POLK COUNTY ITEMIZER.

ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY,

—BY—

GEORGE E. GOOD.

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THE BATH OF FIRE.

"To hear the people of Chicago, Milwaukee and Detroit talk, on that fatal morning, when Reuben March and Son, the great mill-owners, capitalists and speculators, failed, one would think there had never been such a catastrophe.

"The failure happened on the fifteenth of April, and a good many people, at first, made very witty remarks about the Ides of March having fallen a month too late, that year; but, after Reuben March was found dead in his bedroom, with a bullet ball through his poor, broken heart, nobody laughed any more. Why, everybody sympathized, some with tears in their eyes, when they first saw the son's white, stern face, and met the gleam of his desperate eyes.

"What will Edith do about her engagement?" society asked. For Edith Musgrove was a somewhat spoiled darling. Her widowed mother, as all the world knew, had refined every nerve, and begged and borrowed of all her friends, to keep up her social position, and dress and accoutre her beautiful daughter. Nor had her scheming been without result. For had not Edith triumphantly come forth from last winter's campaign leading captive the only son and heir of Reuben March, the richest man of the West? Before this, everybody knew that Tom Hanaford, the millionaire merchant, was ready at any moment, to say said million at Edith's pretty feet; but, Tom was stout, and short, and rosy, and ill-bred; and Edith had never given him or his possessions a second thought; being really madly in love with Misael, who was tall, straight, handsome fellow, with frank, hazel eyes, and a merry smile, albeit the mouth and jaw were capable of other than smiling expressions, as was well proven, when his troubles had come upon him.

"It was a few days after the failure, when Misael, who had hitherto been really desperately driven to earn a moment to himself, threw everything aside and betook himself, in the dusk, to Mrs. Musgrove's pretty little house; dear, in spite of its modesty, from its fashionable vanity.

"Edith came down at once, to meet him. But there was a flutter, nervousness of aspect, a nameless something in her demeanor, that made the poor Misael catch his breath, for a moment, and hold back from giving the accustomed caress. At last he said, "Edith, have I lost you with all the rest?"

"She answered nervously. "Why, Misael! Sit down," she said. "Put down your hat. Don't look so dreadfully. Didn't you get my note?"

"Yes. Mere kindly words of sympathy, such as any courteous friend might write. No promise. No assurance of faith. I had never dreamed of doubting you until I read that."

"Doubting me? You couldn't doubt my great sympathy, Misael; I—and—"

"That will do, Edith. Your eyes, your eye, tell me that your heart has failed. I gave myself to you, body and soul, for better or for worse; for richer or poorer. Nothing that could have befallen you, could have made me go back from my vow. You know best whether your constancy is like that. But, at any rate, it is only by your own words that the bond can be broken. Are you going to say them?"

"Edith was twisting a bracelet around her wrist, and examining it, with an embarrassment, as if she had never seen it before. But Misael patiently waited for her to speak. At last she looked up, met those tearful eyes, looked down again, and turned white as ashes, even to her lips, and faltered out:

"You are very unkind, Misael."

"I don't mean to be, dear," he replied, kindly; "but I am very much in earnest. In the last week, the youth has gone out of me. Everything is different."

"What are you going to do—for living?" stammered Edith, finally.

"Robertson, who has the large mill by the Grand street, has engaged me, as manager. I have a salary of fifteen hundred a year—"

"Oh, Misael! And you have spent fifteen thousand or more, all your life!"

"Yes, dear, but I am young and strong. I have hope, too; I shall succeed in the end. But the question is, could you be satisfied, as the wife of a clerk, who had only fifteen hundred a year?"

"We spend more than that, ourselves; and we are so poor—so horribly poor; and in debt everywhere; and mamma so worn out with worry—"

Edith hesitated, rather than said it, and glanced contemptuously at her threadbare, yet pretentious dress, as she spoke.

"We could take her home and hold her old age comfortable and cheerful," began Misael, softly.

"She interrupted him with a little laugh.

"Fifteen hundred a year! It would divide rather scrimpily, among three; and mamma is the last person in the world to be happy in poverty."

