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BLOOMSBURG, PA., FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 1887.

THE COLUMBIAN, VOL. XXI, NO 15
COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT, VOL LI, NO 4

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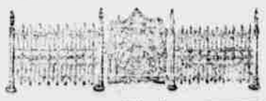
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SELECT STORY.

THE MAN AND THE AX.

On one of the last evenings of the year just closed M. Antoine Redoux, one of the most justly esteemed citizens of Paris and ex-mayor of one of the towns of central France, found himself in Baker street, London. Fifty years of age, fat and jovial, carrying his heart in his hand—but practical enough in business affairs—this worthy head of a family and true social example did not escape more than others from certain imaginary illusions, when he was alone and vis-a vis with the inner man, that sometimes frequent the brain of the steadiest business man. According to alienists these brains—outside of business matters—belong to a mysterious world, whose creatures are often fantastic. If, then, it happened that M. Redoux, when in the seclusion of his office, let his mind go astray with some of those strange and troubled fancies, of which he never spoke a word, the mania he allowed himself to pet, be it larky or melancholy, very soon became despotic and tenacious to the point of clamoring for realization. Master of himself, however, he could dissipate the mania with a profound sigh, when the least incident of real life came with its shock to awaken him from these morbid attacks, which had never proven very serious. But for a long time this circumspect man had been on his guard against this weakness, and had been obliged to govern himself according to the regulations of the strictest regime to evade exciting emotions that might put him astride his hobby horse. Above all, he drank very little! On this particular evening, M. Redoux, having well dined—without his usual prudence—at the house of a merchant, with whom, along with the dessert, he had concluded a most advantageous affair, the object of his journey to London, did not perceive that the insidious fumes of port, sherry, ale and champagne had altered a trifle the susceptibility of his lucidity. He was returning to his hotel at an early hour, when he noticed that a heavy fog, mixed with a drizzling rain, was falling.

He sought refuge under a doorway, which happened to be the entrance of the famous Tussand museum. To avoid a cold, and to find a comfortable shelter, as well as to kill time while satisfying curiosity, the ex-mayor of one of the towns of central France threw away his cigar and ascended the stairs leading to the wax salons. On the threshold of that long hall where stood, in improbable immobility, this strange gallery of personages, diversified in costumes and most of them wearing crowns, all like ponderous fashion plates of centuries past, M. Redoux felt a thrill pass through him. An object caught his vision. Though quite in the back it seemed to dominate the entire hall from the platform of the "chamber of horrors." It was the old instrument which according to sufficiently serious documents, had been used in France for the execution of King Louis XVI. At this sight, and informed by the programme of the true origin of the apparatus, the excellent citizen, always liberal in his political opinions, and, thanks to the profitable day just ended, felt himself disposed with generosity toward the king martyr. Setting aside all opinions and ready to blame any excesses, he felt his heart growing tender toward the august victim, whose memory this grave specimen of historical tools had evoked. Honest and intelligent, the temperament impressionable, where the emotions magnified quickly, M. Redoux scarcely honored with a brief look the crowd of wax figures resplendant in gold, silk, purple and pearls. Moved by the stronger impression of that guillotine and thinking of the great drama past, he chose the neighborhood of the platform where stood an approximate likeness of Shakespeare and sat himself to meditate. Genial natures become expansive under any kind of emotion. The ex-mayor of the central town of France noticed a visitor sitting near him—French, no doubt, if he was to judge by appearances—who, like himself, had fallen into a brown study. He turned toward him, and to feel his ground let drop a few remarks as to "the impression almost sad that this sinister machine caused, independent of one's political beliefs."

But gazing more closely at his neighbor, the excellent M. Redoux stopped short, rather vexed, for he had discovered that for some two minutes he had been addressing one of those sham visitors that the administration places on the benches destined for living ones. At this moment a loud voice warned the visitors that the hour for closing had come. The chandeliers were rapidly extinguished, and the last of the curious, as though loath to leave, threw a summary look on the fantastic surroundings as if wanting to preserve a souvenir of the general aspect.

M. Redoux's unrequited expansion and the morbid excitement of his first impression—sufficiently unhealthy—had transformed his feelings into a mania of unaccustomed intensity. It was more—it was a dark hobby that shook its bells until the sound had penetrated the inmost recesses of his brain. The idea of resistance forsook him.

