

FUNNY THINGS IN PROSE



Pitfalls That Beset the Ancients.

Gruesome Horrors of Food Testing in the "Grub Age."

"Of all great mysteries in this world," remarked the Hungry Man, as he gave his order to the waiter, "that of food is one of the most fascinating. We modern folks who enjoy the benefits of other people's experience and discoveries, seldom give to this fact a thought, but nevertheless the fact remains. Let me illustrate:

"There is our good friend, the mushroom, for instance, and likewise our arch enemy, the toadstool. They are so like each other in appearance that even to this day luckless mortals occasionally eat the wrong one and join the ranks of the toadstool-eaters of the past. Before folks learned to distinguish the difference, therefore, what a lot of calamities must have been brought about through the unfortunate resemblance and mistake of the deplorable ignorance. To the Stone Age, the Age of Reptiles, and the other prehistoric periods, there should be added still another—the Grub Age.

"It strikes me that the Grub Age—that indefinite epoch when the human race was making the acquaintance of its daily fare—must have been a very trying, not to say painful, portion of the world's history. We are told in tradition that the ancients very generally were hardy races. They needed to be, for, compared with the discovery and conquest of new foodstuffs to eat which you and I of the present day regard as common—the discovery and conquest of strange lands was mere child's play.

Was, Indeed, a Hero.

"Show me, for example, a portrait of the first man who ate an oyster—soft and wobbly—and I'll show you the portrait of a brave and dauntless hero, willing to sacrifice his all for the benefit of the family bill of fare. In those days, every man was a sort of government experiment station.

"Of course, I have no positive information, but I shouldn't be at all surprised if one of the worst punishments meted out to prehistoric man by his fellow beings was a sentence to serve as food tester to the village. That I have no doubt, because, a great sight, because of the terrible uncertainty attached to the job. With everybody testing, no man's life would be safe, but with one man condemned to test anything and everything which was brought before him, the danger would be minimized to all except the unfortunate tester. That I have no doubt, was practiced among the very ancient, else how happened it that so many of the patriarchs of old were playing golf and bridge whilst at the age of 80?

"No doubt the doctrine of expansion was then applied to eatables. The man who believed in supplementing the family fare with something new and novel was regarded as dangerous to the health of the community, and old men loudly cried out for the days of the 13 original foods. Progressive ideas, as you are well aware, as now, and that is why we of today eat soft-shelled crabs, lobsters, frogs' legs, calves' brains, snails, eggs, terrapin, clams, potatoes and other delightful dainties with impunity.

Matter for Reflection.

"But, as you eat, consider the pains, the nerve, the fortitude which your ancestors had to display in order to establish the reputation for honesty of the stuff which you enjoy. You who like apple fritters, how would you like to have been the man who first overcame the prejudice against the apple? If I remember rightly the apple was the fruit which helped to destroy the peace of the Garden of Eden.

"How about potatoes? What was the prehistoric person thinking when he ate upon them? Is it in the realm of possibility that he had the nerve to eat one of the dirty brown things? I think not. And it's the same with turnips, asparagus, beets, celery and so on to infinity. May blessings be upon the heads of their discoverers and early patrons. Beside them the occupants of the Hall of Fame, mere historic personages, fade away into the deep gloom of insignificant obscurity. Trot out the benefactor who first picked the first beet! Oh, show me the martyr who first boomed gaudy turnips!

"It is to the residents of the ancient sea coasts, however, that we should ascribe the lowest. To them belongs the greatest credit, for the conquest of the vegetable is as nothing when compared with the conquest of the shell fish. What was it about the crab's physical appearance that suggested he was good to eat? How many people have been bitten by their teeth on the shell of his relative, the lobster, before learning that the inside alone was eligible for internal use? And what wayward, what stupid, what man who first boiled a lobster said when he saw the ugly beast turning red? For all we know, however, the very ancients may have had even worse than we give them credit for, as I doubt whether any man living today would care to go and gather material for a Pleistocene pot pie, a Megalithic steak or Pterodactyl stew.

Should Lead the Host.

