

THE PREY OF LEECHES.

SLEEPING ROOMS ATTACKED BY FIERCELY HUNGRY WORMS.

A Leech Farm in a Populous Part of San Francisco, Cal.

People in the Western Addition have slept soundly for years in ignorance of the fact that at any moment a plague, worse than the locusts of Egypt, might come crawling into open windows and under loosely-hung doors—a plague of fierce blood-hungry leeches.

There is an extensive leech farm at 1125 Bush street, where 10,000 of the repulsive monsters are confined awaiting purchasers. The farm is one of two in the United States, the other being in New York, and there at times 50,000 leeches squirm ceaselessly about, over and through swamp muck, constantly searching for some hapless animal that chance may have nitred down to furnish a feast for the insatiable animal.

The leeches at the San Francisco farm broke away the other night and overran the neighboring tenement in a very short time. Hundreds of them crawled up the walls and tried every window and crevice, seeking an entrance because of some instinctive knowledge that in the house they could find succulent pasturage upon the forms of sleepers who rested without knowledge of the threatening danger.

But a minority found their way into the sleeping-rooms—not more than a thousand—but even that number of snaky, greenish-black, creepy worms sufficed to terrify the occupants almost into fits when they felt the eager suction of the leeches and awoke to find themselves festooned with the ugly products of the swampy ooze of Bordeaux.

The first to awaken was a young lady, and she was not long in announcing her distress and arousing her fellow-occupants of the house, only to find that each of them had for room companions from a score to hundreds of the leeches.

Brooms were savagely plied in every corner and under every piece of furniture. Bedclothing was shaken and closely examined. Leeches were dressed with soothing applications, and after several hours of activity the household again settled down to rest.

Next morning an examination of the premises and those adjacent was made, and when the leech farm was discovered the secret was out, as well as the leeches.

The worms are brought from France, where about Bordeaux there are wide areas of black, light ooze in which leeches of the finest sort multiply unstinted. The ooze fairly heaves with their writhing at the season of the year when they are most active, and it is then that one of the crudest sights possible may be seen.

Old horses, worn out in faithful service, are driven into the marshes and are soon covered with the hungry leeches, which fasten to lips, eyelids, nose or any other tender part, and hang to until glutted with the life-blood of their victim, or until the wretched horse weakens under the drain and falls to succumb in the arms of the leech morass.

When leeches are desired to send to New York or San Francisco men are hired whose poverty compels them to accept any chance. The men walk barelegged into the borders of the leech swamps and are immediately covered by the repulsive crawlers, but before they can more than pierce the skin of the men with their sharp semilunar teeth they are swept off into pouches, from which they are counted out into boxes of wet moss and boxes of their native ooze, embedded in which they are transported safely any distance.

The large leeches, such as those of Japan, which reach two feet in length, are not in common use, nor are certain poisonous sorts such as the small black leeches of Australia. The thick, fat, fierce worms of Hungary, Sicily and France are preferred by practitioners who use leeches, and it is from those countries that the rest of the world is supplied. The San Francisco leech farm is formed by placing quantities of the ooze of the Bordeaux swamps, especially imported for the purpose, in large boxes with tight covers. The leeches bore about through the muck, until wanted for sale, when they are counted out, washed and disposed of, ready to bite any living thing and hang on until they are swollen to eight or ten times their ordinary size. Then they drop off and lie dormant until assimilation shall have been finished and hunger again arouses them.—[San Francisco Examiner.]

Water Power and Electricity.