"She has probably advised you to throw me over and smile upon Mr. Hanaford," exclaimed, Misael, a sudden light breaking upon him. "I met the fellow, to-day, and noticed how he sneaked out of my way."

A painful blush burned all over Edith's face. But an angry light, also, leaped to her eyes. She said, stiffly:

"You needn't call it sneaking, Misael. You must expect a good many people to avoid you, now."

"That is enough, Miss Musgrove," said Misael. "Poverty is a crime, I see—at least in the eyes of Mr. Hanaford and"—the words were spoken bitterly, and with emphasis,—"his friends."

"Yes, it is quite enough, Mr. March," exclaimed a new voice, as Edith's mother, who had been listening behind the folding doors, swept into the room. "It is very nice to threaten two women, and talk big about an absent man, but I can't have you doing it here any longer. My daughter, (Edith, if you cannot control yourself" for Edith had burst into tears, "you had better leave the room,) my daughter feels that, under the peculiar circumstances in which you now stand, it is for neither her advantage nor yours, to continue an engagement contracted—"

"While I was rich and prosperous," broke in Misael. "I understand all you would say, Mrs. Musgrove. But I will accept no dismissal, except from my promised wife. Edith, do you agree with your mother? Is it your wish to break your engagement?"

His voice was stern, his attitude commanding. But the poor girl made no reply. She only sobbed the more.

"Speak, Edith, love, and assure Mr. March," said Mrs. Musgrove, "that what your mother has said is neither a fabrication nor a mistake. Tell him your own decision, and let him see that you speak your own mind."

"Yes, speak your own mind, and God's truth," added Misael, as the shrewish voice ceased.

Thus adjured, Edith, at last, lifted her woful, tear-wet face from her hands, and faltered out:

"Yes, Misael, it is better that we part. Mamma is right. I am so sorry to lose you. But I never could be a poor man's wife."

A stern voice interrupted her.

"Give me that ring off your finger."

Edith, too frightened for reply, drew off the magnificent solitaire, which she had worn with such pride, and handed it to Misael.

The latter made two strides to the window, threw it open, and tossed the glittering bauble into the crowded street. A drayman, trudging beside his horses, saw the act, and ran to pick up the ring, turning, as he did so, an inquiring look at the window. With a nod and a gesture of assent, March drew down the sash, and turned again to Edith.

"Will you send me my letters, and the chain that was my mother's? Send them to-day," he said. "The other gifts you are welcome to keep, or to sell, if you like," he added, scornfully. "The proceeds will, perhaps, help out your trosseau."

Then he was gone; and Mrs. Musgrove, white with rage, ran to see if she could distinguish the man who picked up the diamond; but he had turned the corner, and she never found him. It is good to know that he was an honest fellow, and the money, about a fourth of its value, which he received for the diamond, bought him a little home of his own.

"Well, we are rid of that brute, at least," exclaimed the irate mother, finally. "And now, my dear, you will be very cordial, mind, to Mr. Hanaford."

"I—I don't know," sobbed Edith. "We have been cruel, and—and—I like Misael—ever so much the best."

Mrs. Musgrove rose to the occasion.

"Don't be a fool!" she snapped. "Which do you like best: horse-cars, or an elegant barouche, with two men on the box? And which do you like best: cheap alpaca or Lyons velvet? Sham jewelry or real diamonds? Pray tell me, love."

Edith, if not convinced, was silenced; and tried to stifle the ache at her heart. She made an effort to smile, and be cordial, as her mother bade her, when the prosperous merchant called, that evening, with a big boquet and an underbred smirk.

Misael, meanwhile, went away raging, half desperate; almost cursing fate. His better nature conquered, at last. He threw himself into his work with an intensity of purpose, an energy of action, that carried all before it; and at once delighted and terrified, plodding John Robertson, the new owner of the mills, and one of the heaviest creditors of the late firm of March & Son.