Prime honors, notwithstanding, let us bestow upon him who first ate a snail. What courage! What originality! Leaving a long and luminous path behind it as it goes, the snail is suddenly seized, its caper looks at it meditatively and then—did he take it home and cook it, that first snail, or did he eat it?

"Ah," said the Heroic Man, interrupting himself, "here comes the waiter with our tripe and ice cream."—A. H. F. in Brooklyn Eagle.

WHEN WITH THE GIRLS.

If You'd Profit by Experience, Let Poetry Alone.

Boys don't read poetry to the girls. There isn't one in ten who appreciates it. They will rave over "The rose is red, the violet blue," etc., but when you deal them out some huge chunks of real good verse, with the brand blunk in and the trademark "Apollo being led to the cooler by the Muses," they stick their fans before their faces, sigh and wake up when you finish. Many a promising young man has ruined his life by reading poetry to the wrong girl. Her father overheard him, perhaps, and thinks: "Damn it, that sort of stuff ain't going to keep the wolf from the door." But he is mistaken. I have heard lots of poems

that I would guarantee to keep him away eternally.

One of our poets who has not taken out a regular license from the Sinking Fund read some soulful songs on the ocean to a dear girl he was edging up to. They were all about the wild waves, gray skies and so on.

"Did you ever, Miss Daisy," he asked, "think what those vast heaving billows melting on the shore and then receding sing as they come and go—what the sound of their ebb and flow means?"

"No, I never have," she replied calmly; "but when my brother and I were on the coast of Maine last summer we used to listen to the waves breaking, and he said they sounded to him—"

"Poetical!" interrupted the poet.

"Yes, I suppose so," she said. "They went 'Slosh, b'gosh, slosh, b'gosh,' from morning until night."—Louisville Times.

SUCH A LOVELY LIE!

Roundie Outdoes Himself at Club Revamping a Chestnut.

Roundie was narrating some of the scenes and incidents of his European trip to his circle at the club. He said:

"As you know, they took you into the railway carriages over there for better or for worse. Occasionally the result is anything but harmonious. Putting some kinds of people together is like mixing an effervescent salt—there must be a vent for the ensuing trouble or an explosion.

"I was travelling out of Berlin one day. Going through a suburb we picked up a heavy passenger who was enjoying a huge cigar. After we had been locked in he disappeared in smoke.

"A stationer or two beyond a woman was locked up with us. At once she began to sniff at the fog created by our fellow passenger. When he discovered that the woman was annoyed by it, he threw away the remains he was smoking—and lit a fresh one, just to show her his vicious could be when challenged. He went to work on it like a bellows, taking pains to blow the smoke into her corner as far as possible.

"She began to make remarks to her dog about it and the intelligent animal looked at the enemy fiercely. The latter was annoyed and the surrounding smoke got thicker.

"At last the remarks to the dog waxed threatening and suddenly something happened in the mist. The angered lady with the heavy passenger from her neighbor's face and tossed it through the window. The indignant victim got back at her like touching off a keg of powder.

"Quick as a flash he seized the dog and hurled it after the cigar. Not a word had been exchanged, but each made up for it when we pulled into the station a moment later. Bent upon mutual revenge, they overcame the guard. She demanded satisfaction for the outrage upon her pup. He declared that he had been robbed of the only cigar in Germany worth smoking!

"Of course the everlasting military swarmed around. The one with the most gold brand promptly suggested a mutual arrest to settle the matter. Just as the arrest bid fair to be official the dog blandly returned upon the scene.

"The lady uttered a cry of relief and might have gathered the pup into her arms had not the enemy run out. You see, the dog, by bringing the offending cigar back with him, thinking that he had been thrown from the coach to fetch it!

"Well, according to the guard, the property having been restored, the culprits were released. And both were satisfied. One might have expected such a conclusion in Ireland, but in Germany—never! The audience was silent until Roundie

had departed. "How lovely he can lie!" said some one. "In the days of old Rameess that story had parallels."—New York Herald.

Behaving Like a Lady.

