

OPTIMISM.

[Ella Wheeler in Manhattan.]
I'm no reformer, for I see more light
Than darkness in the world; mine eyes are quick
To catch the first dim radiance of the dawn,
And slow to note the cloud that threatens storm.

WHITE HOUSE CRANKS.

Crazy Cranks on the President--The Red Man of Revelations.

[Cor. Pittsburg Commercial Gazette.]
The White House is a very popular resort with cranks. Every crank who comes to Washington imagines he has some important business with the president.

"This, however, is not always the case. I remember a short time ago I was on duty in the grounds one night when a reception was going on. I was approached from the White House portico by a tall, clean-shaven, middle-aged man, neatly dressed in a black walking suit, who asked in a tone as if he merely wanted a chat with some one: 'Are you a watchman here?'"

"The president is giving a reception, I believe?" "I believe he is," said I. "A public reception, isn't it?" asked the stranger. "I don't know anything about that," I answered. "Would you take me to a respectable citizen?" was the next question.

"Hardly able to judge on so short an acquaintance," said I. The stranger chuckled quietly at this and said, "Quite right; but from my general appearance now, my manners and conversation, would you set me down as respectable or otherwise?" "Respectable," said I. "Just so. And yet, in this great and glorious land of the free," sarcastically said he, "a respectable citizen is suddenly turned away from the door of the executive mansion by funkies when he simply seeks, with other citizens to pay his respects to the officer they have chosen by ballot to preside over them; at a time, too, set apart, it is understood, for the purpose."

"But perhaps," said I, "there must have been a reason. Perhaps you are mistaken, and this is not a public reception." "Asked if I had a card," continued the stranger, indignantly (ignoring my last remark); "questioned and cross-examined as if I was a felon or conspirator, and the door then shut in my face. All right, if this is St. Petersburg, and this is the palace of the czar, pointing to the White House. 'Infamously wrong if this is Washington and that is the White House.'"

"So far there had not been anything in the man's manner or talk to indicate that he was anything more than a visitor to the city, disgusted and indignant at his disappointment at being summarily deprived of what he perhaps considered his only chance while here to see the president; but suddenly changing his manner after his last remark, he abruptly asked me in the sepulchral tones of the ghost in the sepulchral tones of the ghost in 'Hamlet,' 'Do you ever read the bible?' 'Sometimes,' I answered. 'Did you ever read the book of Revelations?' 'Yes,' 'Do you remember the red man, in that book?' 'I can't say that I do.' 'Well, read it again,' said the stranger, adding quickly, 'I am the red man there mentioned. I hold in my hands the fates of nations and their rulers. I make and unmake presidents--Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Grant, and this man Arthur. They were elected, yes, but elections can not change destiny. That I control. Let the present occupant of the White House beware,' and with a threatening shake of his long forefinger at the mansion, the man started down the flag sidewalk toward the gateway. Now, if that fellow had got in he might have behaved as well as anybody. But in case he had got started on the book of Revelations there is no knowing what might have happened."

Meals in the Fo'castle.

[Exchange.]
The manner of serving meals in the forecastle is as simple as is the system of cookery in vogue in the galley. The cook gives out the made dishes in the pans in which they have been prepared. One man in each watch is appointed to go to the galley for the food. He places it on the deck in the middle of the forecastle and the men take their shares one by one. The man who takes more than his just share is not regarded with favor by his shipmates. If he persists in his piggish method of helping himself, his shipmates will not only remonstrate with him, but will go to the length of reducing his share to the proper limits; and if he protests against this treatment a committee of one or more, according to his size, is appointed to thrash him. The sailors sit on their chests while at their meals. No tables are provided for them.

The Night of Pannage.

[Chicago Herald.]
Centuries ago oak was by far the most valued forest tree in England, on account of acorns fattening hogs. In ancient records it is put down how many hogs such and such woods would carry. Pannage was the right of feeding swine, and to this day persons adjoining the New Forest have the right of pannage for six weeks there on paying a small fee.