It was just about a year from the great failure, and nearly as long from the rupture of Misael's engagement, and Miss Musgrove's acceptance of Mr. Thomas Hanaford's five-thousand-dollar solitaire diamond ring; it was, in fact, in the beginning of April, that Rawlins, the old foreman, who had begun life under Reuben March, while Misael was in petticoats, and had hoped to finish his days under the new-old dynasty, accosted his young master, as he passed through the still-room of the great distillery, in the last of the afternoon.

"There's something wrong, sir," he said, "with this still. You'll see the runs are not above half what they should be, and a heavy charge of grain in, and splendid fires."

"I see," replied Misael, after a moment's observation of the scanty stream of liquor that flowed from the worm. "There's a stoppage somewhere, or perhaps that peg inside has got loose again."

"We'd best knock off work, to-morrow, then, and look into the thing, hadn't we?"

"Knock off work? Lose a day? What's the use of that?" demanded March. "Let down that fire now, and draw the charge from both chambers. Everything will be cooled off by morning, and I will be here by six o'clock to look into it, myself."

"But, Mr. March, I don't think it would be safe for you, or any man, to go into that still, twelve hours from it being all alive, so. The foul air, and the fumes from the liquor, would take his breath, long before he'd get at his work."

"There's no work to do, if what I think is the case. It's only that peg, in the lower pipe, dropped out," interrupted March, impatiently. "It won't take two minutes to do the whole thing, and nobody's life will be risked but mine, and that's—"

He stopped short, it not being his style to make confidences, or to bemoan his hard lot. Rawlins, scratching his head without removing his Glengarry cap, replied: "Well, sir—I don't know—I suppose a quick, strong man, with his wits all about him—if he held his breath—"

"Yes, it's safe enough," broke in Misael, impatiently. "At any rate, I shall do it. You just see to the fire and the charge. Get them out, as quick as you can, and leave everything open to cool. Be here in the morning yourself, at six o'clock, and I will be along by the time you're ready for work."

"All right, sir," replied Rawlins, wisely abandoning the argument, and subsiding into simple obedience.

That evening Misael happened, in returning from a walk, to pass Mrs. Musgrove's house. The window was a little open, and he heard Edith singing a plaintive, little German song, of which he had once been very fond. He stopped for a moment in the darkness, and listened. When the song was ended, a coarse voice cried:

"Why, anybody would think you hadn't a friend in the world, Miss Edith, to hear such a mournful ditty. Give us something more lively, can't you?"

"Idiot!" muttered Misael, dragging his hat over his brows and striding away. "He can't be content till he has dragged her down to his own level. Well—better so; better so."

Then instead of returning home, as he had intended to do, he struck off into the country, and walked as if on a wager, through mile after mile. Finally, partly through fatigue, and partly because the gentle country sounds had tamed the fever of his blood, he went home, and slept a few hours of heavy sleep, before the toil of another day began.

At six o'clock the next morning, master and man stood together, before the black and silent still, with its gloomy litter of extinct coals and ashes, not yet removed, and the reeking fumes of crude alcohol breathing from its every crevice, like the horrible atmosphere surrounding a drunkard.

"Where's the Davy lamp," asked Misael, throwing aside his coat, and standing, a model of athletic and supple manhood, in his dark flannel shirt and trousers, with a leathern belt around his waist.

"Why, Mr. Misael, don't you remember? You flung it in the fire, one day, when it wouldn't light for you? You said it was no good. There ain't another to be had, short of Broad street; and not this hour in the morning, even there. You'll have to give it up, now, sir, spite of fate."

Perhaps the old man's tone of triumph annoyed his master's irritable nerves. Perhaps it was only the reckless and impetuous temper possessing him in these days. But without replying, save in a black and bitter word, crushed between his teeth, Misael snatched a candle from the shelf, and lighting it, sprang up the steps leading to the second story of the still-room, where was the entrance to the upper division of the chamber, which contained the charge, or grain, from which, by the use of steam and pressure, the poison is extracted which, after various other processes, goes forth to the world as whiskey.

