atrophied, and the great mental strain incident to the work of pounding sand or coming in when it rains is more than it is equal to.

Playing billiards, accompanied by the vicious habit of pounding on the floor with the butt of the [Pg 149] cue ever and anon, produces at last optical illusions, phantasmagoria and visions of pink spiders with navy-blue abdomens. Base-ball is not alone highly injurious to the umpire, but it also induces crooked fingers, bone spavin and hives among habitual players. Jumping the rope induces heart disease. Poker is unduly sedentary in its nature. Bicycling is highly injurious, especially to skittish horses. Boating induces malaria. Lawn tennis can not be played in the house. Archery is apt to be injurious to those who stand around and watch the game, and pugilism is a relaxation that jars heavily on some natures.

Playing billiards, accompanied by the vicious habit of pounding on the floor with the butt of the cue ever and anon, produces at last optical illusions
(Page 149)

Foot-ball produces what may be called the endogenous or ingrowing toenail, stringhalt and mania. Copenhagen induces a melancholy, and the game of bean bag is unduly exciting. Horse racing is too brief and transitory as an outdoor game, requiring weeks and months for preparation and lasting only long enough for a quick person to ejaculate "Scat!" The pitcher's arm is a new disease, the outgrowth of base-ball; the lawn-tennis elbow is another result of a popular open-air amusement, and it begins to look as though the coming American would hear [Pg 150] with one overgrown telephonic ear, while the other will be rudimentary only. He will have an abnormal base-ball arm with a lawn-tennis elbow, a powerful foot-ball-kicking leg with the superior toe driven back into the palm of his foot. He will have a highly trained biceps muscle over his eye to retain his glass, and that eye will be trained to shoot a curved glance over a high hat and witness anything on the stage.

Other features grow abnormal, or shrink up from the lack of use, as a result of our customs. For instance, the man whose business it is to get along a crowded street with the utmost speed will have, finally, a hard, sharp horn growing on each elbow, and a pair of spurs growing out of each ankle. These will enable him to climb over a crowd and get there early. Constant exposure to these weapons on the part of the pedestrian will harden the walls of the thorax and abdomen until the coming man will be an impervious man. The citizen who avails himself of all modern [Pg 151] methods of conveyance will ride from his door on the horse car to the elevated station, where an elevator will elevate him to the train and a revolving platform will swing him on board, or possibly the street car will be lifted from the surface track to the elevated track, and the passenger will retain his seat all the time. Then a man will simply hang out a red card, like an express card, at his door, and a combination car will call for him, take him to the nearest elevated station, elevate him, car and all, to the track, take him where he wants to go, and call for him at any hour of the night to bring him home. He will do his exercising at home, chiefly taking artificial sea baths, jerking a rowing machine or playing on a health lift till his eyes hang out on his cheeks, and he need not do any walking whatever. In that way the coming man will be over-developed above the legs, and his lower limbs will look like the desolate stems of a frozen geranium. Eccentricities of limb will be handed over like baldness from father to son among the dwellers in the cities, where every advantage in the way of rapid transit is to be had, until a [Pg 152] metropolitan will be instantly picked out by his able digestion and rudimentary legs, just as we now detect the gentleman from the interior by his wild endeavors to overtake an elevated train.

In fact, Mr. Edison has now perfected, or announced that he is on the road to the perfection of, a machine which I may be pardoned for calling a storage think-tank. This will enable a brainy man to sit at home, and, with an electric motor and a perfected phonograph, he can think into a tin dipper or funnel, which will, by the aid of electricity and a new style of foil, record and preserve his ideas on a sheet of soft metal, so that when any one says to him, "A penny for your thoughts," he can go to his valise and give him a piece of his mind. Thus the man who has such wild and beautiful thoughts in the night and never can hold on to them long enough to turn on the gas and get his writing materials, can set this thing by the head of his bed, and, when the poetic thought comes to him in the stilly night, he can think into a hopper, and the genius of Franklin and Edison [Pg 153]

together will enable him to fire it back at his friends in the morning while they eat their pancakes and glucose syrup from Vermont, or he can mail the sheet of tinfoil to absent friends, who may put it into their phonographs and utilize it. In this way the world may harness the gray matter of its best men, and it will be no uncommon thing to see a dozen brainy men tied up in a row in the back office of an intellectual syndicate, dropping pregnant thoughts into little electric coffee mills for a couple of hours a day, after which they can put on their coats, draw their pay, and go home.

All this will reduce the quantity of exercise, both mental and physical. Two men with good brains could do the thinking for 60,000,000 of people and feel perfectly fresh and rested the next day. Take four men, we will say, two to do the day thinking and two more to go on deck at night, and see how much time the rest of the world would have to go fishing. See how politics would become simplified. Conventions, primaries, bargains and sales, campaign bitterness and vituperation—all [Pg 154] might be wiped out. A pair of political thinkers could furnish 100,000,000 of people with logical conclusions enough to last them through the campaign and put an unbiased opinion into a man's house each day for less than he now pays for gas. Just before election you could go into your private office, throw in a large dose of campaign whisky, light a campaign cigar, fasten your buttonhole to the wall by an elastic band, so that there would be a gentle pull on it, and turn the electricity on your mechanical thought supply. It would save time and money, and the result would be the same as it is now. This would only be the beginning, of course, and after a while every qualified voter who did not feel like exerting himself so much, need only give his name and proxy to the salaried thinker employed by the National Think Retort and Supply Works. We talk a great deal about the union of church and state, but that is not so dangerous, after all, as the mixture of politics and independent thought. Will the coming voter be an automatic, legless, [Pg 155] hairless mollusk with an abnormal ear constantly glued to the tube of a big tank full of symmetrical ideas furnished by a national bureau of brains in the employ of the party in power? [Pg 156]

EARNING A REWARD

XVI

Those were troublous times indeed. All-wool justice in the courts was impossible. The vigilance committee, or Salvation army, as it called itself, didn't make much fuss about its work, but we all knew that the best citizens belonged to it, and were in good standing.

It was in those days that young Stewart was short-handed for a sheep-herder, and had to take up with a sullen, hairy vagrant called by the other boys, "Esau." Esau hadn't been on the ranch a week before he made trouble with the proprietor and got from Stewart the red-hot blessing he deserved.

Then Esau got madder and skulked away down the valley among the little sage brush hummocks and white alkali wasteland, to nurse his wrath. When Stewart drove into the corral that night, [Pg 157] Esau rose up from behind an old sheep dip-tank, and without a word except what may have growled around in his black heart, he leveled a Spencer rifle and shot his young employer dead.

That was the tragedy of that week only. Others had occurred before and others would probably occur again. Tragedy was getting too prevalent for comfort. So as soon as a quick cayuse and a boy could get down into town, the news spread and the authorities began in the routine manner to set the old legal mill to running. Some one had to go down to "The Tivoli" and find the prosecuting attorney, then a messenger had to go to "The Alhambra" for the justice of the peace. The prosecuting attorney was "full," and the judge had just drawn one card to complete a straight flush, and had succeeded.

So it took time to get square-toed justice ready and arm the sheriff with the proper documents.

In the meantime the Salvation army was fully half way to Clugston's ranch. They had started out, [Pg 158] as they said, "to see that Esau didn't get away." They were also going to see that Esau was brought into town.

What happened after they got out there I only know from hearsay, for I was not a member of the Salvation army at that time. But I learned from one of those present, that they found Esau down in the sage brush on the bottoms that lie between the abrupt corner of Sheep mountain and the Little Laramie river. They captured him but he died soon after, as it was told me, from the effects of opium taken with suicidal intent. I remember seeing Esau the next morning, and I thought I noticed signs of ropium, as there was a purple streak around the neck of the deceased, together with other external phenomena not peculiar to opium.

But the grand difficulty with the Salvation army was that it didn't want to bring Esau into town. A long, cold night ride with a person in Esau's condition was disagreeable. Twenty miles of lonely road with a deceased murderer in the bottom of the wagon is depressing. Those of my readers [Pg 159] who have tried it will agree with me that it is not calculated to promote hilarity.

Mr. Whatley hadn't gone more than half a mile when he heard the wild and disappointed yells of the Salvation army (Page 159)

So the Salvation army stopped at Whatley's ranch to get warm, hoping that some one would steal the remains and elope with them. They stayed some time and managed to "give away" the fact that there was a reward of $5,000 out for Esau, dead or alive. The Salvation army even went so far as to betray a good deal of hilarity over the easy way it had nailed the reward or would as soon as said remains were delivered up and identified.

Mr. Whatley thought that the Salvation army was having a kind of walk away, so he slipped out at the back door of the ranch, put Esau into his own wagon and drove off to town. Remember, this is the way it was told to me.

Mr. Whatley hadn't gone more than half a mile when he heard the wild and disappointed yells of the Salvation army. He put the buckskin on the back of his horse without mercy, urged on by the [Pg 160] enraged shouts and yells of his infuriated pursuers. He reached town about midnight, and his pursuers disappeared. But what was he to do with Esau?

He drove around all over town trying to find the official who signed for the deceased. He went from house to house like a vegetable vender, seeking sadly for the party who would give him a $5,000 check for Esau. Nothing could be more depressing than to wake up one man after another out of a sound sleep, and invite him to come out to the buggy and identify the remains. One man went out and looked at him. He said he didn't know how others felt about it, but he allowed that anybody who would pay $5,000 for such a remains as Esau's could not have very good taste.

Gradually it crept through Mr. Whatley's wool that the Salvation army had been working him, so he left Esau at the engine house and went home. On his ranch he nailed up a large board, on which had been painted in antique characters, with a paddle and tar, the following: [Pg 161]

> ☞ Vigilance Committees, Salvation Armies, Morgues, or young physicians who may have deceased people on their hands, are requested to refrain from conferring them on to the undersigned.
>
> ☞ People who contemplate shuffling off their own or other people's mortal coils will please not do so on these grounds.
>
> ☞ The Salvation Army of the Rocky Mountains is especially hereby warned to keep off the Grass! James Whatley.

[Pg 162]

A PLEA FOR JUSTICE

XVII

To the Honorable Mayor of New York:

SIR—I suppose you are mayor of this whole town, and if so you are the mayor of the hosspitals as well as of the municipality of New York. I am a citizen of this place that has always been square towards every man and paid my bills as they accrewed. I now ask you, in return for same, to intervene and protect me in my rights. The millishy has never been called out to suppress me. I have never been guilty of rebellyun or open difyance off the law, and yet I am unable to get a square deal and I write this brief note and enclose a two-cent stamp, to ascertain whether, as mayor, you are for me or agin me.

Three years ago I entered your town from a westerly direction. I done so quietly and I presume [Pg 163] that few will remember the sircumstans, yet such was so. I had not been here two weeks when I was run into, knocked over and tromped onto by the bay team of a purse-proud producer of beer. I was dashed to earth and knocked galley west on Broadway st. looking north by sed horses and I was wrecked while peasably on my way to my place of business. When I come to myself I was in a large, cool hosspital which smelt strong of some forrin substans. The hed doctor had been breathing on me and so I come too. When I looked around me I decided to murmur "Where am I at?" which I did.

... I was in a large, cool hosspital which smelt strong of some forrin substans. The hed doctor had been breathing on me and so I come too (Page 163)

I soon learned that I was in a hosspital, and that kind friends had removed one of my legs. I will not take up your time, sir, by touching on my sufferings. Suphice it to say that I went foarth at last a blasted man, with a cork leg that don't look no more like my own once leg which I was torn away from, in spite of the Old Harry. It is too late to repine over a wooden leg, unless it is a pine leg, but I come to you, sir, to interfear on behalf of another matter which I will now aprooch. [Pg 164] Sorrows at that time come on me thick and fast. During that fall I lost my wife and two dogs by deth. This was the third wife I have been called on to bury. It has been my blessed privilidge to mourn the loss of three as good wives as I ever shook a stick at. I have got them all in one cool, roomy toom, with a verse on the door of same and their address, so that they will not delay the resurrection. Under the verse that was engraved on the slab, some low cuss has wrote three verses of poetry with a chorus to each verse which winds up with the words:

Tit, tat, toe, three in a row.

But all this is only introductory. Sir, it has long been my heart's desire that all my beloved dead should repose together. I have a large lot in the semmetery, and last week a movement was placed on foot to inter my late leg by the sides of my deceased wives. I applied to the hosspital for said leg, having got a permit to bury same. I was pleasant and corechus to the authoritis there, saying that my name was Gray and I was there to procure my leg, whereupon a young [Pg 165] meddicle cuss said to the head ampitater:

"Here's de man that wants to plant Gray's l-e-g in a churchyard."