THE TWO QUATRAINS.

[Iran Tourgenieff.]
There was once a town whose inhabitants worshipped poetry so ardently that, if some weeks elapsed without new and masterly poems coming to light, such a poetical sterility was regarded as a public calamity.

Every one then would put on his best clothing, would strew ashes upon their heads, and would gather together in an open space to wail, to shed tears, and to murmur bitterly against the Muse, who had forsaken them.

On one of these days of mourning, a youthful poet, Junius, appeared in the square, which was densely packed with sorrowing people.

He mounted the rostrum in haste, and made a sign that he wished to recite a poem.

The listeners flourished their staves, and shouted the stentorian voices: "Silence! attention!" The expectant multitude were silent.

"Friends! companions!" began Junius, in a clear but slightly faltering voice: "Friends and companions! The lover of Poetry, God of harmonious beauty and light, Charms away trouble and vanquishes sorrow; Apollo arises--and fled is the night!"

Junius had concluded; the answer was a universal burst of laughter, howls and whistles from every side.

The upturned faces of the multitude glowed with indignation; every eye sparkled with rage; every hand was raised threateningly and clenched.

"Does he wish to mock us with that?" yelled the furious voices. "Tear the paltry rhymester down from the rostrum! Down with the blockhead! Pelt the fool with rotten apples and stinking eggs! Stones! bring stones!"

Junius rushed headlong from the rostrum; but scarcely had he gained his dwelling than he heard tumultuous applause, shouts of praise, and acclamations.

Tortured with doubts Junius returned to the square and endeavored, if possible, to mingle unobserved in the crowd, for 'Tis dangerous to rouse the grim lion."

And what did he see? Raised high upon the shoulders of the multitude on a flat, golden shield, clothed in the purple mantle, his locks crowned with laurel, stood his rival, the youthful poet Julius.

And the people shouted "Glory and honor to the immortal Julius! He has consoled us in our trouble, and in our great sorrow he has refreshed us with his sublime poetry, which is sweeter than honey, more musical than the sound of the cymbals, more fragrant than the odor of roses, and purer than the blue of heaven! Lift him in triumph, perfume his inspired head with soft clouds of incense, fan him with palm branches, strew all the spices of Arabia before him! Honor and glory to the divine poet!"

THE STAGE FALL.

A Feat Which Few Actors Have Acquired--Explanations of How It Is Done.

[Croffut's Letter in Boston Globe.]
How to fall gracefully and safely before an audience is a feat which only a few actors have thoroughly acquired.

A good many fall so awkwardly as to excite mirth, and a good many hurt themselves. I remember a young lady in one of Daly's plays a few years ago to whom he said, "Here! You must fall at this cue." At that cue, accordingly, she fainted and fell, but she knocked over a chair and a stand, broke a lamp and set the stage afire!

The curtain was rung down, the fire put out, and, indignant, he asked her what she meant by such clumsiness. "Well," she said, "you never told me how to fall, and nobody ever showed me." She had never thought of taking a lesson in so important a matter.

Fanny Davenport is now a large and solid woman, but her fall in "Fedora" is one of the most effective bits of stage business she reels fainting to the sofa, quivers and dies in an instant, half lying on her face, and as her horrified husband runs up to look and learns the dreadful truth, she rolls entirely over by sheer force of gravity and drops with a startling thud upon the floor.

The best fall I remember having seen is that of Francis Wilson in the "Princess of Trebizonde" at the Casino. He posed among the comic statuary on a pedestal a foot and a half high, with a brass-drum on his breast. He would fall directly over, backward, or on either side, without putting out a hand or bending his body--fall straight upon the floor, like a stone figure. I wonder it didn't kill him--especially when he was encased a half a dozen times. I don't think a death or a fatal injury ought to be repeated too often.