A round aperture, perhaps eighteen inches in diameter, called a manhole, gives admittance, in cases like this, from the second story of the still-room, to the upper chamber of the still; and a short ladder, pulled in after him by the inspector, gives him the means of descending to the lower compartment. In this lower division lies the principal danger; for the foul air, strongly impregnated with the fumes of alcohol, is naturally denser here than above; and the manhole admits a certain amount of pure air above, which does not penetrate below. But, also, it was in this lower chamber that this mischief lay, as Misael suspected; and yet hither he was bound to penetrate.

Rawlins, standing for a moment aghast, recovered his breath and tongue in the next, and following up the stairs as fast as his old legs would take him, almost screamed out:

"Master! For God's sake, stop! Don't think for a minute of carrying a candle into that hell of a place. It'll explode before you're fairly inside! Stop, stop, for God's sake!"

"Nonsense, man, there's no danger," replied Misael, laughing, grimly; for he was not insensible of the poor fellow's homely devotion. "See, I'll test it, to satisfy you." And lighting a bit of paper, he tossed it through the manhole.

Both men craned their necks forward, and saw the cheerful yellow blaze suddenly turn to a ghastly blue, and then expire, as the wisp went floating downward into the dense blackness of the pit.

"You see it don't explode," said Misael, throwing one leg over the edge of the manhole. "Here, hold on to the candle, till I'm in; and pass me the end of the ladder."

"It burned queer, though," persisted Rawlins, mechanically doing as he was bid.

"You'll see queerer things than that, if you don't look sharp, and give me that ladder," replied Misael, so impatiently that Rawlins made no further audible comment; but passed in the ladder, and gave the candle into the hands of his young master.

The latter, after a moment of hesitation, set the candle upon a projecting beam, just below the manhole, where its light would penetrate feebly indeed; but, as he thought, sufficiently, to the pit below. Then, putting his head out of the hole, Misael took a long inspiration of fresh air; or, what passes for such, in a distillery; nodded goodhumoredly to Rawlins, dragged his woolen cap firmly over his brows, and rapidly descended the ladder, his mind bent upon accomplishing his task, and returning to upper air before the vitality of that long breath should be exhausted.

Instinct, rather than sight, led him straight to the spot at which he aimed. Here he found the loosened peg, lying beside the hole it should have stopped, which confirmed his suspicion that this was the seat of all the trouble. Two quick movements sufficed to insert the peg in its place, and drive it well home, which he did by means of a little hammer which he had brought in his pocket. Then, not sorry, in spite of his bravado, to have finished his undertaking, he was turning toward the ladder, when his eyes were almost blinded by a sudden glare overhead. At the same moment his ears were stunned by a succession of snapping explosions, as if the air were all at once impregnated with innumerable fire-crackers. A quick pang of physical fear, such as may take the bravest man by surprise, for an instant contracted Misael's heart. For, looking up, he saw the chamber above him filled with a lambent blue flame, and he realized that the gasses from the lower crypt, drawn up into the upper one by the draft through the manhole, had taken fire from the uncovered candle flame, and would burn until all was exhausted.

But that pang of wild terror was soon over. The real courage of the man asserted itself. The mind, resuming its sway, took a rapid and exhaustive view of the situation.

The manhole, he knew, was the only possible exit from the trap in which he had placed himself. That manhole was only to be reached through the flames. He could not live for more than a minute, without breath; to draw in the noxious vapors about him was certain death; there was momentary danger that the gas above would explode, killing him by the shock; if not this, the flames would extend downward, and reach him; or, the woodwork would ignite, and burn him, like a rat in a hole.

Death was certain, if he stood still. There was one bare chance of escape, however, if he acted at once. If he must die, it was better to die struggling, than cowering. Perhaps it took him fifteen seconds to think this all out. It was not more, certainly. Then, with a sudden rush, and a cry, "God have mercy on me," he seized the sides of the ladder and ran up, never shrinking as the deadly flames licked his face. He felt his beard ignite, and burn crisp, close to the skin. But, not daring to open his eyes, lest he should lose them, he groped wildly at the top of the ladder for the manhole. As he grasped it, he felt the skin, on the back of both hands, split from wrist to knuckles; and he heard, as if through tumultuous waves, the voice of the old man, uttering an inarticulate cry of horror and amazement.