A little girl from an East End slum was invited with others to a charity dinner given at a great house in the West End of London. In the course of the meal the little maiden started her hostess by propounding the query:

"Does your husband drink?"

"Why, no," replied the astonished lady of the house.

After a moment's pause the miniature querist proceeded with the equally bewildering question:

"How much coal do you burn. What is your husband's salary? Has he any bad habits?"

By this time the presiding genius of the table felt called upon to ask such strange questions.

"Well," was the innocent reply, "mother told me to behave like a lady, and when ladies call at our house they always ask mother those questions."—Spare Moments.

What He Said.

"Oh! He swore so!" sobbed the young wife. "I think he must be getting some terrible mental trouble. Oh, my!"

"Tell me all about it," said her mother, soothingly. "Did he really swear?"

"Indeed, he did, frightfully. It was at the table. He had just started to eat a nice dessert I had made for him, when all of a sudden, for no apparent reason, he jumped up and yelled: 'Jumping Jehosaphat! What the deuce!'"—Catholic Standard and Times.

Took Ye Wise Editor Into Camp.

Mr. Hobo Earned All He Got With His Pedestrianic Yarn.

The hobo, seating himself by the roadside as he approached Marmalade Fork, Ia., cogitated:

"Dis won't do," said he to himself. "Nuttin' doin' in the way of a handout since yesterday, an' I ain't had a sit-down in a kitchen since I lef' Illinois. Dey's somethin' got to be done, dat's all."

He pawed over his head reflectively and continued his musing.

"I ain't had a seegar nor a butt fr' 'free days, an' if I see a cat o' mixed ale I'd have de hydropophila. It's bin so long since I piped on a bowl o' suids, I got t' push de game along somehow."

He picked up a handful of pebbles and began to toss them into the middle of the road as he continued his day dream.

"I can't bust into a cage, fr' I ain't got no tools, an' I don't want t' take no chances on golt' over de road fr' boig-lary anyhow. An' de bunch in dis state won't stand fr' no kind of a touch. Dey gives yo' de Nansen gaze we'en yo' hit 'em fr' a chanst t' do 'free days' plow in fr' a breakfas', an' we'en yo' rap on a back door dey sic' four blue-ribbon bull terrier mutts on youse. I don't see dis 'ing no longer, dat's what, an' somethin' got t' be put over or it's me fr' de bus-house."

For a little while longer he pondered, and then he slapped his thigh with great

force. There was a grin of victory on his unshorn chart.

"Just de game t' a T," he murmured, as he rose up William Riley. "If I don't git dat one over de plate, den nuttin' ever was put over, dat's all."

