THE FAMILY STORY

FIVE THOU'

MY dear girl, you'll have to let me off. I'm awfully sorry, but the Governor won't give way. I'm really fond of you, and I think you are of me, but——"

"O! why didn't I want to marry a decent barrister, a doctor, or even a journalist, instead of an Earl's younger son?" said Miss Muriel Mallett, with a frown on her pretty face, and a tear or two in her large, limpid eyes—eyes which made all the men think, wrongly, that she was poetical and sentimental. "But, seriously, can you give me up?"

The Hon. Bob Martindale looked at her. She was just his ideal—tall, well-built, but with a saucy face in which the big black eyes seemed out of place, if fascinating. There was in her countenance the strangeness which, according to Bacon, is necessary to great beauty. She affected a tailor-made gown and was always well groomed; yet, though her dress was a trifle mannish, in the brusque movements which showed that she was fidgety, glimpses of gossamer stocking and fine Valenciennes revealed themselves, and showed that she had a conscience in costume that would have delighted the hero of Gautier's novel with the famous preface.

"My dear girl, if it were a question of risking my life, or anything like that, I wouldn't hesitate; if it were even one of those affairs of fellows who for a few hours of—of—well, you know, gladly die, I'd be there; but—but I can't be a cad. They have brought me up as a swell without any profession, and I'm a bit of a fool, and I couldn't live on your earnings as actress, so there you are."

Miss Muriel sighed. Bob was a handsome fellow and manly, and he would have the title and estates some day if two obstacles were to disappear.

"I did like you, Bob, and do, and you were always straight. I should like to have been your wife. If only we'd some money to run a theatrical company with!"

"Yes, if I hadn't been such a juggins as to blue the five thou. old Uncle Tom left me—I didn't know you then."

"Yes, if we'd the five thou.!" she started a little. "You will marry me if ever I have £5,000? O, you'd have to work, have to be my manager."

He nodded.

"It's a promise for two years?"

"Yes."

"Honor bright?"

"Yes, of course, if——"

"If I run straight? Well, look here, we've been engaged—honorably—and you want to break it off."

He lowered his head.

"I'm young, only 24 even at Somerset House. I'd like to have married you, and I should have been a good wife, too. However, some day I may want to marry some one else."

The man shuddered.

"A broken engagement isn't a certificate of good character; you must give me one. That's fair."

She got up and wheeled to him a little round table, on which was a crocodile-skin writing-pad, with silver edges. She opened it, took out writing paper, and found him pen and ink.

"Now, then, write this—

"My Dear Miss Mallett: It is my painful duty to tell you that I have made fruitlessly a desperate effort to gain my father's consent to our marriage. He utterly refuses, saying that he is so old-fashioned as to object to have an actress as daughter-in-law. Therefore, I am compelled to break off my engagement with a woman whom I still love and esteem."

The Hon. Bob signed the letter sadly.

"Now, be off. I've to go to rehearsal. No, you mustn't drive me down. Once more, if within two years I have five thou. as capital, you promise you will marry me?"

"Yes, darling, on my word of honor!"

With a swift movement she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him passionately. A minute later he found himself in the street, sad and bewildered.

That evening there was rejoicing in the big mansion in Belgrave square, and the Earl of Hexham drank too much in honor of the return to respectability of the prodigal Bob.

"We'll soon find you a wife, my boy," he said, over the port, which he drank in honor of the affair and in defiance of gout and doctor's orders. "None of your rich American trash, but some one of decent family and the sort of solid, reasonable dowry that a younger son deserves."

Next morning at 12 o'clock, when the Earl was vainly trying to put on his boots without swearing at the pain, the Hon. Bob entered the library with a document in his hand. "I never thought she'd have done it, sir," he said.

"Done what?"

"Look; the beastly thing says, 'The plaintiff claims damages for breach of promise of marriage.'"

"Bring me my slippers!" shouted the Earl; "damn the horse! send round the brougham!"

Off he went to Lincoln's Inn Fields.

"You'd better settle," said Mr. Ponder, the old family lawyer.

"Settle!" he shouted, "settle! I'll show up the baggage, the ——! I'll put every detective in London on the job. I'm not afraid of court, and when the jury hears what she really is——"

"But the scandal?"

"Don't talk about scandal; enter an appearance, and leave the rest to me."

"My dear Governor," interrupted Bob, who had accompanied him, "be fair to the girl. I didn't think Muriel would have done it; but she's perfectly straight—I'd stake my life on it."

"Nonsense, Bob! You're a fool, and you'd better stay abroad till the affair's over. I'll attend to it. I'll show her how to fight." The Earl's eyes gleamed. "We'll teach her, won't we, Ponder, what litigation means?" Then he told a lengthy, stale tale of his successful lawsuit about right-of-way—a success which added a new mortgage to the family collection.

"It's all very well," said Mr. Ponder, "but that was chancery, this is common law. I'm sure we should make a mess of it. One of my articled clerks has set up in business in Bedford Row; he's a smart fellow, and will fight hard, and just suit you."

