

THE MARCH HARE

by

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A FLOURISHING INDUSTRY

THE infant industry of buying worthless cattle, inoculating them with pleuro-pneumonia and tuberculosis, and collecting the indemnity when they are officially put to death to prevent the spread of the contagion, is assuming something of the importance and dignity of a national pursuit. The proprietors of one of the largest contageries on Long Island report that the outlook is most encouraging; they begin each fiscal year with a large surplus in their treasury. Some of the Western companies, too, have been highly prosperous and intend to mark their gratification by an immediate issue of new shares as a bonus.

The effect of this industry upon pastoral pursuits is wholesome. The stock ranges of Texas, Wyoming and Montana thrill with a new life, and it is estimated that their enlargement during the next few years will bring not less than five million acres of public land into the service of man and beast. The advantage to manufacturers of barbed-wire fencing is obvious, while the indirect benefit to agriculture through the enhanced price of this now indispensable material will supply the protectionist with a new argument and a peculiar happiness. Cattle-growing has hitherto been attended with great waste. A large percentage of the "stock on hand" was unsalable. Failure of the cactus crop, destitution of water and prevalence of blizzards, together with such natural ills as cattle flesh is heir to, have frequently so reduced the physical condition of the herds that not more than a half would be acceptable to the buyer. The ailing remainder were of little use. A few of the larger animals could be utilized by preparing them as skeletons of buffaloes for Eastern museums of natural history, but the demand was limited: nine in ten were suffered to expire and become a dead loss. These are now eagerly sought by agents of the contageries, purchased at good prices, driven by easy stages to the railways and, arriving at their final destination, duly infected. They are said to require less infection than they would if they were in good condition, with what the life insurance companies are pleased to call a fair "expectation of life." Some of the breeders prefer to isolate these failures and do their own infecting; but the tendency in the cattle trade, as in all others, is toward division of labor. The regular infectionaries possess superior facilities of inoculation, and government inspectors prefer to do business at a few great pleuro-pneumoniacal and tubercular centers rather than make tedious journeys to distant ranges. The trend of the age is, in fact, toward centralization.

The effect of the new industry upon commerce cannot be accurately foreseen, but it is natural to suppose that it will largely increase the importation of low-grade cattle from South America. Hitherto it has not been profitable to import any that were unfit for beef. But if the *Bos inedibilis*, the milkless crowbait and other varieties "not too good for human nature's daily food"—in fact not good enough—can be laid down in New York or New Orleans at a cost of not more than thirty dollars each, including the purchase price of ten cents, and inoculated before they have eaten their heads off, there would seem to be a reasonable margin of profit in the traffic. If not, the legal allowance for their condemnation and slaughter can be easily increased by legislative action. If Congress will do nothing to encourage capital in that direction the States most benefited by this extension of American commerce can respond to the demand of the hour with a judicious system of bounties. Importation of cheap foreign cattle eligible to pleuro-pneumonia and the junior disorder will provide employment to a great number of persons who, without apt appropriation's artful aid, might languish on farms and in workshops, a burden to the community and a sore trial to themselves.

THE RURAL PRESS

THERE will be joy in the household of the country editor what time the rural mind shall no longer crave the unwholesome stimuli provided by composing accounts of corpulent beetroots, bloated pumpkins, dropsical melons, aspiring maize, and precocious cabbages. Then the bucolic journalist shall have surcease of toil, and may go out upon the meads to frisk with kindred lambs, frolic familiarly with loose-jointed colts and exchange grave gambolings with solemn cows. Then shall the voice of the press, no longer attuned to praise of the vegetable kingdom, find a more humble but not less useful employment in calling the animal kingdom to the evening meal beneath the sanctum window.

To the overworked editor life will have a fresh zest, a new and quickening significance. The hills shall seem to hump more greenly up to a bluer sky, the fields to blush with a tenderer sunshine. He will go forth at dawn executing countless flip-flaps of gymnastic joy; and when the white sun shall redden with the blood of dying day, and the pigs shall set up a fine evening hymn of supplication to the Giver of All Swill he will be jubilant in the editorial feet, blissfully conscious that the editorial intellect is a-ripening for the morrow's work.