And indeed it was a sight to shake a stronger brain than that of Rawlins, to see the ghastly figure emerging from the sea of fire: the eyes closed, the lips drawn away from the clenched teeth, the flames feeding upon hair and flesh. With a blind instinct of doing something to help, the faithful follower rushed forward, and seized Misael's hands, which were clenched upon the edge of the opening. He tried, but at first vainly, to drag his master out; but the crisp and blistered skin slipped from under his grasp. For an instant, it seemed that the pursuing flames, even there, would drag their victim back into their deadly embrace; for Misael tottered, wavered, staggered backward, and almost fell into the abyss. But at last, with a wild cry of despair, he succeeded in flinging himself violently forward. There, for a moment, he hung on the edge of the manhole, half in, half out; a limp, lifeless, scorched body. Had he been alone, that would have been the last of him. But he was not alone. As he fell, Rawlins seized him again; and this time, with more discretion; and dragging him through the manhole, laid him, a blackened, senseless heap, upon the floor of the chamber, alive indeed, but so scarred that it seemed doubtful if he had not been saved from a sudden death to perish in more cruel and lingering torments.

Some early workmen, meantime, had fortunately collected in the lower part of the still-house. Hearing the cries of Rawlins for help, they rushed up, at this crisis. The flames, stifled by closing the manhole, soon expired, and without further damage. A doctor and a carriage were summoned in haste. The poor, senseless, unsightly body, an hour before the embodiment of manly grace and beauty, was removed to the comfortless lodgings for which Misael March had exchanged his luxurious home. Rawlins begged a day's vacation, to recover his shaken nerves, and look after his young master. Then the men went back to their tasks; business hours began; and the world went on the same as ever, just as if a strong, brave young man had not been been brought down to the gates of death.

It was about ten days after this that Misael March opened his eyes, late in the afternoon of a sweet April day, and looked languidly, but intelligently, about him, while a crowd of ideas, half memories, half fancies, came trooping around his bed, and sat beside his pillow, waiting to be questioned.

He was sick? Yes, evidently; and his hands and wrists were swathed into two great, white parcels, over which he seemed to have no control; and his head was bandaged; and how oddly his face felt. By-and bye, when he was stronger, he would think about it more. But not now. Thinking made him dizzy. And the room? It wasn't the lofty, frescoed ceiling, at which his waking eyes had stared, boy and man, for some twenty years. Nor was it the heavy walnut furniture to which he had been accustomed, in that stately, old, paternal mansion he remembered now.

Oh, yes, he lived at Mrs. Simpson's boarding house. But still, this was not quite his impression of the comfortless cell, where the last sad year had dragged along its home hours. Ah, well, he was too tired to think any more of that, or of anything. And so the swollen eyes drooped again, and he slept. Yet he carried into dreamland the impression of a delicious odor of cologne water, and a cool, soft touch upon his head, whence the hair had been shaved.

When he woke again it was in the early morning, and the soft, gray light fell gratefully upon his heated eye-balls, and seemed to soothe the weariness of his brain. Lying quite still, he again looked about him, and remembering clearly his late surroundings, perceived that he lay, now, in another, and much pleasanter bedroom, with soft, dark curtains at the windows, and many a graceful article, of mingled use and ornament, softening the formal utilitarianism of boarding-house furniture.

"It looks as if a woman, a lady, were about, was the thought drifting through the languid mind.

Suddenly from the deep chair at the other side of the bed a figure rose, and went to open the window, to let in the sweet, morning air.

Standing there for a moment, with her back toward him, Misael studied this figure, with the same weary, incurious gaze which he had fixed upon the curtains. But, as he gazed, a memory, rising from the deep springs of life, and quivering with the deadly sorrow, and the living joy, that dwell there, began to whisper in his ear.

That lissom, girlish shape, with its rounded throat and waist, and the graceful fall of the shoulders; that perfectly moulded head, with its little, weary droop, after the night's watching; that wealth of nut-brown hair, coiled heavily and low, at the back; that tiny ear; that line of cheek, just visible beyond. Ah, it could not, could not be; and yet how like; how sweet to fancy it might be her. Unconsciously, the thought took form, and, half aloud, he murmured:

"Edith!"