Bob went off to the Rivieras, and lost all the money his father gave him. During his absence the old gentleman employed a detective—a fellow with splendid imagination, but very poor powers of observation—and the skirmishing was done under the Earl's supervision. Bob was to have staid away till after the trial; however, an urgent letter from a club friend of his father brought him home in a hurry. He arrived in the evening, and, going to the Carlton, learned that the case was in the list for next day. When he reached Belgrave Square and was shown into the library he found his father with Mr. Hicks, his Bedford Row solicitor. There was a row going on at a high pitch.

"Pray tell your father he must settle," said Mr. Hicks.

"Settle be damned!" interrupted the old boy.

"Settle, I say," rejoined the solicitor. "You see, Mr. Martindale, Sir Edward says he won't cross-examine the plaintiff as to her character. He suggests that the material is absurd, and he does not believe a word of the detective's story—he says he'd sooner return the brief."

"And the check?" gasped the Earl.

"Yes, and the check. He says there's no decent defense, and he won't try to support the detective's tissue of lies. Moreover, he insists that if he did he'd fail, and the damages and disgrace would be awful."

"What does it matter to me?" shouted the old gentleman. "It's not my case, it's my son's."

"That's a bit steep," observed the son.

"My retainer is from you, my lord," urged Mr. Hicks.

"O, I'll pay your confounded costs, but where will they get their damages from?"

Bob groaned.

"They've told me they'll make him bankrupt," replied Mr. Hicks, "and his discharge will be suspended for two years at least."

"What has that to do with me?" said the Earl grimly.

Bob interposed: "Lord Salisbury has many claims on his patronage, and in my bankruptcy he'd find a decent excuse for leaving me out in the cold."

The Earl had no gout, but he managed without its help to use very vigorous language concerning sons, solicitors, advocates, and actresses.

"They will take £5,000 for damages, with a full apology and withdrawal in open court," said Mr. Hicks, "and £500 for costs."

"An apology! A withdrawal!"

"A withdrawal of all the charges on the record."

Next day, to the infinite disgust of the reporters and the crowded court, Sir Edward, in a graceful speech, made an apology of the most ample character, withdrew all imputations, and announced that £5,000 would be paid as compensation for the injury to the lady, together with her costs.

The Morning Post, on the morrow, announced that the Earl of Hexam had gone to Buxton.

When the honorable Robert, a day later, received a letter from Muriel, saying she was most anxious to see him, he took a cab to Brompton Crescent, and grew more and more perplexed every inch of the way.

Miss Muriel, looking very neat, natty, handsome, and piquant, with a prodigious glow of life in her eyes, shook hands with him warmly and made him sit down on the sofa by her side. For a quarter of an hour she stimulated his curiosity by talking about nothing in particular. At last his patience broke down.

"Look here, Ella," he said brusquely, "stow the cackle and come to cues. I'm delighted to see you, and don't bear malice; but what on earth put it into your pretty head to send for me?"

She laughed loud, long, and heartily—so loud, long, and heartily that at last he laughed with her.

"Well, you are a goose!" she said.

"I know it," he answered. "I dread Michaelmas."

"I think your brain is developing; you're growing witty. O, you haven't got there yet!"

"Well, but——"

"Listen to me. The Hon. Robert Talbot Hiesmes Clarence Martindale made a promise to Miss Muriel Mallett that if within two years she had £5,000 to finance a theatrical company with he'd marry her."

He gazed open-mouthed.

She wheeled up the little round table to him, opened the crocodile-skin writing pad with silver edges, and took a bundle of crisp "flimsies" from the flap.

"One, two, three, four," she counted out up to fifty; 'fifty' brand new Bank of England notes, each for 100 beautiful, shining sovereigns. You see, I've got the five thou."

He stared, mentally paralyzed.

"The damages!" she shouted, hysterical with laughter.

"The damages!"

"Yes, and your promise."

"Yes, but——"

"There are no buts about it; you've promised, and you love me."

He nodded.

"And I love you. If the Earl hadn't played it so low down in the defense I might have chucked up the game. As it is, I hold you to your word as a man of honor. Will you marry me?"

She looked into his eyes. He really loved her. She took hold of his left hand, his right arm wandered round her waist.

"Will you marry me?" she repeated, her lips an inch from his.

He replied affirmatively without a word.

There is now one obstacle the less between the husband of the fascinating Muriel Mallett and the earldom of Hexham, for his lordship died suddenly from apoplexy on getting a telegram from an old club friend concerning his son's marriage with the fascinating actress.—The Sketch.

A Long Shot.

James Shields was elected to the Senate in 1848, defeating his predecessor, Senator Breese. Shields had distinguished himself in the Mexican War, and at the Battle of Cerro Gordo he was shot through the lungs, the ball passing out at his back. His recovery was one of the marvels of the day. Shields' war record is believed to have secured to him his triumph over Breese. When the news of Shields' election was received, a lawyer named Butterfield was speaking of it to a group of friends, when one of them remarked: "It was that Mexican bullet that did the business." "Yes," retorted Butterfield, "that was a great shot. The ball went clear through Shields without hurting him, and killed Breese one thousand miles away."

ILLITERACY IN THE NATION.

Percentage Now Greater in New England than in the West.