A most interesting application of water power to electric lighting and heating purposes has been made at a shooting lodge in the west highlands of Scotland. A dam was built across a small mountain burn some 800 feet above the lodge. The burn is led for some distance past the dam in an open drain, and at a point about 650 feet above a turbine, to which it is conducted in a closed pipe. The waterfall thus made is the highest that is used for electric lighting in the British Isles. The current is conveyed from the turbine house to the various buildings, the lodge about two hundred yards distant, the stables, laundry and head stalker's cottage, some four hundred yards away, by means of insulated conductors laid underground in tarred wood troughing and completely protected by melted bitumen run into the troughs. In all there are some 292 electric lamps installed. A special feature of the installation is a system of electric stoves, which are used for warming and keeping dry the cellars. Any other parts of the buildings. Any one who has lived in the mountains of Scotland and has had experience of their damp and inclement climate can well understand what a god-send such appliances are at times when a "Scotch mist" is ruling for weeks together.—[Chicago News.]

The Swedish Capitol.

When does Stockholm present itself to its best advantage? Is it when the hoarfrost, covering the naked branches of the trees and shrubberies, seems to transform the parks and gardens into coral gorges, while her waters lie ice-

bound on every side; when, in the frosty winter evening, from the harbors devoid of ships, flaming bonfires and pale electric lights, stirring music, dancing streamers, the merry din of voices, the gleaming skates, and the strong, the graceful, the gay skaters entice you down on the ice to mingle with the rosy-cheeked girls, the sturdy boys, the middle-aged, nay, even the old, in friendly competition. Or is it on a sunny day, in the lovely month of May, when the radiant sunlight trembles on the tender foliage and the glittering waves ripple against the shore, and the parade comes marching by with drum and trumpet, filling with delight the hearts of the masses? Or is it, perhaps on mid-summer eve—when darkness steals away—when every shop door is decorated with birch boughs, every ship, from the stately Norland steamer to the smallest skiff, is decked with flowers and garlands; when even the tired cart driver alarms his horse and his mean vehicle with the fragrant birch leaves; when the heights, the still waters, the noble palace, all are suffused with the indescribably soft rosy light of the incomparable night of the Northland. Which opinion the stranger may incline toward, to the native of this beautiful city all the seasons are enjoyable, and wherever he may be his thoughts turn lovingly to the fair city of his birth.

Ingenuous Coal Oil Smugglers.

"Customs officers at one town recently discovered an ingenious method of smuggling coal oil over from Detroit," said H. A. Peiter, of Windsor, Canada, at the Leland. "There is a stiff duty on kerosene imposed by Canada, you know, and the smugglers take delight in evading our traffic laws. The latest scheme to do this was devised by some Detroit boatmen. At Detroit they would buy a couple of barrels of kerosene at about seven cents a gallon, and haul them down to the river bank just above Belle Isle. The barrels would be fastened together with ropes, and to one of them would be attached a long piece of string to the other end of which was tied a harmless looking chip or piece of stick. Then the barrels would be pushed into the river and made fast to a rowboat with which the smugglers would start across to the Canadian shore, towing the barrels of oil which being but little heavier than water were easily pulled along just beneath the surface.

"Should a revenue boat have in sight the lashings of the barrels to the boat were quickly unshipped. The barrels sank slowly to the bottom, and when the customs officers overboard the boat nothing incriminatory could be found. When the coast, or rather the river, was clear the boatmen would return and locate the sunken oil by the bit of wood floating on the surface which they had tied to the barrels before starting. With a grappling hook the barrels were soon recovered and the oil landed in Canada despite her majesty's customs."—[Chicago Herald.]

A Neglected Frontier Industry.

The recent robbing of the stage coach between Bonner Ferry and Kootgal Station, in Montana, calls attention to a decaying industry, the revival of which might well engage the energies of our statesmen. Time was when the holding up of stage coaches was one of the most lucrative branches of business open to the younger men of the country, and it is not going too far to say that it was the foundation of some of the proudest fortunes of the West. In the days of Black Bart, Calaveras Jim and the Santa Clara Kid it was nothing for young men in this line of business to retire rich at the end of six or seven years of earnest endeavor. To be sure, one risked something, but no fortune was ever wrong from fate without venture of some sort. From 1857 to 1868 was the golden era of the road agent, and there are men now living who will freely confess that it was a positive pleasure to hold up one's hands to such perfection had the art been brought. The introduction of the railroads, always fatal to art if we believe Mr. Ruskin, has changed all this, and the gentlemen engaged in the robbing of stage coaches have been either driven from the field or forced to turn their attention to the vulgar holding up of the beggarly express trains. This is true to such an extent that Mr. Bret Harie has been forced to leave the country for lack of material, and is now situated in London, and at last accounts was wearing white shirts. Such incidents as the one in Missoula County only serve to sadly accentuate the decline of the road agent.—[Omaha World-Herald.]