The figure turned, with a start, and came swiftly toward the bed. Yes! it was Edith. The face was thin and wan; the eyes were weary with long watching; a nameless look, born of heroism, had replaced the frivolous girl-smile; but it was Edith, his own Edith.

All the past was forgotten, all the old love came to life again, all the old tenderness was in his voice, as he whispered, vainly stirring his poor bound hands, to try to touch that head that was bowed beside him.

"My darling! My own—"

"Thank God, to hear you speak again, and to speak so to me," cried the girl. "Misael, oh, Misael, can you forgive me?"

A look of pain and doubt crossed his face, as he said:

"Darling, I do not remember everything yet; and there are some things I do not want to remember. There was a cloud between us; do not lift it; you are here, you are mine and I am yours; when I am a little stronger we will be married. That is all I want to know."

"Oh, Misael, it is enough; and you are so, so good," sobbed Edith. For some happy moments, no more was said. Then he asked, suddenly:

"Dear, are you here with your mother's consent?"

She fell on her knees beside his chair, and hid her glowing face in her hands, as she murmered:

"No. I have no friend but you, in all the world. When we heard you were dying, I told mamma, and—and—and—that man, that I should come and nurse you, till you died. They said no, and he said I should choose between him and you. I did choose. I said that one day, beside your death-bed, was more than all his wealth to me."

"My darling! My true-hearted love!"

"Then mamma said, if I left her house, to come to this, I never should come back. I waited, for a moment, to see if I was strong enough for that test; and I found I was; and I came. Mrs. Simpson was very good to me. She knew we had been engaged; and she likes you, ever so much; and she let me stay; she said she would stand by me in everything; and if you had not got well, I would have stayed here the little time I should have lived—"

She broke down, here, and hid her face in her hands.

"But now you will stay with me, my own, my darling?" said Misael. "And this very day, good Dr. Winthrop shall marry us. He will be so glad Ah, my dear, that was a happy day for me, when, through that bath of fire, I struggled back to life, and you."

"Oh, Misael, you are so noble, so generous, to forgive me! All my life shall be dedicated to proving my gratitude."

A happy silence fell, and through it each loving heart saw the fair vision of a future, that should amply atone for all the past; and glad are we to know that these fair visions were not exaggerated pictures of the reality, which has since come to pass.

The amenities of journalism are not strictly observed in the rural districts of Missouri. The Marple Hill Reflector refers to a rival as follows: "The ignorant, contemptible, mean, sneaking, cowardly, self-important, low-flung, dirty, outlandish, back-biting, self-styled 'politician,' dead beat, whisky bloat, backwoods bummer, log-cabin child of misfortune, beer-inflated, big-headed, soft-skulled, overrated swamp angel, who claims to edit the Swamp paper, thinks the editor of the Reflector terribly ignorant. Let him look at the twenty seven mistakes in his last issue; let him remember the 'blatant' in the issue before; and let him not forget that he used 'adorous' for arduous in a leading local in his issue of August 24. Oh, you dirty whelp; you poor, crawling, creeping viper; you dirty scum of the dirty, stinking, stagnated swamp; you mean, big-jawed, slab-sided, knock-kneed, bow-legged, bander-shanked pup; lost, as you are, to honesty, to principle, to justice, to common decency, do you imagine you can rule God's country—the hills? Go back into the cesspool from which you have crawled, and there remain. Don't come out of your den to abuse respectable people. Go to school, Kelly, and you may learn something yet." Kelly's reply is awaited with interest.

Requires practice: Lady customer—"Will you please direct me to the dress department?" Obliging floor-walker—"Certainly; walk along this way." Lady customer—"My dear sir, I couldn't walk that way if I practiced for two years.

THE WRONG VERDICT.

