

Democratic Watchman

Bellefonte, Pa., Sept. 21, 1894.

PRACTICING.

Ten little troublesome fingers,
Ten little finger-mis-
Pattering on the piano,
Scattering over the scales,
Clicking and clacking and clattering,
Each in the other one's way—
What trying and sighing and crying
To teach little children to play!

To play? I call it working,
When ten little fingers like mine
Are bumping and clumping and thumping,
And never fall into line.
They tumble and tumble and stumble,
They trip and they skip and they hop,
And just when the music is gayest
They come to an obstinate stop.

Do you think that mamma's pretty fingers
That sparkle and dance on the keys
While the music is rippling below them,
Were ever as clumsy as these?
I would rather—I would rather practice,
How patiently—day after day,
If I thought that my practice and patience
Would end in such beautiful play.

A Night of Terror.

Terrible Experience of Argonauts.

In these days of forest and prairie fires, involving heavy losses of life and property, an experience of my own may be of some interest. In 1848 a company of emigrants, numbering nearly 100, left Independence, Mo., for the Sonoma Valley, Cal. At the end of the fifth day's journey we encamped in a grove of 200 or 300 acres, in the midst of a plain apparently limitless in extent. On every side it stretched beyond the range of vision—a sea of waving grass, interspersed with flowers of every color. The month was August or September.

The season had been very dry, and the earth was cracked and parched. Vegetation was beginning to fall. The effect of the drought, especially the short, or buffalo, grass which carpeted the ground. The trees in the grove looked brown and sore. They had a brassy appearance. We did not realize all these things at once, and to our Eastern eyes the panorama spread out before us was one of great grandeur.

The wagons were arranged in the form of a hollow square as a protection against night prowlers. Supper was prepared and eaten, arms looked after, sentries stationed, and all who were off duty gathered around the Captain's tent to talk over the events of the day and plan for the future.

We had engaged a scout at Independence as guide and hunter during the journey. His name was James Fletcher. He was six feet in height, spare and sinewy as an Indian, a brave man and a dead shot. He achieved distinction as a member of Berdan's corps of sharpshooters during the Civil War.

WOLVES GAVE THE WARNING.
About 11 o'clock we all, except the sentries and the scout, turned in for a few hours' sleep, for we were to be up and ready to march by daybreak. When we closed our eyes and sleep fell upon us there were no indications of anything unusual. The silence was profound, except when broken by the movements of the horses or the occasional howling of prairie wolves.

Fletcher, our scout, sleepless and restless after the manner of his tribe, remained up, taking frequent strolls around the stockade of wagons, and making observations of the environment of the camp. Without knowing why he had a presentiment of coming evil. There was a glow on the horizon that he did not like. Wolves appeared in increasing numbers, moving in an easterly direction. Flocks of plover and other birds of the plains flew past with unwonted cries. To Fletcher's trained mind and eye the occurrence foreboded evil. He thought of fire, but apprehended no danger from that source. He knew there was a fire eight or ten miles away, to the west, and he believed it would be an effectual barrier to a conflagration coming from that direction. He knew there was no fire on our side of the stream.

Puzzled by the movement of animals and birds, and keen, as always, for adventures, he saddled his horse and galloped in the direction of the horizon. He rode rapidly for an hour, which brought him to the river. It traversed a valley several miles in width, which sloped toward the west. The bank on our side was 15 to 20 feet higher than on the opposite side. Rising like a wall it shut out the view from the westerly side of the stream.

Dismissing my standing on a little knoll, or Indian grave, he looked upon a remarkable scene. For miles beyond the river the plain was a mass of flame, gathering force and volume as it swept forward, and consuming everything in its course. This was the cause of the glowing tint we had observed on the horizon. He was not alarmed, for he still thought the river would check the progress of the flames.

MAGNIFICENT, BUT AWFUL.
For half an hour he stood motionless, watching the magnificent spectacle. Rapidly the fire ate its way toward the river. At a narrow place a tuft of burning grass was caught up by the whirlwind of flame and wafted over the stream. He knew in an instant what this meant. The camp was in danger and we would have to fight for our lives.

Putting spurs to his horse he began a ride for the camp as heroic as that of Sheridan from Winchester. His horse was wary and active, and he did not spare him. His feeling can be better imagined than described, as he spread along under the silent stars, with death in his wake. His object was to reach the camp long enough in advance of the fire to enable us to take measure for our safety.

Rushing through the stockade of wagons without drawing rein, Fletcher discharged his pistol and shouted: "The prairie is on fire! The flames have crossed the river! The camp is in danger!" Every member of the party was up in an instant. There was no panic. Even the women were cool and collected. We were always on the lookout for danger, and were in a manner prepared for it. A hurried council was held to devise measures for our safety. None of us knew

Southern Development.

Some of our Northern exchanges are prophesying a movement of the native population from the colder regions of the North to the milder climate and the cheap lands of the South. The *Pittsburg Commercial Gazette* says: "It would not be at all surprising should the first general movement towards the Southern States come from men residing in the Northern sections rather than from foreign lands. The favorable condition of the crops throughout the greater portion of the South compared with the very unfavorable situation in many sections of the North and West, is calculated to arrest the serious attention of farmers and fruit-growers. There are hundreds of families who have given up in despair and are now leaving drought-stricken regions for more desirable quarters, and many of these intend to go South. The era of land speculation is about at an end in the west. The best agricultural areas have been occupied, prices are too high for those of limited means who are seeking for homesteads, and the low prices of corn, wheat and other staples of the great prairies indicate the necessity not only of a change of situation, but of a greater diversity of production."

