Democratic Watchman.

Bellefonte, Pa., March 9. 1900.

Starting a Joke.

Queer Way In Which the Green Goods Game Originated.

"Did you ever hear how the green goods game originated? But of course you did not, for not over a half dozen men ever knew," said an old time sport. "The beginning of the game was due to accident and the freak of a man on a spree. Once originated, however, it was the most remarkable swindle in criminal annals. For a long time there was no law against it, for of course there was no attempt at counterfeiting.

"Along about 1872 down on Houston street, east of Broadway, Matt Grace, a professional wrestler and leader of a tough crowd, ran a saloon, a dingy, cheerless place, with sawdust on the floor an inch thick, one of the kind consistent with the neighborhood, which was then known as Murderers' row. It was the center of crime of this great city. Barney McGuire, whose photograph is in the rogues' gallery, was then at the head of a lot of swindling games. He used to hang out at Grace's place. Another of the gang was Big Red, a pugilist, but a good natured sort of a fellow, burly and bluff. They ran things in their neighborhood, and many a countryman was run into the place, passed his good coin over the bar and woke up in the morning with a pocketful of counterfeits. Grace's wasn't the only place of the kind either, and the secret service men had their eyes on the row and knew all the men in the gangs. But knowing and proving are two different things, and the secret service officers were constantly engaged in trying to secure evidence against the men.

"Living in that neighborhood was Joe Hennessy, who was then boss of the Plasterers' union and was given to occasional jags, when he would frequent Matt Grace's place, although he was a thoroughly honest man and when sober kept away from the crooks who used to frequent Murderers' row. He knew them all, however, and was safe among them when drunk, which was not often the case. Because of this he was unknown to the secret service men, of whom Colonel Whitley was chief, with headquarters at 56 Bleecker street, near Crosby.

"Colonel Whitley one day decided to see if he couldn't trap the counterfeiters who hung out at Grace's. So he had one of his men make up as a countryman and go around at night. It happened that Colonel Whitley's plan was put into execution at the time when Hennessy was enjoying one of his infrequent jags in Matt's place, and he was the one whom the disguised detective first saw when he entered and whom he took up with, as he could do easily enough, for Joe was in his usual good humor.

"They had a few drinks, and by and by the pseudo farmer said to Joe, 'I'll give you $2 if you'll get me $100 in counterfeit.' Joe was mad at first to be taken for one who would deal in fairy money, but after a little thought he decided to have a joke on the supposed farmer.

"So he said: 'All right. I can't get it tonight, but you meet me here tomorrow morning. I'll have it ready for you.' Then they separated, the farmer going out. Joe told the gang what had happened and invited them all to be on hand when he fooled the guy. Then he went to work to prepare to fool him.

"Hennessy got two $1 bills and a lot of paper as near to the texture of bank note paper as he could, cut it into sheets the exact size of a $1 bill, bound 98 of them together with a dollar bill on the bottom and another on the top. He stained the edges of the bundle with green ink and was ready.

"The supposed farmer got around at the appointed time, and all of the gang were on hand when he came in. He soon got away in a corner at a table with Hennessy and asked him if he had the fairy money with him. 'Yes,' said Joe, 'but all these fellows are sort of looking at us, so I'll have to pass it to you under the table. Where's your $2?' The $2 was pushed to him over the top of the table, and Joe passed the supposed counterfeit money under it. The detective looked at the package, saw the top bill, jumped up and, pulling off his disguise, arrested Joe.

"The whole party accompanied the sleuth and Joe to Colonel Whitley's headquarters, where Joe wanted to know what he had been arrested for.

"'For dealing in counterfeit money,' replied Colonel Whitley.

"'There's nothing false about that money,' said Joe. 'Just examine that package, and you'll find two $1 bills and a lot of worthless, green stained paper, which cost me nothing, and for it all I got $2. No one has lost or made a cent. I thought to play a harmless joke on a dishonest countryman.'

"Colonel Whitley let Joe go, of course, but McGuire and his cronies got together, with a big idea in their brains. 'Here,' said they, 'we have been dealing in counterfeit money, which is against the law, and we are liable to arrest if it is found in our possession. We have to show it to our come ons. Now, why not show them real money and let them test it? We'll tell them it's counterfeit and that not even an expert could tell it from the genuine. Then when they buy it we'll do it up in packages and put it in a satchel while the come on is looking, have another satchel just like it with packages of green paper with a $1 bill on top and change satchels going through a passage or in some other way.'

