

GREAT PRESENCE OF MIND.

A Terrible Catastrophe Averted by a Public Speaker's Self-Control.

One of the "sights" of Philadelphia, fifty years ago, was a magnificent Chinese museum, whose treasures, collected by Mr. Dunn, a munificent merchant, were displayed in a building erected on the site on which now stands the Continental hotel. Over the museum was a long, narrow upper room, about thirty-five feet high. It was a public hall, used for lectures and concerts, and with it was associated a most remarkable instance of presence of mind. A correspondent of the London Spectator tells the thrilling story.

In the central part of this immense auditorium were collected one evening about three thousand persons. At about nine o'clock, the manager of the building came to the leader of the meeting, white with affright, and told him that the floor had sunk nearly a foot, and that in a few minutes more the tenons of the joists might be out of their sockets.

The floor would then fall through onto the Chinese museum, and the walls, sixty feet in height, would collapse and be precipitated, with the roof, upon the assembly.

The leader explained to the person whom the audience expected next to hear, that by addressing the assembly from the end of the hall, he could withdraw the company from the sunken part of the floor to that where the front walls strengthened the joists to bear the weight of the people.

The reply to this was that his own family was in the audience, and that he must get them out first. "You shall not!" said the leader; "a hint of danger, a rush, and we shall all be under the fallen walls and roof. Five minutes' delay may kill us altogether."

As a boy in the audience I well remember my surprise at seeing the leader suddenly appear at the far front of the room, and tell the people that they would next be addressed from where he stood—the organ-loft. As the audience turned and moved to the front, the flooring rose six inches.

The people were entertained partly by an impromptu sentimental song in a voice without a quaver, in the very face of death, and as soon as practicable they were quietly dismissed.

Not a single individual in that great assembly was aware that, by the presence of mind of one man, an awful catastrophe had been averted. The imagination sickens at the thought of what would have been the consequence of a panic and sudden alarm by the failure of the courage of this man.

I am confident that, excepting the speaker referred to and the manager of the building, no one outside the immediate family of the man whose courage prevented this catastrophe has known the whole story till now.

The terror of those minutes before the crowd was moved and the floor rose toward its level, was such, that he never, even in his own family, alluded to the scene, though he lived for forty years afterward.

LAND AT THE NORTH POLE.

Evidences of It Traceable in the Icebergs of the Arctic Ocean.

There is no reasonable doubt that there exists in the Arctic ocean, somewhere in the vicinity of the north pole, an ice-covered land of considerable extent. This is evident from the character of the icebergs observed at various points within the Arctic ocean; for there are different classes of icebergs, as there are different kinds of coal. The difference between the floeberg, or palaeocrystic iceberg, and the ordinary iceberg of the north Atlantic, says a scientific exchange, is as great and as easily distinguishable as is the difference between a block of bituminous coal and one of anthracite. The floeberg is distinguished by its tabular form, great uniformity of height, rectangular shape, nearly flat surface, perpendicular cliffs, and especially from its laminated structure. Whenever a palaeocrystic iceberg is seen in the far north, before its face has suffered much from the melting action of the sun, a close observer notes that it presents along its front a series of faint blue lines, separated by interspaces of opaque white. These lines show a stratification due to yearly accumulations of snow upon a nearly level surface, which are transformed gradually into ice, and each line also represents the limit of the accumulation of a single year. In a similar manner are formed the glaciers of the Alps and Greenland, but these latter ice-sheets are torn, distorted and reformed a thousand times in their descent down rapid slopes and through confining valleys of greater or less width. Floebergs, then, are parts of great ice sheets which, formed from successive snowfalls over a land area of no great elevation and very gentle gradients, flow downward from its highest level in the direction of least resistance. The slope being gentle, the ice moves gradually seaward, with its structure unchanged and its stratification unbroken, and passes slowly into the ocean, whence eventually its buoyancy causes it to rise and disrupt in a vast mass from the main sheet.

FACTS AND FIGURES.

There are 150,000,000 opium smokers in China.

Twelve average tea plants produce one pound of tea.

The railroads of this country employ 33,136 locomotives.

It is estimated that the land in the United States is worth \$12,500,000,000.

The king of Samoa has forbidden his subjects to sell or to use intoxicating liquors.

The University of Chicago conferred its first degree of doctor of philosophy upon a Japanese.

An ant's brain is larger, in proportion to the animal's size, than that of any other creature known.

Last year the postmasters of this country handled about 4,000,000,000 pieces of stamped paper.

Sir John Hart declares that the Chinese pay every year for their national curse, opium, \$100,000,000.

COINS OF LITTLE USE.

The Gold Dollar Had No Utility, While the Three-Cent Piece Served a Purpose.

To one who has not given the subject thought it would seem that the most useless coins ever issued by the United States were the silver three-cent pieces. They were small, as thin as a sheet of manilla paper and before they finally disappeared from circulation they came to be regarded as nuisances.

Although there is much to be said against the annoying little coins, says the New York Herald, they were, as a matter of fact, of far greater utility, as far as circulation is concerned, than another coin. This is the gold dollar, which, experts at the sub-treasury say, has never served any useful purpose. Said Maurice Muhleman, cashier of the sub-treasury, recently:

"From the mutilated condition of the gold dollars sent here for redemption it is positively shown that the public do not regard them as coins. Their only use appears to be for bangles, necklaces, watch charms, scarf pins and the like. It is doubtful if one in a thousand ever really passed in circulation."

