

The Wolf-Charmer.

There was sorrow and great trouble in the household of Michael Tronski, the fiddler of Arntna, a small village in Austria Poland. He had fallen that morning from a ladder on his cottage roof, and was now lying in bed, groaning and helpless, with a broken arm and collar-bone. Worse still, there had been heavy sickness and death in the family. Doctors' bills and other expenses had swallowed up all the poor violin-scraper's savings. Now that he was laid helpless on his back, destitution and starvation stared him and his children in the face.

"Do not take on so father dear," said Marscha, the fiddler's little daughter, as she moistened the sick man's lips with water in a vain attempt to allay his burning thirst. She was only twelve years old, but her mother's early death had made it necessary to be womanly very early. She had helped the doctor that day, as he sat her father's broken limb, with a courage and quiet presence of mind that had won his highest praise.

"No need of any other nurse so long as you are with him, my dear," he said. "Only see that he is kept quiet and his mind easy."

"His mind easy! Yes, that was easy said," thought poor Marscha, who knew that there was no more food in the house than would serve for that day and the next, nor any money to buy more. Her poor father had, as she knew, reckoned on earning enough to keep them for weeks by playing that very evening at the wedding feast of Janoz Patusta, the richest farmer in the neighborhood. Still the brave girl resolved to do her best.

"My children! My children!" he kept moaning. "Everything gone! Neither food nor money in the house, and I lying here like a log unable to earn more! My poor, helpless children, what will become of them?"

"Dear father," said Marscha. "God will provide for us, I am sure. Mother always told me not to be afraid. And then there's Iwan."

"Iwan, yes," said the old man bitterly. "Iwan could have taken my place to-night if I had not been such an obstinate ass, and insisted upon him learning carpentry instead of fiddling. I was determined that my son should be something better than a fiddler, forsooth, and never would let him learn. He is well avenged now, and we shall all starve."

"No, we shan't," replied Marscha. "I made enough bread yesterday to last us for two days yet, and neighbor Brigatta gave me some milk this morning. I am going to get you some now."

"My poor, motherless child!" muttered the man. "May God help us, as you say! Where is Anna?"

"Brigatta took her home with her to be out of the way, as she is so little. Drunk, dear father," and she held the cup to his mouth.

At this moment a tall, handsome boy entered the cottage, with grief and dismay on his face. Marscha made him a sign to control himself. He made an answering sign and slowly approached the bed.

"Dear father," he said. "I have just heard of your terrible accident, and my good master let me come to you at once to see if I could help."

"No, my boy; there is nothing to be done—unless," he corrected himself, "Carlovitz would let you go over to Janoz Patusta, at the farm, and tell him that I cannot play the violin to-night at the wedding. There is nobody in the village whom I can send in my place. We shall soon know what starving means."

"Father," said the boy, eagerly, and with a certain confusion of manner, "let me go instead of you."

"You?" said Michael—"you! What could you do! I never allowed you to learn even how to handle the bow."

"But I learned for all that," replied Iwan, blushing deeply. "Don't be angry with me, father, but I used to practice in the evenings, after work was over, on Carlovitz's old fiddle. I was so unhappy after you sent me away, and I could not hear any more music."

"My poor boy!" said Michael. "But let me hear you play."

Iwan took his father's violin, and played a slow, plaintive air upon it. Then he changed the key and rattled off a lively dance tune. Both were excellently done.

"I could not have believed it possible," said his father. "You will be a better player than ever I have been. I can see that. Yes, you may go to Patusta's, and tell him I sent you to take my place. I am sure he will make no difficulty if you play to him half as well as you did to me just now. You are not afraid of the long walk?"

"No, indeed," smiled Iwan. "Keep your mind easy, Marscha," he continued, turning to his pale, anxious little sister. "I'll be back to-night somewhat late, perhaps, with my pockets full of coppers, with a little silver mixed with them I hope. But it's a good bit of a road, and I must tell Carlovitz not to expect me to-night. So good-bye, father; good-bye, Marscha!" And off tipped the light-hearted boy.