"That's what they did, and that is how the green goods game of the present day originated, from the joke of an honest man, innocent of any intent to do wrong, and its possibilities revealed to counterfeiters by a secret service man. Of course, it was developed and enlarged subsequently, and for years there was no law by which operators could be punished. They did no counterfeiting. If they cheated any one, it was a person who had tried to buy counterfeit money, and there was no provision to punish them for failing to deliver dishonest goods to a dishonest man. The police were in on the scheme and protected it. They got hundreds of thousands of dollars of hush money, and the men who ran the game fared equally well. Eventually the present federal laws providing punishment for use of the mails with intent to defraud were passed, but it's hard to detect green goods correspondence, and so long as there are dishonesty and ignorance in the land the game will flourish."—New York Sun.

Tidal Waves.

What of the tidal wave, that mysterious, indispensable swelling of the waters that, following the "pull" of the moon, rolls round this globe of ours twice in each 24 hours, stemming the outflow of mighty rivers, penetrating far inland wherever access is available and doing within its short lease of life an amount of beneficent work freely that would beggar the wealthiest monarchy of the world to undertake if it must needs be paid for? Mysterious it may well be called, since, though its passage from zone to zone be so swift, it is like all other waves, but an undulatory movement of that portion of the sea momentarily influenced by the suasion of the planet—not, as is vulgarly supposed, the same mass of water vehemently carried onward for thousands of miles.

To meet a tidal wave at sea is in some parts of the world a grim and unforgetable experience. Floating upon the shining blue plain, with an indolent swelling of the surface, just giving a cozy roll to your ship now and then, you suddenly see in the distance a ridge, a knoll of water that advances, vast, silent, menacing. Nearer and nearer it comes, rearing its apparently endless curve higher and higher. There is no place to flee from before its face. Neither is there much suspense, for its pace is swift, although it appears so deliberate, from the illimitable grandeur of its extent. It is upon the ship. She behaves in accordance with the way she has been caught and her innate peculiarities. In any case, whatever her bulk, she is hurled forward, upward, backward, downward, as if never again could she regain an even keel, while her crew cling desperately to whatever holding place they may have reached.

Some will have it that these marvelous upliftings of the sea bosom are not tidal waves at all—that they do not belong to the normal ebb and flow of the ocean that owns the sway of the moon; if so, they would be met with more frequently than they are at sea, and far more disasters would be placed to their account. This contention seems reasonable, because it is well known that lonely islets, such as St. Helena, Tristan d'Acunha and Ascencion are visited at irregular intervals by a succession of appalling waves (rollers) that deal havoc among the smaller shipping and look as if they would overwhelm the land. The suggestion is that these stupendous waves are due to cosmic disturbance, to submarine earthquakes upheaving the ocean bed and causing so vast a displacement of the ocean that its undulations extend for several thousands of miles. — London Spectator.

Rushing Into the Grave.

"Why will elderly and especially portly persons who have suspected cardiac disarrangements persist, in spite of the numerous examples of sudden death that are recorded almost daily in the papers, in actually rushing themselves into the grave?" said a well known physician. "Surgeon General Hammond died after a hurried run up stairs, and Herbert Spencer, though warned by his physicians that death would follow any undue exercise, persisted in an effort to vault a stile, which he finally did, only to expire from heart disease a few hours later. He might have lived many years.

"I cannot understand why men and women of all ages and degrees of health will race after street cars as though their lives depended upon catching a particular car when it is common knowledge that the cars are run on a leeway of from one to three minutes. It is the same impelling reason, I presume, that will cause a man who is being carried past his station to leap from the moving electric or steam car to certain injury or death.

"In running the body is entirely thrown from the ground for an instant with each step, and it is the most violent of exercises. The heart and lungs are suddenly called upon to respond to the unusual and violent strain, and hemorrhage from the latter and rupture of the valves of the former often follow. The heart is a tough muscle, but it has its limits. The body, after all, is like a cable—as strong as its weakest part.

"This is well exemplified in autopsies upon the bodies of athletes. In many cases of perfect muscular development the lungs, heart or kidneys have been found so diseased that had not death resulted from other causes this diseased condition would soon have produced it.