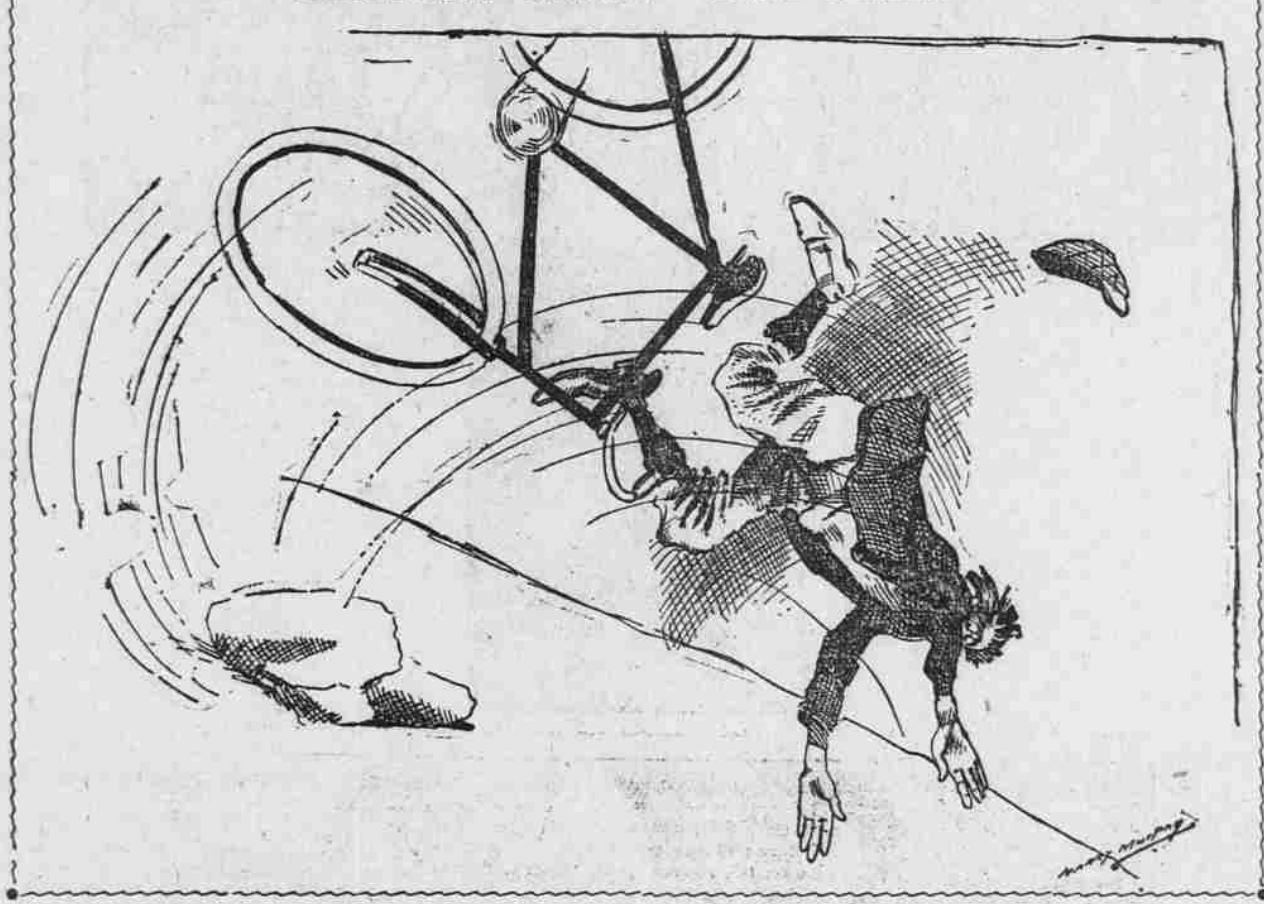
Whereupon he pushed on toward Marmalade Fork. When he reached the town he hunted up the office of the Marmalade Fork Clarion-Kazoo. He found the staff engaged in digging the remains of the sticky fluid out of a half-pound can of lard.

"Hey," said the staff, roughly—the staff wrote, set up and printed the paper—"What d'ye want? Clear out o' here!" "Wait a minute," put in the hobo, persuasively, yet with proper dignity. "Wait till I tell you who I am, and then he proceeded to announce himself to the one-man-power staff of the Marmalade Fork Clarion-Kazoo as a citizen of New York, who had on a wager of \$35,000, set out two months before to walk to San Francisco without a cent in his pocket. It never occurred to the Clarion-Kazoo man to inquire of the hobo the name of the pulp-head who had made such a wager with him. The features of the Clarion-Kazoo man lighted up cordially, and he conducted the hobo to the speakeasy in the rear of his shack and blew him off to numerous high ones in quick succession. Then he conveyed him out to a feedery, where the hobo ate yellow-legged chickens and pork chops and watermelon until he could barely see out of his eyes.

Has to Take a Rest.

Then the Clarion-Kazoo man dug for a dollar's worth of cigars for the hobo, introduced him around town as the famous pedestrian from New York who was hiking it to Frisco on a \$35,000 bet, and when the hobo left town three hours later on

MILITARY TERM "LEFT WHEEL"



POEMS WORTH READING

Reddy Dear.

If he's just a little over five foot four,
An' just a trifle shy o' five foot ten;
If he's sand an' grit an' muscle to the core
An' his back his cushion in his breeches' seam;
If he's yeller stripes a-runnin' down his legs,
If he curves a trifle outwards at the knee,
If he slouches when he walks, if he cusses
When he talks,

Then he's Trooper Reddy, U. S. Cavalry.

