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Twenty million acres of the land of the United States are held by Englishmen.

The colony of Sierra Leone, Africa, is 103 years old, yet there is no machinery there except the sewing machine.

Mr. Keith has contracted with the Costa Rican Government for the construction of a suspension bridge over the Reventazon River.

Professor P. H. Carpenter, the deep-sea student, like Hugh Miller, the geologist, has taken his own life after a period of madness.

In Gray's Harbor, Washington, the pelican is a common sight. Captain Bergman, of the steamer Typhoon, shot two of the birds the other day, and in order to find out how much water the pouch of the bird would hold, he cut off the head of one of them and tied a string tightly about the neck.

In a letter written shortly before his death, the historian James Parton illustrated his views on the financial side of authorship by saying: "An industrious writer, by the legitimate exercise of his calling—that is, never writing advertisements or trash for the sake of pay—can just exist, no more."

It seems likely, notes the Chicago Herald, that electricity is to be called in to explain many of the celestial phenomena which have hitherto been ascribed to other agencies.

G. W. Childs, in the Philadelphia Ledger, is authority for the statement that American gardeners are now producing as fine chrysanthemums as those of Japan.

The Breckers' Gazette says it recently visited the Union Stock Yards at Chicago, in company with a gentleman from England who is carefully studying American agriculture.

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THE KEY OF CHRISTMAS LAND.

Who has the key of the Christmas Land? Where the bonfire shines, And the holly twines, Carols sing—a merry band—And stars are bright o'er that fair strand—Who has the key of Christmas Land?

Light are the hearts in Christmas Land; In each group you meet There are faces sweet. Bosoms young and gentle are there, And brows not yet wrinkled with care—Who has the key of Christmas Land?

Dear baby hearts in Christmas Land, We want to be near, And join in your cheer. When the trees with their strange fruit bend, And you wait for what Santa sends—Who has the key of Christmas Land?

Love has the key of Christmas Land, Oh! come, dear love, With wings like the dove, Sweave over us the light of peace, Sow for us harvest full of increase—Open the gates of Christmas Land.

Open the gates of Christmas Land; There is much to do And days are few. But all men set Charity free; By thy grace, let us see thee here None of God's poor in Christmas Land. —William Tell.

A MAD CHRISTMAS.

BY R. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM.

If there is one thing more than another when a bachelor commences to doubt whether his state of single blessedness is the most desirable form of existence it is at Christmas time. The joys of the season are essentially domestic joys; and every one is either looking forward to convivial meetings with a circle of relations and friends or a happy reunion with his own family.

Now, although I must plead guilty to ten years of bachelorhood, I never was one of the misanthropic type. I was single (observe the past tense) not from principle, but merely from force of circumstances, and I was never addicted to shutting myself up with my books and a cat, and growing cynical remarks at the pleasure seeking world.

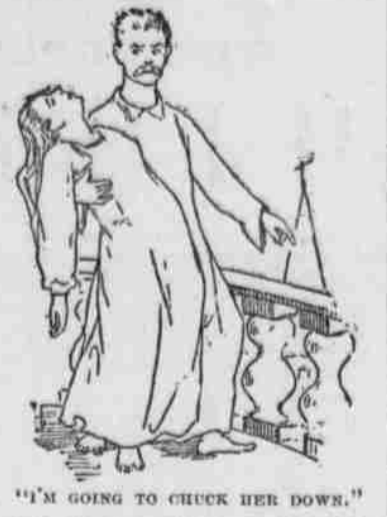
The idea of spending Christmas in any solitary room, with only my landlady and her domestic to talk to was a contingency which I had never contemplated for a moment; but last year I was very nearly brought face to face with it. I generally had at least two or three invitations to select from, and chose the one where I should be likely to meet the most interesting set of people; but on this occasion my usual invitations did not arrive.

The Harwoods, with whom I had spent the Christmas before, had lost a child, and were in mourning; the Houldens were wintering at Nice (Mrs. Houlden was delicate) and at Houghton Grange both the girls were married, and the Christmas home parties were things of the past.