Agnes Booth doesn't know how to fall easily unless she has learned lately. When she was playing the wife in "The Celebrated Case," she used to hurt herself every night--got black and blue till she finally threw up the part, and Miss Cowell took it and "fell" into it gracefully.

These recollections have been suggested by a technical lesson. The other afternoon I dropped into Frohiser's college of acting, and found him engaged teaching a class of theatre-bound young ladies how to fall, illustrating his teaching with them one by one. "Remember this," he said, "persons fall either from fainting, drunkenness or sudden death. They die either by dagger, sword, pistol or poison--except an occasional case like Mansfield, who dies of apoplexy. Sudden death is followed by sudden relaxation, which causes the knees to bend as one of the first visible signs. The knees bend, the shoulders droop, the victim turns partially in his tracks--so--and falls--so--"

"not," he resumed on recovering his feet, "as if he were built of iron, or wood, or even of flesh and bone, but as if he were made of snow or of sand--melting away at the bottom first."

"Now, Miss Wright, let's see you fall--at the cue, 'Wretch, here I am!' There are two things to be avoided, remember. Don't crouch down as if you were afraid, and don't flop your feet and show your stockings, for that is not impressive. Now, then--'Wretch, here I am!'"

The young lady gathered herself up and fell.

"Ah, that isn't fair!" he said; "you sat down! You must always strike first on the side of your knees."

"I am afraid it will hurt me." "Nonsense! Do you want to be an actress?" "Yes; I will do anything. Give me the cue."

A Story that Ruined His Prospects.

[Indianapolis Sentinel.]
At a meeting of the Washington Press club the other night, Col. Wintersmith, of Kentucky, told the following story: "I was a candidate for senator from Kentucky in 1876," he said, "when I told one story that defeated me, but I can tell it now without any such danger. One day I was in the gallery of the senate when McCreery, of Kentucky, rose to make a speech. Every senator on the floor sought the cloak-room, except his colleague, Garret Davis, and the president. I could not help that, but when a stampede from the galleries began I felt that my opportunity had come. Jumping to my feet, I shouted: 'Senator McCreery is a Kentuckian, so am I. The first man who moves out of this gallery shall die.' All took their seats under duress, and for more than five mortal hours even, we sat still, listening to his address. When it was over I lowered the pistol which I had held ready in my hands, and the crowd started. With a gesture one man stopped the rush.

"Col. Wintersmith," he said, "we have stayed here under duress at your request. Now let me ask you a favor. 'It is granted before it is asked,' I said, not to be outdone in courtesy. He went on. 'Col. Wintersmith, we have been here nearly six hours because we preferred to stay rather than be shot. But, if this emergency ever happens again, we ask you simply this--shoot, without any parley.' Some newspaper men go hold of it. McCreery's friends were so angry with me that rather than see me elected they turned in and chose Beck. It does not pay to be indiscreet, and telling this story spoils my being a senator."

Coffee in the West Indies. [Globe's Enquirer Letter.]
"Is coffee native to the West India islands?"

"Oh, no. It was taken there, and the first coffee was grown in Martinique. The coffee of Martinique is still very fine, and the whole of it goes to France. The coffee plants are raised from seeds, and are transplanted in a year and a half from nurseries into the fields, and set six feet apart. It takes three years for them to bear any, and they continue to bear better and better, till at the age of 20 years they are in full strength. It blossoms between February and May, and they pick the coffee off carefully, leaving the green berries, and taking only the ripe. The moment the berries are removed the tree commences to blossom again. The fruit is red, looks like a cherry and has two kernels. A machine is used to divide the red skins from the kernel. Then the gummy kernel is washed in cold water, dried in the sun, and to get the remaining portion of the rind off the grain is beaten in pestles like hominy; then a fanning-mill takes the chaff off, and the product is spread on large tables and the imperfect grains taken out to make the best coffee."