The report of the Commissioner of Education presents some curious and interesting facts with regard to illiteracy in the United States. This information is derived mainly from official records and deserves careful attention. It appears that the number of persons over 10 years of age who cannot read and write is 6,324,702, or 13.3 per cent. of the total population, according to the latest statistics. In 1880, the rate of illiteracy was 17 per cent., and a decrease of 3.7 per cent. since that time is gratifying in the sense that implies gradual improvement, but the situation is still lamentable, and no good citizen can contemplate it without experiencing a certain degree of humiliation.

The government is based upon the idea of popular intelligence as an assurance of political safety and prosperity, and vast sums of money are expended for educational purposes. There is really no excuse for ignorance in a country where free schools abound and instruction is within easy reach of all classes. Nevertheless, over thirteen out of every 100 of the people are unable to read and write. This great army of illiteracy is a standing reproach, as well as a menace, and there is no more important duty than that of reducing it as rapidly as possible.

There was a time when New England led all the rest of the country in the general average of popular intelligence, but this is no longer true. It is now in the West, and not in the East, that the best showing is made of the education of the masses. Nebraska stands at the head of the States in point of literacy, only 3.1 per cent. of its population being unable to read and write. No State west of the Mississippi River, with the exception of the four Southern States, ranks as low as Massachusetts in the number of illiterates in its population. This means, of course—and the fact is a very significant one—that a large percentage of the educated element of the East has removed to the West, thereby materially modifying its "wild and woolly" condition, and it means furthermore that the West has been doing a great deal in the enlargement of its educational facilities.

The public schools of such States as Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas are equal in every respect to those of any of the Eastern States, and their academies and universities are rendering effective service in the sphere of higher learning. So far as the South is concerned, allowance must be made for the presence of the colored race, the illiterate members of which constitute nearly one-half of the total number of illiterates in the United States, but even with this serious drawback, the Southern States are making substantial gains in education, and the conditions promise an acceleration of such progress from year to year.—Minneapolis Times.

Will Not Submit to Dictation.

The subject of renewing the privileges of the Bank of France will shortly come up for discussion in the chamber, after having been in abeyance since 1892, when the senate approved a bill for the purpose.

The bill has not since been modified and the provisions included in it will, it is thought, be adopted without material alteration. One of them, which was to empower the bank to increase its note issue from 3,500,000,000 francs to 4,000,000,000, was passed as far back as 1893. The charter expires on Dec. 31, 1897, and the proposal is to extend it for a period of twenty years from that date, in consideration of the bank making certain concessions to the state.

Among these concessions is one by which the bank is to forego all future interest on the government debt, 140,000,000 francs, and not to demand repayment of the capital so long as the charter is in force. The bank is to undertake the service of the national debt and transact other business for the treasury, both at the head office and branches, free of charge, and make an annual payment to the latter for 2,000,000 francs during the first year of the currency of the new charter and 2,500,000 francs per annum subsequently. It is to open several new branches and make advances to agricultural cooperative societies.

It is not improbable that an effort will be made to convert the bank into a state institution, but such a project does not command support either in financial or ministerial circles, and is not in the least degree likely to meet with success.—Edinburgh Scotsman.

What's in a Name?

The story of their trouble is easily told.

There was William J. Brown, who had an office on the seventh floor, and W. Joseph Brown, who had an office on the sixth floor. Each tried to stick to his own method of parting his name, but many labor-saving correspondents insisted upon using only the initials, and that made a good deal of trouble. It was annoying to one W. J. Brown to see a check sticking out of a letter as he opened it, only to find that it belonged to the other W. J. Brown, and it was annoying to the other W. J. Brown to pay express charges on packages belonging to W. J. Brown on the floor above.

William J. tossed a letter into W. Joseph's office one day with the suggestion that it would be a good scheme for him to pay his bills, as he (William J.) was tired of receiving them.

It was not until W. Joseph's wife made the mistake of addressing a letter to him as "W. J." that the real trouble began. William J. handed the letter to W. Joseph and asked with righteous indignation: "Why don't you supply your wife with enough money when she goes visiting?" He got away before there was a chance for an explosion, but it came the next day when W. Joseph drifted into his office and handed him a letter with the remark: "I wish you'd marry that girl. You've been engaged long enough, and, besides, her letters are getting sickening."

The police finally succeeded in restoring order.—Chicago Post.

Heard While Waiting.

A passenger, while waiting at a railway station for his train, amused himself by watching the queer looks and antics of a tailless cat as it played about on the platform. The stationmaster happening to pop out of his office, the intending traveler pointed to the cat and said, "What kind of a cat is that—Manx?" "No," replied the stationmaster, with a sly smile, "Brighton Express."

Microphones.

A recent invention consists of an apparatus by means of which a microphone suspended over a child's crib automatically rings an electric bell situated at any convenient point on the least noise made by the child. The microphone, as is well known, is a very sensitive form of a telephone transmitter, capable of detecting the faintest sounds.

It is not a sin to steal things at a grocery store where you "trade."

Saw a Meteoric Stone Fall.