Queerest Animal in the World.

Of all the creatures that God has made "under the sun," as Ecclesiastes would say, the most remarkable, as well as the most useless, is the tuatara, a species of lizard known to exist only in New Zealand. The tuatara grows to be from nine inches to a foot in length, and may be said to accept life's hardships with more indifference than any other known representative of the animal creation. He is the very embodiment of negative existence, and does not seem to care in the least whether the sun sets at nine o'clock in the morning or stays up till midnight. He is almost invariably found clinging motionless to a rock on the sea coast, wholly oblivious or indifferent to the drenching spray or the blinding sunlight. He has no "thought for the morrow," and to all intents and purposes needs neither food nor drink to keep the colors in his coat and fire in his eye. He has been kept for days, months and years in a sealed glass case, his lethargy but slightly aggravated through lack of air. A recent writer on antipodean oddities says: "He makes no noise and moves so seldom and so slowly that many persons have watched those confined in cases for a long time, and then left them, under the impression that the creatures were only stuffed specimens after all. Yet the solemn blinking of the golden eyes and the slow, heaving motion of the leathery sides bore right witness of a sluggish vitality."—[St. Louis Republic.]

Girdle belts of seal leather and kid are studded with steel.

Old Aunt Peggy.

When the war was over, old Aunt Peggy went to Monsieur, and said: "Monsieur, I ain't never gwine to quit yer. I'm gittin' ole an' feeble, an' my days is few in de han' lan' o' sorrow an' sin. All I axes is a life co'ner whar I kin set down an' wait peaceful fu de en'."

Monsieur and Madame were very much touched at this mark of affection and fidelity from Aunt Peggy. So, in the general reconstruction of the plantation which immediately followed the surrender, a nice cabin, pleasantly appointed was set apart for the old woman. Madame did not even forget the very comfortable rocking chair in which Aunt Peggy might "set down," as she herself touchingly expressed it, "an' wait fu de en'."

She has been rocking ever since. At intervals of about two years Aunt Peggy hobbles up to the house, and delivers the stereotyped address which has become more than familiar: "Mistress, I's come to take a las' look at you all. Le' me look at your good. Le' me look at de chillun—de big chillun an' de lile chillun. Le' me look at de pictures and de photographs an' de piany an' eve'ything 'fo' it's too late. One eye is done gone, an' de odder's a-gwine fas'. Any mo'nin' yo' po' ole Aunt Peggy gwine wake up an' fin' hersef' stone-blind."

After such a visit Aunt Peggy invariably returns to her cabin with a generously filled apron.

The scruple which Monsieur one time felt in supporting a woman for so many years in idleness has entirely disappeared. Of late his attitude towards Aunt Peggy is simply one of profound astonishment—wonder at the surprising age that an old black woman may attain when she sets her mind to it, for Aunt Peggy is a hundred and twenty-five, so she says.

It may not be true, however. Possibly she is older.—[Harper's Young People.]

The Lives of Birds.

According to a foreign scientific journal, the swan is the longest lived bird, in extreme cases reaching 300 years. The falcon has been known to live 162 years. An eagle died in 1819 which had been caught 104 years before and was then quite old. A white-headed vulture, which was caught in 1706, died in the aviary at Schonbrun, near Vienna, in 1824. Parrots live more than a century. Water birds have a long life, exceeding that of several generations of men. Ravens live over 100 years. In captivity eagles live from twenty to twenty-five years, and still longer in freedom. The common hen attains the age of from fifteen to twenty years. Doves live ten years, and the little singing birds from eight to seventeen years. The nightingale's life is the shortest, ten years being the longest, and next comes the blackbird, which never lives longer than fifteen years.