He then laughed a hoarse laugh and went on preserving a polapus in a big glass fruit can with alkohall in it. Wherever I went I met with a general disposition to fool with a stricken and one-

legged man. I went from ward to ward, looking at suffering and smelling kloryform till I was sick at heart. I was referred from Dan to Beersheby, from the janiter up to the chief tongue inspector, and one place where I went into they seemed to be picking bone splinters out from among a gentleman's brains. I made bold to tell my business, but with small hopes.

"This is the man I told you about, Doc," said a young man who was filing and setting a small bone handsaw. "This is that matter of Gray, the man who wants his leg."

"Damn your Gray matter," says this doctor, whereupon the rest bust into ribald mirth.

I was insulted right and left for a whole forenoon, and came away shocked and pained. Will you assist me? There is no reverence among doctors any more and they have none of the finer feelings. Some asked me if I had a check for my leg. Some said they thought it had escaped from the hosspital and gone on the stage, and one feller said that this hosspital would not be responsible for the legs of guests unless deposited in the office safe. I like fun just as well as anybody, Mr. Mayor, but I don't think any one should be youmerous over the cold dead features of a leg from which I have been ruthlessly snatched. [Pg 166]

I now beg, sir, to dror this hasty letter to an untimely end, hoping that you will make it hot for this blooming hosspital and make them fork over said leg. Yours, with kindest regards,

A. Pittsfield Gray.

[Pg 167]

GRAINS OF TRUTH

XVIII

A young friend has written to me as follows: "Could you tell me something of the location of the porcelain works in Sèvres, France, and what the process is of making those beautiful things which come from there? How is the name of the town pronounced? Can you tell me anything of the history of Mme. Pompadour? Who was the Dauphin? Did you learn anything of Louis XV whilst in France? What are your literary habits?"

It is with a great, bounding joy that I impart the desired information. Sèvres is a small village just outside of St. Cloud (pronounced San Cloo). It is given up to the manufacture of porcelain. You go to St. Cloud by rail or river, and then drive over to Sèvres by diligence or voiture. Some go one way and some go the other. I rode up on the Seine, aboard of a little, noiseless, low-pressure steamer about the size of a sewing machine. It was called the Silvoo Play, I think. [Pg 168]

The fare was thirty centimes—or, say, three cents. After paying my fare and finding that I still had money left, I lunched at St. Cloud in the open air at a trifling expense. I then took a bottle of milk from my pocket and quenched my thirst. Traveling through France, one finds that the water is especially bad, tasting of the Dauphin at times, and dangerous in the extreme. I advise those, therefore, who wish to be well whilst doing the Continent, to carry, especially in France, as I did, a large, thick-set bottle of milk, or kumiss, with which to take the wire edge off one's whistle whilst being yanked through the Louvre.

St. Cloud is seven miles west of the center of Paris and almost ten miles by rail on the road to Versailles—pronounced Vairsi. St. Cloud belongs to the Canton of Sèvres and the arrondissement of Versailles. An arrondissement is not anything reprehensible. It is all right. You, yourself, could belong to an arrondissement if you lived in France. [Pg 169]

St. Cloud is on the beautiful hill slope, looking down the valley of the Seine, with Paris in the distance. It is peaceful and quiet and beautiful. Everything is peaceful in Paris when there is no revolution on the carpet. The steam cars run safely and do not make so much noise as ours do. The steam whistle does not have such a hold on people as it does here. The adjutant-general at the depot blows a little tin bugle, the admiral of the train returns the salute, the adjutant-general says "Allons!" and the train starts off like a somewhat leisurely young man who is going to the depot to meet his wife's mother.

One does not realize what a Fourth of July racket we live in and employ in our business till he has been the guest of a monarchy of Europe between whose toes the timothy and clover have sprung up to a great height. And yet it is a pleasing change, and I shall be glad when we as a republic have passed the blow-hard period, laid aside the ear-splitting steam whistle, settled down to good, permanent institutions, and taken on the restful, sootheful, Boston air which comes with time and the quiet self-congratulation that one is born in a Bible land and with Gospel privileges, and where the right to worship in a strictly high-church manner is open to all. [Pg 170]

The Palace of St. Cloud was once the residence of Napoleon I in summer-time. He used to go out there for the heated term, and folding his arms across his stomach, have thought after thought regarding the future of France. Yet he very likely never had an idea that some day it would be a thrifty republic, engaged in growing green peas, or pulling a soiled dove out of the Seine, now and then, to add to the attractions of her justly celebrated morgue.

Louis XVIII also put up at the Palace in St. Cloud several summers. He spelled it "palais," which shows that he had very poor early English advantages, or that he was, as I have always

suspected, a native of Quebec. Charles X also changed the bedding somewhat, and moved in during his reign. He also added a new iron sink and a place in the barn for washing buggies. [Pg 171] Louis Philippe spent his summers here for a number of years, and wrote weekly letters to the Paris papers, signed "Uno," in which he urged the taxpayers to show more veneration for their royal nibs. Napoleon III occupied the palais in summer during his lifetime, availing himself finally of the use of Mr. Bright's justly celebrated disease and dying at the dawn of better institutions for beautiful but unhappy France.

I visited the palais (pronounced pallay), which was burned by the Prussians in 1870. The grounds occupy 960 acres, which I offered to buy and fit up, but probably I did not deal with responsible parties. This part of France reminds me very much of North Carolina. I mean, of course, the natural features. Man has done more for France, it seems to me, than for the Tar Heel State, and the cities of Asheville and Paris are widely different. The police of Paris rarely get together in front of the court-house to pitch horseshoes or dwell on the outlook for the goober crop. [Pg 172]

And yet the same blue, ozonic sky, if I may be allowed to coin a word, the same soft, restful, dolce frumenti air of gentle, genial health, and of cark destroying, magnetic balm to the congested soul, the inflamed nerve and the festering brain, are present in Asheville that one finds in the quiet drives of San Cloo with the successful squirt of the mighty fountains of Vairsi and the dark and whispering forests of Fon-taine-*bloo*.

The palais at San Cloo presents a rather dejected appearance since it was burned, and the scorched walls are bare, save where here and there a warped and wilted water pipe festoons the blackened and blistered wreck of what was once so grand and so gay.

San Cloo has a normal school for the training of male teachers only. I visited it, but for some cause I did not make a hit in my address to the pupils until I began to speak in their own national tongue. Then the closest attention was paid to what I said, and the keenest delight was manifest [Pg 173] on every radiant face. The president, who spoke some English, shook hands with me as we parted, and I asked him how the students took my remarks. He said: "They shall all the time keep the thinkness—what you shall call the recollect—of monsieur's speech in preserves, so that they shall forget it not continualle. We shall all the time say we have not witness something like it since the time we come here, and have not so much enjoy ourselves since the grand assassination by the guillotine. Come next winter and be with us for one week. Some of us will remain in the hall each time."

At San Cloo I hired of a quiet young fellow about thirty-five years of age, who kept a very neat livery stable there, a sort of victoria and a big Percheron horse, with fetlock whiskers that reminded me of the Sutherland sisters. As I was in no hurry I sat on an iron settee in the cool court of the livery stable, and with my arm resting on the shoulder of the proprietor I spoke of the crops and asked if generally people about there regarded the farmer movement as in any way [Pg 174] threatening to the other two great parties. He did not seem to know, and so I watched the coachman who was to drive me, as he changed his clothes in order to give me my money's worth in grandeur.

One thing I liked about France was that the people were willing, at a slight advance on the regular price, to treat a very ordinary man with unusual respect and esteem. This surprised and delighted me beyond measure, and I often told people there that I did not begrudge the additional expense. The coachman was also hostler, and when the carriage was ready he altered his attire by removing a coarse, gray shirt or tunic and putting on a long, olive green coachman's coat, with erect linen collar and cuffs sewed into the collar and sleeves. He wore a high hat that was much better than mine, as is frequently the case with coachmen and their employers. My coachman now gives me his silk hat when he gets through with it in the spring and fall, so I am better dressed than I used to be.

But we were going to say a word regarding the porcelain works at Sèvres. It is a modern building [Pg 175] and is under government control. The museum is filled with the most beautiful china dishes and funny business that one could well imagine. Besides, the pottery ever since its construction has retained its models, and they, of course, are worthy of a day's study. The "Sèvres blue" is said to be a little bit bluer than anything else in the known world except the man who starts a nonpareil paper in a pica town.

I was careful not to break any of these vases and things, and thus endeared myself to the foreman of the place. All employes are uniformed and extremely deferential to recognized ability. Practically, for half a day, I owned the place.

A cattle friend of mine who was looking for a dynasty whose tail he could twist while in Europe, and who used often to say over our glass of vin ordinaire (which I have since learned is not the best brand at all), that nothing would tickle him more than "to have a little deal with a crowned head and get him in the door," accidentally broke a blue crock out there at Sèvres which wouldn't [Pg 176] hold over a gallon, and it took the best part of a car load of cows to pay for it, he told me.

The process of making the Sèvres ware is not yet published in book form, especially the method of coloring and enameling. It is a secret possessed by duly authorized artists. The name of the town is pronounced Save.

Mme. Pompadour is said to have been the natural daughter of a butcher, which I regard as being more to her own credit than though she had been an artificial one. Her name was Jeanne Antoinette Poisson Le Normand d'Etioles, Marchioness de Pompadour, and her name is yet used

by the authorities of Versailles as a fire escape, so I am told.

She was the mistress of Louis XV, who never allowed her to put her hands in dishwater during the entire time she visited at his house. D'Etioles was her first husband, but she left him for a gay but rather reprehensible life at court, where she was terribly talked about, though she is said not to have cared a cent.

She developed into a marvelous politician, and early seeing that the French people were largely governed by the literary lights of that time, she began to cultivate the acquaintance of the magazine writers, and tried to join the Authors' Club. [Pg 177]

She then became prominent by originating a method of doing up the hair, which has since grown popular among people whose hair has not, like my own, been already "done up."

This style of Mme. Pompadour's was at once popular with the young men who ran the throttles of the soda fountains of that time, and is still well spoken of. A young friend of mine trained his hair up from his forehead in that way once and could not get it down again. During his funeral his hair, which had been glued down by the undertaker, became surprised at something said by the clergyman and pushed out the end of his casket.

The king tired in a few years of Mme. Pompadour and wished that he had not encouraged her to run away from her husband. She, however, retained her hold upon the blasé and alcoholic monarch by her wonderful versatility and genius. [Pg 178]

When all her talents as an artiste and politician palled upon his old rum-soaked and emaciated brain, and ennui, like a mighty canker, ate away large corners of his moth-eaten soul, she would sit in the gloaming and sing to him, "Hard Times, Hard Times, Come Again No More," meantime accompanying herself on the harpsichord or the sackbut or whatever they played in those days. Then she instituted theatricals, giving, through the aid of the nobility, a very good version of "Peck's Bad Boy" and "Lend Me Five Centimes."

She finally lost her influence over Looey the XV, and as he got to be an old man the thought suddenly occurred to him to reform, and so he had Mme. Pompadour beheaded at the age of forty-two years. This little story should teach us that no matter how gifted we are, or how high we may wear our hair, our ambitions must be tempered by honor and integrity; also that pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a plunk. [Pg 179]

A SCAMPER THROUGH THE PARK

XIX

Last week Colonel Bill Root, formerly Duke of Council Bluffs, paid me a visit, and as I desired to show him Central Park, I took him to Fifty-Eighth street and hired a carriage, my own team being at my country place. I also engaged the services of a dark-eyed historical student, who is said to know more about Central Park than any other man in New York, having driven through it, as he has, for years. He was a plain, sad man, with a mustache which was mostly whiskers. He dressed carelessly in a négligé suit of neutral-tinted clothes, including a pair of trousers which seemed to fit him in that shy and reluctant manner which characterized the fit of the late lamented Jumbo's clothes after he had been indifferently taxidermed.

Colonel Root and I called him "Governor," and thereby secured knowledge which could not be obtained from books. Colonel Root is himself no kindergarten savant, being the author and discoverer of a method of breaking up a sitting-hen by first calling her away from her deep-seated passion, tying a red-flannel rag around her leg, and then still further turning her attention from her wild yearning to hatch out a flock of suburban villas by sitting on a white front-door knob. This he does by deftly inserting the hen into a joint of stove-pipe and then cementing both ends of the same. Colonel Root is also the discoverer of a cipher which shows that Julius Cæsar's dying words were: "Et tu Brute. Verily the tail goeth with the hide." [Pg 180]

After a while the driver paused. Colonel Root asked him why he tarried.

"I wanted to call your attention," said the Governor, "to the Casino, a place where you can provide for the inner man or any other man. You can here secure soft-shell crabs, boiled lobster, low-neck clams, Hamburger steaks, chicken salad, miscellaneous soups, lobster salad with machine-oil on it, Neapolitan ice-cream, Santa Cruz rum, Cincinnati Sec, pie, tooth-picks, and finger-bowls." [Pg 181]

Said the Governor as he swung around with his feet over in our part of the carriage and asked me for a light (Page 181)

"How far does the waiter have to go to get these things cooked?" inquired Colonel Root, looking at his valuable watch.