"Ah," thought he, "to experience—without danger—these terrible sensations, so terrible, that must have assailed the good King Louis XVI before this fatal plank! To be in imagination the king himself! To hear the rolling of the drums, and to listen to the last comforting words of the Abbe Edgeworth de St. Firmont! And to speak out one's treasures of moral generosity! And to indulge in the luxury of pitying (very sincerely, all political opinions apart) this worthy father of a family; this man too good, too generous indeed, too full of all those qualities that" * * * M. Redoux recognized as a part of his own nature. "What glorious minutes to pass! What sweet tears to shed!" But to accomplish this he must be alone before the guillotine, where in secret, without being seen, he could give himself up with full liberty to the enjoyment of that flattering and moving soliloquy. But how to do it?

Such was the strange mania disturbing the brain of the honorable M. Redoux, already a little excited by the wines of France and Spain. He looked attentively at the two posts of the scaffold, the top of which was covered on this particular evening with a green baize hood, which concealed from view the fatal knife—a precaution, no doubt, to prevent a shock to persons of an over-sensitive nature. This time the mania insisted upon being realized and a luminous ruse conquered the difficulty and suddenly lighted the understanding of M. Redoux.

"Bravo! I have it!" he murmured. "I have my matches. A single gas jet will light the tragic scene. Then a call, and the door will be opened. I will explain that I fell asleep and give the boy a half guinea It is quite worth it!"

The room was already in shadows. A workman's lantern on the platform burned dimly. The tinsel, the crystals and silks threw a shining note in the dullness. Presently he heard footsteps; it was one of the porters coming toward him in the Shakespeare alley. Giving a look at his neighbor, M. Redoux took suddenly an immobile pose. The gesture he chose was that of one offering a pinch of snuff. His broad brimmed hat, his ruddy hands, his sleek face and half closed eyes, the plits in his long overcoat; all his person, stiff and breathless, seemed to add one more to the sham visitors, so much so that in the almost total obscurity the porter, in passing M. Redoux, thought no doubt that it was a new acquisition of which the administration had not warned him, gave him a few light strokes with a feather duster and passed on. The next moment the doors were closed. M. Redoux, triumphant, could at last realize one of his fancies, alone in the blue darkness of the wax parlor. Groping his way on tiptoe, passing those vague kings and queens, he reached the platform and slowly ascended the steps leading to the lugubrious machine. The collar in wood was vis-a-vis the entrance of the hall. Redoux closed his eyes in order to recall more vividly the sad scene, and large tears were not slow to trickle down his cheeks. He thought of the tears of old Malesherbes, charged with the defense of his king before the national convention—tears that were his only defense.

"Unfortunate monarch!" sobbed Redoux. "How well I understand what you have suffered! But from your infancy you were led astray! You were a victim of a necessity of the times! I pity you from the bottom of my heart! As fathers of families we understand each other. Your crime was to have been a king; mine to have been a mayor!" And the too sensitive manufacturer, a little haggard, added in broken accents, and with a gesture as if offering support to some one: "Courage, your majesty? Remember that we are all mortal!"

Then looking at the plank he touched its spring.

"To think that he was stretched there," said the excellent man. "Yes, we were very nearly of the same figure, so it appears, and he must have had the same embonpoint as I. Pretty solid work this guillotine, and well put together. Oh, what were, what must have been, that is to say, his supreme thoughts when once stretched on this plank! In three seconds he must have reflected on centuries! Let us see. The executioner is not here. Why should I not stretch myself there—just a little—to know, to experience morally"—

After this mental invitation the worthy M. Redoux took a resigned expression, quasi sublime, inclined forward, slowly at first, then little by little, stretched himself on the movable plank, so successfully indeed that he could with ease contemplate the two half moons of the gaping collar.

"There. Let us stop here and meditate. What agony he must have felt?"

And he wiped his eyes with his handkerchief. Redoux to install himself more comfortably made a light movement of the body which pushed the sliding plank even with the collar piece. This chance movement encouraged the ex-mayor to make the illusion more perfect, he leaned his neck on the half moon.

"Ah, poor king! I understand and I lament," murmured good M. Redoux, "and it is a consolation to know that once here suffering is not of long duration."

As he made a movement to raise himself he heard by his right ear a light, dry crack. Crick! It was the other half moon, shaken by the agitation of M. Redoux, slipped in its place and imprisoning the head of the manufacturer. The honorable M. Redoux was uncomfortable under the sensation, and twisted himself right and left. But in vain; he was caught in the trap, and how was he to find the secret to liberate himself.

A singular thing: The little incident had sobered him. Then without transition his face became the color of plaster, and his blood ran through his arteries with terrible rapidity. His eyes rolled as if under the action of vertigo, his body became like ice and his teeth chattered. In the midst of his hallucination a gleam of light assured him that there was no danger, since there was no executioner. But it had just struck him that seven feet above him hung that fatal knife, a hundred pounds in weight, that the wood was worm eaten, the springs worn, and that by moving his body he exposed himself to the danger of touching the button that would cause the knife to descend. Then his head would roll at the feet of these wax phantoms who now seemed to him a terrible audience, for the reflection of the lantern on all those figures gave vitality to the impossibility. They were looking at him; this crowd with glazed eyes seemed to wait.