Styles in Wooden Legs.

The demand for willow wood for artificial legs has grown immensely in recent years. The funny men on the stage talk glibly of cork legs, but light willow limbs are more popular. English makers claim that the best willow in the world is to be found along the banks of the small streams in their southern counties, and there seems some ground for their contention, although an immense quantity of good willow wood is cut every year in this country. Statisticians say that over one million English-speaking men wear or walk on wooden legs, and this accounts for the enormous trade in limbs of this kind. The old-fashioned stump with an iron tip on it is seldom seen now. It was a common sight in its day, and with reasonable care and luck lasted close on a lifetime; but it was too awkward and conspicuous, not to say noisy, to be popular. The modern wooden leg is more costly, but it is much more comfortable, and many a man who is compelled to walk by the aid of one can give pointers in grace and deportment to others more blessed by fortune.—[St. Louis Globe-Democrat.]

Papier Mache Articles.

In a New York shop an old time axe was displayed a short time ago, apparently suspended by its handle. It was a fine specimen of the work of the hand, and the handle was made of a material, and is now situated in London, and at last accounts was wearing white shirts. Such incidents as the one in Missoula County only serve to sadly accentuate the decline of the road agent.—[Omaha World-Herald.]

Fox Against Bull.

Farmer Otis T. Burbank of Lenox township, Susquehanna county, Penn., saw a winded fox trotting toward the barn while he was feeding his cattle the other noon. In a moment the fox cropt under the barnyard fence, panted as though he had been racing for several hours, and lay down on a mass of straw close to the barn. Mr. Burbank's ugly Durham bull was nosing in the straw, and he began to paw and follow the moment he caught a glimpse of the tired fox. Reynard paid no attention to the noisy bull at first, but as the bull came closer, bellowed louder, and pawed up the straw until it flew all over him, the fox began to watch him. Suddenly the bull lowered his horns and dived at the fox, and the fox sprang up and snapped viciously at the bull's nose. He didn't catch

it, and the bull immediately made another dash at the fox. This time the fox settled his teeth in the bull's snout with the ferocity of a panther. Instantly the bull threw his head up with terrific force, and the fox lost his hold on the bull's nose and landed on the roof of the barn, twenty-three feet from the ground.

Then the angry bull looked all around for the fox, growling, snorting and pawing, as before, and the fox climbed to the peak of the barn and sat there for a minute or so. The oxes on the opposite side of the barn and the fox jumped from the ground and the yard and lay down on the straw again. Once more the bull dashed at him, and the fox bit his nose till the blood came. The pain made the bull more furious, and he rushed at the fox for the fourth time. Reynard snapped at his snout again, but he failed to reach it, and the mad bull forced him against the barn and drove his horns clear through the plucky fox's body. Then the bull ran around the yard with the fox on his horns, and Mr. Burbank clubbed the bull into the stable, where he pulled the fox loose. The fox was still kicking, but he soon died, and the bull had a sore nose for more than a week.—[New York Sun.]

Fun That Didn't Pan Out.

"The other day a real smart young man came aboard," said Capt. Leale of the El Capitan, "and he came up to chat with myself and two young ladies before the boat started. Next to the ladies sat a Chinaman. The smart young man began to nod toward the blue-bloused heathen and make all sorts of grimaces. He kept up his pantomime for some time, showing off before those girls in the endeavor to establish a reputation for dare-devil fun. The Chinaman eyed him with that stolidity which the race has accumulated through generations of starvation. Finally my o'er-bright friend tired of his monkey shins and said: "Just watch me have some fun with that Chinaman."