A TORNADO OF FLAME.
These preparations had hardly been completed when the fire burst upon us. It came sweeping over the plain in great billows. It struck us fair and square. All at once we were enveloped in flame. We had done all we could and silently awaited the result. The heat was intense and the smoke stifling. We saw that the wet bedding and clothing on the wagons was holding back the fire in that direction. Five minutes of intense anxiety ensued. Then the sea of flame parted and swept forward on either side with a roar like that of a tornado.

We then looked after results. Two small children had been smothered by the smoke and heat. Three men, who had sought safety by climbing trees, contrary to orders, were found burned to a crisp. The flames had enveloped every tree in the grove from top to bottom. All of our bedding had been consumed, and the wagons were badly scorched. Fletcher kept watch over the animals and when the flames parted he drove them into the inclosure from the rear. Three horses and several cows, straying off, perished.

Next morning we dug a grave near the foot of a large walnut tree, in which we deposited our dead, mended our wagons the best we could, and with no bedding and little clothing resumed our journey with heavy hearts. The five bodies were afterward exhumed and taken to Sonoma for interment.

The awfulness of prairie and forest fires cannot be realized by those who have never witnessed them. People in the Northwest who are passing through this terrible experience, the worst probably in the history of the country, are deserving of the active sympathies of the American people.

HERMAN HARTER.

Mark Twain's Apology.

Urge by His Wife He Proceed to Mrs. Stowe That He Had a Collier.

This story about Mark Twain was told by a Hartford man to a Washington *Star* reporter the other night. It may not be entirely new to every one, but even if it isn't, it is good enough to bear repetition.

One beautiful summer morning a few years ago, Mark wandered out before breakfast, unconventionally attired in a smoking jacket and slippers and adorned with either collar or necktie. The humorist is proverbially careless as to his dress, and if it were not for his faithful wife would be as likely as most to appear in public in this garb most of the time.

A few doors from Mr. Clemens's house lives the aged authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." On this particular morning as Mark strolled by Mrs. Stowe's residence, he espied the old lady seated upon the veranda. He pushed open the gate, walked in and made a very enjoyable quarter of an hour's call. Then he lounged back to breakfast.

During the progress of the meal he casually alluded to his call upon Mrs. Stowe.

"You don't mean to say that you went into Mrs. Stowe's house in that condition, do you?" ejaculated his despairing wife.

"What condition?" asked Mark blankly.

"Why, without any collar or necktie. What will Mrs. Stowe think of you? You'll have to go over and apologize to her just as soon as you can make yourself presentable."

"All right, my dear," said the crestfallen humorist, meekly, "but I don't think she noticed anything out of the way. She didn't speak of it."

A few moments later, breakfast having been finished, Mark disappeared in the direction of the dressing room, and shortly afterward despatched one of his children upon some mysterious errand in which a small parcel played a part.

The child presently returned bearing a note, which Mark, after reading, carried in triumph to his wife.

"It's all right, my dear," he said, referring to the note. "Mrs. Stowe says she is always glad to see me, even without the customary neck-wear, and begs me to mention the circumstances."

"What have you done now?" queried Mrs. Clemens in a tone of hopeless resignation.

"Why," drawled out the humorist, "I sent my collar and necktie over to Mrs. Stowe, so that she would know that I really owned them. You may rest assured now, my dear, that it's all right. She is satisfied, I am sure, that I do have collars and neckties about the house somewhere."

Mountain Streams Drying Up.

The Continued Drought in the Up River Districts Causing Much Apprehension.

The continued drought in the up river country is causing low water in all the streams tributary to the Susquehanna. The *DuBois Courier* says at Driftwood, where rafts, arks and millions of feet of logs have floated by every year for more than a quarter of a century, and where Ohio steamboats could navigate a part of each year, Bennett's Branch does not afford as much water as a good strong mountain trout brook.

Hix run, Mix run, Dent's run, Trout run, Medix run, Laurel run, Kersey run, Wilson run and Mountain run, tributaries of the first magnitude, down which great quantities of lumber have been floated every year, have not water enough combined to prevent the dissolution of the Prohibition party. The smaller branches, with a few exceptions, have entirely disappeared. Johnson's run, a good, strong stream five miles east of Benzette, from which many fine strings of trout have been taken, even up to the last season, and some of them by DuBois fishermen, can only be located by its dry bed. Stones, sand and gravel are the only articles visible in the channel. Wainright, at Grant station, which once drove a large saw mill, and the Lixfield run, at Penfield are the same, and Cherry run, Mill run and Barcamp are all about the same. The combined length of the main stream and the tributaries named is about 170 miles, all west of Driftwood, and all of that country is suffering as never before since the valley was settled by the white men at the beginning of the present century.

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Central Railroad Guide.

CENTRAL RAILROAD OF PENNSYLVANIA. Condensed Time Table.

READ DOWN		READ UP	
No. 1	No. 2	No. 1	No. 2
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2:30	3:15	2:30	3:15
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