These were my stock invitations; and as I recollected others among my circle of acquaintances to whom something or other had happened since last year it slowly dawned upon me that if I desired to avoid a Christmas in London I had better make arrangements to remove myself either to a northern hydropathic establishment which I had occasionally honored with my presence, or to a Brighton hotel, where I was sure of falling in with some pleasant company.

Just as I had arrived at this melancholy decision, however, a letter arrived which afforded me the greatest satisfaction. It was an invitation to spend a week or two with my old friend, Fred Hallaton, at his place in Leicester-shire; and with the ill-recollection before me of a pleasant Christmas spent at Gaultby Hall some three years ago, I lost no time in penning a cordial assent to the welcome invitation.

to see me, however, and greeted me warmly.



"I'M GOING TO CHUCK HER DOWN."

During our drive to Gaultby I hazarded a few remarks, with a view to ascertaining what sort of a party there was collected at the Hall, but I got nothing definite out of him. He was quite unlike his old self, and I came to the conclusion that he must be ill.

How long I sat there I cannot tell, for I fell into a heavy doze, and when I woke up with a sudden start it was with the uneasy consciousness that something unusual had awakened me. I sprang to my feet and looked fearfully around. The flickering flames of my fire, almost burned out, were still sufficient to show me that no one had entered the room; but while I stood there with strained senses I heard a sound which made my blood run cold within me; and, although I am no coward, I shivered with fear.

I am no coward, I shivered with fear. It was the half-muffled shriek of a woman in agony, and it came from Mrs. Hallaton's room. For a moment I was powerless to move; then I hastily unlocked the door, and, hurrying down the corridor, knocked at hers. There was no answer. I tried the handle; it was locked; but, listening for a moment, I could hear the sound of a woman gasping for breath. I rushed back along the corridor to Fred's room. The door was closed, but unlocked, and I threw it open.

"Fred!" I cried; but Fred was not there, nor had the bed been slept on. A candle was burning on the dressing table, and in the right hand corner of the room was what appeared to be a hole in the wall, but when I stood before it I saw at once that it was a secret passage running parallel with the corridor. Looking down it, I could see a light at the other end, and knowing it must lead into Mrs. Hallaton's room, I caught up the candle and bending almost double half ran, half crept along it, until I reached its other extremity, and found myself in Mrs. Hallaton's room. I stood upright and glanced half eagerly, half fearfully around. The room was empty, but the window directly opposite to me was open, and as my eyes fell upon it I stood petrified with a dull sickening horror, and the candle dropped with a crash from my nerveless fingers.

I stammered out an expression of sympathy. To tell the truth, I scarcely knew what to say. I was bewildered at this painful explanation of the gloom which reigned over the house. Presently Fred closed his eyes and left me to digest this strange and unwelcome piece of news. I am naturally somewhat selfish, and before very long my sympathy was diverted in some measure from my host to myself. It occurred to me that it was by a guest in a house the mistress of which was mad. It was not altogether kind of Fred to invite me, I thought, under the circumstances, without some explanation of his wife's state. I began to feel quite as injured man. I was quite tired of my own company, and Fred was fast asleep. So I opened the door softly and made my way down to the hall. As I passed an open door Mrs. Hallaton appeared and beckoned me in. I had no alternative but to obey her invitation.

"Mr. Neilson," she said, in an agitated tone, "as you are going to stop here for a day or two, there is something connected with this household which you ought to know. Has my husband told you anything?" I bowed and told her gravely that I knew all, and that she had my profoundest sympathy.

"Perhaps you are surprised that I should ask whether Fred had told you," she said, turning a little away from me. "It seems a rangle, doesn't it, that one should be mad and be conscious of it? It only comes on in fits, and they are terrible." She shuddered, and so, to tell the truth, did I. "Such a phase of madness is probably not incurable," I ventured to suggest timidly.