At Patusta's farm all was bustle and excitement. The first feelings of disappointment on learning that Michael could not come himself to the wedding, and had sent so young a substitute, were quickly allayed on hearing the masterly manner with which the lad handled his father's bow. The most of the guests had heard of the accident, and knew of the great troubles that one after another had fallen on the fiddler's family. General sympathy was roused. The dancing, the happiness, and above all Iwan's lovely music, opened their hearts. When the ball ended, about two in the morning, the boy was dismissed with not only the promise of payment for his night's work, but the pocketful of money of which he had spoken to Marscha, of which the greater part was not copper, but shining white silver.

Who so charming now as Iwan, strid-

ing the golden homage of his three-mile walk, his violin slung lightly over his shoulder, and his hands in his pockets rattling his gains? He kept whistling from time to time to give expression to his pleasure, as he thought of his father and Marscha and wee toddling Anna.

"Oh, if mother were only alive!" he thought, "how pleased she would be! Poor father need not want anything now. There's enough here for that clever little sister of mine to keep house for me for a long time. She is thinking of me now while she is sitting up waiting for me. I am later than I thought I should be when I left home. This wood will cut off a good quarter of a mile if I cross it."

With a boy's thoughtlessness he left the beaten track, and turned aside into a pine wood near. The sudden darkness startled him at first, as the faint light of the waning moon could not penetrate through the thick branches. But confident that he could find his way and regain the high-road again at the other side of the wood, his eagerness to reach home prevented him from turning back. He contented himself with picking his steps carefully. Suddenly the ground seemed to give away beneath him, and he was precipitated into a deep pit. He was stunned for a moment, but the earth at the bottom was soft and no bones were broken. Picking himself up his first thought was his father's precious violin. If that were broken, then indeed would the measure of their misfortunes be full, and his carelessness would have done it. To his great joy it was unharmed. Then he began feeling about the walls of the pit for a means of escape. Suddenly something met his eyes that nearly froze his blood with horror. Two glowing points like red-hot coals glared upon him out of the darkness around. Iwan comprehended the matter now. He had fallen into one of the pitfalls dug to entrap wild animals, and was now hopelessly imprisoned with a wolf! The creature, he felt, was confounded and terrified for the moment by the noise of his fall. But he was convinced that it would soon recognize the helplessness to defend himself of his comrade in misfortune, and would make a breakfast of him in shorter order than it took to think of it all.

Iwan's breath came thick and fast, but he was not one of those who easily resign hope. He called to mind the old ballad of how a valiant Danish chief was taken in battle by his enemies and thrust into a cavern full of serpents and other deadly reptiles; how he had been allowed, as a last boon, to take with him his harp of seven strings; and how he had played upon it for a night and a day using his feet when his fingers failed him. So long as he played, not a creature attempted to do him hurt, so great is the power of music over even the dumb brutes. At last his enemies were moved and opened to him his prison doors.

"Why may not I take a leaf out of that old Danish book?" thought Iwan, quickly unslung his fiddle and bow. "A violin is as good as a harp any day. If I can manage to keep the brute off until daylight, somebody is sure to be passing on the road or the owners of the trap will come to see if there is any booty."

He drew the bow across the strings and commenced a slow, melancholy tune that would have brought the tears to his own eyes had not the sense of desperate danger been the feeling uppermost in his mind. The awful beast gave a long howl.

"You like music?" thought Iwan. "All right, Master Wolf, you shall have plenty of it."

His eyes were now getting accustomed to the darkness, and he perceived that his dangerous fellow-prisoner was an enormous gray wolf whose gaunt sides spoke of a hunger which would afford him small hope of escape should his music not succeed in exercising the hoped-for charm over it. He played on with the energy of despair. Although it was early spring, and the snow nearly all melted away, it was still bitterly cold. The poor boy's fingers soon got so chilled that he could not hold the bow. Still he fiddled bravely on, his terrible companion only giving vent from time to time to an uneasy growl, alternating with a long, melancholy howl. These sounds, however horrible in themselves, were pleasant to Iwan's ears, as showing him that his music was having the desired effect. But the hours went past, the dawn was breaking, and the poor boy's hands were so benumbed that he noticed, to his horror, that the tones were getting broken and even sometimes refused to come at all.