Mr. J. F. Black, a farmer, living about nine miles from Ottawa, Kan., saw a small meteorite fall on his land late in the afternoon of April 9 last, and going to the spot where it fell, picked it up. It weighs thirty-one ounces and contains a little iron, but consists in the main of stony material.

New Zealand's Gems.

Agate-hunters from Germany are now exploring New Zealand with very promising results. Blue and white topaz and splendid specimens of amethyst have been discovered by them, as well as large pieces of quartz so filled with slender, rutile crystals as to resemble masses of matted hair.

Java's Man-Ape.

Prof. Marsh, of Yale, has recently announced his opinion that the remarkable remains of a skull, teeth and other fossil bones found by Dr. Dubo's in Java belonged to an animal that "was not human, but represented a form intermediate between man and the higher apes." This opinion confirms the belief of the discoverer of the bones, who called the animal pithecanthropos, or "ape-man." The bones were found in ancient volcanic deposits, and belong, Prof. Marsh thinks, to the age known as the Pliocene.

New Kind of Kites.

Meteorologists are now trying to study the atmosphere high above the ground with the aid of self-recording barometers and thermometers, etc., sent up in kites. This has resulted in a great improvement in the forms of kites, which are now constructed on scientific principles. At the headquarters of the Weather Bureau in Washington box-shaped kites, with open ends and sides partly covered with silk, are used. Instead of twine or cord, fine piano wire is employed to hold the kite. At the Blue Hill Observatory, near Boston, box-shaped kites have been sent up to an elevation of almost a mile above sea-level.

A Phosphorescent Party.

Monsieur Henry, of the Paris Academy of Sciences, has invented a phosphorescent starch with which surprising effects can be produced. Used as a face-powder, it makes the countenance glow in a dark room with mysterious radiance. Recently a "5-o'clock tea" was given in Paris after dark, no light being employed except that supplied by phosphorescent starch sprinkled over everything in the room. The carpet, the ceiling, the pictures on the walls, the furniture, the teacups, the flowers, the faces, shoulders and dresses of the ladies all glowed and gleamed, making a spectacle that was at once startling and beautiful.

Oldest Man in the World.

According to statistics collected in Germany the oldest man known to be living anywhere on the earth is Bruno Cotrim, a negro born in Africa, but now living in Rio Janeiro. Upon the same authority is based the seemingly incredible statement that there are 3,883 persons living in Bulgaria, each of whom has reached, or passed, the age of 100 years, making one centenarian to every 1,000 inhabitants of that country! Germany, with a population of 52,000,000, claims only 78 centenarians, and France, with a poulation of 40,000,000, 213 centenarians, while Ireland, whose population numbers only 4,600,000, has 578 centenarians.

Destroying Friction.

After calling attention to the fact that man was content with the use of oil to keep machinery in running order until he began to ride the bicycle, when he demanded some better labor-saver and invented ball-bearings, the Scientific American proceeds to illustrate and describe some recent applications of such bearings. They are employed for wagon and carriage wheels, for the carrier-wheels of cable roads, and for the shafts of swift-running machinery. They practically dispense with the use of the oil can and greatly reduce the amount of friction to be overcome, thus adding to the effective power of all machines in which they are used. The singular fact is noted that Prof. Boys, of London, showed experimentally that ball-bearings, when properly constructed, are practically proof aginst wear. He demonstrated this fact by weighing the balls of a bicycle-bearing when they were new, and again after they had been subjected to long service. They showed no loss of weight.

American Soapstone.

In the Ragged Mountains, in Albemarle County, Virginia, the scene of one of Poe's weird tales, exists a great deposit of soapstone which is said to be the finest in the world. It was discovered only about twelve years ago, but now a small colony exists at the spot and three quarries have been opened. The stone, which is very hard and fine-grained, is cut out in blocks averaging nine tons in weight, and afterward is sawed into slabs. It is employed, among other things, for tanks in chemical laboratories, tubs and sinks in laundries, linings for fireplaces, griddles, which need no greasing when made of soapstone, tables and fittings in hospitals and dissecting-rooms. Acid is said to have no effect upon the stone.

Does Women Earn Her Keep?

Thousands of women work in the mines of Belgium, England and Cornwall. In the first-named country they formerly worked from twelve to sixteen hours a day with no Sunday rest. The linen-thread spinners of New Jersey, according to the report of the Labor Commissioner, are "in one branch of the industry compelled to stand on a stone floor in water the year round, most of the time barefoot, with a spray of water from a revolving cylinder flying constantly against the breast; and the coldest night in winter, as well as the warmest in summer, these poor creatures must go to their homes with water dripping from their underclothing along their path, because there could not be space or a few moments allowed them wherein to change their clothing." Yet women are "exempted" from labor attended by hardship!

Despite these washerwomen, miners and linen-thread spinners, we are told "it is woman's privilege generally to be exempted from the care of earning her livelihood and that of her offspring."