"Incurable! of course it is not incurable," she answered, vehemently. "I edged a little toward the door. I had no experience in talking with lunatics, and felt anything but comfortable in my present position. Mrs. Hallaton was beginning to look very excited and dangerous.

and then my struggling feet seemed to part with the earth, as with a wild yell of: "Leicester! Leicester!"

"Leicester! Leicester!" I opened my eyes and sat up with a start. The paper had slipped from my fingers, and the train was slowly steaming into Leicester station, and there, standing upon the platform, smiling and robust, looking the very picture of health, was Fred Hallaton.

That Christmas party at Gaultby Hall was the most enjoyable I was ever at, and the people (the house was crammed full of visitors) the most entertaining and agreeable I ever met. There was one young person especially—a Miss Alice Pratton she was then—with whom I got on remarkably well. I never enjoyed a visit so much in my life as I did that one, nor a ride so much as one afternoon when Miss Pratton and I, after a capital run, rode home together with her little hand in mine and our horses very close together. Next Christmas, if Alice doesn't object, I mean to have a jolly little house party of my own.

Christmas Carols.

Musical specialists divide carols into two classes, the sacred and the secular, although there is a third, the words of which are a curious admixture of both, as for example: "If the sun shines through the apple tree on Christmas Day there will be an abundant crop the following year."

Now the time comes wherein Our Savior Christ is born, The larder's full of beef and pork The garner's filled with corn.

The music is often excellent, many of the carols being composed during the best days of the ecclesiastical masters, and in not a few of these compositions appear fugue, counterpoint, and even canon of excellent composition and harmony. They were originally sung in all the churches at Christmas time, instead of the hymns for the day, and in the rural districts of England this custom is still observed. But more frequently at present they are heard from the lips of strolling bands of singers, while a solitary warbler sometimes serves to recall the caroller in Dickens's Christmas story, who goes outside the door with: "God bless you, merry gentlemen, may nothing you dismay," when old Scrooge cuts the song short with a ruler.

Many collections of carols have been made, and some of them are really remarkable compositions, being fugues in three to six parts, and the words of not a few are really poetical, both in idea and language, such as "The Carol of the Holy Well": "All under the leaves, the leaves of life, I met with virgins sweet; And one of them was Mary mild, Our Lord's mother of Heaven. Oh, what are you seeking, you seven fair maids? All under the leaves of life, Come tell me what seek you All under the leaves of life."

Christmas Hints.

Buy no more than you can afford. Give no gift where you do not delight to. Shop no more than you have the strength for. Entertain only within you means. Keep your Christmas nerve and muscle and heart and hope and cheer first for your own home, your own sweetest, your dearest, your closest, your truest, and then for the homeless, the friendless, the unloved, the "untended," and by true, true to the last Christmas card that goes to your postoffice, or the last "Merry Christmas" that crosses your lips!

Couldn't Fool Santa Claus.

Santa Claus—"One of the boys has been trying to ring in his father's stocking on me, but he's going to get badly left."

Christmas Prayers and Saws.

A warm Christmas, a cold Easter. A green Christmas makes a fat graveyard. If ice will bear a man before Christmas it will not bear him afterward. If Christmas finds a bridge he'll break it; if he finds none he'll make one.

Scientific Vision.

The human retina and the chemical retina, says Professor William Schooling, see very differently. Look at the Pleiades with unaided eye as I you may see six or seven or a dozen stars; look at it through a three inch telescope and you may see perhaps 300. Study it through a telescope for three years as M. Wolff has done, and map the stars and their places, and you may record 600 to 700 stars on a strange background of nebulous light; expose a sensitive plate for an hour and more than twice that number are revealed, lengthen the exposure to four hours and you have a picture of 2292 stars with a different and more extensive background of nebulosity.

THE QUEER WAYS OF RAT

UNPLEASANT LITTLE BEASTS, BUT WORTH STUDYING.