"Oh, no; you'll not have any fun with me," answered the brown man in English. "All the smartness left that bright youth. He was the cheapest boy on the human market. It was the first time I had ever seen him done up. He reddened, became all hands and feet, and silently stole away, stopping on himself as he went."

"I think I had more fun with him than he had with me," remarked the Chinaman. "Rather a tiresome young man, don't you think?"—[San Francisco Examiner.]

Directors' Fees.

The fees that directors of business corporations receive range from \$5 to \$15 for attendance at each meeting. It is a fact not generally known that there are some men in this town who enjoy very handsome incomes from this source alone. Of course, they are men of wealth and high business standing, whose reputation for financial skill and probity makes them eagerly sought for as directors. Cornelius Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller or J. Pierpont Morgan, for instance, would be welcomed in the directory of any business corporation. Samuel D. Babcock, ex-President of the Chamber of Commerce, has the reputation of being a director in more companies than any other man in New York. Russell Sage is not far behind him. Mr. Jay Gould might also be a multifarious director, but of late years he has given the greater part of his time and attention to corporations which he practically controls.

The president of one of the largest banks in this city said the other day that, although he was a director in comparatively few corporations, his fees amounted to \$2,000 last year. "I know one man," said he, "whose income from directors' fees alone ranges from \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year."

Nearly all of the great financial concerns pay their directors \$10 each for every meeting they attend. The money is usually paid in gold, and is handed to the director as soon as he enters the board room. In some cases the custom prevails of making a pool at each meeting, which is divided among the directors in attendance. Where there are fifteen members of a board of directors \$150 in \$10 gold pieces or crisp new notes is placed on a plate in the center of the directors' table, and the members who are present when the meeting is called to order at once divide up the amount. If there are but five members they each take \$30 from the plate. This method stimulates promptness in attending the meetings.—[New York Times.]

A Lucky Whip.

Charles Marvin, the famous driver who broke all world's trotting records on the Stockton track, attributes some of his good luck to an old whip which he borrowed from Willis Parker and used in all his great races against time. Marvin had good whips in his stable outfit, but he found one in Parker's stable that suited him exactly, and he used it in driving Samol in 2:08. That event made the old whip lucky and Marvin called for it every time he drove against the world's records. He had it when he gave Arion his wonderful mile of 2:10, and also when Palo Alto made his mark of 2:08.

When the great driver left Stockton he begged Parker to let him carry with him the lucky whip, but the Stockton horseman promised to send it to him before the opening of another trotting season. Parker now has the whip ready to send East, and he will express it to Marvin at Franklin, Penn. There is a warm friendship existing between Parker and Marvin, and the owner of the whip decided to have a proper inscription on it before he sends it from Stockton. He had the handle covered with solid gold for a distance of seven inches from the butt, and the engraving on it gives the names of Samol, Arion and Palo Alto, with their records and the dates of the world-beating performances.

Marvin will highly prize the whip, and it will please him to receive another token of esteem from his old Stockton friend, Parker.—[Stockton (Cal.) Independent.]

THE JOKER'S BUDGET.

JESTS AND YARNS BY FUNNY MEN OF THE PRESS.

A Prudent Society Mother—Nothing Will be Lost—One View of It—Advantage of the Seasons—A Good Plan—Etc., Etc.

Daughter—Ma, Mr. Blank proposed to me last night.
Mother—Did you accept him, daughter?
"Yes, mamma."
"Has he any money, daughter?"
"Only \$1,800 a year."
"Well, daughter, handle him carefully till summer. Possibly you can pick up something better during the spring."
—[Texas Siftings.]

NOTHING WILL BE LOST.

Young Man (whose mother severely objects to the girl of his choice)—Mother, you say how much I will lose by marrying a girl so far below me in social standing as Clara; but then just think of how much she will gain, and it will all be in the family.—[Bazaar.]

ONE VIEW OF IT.

"I don't think it's exactly fair for my teacher to keep me in because she can't read my writing," said Willie. "It isn't my fault if she doesn't know how to read."