It would seem the time that this libel upon womanhood should be scorned by fair minded men. From all antiquity the majority of women have been faithful workers, rendering a full equivalent in labor for their scanty share of the world's goods. The origin of every industry bears testimony to this. In our own era, while women were still homekeepers, did they not earn their livelihood? What was the weaving, the sewing, the cooking, the doctoring, the nursing, the child care, "the work that was never done," if it was not earning a subsistence? Even in these days, when woman goes forth and receives the reward of her labor as publicly as man, she is no more worthy of her hire. Her ancestress—sweet and saintly soul!—did not dream of recompense. But was it not her due, and shall we refuse to credit it because man was then a self-sufficient ignoramus who deemed himself the only one fit to acquire property?—Popular Science Monthly.

A HORSE IN THE NAVY.

Official Regulations a Little Vague as to the Treatment of Live Stock.

Several years ago a band of naval officers was ordered by the commandant of one of our naval stations to hold a survey on one of the horses belonging to the station. The board met, examined the horse, found that he was suffering from "the scratches" and "stringhalt," and was generally rundown. An examination of the navy regulations showed that only certain recommendations could be made by the board, as follows:

"To be turned into store for use," "To be retained in or for use," "Sold," "Used for scrap metal," "To be issued for any other purpose," "To be thrown on the dump," "To be transferred to some other station," "To be used for repairs for some other article," or "To be extensively repaired." Since it was the unanimous opinion of the board that he ought to be treated by a veterinary surgeon, it was recommended, in conformity with the regulations "that he be extensively repaired."

This was three or four years ago, and he was "extensively repaired" by a veterinary surgeon, but evidently the "repairs" were not lasting, as the sequel will show.

Recently there came a recommendation from the present commandant that the horse be shot, as he was old and worthless, and that it would be kindness to put him out of his misery.

In the same mail came a requisition from the same commandant asking for authority to buy ten tons of A first-class fertilizer.

It was then that the navy department indorsed on the requisition "Why not use the horse to produce the fertilizer?"

The commandant promptly returned the paper with the endorsement: "Since the horse is not an A1, first-class horse, being old and decrepit, he is incapable of filling the bill."

And here the matter stands for the present.—Washington Star.

He Could Shoot.

The Marquis de Mores, who was murdered by his native escort while on an expedition in Northern Africa, was an intrepid and adventurous Frenchman, and many characteristic stories are told of his experiences in the Bad Lands of Western Dakota, where he carried on an extensive cattle business fifteen years ago. One day when the marquis returned to his shanty, according to one narrator, he found a couple of cowboys conducting themselves in a lawless manner around the place. They gave the Frenchman the laugh on his horsemanship, and one of the pair, nicknamed Broad Back Morris, mounted his pony with the remark that he would show the marquis how to ride. Digging in his spurs he began circling about the Frenchman, his companion following his example, the two firing their Winchesters and cursing the marquis to the best of their ability as they rode. The latter calmly rolled a cigarette and began puffing it.

"Drop that, you tenderfoot!" roared one of the invaders, pulling up his mustang with a jerk; "drop that or I'll clip it out of yer mouth." At the same moment he lifted his Winchester.

De Mores turned half way in his saddle, took a deep inspiration and blew out a cloud of smoke. As it cleared away the cowboy took deliberate aim and fired. The cigarette was sent flying in fragments.

In an instant De Mores had drawn his long-barrelled French revolver from his belt and pulled the trigger. The Winchester dropped out of the cowboy's hands. He had been shot through both wrists. The other cowboy was in on De Mores' flank. As soon as I saw him pull his gun he grabbed his rifle, but hadn't time to raise it before the marquis fired a second time, just as his bronco gave a lunge and a buck. The man tumbled off with a bullet in his shoulder. De Mores then rolled another cigarette, lighted it and continued the conversation.

Crimson Clover.

Good success with crimson clover should be secured, provided the land is thoroughly well fitted after harvest, if one peck of crimson clover be sown together with half a bushel of rye. In planting one crop immediately after another, the fact should not be lost sight of that the one removed, especially if it is not a leguminous plant, is likely to have taken a large quantity of the readily available plant food from the soil. This being the case, either superior fitting of the land by culture and by allowing it to weather for a week or two between the harvesting of one crop and the sowing of the next or commercial fertilizers, should be resorted to to start the young plants of the second crop. Once well started they will take care of themselves. On the black loam the next year's product might be mown early and made into hay, while on a clay upland the clover and rye had better be plowed under. Clover roots and stubbles should form a fair quantity of plant food for the young corn on the black loam which most likely is far richer than the upland.—Country Gentleman.

An English "Bull."

Sir Francis Scott, the British commander in the recent expedition against Ashantee, is not believed to be a countryman of Sir Boyle Roche, but in reviewing the troops after their return to England he made a remark which is almost worthy to stand beside some of those of the celebrated maker of "bulls."

Sir Francis, in addressing his men, said: "You were no doubt disappointed because this campaign gave you no opportunity to fight; but if there had been any fighting, there would have been many absent faces here to-day."

Edison's Speech.

Mr. Edison has only once tried to make a speech. It was before a girls' seminary, where he had agreed to lecture on electricity. He had engaged a friend named Adams to operate the apparatus while he talked; but when the "Wizard" arose before his audience, he felt so dazed that he simply said: "Ladies, Mr. Adams will now address you on electricity, and I will demonstrate what he has to say with the apparatus."

LIGHTNING'S QUEER FREAKS.