Chorus—
An' I lift my glass to you, Reddy dear!
An' I give the road to you, Reddy dear!
When the time is gittin' hot,
Oh, ye're Johnny on the spot—
An' this ain't no poet's rot.

Reddy dear!
He kin ride his horse on top or underneath—
Which you see afore you ever understands—
He kin guide him wid his fingers or his teeth,
An' he's shootin' all the time wid both his hands.

Oh, nothin' makes no difference to him.
He's a Cossack, he's a Jaiun, an' he's more,
For you shoot him through the head an' he kill
The pliar does.

An' he just keeps on a-ridin' like afore!
Chorus—
An' my regards to you, Reddy dear!
I duck my nut to you, Reddy dear!
You ain't no more to bluff,
But when the weather's lookin' rough
You bet you're the stuff.

Reddy dear!
The Injun come an' learnt him how to ride,
The cowboy come an' learnt him how to shoot;

The Injun tried to do him up—an' died,
An' the cowboy done the same—an' followed right.
Oh, it ain't no use in no more, fight to him,
When he calls around to bring his little bill,
Just throw away yer gun an' take it on the hip.

Or else sit down an' make yer final will.
Chorus—
Then have a drink on me, Reddy dear!
An' take the best you see, Reddy dear!
Ye're a dandy, ye're a dandy,
Ye're neat an' quick an' handy,
An' you don't feed no candy.

Reddy dear!
I've seen a heap o' sopers in my days
Wot made a better show'n' on parade—
Some Prince o' Own, or Some One Else's Grays,
All chivied up in fuzzy gilt an' braid,
I've heard the kids a-cheerin' 'em like mad
An' the kids exclaimin': "Wot a lovely sight!"

Reddy dear ain't none on clothes, but Gawd
An' mighty, knowin' where the night he hid,
He's bell an' flyin' bricks in a fight.
So, here's a toast to you, Reddy dear!
We'll always swear by you, Reddy dear!
On some fine day, mayhap,
You will meet me in a snap
Where somethin''s got to drop—
Not Reddy dear.

—Maurice Brown Kirby, in Chicago Tribune.

Summer Girl's Good-Bye.

It seems as though the night be hushed,
A number long hangs above,
A dozen throbbing hearts are crushed,
A dozen aching eyes in love!

And all because her trunk is there,
Her golden bags and telescopes,
The grinning "Boots," the coach and pair,
All seem to mock their once fond hopes.

She comes at last, they stare—the men—
A dozen bosoms rise and sigh;
She climbs aboard, unhelped, and then—
A smile, a handshake and good-by!

They stand and gaze far down the road,
The great sounds forth the Monday meal,
Until the coach and precious load
Are but a distant, dusty cloud.

Outraged are line and rod and reel,
Deserted are the fishing blights;
The great sounds forth the Monday meal,
But twice have lost their appetites.

Oh, cheer up, chaps, forget her soon,
Let not her absence cause you pain,
For he'll be back again now June
To whet on your hearts again.

—Victor A. Hermann, in New York Herald.

In Watermelon Time.

"W'en de twilight come, in crush
Fro de ghostly yaller coon;
Fro de breeze, hit rustle 'hush,
An' de moon, hit shine down—
Den de stalks in slide
Till he see de darkish rin',
Fro de stalks an' honse' pride
In de watermelon vine!

"W'en he taps on Mr. Millyn,
An' he anush, 'Plunk-a-lunk!'
Den he's ripe; but w'en he's fillin',
Hit come back, 'Tunk-a-tunk!'
When the time is gittin' hot,
Oh, ye're Johnny on the spot—
An' this ain't no poet's rot.

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Which you see afore you ever understands—
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—Maurice Brown Kirby, in Chicago Tribune.

Same Old Story.

I made me a tale of the tempest at sea,
Full of thunder and lightning above,
And of terrors that when the storm
Winds are free—

But the end of the story was love!
I sang me a song of a raid in the glen,
With a lit of the pipers who played,
Strike again, strike again, and die fighting like men!