"Is coffee expensive there?" "Yes; it formerly sold at about 25 cents a pound bought from the planters. The government gave a premium of \$40 for every two acres planted in coffee when I looked into the question. The coffee estates are on the mountains, while the sugar estates are down near the sea shore. There are about one thousand coffee estates in Guadeloupe alone. Within a few years past, however, coffee has come down very much on account of the enormous increase of production from Brazil, Mexico and almost every warm country."

An Immense California Vineyard. [San Francisco Call.]
In the immense vineyard of Gov. Stanford at Vina there are, at present, 10,000 acres planted in grape vines of different varieties, the greater portion of which are young, and as yet have not been productive. The old Gerke vineyard, which forms the nucleus, covers a space of seventy-five acres; to this 1,000 acres of young vines were added in 1882, and 1,500 acres in 1883. They are all very thrifty, and form a beautiful sight when viewed from any direction.

The irrigation of this vineyard is, perhaps, the most complete in the world. At regular intervals through the vineyard avenues are cut which are forty feet in width; through these avenues are run irrigating ditches, with a driveway on each side. The blocks thus formed by the irrigating ditches are about fifty yards wide, but extend a great length, and contain about 100 acres each. In this way the system of irrigation is made complete, and all the land receives an equal proportion of water. Every two of these blocks are planted to a different variety of grapes. The main ditches run east and west across the field, and where the field is uneven intersecting ditches are made. In some cases it has been necessary to construct dunes to carry the water over lower lands. A flume 1,800 feet long has been built to carry water over the alfalfa fields. Besides the 10,000 acres planted in vines, the governor owns 10,000 acres more that he has lately acquired by purchase. He is contemplating, however, extending his vineyard, making new additions to it each year.

A Chicago Wife's Warning. [Philadelphia Call.]
"Will you be home to dinner?" asked a Chicago woman of her husband as he was about starting for business.

"No, I think not," he answered. "I expect to be very busy. Besides, a new saloon is to be opened just around the corner from my office, and I will drop in there and get a little free lunch."

"Well," said his wife, while a wave of fear swept across her face, "be careful not to get hurt in the rush."

A West Indian Pest. [Cincinnati Enquirer.]
One of the worst pests in the West Indies is the jigger, which they call there the chegoe. It gets under the skin and lays an egg there, and then a tumor follows, and unless these eggs are taken out they sometimes make ulcers, create large holes in the feet, and cases are known where negroes have had all their toes eaten away, or have even lost a leg from the jigger.

FEMALE DETECTIVES.

What They Are Fitted For and What They Are Not--Useful at Receptions.

[New York Sun.]
"Are female detectives ever regularly employed in the detection of crime?" "We don't employ women," a superintendent of detectives replied, "because it is our firm conviction that women cannot be relied on. We have tried them and found them wonderfully quick at divining the source of a mysterious crime, patient in testing a plan for capturing a suspected person, and--yes, uncommunicative. There is just one reason, and only one reason, why they are not to be trusted--no one can tell who has the most influence over them. Anyhow, we can't afford to take the risk of employing them and being betrayed by them."

Another experienced manager of detectives said: "Sometimes persons apply for a female detective to act as an attendant to take care of wraps at fashionable receptions. They are well known in society, who have had trouble after receptions in getting the wraps, overshoes and umbrellas to the owners. Sometimes they get so mixed up that the owner of an old overcoat or shawl or umbrella saunters innocently off with a new and more expensive overcoat, shawl or umbrella." Winking with a wicked expression: "Hats, you know, are notoriously successful in eluding their owner's search--if they are good hats. If the occasion is a fitting one for a detective, we send one. It is not generally understood that female detectives are employed only at these large receptions, and then only in the waiting-room and in the room set apart for the ladies' special use. Some persons imagine that female detectives go to the receptions as guests. That would be an insult to the genuine guests. Besides, in society here every one knows her neighbor, and the female detective would herself be detected as a stranger. Then introductions would necessarily follow under an assumed name, and the subsequent explanations the hostess would be compelled to make in accounting for the disappearance of Mrs. So-and-So would make her life a burden. I see no good reason, though, why female detectives should not be employed in the ladies' room. It is a convenience to have a skilled eye on the property, instead of one liable to make mistakes or to be out of the way when wanted."