"God help me," he thought, "if I get quite powerless before anyone comes to my help! My poor father and Marscha! what will they say if I never come home? And I thought to make them so happy with the money that I have earned to-night!"

This thought nerved his arm once more. But he felt it could not be for long. His strength was leaving him fast.

It was now broad daylight. The rattle of a wagon was heard from the road. Hope but new life into Iwan's bow. He drew it across the strings so as to produce the highest notes which he knew would be the most piercing, accompanying them by a shrill cry at the top of his voice.

The rattle ceased. In a few minutes a kindly, weather-beaten face was seen peering over the mouth of the pit. "Well, my lad," said the man, recognizing Iwan, whose passion for music and his father's resolve not to make him a fiddler was well-known, "you've chosen an odd place in which to practice forbidden arts. How came you here?"

"Don't stop to ask. Look at my comrade. Run for a gun," panted the boy, still fiddling desperately.

"Mercy on us! You have an unchancey companion, and no mistake," cried the man, now perceiving the brute. "Hold on a bit longer. I will be back in a jiffy."

He was turning away. At that moment another man appeared. He had a gun on his shoulder. It was Stephen Huria, the owner of the pit. He came on with great angry strides.

"What is that?" he said. "Who is fiddling down there in my pit?"

"Now that is what I call coming in the nick of time," cried the wagoner.

"Iwan Tronski is down there with a wolf. If you don't make quick work of the brute with your gun he'll soon make short work of poor Iwan."

"The fiddler's son! How ever did he get down there?"

"I want waiting for an answer he ran to the pit and looked down. The boy had just fallen from the poor boy's nerveless fingers. Forgetful of the danger of taking his eyes off the creature, he stopped to pick it up. Freed from both spells that had held it hitherto, the wolf gave a wild growl and sprang at him. Iwan gave himself up for lost. Then a shot from the hunter's gun, directed by his practiced eye, made the monster harmless forever."

Iwan was taken out of the pit nearly as dead as the wolf from sheer exhaustion. A little brandy from the hunter's flask revived him. Then the wagoner gave him a lift as far as the village.

It was a proud moment and a happy one for him when, after telling his story, he emptied the contents of his pockets into his wise little sister's lap, and heard his father, with tears of thankfulness, calling him the staff of his old age.

"And now, father," he concluded, "you will not forbid me any more to practice the fiddle, I am sure."

"It is needless to say what was Michael's answer."

My story ought by rights to end here. But there is a sequel to it, for all that, which I think I must give, although Iwan never encountered another such thrilling adventure as that which followed on his first entrance into public life.

It was not long after this that a handsome carriage drove through the village, and stopped at Carlovitz, the carpenter's door. A pleasant-faced, middle-aged gentleman got out. It was Count Forback, from the castle, the great man of the place. He asked to see Iwan Tronski. Iwan came forward with quiet self-possession.

"Stephen Huria," said the Count, "has been telling me a wonderful story of a boy who charmed a wolf into patience by playing the violin to him the whole night. Is this true, and are you he?"

Iwan bowed. "Not the whole night, my lord; only a few hours," he said modestly.

"And quite enough too in such grisly company," answered the nobleman, smiling. "You must be a plucky youngster. My daughters were so delighted with the story when Stephen told it that they gave me no rest until I promised to try to get you to play to them too. I don't think they will be more difficult to charm than the wolf. What do you say? If you will come back to the castle with me, I will make it worth your while, for your sick father's sake."

"I will come willingly," answered Iwan, "if my master will spare me. But indeed, sir, I am but a very poor player, as I have had to learn all I know in secret."

"I have heard of that too, my boy," said the Count, who was himself a musical enthusiast, "and I respect you for your energy. Carlovitz will give me the boy for to-night?"

The carpenter's consent was readily given to the great man. Iwan in his Sunday best—and a very modest best it was—rode in a carriage for the first time in his life, scarcely able to realize his good fortune. On arriving at the castle he was given in charge to the housekeeper, who petted and made much of him, and told him stories of her master's and the young ladies' goodness.