"That," said the Governor, as he swung around with his feet over in our part of the carriage and asked me for a light, "depends on how you approach him. If you slip a half dollar up his coat-sleeve without his knowledge he will get your twenty-five cent meal cooked somewhere near by, but otherwise I have known him to go away and come back with gray side-whiskers and cobwebs on the pie instead of the wine."

We went in and told the proprietor to see that our driver had what he wanted. He did not want much, aside from a whisky sour, a plate of terrapin, a pint of Mr. Pommery's secretary's beverage, and a baked duck. We had a little calves' liver and custard pie. Then we visited Cleopatra's Needle.

"And who in creation was Cleopatra?" asked Colonel Root.

"Cleopatra," said the driver, "was a goodlooking Queen of Egypt. She was eighteen years old [Pg 182] when her father left the throne, as it was screwed down to the dais, and died. He left the kingdom to Cleopatra, in partnership with Ptolemy, her brother. Ptolemy, in 51 B. C., deprived her of the throne, leaving Cleopatra nothing but the tidy. She appealed to Julius Cæsar, who hired a man to embalm Ptolemy, and restored Egypt to his sister, who was as likely a girl as Julius had ever met with. She accompanied him to Rome in 46 B. C., and remained there a couple of years. When Cæsar was assassinated by a delegation of Roman tax-payers who desired a change, Cleopatra went back and began to reign over Egypt again. She also attracted the attention of Antony. He thought so much of her that he would frequently stay away from a battle and deny himself the joys of being split open with a dull stab-knife in order to hang around home and hold Cleopatra's hand, and, though she was a widow practically, she was the Amélie Rives style of widow, and he said that it had to be an all-fired good battle that could make him put on [Pg 183] his iron ulster and fight all day on the salary he was getting. She pizened herself thirty years before Christ, at the age of thirty-nine years, rather than ride around Rome in a gingham dress as a captive of Augustus. She died right in haying time, and Augustus said he'd ruther of lost the best horse in Rome. This is her needle. It was brought to New York mostly by water, and looks well here in the park. She was said to be as likely a queen as ever jerked a sceptre over Egypt or any other place. Everybody that saw her reign said that the country never had a magneticker queen."

As we rode swiftly along, the slight, girlish figure of a middle-aged woman might have been seen striving hurriedly to cross the driveway. She screamed and beckoned to a park policeman, who rushed leisurely in and caught her by the arm, rescuing her from the cruel feet of our mad chargers, and then led her to a seat. As we paused to ask the policeman if the lady had been injured, he came up to the side of the carriage and whispered to me behind his hand: "That woman I have rescued between thirty and forty times this year, and it is only the first of July. [Pg 184] Every pleasant day she comes here to be rescued. One day, when business was a little dull and we didn't have any teams on the drive, and time seemed to hang heavy on her hands, she told me

her sad history. Before she was eighteen years of age she had been disappointed in love and prevented from marrying her heart's choice, owing to the fact that the idea of the union did not occur to him. He was not, in fact, a union man. Time passed on, from time to time, glad spring, and bobolinks, and light underwear succeeded stern winter, frost, and heavy flannels, and yet he cometh not, she sayed. No one had ever caught her in his great strong arms in a quick embrace that seemed to scrunch her whole being. Summer came and went. The dews on the upland succeeded the frost on the pumpkin. The grand ratification of the partridge ushered in the wail of the turtle dove and the brief plunk of the muskrat in the gloaming. And yet no man had ever dast to come right out and pay attention to her or keep company with her. She had an emotional [Pg 185] nature that just seemed to get up on its hind feet and pant for recognition and love. She could have almost loved a well-to-do man who had, perhaps, sinned a few times, but even the tough and erring went elsewhere to repent. One day she came to town to do some trading. She had priced seven dollars and fifty cents' worth of goods, and was just crossing Broadway to price some more, when the gay equipage of a wealthy humorist, with silver chains on the neck-yoke and foam-flecks acrost the bosom of the nigh hoss, came plunging down the street.

"The red nostrils of the spirited brutes were above her. Their hot breath scorched the back of her neck and swayed the red-flannel pompon on her bonnet. Every one on Broadway held his breath, with the exception of a man on the front stoop of the Castor House, whose breath had got beyond his control. Every one was horrified and turned away with a shudder, which rattled the telegraph wires for two blocks.

"Just then a strong, brave policeman rushed in and knocked down both horses and the driver, [Pg 186] together with his salary. He caught the woman up as though she had been no more than a feather's weight. He bore her away to the post-office pavement, where it is still the custom to carry people who are run over and mangled. He then sought to put her down, but, like a bad oyster, she would not be put down. She still clung about his neck, like the old party who got acquainted with Sinbad the Sailor, though, of course, in a different manner. It took quite a while to shake her off. The next day she came back and was almost killed at the same crossing. It went on that way until the policeman had his beat changed to another part of town. Finally, she came up here to get her summer rescuing done. I do it when it falls to my lot, but my heart is not in the work. Sometimes the horrible thought comes over me that I may be too late. Several times I have tried to be too late, but I haven't the heart to do it."

He then walked to a sparrow that refused to keep off the grass and brained it with his club. [Pg 187]

HINTS TO THE TRAVELER

XX

Every thinkful student has doubtless noticed that when he enters the office, or autograph department, of an American inn, a lithe and alert male person seizes his valise or traveling-bag with much earnestness. He then conveys it to some sequestered spot and does not again return. He is the porter of the hotel or inn. He may be a modest porter just starting out, or he may be a swollen and purse-proud porter with silver in his hair and also in his pocket.

I speak of the porter and his humble lot in order to show the average American boy who may read these lines that humor is not the only thing in America which yields large dividends on a very small capital. To be a porter does not require great genius, or education, or intellectual versatility; and yet, well attended to, the business is remunerative in the extreme and often [Pg 188] brings excellent returns. It shows that any American boy who does faithfully and well the work assigned to him may become well-to-do and prosperous.

Recently I shook hands with a conductor on the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, who is the president of a bank. There is a general impression in the public mind that conductors all die poor, but here is "Jerry," as everybody calls him, a man of forty-five years of age, perhaps, with a long head of whiskers and the pleasant position of president of a bank. As he thoughtfully slams the doors from car to car, collecting fares on children who are no longer young and whose parents seek to conceal them under the seats, or as he goes from passenger to passenger sticking large blue checks in their new silk hats, and otherwise taking advantage of people, he is sustained and soothed by the blessed thought that he has done the best he could, and that some day when the summons comes to lay aside his loud-smelling lantern and make his last run, he will leave his dear ones provided for. Perhaps I ought to add that during all these years of Jerry's prosperity [Pg 189] the road has also managed to keep the wolf from the door. I mention it because it is so rare for the conductor and the road to make money at the same time.

I knew a conductor on the Union Pacific railroad, some years ago, who used to make a great deal of money, but he did not invest wisely, and so to-day is not the president of a bank. He made a great deal of money in one way or another while on his run, but the man with whom he was wont to play poker in the evening is now the president of the bank. The conductor is in the purée.

It was in Minneapolis that Mr. Cleveland was once injudicious. He and his wife were pained to read the following report of their conversation in the paper on the day after their visit to the flour city:

"Yes, I like the town pretty well, but the people, some of 'em, are too blamed fresh."

"Do you think so, Grover? I thought they were very nice, indeed, but still I think I like St. Paul the best. It is so old and respectable." [Pg 190]

"Oh, yes, respectability is good enough in its place, but it can be overdone. I like Washington, where respectability is not made a hobby."

"But are you not enjoying yourself here, honey?"

"No, I am not. To tell you the truth, I am very unhappy. I'm so scared for fear I'll say something about the place that will be used against me by the St. Paul folks, that I most wish I was dead, and everybody wants to show me the new bridge and the waterworks, and speak of 'our great and phenomenal growth,' and show me the population statistics, and the school-house, and the Washburn residence, and Doc Ames and Ole Forgerson, and the saw-mill, and the boom, and then walk me up into the thirteenth story of a flour mill and pour corn meal down my back, and show me the wonderful increase of the city debt and the sewerage, and the West Hotel, and the glorious ozone and things here, that it makes me tired. And I have to look happy and shake hands [Pg 191] and say it knocks St. Paul silly, while I don't think so at all, and I wish I could do something besides be president for a couple of weeks, and quit lying almost entirely, except when I go a-fishing."

"But don't you think the people here are very cordial, dawling?"

"Yes, they're too cordial for me altogether. Instead of talking about the wonderful hit I have made as a president and calling attention to my remarkable administration, they talk about the flour output and the electric plant and other crops here, and allude feelingly to 'number one hard' and chintz bugs and other flora and fauna of this country, which, to be honest with you, I do not and never did give a damn for."

"Grover!"

"Well, I beg your pardon, dear, and I oughtn't to speak that way before you, but if you knew how much better I feel now you would not speak so harshly to me. It is indeed hard to be ever gay and joyous before the great masses who as a general thing, do not know enough to pound sand, but [Pg 192] who are still vested with the divine right of suffrage, and so must be treated gently, and loved and smiled at till it makes me ache."

Mr. Cleveland was greatly annoyed by the publication of this conversation, and could not understand it until this fall, when a Minneapolis man told him that the pale, haughty coachman who drove the presidential carriage was a reporter. He could handle a team with one hand and remember things with the other.

And so I say that as a president we can not be too careful what we say. I hope that the little boys and girls who read this, and who may hereafter become presidents or wives of presidents, will bear this in mind, and always have a kind word for one and all, whether they feel that way or not.

But I started out to speak of porters and not reporters. I carry with me, this year, a small, sorrel bag, weighing a little over twenty ounces. It contains a slight bottle of horse medicine and a powder rag. Sometimes it also contains a costly robe de nuit, when I do not forget and leave said [Pg 193] robe in a sleeping car or hotel. I am not overdrawing this matter, however, when I say honestly that the shrill cry of fire at night in most any hotel in the United States would now bring to the fire-escape from one to six employes of said hotel wearing these costly vestments with my brief but imperishable name engraven on the bosom.

This little traveling bag, which is not larger than a man's hand, is rudely pulled out of my grasp as I enter an inn, and it has cost me $29 to get it back again from the porter. Besides, I have paid $8.35 for new handles to replace those that have been torn off in frantic scuffles between the porter and myself to see which would get away with it.

Yesterday I was talking with a reformed lecturer about this peculiarity of the porters. He said he used to lecture a great deal at moderate prices throughout the country, and after ten years of earnest toil he was enabled to retire with a rich experience and $9 in money. He lectured on phrenology and took his meals with the chairman of the lecture committee. In Ouray, Colorado, [Pg 194] the baggageman allowed his trunk to fall from a great height, and so the lid was knocked off and the bust which the professor used in his lecture was busted. He therefore had to borrow a bald-headed man to act as bust for him in the evening. After the close of the lecture the professor found that the bust had stolen the gross receipts from his coat tail pocket while he was lecturing. The only improbable feature about this story is the implication that a bald-headed man would commit a crime.

He therefore had to borrow a bald-headed man to act as bust for him in the evening (Page 194)

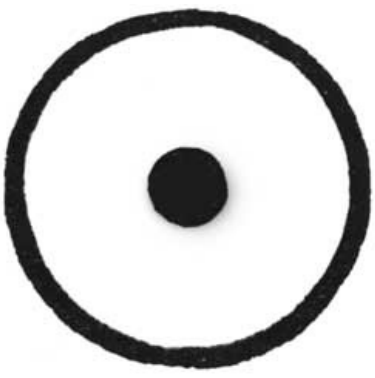
But still he did not become soured. He pressed on and lectured to the gentle janitors of the land in piercing tones. He was always kind to every one, even when people criticised his lecture and went away before he got through. He forgave them and paid his bills just the same as he did when people liked him.

Once a newspaper man did him a great wrong by saying that "the lecture was decayed, and that the professor would endear himself to every one if some night at his hotel, instead of blowing out [Pg 195] the gas and turning off his brains as he usually did, he would just turn off the gas and blow out his brains." But the professor did not go to the newspaper man's office and shoot holes in his person. He spoke kindly to him always, and once when the two met in a barber shop, and it was doubtful which was "next," as they came in from opposite ends of the room, the professor gently yielded the chair to the man who had done him the great wrong, and while the barber was shaving him eleven tons of ceiling peeled off and fell on the editor who had been so cruel and so rude, and when they gathered up the debris, a day or two afterward, it was almost impossible to tell which was ceiling and which was remains.