ADVANTAGE OF THE SEASONS.

Mr. Flame (rejected)—And am I to consider your "no" positive and irrevocable?
Miss Icicle—Well, I don't know. Try me next summer and see.

A GOOD PLAN.

Closet—You don't catch me giving an architect a thousand dollars to plan a house. I'll dig the cellar, draw on some timbers, then go down there with my shorthand clerk, and it won't cost me a blamed cent.

Hanks—What can the clerk do?
Closet—Take down the advice given me by my neighbors.—[Truth.]

A SCRAPER.

Wool—I never saw a man who could scrape an acquaintance like Brush.
Van Pelt—What is his business?
Wool—He is a barber.

HINT TO COLLECTORS.

"If I pay this bill," said Fwaddy, languidly, "you will quit coming, I suppose?"
"Course I will," replied the tailor's errand boy.

"And if I don't pay it you'll keep on coming, I presume?"
"You kin jest bet I will."
"Then I will pay it," said Fwaddy, hastily counting out the money and reaching for his smelling bottle. "You always smoke a beastly five-cent cigar."
—[Chicago Tribune.]

ENVY.

"I paint," she said; and then I heard her fellow artist speak;
"Oh, yes," came answer, "I can see the roses in your cheek."
—[Yankee Blade.]

THE BULL BY THE HORN.

She (at three a. m., trembling)—Oh, George, I'm afraid papa is going to come down!
He (eagerly)—Darling, hurry and meet him, and have him do something handsome while he is about it.—[New York Herald.]

FEMININE AMENITIES.

Mrs. Gusher—Really, Mrs. Floyd Robinson, what lovely jewelry you have!
Mrs. Floyd Robinson—Yes, my husband always gives me some little token on my birthday.
Mrs. Gusher—And you have so much of it too.

A GOOD REASON.

"Did you hear of that case on Manhattan avenue?" said Mr. Uptown to Mr. Murray Hill, as they met on a Third avenue elevated train.
"No; what about it?" inquired Murray Hill.

"Why," said Uptown, "a man lay there in the house nine days before the family would bury him. Had the funeral yesterday."

"By gracious!" said Hill, "that's an outrage! Why didn't they bury him before—superstition?"
"No; not exactly that," and Uptown, drawing Hill's ear down and towards his mouth, said: "That wasn't it. He was not dead."
—[Texas Siftings.]

FIXING THE RESPONSIBILITY.

"I'm no fool."
"The man who told you that was one."

A BLUE LOOKOUT FOR HIM.

"Jones has got into the social swim at last, I see."
"Then he is a goner."
"Why so?"
"Because he told me the other day that he never had been able to keep his head above water since he got married."
—[New York Press.]

HIS FORGOTTEN THAT.

"This coat is too tight across the chest."
"Well, it won't be long. You are a cigarette smoker, you know."

TO HIM THAT WAITS.

"All things come to him who waits."
"Is true as sages say;
I'm waiting for a million, and
There came a dun to-day."
—[New York World.]

A SALE SECURED.

Friend—What is your idea in calling your new book "A Secret?"
Author—I expect the women to buy it and give it away.

TO MAKE A WOMAN.

Mrs. Smythe—I never could understand why it takes ten tailors to make a man.
Mrs. (unwarily)—Why?
Mrs. Smythe—Because I should feel made with just one dressmaker.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN.

Mrs. Luviday—Why are you so changed, Charles? Before we were married you used to talk to me by the hour; now you scarcely ever have a word to say to me.

Mr. Luviday—Spoken, my dear, was given to man to conceal his thoughts. Being my wife, you know, I have nothing to conceal from you.—[The Jester.]

A MATTER OF DOUBT.

"I don't think I shall call on Miss Nippings again," he said reflectively.
"Why?"
"She made use of the expression, 'the late unpleasantness' last night."

"What of that?"
"She said it in a way that left me in doubt as to whether she meant me or the war."—[Washington Star.]