"Help!" he gasped, but he did not dare to say it again for fear the vibrations might push the button. And this fixed idea wrinkled his livid brow, drew his generous jaws, and caused his cranium to tingle. In the black silence and before the hideous absurdity of such a death his hair and beard began to whiten gradually. Minutes aged him like years. At the sudden cracking of the timber he fainted. Two hours after, when he had recovered himself, the cold appreciation of his situation caused him to enjoy a new kind of torture, till the grating of a mouse gnawing the wood caused him to faint again. On opening his eyes he found himself, half dressed, in one of the armchairs of the museum, surrounded by porters and workmen, who were rubbing him with hot rags and making him take stimulants.

"Oh!" he muttered, with a haggard look at the guillotine. "What a dream! What a night under that terrible knife!" Then, in a few words, he told the story. "But, sir," replied one of the porters, the same one that had dusted him the evening before, "you alarmed yourself without reason."

"Without reason?" painfully articulated Redoux, his throat still sore.

"Yes; the collar piece has no strings, and was the joints that made the noise that frightened you. And as to the knife"—

Here the porter mounted the steps of the platform and raised from its perch the green baize hood; it was empty.

"Two days ago it was taken to be repaired." At these words M. Redoux stood on his legs and shook himself as if to test their solidity. Then catching a glimpse of himself in one of the mirrors he saw that he had aged ten years. He gave in silence—this time with sincere tears—three guineas to his liberators. That done, he took his hat and left the museum. Once in the street he directed his steps toward his hotel, took his valise and departed that evening for Paris. His first care was to have his hair and beard carefully dyed before going home, where he never spoke a word of his adventure.

But in the high position which he occupies in one of the houses he will not allow himself even in fancy to sympathize with the opposite party. He is not likely to forget that lamentable night, and if one of the honorable members declared that princes are not to be pitied, whatever befall them, M. Redoux would smile and change the conversation.—*E. H. M.*

Curious Clocks.

When the Emperor, Charles V., of Spain, retired to the Monastery of St. Yuste, he took with him Torriano, his clock-maker, in order to while away the time by constructing the movements of clocks. So wonderful were some of the pieces of work which they made, that the monks would not believe any one except the devil had a hand in them until the machinery was shown to them by the ex-Emperor. It was ordered by Charles that when he should die all these clocks should cease running—and it is said to be a fact that his orders were obeyed.

Another King of Spain came to Geneva to see a clock which had been made by Droz, a merchant of that city. Upon the clock were seated a shepherd a negro, and a dog. As the hour was struck, the shepherd played upon his flute, and the dog played gently at his feet. But, when the King reached forth to touch an apple that hung from a tree, under which the shepherd rested, the dog flew at him and barked so furiously that a live dog answered him and the whole party left in haste. Venturing to return, one of the courtiers asked the negro, in Spanish, what time it was. There was no reply; but when the question was repeated in French, an answer was given. This frightened the courtier, who rejoined his companions, and all of them voted that the clock was the work of the evil one.

Upon the belfry of the Kauthaus, in Coblentz, there is the head of a giant—bearded, and helmeted with brass. The giant's head is known as "the man in the custom-house;" and whenever a countryman meets a citizen of Coblentz away from that place, instead of saying: "How are all our friends in Coblentz?" he asks: "How is the man in the custom-house?" At every stroke of the bell which sounds the hours upon the clock, the mouth of the giant opens and shuts with great force, as if it were trying to say, in the words of Longfellow: "Time was—Time is—Time is past."—*Popular Science Monthly.*

Buried Relics.

A WASHINGTON BUTTON AND A CANNON BALL EXCAVATED BENEATH THE MINT.

Workmen engaged in digging for a foundation for the new boiler house in the rear of the main building of the United States Mint have found two relics. One is a much corroded six-pound cannon ball. It was found at a depth of nine feet. It was imbedded in a vein of brick clay that extends from Broad street eastward. The ball has been placed in one of the cases of relics in the Mint Museum. Superintendent Fox's theory is that the British army, while in possession of Philadelphia during the Revolutionary War, had a battery planted upon the lot of ground now occupied by the Mint, and that the ball had accidentally been dropped and rolled, unobserved, into the grass covered soil, and that in later years it had been covered in the filling in of the ground to bring it up to the standard level.