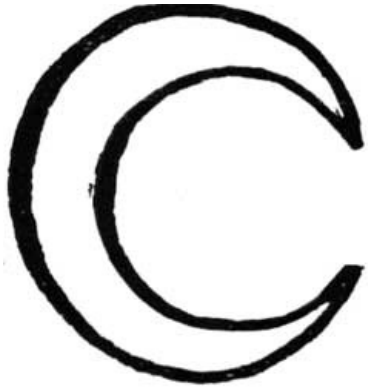
So it is always best to deal gently with the erring, especially if you think it will be fatal to them.

The reformed lecturer also spoke of a discovery he made, which I had never heard of before. He began, during the closing years of his tour, to notice mysterious marks on his trunk, made with [Pg 196] chalk generally, and so, during his leisure hours, he investigated them and their cause and effect. He found that they were the symbols of the Independent Order of Porters and Baggage Bursters. He discovered that it was a species of language by which one porter informed the next, without the expense of telegraphing, what style of man owned the trunk and the prospects for "touching" him, as one might say.

The professor gave me a few of these signs from an old note-book, together with his own interpretation after years of close study. I reproduce them here, because I know they will interest the reader as they did me.



This trunk, if handled gently and then carefully unstrapped in the owner's room, so as to open comfortably without bursting the wall or giving the owner vertigo, is good for a quarter. [Pg 197]

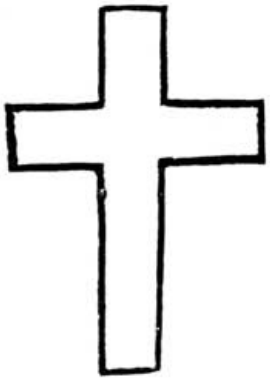


This man is a good, kind-hearted man generally, but will sometimes escape. Better not let him have his hand baggage till he puts up.

This trunk belongs to a woman who may possibly thank you if you handle the baggage gently and will weep if you knock the lid off. Kind words can never die. (N. B. Nyether can they procure groceries.) [Pg 198]

This trunk belongs to a traveling man who weighs 211 pounds. If you have no respect for the blamed old fire-proof safe itself, please respect it for its gentle owner's sake. He can not bear to have his trunk harshly treated, and he might so far forget himself as to kill you. It is better to be alive and poor than it is to be wealthy and dead. It is better to do a kind act for a fellow-being than it is to leave a desirable widow for some one else to marry.

If you will knock the top off this trunk you will discover the clothing of a mean man. In case you can not knock the lid entirely off, burst it open a little so that the great, restless, seething traveling public can see how many hotel napkins and towels and cakes of soap he has stolen. [Pg 199]



This is the trunk of a young girl, and contains the poor but honest garb she wore when she ran away from home. Also the gay clothes she bought after a wicked ambition had poisoned her simple heart. They are the gaudy garments and flashy trappings for which she exchanged her honest laugh and her bright and beautiful youth. Handle gently the poor little trunk, as you would [Pg 200] touch her sad little history, for her father is in the second-class coach, weeping softly into his coarse red handkerchief, and she, herself, is going home on the same train in her cheap little coffin in the baggage car to meet her sorrowing mother, who will go up into the garret many rainy afternoons in the days to come, to cry over this poor little trunk and no one will know about it. It will be a secret known only to her sorrowing heart and to God. [Pg 201]

A MEDIEVAL DISCOVERER

XXI

Galilei, commonly called Galileo, was born at Pisa on the 14th day of February, 1564. He was the man who discovered some of the fundamental principles governing the movements, habits, and personal peculiarities of the earth. He discovered things with marvelous fluency. Born as he was, at a time when the rotary motion of the earth was still in its infancy and astronomy was taught only in a crude way, Galileo started in to make a few discoveries and advance some theories of which he was very fond.

He was the son of a musician and learned to play several instruments himself, but not in such a way as to arouse the jealousy of the great musicians of his day. They came and heard him play a few selections, and then they went home contented with their own music. Galileo played for [Pg 202] several years in a band at Pisa, and people who heard him said that his manner of gazing out over the Pisan hills with a far-away look in his eye after playing a selection, while he gently up-ended his alto horn and worked the mud-valve as he poured out about a pint of moist melody that had accumulated in the flues of the instrument, was simply grand.

It was at this time that he noticed the swinging of a lamp in a church, and observing that the oscillations were of equal duration (Page 202)

At the age of twenty Galileo began to discover. His first discoveries were, of course, clumsy and poorly made, but very soon he commenced to turn out neat and durable discoveries that would stand for years.

It was at this time that he noticed the swinging of a lamp in a church, and, observing that the oscillations were of equal duration, he inferred that this principle might be utilized in the exact measurement of time. From this little accident, years after, came the clock, one of the most useful of man's dumb friends. And yet there are people who will read this little incident and still hesitate about going to church.

Galileo also invented the thermometer, the microscope and the proportional compass. He seemed [Pg 203] to invent things not for the money to be obtained in that way, but solely for the joy of being first on the ground. He was a man of infinite genius and perseverance. He was also very fair in his treatment of other inventors. Though he did not personally invent the rotary motion of the earth, he heartily indorsed it and said it was a good thing. He also came out in a card in which he said that he believed it to be a good thing, and that he hoped some day to see it applied to the other planets.

He was also the inventor of a telescope that had a magnifying power of thirty times. He presented this to the Venetian senate, and it was used in making appropriations for river and harbor improvements.

By telescopic investigation Galileo discovered the presence of microbes in the moon, but was unable to do anything for it. I have spoken of Mr. Galileo, informally calling him by his first name, all the way through this article, for I feel so thoroughly acquainted with him, though there was such a striking difference in our ages, that I think I am justified in using his given name while [Pg 204] talking of him.

Galileo also sat up nights and visited with Venus through a long telescope which he had made himself from an old bamboo fishing-rod.

But astronomy is a very enervating branch of science. Galileo frequently came down to breakfast with red, heavy eyes, eyes that were swollen full of unshed tears. Still he persevered. Day after day he worked and toiled. Year after year he went on with his task till he had worked out in his own mind the satellites of Jupiter and placed a small tin tag on each one, so that he would know it readily when he saw it again. Then he began to look up Saturn's rings and investigate the freckles on the sun. He did not stop at trifles, but went bravely on till everybody came for miles to look at him and get him to write something funny in their autograph albums. It was not an unusual thing for Galileo to get up in the morning, after a wearisome night with a fretful, new-born star, to find his front yard full of albums. Some of them were little red albums with [Pg 205] floral decorations on them, while others were the large plush and alligator albums of the affluent. Some were new and had the price-mark still on them, while others were old, foundered albums, with a droop in the back and little flecks of egg and gravy on the title-page. All came with a request for Galileo "to write a little, witty, characteristic sentiment in them."

Galileo was the author of the hydrostatic paradox and other sketches. He was a great reader and a fluent penman. One time he was absent from home, lecturing in Venice for the benefit of the United Aggregation of Mutual Admirers, and did not return for two weeks, so that when he got back he found the front room full of autograph albums. It is said that he then demonstrated his great fluency and readiness as a thinker and writer. He waded through the entire lot in two days with only two men from West Pisa to assist him. Galileo came out of it fresh and youthful, and all of the following night he was closeted with another inventor, a wicker-covered microscope, and a [Pg 206] bologna sausage. The investigations were carried on for two weeks, after which Galileo went out to the inebriate asylum and discovered some new styles of reptiles.

Galileo was the author of a little work called "I Discarsi e Dimas-Trazioni Matematiche Intorus a Due Muove Scienze." It was a neat little book, of about the medium height, and sold well on the trains, for the Pisan newsboys on the cars were very affable, as they are now, and when they came and leaned an armful of these books on a passenger's leg and poured into his ear a long tale about the wonderful beauty of the work, and then pulled in the name of the book from the rear of the last car, where it had been hanging on behind, the passenger would most always buy it and enough of the name to wrap it up in.

He also discovered the isochronism of the pendulum. He saw that the pendulum at certain seasons of the year looked yellow under the eyes, and that it drooped and did not enter into its [Pg 207] work with the old zest. He began to study the case with the aid of his new bamboo telescope and a wicker-covered microscope. As a result, in ten days he had the pendulum on its feet again.

Galileo was inclined to be liberal in his religious views, more especially in the matter of the Scriptures, claiming that there were passages in the Bible which did not literally mean what the translator said they did. This was where Galileo missed it. So long as he discovered stars and isochronisms and such things as that, he succeeded, but when he began to fool with other people's religious beliefs he got into trouble. He was forced to fly from Pisa, we are told by the historian, and we are assured at the same time that Galileo, who had always been far, far ahead of all competitors in other things, was equally successful as a fleer.

Galileo received but sixty scudi per year as his salary while at Pisa, and a part of that he took in town orders, worth only sixty cents on the scudi. [Pg 208]

HOW TO PICK OUT A BIRTHPLACE

XXII

Every American youth has been told repeatedly by his parents and his teachers that he must be a good boy and an exemplary young man in order to become the president of the United States. There is nothing new in this statement, and I do not print it because I regard it in the light of a "scoop." But I desire to go a trifle further, and call the attention of the American youth to the fact that he must begin at a much earlier date to prepare himself for the presidency than has been generally taught. He must not only acquire all the knowledge within reach, and guard his moral character night and day through life, or at least up to the time of his election, but he must be a self-made man, and he should also use the utmost care and discretion in [Pg 209] the selection of his birthplace.

A boy may thoughtlessly select the wrong state, or even a foreign country, as the site for his birthplace, and then the most exemplary life will not avail him. But hardest of all, perhaps, for one who aspires to the highest office within the gift of the people, is the selection of a house in which to be born. For this reason I have selected a few specimen birthplaces for the guidance of those who may be ignorant of the points which should be possessed by a birthplace.

Take, for instance, the residence of Andrew Jackson. No one has ever retained a stronger hold upon the tendrils of the Democratic heart than Andrew Jackson. His name appears more frequently to-day in papers for which he never subscribed than that of any other president who has passed away.

Andrew Jackson was a poor boy, whose father was a farm laborer and died before Andrew's birth, thus leaving the boy perfectly free to choose the site of his birthplace. [Pg 210]

Here Andrew turned the grindstone in the shed, while a large, heavy neighbor got on and rode for an hour or two (Page 210)

He did not care much about books, but felt confident at the start that he had chosen a good place to be born at, and therefore could not be defeated in his race for the presidency. Here in this house A. Jackson first saw the light, and here his excellency sent up his first Democratic whoop. Here, on the back stoop, was where he was sent sorrowing at night to wash his chapped feet with soft soap before his mother would allow him to go to bed. Here Andrew turned the grindstone in the shed, while a large, heavy neighbor got on and rode for an hour or two. Here the future president sprouted potatoes in the dark and noisome cellar, while other boys, who cared nothing for the presidency, drowned out woodchucks and sucked eggs in open defiance of the pulpit and press of the country.

And yet, what a quiet, peaceful, unostentatious home, with its little windows opening out upon the snow in winter and upon bare ground in summer. How peaceful it looks! Who would believe that up in the dark corner of the gable end [Pg 211] it harbors a large iron-gray hornets' nest with brocaded hornets in it? And still it is so quiet that, on hot summer afternoons, while the bees are buzzing around the petunias and the regular breathing of the sandy-colored shoat in the back lot shows that all nature is hushed and drugged into a deep and oppressive repose, the old hen, lulled into a sense of false security, walks into the "setting room," eats the seeds out of several everlasting flowers, samples a few varnished acorns on an ornamental photograph frame in the corner, and then goes out to the kitchen, where she steps into the dough that is set behind the stove to raise.

Here in this quiet home, far from the enervating poussé café and carte blanche, where he had pork rind tied on the outside of his neck for sore throat, and where pepper, New Orleans molasses and vinegar, together with other groceries calculated to discourage illness, were put inside, he laid the foundation of his future greatness.

Later on, the fever of ambition came upon him, and he taught school [Pg 212] where the big girls snickered at him and the big boys went so far away at noon that they couldn't hear the bell and were glad of it, and came back an hour late with water in both ears and crawfish in their pockets.

After that he learned to be a saddler, fought in the Revolutionary War, afterward writing it up for the papers in a graphic way, showing how it happened that most everybody was killed but himself.

Here the reader is given an excellent view of the birthplace of President Lincoln.

The artist has very wisely left out of the picture several people who sought to hand themselves down to posterity by being photographed

in various careless attitudes in the foreground.

In this house Mr. Lincoln determined to establish for himself a birthplace and to remain for eight years afterwards. In fancy, the reader can see little Abraham running about the humble cot, [Pg 213] preceded by his pale, straw-colored Kentucky dog, or perhaps standing in "the branch," with the soothing mud squirting gently up between his dimpled toes.