And the struggle was over a maid!
I planned me a play of a monarch of fame,
And his courtiers in silken attire
And his steedman, who came like a moth
To a flame of bright eyes were the fire!

I passed the praise of a hero so calm,
And so strong in the tumult to stand;
When I found me the charm that had strength—
It was only the touch of a hand!

And if I by heart for a moment be strong,
If my tale for a page ring sincere,
Or if merits belong to the play or the song—
They are only your echoes, my dear!

—Black and White.

Lights Out.

Farewell to him who by Columbia's side
Watched history's lengthened shadows past her
glide.

And were the blue, and laughed at pain,
Her golden bags and telescopes,
For noblest manhood has been borne
And followed where the flag has gone;

But all the echoes, answering round about,
Have hidden him to sleep.
Lights out! Lights out!

And deep in Memory's heart, that through the
years
Still keep her thoughts of patriots and her
tears.

Thy name lives on for evermore
Till God's great morn appears.
So, brightly, in that farther land
Look down from where all martyrs stand;
See how foul murder's work has banished
doubt,
And hear, in that sweet, solemn note of pain,
A glorious benison, a joyful strain—
Lights out! Lights out!

—John R. Rethorn in Chicago Record-Herald.

The Automobile Coat.

Oh, Automobile Coat,
Not that that man wears
On his fiery, unnamed steed
Up to the side of Silver-a-mon,
And busts a britten strap
At intervals,

But that that woman wears
When she doth promenade
The thronging thoroughfares,
Or crowds the bargain counter
To the wall;

Oh, Automobile Coat,
Who first suggested you
As a garment
For shapers divinely tall
And most divinely fair,
Or dumpy as the duck's?

What hypnotist of Fashion
Patterns you,
Can you patch a heart that's broken?
From their ancient kingdom banished."

And said I, "It's plainly seen
They will bring no more broom,
But come tell me now, by token:
You can cobbler ragged shoes,
An' Leprechaun aroon.

"Can you patch a heart that's broken?
"Myself could give you work
No decent shoe would shirk,
But I'm thinking you must leave it—
For the hammering you'd do
Would break it more for two,
And no stitching now could save it."

And said he, and looked so shy—
"If a new heart I supply,
Why may my work be willin'?"
Katty Moran left her own,
Badly hurt, here, to be sewn:

"You can have it for a shillin'!"
"I'll be bound," says I—
"Put your thread and hammer by,
Take my purse and all that's in it;
Twice myself with cruel dart
Pierced and tattooed my poor heart!
Give me hers this very minute!"
—Pall Mall Gazette.

Unguarded Gates.

Wide open and unguarded stand our gates,
And through them press a wild and motley
throng—
Men from the Volga and the Tartar steppes,
Featureless flunkeys of the Hoang-Ho,
Malayan, Scythian, Teuton, Kelt and Slav,
Fying the Old World's poverty and scorn;
These bringing with them unknown gods and
rites.

Those, tiger passions, here to stretch their
claws.
In street and alley what strange tongues are
these,
Accents of menace alien to our air,
Voices that echo the Tower of Babel knew!
O Liberty, White Goddess! is it well
To leave the gates unguarded? On thy breast
Fold sorrow's children, soothe the hurts of
fate,
Lift the downtrodden, but with the hand of
steel!

Stay those who to thy sacred portals come
To waste the gifts of freedom. Have a care
Least from thy brow the clustered stars be torn
And trampled in the dust for no good
thing.
The thronging Goth and Vandal trampled
Rome.

And where the temples of the Caesars stood
The lean wolf unmercifully made her lair,
—Thomas Bailey Aldrich, in Atlantic Monthly, April, 1892.

Arabella.

When Arabella looks at me
Just as lovin' as can be,
An' my arm slips 'round her waist
An' de corn lips I taste,
As I bid dat gal good-by,
Den Arabella b'longs to me.