The rural newspaper! We sit with it in hand, running our fingers over the big, staring letters, as over the black and white keys of a piano, drumming out of them a mild melody of perfect repose. With what delight one disports him in the deep void of its nothingness, as who should swim in air! Here is nothing to startle, nothing to wound. The very atmosphere is suffused and saturated with "the spirit of the rural press;" and even one's dog sits by, slowly dropping the lids over its great eyes; then lifting them with a jerk, tries to look as if it were not sleepy in the least degree. A fragrance of plowed fields comes to one like a benediction. The tinkle of ghostly cowbells falls drowsily upon the ear. Airy figures of prize esculents float before the half-shut eyes and vanish before perfect vision can attain to them. Above and about are the drone of bees and the muffled thunder of milk-streams shooting into the foaming bucket. The gabble of distant geese is faintly marked off by the barking of a distant dog. The city, with all its noises, sinks away, as from one in a balloon, and our senses swim in the "intense inane" of country languor. We slumber.

God bless the man who invented the country newspaper!—though Sancho Panza blessed him long ago.

"TO ELEVATE THE STAGE"

THE existence of a theatrical company, composed entirely of Cambridge and Harvard alumni who have been in jail strikes the imagination with a peculiar force. In the theatrical world the ideal condition conceived by certain social philosophers is being rapidly realized and reduced to practice. "It does not matter," say these superior persons, "what one does; it is only important what one is." The theater folk have long been taking that view of things, as is amply attested by the histrionic careers (for examples) of Mrs. Lily Langtry and Mr. John L. Sullivan. Managers—and, we may add, the public—do not consider it of the least importance what Mrs. Langtry does on the stage, nor how she does it, so long as she is a former favorite of a Prince and a tolerably fair counterpart of a Jersey cow. And who cares what Mr. Sullivan's pronunciation of the word "mother" may be, or what degree of sobriety he may strive to simulate?—in seeing his performance we derive all our delight from the consciousness of the great and godlike thing that he has the goodness to be.

It is needless to recall other instances; every playgoer's memory is richly stored with them; but this troupe of convicted collegians is the frankest application of the principle to which we have yet been treated. At the same time, it opens up "vistas" of possibilities extending far-and-away beyond what was but yesterday the longest reach of conjecture. Why should we stop with a troupe of educated felons? Let us recognize the principle to the full and apply it with logical heroism, unstayed by considerations of taste and sense. Let us have theater companies composed of reformed assassins who have been preachers. A company of deaf mutes whose grandfathers were hanged, would prove a magnetic "attraction" and play to good houses—that is to say, they would be to good houses. In a troupe of senators with warts on their noses the pleasure-shoving public would find an infinite gratification and delight. It might lack the allurements of feminine charm, most senators being rather old women, but for magnificent inaction it would bear the palm. Even better would be a company of distinguished corpses supporting some such star inactor, as the mummy of his late Majesty, Rameses II of Egypt. In them the do-nothing-be-some-thing principle would have its highest, ripest and richest development. In the broad blaze of their histrionic glory Mrs. Langtry would pale her uneffectual fire and Mr. Sullivan hide his diminished head.

From the example of such a company streams of good would radiate in every direction, with countless ramifications. Not only would it accomplish the long desired "elevation of the stage" to such a plane that even the pulpit need not be ashamed to work with it in elicitation of the human snore, but it would spread the light over other arts and industries, causing "the dawn of a new era" generally. Even with the comparatively slow progress we are making now, it is not unreasonable to hope that eventually Man will cease his fussy activity altogether and do nothing whatever, each individual of the species becoming a veritable monument of philosophical inaction, rapt in the contemplation of his own abstract worth and perhaps taking root where he stands to survey it.

PECTOLITE

THIS is one of the younger group of minerals: it was discovered by a German scientist in 1828. For its age it is an exceptionally interesting stone—if it is a stone. Its most eminent and distinguishing peculiarity is described as the "property of parting with minute splinters from its surface upon being handled, these splinters or spicules piercing the hand, producing a pain similar to that experienced by contact with a nettle."