At length he was summoned to the drawing-room. He was dazzled at first by the lights and the grand dresses of the ladies. But they were all so kind that he soon took courage. A violin was now put in his hand. Iwan played his very best, and his hearers were delighted. At the end of the evening the Count took him aside.

"My good lad," he said, "it is plain to me that you have a wonderful talent for music. It would be a thousand pities to neglect it. Should not you like to be a great player?"

"Oh, yes sir!" cried Iwan, his eyes sparkling.

"Then listen," said the Count. "It would be an easy thing for me to take you from your present employment, and pay for your teaching at the Conservatory of Vienna. But when I was a lad my father taught me that it was of no use being helped by others unless I should try to help myself. This I am sure you will be willing to do. Here is my plan. Will you be willing to be guided by me?"

"I will do anything you tell me," said the grateful boy.

"It is this, then," the Count put a gold piece into his hand. "This is your payment for the pleasure you have given us this evening. I see you have a large stock of national Polish melodies at your finger-ends. I take great interest in them, and should like to make a collection of them. If you will come here once a week and play over to me as many as you can recollect, you shall have the same sum each time. Lay it by until you have enough to start upon, and your career is made. Is it a bargain?"

Iwan kissed his hand, and returned home a proud and happy boy. Every week for many months he went to his kind patron's castle, and played to him not only the airs that he had known all his life, but others which he took pains, with his father's help, to collect from far and near. Soon he had earned enough for his further maintenance and studies. He entered the Conservatory of Music at Vienna, and with the best instruction that most musical cities could give, became one of the first violin-players of the day. It is red gold now, instead of coppers and silver, which he sends from time to time to his loving and beloved sister Marscha, to help to keep house with for his old and infirm father and sister Annie. E. M. Traquair, in Harper's Young People.

The One Thing Needful.

The mother was very slowly trying to eat. Little Chap was eating without trying. Finishing his meal he laid down his fork, and with a look worthy of imitation, said to his mother, "Why don't you put a little vim into it?"—The Advance.

WHAT SAILORS EAT.

A Diet Made Up Largely of "Salt Horse"—The Luxury of a Fresh-Fish Dinner.

Perhaps some of the young admirers of a "life on the ocean wave" would like to know how they fared aboard ship. There is no mother's pantry to visit. Each sailor furnishes his own tin plate, coffee-cup, and knife and fork. He has no table, with chairs placed for his convenience. When "grub" is ready to be served the cook gives the signal. A sailor comes and receives a pan of bread; another takes a pan of beef, the third takes the large coffee-pot, with hash or potatoes as the cook chooses. The bill of fare is fixed by law. At the beginning of the voyage the captain calls his crew aft and inquires if there are any who wish to have their food weighed. They always prefer to eat as much as they can "stow away."

The sailors eat in the forecabin. If they are disposed, they can rig themselves a table; otherwise they must sit around on trunks or the deck in rough weather, and take their rations. The officers eat with the captain in the cabin, where a table is set and furnished as at home. A rack is used in rough weather to keep the dishes from dancing. If there is a good cook on board everything goes well, but an unskilled cook makes all hands miserable.

During rough weather passengers do not attempt to sit at the table, but take whatever they require in their hands and eat the best way they can. During rough weather, when the ship gave a lurch and a piece of beef went galloping across the deck, the sailor raised his fork, and making a dash at the beef, shouted: "Stop that horse!" The sailors called their beef "salt horse." The story which they tell is this: "One voyage, when the beef was particularly tough, a horse shoe was found in the bottom of the beef barrel, whereupon one of the sailors got up the following rhyme:

"Old horse, old horse, what brought you here!
From Sacapag to Portland pier,
I was drugging lumber for many a year,
I was kicked and cuffed with sore abuse
And salted down for sailors' use;
Between the mainmast and the pumps
I was salted down in great big chunks;
They hauled me over and picked my bones,
Then shove me over to Davy Jones."

