

## HUMOROUS SKETCHES.

### Whistling for a Lobster.

John Rathburn, who is one of the stingiest men in Galveston, went to the fish market last Sunday. He was accompanied by his dog, which animal's tail was seized by a live lobster. The dog started for home at full speed, the lobster still retaining its hold on the dog's continuation.

"Whistle for your dog to come back," exclaimed the indignant fishmonger.

"Whistle for your lobster to come back," retorted Rathburn.—*Siftings*.

### A Delicate Question.

One afternoon as the Hon. W. C. Raines, a lawyer well known in Western New York, was traveling over the Central he was approached by the conductor, who was one of his innumerable friends, and who announced that he wanted his advice on a rather delicate matter.

"Well, what is it?"

"Well, Mr. Raines, the fact is, there's a big, two-fisted fellow forward in the smoker that won't pay his fare."

"Well?"

"Well, what I want to ask you is: Had I better let him ride free, or take a licking?"—*Drake's Magazine*.

### A Narrow Escape.

They were telling some pretty tough stories, and presently his turn came.

"Yes," he began, clearing his throat, "people lose their lives sometimes in the foolish sort o' way. I recollect an Irishman, poor fellow, who some years ago sat down on what he s'posed was a keg o' black sand to smoke his dudden. After finishin' his fust pipe he got up an' knocked the live ashes right into the keg."

"Many killed besides him?" asked a breathless listener.

"Many what?"

"Killed—blown up."

"Oh, there wusn't no explosion, nuthin' explosive 'bout black sand.—*Free Press*.

### Cold Facts.

"We had a very cold winter," said a traveling man to a Westerner on a train between Milwaukee and St. Paul.

"Yes," was the response, "purty cold. Colder up here, I guess, than it was in your State."

"I don't know about that; it was so cold along the lake shore that stove lids froze in the holes, and when a man went to bed at night he had to break the covers with a club before he could turn them down to get under them."

"That's rawther cool, but it's not a patchin' to what we have up in this country. I'll tell you a little experience I had in January. I run a livery stable, and a mountain tough came in to hire a rig. It was so cold that I wouldn't let anything go out, and the cuss got mad and begun to tear around. I follered him out on the street, and the first thing I knowed, he had his pistol out, pointin' it right at me. I thought I was a goner and backed off about twenty feet when he blazed away."

"Did he hit you?"

"No; and that's the funny part of it. The air was froze so hard around the muzzle of the gun that the bullet bounced back and knocked one of his eyes out, and I had to pay the blamed fool's doctor's bill to keep him from suin' me for damages."—*Merchant-Traveler*.

### A Woman's Way.

George W. Hemingway was bashful—oh, very, very bashful. Would it never strike twelve? Helen asked herself, as she sat down for a moment and watched him with the other skaters gliding merrily about. While she gazed George did actually strike—struck one—but it was only a fat man, and it took ten minutes to get them untangled; so, after all, it didn't help her metaphor much.

By-and-bye George saw Helen sitting there alone and he bore down upon her. He was still suffering from the embarrassment of his fall. He would conceal his emotions. Like other young men in such time he would be funny. So he said:

"Would you be willing to accept this rink if I'd give it to you?"

That wasn't funny enough to kill, still Helen thought she saw a chance to play a follow and count on the dark red. She hadn't visited two winters in Chicago for nothing. Quick as a flash she slipped in a cartridge loaded for duck.

"Accept this rink?" she coyly faltered. "Oh, George, you are so abrupt—but you—may see papa."

George gasped, but he let the bill go through without debate. Five minutes later the two were skating around the rink as one. George was the won.—*Boston Journal*.

### A Bad Break.

Sam Peterby, a merchant from the interior, while attending the Mardi Gras festivities at Galveston, united business with pleasure by purchasing a bill of goods from a prominent firm. He was very politely received, and one of the proprietors showed him over the immense store. On reaching the fourth floor the customer perceived a speaking tube on the wall, the first thing of the kind he had ever seen.

"What is that?" he asked.

"Oh, that is a speaking tube; it is a great convenience. We can converse with clerks on the first floor without the trouble of going down stairs."

"Can they hear what you say through that?" asked the visitor.

"Certainly; and they can reply at the same time."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the visitor. "May I talk through it?"

"Certainly," was the reply.

The visitor put his mouth to the speaking tube and asked:

"Are Sam Peterby's goods packed up yet?"

The people in the office must have supposed it was somebody else speaking, for a moment later the distinct reply came back:

"No. We have not packed them yet. We are waiting for a telegram from his town. We believe he is a slippery cuss."

Tableau.—*Siftings*.