In the mineral kingdom pectolite ought to take high rank, near the very throne. In its power of annoying man it is a formidable competitor to several illustrious members of the vegetable kingdom, such as the nettle, the cactus, the poison ivy and the domestic briar. There are, indeed, several members of the animal kingdom which hardly excel it in the power of producing human misery. Considering its remarkable aptitude in that bad way its rarity is somewhat difficult to understand, and is perhaps more apparent than real. Professor Hanks says that previously to its discovery in California it had been found in only eight places. If upon investigation these should turn out to be Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America, Australia and the two Polar continents, the unnatural discrepancy between its objectionable character and its narrow distribution would be explained away, and pectolite seen to be "in touch" with its sister malevolences, whose abundance is usually in the direct ratio of their noxiousness to man.

In his efforts to make this uncommon mineral known, advance its interests and bring it into closer relations with mankind, Professor Hanks is winning golden opinions from the manufacturer of arsenic, the promoter of the Canadian thistle, and the local agent of the imported rattlesnake. The various uses to which it can be put are obvious and numberless. As a missile in a riot—the

impeller wearing a glove, but the other person having nothing to guard his face and eyes—its field of usefulness will be wide and fertile. Small fragments of it attractively displayed here and there about the city will give a rich return of agony when thoughtlessly picked up. For village sidewalks inimical to the thin shoe of the period it would be entirely superior to the knotty plank studded with projecting nail heads. With a view to these various “uses of adversity,” it would be well for Professor Hanks to submit careful estimates of the cost of quarrying it and transporting it to places where it can be made to do the greatest harm to the greatest number. To assist and further the purposes of Nature, as manifested in the character of the several agencies and materials which she employs, is the greatest glory of science. A human being assailed by all the natural forces, seizing a stone to defend himself and getting a fistful of pectolitic spiculae, is a spectacle in which one can get as near and clear a glimpse of the Great Mystery as in any; and science is now prepared to supply the stone.

LA BOULANGÈRE

A ONCE famous American actress, Miss Mary Anderson—sometimes, I think, called “Our Mary”—was an accomplished baker. Among her personal friends, those at least who had the happiness to dine at her home, she had a distinguished reputation as a bread-maker. She was once persuaded to make public the prescription that she used, through the London *Times*, thus materially enlarging her practice by addition of many new patients. I regret my inability to reproduce the prescription here for the benefit of such housekeepers as are unfettered by Colonial tradition—who, not having inherited the New World system from their great-grandmothers, might be accessible to the light of a later dispensation. For bread-making is, I think, a progressive science in which perfection is not attained at a bound by merely “dissolving the political bands” which connect one country with another.

History is garrulous of our Revolutionary sires: their virtues and other vices are abundantly extolled; but concerning our Revolutionary dames the trumpet of fame remains mysteriously and significantly reticent—a phenomenon not easily accounted for on any hypothesis which assumes or concedes their worth. Historians, poets and those, generally, who have possession of the public ear and hold it from generation to generation, seem to feel that the less said about these merry old girls the better. I believe the secret of it lies in the consciousness of the literary class that the mothers of the Republic made treasonably bad bread, and that their sins of that sort are being visited upon their children, even to these third and fourth generations, and (which is worse) practiced by them. No doubt the success of the Revolutionary War would have been achieved later if our brave grandfathers had not been fortified in body and spirit by privation of the domestic loaf of the period, known to us through the domestic loaf of our own. To immunity from the latter desolating agency the soldiers on both sides in the more recent and greater conflict were obviously indebted for the development of that martial spirit which made them so reluctant to stop fighting and go home. It must be said, however, in defence of the Bread of Our Union that if one is going to eat the salt-spangled butter which also appertains to the home of the brave it really does not greatly matter what one eats it on.