The captain of a sailing ship was asked by his wife if she couldn't give the sailors a good dinner. He replied that he was afraid it would make them surly. She finally prevailed. A fine turkey was procured from shore and given to the cook, who served it up in good order and gave it to the sailors. One gave a scrutinizing look and exclaimed: "What is this old bird doing here?" Another said: "I wonder how old it is? Must have died of old age." The third remarked that if it had been good for anything they would have kept it in the cabin. They finally gave it overboard and made a dinner of "salt horse." The captain's wife, after that, never meddled with her husband's housekeeping.

Sometimes a dolphin is caught, and, as you watch the diving colors of blue and gold, as he writhes upon the deck, visions of savory chowder and fresh fried fish pass before you.

With what an important air the cook comes into the cabin and asks for a piece of silver, which he puts into the frying-pan with the sputtering fish. If the silver turns black he considers the fish to have been poisoned. He says they sometimes eat copper from the bottom of a ship or from copper banks. How anxiously we await the test those on shore, whose thoughts are filled with politics, the temperance question and divorce cases can never know. The silver is usually found to be bright and shining, and the luxury of a fresh-fish dinner is enjoyed with unadulterated happiness. Often a porpoise is harpooned, and then there is great excitement. The liver and heart taste similar to those of a hog, but one must be exceedingly hungry to enjoy the meat. It has one virtue—that of being fresh. The oil is usually saved, being quite valuable. That found in the head is much esteemed for oiling clocks, etc. When a Spanish mackerel is caught a savory dinner may be expected.

Sometimes thousands of flying fish dart from the water on all sides of the ship, and spreading their gauzy wings, fly for a few seconds above the water, while we are tempted to exclaim:

Fish, fish all around,
And not one mouthful to eat.

For, although they are most delicate eating, it is impossible to catch them at sea. Often during the night one flies on board. On the island of Barbadoes the fishermen are very successful in catching these fish, and a meal of boned flying fish is worth eating.

During severe storms the cook has many trials trying to serve his meals. In carrying the dinner from the galley to the cabin he is sometimes struck by a heavy sea, the basket washed from his grasp, the dinner and dishes wrecked. On one occasion the cook of a bark was struck by a sea and washed overboard, dinner, basket, and all. It was beyond the power of his shipmates to save him.—Worcester Spy.

Patti's Toilet.

A peculiarity in connection with Mme. Patti's toilet has been revealed. It appears that when the diva goes to her bath, which she takes about 5 o'clock on the evening she is to sing, she never allows the water to touch her neck and face, although the rest of her body is religiously immersed. She has a singular theory, that hot or cold water produces wrinkles, and it is certainly some sort of proof, that her theory is correct, that in spite of being considerably over 40 years of age, there is not a wrinkle visible on her neck, throat or face. Of course she insists that she keeps equally clean by means of cold cream, which she uses in copious quantities, generally spreading it on her face and neck, and leaving it there while her maid goes through the hair-dressing process, often a period of an hour or so. Then the cold cream is taken off very carefully with a towel, and Mme. Patti considers herself washed.—New York Mail and Express.

ON THE ICE.

Scenes in Mid-Winter at Niagara—A Thrilling Adventure in the Rapids.

When, in the spring, and sometimes during a protracted thaw in the depth of winter, the vast fields of ice that border the shores of the great upper lakes are detached from their moorings and set in motion by the currents that set toward the sea, the great gorge of the Niagara, below the falls, presents a spectacle unsurpassed among icy wonders. I say unsurpassed, because credible witnesses have said that not even the mighty glaciers of Switzerland show more striking examples of natural power.

Huge cakes of ice come tumbling over the cataract in such enormous quantities that after the movement has continued for a week the whole bed of the river below seems filled with them. The process is often aided by a strong northerly wind at the mouth of the river, which sets back the ice, and literally piles it into the wide, deep channel. It is difficult to convey to those unfamiliar with the locality an adequate idea of the sight.

