

W. C. T. U. Activities in Bellefonte and Centre County.

A well-attended and interesting meeting of the executive committee of the Centre county W. C. T. U. was held in Bellefonte recently at which gathering it was decided to hold this year's annual convention at Howard on Wednesday and Thursday, September 17th and 18th.

In the discussion of legislative candidates John L. Holmes was favorably considered. A committee was appointed to interview Mr. W. H. Noll Jr., the Democratic candidate, as to his position on the wet and dry issue, the result to be given publicity as was done in the case of Mr. Holmes.

During the meeting the president of the county Union, Miss Rebecca N. Rhoads, made the announcement that her time will be necessarily much occupied during the summer with her national W. C. T. U. work as superintendent of the soldiers' and sailors' department.

Mention was made of the Bellefonte W. C. T. U.'s generous support of the hospital. For years this Union has maintained their room in the institution but this year entered, besides, into the special drive for funds to "Help Centre's Sick."

Prize essay contests, as usual, have been held in the public schools of the county and the Bellefonte Academy and High school. Announcement of the prizes awarded for these will appear in the county papers after commencement.

The State College W. C. T. U. reports a great increase in membership and general interest. Bellefonte, Phillipsburg, Rebersburg, Centre Hall and other Unions throughout the county also show gratifying progress.

The first night of the county W. C. T. U. convention at Howard in September is to be young people's night, at which time a gold medal contest by the L. T. L.'s will be held and a playlet given by the Centre Hall Y. P. B. Much interest in the soldiers and sailors department is manifest throughout the county—a number of afghans and sunshine bags having been made by Centre county Unions and sent to the disabled world war veterans, and many more are being made.

James Crider and Edward Brophy, the two Lawrence county prisoners who escaped from the Rockview penitentiary on Wednesday evening of last week and were caught near Snow Shoe intersection at two o'clock Thursday morning, were given the usual sentence by Judge Quigley on Saturday morning and the same afternoon were taken back to the Pittsburgh institution by sheriff E. R. Taylor. They will now have two years or more in which to meditate upon the foolishness of trying to evade just punishment for the crimes they committed.

—Subscribe for the "Watchman."

Old Times in Bellefonte. The Rope Walk and the Footless Boy.

In response to our request that he write for the "Watchman" some details of the recollections he has of Bellefonte, when he lived here seventy-six years ago, Mr. C. H. Starkey, of Santa Fe, New Mexico, has forwarded the following very interesting contribution:

Santa Fe, New Mexico, May 15th, 1924. Editor "Democratic Watchman," Bellefonte, Pa. Dear Sir.

I send you, herewith, a few little scraps, from the recollections of days long gone by, that may be of interest to your readers of these days, who, some of them at least, may be able to recall names and scenes that have long been forgotten. As I said, in a former letter, the recollections of the old town lie before me like a great map or an airplane picture.

My brother and myself were fairly well trained as singers, having taken a course of lessons under a Mr. Basset, in the basement of the Presbyterian church. We would get Ed Keene and Abbie Stone to go with us, some pleasant evenings, when the streets would have a few strollers, wandering for pleasure and a pleasant chat, and taking our stand back a little, under the portico, would sing the then popular negro minstrel songs such as "Dolce Jones," "Old Virginia," "Suane River," "Sail on Silver Moon," etc.

Looking at the court house reminds me of a little joke a few of the fun-loving young men of the town played on the public, to raise money to help some of the poor, or one at least, of the poor. They engaged the building for a "Grand Concert," one night to raise money for the benefit of a poor, unfortunate, who was, fortunately, possessed of a good voice and would sing some of the popular songs of the day.

"If you want any more Just sing it yourself."

Then he stepped behind the curtain, and through a window into the alley, and went home. The audience waited patiently for a time, then, realizing that they had been very neatly "sold" "for the benefit of the poor," retired to their homes, saying nothing.

About 1848 or 1850 when the little dwarf, Tom Thumb, just became known his manager brought him to Bellefonte and gave an exhibition at the court house. Tom was a curiosity in those days. He was full grown, but only twenty-eight inches high. He had, on the platform, among other things, a little settee, not more than two feet long, with the seat about five inches above the floor.

There was another little girl about Ella's size who attracted the attention of the younger element, for a time; her name was Ada Carpenter. She was the youngest child of Abe Carpenter, and had a brother Charley, at that time about eighteen or twenty years of age. The mother was quite a large, rather portly woman, rather commanding in appearance. Ada was my own particular playmate. We made many mud pies for each other.