America’s dyspepsia is not entirely the product of the frying-pan, the pie and the use of the stop-watch at meals. Any wholesome reform in bread-making as practiced darkly in the secrecy of our kitchens, will materially mitigate the national disorder; though even bread made according to the plans and specifications of Our Mary can hardly be expected to manifest all its virtues if eaten blazing hot. Whatever may be the outcome of Mistress Mary’s quite contrary way of imparting her

sacred secret to a foreign newspaper and ignoring the press of her own country—whether anybody now compounds bread after her prescription or not, or if anybody does, whether anybody else will eat it—this much was accomplished: she showed that at least one American woman was not afraid to tell the world and the public prosecutors how she made bread. As a bread-maker she was indubitably gifted with the divine audacity of genius.

ADVICE TO OLD MEN

IT goes without saying that among the elements of success a broad and liberal total abstinence is chief. The old man who gets drunk before dinner is born to failure as the sparks fly upward. Diligence in business is another qualification that needs not be particularly dwelt upon; the old man who seeks his ease while his young and energetic employees, trained to habits of industry, are stealing all the profits of the business will find his finish where he did not lose it. He is beyond the reach of remonstrance.

Study the rising old man. You will find him invariably distinguished by seriousness. He is not given to frivolity. He does not play at football. He does not contribute jokes to the comic papers. He does not waste his time kissing the girls. The rising old man is all business. We can all be that way if we are old enough to have no infrangible habits.

As to manners, and these are of the utmost importance, a deferential and reverent attitude toward youth has a commercial value that it would be hard to appraise too highly. Remember, old man, that the youth whom you employ to-day you may serve to-morrow, if he will have you. It is worth while to make him admire you, and the best way to do so is (to show him that you respect him. There are certain virtues that win the admiration of all; let him think that you think that he has them.

A most desirable quality in an old man is modesty. It is not only valuable as a mental equipment necessary to success, it is right and just that you should have it. Pray do not forget, in the exultation of growing old, that age is peculiarly liable to error through the glamour of experience. To the errors of age and experience are attributable most of those failures which come to us in the later life. We can not help being old, but Heaven has not denied us the opportunity to take counsel of youth and ignorance. Some one has said that the way to succeed is to think like a philosopher and then act like a fool. The thinking being needless, a mere intellectual luxury, and therefore a sinful waste of the time allowed us for another and better purpose, renounce it. As to action, study the young. Every successful man was once young.

Do not try; to get anything for nothing; when you have obtained a liberal discount for cash you have done much; do the rest by paying the cash. An honest old man is the pride and glory of his son.

Dig, save, fast, go as nearly naked as the law allows, and if Heaven does not reward you with success you will nevertheless have the satisfaction that comes of the consciousness of being a glittering example to American age.

A DUBIOUS VINDICATION

HARDLY any class of persons enjoys complete immunity from injustice and calumny, even if “armed with the ballot”; but probably no class has so severely suffered from Slander’s mordant

tooth as our man-eating brethren of that indefinite region known as the "Cannibal Islands." Nations which do not eat themselves, and which, with even greater self-denial, refrain from banqueting on other nations, have for generations been subjected to a species of criticism that must be a sore trial to their patience. Every reprobate among us who has sense enough to push a pencil along the measured mile of a day's task in a newspaper office without telling the truth has experienced a sinful pleasure in representing anthropophagi as persons of imperfect refinement and ailing morals. They have been censured even, for murder; though surely it is kinder to take the life of a man whom you set apart for your dinner than to eat him struggling. It has been said of them that they are particularly partial to the flesh of missionaries.

It appears that this is not so. The Rev. Mr. Hopkins, of the Methodist Church, who returned to New York after a residence of fifteen years in the various islands of the South Pacific, assured his brethren that in all that period he could not recollect a single instance in which he was made to feel himself a comestible. He averred that his spiritual character was everywhere recognized, and so far as he knew he was never in peril of being put to the tooth.

His testimony, unluckily, has not the value that its obvious sincerity and truth merit. In point of physical structure he was conspicuously inedible; so much so, in truth, that an unsympathetic reporter coldly described him as "fibrous" and declared that in a country where appetizers are unknown and pepsin a medicine of the future, Mr. Hopkins could under no circumstances cut any figure as a viand. And this same writer meaningly inquired of the cartilaginous missionary the present address of one "Fatty Dawson."