Think of a tremendous flood of water fourteen miles in length, sometimes pent between lofty banks, the water varying from eighty to two hundred feet in depth, sometimes raging in a narrow channel, and then spread out in a tranquil flow with a width of half a mile—think of such a stream or strait as this, so burdened by the ice that has been poured into it, that only in occasional places is the water visible at all! Sometimes the process of freezing compacts it; but more often this wonderful exhibition is seen in comparatively mild winter weather. For it must be remembered that so deep and rapid a current as this is beyond the direct action of the frost; nothing could bridge it with ice from shore to shore but the filling of the channel with the enormous winter accumulations of the upper lakes.

The rigors of the season may somewhat diminish the flow of water; yet in all seasons the almost immeasurable flood of Niagara is there, and it must find outlet. You may climb over huge ice-hills and pick your way among ice-boulders out to the middle of the stream, where you can look down into some wide crevice and see the water thirty feet below, struggling with its numbance.

Sounds of cracking and grinding continually are heard; the impatient waters are fighting with their bonds, and the great mass is slowly, imperceptibly being carried into Lake Ontario—while pedestrians, and even double sleighs, are safely crossing over it. Meanwhile as the great blocks come dashing over he falls much faster than they can find exit below, the surface of the river, which is now the rough and irregular bed of ice, rises and encroaches upon the banks. In some seasons this rise has been as high as sixty feet. There is seen such an exhibition of the power of the forces of nature as perhaps cannot be witnessed elsewhere. In Switzerland, for example, the majestic glaciers creep along their ancient beds with a march that is irresistible; but neither man nor nature has placed any impediment in their course to prove them irresistible. But on the banks of the lower Niagara, I have seen the shaves crumble like egg-shells before the pressure of the great ice-hills; I have seen large houses and storehouses, built so high above the water-level that no danger was dreamed of, orn from their foundations and borne off among the ice-hills, and I have seen all oak trees, two feet in diameter, mapped off like pipe stems, and even orn up by the roots, by the slow, imperceptible, and yet irresistible pressure of this American glacier.

Almost any winter, beyond where the huge round ice mountain rises well toward the brink of the American fall, out in the middle of the wide channel where in other seasons the waters toss and swell from a depth of two hundred feet, you may see great ice-hummocks, decorated with the flags of both nations. You may go out there by a well-defined and safe path, through valleys and over hills of ice—always safe; if hungry, you may buy refreshments there from a pine-board booth, where you will see a cook-stove; and if very ambitious of unusual experiences, you may actually have your photograph taken on the ice, in front of the cataract.

In this tremendous winter aspect of Niagara, it might be expected that accidents and perilous adventures would happen. I will relate the most remarkable that occurs to me.

In the month of December, many years ago, an American whom we may call Clarke was engaged in buying and shopping timber in the Canadian woods, back of Chippewa, which is two miles above the Horse-Shoe Fall. The river is here two miles in width, and flows with a strong, smooth current, which, hardly a mile below, is broken by the first abrupt descent which begins the angry rapids. But steam-tugs and steamboats come down to Chippewa, and the river is safely navigated here by oarsmen of strong arms, cool heads, and knowledge of the stream. Clarke was one of these.

He had lived all his life in sight of the river, knew as much of it as any man could know and had rowed a boat upon it above the falls from his boyhood. He would have laughed at any one who had told him that he could be in danger while rowing his boat across from Chippewa to the American shore.

The short December day was nearly done, but there was still half an hour's daylight, when Clarke came out of the woods where he had been overseeing his choppers, and pulled his skiff out into the stream. He knew that a better point for crossing was opposite Navy Island, a little above; and he rowed up toward it.

The weather was mild, and had been for some days, and Clarke found the river filled with floating ice. As he turned from the lower end of the island and pushed out into the current, he saw that the cakes of ice were large, and that some dexterity would be required to pull around among them. But this did not trouble him; he thought he had been in just such a situation before. If anything did trouble

him, it was the fear that daylight might be spent before he could reach the opposite shore.

He had not rowed ten strokes when he found himself in a narrow channel between two great blocks of ice. Men who use the car upon this river are quick of observation and Clarke suddenly suspended his rowing, as he saw these ice-cakes slowly closing together by the action of the current.