Here a great heart first learned to beat in unison with all humanity. Late one night, after the janitor had retired, he pulled the latch-string of this humble place and asked if the proprietor objected to children. Learning that he did not, the little emancipator deposited on the desk a small parcel consisting of several rectangular cotton garments done up in a shawl-strap, and asked for a room with a bath.

Our next illustration shows the birthplace of President Garfield. He was born plainly at Orange, Cuyahoga county, Ohio. Here he spent his childhood in preparing for the presidency, lying on his stomach for hours by the light of a pine-knot, studying all about the tariff, and ascertaining how many would remain if William had seven apples and [Pg 214] gave three to Henry and two to Jane. He soon afterward went to work on a canal as boatswain of a mule. It was here he learned that profanity could be carried to excess. He very early found that by coupling the mule to the boat by the use of a cistern pole, instead of coming into direct contact with the accursed yet buoyant end of the animal, he could bring with him a better record to the class-meeting than otherwise. He then taught school, and was beloved by all as a tutor. Many of his pupils grew up to be ornaments to society, and said they had never seen tuting that could equal that of their old tutor.

Mr. Garfield availed himself of the above birthplace on the 19th of November, A. D. 1831. He then utilized it as a residence.

Here we are given a fine view of the birthplace of President Cleveland. It is a plain structure, containing windows through which those who are inside may look out, while those who are on the outside may readily look in.

Under this roof the idea first came to Mr. Cleveland that some day he might fill the presidential [Pg 215] chair to overflowing. If the reader will go around to the door of the shed on the other side of the house, he will see little Grover just coming out and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

On the door of the barn can be seen the following legend, scratched on its surface with a nail:

> "I druther be born lucky than blong to a nold Ristocratic fambly.
>
> S. G. C."

Here we have an excellent view of Mr. Harrison's birthplace from the main road. It hardly seems possible that a man who now lives in a large house, with a spare room to it, gas in all parts of it, and wool carpets on the floor, should have once lived in such a plain structure as this. It shows that America is the place for the poor boy. Here he can rise to a great height by his own powers. Little did Bennie think at one time that people would some day come from all quarters of the United States to see him and take him kindly by the hand and say [Pg 216] that they were well acquainted with his folks when they were poor.

These various birthplaces prove to us what style is best calculated for a presidential candidate. They demonstrate that poverty is no drawback, and that frequently it is a good stimulant for the right kind of a boy. I once knew a poor boy whose clothes did not fit him very well when he was little, and now that he is grown up it is the same way.

That poor boy was myself. But I can not close this research without saying that the boys alone can not claim the glory in America. The girls are entitled to recognition.

Permit me, therefore, to present the birthplace of Belva A. Lockwood. I do not speak of it because I desire to treat the matter lightly, but to call attention to little Belva's sagacity in selecting the same style of birthplace as that chosen by other presidential candidates. She very truly said in the course of a conversation with the writer: "My theory [Pg 217] as to the selection of a birthplace is, first be sure you are right and then go ahead."

We should learn from all the above that a humble origin does not prevent a successful career. Had Abraham Lincoln been wealthy, he would have been taught, perhaps, a style of elocution and gesture that would have taken first rate at a parlor entertainment, and yet he might never have made his Gettysburg speech. While he was president he never looked at his

own hard hands and knotted knuckles that he was not reminded of his toiling neighbors, whose honest sweat and loyal blood had made this mighty republic a source of glory and not of shame forever.

So, in the future, whether it be a Grover, a Benjamin, or a Belva, may the President of the United States be ever ready to remove the cotton from his ears at the first cry of the oppressed and deserving poor. [Pg 218]

ON BROADWAY

XXIII

Once when in New York I observed a middle-aged man remove his coat at the corner of Fulton street and Broadway and wipe the shoulders thereof with a large red handkerchief of the Thurman brand. There was a dash of mud in his whiskers and a crick in his back. He had just sought to cross Broadway, and the disappointed ambulance had gone up street to answer another call. He was a plain man with a limited vocabulary, but he spoke feelingly. I asked him if I could be of any service to him, and he said No, not especially, unless I would be kind enough to go up under the back of his vest and see if I could find the end of his suspender. I did that and then held his coat for him while he got in it again. He afterward walked down the east side of Broadway with me. [Pg 219]

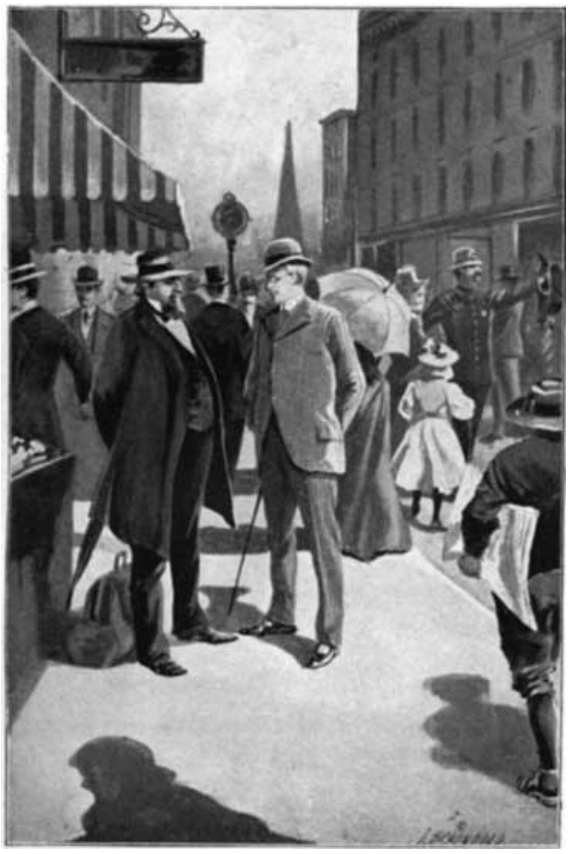
"That's twice I've tried to git acrost to take the Cortlandt street ferry boat sence one o'clock, and hed to give it up both times," he said, after he had secured his breath.

"So you don't live in town?"

"No, sir, I don't, and there won't be anybody else livin' in town, either, if they let them crazy teamsters run things. Look at my coat! I've wiped the noses of seventy-nine single horses and eleven double teams sence one o'clock, and my vitals is all a perfect jell. I bet if I was hauled up right now to be postmortumed the rear breadths of my liver would be a sight to behold."

"Why didn't you get a policeman to escort you across?"

"Why, condemb it, I did futher up the street, and when I left him the policeman reckoned his collar-bone was broke. It's a blamed outrage, I think. They say that a man that crosses Broadway for a year can be mayor of Boston, but my idee is that he's a heap more likely to be mayor of the New Jerusalem." [Pg 220]



A man that crosses Broadway for a year can be mayor of Boston, but my idee is that he's a heap more likely to be mayor of New Jerusalem (Page 220)

"Where do you live, anyway?"

"Well, I live near Pittsburg, P. A., where business is active enough to suit 'most anybody, 'specially when a man tries to blow out a natural-gast well, but we make our teamsters subservient to the Constitution of the United States. We don't allow this Juggernaut business the way you fellers do. There a man would drive clear round the block ruther than to kill a child, say nuthin of a grown person. Here the hubs and fellers of these big drays and trucks are mussed up all the time with the fragments of your best people. Look at me. What encouragement is there for a man to come here and trade? Folks that live here tell me that they do most of their business by telephone in the daytime, and then do their runnin' around at night, but I've got apast that. Time was when I could run around nights and then mow all day, but I can't do it now. People that leads a suddentary life, I s'pose, demands excitement, and at night they will have their fun; but take a [Pg 221] man like me—he wants to transact his business in the daytime by word o' mouth, and then go to bed. He don't want to go home at 3 o'clock with a plug hat full of digestive organs that he never can possibly put back just where they was before.

"No, I don't want to run down a big city like New York and nuther do I want to be run down myself. They tell me I can go up town on this side and take the boat so as to get to Jersey City that way, and I'm going to do it ruther than to go home with a neck yoke run through me. Folks say that Jurden is a hard road to travel, but I'm positive that a man would get jerked up and fined for driving as fast there as they do on Broadway; and then another thing, I s'pose there's a good deal less traffic over the road."

He then went down Wall street to the Hanover Square station and I saw him no more. [Pg 222]

MY TRIP TO DIXIE

XXIV

I once took quite a long railway trip into the South in search of my health. I called my physicians together, and they decided by a rising vote that I ought to go to a warmer clime, or I should enjoy very poor health all winter. So I decided to go in search of my health, if I died on the trail.

I bought tickets at Cincinnati of a pale, sallow liar, who is just beginning to work his way up to the forty-ninth degree in the Order of Ananias. He will surely be heard from again some day, as he has the elements that go to make up a successful prevaricator.

He said that I could go through from Cincinnati to Asheville, North Carolina, with only one easy change of cars, and in about twenty-three hours. It took me twice that time, and I had to change [Pg 223] cars three times in the dead of night.

The southern railroad is not in a flourishing condition. It ought to go somewhere for its health. Anyway, it ought to go somewhere, which at present it does not. According to the old Latin proverb, I presume we should say nothing but good of the dead, but I am here to say that the railroad that knocked my spine loose last week, and compelled me to carry lunch baskets and large Norman two-year-old gripsacks through the gloaming, till my arms hung down to the ground, does not deserve to be treated well, even after death.

I do not feel any antipathy toward the South, for I did not take any part in the war, remaining in Canada during the whole time, and so I can not now be accused of offensive partisanship. I have always avoided anything that would look like a settled conviction in any of these matters, retaining always a fair, unpartisan and neutral idiocy in relation to all national affairs, so that I might be regarded as a good civil service reformer, and perhaps at some time hold an office. [Pg 224]

To further illustrate how fair-minded I am in these matters, I may say I have patiently read all the war articles written by both sides, and I have not tried to dodge the foot-notes or the marginal references, or the war maps or the memoranda. I have read all these things until I can't tell who was victorious, and if that is not a fair and impartial way to look at the war, I don't know how to proceed in order to eradicate my prejudices.

But a railroad is not a political or sectional matter, and it ought not to be a local matter unless the train stays at one end of the line all the time. This road, however, is the one that discharged its engineer some years ago, and when he took his time-check he said he would now go to work for a sure-enough road with real iron rails to it, instead of two streaks of rust on a right of way.

All night long, except when we were changing cars, we rattled along over wobbling trestles and third mortgages. The cars were graded from third-class down. The road itself was not graded at [Pg 225] all.

They have the same old air in these coaches that they started out with. Different people, with various styles of breath, have used this air and then returned it. They are using the same air that they did before the war. It is not, strictly speaking, a national air. It is more of a languid air, with dark circles around its eyes.

At one place where I had an engagement to change cars, we had a wait of four hours, and I reclined on a hair-cloth lounge at the hotel, with the intention of sleeping a part of the time.

Dear, patient reader, did you every try to ride a refractory hair-cloth lounge all night, bare back? Did you ever get aboard a short, old-fashioned, black, hair-cloth lounge, with a disposition to buck?

I was told that this was a kind, family lounge that would not shy or make trouble anywhere, but I had only just closed my dark-red and mournful eyes in sleep when this lounge gently humped itself, and shed me as it would its smooth, dark hair in the spring, tra la. [Pg 226]

The floor caught me in its great strong arms and I vaulted back upon the polished bosom of the hair-cloth lounge. It was made for a man about fifty-three inches in length, and so I had to sleep with my feet in my pistol pockets and my nose in my bosom up to the second joint.

I got so that I could rise off the floor and climb on the lounge without waking up. It grew to be second nature to me. I did it just as a man who is hungry in his sleep bites off large fragments of the air and eats it involuntarily and smacks his lips and snorts. So I arose and deposited myself again and again on that old swayback but frolicsome wreck without waking. But I couldn't get aboard softly enough to avoid waking the lounge. It would yawn and rumble inside and rise and fall like the deep rolling sea, till at last I gave up trying to sleep on it any more, and curled up on the floor.

I bought tickets at Cincinnati of a pale, sallow liar, who is just beginning to work his way up to the forty-ninth degree in the Order of Ananias (Page 222)

The hair-cloth lounge, in various conditions of decrepitude, maybe found all through this region. [Pg 227] Its true inwardness is composed of spiral springs which have gnawed through the cloth in many instances. These springs have lost none of their old elasticity of spirits, and cordially corkscrew themselves into the affections of the man who sits down on them. If anything could make me thoroughly attached to the South it would be one of these spiral springs bored into my person about a foot. But that is the only way to remain on a hair-cloth chair or sofa. No man ever successfully sat on one of them for any length of time unless he had a strong pair of pantaloons and a spiral spring twisted into him for some distance.