IN A NEW YORK HOTEL.

First Drummer—That hotel clerk in there shows a disposition to run over everybody who comes in his way.
Second Drummer—I can account for that.

"How?"
"You see, he wears a diamond breast-pin that has so frequently been mistaken for a head-light of a locomotive that he really thinks he is one. That's why he runs over people."—[Texas Siftings.]

SETS 'EM UP.

Bora—In drinking with your friends you must be very liberal, Jake.
Jake—Why so?
Coro (yawning)—You do so much "setting up."

SECOND THOUGHT.

She (after he has stolen a kiss)—I am surprised, sir. I never thought that of you. I never thought you would dare. (Silence.) I didn't think you had that much spunk.—[New York Herald.]

EDISON'S LATEST.

The people of this brilliant age will, doubtless, soon expect to hear the "wizards" talking clock. Converse in dial-ect.
—[Chicago Journal.]

SOCIETY INCIDENT IN ARIZONA.

Miss Lariat—Mr. Dyle, let me introduce my brother, Mr. Lariat.
Mr. Dyle (proprietor of lending fare banking institution)—I am glad to see you, sir.

Mr. Lariat—I think I have met you before, Mr. Dyle.
Mr. Dyle (imagination pulling out a handful of coin)—Er—how much?—[Chicago Tribune.]

SO DIFFERENT.

Mr. Billus—Maria, I think you lavish altogether too much time and attention on that pool.
Mrs. Billus—Poor little fellow! I feel so sorry for him, John! You know he hasn't any club where he can go and spend three or four hours every evening.
—[Chicago Tribune.]

THE STUMPERS.

"Why do you think all politicians would make good dentists?"
"They are experts when it comes to taking the stump."

AN OCEAN JOKE.

Jake—You are the shore, darling; I am the ship that hugs you.
Old Belows—(entering)—Yes, I am the breaker.
And Jake passed into the darkness with an inclination to stand up.

How They Do in Florence.

A harrowing tale comes across the sea about a young American girl who was studying music in Florence.

She had few friends in the city, and lived by herself. She became ill, and apparently from a desire not to worry any one else, she struggled against her increasing weakness, and let no one know of her condition.

She had been helpless and in considerable need of careful nursing for some days, when one evening after night had fallen, four black-robed figures, with hidden faces and only holes out through the sombre cloth for their eyes, appeared in her room. Almost fainting from terror, she made a frantic appeal for mercy, but it only met with a low murmured response, which did not reassure her. Finally the stretcher which they brought was placed at her bedside, she was slipped on to it, a cloth was thrown over her and she felt herself borne through the streets.

But not to a terrible dungeon, as her fevered imagination supposed. When she regained consciousness it was to find herself in a hospital ward, where she received devoted care and attention. Later on she learned that her case had come under the notice of the famous Order of the Misericordia, and its efficient, though mysteriously alarming, ministrations was the result.

All ranks and conditions of Florentine society hold membership in this order; and the shrouding robes are worn so that service without ostentation may be rendered. It has existed for hundreds of years.—[New York World.]

A Bootblack's Odd Sign.

The United States once claimed the "Learned Blacksmith," but it has remained for Liverpool, England, to come forward in these latter days with a "Learned Shoemaker," who displays the following as a sign as well as a proof of his erudition:

"Pedal teguments artistically illuminated in ebony lues and lubricated in a workmanlike manner for the infinitesimal remuneration of two pence. Antiquated teguments (pedal or superpedal) expurgated judiciously and resuscitated with exceeding expedition for a nominal compensation. Of the innumerable forestates of heaven and of paradise, which every patron is permitted to partake, I would simply and briefly remark that from the eventuation of the operation to its ultimate successful completion, the patron reclines superincumbent on cushions which a sybarite might envy. In this superlatively luxurious attitude my customers will find that the horizontal and the perpendicular are gracefully blended."—[St. Louis Republic.]