He unshipped an oar, and tried to push one of them off. The oar was forced out of his hands, the blocks closed together upon the boat and crushed it between them into a shapeless pile of kindlings. Warned of the disaster, Clarke leaped in time, and found himself safe for the present on the ice.

If he had not thought and acted quickly in that awful moment, no earthly power could have saved him from destruction. He did not know what he was braving when he left the shore—no row boat could float amid the terrible washing and grinding of this ice. He knew he could expect no aid from the shore, and he knew that he had begun the fearful journey over the falls.

He looked toward the island. It was not far away. The ice-block on which he stood was very large; between it and the one above was a space of clear water; beyond that stretched the next ice-cake; and then there was another space of water between it and the island.

The feat that he performed to save himself was a daring and desperate one, and probably nothing but desperation led him to attempt it.

He ran along the ice upon which he stood, and made a frantic leap. He said afterward that the distance, whatever it was, seemed to him greater than any man could jump; but he struck the next iceberg a foot from the water. Not pausing an instant he ran on to the next block.

It was at least twenty feet from the shore of the island. Never stopping to pull off coat or boots, he plunged into the icy stream, and breasting the current, swam rapidly to the shore. His knowledge of the locality enabled him to find the house of the only occupant of the island at that time, before whose blazing log-fire he was soon warmed and dried. Clarke owed his preservation to a presence of mind and promptness of action which few would exhibit in the face of such a peril.

JAMES FRANKLIN FITTS.

Safe Car-Heating.

Public indignation against the railroad men who persist in the use of car stoves has reached a point where it will not be wise to trifle with it.

The plea that no substitute for stoves has been found is now generally recognized as false and mendacious. The spreading of the knowledge of this fact leaves no loophole of excuse for the railroad companies to crawl out of. They are probably mistaken, even in their cold-blooded calculations of economy. Their pecuniary losses by fire would doubtless more than pay for a safe system. There is nothing to stop, indeed, that a safe plan would cost any more than the present murderous one. But, even if it would, the weighing of burning humanity in the balance with a few dollars and cents by public corporations is not to be tolerated.

There is another point of view for railroad men to regard this subject from, and it is singular that some of them have not been keen-sighted enough to profit by it. The company, having competitors, which first supplies travellers with trains of safe cars, so far as fire is concerned, will secure virtually all the passenger business between its termini. It will find its gain in actual travel and in the good will which brings freight business. The people are in a frame of mind to boycott those roads which cling to the stove, just as soon as they can get the opportunity.

There is no room for any more palaver about difficulties. The safe heating can be accomplished. It is accomplished in a few instances, and the people know it. Where there is a will there is a way. If the companies do not do their duty without the constraint of a rigorous law should be put upon them. Let us have no more burnt sacrifices to corporate greed.—New York World.

Fern Culture.

Ferns are easily cultivated if a few practical details are observed. Growing in their native habitats they are, for the most part, found in shady positions, where, during their growing period, they have abundance of moisture at their roots; therefore, under cultivation, a shady window is for most kinds more suitable than a sunny one, and during their season of growth a good supply of water at the roots is demanded. While it is necessary for their success to have an abundance of water, they are at the same time impatient to stagnant soil, and to prevent anything of the kind occurring, perfect drainage is indispensable. Not only is drainage necessary in the cultivation of ferns, but it is also needed in the culture of all kinds of window and greenhouse plants after they have attained a certain size. No plants do I know, except aquatics, that succeed in a soil from which the water does not pass off freely. Plants growing in pots six inches in diameter and over, should have good drainage. This may be done by placing over the hole in the bottom of the pot a piece of broken pottery in small pieces, instead of the material in small answer well. Fill about one-fourth of the pot in this manner, and over the top place some moss or other rough material to prevent the soil from mixing with the drainage, and thereby preventing the water from passing freely out.

The most suitable soil for ferns is a mixture of garden loam and the black soil found in the woods, about equal parts of each, then with a good sprinkling of sharp sand through the whole, giving more if the loam is clayey and less if sandy.—Vick's Magazine.

There are many people in this world, who, not having the slightest knowledge of sculpture, nevertheless are noticeable for cutting very good figures.—Boston Budget.