### A Street Car Romance.

The bleak and uninviting interior of a street car was the scene of a proposal of marriage. The hour was 9:30; the car one of the amber-hued chariots of the Thirteenth and Fifteenth streets line, in Philadelphia, and the interested parties a pretty girl of about nineteen summers, with dark eyes and rosy cheeks, and a young man of two or three and twenty. "Are you cold, Amelia?" came in gentle tones across the car. "Yes, Charley," was the half-whispered reply. Charley snuggled up close and took Amelia's hand in his. He then glanced at her in a loving way, looked across at the reporter, who was apparently asleep, noticed that the conductor was entirely occupied in keeping his feet warm, and, after giving one or two coughs, said, with a smile: "Do you recollect what I told you the first time I met you, Amelia?" "No, Charley. What?" "Why, that I had never been in love, and that it would be a cold day when I'd ask a girl to marry me." "Oh, yes; but why do you ask?" "Well, this is a very cold day, Amelia, isn't it?" "Yes, Charley! but why?" and she blushed as she glanced up at him, and his face drew nearer hers. "Well, will you?" There was a silence for a moment but for the jingle, jingle of the bells and the shuffling of the conductor's feet upon the icy platform. Then she slipped her hand into his, blushed even rosier than before and whispered "Yes." "Bless you, my children," exclaimed the reporter; and as the lovers half started up, abashed at the unexpected discovery of their secret, the scribe shot out of the doorway and hurried away.—*Philadelphia Record*.

### Animal Barometers.

There are two live barometers in Sacramento, Cal., that have proved trustworthy, even where artificial instruments have failed. One of them is a cat-fish, which is kept in a water trough. No matter how clear the weather may be, this fish always, before a storm, makes it a point to swim about with his head below the water and his tail above. When the rain begins to fall he goes out of sight until the weather changes. The other is a couple of frogs under the floor of the police office, which have never yet been seen by any of the police officers, but who presage a storm several hours in advance of the barometrical indications by a series of peculiarly discordant croaks. No matter how clear and bright the night, the police officers then make it a point to prepare for a storm, and the warning has never proved in vain.

The moss crop of Florida, says the *Pensacola Commercial*, is worth more than the cotton crop, and can be put on the market at less expense. The demand exceeds the supply, and there is not a county in which this product is not going to waste.

## FOR FEMINE READERS.

### A Kentucky Talisman.

A novel custom prevails among the ladies of Winchester, Ky., which will immediately commend itself to maiden ladies growing old, says a correspondent. They say that she who puts on a silk knit garter the first day of the year and wears it continuously will certainly marry during the year. The mother of a certain young lady, being much pleased with the silken ringlet worn by her daughter, proposed to knit a "fellow" for it, but the young lady declined, saying she had confidence in the bewitching circlet, and preferred the natural coming of the fellow.

### Oddities in House Decoration.

The demand for novelties in household decoration does not abate, according to the report of the jewelers. An old shoe or an old hat gives an idea for a bon bon case. Every animal in the menageries is employed by various artisans. Botany as well as zoology is ransacked for designs, and all the combinations apparently possible are made. Nevertheless, there seems to be no limit to the fertility of the designers. In referring to this subject a bric-a-brac dealer, with an idle quarter of an hour on his hands, conducted a reporter through his collection, and as he went along his counters he said:

"There is a lamp that has the form of a white owl, from whose head rises the stem of an immense rose with closely folded leaves, which entirely conceal the globe. There is a stork in flight, with its wings spread out and its legs extended. It is ornamented, and is to be suspended from the chandelier by invisible threads. There is a candlestick with a gold grape leaf for its base, and with a light receiver or crystal painted in gold. There is a big elephant of porcelain, with an opening in its back for begonias, and there is a porcelain vase representing a tree trunk overgrown with climbing plants. There is a mirror to be bordered with cut flowers, and to represent a miniature lake in the centre of a dinner table. That crystal ball, mounted upon a spiral pedestal, is for a centre table ornament, to reflect the light. The morning just as you observe, pond lilies past there came so that they seem to be floating in water. That dagger is a paper cutter, and its sheath forms a thermometer. That cat is an inkstand. The head in a flaring bonnet is the same; lift the face and there is the ink-well. That gold umbered ship, with silver sails and a cargo incased in Austrian glass is a liquor set. Here is a baby carriage that represents a slipper lined with plush, and here is another shaped like a canoe. That tree of gold, a nest of eggs, is for Easter. This paper contains a Geneva timepiece, and this one has a clock on one side, a barometer on the other, a thermometer between, and a geographical globe above.—*Jewelers' Circular*.