In private houses hair-cloth sofas may be found in a domesticated state, with a pair of dark, reserved chairs, waiting for some one to come and fall off them. In hotels they go in larger flocks, and graze together in the parlor. [Pg 228]

THE THOUGHT CLOTHIER

XXV

General Dado has been sharply criticised—roundly abused, even—for making a claim against the

Grant estate for alleged assistance in preparing the "Memoirs" that have added to that estate some half-million of dollars. The Philadelphia *Bulletin* says:—"There is no mark of contempt so strong that it ought not to be fixed on so shameless and unblushing an ingrate." And it is this—the man's ingratitude—that most offends. General Grant's unswerving loyalty to Dado, his zeal in giving places to him so long as he had them to give, and in soliciting others to give them when it was no longer in his own power to do so, was an offense in the nostrils of most Americans. His intimacy with Dado was one of the causes of Grant's being in bad odor, as it were, at a certain period of his career; and the present unpleasantness is a part of the penalty for taking such a man into his bosom. The claimant is getting the worst of it, however, and we are tempted to overlook his ingratitude for the sake of the following skit called forth by his appearance as a thinker and clothier of thoughts.—*The Critic*. [Pg 229]

There is something slightly pathetic in the delayed statement that some of General Grant's best thoughts were supplied by General Adam Dado. While it is a great credit to any man to do the meditating, pondering, and word-painting necessary for a book which can attain such a sale as Grant's "Memoirs," it shows a condition of affairs which every literary man or woman must sadly deplore. Who of us is now safe?

While the warrior, as a warrior, has nothing to do but continue victorious through life, he can not safely write a book for posterity. Literature is at all times more or less hazardous under present copyright regulations, but it becomes doubly so when our estates have to reimburse some silent thinker who thought things for us while amanuensing in our employ. Even though we may have told him not to think thoughts for us, even though we asked him as a special favor to avoid putting his own clothing on our poor, little, shivering, naked facts, there is no law which can prevent his making that claim after we are dead. [Pg 230]

And how can a court of law or an intelligent jury judge such a matter? A great man thinks a thought in the presence of two amanuenses, provided I am right in spelling the plural in that way. He thinks a thought, I say, surrounded by those two gentlemen and an improved typewriter. He gives utterance to the thought and dies. One of the amanuensisters then states to the jury that he thought it himself, and that his comrade clothed it. The estate is then asked to pay so much per think for the thoughts and so much at war prices for clothing the ideas. Who is able, unless it be an intelligent jury, to arrive at the truth?

The first question to ask ourselves is this: Was General Grant in the habit of calling in a thinker whenever he wanted anything done in that line? He says distinctly in his letter that he was not. He could not do it. It was impracticable. Supposing in the crash of battle and in the moment of victory your short, hard thinker has his head shot off and it falls in a pumpkin orchard, where there is naturally more or less delay in identifying it, what can you do? Suppose that you were the [Pg 231] president of the United States, and your think-supply got snow-bound at Newark in a vestibule train, and congress were waiting for you to veto a bill. You could not think the thought in the first place, and even if you could you would hate to send it to congress until it was properly clothed. I am told that nothing shocks congress so much as the sudden appearance "in its midst" of a naked and new-born thought.

But General Dado has the advantage over General Grant in one respect. He can not be injured much. Otherwise the case is against him. But the matter will be watched with careful interest by literary people generally, and especially by soldiers and magazines with a war history. It is a warning to those who think their thoughts in unguarded moments while stenographers may be near to take them down and claim them afterwards. It is also a warning to people who thoughtlessly expose naked facts in the presence of word-painters and thought-clothiers, who may decorate and outfit these children of the brain and charge it up to the estate. [Pg 232]

Is the time coming when general dealers in apparel and gents' furnishing goods for the use of bare facts, and men who attend to the costuming, draping, and swaddling of nude ideas, will compete so closely with each other that, before a think has its eyes fairly open, one of these gentlemen will slap a suit of clothes on it, with a Waterbury watch in each pocket, and have a boy half way to the office with the bill? [Pg 233]

A RUBBER ESOPHAGUS.

XXVI

Puget Sound is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful sheets of water in the world. Its bosom is as unruffled as that of an angel who is opposed to ruffles on general principles.

To say that real estate was once active at certain places on its shores is just simply about as powerful as the remark made by the frontiersman who came home from his haying one afternoon and found that the Indians had burned up his buildings, massacred his wife, driven off his milch cows and killed his children. He looked over the bloody scene and then said to himself with great feeling; "This, it seems to me, is perfectly ridiculous."

I once drove about Seattle for two days with a real estate man, not buying, but just riding and enjoying the scenery while we allowed prices gently to advance and our whiskers to grow. Finally [Pg 234]

I asked him if he knew of a real "snap," as Herbert Spencer would call it, within the reach of a poor man. He said that there was a bargain out towards Lake Washington, and if I wanted to see it we could go out there. I said I should like to see it, for, if really desirable, I might buy some outside property. We drove quite awhile through the primeval forest, and after baiting our team and eating some lunch which we had with us, we resumed our journey, scaring up a bear on the way, which I was assured, however, was a tame bear. At last we tied the team, and, walking over the ridge, we found a lot facing west, seventy-three feet front, which could be had then at $1,500. I don't suppose you could get it at that price now, for it is within a stone's throw of the power house and cable running from the city to Lake Washington.

A friend of mine once told me how he lost a trade in Spokane Falls. He had the refusal for a week of a twenty-four-foot business lot "at $500." He thought and worried and prayed over it, and [Pg 235] wrote home about it, and finally decided to take it. On the last day of grace he counted up his money and finding that he had just the amount, he went over to the agent's office with it to close the trade.

"Have you the currency with you to make the trade all cash?" asked the agent.

"Yes, sir, I have the whole $500 in currency," said my friend, drawing himself up to his full height and putting his cigar back a little further in his cheek.

"Five hundred dollars!" exclaimed the agent with a low, gurgling laugh; "the lot is $500 per front foot. I didn't suppose you were Pan-American ass enough to think you could get a business lot in Spokane for $500. You can't get a load of sand for your children to play in at that rate."

Once as my train passed a little red depot I saw a young squaw leaning up against the building, and crying. As we moved along I saw a plain black coffin—a cheap affair of pine, daubed with walnut stain to make it look still cheaper, I presume. I had never seen an Indian—even a squaw— [Pg 236] weeping before, and so the picture remained with me a long time, and may for a long time yet to come.

I've never been a pronounced friend of the Indian, as those who know me best will agree. I have claimed that though he was first to locate in this country, he did not develop the lead or do assessment work even, so the thing was open to re-location. The white man has gone on and found mineral in many places, made a big output, and is still working day and night shifts, while the Indian is shiftless day and night, so far as I have observed.

But when we see the poor devils buying our coffins for their dead, even though they may go very hungry for days afterwards, and, as they fade away forever as a people, striving to conform to our customs and wear suspenders and join in prayer, common humanity leads us to think solemnly of their melancholy end.

On that trip I met with a medical and surgical curiosity while on the cars. It consisted of a young man who was compelled to take his nourishment through a rubber tube which led directly into [Pg 237] his stomach through his side. I had heard of something like it and in my extensive medical library had read of cases resembling it, but not entirely the same. The conductor, who had shown me a great many little courtesies already, invited me into the baggage car, where he had the young man, in order that I might see him.

The subject was a German about twenty years of age, of dark complexion and phlegmatic temperament. He stood probably about five feet four inches high in his stocking feet and did not attract me as a person of prominence until the conductor informed me that he ate through the side of his vest.

It seems that about two years ago the boy had some little gastric disturbance resulting from eating a nocturnal watermelon or callow cucumber. As I understand it, he, in an unguarded moment, called a physician who aimed to be his own worst enemy, but who contrived to work in the public on the same basis, using no favoritism whatever. He was a doctor who has since gone [Pg 238] into the gibbering industry in alcoholic circles.

So it happened that on the day he was called to the bedside of this plain, juvenile colic, the enemy he had taken into his mouth the evening before had, as a matter of fact, rifled his pseudo-brains, and being bitterly disappointed in them, had no doubt failed to return them.

Therefore "Doc," as he was affectionately called by the widowers throughout the neighborhood, was entirely unfit to prescribe. He did so, however, just the same. That kind of a doctor is generally willing to rush in where angels fear to tread. He cheerfully prescribed for the boy, and, in fact, filled the prescription himself. The principal ingredient of this compound was carbolic acid. A man who can, by mistake, administer carbolic acid and not even smell it, must do his thinking by means of a sort of intellectual wart.

But he did it, anyhow.

So, after great suffering, the young fellow lost the use of his entire esophagus, the lining coming [Pg 239] off as a result of this liquid holocaust, and then afterwards growing together again.

The parents now decided to change physicians. So after giving "Doc" a cow and settling up with him, another physician was called in. He said there was no way to reach the stomach but from the exterior, and, although hazardous, it might save the patient's life. Speedy action must be taken, however, as the young man was already getting up quite an appetite.

I can imagine Old Man Gastric waiting there patiently, day after day, every little while looking at his watch, wondering, and singing:

We are waiting, waiting, waiting,

Finally, as he sits near the cardial orifice, where the sign has been recently put up,

The Elevator is Not Running,

a light bursts through the walls of his house and he hears voices. Hastily throwing one of the coats of the stomach over his shoulders, he springs to his feet just in time to catch about a [Pg 240] nickel's worth of warm beef tea down the back of his neck.

The patient now wears about two feet of inch hose, one end of which is introduced into the upper and anterior lobe of the stomach. The other he has embellished with a plain cork stopper. I asked him if he would join me in a drink of water from the ice-cooler, and he said he would, under the circumstances. He said that he had just taken one, but would not mind taking one more with me. He then removed the stopper from his new Goodyear esophagus, inserted a neat little tin funnel, with which he was able to introduce the water. It gently settled down and disappeared in his depths, and then, putting away the garden hose, he accepted a dollar and gave me a history of the case as I have set it forth above, or substantially so, at least.

I could not help thinking of him afterward. I tried to imagine him on his way to Europe over a stormy sea; the surprise of his stomach when it found itself frustrated and beaten at its own game, and all that. Then I thought of him as the honored guest of some great corporation or club, [Pg 241] and at the banquet, when the president, in a few well-chosen words, apparently born of the moment but really wearing trousers, says, "Gentlemen, we have with us this evening," etc., etc.; and then rising, all the members join in a toast to the guest. Touching his glass to theirs, and then gracefully unreeling his garden hose, he takes from his pocket the small funnel, and, gently sipping the generous wine through his tin pharynx, he begins his well-digested response.

Nature did not do much for this poor lad, but science has stepped in and made him a man of mark. He went to bed unknown. He awoke to find himself noted. He went to sleep with ordinary tastes. He arose with no taste at all. Thus, through the medical treatment of a typhoid idiot, for a disease which was in no way malignant, or, as I might say, therapeutic, he became a man of parts and stands next to the nobility of Europe, not having to work.

Afterward, in Paris, I saw on the street a man who played the trombone by means of a bullet-hole [Pg 242] in his trachea, but I do not think it elevated me and spurred me on to nobler endeavor and made a better man of me, as did this simple-hearted young gentleman who made a living by eating publicly through a tin horn, and who actually earned his bread by eating it. I hope that the medical fraternity will make his case a study and try to do better next time. That is the only moral I can think of in connection with this story. [Pg 243]

ADVICE TO A SON

XXVII

My Dear Son: I just came here to New York on business, and thought I would write to you a few lines, as I have a little time that is not taken up. I came here on a train from Chicago the other day. Before I started, I got a lower berth in a sleeping car, but when I went to put my sachel in it, before I left Chicago, there were two women and a little girl there, and so I told the porter I would wait until they moved before I put my baggage in the section, for of course I thought they were just sitting there for a minute to rest.

Hours rolled by and they did not move. I kept on sitting in the smoking-room, but they stayed. By and by the porter came and asked me if I had "lower four." I said yes—I paid for it, but I couldn't really say I had it in my possession. He then said that two ladies and a little girl had "upper four," [Pg 244] and asked if I would mind swapping with them. I said that I would do so, for I didn't see how a whole family circle could climb up into the upper berth and remain there, and I would rather give them the lower one than spend the night picking up different members of the family and replacing them in the home nest after they had fallen out.

I had a bad cold, and though I knew that sleeping in the upper berth would add to it, I did not murmur. But little did I realize that they would hold the whole thing all of two days, and fill it full of broken crackers and banana peels, and leave me to ride backward in the smoking-room from Chicago to New York, after I had paid five dollars for a seat and lower berth.

Woman is a poor, frail vessel, Henry, but she manages to arrive at her destination all right. She buys an upper berth and then swaps it with an old man for his lower berth, giving to boot a half-smothered sob and two scalding tears. Then she says "Thank you," if she feels like it at the end of [Pg 245] the road, though these women did not. I have pneuemonia in its early stages, but I have done a kind act, which I shall probably have to do over again when I return.