The other relic is a Washington button. It was found in the same locality as the cannon ball, but not so far beneath the surface. It was the custom of the patriotic people of this city in former times to celebrate great events by the wearing of such buttons and medals. The button has upon it this inscription: "Memorable Era, March 4, 1789." It also has upon it the representation of an eagle, clutching in one talon three arrows, in the other an olive branch. A shield on the eagle's breast has upon it the stars and stripes. One of these buttons has for many years been encased among the rare medals and buttons in the museum.

Chinese in Philadelphia.

Since the raids of the police on the Chinese gambling dens and opium joints, attention has been called to the filthy and unwholesome condition of the houses they occupy. The Chinese as a people are wonderfully fond of company. They never like to be alone and the element of gaming and carousing in their nature is very strongly marked. Too many live in filth in order to economize and squander their savings at the gambling dens and opium joints, thus increasing the filthy conditions that surround them. The board of health will doubtless take some action in relation to their mode of living.

READING'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

IMPORTANT REPORT OF CITY SUPERINTENDENT BALLIET. THE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION EXPLAINED—MECHANICAL MEMORIZING A RELIC OF BYGONE DAYS—OBJECT LESSONS—SUCCESS OF THE SYSTEM DEPENDS UPON TEACHERS.

The following is the report of City Superintendent Balliet, read before the Board of Control March 15:

It is perhaps proper that I should make a brief reference at this time to some criticisms that have recently been made on the educational policy of your Board and on some changes that have been made in the teaching in our schools. Several persons have attempted to create the impression, by making certain statements in the city papers, that we are "experimenting" in our schools with dangerous novelties in the way of teaching; that these methods are not adopted extensively in the best schools of the country and that they have proved a failure where they have been used. To this I can only reply that such a statement is entirely at variance with the facts, and could be made only by a person who is utterly uninformed as to what is done to day in the best schools of the country, or who, by misplacing confidence, has received his information from unreliable sources.

The changes that have been made in the work of our schools have, in all essential points, been made in all progressive schools of the country within the last fifteen years, and most of the methods introduced, which have been characterized as "new," have been in use in the best schools of some of our cities for over twenty-five years. There is no instance on record where these methods have proved a failure, excepting a few small towns where teachers did not understand the work and had no competent supervision to assist and direct them.

Without going into full explanation of what we are doing in our schools, I may briefly state that it is my purpose, as well as the purpose of your Board, to bring the work of our schools in harmony with the best educational thought of the day, to eliminate, as far as possible, mechanical teaching and rote learning, and to make all instruction practical in the best sense of the word. To accomplish this some changes will be necessary in all the grades, and it will require at least five or six years to make them. The results will not appear in the higher grades until pupils now trained in the primary schools will reach those grades. I have thus far devoted more time to the work of the primary and lower secondary schools than to the higher grades, in the first place, because by far the larger number of pupils attending public schools are found in these grades, and many of these must leave school before they reach the higher grades; and in the second place, because the foundation for all reforms in the work of the higher grades must be laid in the primary schools.

The changes that have been made are confined largely to arithmetic, geography and primary reading. In the teaching of history, drawing, etc., but few changes have been made. These branches are as important as any of the of the others, and some changes will be necessary in the future in order that they may be taught with the greatest possible efficiency.

Several features of our work have been more particularly criticised by our friends, and I may be pardoned for making a brief reference to them specifically. The statement has been made that pupils in our primary schools are not taught the multiplication table. If by this it is meant that they do not learn the table at all and do not learn to multiply, the statement is utterly incorrect. Children are taught from the very start in the lowest primary schools to add, subtract, multiply and divide. All the work is at first done with objects, and they fix in the memory the products of the various numbers as fast as they learn the numbers, by repeatedly solving problems involving these products. They learn the table in this way intelligently from objects as fast as they need it, and are at once able to apply it to practical problems. The mere mechanical memorizing of the entire multiplication table by children six years old by repeating it in concert from day to day, without comprehending its meaning, is a relic of by gone days in education, and there are few educators of any standing who would pretend to defend it today.