Unexpected Results of Many Strokes of the Electric Fluid

Few natural phenomena show so many eccentricities of behavior as Jove's thunderbolts. Machine-made electricity, especially when playing the truant, is tricky enough, but the fiery product of the clouds is still more original, inconsistent and lawless. In small towns, or in the outskirts of large ones, where the houses are detached from one another, and are 50 or 100 feet apart, one frequently hears of damage by lightning; it is seldom a row of brownstone fronted buildings, a block of stores, a fifteen or twenty story apartment house, or a sky-scraper office building, in those portions of a city which are built up solidly, is hurt in any way.

So long has this state of affairs existed and been recognized that it has affected the business of making and erecting lightning rods. If a man should institute a special search for such apparatus in the older part of the metropolis, with an opera-glass in his hand and a high window or roof for his post of observation he might well ask whether the lightning rod has not become, like the dodo, an extinct species. Eventually, a few tall, slender church spires and certain classes of buildings under the control of federal or municipal bureaus would be found displaying metallic bristles, connected by a copper cable with the ground.

But these and the few other discoverable exceptions would only serve to emphasize the rule. Inquiry reveals, however, that an extensive business in lightning rods is still carried on. They are seen as frequently as ever in small towns and on farms. Occasionally, you will hear of a man who has a house and big warehouses in the city which are not provided with these safeguards, but who employs them abundantly on his country house and stock barns. It is said that Mr. Edison and Mr. Westinghouse, who are supposed to know a thing or two about electricity, protect their houses and shops which are isolated structures in this way; and weather bureau experts and other scientists who have investigated the subject declare that a properly constructed lightning rod has a distinct value. It is clear, therefore, that this time-honored institution is not going out of favor except in big cities.

The singular indifference which the lightning seems to manifest toward great centers of population is probably not due to the nonconducting qualities of the brick and stone so largely used there in the construction of buildings. On the other hand, most of the theories advanced to account for the puzzling phenomenon in question assume that, in some way or other, better facilities exist in and near great cities than elsewhere for relieving a thunder cloud of the superabundant electricity and leading the same quietly to the earth. The vast number of chimneys, flagstaffs, spires and other upward projections from the roofs, especially when well wetted, facilitate a silent discharge in innumerable small streams. The complicated network of telegraph and telephone wires reaching through the streets, high in air, has also been credited with disseminating a good deal of electricity during thunderstorms. A third factor in the situation may possibly be found in the steel frames of some of the modern high buildings. Certainly, if the metallic portions of the roof of one of these structures were properly connected with the frame, and if the latter reached down into permanently moist soil, the combination would afford a lightning rod of exceptional efficiency and proportions. Distribute the credit among the various agents as one may, there is evidently a set of conditions existing in large cities which tend to lessen the violence of lightning there, and which appreciably affects the demand for lightning rods.

Listening.

In discussing the art of conversation nearly all the attention is given to what is said. The matter and the manner of our words, the motives which prompt them, the wisdom which chooses them, their probable effects for good or for evil, receive and deserve much scrutiny. Comparatively little notice is taken of the other half of conversation, which consists in listening.

It is usually regarded as a simple passive condition, needing no particular effort, and, therefore, no special consideration. Like a vessel which merely holds the liquid poured into it, the listener is supposed for the time to be only receptive, all his active faculties being reserved for the time when he comes to reply.

The common phrase, "having nothing to do but listen," betrays the small respect paid to the act, and the slight effort it is thought possible to put into it.

Thus it happens that, as no one is systematically taught and trained to listen, we have few really good listeners among us, and, for want of them, much good speaking is absolutely wasted.

For listening is an art, having as many grades and qualities as any other, and, until this is recognized, the value of conversation must be sadly limited.

Interviewing Casey.

A reporter of a New York daily once went to the office of the late General Casey to get some information concerning the Lydecker tunnel story. General Casey looked at the young man rather sternly at first, and the reporter expected but scant detail to follow. "Come in, sir!" he exclaimed, in a tone of almost unpleasant command. The two doors of his office were open. The reporter was standing. The general, without a word, went to one door and closed it with the utmost precision; then he went to the other door and closed it with the same precision. The reporter was in doubt. The two were in the room alone. Coming up to the newspaper man, he pointed his index finger straight at his eye, and said: "Sit down there, young man, and I'll tell you the ——st story you ever heard." And he did.

Fiery Dragons.

In the "Statistical Account of Scotland," published at Edinburgh in 1793, there is an account of the "rare appearance" of fiery dragons, which sailed through the rarified atmosphere of the Scottish highlands in the latter part of November and the first few days of September, 1792. According to the account, they had a "fiery red color" and made their appearance in the north, flying rapidly in an easterly direction. The account adds that "many people regarded the phenomenon with much terror" because it "was indeed a strange and startling sight to behold."

A Vacuum.

A perfect vacuum is a perfect insulator. It is possible to exhaust a tube so perfectly that no electric machine can send a spark through the vacuous space, even when the space is only one centimetre.

Lots of people are afraid of a cyclone who are not afraid of the devil.

THE FARM AND HOME

MATTERS OF INTEREST TO FARMER AND HOUSEWIFE.