### Fashion Notes.

The German ladies are trying to introduce crinoline again.

Great bunches of flowers, all of one kind, are favorite hat and bonnet decorations.

The peak-brimmed poke bonnet reappears among the millinery importations and productions.

Braid and embroidery in the greatest imaginable variety of patterns adorn the new jersey jackets.

Embroidery of all sorts seems to be running wild. An exaggerated soutache braid, fully a quarter of an inch wide, is among the novelties.

Among the prettiest and most artistic of the new woolen costumes are those which are embroidered in chenille shaded in several colors of wool.

For spring, loose flowers, garlands sprays, bouquets, ferns—in fact, any designs from nature—are reproduced in dress goods to please the fancy of the fair.

Very few jewels are observed in the evening; there are leaders of fashion who wear scarcely any, others who wear none at all, just as their own fancy dictates.

It is said that for summer wear light fabrics will be made with corsages pleated on the shoulder, crossed in front and belted at the waist, the sash or belt having long ends.

With plain plaited skirts are again appearing the narrow flounces reaching up to the waist, which in their materials, and to low-cut bodices with short sleeves,

are especially becoming and suitable as ball dresses for young girls.

Waistcoats of jerseys are, as a rule, narrow, of a contrasting color with the rest of the jacket, and are braided or beaded to match the braid of the jacket, and fastened with small lasting, metal, crochet, or fine enameled buttons.

Jerseys of wool rival those of silk for dressy suits. They are elaborately but tastefully braided with Hercules and Titan soutaches, and buttons of small size. They come in every color and shade, as well as the black and cream white.

### Nature's Riddles.

Chickens two minutes after they have left the egg, will follow with their eyes the movements of crawling insects and peck at them, judging distance and direction with almost infallible accuracy. They will instinctively appreciate sounds, readily running toward an invisible hen hidden in a box when they hear her "call." Some young birds also have an innate, instinctive horror of the sight of a hawk and of the sound of its voice. Swallows, titmice, tomtits and wrens, after having been confined from birth, are capable of flying successively at once when liberated on their wings having attained the necessary growth to render flight possible. The Duke of Argyll relates some very interesting particulars about the instincts of birds, especially of the water ouzel, the merganser, and the wild duck. Even as to the class of beasts I find recorded: "Five young polecats were found comfortably imbedded in dry, withered grass, and in a side hole, of proper dimensions for such a lair, were forty frogs and two toads, all alive, but merely capable of sprawling a little. On examination the whole number, toads and all, proved to have been purposely and dexterously bitten through the brain." Evidently the parent polecat had thus provided the young with food which could be kept perfectly fresh, because alive, and yet was rendered quite unable to escape. This singular instinct is like others which are yet more fully developed among insects—a class of animals the instincts of which are so numerous, wonderful, and notorious that it will be, probably, referred to one or two examples. The wasp affords another well known, but very remarkable, example of a complex instinct closely related to that already mentioned in the case of the polecat. The female wasp has to provide fresh, living animal food for her progeny, which, when it quits its egg, quits it in the form of an almost helpless grub, utterly unable to catch, retain, or kill an active, struggling prey. Accordingly the mother insect has not only to provide and place beside her eggs suitable living prey, but so to treat it that it may be a helpless, unresisting victim. That victim may be a mere caterpillar, or it may be a great, powerful grasshopper, or even that most fierce, active and rapacious of insect tyrants, a fell and venomous spider. Whichever it may be, the wasp adroitly stings it at the spots which induce complete paralysis as to motion, let us hope as to sensation also. This done, the wasp entombs the helpless being with its own egg, and leaves it for the support of the future grub.—*Fortnightly Review*.

### Strange Murder.

As a means of suicide the small venomous serpents of Oriental countries have always been in vogue—the asp of Cleopatra recurring to every one's memory as a prominent example. In certain parts of Bengal there is said to be a race of gypsies, one of whom for a fee will furnish a small cobra to any applicant, "and no questions asked." A man who desires to commit murder procures one of these reptiles and places it within a bamboo just long enough to let the head protrude a trifle at one end, and the tail at the other. Armed with this deadly weapon the murderer creeps softly to his enemy's tent at dead of night, cuts a hole in the wall, and introduces the bamboo. The tortured reptile, careless upon whom it wrecks its animosity, strikes its fangs into the sleeper, then is withdrawn, and the assassin steals silently away.—*Gentleman's Magazine*.

London has a cremation co-operative association, where, by the payment of a guinea a year, you can be cremated in first class style for \$60, and your ashes will be returned to your relatives.

The native population of the Hawaiian Islands is 4,000 less than it was a year ago.