I wish I could remember the name of the gentleman who was a building contractor in the town. He built the large addition on the south end of the Arcade. He was known as "Peaches and Cream," because he would never allow anything to ruffle his temper. "Peaches and Cream" would smooth and sweeten the way out of any difficulty.

The "Nigger Town" mentioned in a former letter was located at the foot of the Big Hill at the east end of Bishop street. The houses all on the south side of the street. The other side was a cow pasture. The inhabitants of "Nigger Town" were all runaway slaves, from the South. There were three prominent characters among them. One of them was a rather tall, fine, gentlemanly looking fellow, not too dark, well liked by all who knew him. One day a couple of young men drove into town in a double seated carriage, with a rather fine pair of horses. They put up at a hotel and in due time it became known that they were looking up a location for business in the surrounding country, or in the town.

Another of the prominent characters was John Gance. A big, stout, burly fellow, as ugly as he was big and had a wife who was a fair mate for him. One Sunday John got on a "tare." He was ugly and the only one who could do anything with him was his wife. John started down town. His wife followed him trying to induce him to go home. Just about the corner of Bishop and Allegheny streets, close to the Bond Valentine residence (now the Brant House), they got into a wrangle and John knocked his wife down and proceeded to give her a sound drubbing. She yelled, of course, and John swore. Bond Valentine opened a window of his home and cried for some one to separate and arrest the parties. Very soon my father, who was a constable, at that time, with three or four other big, stout men, separated the contestants and proceeded to take John to jail; four men carrying him and one old gentleman who had been constable before my father was elected, walking along by the side of the brute would kick him, and swear at him, "kick your wife will you!" "kick—kill your wife will you!" In the mean time John swore that whenever he got out again he would "burn the d—d town," especially the constable's residence. He was lodged in jail all night. His wife had been quite severely injured having pieces bitten out of her neck and considerably injured otherwise. John was in safe keeping in jail, but the question among the authorities was—"What shall we do with that Nigger?"

One day the jailer accidentally forgot to lock the rear door of the jail. He was very necessarily absent from duty. John saw the open door, he saw a place where he could get over the jail wall; the jailer got back just in time to see John climb for liberty. The alarm was given and men started after the convict. "Halt! Halt! Halt!" but John wouldn't halt! He made for the tall timber and the mountains north-east of town. Bellefonte never saw John Gance again.

The other character was "Rache" Boston, one of the best wash women of the town. A big, stout, hearty woman the equal of any of the street in strength and as good natured as she was big. She was a whole washing machine, wringer and all.

You are wondering about the "footless boy" and the "Rope Walk." The walk was up near the Pine Woods and Quaker graveyard. I do not remember who the proprietor was, but I remember that ropes like clothes line rope was made there. The footless boy worked there after his misfortune. The boy was the son of a moulder who worked in a foundry somewhere near the Ingraham Ax factory. His misfortune came about through fear of punishment. A very cold time in the winter, perhaps about 1848, the boy was sent from his home near the Rope Walk to carry dinner to his father; in crossing the creek, on the ice, he broke through and in some way spoiled his father's dinner. Knowing that he would be severely punished if he went home, he went to a barn, near his home climbed up into the loft and buried himself in the straw. He was not found for some days but when found his feet were frozen so badly that there was no hope of saving them; they were amputated, and when warmer weather came he was well enough to be an assistant on the Walk. What became of the boy after that I do not know. Perhaps some of the parties who knew some things about the Starkey's can give you information on that line.

C. H. STARKEY.

By way of explanation for younger readers of the above the east end of Bishop street, in those days, was the square between Penn and Ridge streets. The Bishop street hill was much steeper then than now as it had not been graded and filled as it is today.—Ed.

ANOTHER VOICE FROM THE PAST.

From D. M. Kerlin, of Rudd, Iowa, comes another side-light on the old days. He writes: "I have read the "Watchman" for about sixty-four years and still think I can't keep house without it.

"In your account of old business places, published several weeks ago, you left out the most important one, to my way of thinking. I mean the Harvey McClure harness shop, just around the corner on Bishop street, off Allegheny. On the door, in large letters was "Republican Headquarters." And, what arguments were carried on in there from 1860 to 1865. They talked rough about Democrats in those days and some of us fairly dreaded to pass the place where a Democrat was anathema.