Profits from Crops Must Always Include that Which the Soil Gained—Farmers as Lawmakers—Room for Dairy Improvement—Odds and Ends.

Relative Cost of Crops.

Any crop that leaves the soil in good condition will cost less than one which apparently pays better, but which largely draws upon the soil for plant food. Ordinary wheat straw takes more fertility from the soil than potatoes, if compared by weight, because the potato is composed more largely of starch and water. The soil should not be considered as a source of food for plants, but rather as a location for growth, the food for the plants to be provided by the farmer, according to the requirements of the crop.

No crop pays that leaves the soil poorer, unless sold at a price which will eanble to restore the plant food and also receive a fair profit for his time and labor. The soil is the storehouse of the farm on which is stored the raw material for future crops, and the real wealth of a farm is in its soil, as it can be drawn upon in the future for crops that may be in demand. Whether a farmer receives a large return or fails altogether during any year, he has the soil as a savings bank, representing much of that which has been applied to it previously.

Water is a staple article on farms, and is sold more extensively than anything else. Milk contains about 87 per cent. of water, and fruits of all kinds are considered more valuable if water predominates in their composition. Even a grain crop is not free from water, while grass and vegetables are mostly composed of water. Water is therefore the cheapest substance procured by good cultivation (for he obtains more of it by good cultivation than would be the case otherwise), and next to water is carbon. When oil, butter, sugar and starch are produced on the farm the leaves of the trees and plants derive carbon (carbon dioxide) from the air and store it in their cells. When the animals consume plants they convert this carbon into compounds familiar to all, but the cost of which so far as the fertility of the soil is concerned may be very small, and when the soil can be made to do service without loss the gain is correspondingly as great to the farmer as from a sale.

The real cost of crops on nearly all farms is that of labor, but labor is profitable according to the uses to which it is applied, and the labor-saving implements must assist the laborer. If the farmer continues to grow crops for which he knows there will be low prices his labor will be more expensive than with some better crop. Just what that better crop may be depends upon the location of the farm, the markets, the soil and other conditions. There are seasons when some crops pay better than others, as was the case with peaches last year, which gave good results. An acre of onions may be more profitable than five or ten acres of wheat, and yet the cost of the onions may be less than that of the wheat proportionately. A diversity of crops should be the rule, for no farmer can afford to take the risk of depending on a single crop. The cost will be according to the skill and judgment used by the farmer, and the estimate of profits must always include that which the soil has also gained.—Philadelphia Record.

Farmers as Lawmakers.

The present personnel of Congress shows that there is one farmer to six lawyers, and still the farmer wonders why it is so difficult to secure legislation on agricultural matters. While the proportion of representatives in State Legislatures is not quite so much in favor of the lawyers, neither is there as large a proportion in favor of the farmer when the representatives of other occupations are considered. The agricultural interests are quite important factors, and should be more prominently represented. Not that there is need of more laws, for we have a surfeit already, but that those in whose interests the laws are or should be made may have a voice in their construction and enactment. Neither should it be allowed that there are not equally intelligent and able men among the farmers as are to be found in any other vocation.

The lawyer, the manufacturer, the capitalist, all have their different interests, and are supposed to know the needs and requirements of legislation to protect and foster those interests. It is but natural that they should make these interests paramount in their labors as represenatives of those who elect them. They know little of the practical side of agriculture, and cannot be expected to enact laws affecting it with the same wisdom and judgment that those familiar with its practical workings can. Each division of industry and business should be represented by a careful selection of those best fitted to understand and expound its needs. Why, then, should not our agricultural interests be more prominently represented in our State and national legislatures? Then and not till then will those interests be loked after as they should be, and the legislation so much desired and so obviously needed be secured.

Room for Dairy Development.

The dairy industry is woefully neglected in many of our States. Well developed in the North and East, it has long been a notorious fact that many sections well provided by nature with excellent pasturage and capacity for grain raising import from other States most of the butter and cheese consumed. While Ohio makes an even ton of butter for each square mile of land surface, and Iowa, Pennsylvania, York State and Connecticut even more, many of our Southern States turn off an average of less than 200 pounds, and Oregon and Washington only 50 pounds. With proper safeguards around the purity of dairy products, this country ought not only to raise every pound of butter and cheese used, but send abroad millions each year.

Feeding Corn and Beets.

An extensive cattle feeder of Nebraska, who feeds 1,000 acres of corn of his own raising and 100 tons of beets a year, has kept a careful account of his operations for the last ten years. From that record the following facts are given:

For the first nine years the cost per head ranged from $14.09 to $32.39; but in 1893 he began feeding beets and corn which had been cut and cured in the shock and then run through a shredding machine, ear, stalk, blade, all of which is by the machine reduced to the condition of coarse hay. The cost of harvesting, shocking, shredding and feeding is 3 cents per bushel of grain and $1.87 per ton of fodder. The 1,900 acres averaged forty and one-half bushels of corn and a ton and one-half of fodder per acre. The bets (sugar beets) yield thirty to fifty tons per acre counting tops and all, and are fed whole. Both cattle and hogs are fond of them, and it was found that after cutting them the first few days the cattle learn to bite them off as a boy bites an apple. Since adopting this ration the cost of fattening cattle has never exceeded $10 per head. No cholera has ever occurred among hogs folowing the cattle while feeding beets. It is estimated that beet tops from beets used in sugar making are worth an average of $3 per acre for cattle food.—Missouri Agriculturist.