When she's singin' in the choir
An' old Jim Jones is standin' by her,
An' blusher an' looks down ag'in,
Den I feels it ain't no use,
An' dis old nigger is a goose,
When Arabella sings with Jim,
An' makes go-oo eyes at him.

When Arabella has a beau
On de night I allus go,
An' I squashes her hat on de sly
As I bids dat gal good-by,
Den, I tells you, I ain't sho
Wine dat gal loves me or no.

When Arabella's ravin' two
Den I don't know what to do!
—Madge Serne, in Galveston News.

Fall Has Come.

Pods are the poppies, and slim spires of pods
The holyhocks; the balsam's pearly breeds
Of rose-stained snow are little sacs of seeds
Collapsing at a touch; the lot, that sows
The pond with green, has changed its flowers
to rods

That balance cell-pierced disks; and all the
needs
Around the sleepy water and its reeds,
Are one white smudge of seedling milk that nods,
Summer is dead, abn' sweet Summer's dead!
The sunset clouds have built her funeral
pyre.

Through which, 'est now, runs subterranean
fire.
While from the east, as from a garden bed,
Mist-vined, the dusk lifts her broad mood,
like some
Green golden mean, saying: "Fall has
come."

Lights out! Lights out!
—John R. Rethorn in Chicago Record-Herald.

the pike he was so gorged with good things and so smothered from the effects of "The good things," he had acquired that he had to lie down and rest himself for nine hours before proceeding on his way.

There are good things scattered nearly everywhere around this country, and the walking-on-a-hot-hobos are learning how to exploit the field these days.—Washington Post.

HIS FIRST KNOWLEDGE OF IT.

And Then He Wouldn't Believe His Neighborly Informant.

Two of our prominent citizens who live within a thousand miles of where the writer is domiciled met in the public road the other day, when the following conversation occurred:

"What's the news?"

"They've captured Aguinaldo."

"Captured who?"

"Aguinaldo."

"What's he been doing?"

"You mean Canby, don't you?"

"Exactly. Who has he killed?"

"Oh, lots of people."

"Where is he scoundrel?"

"He's in jail."

"(More excited) 'Let's get a crowd and lynch him!'"

"It would be too expensive."

"Expensive! What's going to make it expensive?"

"He's too far off."

"Why, ain't he in Moultrie jail?"

"Not a bit of it."

"Well, where is he, then?"

"He's in jail at Manila."

"I told you, didn't I?"

"No, I mean what I say."

"How far is it?"

"About eight thousand miles."

"Get up, Jack!" As he moved on he was heard to ejaculate: "Got no time to talk with every fool I meet in the road. Eight thousand miles! Why, that's clean out of Gregory. Aguinaldo? Don't believe there is such a man in the world. Never heard of such a place as Manila before. These fellows what don't do nothing but read newspapers are mighty smart. Get up, Jack; lost half an hour talking with that slothead when I ought to be home planting 'aters.'"—Moultrie Observer.

Wu's Wholesale Wishes.

Wu Ting Fang, who was a guest at a recent wedding in Washington, was approached after the ceremony by the best man and jokingly asked to go over to the young couple and pronounce a Chinese parental blessing. The obliging Wu immediately complied. Placing his hands on the blushing bride and shaking groom, he said:

"May every new year bless you with a man-child offspring until they shall number 25 in all. May these 25 man-children offspring present you with 25 times 25 grandchildren, and may these grandchildren—"

It is said that the little bride grew hysterical about this time, and the best man made another request to Wu—this time to desist—New York Times.

Pointed Paragraphs.

Pessimism and revenge always have a kick coming.

A wise man is known by the fool things he doesn't say.

The darkest horse is entered just before the nominal start.

The stroke of lightning that spares the rod spoils the house.

The sun shines for all, but the moon is reserved for spoony couples.

Silence may be golden, but the product of the still causes loud talk.

An optimist is a man who invariably asks for cream at a boarding-house.

The man who declares that he never made a blunder is not to be trusted.

No Longer Wild and Woolly West.

We are cultured to the limit in this famous Western land.

Christianity upon us has a cinch.

And refinement in our actions always plays a winning hand—