"I like Levi A. Miller's reminiscence of the good old boyhood days and have in my possession a copy of E. Uffington Valentine's "Hecla Sandwith," which I get out often and re-read when I want to be carried back to familiar scenes and faces of my boyhood days.

Finds Song of English Cicada Very Pleasing

If the insects named as our best are rare and local, or at all events not common, what shall we say of our cicada? Can we call him a singer at all? or if he be not silent, as some think, will he ever be more to us than a figure and descriptive passage in a book—a mere cicada of the mind? He is the most local, or has the most limited range, of all, being seldom found out of the New Forest district. He was discovered there about seventy years ago, and Curtis, who gave him the proud name of Cicada anglica, expressed the opinion that he had no song.

At all events, I can say that unless we have some orthopterous insect, of a species unknown to me, which sings in trees, then our cicada does sing, and I have heard it. The sound which I heard, and which was new to me, came from the upper foliage of a large thorn tree in the New Forest, but unfortunately it ceased on my approach, and I failed to find the singer.

Had we, in England, possessed a stridulating mantis, which is capable of a slower, softer sound than any grasshopper, I should have concluded that I was listening to one; but there was not, in this New Forest music, the slightest resemblance to the cicada sounds I had heard in former years. The cicadas may be a "merry people," and they certainly had the prettiest things said of them by the poets of Greece, but I do not like their brain-piercing, everlasting whirr; this sound of the English cicada, assuming that I heard that insect, was distinctly pleasing.—W. H. Hudson, in "Hampshire Days."

Odd Formations Found in the "Hoodoo Region"

The Hoodoo region, near the head of Miller creek, beyond the east boundary of Yellowstone National park, is said to furnish probably the most striking example in existence of the effects of erosion and wind action upon masses of moderately solid rock. The region was discovered by miners in 1870, and was first explored and reported upon by Col. Norris in 1880, who thus described it:

"Nearly every form, animate or inanimate, real or chimerical, ever actually seen or conjured by the imagination, may here be observed. Language does not suffice to describe these peculiar formations; sketches may probably do something, and photographs more, to convey a conception of their remarkable character, but actual observation is necessary to adequately impress the mind with the wild, unearthly appearance of these eroded Hoodoos of the Goblin land. These monuments are from 50 to 200 or 300 feet in height, with narrow, tortuous passages between them, which sometimes are tunnels through permanent snow or ice fields, where the Bighorn sheep hide in safety; while the ceaseless but ever changing moans of the wild winds seem to chant fitting requiems to these gnomelike monuments of the legendary Indian gods."

A Faulty Recovery

Norman has made his last appearance in the social whirl for this season, or at least until a certain matron by the name of Curtis has had time to cool off and let her better, forgiving nature assert itself.

It happened at a dance at the club. Norman found that he had a certain dance with Mrs. Curtis. Mrs. Curtis is considerably above the average in weight. Then, on top of this fact, she did not dance well. Now, Norman dislikes fat women and detests to dance with poor dancers. So he proposed to Mrs. Curtis that they sit out the dance. They were watching the other dancers, when Norman rather absently, as much to make some effort at conversation as anything, observed:

"Isn't Miss Rodgers pretty? So tall, and slender, and graceful!" "Oh, I suppose so," Mrs. Curtis agreed, rather grudgingly.

Then Norman realized the implied comparison and blurted out: "Oh, but I like fat women, too!"

Plant 76,000,000 Years Old

The horsetail rush or its ancestors dates back some 76,000,000 years, to the day when the world was uninhabited by human life. It is one of the ten species of the sole genus of plants that has survived from the carboniferous era, when its forbears reared their majestic heads to a height of ninety feet and more on stumps six feet thick. The plants of this era ceased growing many millions of years ago, when the world was swept by oceans which buried forests, but for more than half a century they have provided the greatest agent of modern industrial development and have been the bone of contention, under the alias of coal, in many a federal investigation. It has the oldest genealogy of any living thing.—Detroit News.

Making It Clear

A titanotherid has arrived in this country from Asia. That didn't mean anything to us until the scientists kindly explained that a titanotherid is a perissodactyl upulate.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Keeping to the Point

Porter—This train goes to Buffalo and points east. Old Lady—Well, I want a train that gets to Syracuse, and I don't care which way it points.—Dry Goods Economist.

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