A fresh anecdote of John T. Raymond, never before printed, is related by one who was a member of his dramatic company and who is now in this city. It was in 1877 that Raymond, as the immortal Sellers, was doing the Western country. At Evansville, Ind., the house was filled, and the audience, the critics say, was en rapport with the actors. The play went along swimmingly until the denouement was reached. This, it is well known, occurs in the jury scene which closes the drama. At every village a new jury is obtained from the populace. Leading persons of the place are sometimes honored with a place in the box, and it was so at Evansville. The collection was one of the finest ever on the stage—doctors, lawyers and such like. The foreman was a six-foot Kentuckian and a judge, too. He had for years adorned the bench, and was never knewn to quail in public. It was from his mouth that "not guilty" was to be received, and he had been duly cautioned as to his lines. As soon as the verdict is rendered Sellers throws up his hat, hugs the accused and performs many wonderful side plays, after which the curtain descends. At Evansville Raymond did his prettiest, gyrating before the judges like a madman and "fixing the jury" in his inimitable manner. When the case had closed and the jury were expected to return the cut-and-dried verdict of "not guilty" the foreman—this six-foot Kentuckian and a judge to boot—was attacked with stage-fright and startled everybody by shouting:

"Guilty!"

"What?" inquired the disconcerted Sellers.

"Guilty," said the forgetful foreman, thinking he was doing himself and the Evansville party proud.

In vain Raymond giggled; the verdict was plainly, "guilty." Therefore the play couldn't go on as it was laid down; there was no chance for that throwing or hugging. The audience was not slow to catch the mistake, and a wave of hearty laughter began to sweep over the parquette. At last Raymond seeing things to be in a desperate state, began to "fix" the jury again, and buttonholing the big foreman, whispered the proper vernict in his ear. Whereupon the big six-footer mildly stammered out:

"Not guilty."

The hat went up, the lucky accused was congratulated, and the curtain rung down amid the laughter and applause of the audience. That big Kentuckian, however, was never again foreman of any of Raymond's juries.—New Haven (Conn.) Register.

CATCHING A TARTAR.

Some eight or ten years ago a silvery-tongued chap, who claimed to be a fruit-tree agent, swindled the farmers of this county in a shameful manner, and one resident of Nankin was so mad about it that he came to Detroit, searched the rascal out and gave him a pounding on the street. After he got through with his work he told the fellow that he would lick him twice as bad if he ever put eyes on him again, and it was a threat to be long remembered and nursed. About three weeks ago the Nankin man was traveling in Washtenaw County, and as he journeyed along the highway he met a traveler who so closely resembled the fruit-tree swindler that he halted and called out:

"Here you are again, you bold-faced rascal!"

"Yes, I'm here," was the calm reply.

"Well, so am I, and I'm going to lick you until you can't holler! I said I'd do it, and I always keep my word. Come down here!"

The stranger "clumb" without a protest, shedding his coat as he struck the ground, and a fight began. In about two minutes he had used up the farmer and was coolly replacing his coat.

"See here," said the man from Nankin, as he wiped his nose with a burdock, "you fight better than you did eight years ago."

"Well, I dunno. This is my first affair with you."

"Didn't I wollop you in front of the Detroit Postoffice eight years ago?"

"No, sir; I was in Australia up to a year ago."

"And you never saw me before?"

"Never."

"And was never in Nankin?"

"Never."

"Well, I'll be hanged! Come to look at you I can see you're not the man. Why on earth didn't you explain, or ask me to? You must have thought me mistaken."

"Oh, yes, I knew you were mistaken, but I had just discovered that I had driven seven miles on the wrong road and was wishing some one would come along and give me two words of sass."—Detroit Free Press.

"Why is Mrs. Brown putting on so many airs of late?" asked Mrs. Jones of Mrs. Smith. "Haven't you heard of their windfall?" rejoined Mrs. Smith. "No; what is it?" said Mrs. Jones. "Why, Mr. Brown's uncle in the country has just died and left him forty bushels of potatoes. Being independently rich, they are cutting all their acquaintances, you know."

William Shakespeare is running for Secretary of State in Michigan, and half the people are muttering to themselves, "that name sounds familiar, but I can't place it."—Philadelphia News.

KILLED BY ELECTRIC WIRES.