White Clover Seed.

There is no plant which is not an absolute weed that keeps its hold in the soil so pertinaciously as white clover. If it were not so valuable for feed it would become a very bad weed, and, indeed, it is such to strawberry beds, as many growers can testify. White clover propagates not only by seed, but by runners, as the strawberry does. It is one of the surest plants to seed that we have, and the young plants will not be killed by smothering with the larger grass plants, as many weeds will. It often happens when grass is cut late so that it does not start quickly that a mass of white clover will start up and soon show blossoms. This clover was hidden under the grass while the latter was growing, and only began to be noticed when the grass was removed.

Late Hatches of Chickens.

While it is not desirable to set hens late, where they are allowed a wide range some nests will be stolen, and large broods of young chickens may come off as late as September or October. We have had such and made them profitable. The most important thing with late-hatched chickens is to feed them liberally with wheat. This will keep them growing and cause them to feather early. Corn should only be fed after really cold weather makes it necessary. If the young fowls are induced to feather early they will need less corn. The work of feathering exhausts their strength very rapidly, and should be finished before cold weather.

Soil for Lilies.

Soil for the lilium auratum should be rather heavy and lightened with coarse sand and leaf mold, says the Philadelphia Press. The secret of success with the auratum is to have rich soil below the bulb to induce roots to grow below. Rich soil above will feed, but will not cause the bulbs for another season's flowering to form. Bulbs that bloomed last summer, and are to remain out all winter, will decay if they become water-soaked while dormant.

Eggs in a Year.

A hen will furnish, under favorable conditions, at least five or six times her weight in eggs in the course of a year, and sometimes considerably more if properly supplied with the wherewithal; but, as bricks cannot be made without straw, neither can eggs be laid unless their component parts are provided.

Odds and Ends.

If clothespins are boiled a few minutes and quickly dried every few weeks, it will cleanse them and make them more durable.

Figs are aperient and wholesome. They are said to be valuable as food for those suffering from cancer; they are used externally as well as internally.

Tomatoes are a powerful aperient for the liver, a sovereign remedy for dyspepsia and indigestion, and are invaluable in all conditions of the system in which the use of calomel is indicated.

To set the color and prevent delicate colored cambrics and dimities from fading when washed, dissolve 2 cents worth of sugar of lead in a pail of cold water and soak the garments in it two hours; then rinse and wash.

Lime water will sweeten jars and jugs which soap and water fail to cleanse. It is admirable for correcting acidity of the stomach, and for cleansing milk vessels and nursing bottles. A teacupful added to bread sponge will prevent souring.

Biscuit or bread dough once raised with dry yeast will keep in a refrigerator several days if closely covered with an earthen bowl. For breakfast rolls in warm weather it is more hygienic than baking powder, cream or buttermilk biscuit.

The fact that youngsters ruin the appearance of their digits by the exercise which is known as "cracking the joints," is well founded. This habit stretches and weakens the ligaments and so enlarges the joints that the entire hand becomes knotty in consequence.

Currants give an acid richness to cakes and puddings that is very appetizing. A quick way to clean them, after picking out sticks and stones, is to add to every pound about a teacupful of flour, rub thoroughly with the hands and separate them entirely, then rub through a sieve, which will remove most of the stems.

The great annoyance of people who are baking fruit pies comes from the loss of the rich syrup of juicy pies. To prevent this take a strip of muslin one inch wide and long enough to go around the pie, and lap. Wet the cloth in cold water and lay it around the edge, half upon the pie and half upon the plate, pressing it on either side. When the pie is taken from the oven remove the cloth. This will be found a success.

There is no better tonic than seasonable and wholesome food. When appetite flags, and the system weakens from excessive labor and oppressive heat, nutritive (but easily digested) food is required. Heavy dishes, containing animal fat or irritating condiments, like suet puddings, lard pastry, etc., or rich meats—pork, beef and mutton—may be eaten with impunity when snow is flying, but not when the thermometer is in the eighties.

He Was an Absent-Minded Man.

Adam Smith, the great Scottish thinker, who flourished in the eighteenth century, often suffered from absence of mind, of which Mr. John Rae gives several amusing instances in his admirable "Life" of the philosopher. Once, while showing a visitor over the tannery in Glasgow, one of the sights of the city, he walked into the tanpit. On another occasion, during talk over the tea table, he put some bread and butter into the teapot, poured hot water over it, and then complained of the tea that it was the worst he ever tasted. At another tea-party he walked up and down the room, helping himself every now and then to a lump of sugar, until the hostess was forced to place the basin in her lap out of his reach. One Sunday morning he strolled into the garden in his dressing-gown, opened the gate, and, deep in thought, walked four miles along a road, being only recalled to his senses by the ringing of the bells summoning folk to church.

If a man has the dyspepsia the way to his heart is not through his stomach.