"With the three-cent silver piece, it was different. When first coined, the country had nothing in the shape of a coin between the huge copper cents and half cents and the silver half dime. The small coin was hailed as a blessing, and became popular at once. There was an excellent reason for its issue also.

"Strange as it may seem, it was not provided for by a coinage act, but by an act revising the postal rates. This law lowered the cost for transmitting the unit of weight for letters from five to three cents. It was deemed advisable by congress thereupon to issue a coin of corresponding denomination. The coin was of great utility, and circulated freely until the advent of the nickel."

STORIES OF NAPOLEON.

With All His Opportunities He Left the Throne a Pauper.

No man in the history of the world ever had such vast and varied opportunities for piling up a personal fortune as those which fell to the lot of Napoleon Bonaparte. Yet, on the first abdication, when the allies robbed him of his wife and child and sent him to Elba, he left the throne of the most powerful nation in Europe almost a pauper, says the New York Recorder.

The imperial treasures had been kept at Orleans. After the abdication the provisional government, under the influence of Talleyrand, the most notorious self-seeker in France, was more concerned about these treasures than about the future of the nation. A decree of practical confiscation was drawn up and a force of men under M. Dulong was sent from Paris to Orleans to seize on everything that could be found.

Napoleon's personal treasury had at one time contained about 114,000,000 francs. Of this amount more than 100,000,000 francs had been used to equip the army of France for its final struggle with monarchical Europe. The remnant was seized as per programme by Talleyrand's minions. They took 10,000,000 francs in gold and silver coin, 3,000,000 francs in gold and silver plate, perhaps 400,000 francs worth of snuff boxes and rings, a good part of Napoleon's wardrobe, and even his embroidered pocket handkerchiefs. There wasn't anything modest about M. Talleyrand. The Russian officers refused to interfere with this pillage, although appealed to.

The loss of this money only occasioned a moment of irritation to Napoleon. The loss of his wife and child made him like a caged lion at Elba, and, in his opinion, fully justified his dramatic return to France.

ON A CHERRY STONE.

A Talented Convict Carves His Petition for a Pardon.

Gesa Berger, the actor and newspaper man, has a picture in calligraphy that has a remarkable history. It is in size thirty by forty-two inches, and is the work of Joseph Loew, the most noted counterfeiter that the Austrian government ever knew.

When an application is made for a pardon in Austria the red tape policy of that country compels the applicant to address the emperor with all his titles. Emperor Ferdinand had about forty titles. Loew engraved all of these names, together with his petition for a pardon, on a cherry stone.

The letters were so fine that it required the aid of a powerful microscope to decipher them. One day when the emperor visited the prison Loew in person presented a cherry stone to the emperor and told him what it contained. The emperor made an examination and was so amazed at the work that he gave him an unconditional pardon. Not only did he pardon him, but gave him a position as a detective to trail down counterfeiters. Loew was a well-informed man in all the arts and rascalities of counterfeiters, and in less than two years after his pardon he ran to earth almost every counterfeiter in Austria, and died a few years ago covered with detective honors. The picture, although made fifty years ago, is in a remarkable state of preservation.

Hindu Occupations.
The Hindus are curiously frank in specifying their occupations for the census reports. Among the accounts many of them give of their trades they designate themselves as debtors, living on loans, men of secret resources—or plainly thieves, village thieves or robbers. Others more modestly call themselves guests, visitors, story-tellers from house to house, dependents on relatives, supported by their son-in-law, or idlers; and one is without work because he is silly. Among the more serious occupations are declarer of oracles, cleaner of eyes, sorcerer, fore-teller of storms and hail, player of the tomtom, or player, barber, doctor according to the Greek method, servant of a candidate, marriage broker of young domestics, marriage broker of his own daughters for money, etc.

For Housekeepers.

The Table asks housekeepers to try: Rubbing tough meat with cut lemon. Bacon fat for frying chicken and game. Steaming a stale loaf of bread to freshen it.

Warming crackers slightly in the oven before using. Dipping sliced onions in milk before frying.

Fried sweet apples when you have liver or kidney. Heating dry coffee before pouring on the water.

Pouring vinegar over fresh fish to make the scales come off easily. Adding lemon juice to the water in which rice is boiled to keep the grains separate.

Beating the whites of eggs at an open window if the kitchen be hot and steamy.—The Table.

Escaped Prisoners Captured.

SANTA ANA, Cal., Jan. 7.—Two notorious characters, William Denby and Thomas Brown, dug through the county jail here yesterday and scaled a big board fence around the jail grounds. Officers gave them a hot pursuit on horseback, and captured both prisoners after a sharp fight. Both men are charged with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to commit murder.

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You can tell a young doctor from an old doctor in the dark, because when you ask an old doctor a question he doesn't answer you immediately, as if he were cock sure.—Somerville Journal.

A New York monkey slipped his tether and went on a jamboree among the saloons. All the accounts agree that he made a human being of himself.—Boston Herald.

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Yours, MR. & MRS. J. F. FORD.

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