Pierced with electricity while repairing what were supposed to be dead wires, Joseph Stammans was instantly killed yesterday, receiving in his body the full force of the terrific current with which the wire was charged. Joseph Stammans was sent to repair a defective wire, and he climbed up the high pole and began operations on the supply wire leading from the depot at 210 Elizabeth street to the store of Dunham, Buckley & Co., at Broadway and Worth street. These wires are heavily charged with electricity, as they suppliod forty lights of 80,000-candle power. Stammans was directed to climb the old pole and make what electricians term a "loop," so as to lengthen the wire. Electricity was passing through the wire at the time. Stammans was so told when he climbed the pole. On reaching the third cross-tree, about thirty-five feet from the street, and on which the wire ran, Stammans first uncovered the positive wire, stripping it of its insulation and making the half connections of the "loop." Having finished one-half of the positive connection, he cut the negative wire for the purpose of making the corresponding half connection of the "loop," and by some mischance he seized both wires, one with each hand, and thereby made an arc of connection between the tube. The instant his hand touched the second wire, the electricity that was feeding the forty lamps passed through his body, giving him a terrible shock. He lost consciousness, and his fellow-workmen were horrified at seeing him clinging to the ends of the two wires, one leg thrown over the crosspiece of the pole while the other was across the wires underneath. There he hung writhing and struggling, totally unable to release his hold on the wires, which sent the racking and the death-dealing current through his entire frame. A large crowd of people gathered beneath the pole, watching the sad spectacle, while two of the linemen clambered nimbly to his aid. It would have been certain death for them to have caught hold of the writhing body of Stammans until the circuit was broken, which one of the men did by severing one of the wires with his pliers; The other lineman seized Stammans' limp body, and fastened a rope around the waist, lowered it gently to the ground. Life was barely perceptible, but his breathing was only spasmodic. His eyes bulged from his head and his jaw was firmly set. No time was lost in carrying him to the Sixth precinct station-house, where Sergeant Lusson telegraphed for an ambulance, but before it arrived the unfortunate lineman was a corpse.

When the body was examined by the surgeon, it was found that Stamman's hands were burned and blistered on both palms where the electric current had entered, and they looked as if a redhot iron had been drawn across them. There were no other marks visible on the body.—New York Star.

REFORM OF THE JURY SYSTEM.

In the November Century Albert Stickney asks; "Is the Jury System a Failure?" and makes a suggestive and striking argument to prove that it is. He advocates a radical reform by substituting a permanent jury or court of judges for a jury of laymen. Of the origin of the jury system he says, in part:

The whole system of trial by jury never was anything but a clumsy make-shift. In its origin, the jury was not a court of justice for hearing causes, but only a feudal court of the lord's vassals. These vassals first became something in the nature of a judical body merely for the purpose of deciding disputes as to landed estates or feuds; and in deciding those disputes they served mainly as witnesses to facts within their knowledge, and not as judges to hear causes of evidence. This court of vassals was, in time, converted into something like a court of justice, but merely for lack of better machinery. No doubt the jury system was an advance on the methods it superceded. Trial by jury, as a method of ascertaining the truth, is something better than trial by battle. It answered very well for the simple transactions of a rude race just emerging from the fighting era of existence. But how does it serve the needs of a great working people in this nineteenth century? This system of having lawsuits heard by men who know nothing of law, this mixing of one lawyer with twelve laymen and calling them a court, is about as sensible as to try to drive a wild elephant and a thorough-bred in double harness. The combination is not a useful one. Need it be said that this marvelous monstrosity is the morganatic device of that grand old blundering, synthetic English people, which, in affairs of state always insists on adapting old machinery to new uses, which tries to convert an antique feudal tin-pot into the cylinder of modern legal locomotive, and which produces as its masterpiece in political machinery that wondrous thing called parliamentary government, where a minister is put in the War Office because some other men have been outvoted in Parliament, where he gives his time to general legislation instead of to army affairs, where he resigns from the War Office because he has blundered in the legislature on some measure concerning the Irish Church, or Irish landlords, but keeps his seat in the legislature, where he has made his blunders?

Historical: The first round dance originated with Adam when he sat down on a hornet.—Hartford Times.