Even the use of objects in our primary schools has been criticised by some of our friends and characterized as playing with tooth-picks and shoe pegs. This is the usual criticism made by extremely conservative persons to whom such work appears novel at first, and it is a criticism that is perhaps altogether harmless. I know of no book on education that has been published within the last twenty-five years that does not recommend the use of objects in teaching arithmetic to young children. Just how long the use of objects should be continued is a question which only a specialist can intelligently decide, and although the limit may be indicated in a general way in a course of study, it is a question which must virtually be decided by the teacher in the case of each individual child. The purpose of using objects is to give the child the power to do his thinking without them. As soon as objective work has accomplished this purpose it must be continued. When pupils have had proper training in the primary grades, it is unnecessary to continue objective work in the higher grades except for the sake of occasional illustration; but when pupils have never had objective work in the lower grades to any extent such work becomes a necessity in the higher grades. This I found to be the case last year in our secondary and to some extent even in our Grammar schools. Pupils were unable to give a rational, concrete illustration of some of the simplest arithmetical processes. As soon as pupils who have had proper training in our primary schools reach the higher grades objective work in these grades can be discontinued.

We have been criticised also for not teaching children the alphabet before they learn to read. It was supposed that pupils had first to learn the letters before they could possibly learn to read. This method of teaching a child to read was condemned by Horace Mann over forty years ago in his work of reforming the schools of Massachusetts, and has not been used in some of our most progressive cities for years. The supervisor of primary schools of Erie states that it was discontinued in the schools of that city over twenty-five years ago. I know of no large city in which it is used to-day nor of any educational writer of this country of any reputation who defends it. Prof. G. Stanley Hall, of John Hopkins University, says that there has been only one educational writer in Germany for fifty years who has defended it.

Children are taught to read words and sentences before they know the names of the letters by a combination of what are called the Word, the Sentence and the Phonic Methods. In this way the average child under a good teacher learns to read intelligently in six months, and a bright child sooner. This is the method now in use in all schools except those in remote rural districts and in a few conservative towns. It is universally used in many counties in this and other States in graded and ungraded schools.

Without going into any farther discussion of the matter, I desire to say that the work we are doing in our schools must be judged by its results after there has been sufficient time for results to appear. I would therefore respectfully request the members of your Board to visit the schools as often as convenient and observe the work for themselves. They will find that where the teachers are competent the results are excellent even now; and where the teachers are incompetent, or are not interested in their work, the results are poor. Whilst poor teachers will do better teaching with a good method than with a poor one, it remains after all true that a method can not take the place of brains and skill in the teacher and their work will never be good. The value of a method must be judged by the results obtained with it by competent teachers.

Cars Safely Heated.

THE FIRST TRAIN IN THE WORLD TO BE WARMED AND HEATED WITHOUT FIRE.

From the New York Sun.

The Boston express train that rolled into the Forty-second street station at 10:30 last evening pounded over the same rails that bear hundreds of trains daily, yet it was as much of a pioneer in its way as was Peter Cooper's little locomotive. This train, the latest production of the Boston and Albany Railroad shops at Allston, was lighted by electricity and heated by steam. or the first time in the history of railroading the world over a complete train so lighted and so heated has been successfully run.

Twenty incandescent electric lamps ranged in double rows along the high ceiling of the cars effectively light them. Each light is of sixteen-candle power, and the steady glow is fed from the storage batteries of the Julien system. Newspapers may be read with ease, and the cars are cheerful and pleasant. There are sixty storage cells to each car placed under the floor between the trucks, and they may charged with electricity while the train is laid up on a side track in Boston. They will hold twelve hours' supply of the electric fluid, so as to make the round trip to New York and return, and with time to spare.

The steam-heating device consists of an arrangement of pipes which take live dry steam from the dome of the locomotive and conduct it through the cars so as to distribute the heat thoroughly. The distinctive features of the system are an automatic pressure regulating valve on the engine and controlling valves for each car from a main pipe below the car, so that the different cars may be kept at varying temperatures. The water of condensation is carried off by an automatic drip, and does not return to the boiler. The live dry steam is thus enabled to do its perfect work.

Great importance is placed upon the safety of these appliances in case of accident. Their are neither lamps nor stoves to set fire to the wreck.

A Lost Corpse.

In a back country town, where funerals serve much the same purpose that the theatre does in cities, there chanced to die one of the members of the community, and one of the neighbors was asked to "take charge" of the funeral. On the day appointed, the community assembled and stood in groups discussing either the departed or the condition of the crops, while the neighbor in charge bustled from one room to another making the list of arrangements. The hour for the funeral arrived and passed, and yet the services did not begin. Still more time passed and the manager of affairs was seen to be hurrying from room to room, looking anxiously about as if in search of something. As time passed the audience began to show signs of impatience and also of curiosity as the perplexed face of the man in charge appeared again before them. There was evidently a "hitch" in the proceedings somewhere, and an explanation was necessary. Mounting a chair, the impromptu undertaker said:

"My friends, we are—are very sorry to cause any delay in the—ah—last rites to the departed, but the—ah—truth is, we have mislaid the corpse."

It transpired that the coffin had been