The Giants of These Days. [Chicago Inter Ocean.]
In Pliny's time it was customary to describe the warriors of a few generations before as giants. Alexander the Great very well understood the strengthening effect of a little substantial evidence on such descriptions. On one of his expeditions he caused a tomb to be constructed and placed in it arms and armor of an enormous size, and marked the whole with his name. It has been suggested that this clever fraud was practiced by William the Conqueror, whose supposed tomb was opened in the sixteenth century and found to contain the bones of an uncommonly large person. The attempt made to destroy a dear belief, however, received a severe blow by a discovery made in Rouen in 1509. On the authority of Le Cat a stone tomb was uncovered in which was a copper plate bearing the inscription, "Here lies the noble and puissant lord the Chevalier Ricon de Vallemont and his bones."

The skull of Ricon held a bushel of corn, and his skeleton indicated that when clothed in flesh the chevalier stood nineteen feet in his stockings. As unsettling to a serene mind as his appearance may have been on a dark night, he was quite a pigmy beside Thentobachus, king of the Tentons, who towered up twenty-five feet. Le Cat says his monster bones were found January 11, 1613, mentioning the date particularly. The skeleton of another monster thirty feet long was found at Mazano, Sicily, in 1516, and still another at Palermo in 1548, which measured the same. The appearance in the flesh of these creatures had better be left to the imagination.

As if determined to show that his country was eminent as a producer of the skeletons of giants, an Italian of the fifteenth or sixteenth century relates the finding of a skeleton 300 feet high! It was immediately announced to be the skeleton of the giant Polyphemus, and treated with various ceremonies by the awe-stricken discoverers and the people of the country. The bones, the author naively observes, differed somewhat from those of the ordinary human frame, but that was to be expected in a man so tall.

The evident compounding of prehistoric animal relics with human remains was one of the many cases. The stories of human skeletons of 100 and 200 and even 500 feet high, which began with the Polyphemus incident, belong to the same category of mistakes. There is, however, good ground for supposing that Farragut, the tyrant, slain by Orlando, nephew of Charlemagne, was a huge man, eighteen feet high. Bneart of Vivans, whose bones were found on the banks of the Morderi river, in the mountains of Crussol, on grave authority was stated to be twenty-two feet six inches. Richard, a celebrated anatomist, saw in the suburbs of St. Germain in 1614 the skeleton of a man twenty feet tall.

Up in Alaska. [The Current.]
When it is remembered that, even at Point Barrow, the most northern point of Alaska, the average temperature is only 7° below zero, according to the United States signal service report, it is evident that the people of Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and Dakota are qualified to receive certificates as to their ability, through severe tests, to endure Arctic weather.

Wasn't His Wife. [Merchant Traveler.]
A man rushed up to a woman looking in a show window, and grasping her by the arm, angrily exclaimed: "Come on; I'm tired waiting for you." Then nodding he had made a mistake, he drew back with, "Oh, I beg your pardon, madam, I mistook you for my wife." "I thought so," she answered, with a scornful sneer, and passed on.

A Queer Sort of Truce Custom.

[A. O. Marshall's "Army Life."]
As time wore on, by gradual process, without any formal agreement, we came to a mutual understanding with the Confederates in our front. After this, firing at night practically ceased on our part of the line. A sort of spontaneous truce would spring up each night. The way it worked was this: As the sun went down the artillery would cease firing; after this the rifle firing would gradually grow less, and by the time daylight would pass away it would cease entirely. A few minutes after the last shot was heard some one upon one side or the other would rise a little above his works for a second and then drop out of sight. If no gun was fired upon either side, some soldier on the other side would repeat the action. If no gun was now heard, a soldier upon our side or the rebel side would openly stand up, sight of the opposite line, and his action would be replied to by one of his opponents. These two soldiers, Union and Confederate, would look across at each other a moment, and then, no firing being heard, one after another on each side would get up, and then we would have a line of Union sharpshooters sitting upon top of their works looking over at a line of Confederate soldiers sitting upon theirs, each within easy rifle range of the other. When this was done it was understood that all firing was over for the day.