If you ever become the parent of a daughter, Henry, and you like her pretty well, I hope you will teach her to acknowledge a courtesy, instead of looking upon the earth and the fullness thereof

as a partnership property, owned jointly by herself and the Lord.

A woman who has traveled a good deal is generally polite, and knows how to treat her fellow passengers and the porter, but people who are making their first or second trip, I notice, most generally betray the fact by tramping all over the other passengers.

Another mistake, Henry, which I hope you will not make, is that of taking very small children to travel. Children should remain at home until they are at least two or three days old, otherwise they are troublesome to their parents and also bother the other passengers. There ought to be a law, too, that would prevent parents from taking larger children who should be in the reform [Pg 246] school. Some parents seem to think that what their children do is funny, when, instead of humor, it is really felony. It does not entirely set matters right, for instance, when a child has torn off a gentleman's ear, merely to make the child return it to the owner, for you can never put an ear back in its place after it has been torn off and stepped on, in such a way as to make it look the same as it did at first.

I heard a mother say on the train that her little boy never was quite himself while traveling, because he wasn't well. She feared it was the change in the water that made him sick. He had then drank a whole ice-water tank empty, and was waiting impatiently till we got to Pittsburg, so that he could drink out of the hydrant.

Queer people also ride on the elevated trains here in New York. It is a singular experience to a stranger to ride on these cars. It made me ill at first, but after awhile I got so mad that I forgot about it. For instance, at places like Fourteenth street, and Twenty-third street, and Park Place, there are generally several people who want to get aboard a little before the passengers get off. [Pg 247] Two or three times I was carried by because the guards wouldn't enforce the rule, and I had a good deal of trouble, till I took an old pair of Mexican spurs out of my trunk and strapped them on my elbows. After that I could stroll along Broadway, or get off a train when I got ready, and have some comfort.

The gates on the elevated trains get shet rather sudden sometimes, and once they shet in a part of a man, I was told, and left the rest of him on the outside, so that after a while he fell off over the trestle, because there was more of him on the outside than on the inside, and he didn't seem to balance somehow. It was rare sport for the guards to watch the man scraping along the side of the road and sweeping off the right of way.

One day, when I was on board, there was a crowd at one of the stations, and an old man and a little girl tried to get on. She was looking out for the old man, and seemed to kind of steer him on the platform. Just as he stepped on the train, the guard shut the gate and left the little girl [Pg 248] outside. She looked so scart and pitiful, as the train left her, that I'll never forget it to my dying day, and as we left the platform I saw her wring her poor little hands, and I heard her cry, "Oh, mister, let me go with him. My poor grandpa is blind."

Sure enough, the old man groped around almost crazy on that swaying train, without knowing where he was, and feeling through the empty air for the gentle hand of the little girl who had been left behind. Two or three of us took care of the old man and got him off at the next station, where we waited till she came; but it was the most touching thing I ever saw outside of a book.

Another day the cars were full till you couldn't seem to get even an umbrella into the aisle, I thought, but yet the guards told people to step along lively, and encouraged them by prodding and pinching till most everybody was fighting mad.

Then a pale girl, with a bundle of sewing in her hand, and a hollow cough that made everybody look that way, got into the aisle. She could just barely get hold of the strap, and that was all. She [Pg 249] wore a poor, black cotton jersey, and when she reached up so high, the jersey part would not stay where it belonged, and at the waist seemed to throw off all responsibility. She realized it, and bit her lips, and two red spots came on her pale face, and the tears came into her eyes, but she couldn't let go of her bundle, and she couldn't let go of the strap, for already the train threw her against a soiled man on one side and a tough on the other. It was pitiful enough, so that men who had their seats began to read advertisements and other things with their papers wrong side up, in order to seem thoroughly engrossed in their business.

But two pretty young men, with real good clothes, and white, soft hands, had a great deal of fun over it, and every time the train would lurch and throw the poor girl's jersey a little more out of plumb, they would jab each other in the ribs, and laugh very hearty. I felt sorry that I wasn't young again, so that I could go over there and kick both of them. Henry, if I thought you would do [Pg 250] a thing like that, or allow it done on the same block where you happened to be, I would give my estate to a charitable object, and refuse to recognize you in Paradise.

Just then an oldish man of a chunky build, and with an eye as black as the driven tomcat, reached through the crowded aisle with his umbrella and touched the girl. She looked around, and he told her to come and take his seat. As she squeezed through, and he rose to seat her, a large man with black whiskers gently dropped into the vacant seat with a sigh of relief, and began to read a two-year-old paper with much earnestness, just as if he hadn't noticed the whole performance. The stout man was thunderstruck. He said:

"Excuse me, sir; I didn't leave my seat."

"Yes, you did," says the black-whiskered pachyderm. "You can't expect to keep a seat here and

leave it too."

"Well, but I rose to put this young lady in it, and I must ask you to be kind enough to let her have it."

"Excuse me," said the microbe, with a little chuckle of cussedness, "you will have to take your [Pg 251] chances, and wait for a vacant seat, same as I did."

That was all the conversation there was, but just then the short fat man ran his thumb down inside the shirt collar of the yellow fever germ, and jerked him so high that I could see the nails on the bottoms of his boots. Then, with the other hand, he socked the young lady into his seat, and took hold of a strap, where he hung on white and mad, but victorious.

After that there was a loud hurrah, and general enthusiasm and hand clapping, and cries of "Good!" "Good!" and in the midst of it the sporadic hog and the two refined young men got off the train.

As the black and white Poland swine went out the door I noticed that there was blood on the back of his neck, and later on I saw the short, stout old gentleman remove a large mole or birthmark, which he really had no use for, from under his thumb nail.

On a Harlem train, as they call it, I saw a drunken young man in one of the seats yesterday. He [Pg 252] wasn't noisy, but he felt pretty fair. Next to him was a real good young man, who seemed to feel his superiority a great deal. Very soon the car got jammed full, and an old lady, poorly dressed, but a mighty good, motherly old woman, I'll bet a hundred dollars, got in. Her husband asked the good young man if he would kindly give his wife a seat. He did not apparently hear at all, but got all wrapped up in his paper, just as every man in a car does when he is ashamed of himself. But the inebriated young man heard, and so he said:

"Here, mister, take my seat for the old lady; any seat is good enough for me." Whereupon he sat down in the lap of the good young man, and so remained till he got to his station.

This is a good town to study human nature in, Henry, and you would do well to come here before your vacation is over, just to see what kind of people the Lord allows to encumber the earth. It will show you how many human brutes there are loose in the world who don't try any longer to appear decent when they think their identity is swallowed up in the multitude of a great city. [Pg 253] There are just as selfish folks in the smaller towns, but they are afraid to give themselves up to it, because somebody in the crowd would be sure to recognize them. Here a man has the advantage of a perpetual *nom de plume*, and he is tempted to see how pusillanimous he can be even when he is just here on a visit. I'm going home next week, before I completely wreck my immortal soul.

I left your mother pretty comfortable at home, but I haven't heard from her since I left.

Your father,

Bill Nye. [Pg 254]

THE AUTOMATIC BELL BOY

XXVIII

Little did B. Franklin wot when he baited his pin hook with a good conductor and tapped the low browed and bellowing storm nimbus with his buoyant kite, thus crudely acquiring a pickle jar of electricity, that the little start he then made would be the egg from which inventors and scientists would hatch out the system which now not only encircles the globe with messages swifter than the flight of Phœbus, but that anon the light of day would be filtered through a cloud of cables loaded with destruction sufficient for a whole army, and the air be filled with death-dealing, dangling wires.

Little did he know that he was bottling an agent which has since pulled out the stopper with its teeth and grown till it overspreads the sky, planting its bare, bleak telegraph poles along every [Pg 255] highway, carrying day messages by night and night messages when it gets ready, filling the air with its rusty wings—provided, of course, that such agents wear wings—and with the harsh, metallic, ghoulish laughter of the signal-key, all the while resting one foot on the neck of the sender and one on the neck of the recipient, defying aggregated humanity to do its worst, and commanding all civilization, in terse, well-chosen terms, to either fish, cut bait or go ashore.

Could Benjamin have known all this at the time, possibly he might have considered it wisdom to go in when it rained.

I am not an old fogy, though I may have that appearance, and I rejoice to see the world move on. One by one I have laid aside my own encumbering prejudices in order to keep up with the procession. Have I not gradually adopted everything that would in any way enhance my opportunities for advancement, even through tedious evolution, from the paper collar up to the finger bowl, eyether, and nyether?

This should convince the reader that I am not seeking to clog the wheels of progress. I simply [Pg 256]

look with apprehension upon any great centralization of wealth or power in the hands of any one man who not only does as he pleases with said wealth and power, but who, as I am informed, does not read my timely suggestions as to how he shall use them.

In hotels it will take the mental strain off the bell-boy, relieving him also of a portion of his burdensome salary at the same time (Page 256)

To return, however, to the subject of electricity. I have recently sought to fathom the style and *motif* of a new system which is to be introduced into private residences, hotels, and police headquarters. In private houses it will be used as a burglar's welcome. In hotels it will take the mental strain off the bell-boy, relieving him also of a portion of his burdensome salary at the same time. In the police department it will do almost everything but eat peanuts from the corner stands.

I saw this system on exhibition in a large room, with the signals or boxes on one side and the annunciator or central station on the other. By walking from one to the other, a distance in all of thirty or forty miles, I was enabled to get a slight idea of the principle.

It is certainly a very intelligent system. I never felt my own inferiority any more than I did in the [Pg 257] presence of this wonderful invention. It is able to do nearly anything, it seems to me, and the main drawback appears to be its great versatility, on account of which it is so complex that in order to become at all intimate with it a policeman ought to put in two years at Yale and at least a year at Leipsic. An extended course of study would perfect him in this line, but he would not then be content to act as a policeman. He would aspire to be a scientist, with dandruff on his coat collar and a far-away look in his eye.

Then, again, take the hotel scheme, for instance. We go to a dial which is marked Room 32. There we find that by treating it in a certain way it will announce to the clerk that Room 32 wants a fire, ice-water, pens, ink, paper, lemons, towels, fire-escape, Milwaukee Sec, pillow-shams, a copy of this book, menu, croton frappé, carriage, laundry, physician, sleeping-car ticket, berth-mark for same, Halford sauce, hot flat-iron for ironing trousers, baggage, blotter, tidy for chair, or any of [Pg 258] those things. In fact, I have not given half the list on this barometer because I could not remember them, though I may have added others which are not there. The message arrives at the office, but the clerk is engaged in conversation with a lady. He does not jump when the alarm sounds, but continues the dialogue. Another guest wires the office that he would like a copy of the *Congressional Record*. The message is filed away automatically, and the thrilling conversation goes on. Then No. 7-5/8 asks to have his mail sent up. No. 25 wants to know what time the 'bus leaves the house for the train going East, and whether that train will connect at Alliance, Ohio, with a tide-water train for Cleveland in time to catch the Lake Shore train which will bring him into New York at 7:30, and whether all those trains are reported on time or not, and if not will the office kindly state why? Other guests also manifest morbid curiosity through their transmitters, but the clerk does not get excited, for he knows that all these remarks are filed away in the large black walnut box at the back of the office. When he gets ready, provided [Pg 259] he has been through a course of study in this brand of business, he takes one room at a time, and

addressing a pale young "Banister Polisher" by the name of "Front," he begins to scatter to their destinations, baggage, towels, morning papers, time-tables, etc., all over the house.

It is also supposed to be a great time-saver. For instance, No. 8 wants to know the correct time. He moves an indicator around like the combination on a safe, reads a few pages of instructions, and then pushes a button, perhaps. Instead of ringing for a boy and having to wait some time for him, then asking him to obtain the correct time at the office and come back with the information, conversing with various people on his way and expecting compensation for it, the guest can ask the office and receive the answer without getting out of bed. You leave a call for a certain hour, and at that time your own private gong will make it so disagreeable for you that you will be glad to rise. Again, if you wish to know the amount of your bill, you go through certain exercises with [Pg 260] the large barometer in your room; and, supposing you have been at the house two days and have had a fire in your room three times, and your bill is therefore $132.18, the answer will come back and be announced on your gong as follows: *One*, pause, *three*, pause, *two*, pause, *one*, pause, *eight*. When there is a cipher in the amount I do not know what the method is, but by using due care in making up the bill this need not occur.