"In portly persons, in addition to the pressure of tight clothes, especially stays, fat fills up the thorax, crowds the lungs and heart and interferes with their natural functions. Undue exertion causes 'shortness of breath' or a 'queer feeling' in the region of the heart. This is nature's warning, when she condescends to give any at all, to go slow or else stop in at the undertaker's on the way and arrange for the funeral."—Washington Star.

Queer Auctions.

A Dutch auction at Cape Town is frequently exciting. If a house is to be sold, the auctioneer offers "50 golden sovereigns for the man who first bids £5,000." Nobody bids. A pause, and then "Fifty golden sovereigns for the man who first bids £4,900."

This is kept up until a bid is secured. But it by no means follows that the house is sold to this bidder. No, the auctioneer is then at it again. Say that £4,400 is the first bid. The auctioneer cries:

"There are 25 golden sovereigns for the first man who has the courage to bid £4,600." Perhaps no one has it. Then £25 is offered for a £4,550 bid. If there is eventually no bid above the £4,400, the man who made that bid is saddled with the house. Otherwise he pockets his bonus and gets off free of it all.

The Only Way.

Two tramps were discussing as to how they might earn a living. The discussion became heated, and one turned to the other exclaiming:

"The only thing you are fit for is for me to lead you around the streets as a performing monkey tied to a string."

"But," said the other quietly, "you would want another man."

"Why?" said the first.

"To point out which end of the string the monkey was."—Buffalo Commercial.

Currants, as most people are aware, come from Corinth. They are a variety of the grape family. The currants grown in America come from north Europe, Canada and England.

In China the members of a man's family are held responsible for his debts.

Identifying Signatures.

The general opinion is that it is an easy matter to identify a signature, and there are few people who would not say with positiveness that they could identify their own signatures under almost any conditions. A discussion by some lawyers the other day makes it appear that a person cannot at all times be sure of his signature, because of the nicety to which the forger has brought his art.

One of the lawyers said that no man could safely go upon the witness stand and swear that a signature shown him was his signature. He claimed that in the identification of a signature a person was largely influenced in his decision by the quality of the paper upon which the signature was written and by what preceded or followed the signature. If the name was written on a blank piece of paper, like that in common use, the lawyer claimed that a witness could not swear with any degree of positiveness that the signature was or was not his own.

In support of his argument the lawyer said that handwriting experts claim that no person can write his name twice exactly alike, and that in any litigation where signatures are in dispute and two signatures appear that are exactly alike, the experts will pronounce one of them a forgery. It may be true that in general conformation two signatures may be alike, but in saying that no two signatures were ever made alike, the experts mean that the loops of the letters and the distances between them will not be the same, distinctions which can be determined only by a system of close measurements. In support of this theory the experts take the case of a farmer who is in the habit of going from his house to his barn at about the usual time every morning. They say that not once in a hundred times will he walk in exactly the same tracks.

Another lawyer told of an experience he had in the trial of a case in Tolland county 25 or 30 years ago. A note was in contest, and a question was raised as to the genuineness of the signature. George P. Bissell was called as a handwriting expert. He testified that the signature on the note was a genuine signature. For the purpose of testing his ability as a handwriting expert while on the witness stand he was given a piece of paper and asked to write his name three times. A blank space was left between the signatures. Mr. Bissell did not know for what purpose he was asked to write his name, and after the paper had been handed to the lawyer who examined him it was given by the lawyer to an expert with the pen. The expert wrote the name of Mr. Bissell on the paper three times, and after this was done Mr. Bissell was recalled to the witness stand, and the paper containing the six signatures was handed to him. He was asked to point out the signatures that he had written. He endeavored to do so, but not one of the signatures he picked out as having been written by himself was his writing. The three selected were written by the pen expert.

Reference was made during the conversation to a trial which occurred in Washington, where a will was in contest. Several experts on handwriting who testified at the trial claimed that the will was in the handwriting of the testator. It was proved, however, that the entire will had been traced. One of the relatives of the deceased had found many of the letters of the deceased. Words to put into the will were taken from the different letters and by a chemical process reproduced in the document which made the will. John Sherman's name was signed as one of the witnesses of the will, and it was also proved that the signature had been taken from a signature which Mr. Sherman had placed to an article in General Grant's "Memoirs of the War."

The conclusion which the lawyers came to when the discussion ended was that it is not such an easy matter to identify signatures as many people imagine.—Hartford Courant.

Kauri Gum.