As it began to grow dark each side would send a line of guards over in front of their works to remain during the night. These lines were often within a short distance of each other. As we had much work to do upon our new lines, the enemy was usually first ready, and it would be on his side that the movement for the night's truce was made. If for any reason we were not ready, the soldier who exposed himself for this purpose was not fired at, but a gun would be fired in the air, which was notice for all to again seek protection. In the morning it was the same. If the guards who had advanced upon the ground between the two opposing armies tarried longer than the other side desired, a warning gun would be fired in the air above them, but no one would be fired at until ample time had been given for all to return to their own works. One of the strangest things connected with these nightly truces was that they were confined to different parts of the line. * * * The Union troops at our immediate left and the rebel troops in their front never had any such understanding, and with them it was a continual fight day and night. The reason for this the author states to have been want of confidence in each other, those rebel troops being considered "the most inferior and worthless in the rebel army--despised by the braver men in their own army, as well as by us."

A Humiliating Reflection. [New York News "Art Babbler."]
The other afternoon I stood in a sculptor's studio as the evening closed in. Among the heavy draperies and in the gloomy corners ghosts of his art loomed with the exaggerated and solemn vastness such forms assume when their details are only imperfectly revealed. One of the populous shade one figure, pallid, lofty, sinuous with a weird and superhuman grace, stood forward in the motionless and silent, into an absolutely startling activity. Twisting up out of the shadows, without apparent base or support, his charming yet sinister genius of the whirlwind seemed to be blown upward over us by the fierce blast they typified. "You ought to put that figure in marble," I said.

"And starve?" the sculptor asked, in a voice which echoed hollowly among the shadows.

There was something in this answer which made me shudder. The tone in which it was uttered was not one of sarcasm or of anger. It was the quiet and commonplace voice of a man making an every-day remark; it was eloquent in the simplicity of its resignation; it was horrible in the positive fact it suggested. There was no despair in it, for the speaker was a man, not a coward; but there was no hope in it either. It rebuked me for a question which I had meant in all honesty as a tribute to the artist's greatness, and which circumstances had turned into a dagger to stab him. What would be the result, indeed, if he did put this figure into the permanent material it should be formed in? Want while he labored on it and want while it went begging for a purchaser. It is a painful, a humiliating, reflection, for me at least, that in America the rich man does not estimate his work as a tribute to the artist's greatness, but as a means of conceiving of its kind ever given shape. "Finish the work you have begun."

Magazine Wood Cuts. [New York News.]
Apropos of wood engraving it is interesting to note how thoroughly that of the magazines has come down to a hard-pan basis of confusion sense. The absurd straining for novelty which makes their pages a year ago a species of incoherent pictorial puzzle, has given place to sensible work. The artists who used to do their best to make a drawing look as little like a drawing as they could have now got back to serious labor. However, the transcendental rage in engraving did one thing; it demonstrated what can be done with wood block and a burin if the man who handles them is competent to his task.

A Plucky Boy Violinist. [Chicago Tribune.]
A boy of 13 years, whose violin playing had long been the wonder of the Cosack village, recently reached St. Petersburg after a journey of 1,000 miles on foot, allured by the hope of obtaining free instruction at the conservatory. But hardships and over- exertion had worn the little fellow out, and he was taken to a hospital dangerously ill of typhoid fever. Should he recover he will certainly find abundant opportunity to show whether his talent is equal to his courage.

American pork is now excluded from France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and Russia.