What Their Tails Are Good For—Clothes Their Skins—Teaching Them Tricks—Rats as Food. A rat's tail is a wonderful thing. The great naturalist, Cuvier, says that there are more muscles in this curious appendage than are to be found in that part of the human anatomy which is most admired for its ingenious structure—namely, the hand. To the rat, in fact, its tail serves as a sort of hand, by means of which the animal is enabled to crawl along narrow ledges or other difficult passages, using it to balance with or to gain a hold. It is prehensile, like the tails of some monkeys. By means of it the little beast can jump up heights otherwise inaccessible, employing it as a projectile spring.

It has often been said that the glove-makers of Paris make use in their trade of the skins of rats which are caught in the sewers, but this is denied. Certainly, says the Washington Star, the material would not be strong enough to successfully counterfeit the kid, unless it were for the thumb parts only, which are generally of a thinner and different kind of leather from the rest. Suggestion has been made that the trade might be opened with the Chinese for the skins of the rats they eat. A thrifty Welshman at one time exhibited himself publicly in England attired in a costume composed from top to toe of ratskins, which he had spent three years and a half in collecting. The dress was made entirely by himself. It consisted of hat, neckerchief, coat, waistcoat, trousers, tippet, gaiters and shoes. The number of rats required to complete the suit was 670. Most curious of the garments was the tippet, composed entirely of rats' tails. At one time a batch of several thousand ratskins was imported from France into England for manufacturing purposes, but they were found too small and too fine in texture to be useful.

Dr. Buckland says that many of the elephants' tusks brought to London for the use of workers in ivory are observed to have their surfaces grooved into small furrows of unequal depth as though cut out by a very sharp-edged instrument. This is done by rats, which are fond of the gelatine or animal glue in the substance. The ivory cutter selects for his purposes the preference those tusks which have been gnawed in this way, because they are the ones which contain the most gelatine and are therefore the best in material. Curiously enough, the trade, while giving this much recognition to the rats' work, has not recognized them as the authors of it, the common belief in the business being that the ivory, before being gnawed by alligators. How it is imagined that alligators get a chance to chew elephants' tusks is a problem. How many people have ever eaten jelly made from elephants' tusks? Yet it is very good indeed. In the English factories where many tons of ivory are sawn annually to make handles for knives and forks, great quantities of ivory dust are obtained. This dust is sold at the rate of sixpence a pound, and, when properly boiled and prepared, it makes the finest, purest and most nutritious animal jelly known. Years ago ivory jelly was a very fashionable remedy and much sought after.

Rats are remarkably intelligent animals, as may be perceived from the difficulty that is experienced in catching them. They can be taught many tricks. Among other things it is possible to make them learn how to beg, to jump through a hoop, to drag a little cart in harness and to carry sticks or money. Rats have never found favor as a delicacy for the table in Europe or in this country, but in many lands they are relished as an article of diet. The slaves of Jamaica used to regard them as a dainty, their masters not providing them with any other meat. Their method of cooking the toothsome rodents was to impale each one on a long wooden skewer, after cleaning the animal and cutting off the tail, turning it briskly around over a fire until the hair was all burnt off. Then was scraped until free from fur, and finally the end of the skewer was stuck into the ground, inclined toward the fire until it was roasted dry and crisp, thus being made ready for the meal. Rats may commonly be seen for sale in the markets of any Chinese town, split and pressed under a heavy weight, so as to look somewhat like dried fish. In this shape the pig-tailed oriental buys them, soaks them in water and then boils, roasts or fries them.

Rats cause great annoyance on board of ships. Dr. Kane said that if asked what, after darkness, cold and scurvy, were the three best things of his arctic sojourn, he would say rats, rats, rats. Nevertheless, when in distress for other food, he was afterward very glad to eat the pests. He writes: "Through the long winter night Hans used to beguile his lonely hours of watch by shooting rats with bow and arrow. The repugnance of my associates to share with me this table luxury gave me frequent advantage of fresh-meat soup, which contributed no doubt to my comparative immunity from scurvy."

Again he writes: "Our diet will be only a stock of meat biscuit, to which I shall add for myself a few rats chopped up and frozen into tallow balls."