New Zealand is a country rich in the great variety of its forest trees—most of them useful, all beautiful, but none to compare with kauri pine either for stately beauty or commercial value. This noble tree attains a height of nearly 200 feet and a diameter of 15 or more. Its stem, or barrel, as the bushmen call it, rises from 30 to 70 feet without knot or limb and then branches into an even head of dark green foliage. At the place where it forks the stem is almost the same in circumference as it is six feet from the ground, and as it has a bark colored in various shades of red or brown it gives one the impression of a beautiful pillar at the entrance to some woodland temple.

Every tree is surrounded by a mound of fibrous soil consisting of decayed leaves, bark, etc., the accumulation of centuries, for the kauri is extremely slow in its growth. These mounds rise from two to six feet in height, according to the age of the tree. But the most remarkable thing about the kauri is the quantity of resinous gum which is shed from every part of it. This gum hardens rapidly on exposure to the air, eventually becoming clear and almost transparent.—Longman's.

Like a Miracle.

A writer says: "I happen to know a case which illustrates forcibly how easy an accident might have affected the whole course of history. A few engineers, of whom Sir Bevans Edwards is the only survivor, composed the party which blew up the docks at Sevastopol. There was a shaft 30 feet deep, with a gallery running horizontally from it.

"At the bottom of this shaft, just inside the gallery, stood one Gordon, afterward of China and Khartum, with a lighted candle in his hand. The powder was lowered in flour barrels, and one of these slipped from the slings, fell to the bottom of the shaft and broke up, so that Gordon was left standing up to his knees in gunpowder with a lighted candle in his hand.

"That there was no premature explosion was a miracle, and if that miracle had not been worked the odds are that a different dynasty would be ruling in China and that Lord Kitchener would never have had the opportunity of making his famous march to Khartum."

Mother's Last Words.

Sunday School Teacher—Come now, Arthur, surely you can tell me what a benediction is. What is the last thing your mother asks when she goes to bed at night?

Arthur—She asts pa if he is sure he locked all the doors and windows down stairs and put the cat out.—Chicago Times-Herald.

——Subcribe for the WATCHMAN.

Country of Still Walkers.

Some 20 years ago you might have seen at Bordeaux on market days strange crowds of villagers arriving on stilts from distant hamlets heavy laden with sacks and baskets, but now the sight would cause almost as much sensation there as it might in one of our own towns. The only stilt walkers that I have ever seen in Bordeaux were great manikins prancing about among the crowd on gigantic stilts at the autumn fair, to the joy of small children, but these were merely professional acrobats.

Near Lake Cazaux, however, where much of the land is yet unreclaimed and marshy, the peasants cling to this mode of locomotion, and we may still see the shepherd guarding his flock on stilts.

In the neighborhood of Arcachon there are stilts to be found in the cottages, and small boys, with the prospect of a few sous to be gained, will buckle them on and perform various tricks for your edification. There is some difficulty about putting on the stilts, and they will not be hurried over it. The shepherd starting from home will often mount on the window sill for the purpose. In the fields, he sits on the ground to tie them on and then rises with the help of a long stick.

The landes of Gascony, once endless plains covered with brushwood and undergrowth, were blessed with a soil so impenetrable that it never absorbed the rain, and even after a slight shower the hollows would be transformed into marshes. There were no roads or sheep paths of any kind, and the cottages of the shepherds and small farmers were dotted about so far from each other in the swamps that the "long legs" were an absolute necessity.

Now the landes, for centuries regarded as a hopeless waste, unprofitable and unhealthy, have been for the most part reclaimed and drained. Forests of pines have been planted, and, instead of being unhealthy, some parts of the district, such as Arcachon, have even become health resorts. Thus the strange old stilts are fast vanishing, for they have lost their raison d'etre. The stilts are usually about six or seven feet in height, and about five feet from the ground there is a rest to support the foot, provided with a stirrup and a strong strap. Higher up a band of leather holds the top of the stilt firmly to the leg below the knee.

Some stilts are much higher than these, especially for fancy walking and tricks, and the man mounted on them is gifted with veritable seven leagued boots, for he can cover the ground at a truly prodigious pace—often as much as eight or ten miles an hour. The lower end of the stilt, which touches the ground, is usually capped with a sheep bone to strengthen it.—Pearson's Magazine.

Their Little Weaknesses.

"Nations and women are a good deal alike."

"In what way?"

"Well, when one woman gets a new hat her neighbor wants to go right away and get a better one, and when one nation builds a new warship all the others start right out to get bigger ones."