Fully to understand the withering sarcasm of this inquiry it is necessary to know that the person whose whereabouts it was desired to ascertain was a co-worker of Mr. Hopkins in the same missionary field. His success in spreading the light was such as to attract the notice of the native king. In the last letter received from Mr. Dawson he explained that that potentate had just done him the honor to invite him to dinner.

Mr. Hopkins being a missionary, one naturally prefers his views to those of anyone who is still in the bonds of iniquity, and moreover, writes for the newspapers; nevertheless, I do not see that any harm would come of a plain statement of the facts in the case of the Rev. Mr. Dawson. He was not eaten by the dusky monarch—in the face of Mr. Hopkins' solemn assurance that cannibalism is a myth, it is impossible to believe that Mr. Dawson was himself the dinner to which he was invited. That he was eaten by Mr. Hopkins himself is a proposition so abysmally horrible that none but the hardiest and most impenitent calumniator would have the depravity to suggest it.

THE JAMAICAN MONGOOSE

WHEN man undertakes for some sordid purpose to disturb the balance of natural forces concerned in the conservation and in the destruction of life on this planet he is all too likely to err. For example, when some public-spirited Australian, observing a dearth of donkeys in his great lone land, thoughtfully imported a shipload of rabbits, believing that they would grow up with the country, learn to carry loads and eventually bray, he performed a disservice to his fellow colonists which they would gladly requite by skinning him alive if they could lay hands on him. It is well known that our thoughtless extermination of the American Indian has been followed by an incalculable increase of the grasshoppers which once served him as food. So strained is the resulting situation that some of our most prominent seers are baffled in attempting to forecast the outcome; and it is said that the Secretary of Agriculture holds that farming on this continent is doomed unless we take to a grasshopper diet ourselves.

The matter lends itself to facile illustration : one could multiply instances to infinity. We might cite the Australian ladybird, which was by twenty well defined and several scientists brought here and acclimated at great expense to feed upon a certain fruit pest, but which, so far, has confined its ravages mainly to the fruit.

The latest, and in some ways the most striking, instance of the peril of making a redistribution of the world's fauna, is supplied by the beautiful tropical isle of Jamaica, home of the Demon Rum. It appears that someone in Jamaica was imperfectly enamored of the native rats, which are creatures of eminent predacity, intrepid to a degree that is most disquieting. This person introduced from a foreign land the mongoose—an animal whose name it seems prudent to give in the singular number. The mongoose, as is well known, is affected with an objection to rats compared with which the natural animosity of a dog to another dog is a mild passion indeed, and that of a collector of customs to holy water seems hardly more than a slight coolness. Jamaica is now ratless, but, alas, surpassingly tickful. The ticks have so multiplied upon the face of the earth that man and beast are in equal danger of extinction. The people hardly dare venture out-of-doors to plant the rum vine and help the north-bound steamers to take on monkeys. The mongoose alone is immune to ticks.

It appears that when this creature had effaced the rats it was itself threatened with effacement from lack of comestible suited to its tooth; but instead of wasting its life in repinings and unavailing regrets—instead of yielding to the insidious importunities of nostalgia, it fell upon the lizards and banqueted royally if roughly; and soon the lizards had gone to join the rats in the Unknown. Now, the Jamaica lizard had for countless ages “wittled free” upon ticks, maintaining among them a high death-rate with which, apparently, their own dietetic excesses (for ticks are greatly addicted to the pleasures of the table) had nothing to do. The lizard abating his ravages, through being himself abated by the mongoose, the tick holds dominion by the unchallenged authority of numbers. Man, the whilom tyrant, flees to his mountain fastnesses, the rum vine withers in the fields and the north-bound steamer sails monkeyless away. Jamaica's last state is worse than her first and almost as bad as ours. She is as yet, however, spared the last and lowest humiliation that a brave and generous people can experience; her parasites do not pose as patriots, nor tickle the vanity of those whom they bleed.