For police and fire purposes the system shows a wonderful degree of intelligence, not only as a speedy means of conveying calls for the fire department, health department, department of street cleaning, department of interior and good of the order, but it furnishes also a method of transmitting emergency calls, so that no citizen—no matter how poor or unknown—need go without an emergency. The citizen has only to turn the crank of the little iron marten-house till the gong ceases to ring, then push on the "Citizens' button," and he can have fun with most any emergency he likes. Should he decide, however, to shrink from the emergency before it arrives, [Pg 261] he can go away from there, or secrete himself and watch the surprise of the ambulance driver or the fire department when no mangled remains or forked fire fiend is found in that region.

This system is also supposed to keep its eye peeled for policemen and inform the central station where each patrolman is all the time; also as to his temperature, pulse, perspiration and breath. It keeps a record of this at the main office on a ticker of its own, and the information may be published in the society columns of the papers in the morning. It enables a citizen to use his own discretion about sounding an alarm. He has only to be a citizen. He need not be a tax-payer or a vox populi. Should he be a citizen, or declare his intention to become such, or even though he be a voter only, without any notion of ever being a citizen, he can help himself to the fire department or anything else by ringing up the central station.

Electricity and spiritualism have arrived at that stage of perfection where a coil of copper wire [Pg 262] and a can of credulity will accomplish a great deal. The time is coming when even more surprising wonders will be worked, and with electric wires, the rapid transit trains, and the English sparrows all under the ground, the dawn of a better and brighter day will be ushered in. The car-driver and the truck-man will then lie down together, Boston will not rise up against London, he that heretofore slag shall go forth no more for to slug, and the czar will put aside his tailor-made boiler-iron underwear and fearlessly canvass the nihilist wards in the interest of George Kennan and reform, nit.

THE END.

[Pg 263]

An Article on the Writings of

James Whitcomb Riley

By "Chelifer"

[Pg 264]

THE AMBROSIA OF JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

"Chelifer" in "The Bookery."—Godey's Magazine.

There are writers that take Pegasus on giddier flights of fancy, and writers that sit him more grandly, and writers that put him through daintier paces, and writers that burden him with anguish nearer that of the dread Rider of the White Horse, and there are writers that make him a very bucking broncho of wit, but there is no one that turns Pegasus into just such an ambling nag of lazy peace and pastoral content as James—I had almost said Joshua Whitcomb—Riley. If you want a panacea for the bitterness and the fret and the snobbishness and pretension and unsympathy and the commercial ambition and worry and the other cankers that gnaw and gnaw the soul, just throw a leg over the back of Riley's Pegasus, "perfectly safe for family driving," let the reins hang loose as you sag limply in your saddle, and gaze through drowsy eyes while the amiable old beast jogs down lanes blissful with rural quietude, through farmyards full of picturesque rustics and through the streets of quaint villages. Then utter rest and a peace akin to bliss will possess your soul.

To make readers content with life and glad to live is one of the most dazzlingly magnificent deeds in the power of an artist. This is too little appreciated in the melodramatic theatricism of our life. This genius for soothing the reader with a pathos that is not anguish and a humor that is not cynicism, this genius belongs to Mr. Riley in a degree I have found in no other writer in all literature. [Pg 265]

Of course, Mr. Riley is essentially a lyric poet. But his spirit is that of Walt Whitman; he speaks the universal democracy, the equality of man, the hatred of assumption and snobbery, that our republic stands for, if it stands for anything. Now downright didacticism in a poet is an abomination. But if a poet has no right to ponder the meanings of things, the feelings of man for man and the higher "criticism of life," then no one has. If to Pope's "The proper study of mankind is man," you add "nature" and "nature's God," you will fairly well outline the poet's field.

Mere art (Heaven save the "mere"!) is not, and has never been, enough to place a poet among the great spirits of the world. It has furnished a number of nimble mandolinists and exquisite dilettants for lazy moods. But great poetry must always be something more than sweetmeats; it must be food—temptingly cooked, winningly served, well spiced and well accompanied, but yet food to strengthen the blood and the sinews of the soul.

Therefore I make so bold as to insist that even in a lyrist there should be something more than the prosperity or the dirge of personal *amours*: there should be a sympathy with the world-joy, the world-suffering, and the world-kinship. It is this attitude toward lyric poetry that makes me think Mr. Riley a poet whose exquisite art is lavished on humanity so deep-sounding as to commend him to the acceptance of immortality among the highest lyrists.

Horace was an acute thinker and a frank speaker on the problems of life. This didacticism seems not to have harmed his artistic welfare, for he has undoubtedly been the most popular poet that ever wrote. Consider the magnitude and the enthusiasm of his audience! He has been the personal chum of everyone that ever read Latinity. But Horace, when not exalted with his inspired preachments on the art of life and the arts of poetry and love, was a bitter cynic redeemed by great self-depreciation and joviality. The son of a slave, he was too fond of court life to talk democracy. [Pg 266]

Bobby Burns was a thorough child of the people, and is more like Mr. Riley in every way than any other poet. Yet he, too, had a vicious cynicism, and he never had the polished art that enriches some of Mr. Riley's non-dialectic poetry, as in parts of his fairy fancy, "The Flying Islands of the Night."

Burns never had the versatility of sympathy that enables Mr. Riley to write such unpastoral masterpieces as "Anselmo," "The Dead Lover," "A Scrawl," "The Home-going," some of his sonnets, and the noble verses beginning

"A monument for the soldiers!
And what will ye build it of?"

Yet it must be owned that Burns is in general Mr. Riley's prototype. Mr. Riley admits it himself in his charming verses "To Robert Burns."

"Sweet singer, that I lo'e the maist
O' ony, sin' wi' eager haste
I smacket bairn lips ower the taste
O' hinnied sang."

The classic pastoral poets, Theokritos, Vergandil, the others, sang with an exquisite art, indeed, yet their farm-folk were really Dresden-china shepherds and shepherdesses speaking with affected simplicity or with impossible elegance. Theokritos, like Burns and Riley, wrote partly in dialect and partly in the standard speech, and to those who are never reconciled to anything that can quote no "authority," there should be sufficient justification for dialect poetry in this divine Sicilian musician of whom his own Goatherd might have said: [Pg 267]

"Full of fine honey thy beautiful mouth was, Thyrsis, created
Full of the honeycomb; figs Ægilean, too, mayest thou nibble,
Sweet as they are; for ev'n than the locust more bravely thou singest."

I have no room to argue the *pro's* of dialect here, but it always seems strange that those lazy critics who are unwilling to take the trouble to translate the occasional hard words in a dialect form of their own tongue, should be so inconsistent as ever to study a foreign language. Then, too, dialect is necessary to truth, to local color, to intimacy with the character depicted. Besides, it is delicious. There is something mellow and soul-warming about a plebeian metathesis like "congergation." What orthoepy could replace lines like these?:

"Worter, shade and all so mixed, don't know which you'd orter
Say, th' *worter* in the shadder—*shadder* in the *worter*!"

One thing about Mr. Riley's dialect that may puzzle those not familiar with the living speech of the Hoosiers, is his spelling, which is chiefly done as if by the illiterate speaker himself. Thus "rostneer-time" and "ornry" must be Æolic Greek to those barbarians who have never heard of "roasting-ears" of corn or of that contemptuous synonym for "vulgar," "common," which is smoothly elided, "or(di)n(a)ry." Both of these words could be spelled with a suggestive and helpful use of apostrophes: "roast'n'-ear," and or'n'ry. [Pg 268]

Jumbles like "jevver" for "did you ever?" and the like can hardly be spelled otherwise than phonetically, but a glossary should be appended as in Lowell's "Biglow Papers," for the poems are eminently worth even lexicon-thumbing. Another frequent fault of dialect writers is the spelling phonetically of words pronounced everywhere alike. Thus "enough" is spelled "enuff," and "clamor," "clammer," though Dr. Johnson himself would never have pronounced them otherwise. In these misspellings, however, Mr. Riley excuses himself by impersonating an illiterate as well as a crude-speaking poet. But even then he is inconsistent, and "hollowing" becomes "hollerin'," with an apostrophe to mark the lost "g"—that abominable imported harshness that ought to be generally exiled from our none too smooth language. Mr. Riley has written a good essay in defense of dialect, which enemies of this form of literature might read with advantage.

But Mr. Riley has written a deal of most excellent verse that is not in dialect. One whole volume [Pg 269] is devoted to a fairy extravaganza called "The Flying Islands of the Night," a good addition to that quaint literature of lace to which "The Midsummer Night's Dream," Herrick's "Oberon's Epithalamium," or whatever it is called, Drake's "Culprit Fay," and other bits of most exquisite foolery belong. While hardly a complete success, this diminutive drama contains some curiously delightful conceits like this "improvisation:"

"Her face—her brow—her hair unfurled!—
And O the oval chin below,
Carved, like a cunning cameo,
With one exquisite dimple, swirled
With swimming shine and shade, and whirled
The daintiest vortex poets know—
The sweetest whirlpool ever twirled
By Cupid's finger-tip—and so,
The deadliest maelstrom in the world!"

It is a strange individuality that Mr. Riley has, suggesting numerous other masters—whose influence he acknowledges in special odes—and yet all digested and assimilated into a marked individuality of his own. He has studied the English poets profoundly and improved himself upon them, till one is chiefly impressed, in his non-dialectic verse, with his refinement, subtlety, and ease. He has a large vocabulary, and his felicity is at times startling. Thus he speaks of water "chuckling," which is as good as Horace's ripples that "gnaw" the shore. Note the mastery of such lines as

"And the dust of the road is like velvet."

"Nothin' but green woods and clear
Skies and unwrit poetry
By the acre!"

"Then God smiled and it was morning!"

Life is "A poor pale yesterday of Death."

"And O I wanted so
To be felt sorry for!"

"Always suddenly they are gone,
The friends we trusted and held secure."

"At utter loaf."

"Knee-deep in June."

—But I can not go on quoting forever. [Pg 270]

Technically, Mr. Riley is a master of surpassing finish. His meters are perfect and varied. They flow as smoothly as his own Indiana streams. His rimes are almost never imperfect. To prove his own understanding he has written one *scherzo* in technic that is a delightful example of bad rime, bad meter, and the other earmarks of the poor poet. It is "Ezra House," and begins:

"Come listen, good people, while a story I do tell
Of the sad fate of one I knew so passing well!"

The "do" and the "so" are the unfailing index of crudity. Then we have rimes like "long" and "along" (it is curious that modern English is the only tongue that finds this repetition objectionable); "moon" and "tomb," "well" and "hill," and "said" and "denied" are others, and the whole thing is an enchanting lesson in How Poetry Should Not be Written.

Mr. Riley is fond of dividing words at the ends of lines, but always in a comic way, though Horace, you remember, was not unwilling to use it seriously, as in his

"——U-
Xorius amnis."

Mr. Riley's animadversions on "Addeliney Bowersox" constitute a fascinating study in this effect. He is also devoted to dividing an adjective from its noun by a line-end. This is a trick of Poe's,

whose influence Mr. Riley has greatly profited by. In his dialect poetry Mr. Riley gets just the effect of the jerky drawl of the Hoosier by using the end of a line as a knife, thus:

"The wood's
Green again, and sun feels good's
June!"

[Pg 271]

His masterly use of the cæsura is notable, too. See its charming despotism in "Griggsby Station."

But it is not his technic that makes him ambrosial, not the loving care *ad unguem* that smooths the uncouthest dialect into lilting tunefulness without depriving it of its colloquial verisimilitude—it is none of these things of mechanical inspiration, but the spirit of the man, his democracy, his tenderness, the health and wealth of his sympathies. If he uses "memory" a little too often as a vehicle for his rural pictures, the utter charm of the pictures is atonement enough. He has caught the real American. He is the laureate of the bliss of laziness. His child poems are the next best thing to the child itself; they have all the infectious essence of gayety, and all the *naïveté*, and all the knife-like appeal. It could not reasonably be demanded that his prose should equal the perfection of his verse, but nothing more eerie has ever been done than the little story, "Where is Mary Alice Smith?" with its strange use of rime at the end.

Of all dialect writers he has been the most versatile. Think of the author of "The Raggedy Man" or "Orphant Annie" writing one of the finest sonnets in the language! this one which I must quote here as a noble ending to my halt praise:

"Being his mother, when he goes away
I would not hold him overlong, and so
Sometimes my yielding sight of him grows O
So quick of tears, I joy he did not stay
To catch the faintest rumor of them! Nay,
Leave always his eyes clear and glad, although
Mine own, dear Lord, do fill to overflow;

[Pg 272]

"Let his remembered features, as I pray,
Smile ever on me. Ah! what stress of love
Thou givest me to guard with Thee thiswise:
Its fullest speech ever to be denied
Mine own—being his mother! All thereof
Thou knowest only, looking from the skies
As when not Christ alone was crucified."

Life is the more tolerable, the more full of learned sympathy, and thereby of joy and value, for the very existence of such a man.

---

of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state’s laws.

The Foundation’s business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation’s website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works

that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.