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FAIR IS THE WORLD.

Tender was spring, when shyly she came wooing, Kissing to life the clouds that long were dead; Summer was fair, her generous aims pursuing, Filling the world with garlands and with bread. Fair is the world, now lordly Autumn rules, With leaf and blossom rudely thrust away; Sweet is the air the sturdy north wind cools, And dog and gun take their awaited day. Keen is my joy, though sadly their last petals The faithful asters drop upon the soil, Blithe is my heart, though grim the frosty crystals Lie cold upon the prostrate golden rod. Fair is the world, my buoyant youth recalling, As deep into the woods I take my way; Fair is the world, though forest leaves are falling And moor and marsh and upland change to gray.

For overland the eager wild fowl greets me, And from the upland pipes the plover's cry, The saucy "scape" of startled jacksnipe meets me, And timorous hares to friendly cover fly. Yes! fair's the world, though cold Old Time turns the glass, And woods are bare of any bird that sings! For staunch old Bang goes "feathering" through the grass, And stirs the oases with whirl of hurrying wings. —Outing.

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

A marital strain—The tug of war. Wages always appeal to man's hire nature.—Pittsburg Dispatch. The bright girl tries to make light of everything.—Dallas News. You can't estimate a man's liberality by what he thinks you ought to give.—Elmira Gazette.

"What on earth is Binks picking on the guitar?" "A quarrel, I should judge."—Puck. The naves of a church do not comprise the rogues of the congregation.—Chicago Tribune. A good liar is better company than a truthful man with an impediment in his speech.—Drake's Magazine.

"Time's up," as the workman announced when he fixed the hanging clock.—Baltimore American. It is a great deal easier to secure an indorsement for a man's character than for his note.—Pittsburg Dispatch. The statement that a detective recently caught a cold has been received in suggestive silence.—Binghamton Leader.

Words are ever mighty to deceive. It makes a big difference whether a tramp or a hero cries, "Give me rest!"—Puck. It takes a smart boy to tell a lie successfully. If he tells it unsuccessfully his father is apt to make him smart.—Providence Telegram. "Which one do you wish to marry?" "The younger sister." "Which one is she?" "I don't know. They both claim to be."—Brooklyn Life.

Hicks—"What is political faith?" Wicks—"Merely a choice between the lies promulgated by the different parties."—Boston Transcript. If all the people in the world were expert mind readers, how quickly the daily thoughts of most people would be radically improved.—Somerville Journal. The sun has its fiery glow, The moon has its silvery gleam, The elm tree has no red at all, But it's handsome just the same. —Boston Transcript.

The Arkansas rejected lover who is suspected of having burned a bride's trousseau may have wished to be regarded as her old flame.—Louisville Courier-Journal. Happy thought! Feeblewitte suggests that henceforth it be considered quite the proper thing to serve dropped eggs with pickled-up dinners.—Detroit Free Press. If a man could only see the consequences of all the evil things he does how hard he would try—not to do the evil things, but to avert the consequences.—Somerville Journal.

"Mrs. Newrich's speech betrays her plebeian origin." "Yes, but she is making every effort to refine it." "Think so." "Yes. To-day at dinner she asked for a small slice of mutton."—New York Press. Professor Whackem—"Who helped you to do those sums?" Johnny Fizzle-top—"Nobody sir." "What! nobody? Now don't lie. Didn't your brother help you?" "No, he didn't help me; he did them all by himself."—Texas Sittings. "After all," said the great man as he laid down the paper, "it is the living who suffer most when one of our number passes from this life." "Do you think so?" said his private secretary. "Yes; the survivors are the ones who see the newspaper pictures."—Washington Post. An Objection Overcome: Hojak—"It is objected that now the Government plumbers can produce a shower, they have no means of shutting the rats off when we have had enough." Tomlik—"Oh, yes, they have. All they need to do is send up a lot of balloons loaded with dry sponges."—Brooklyn Life. It is said of a certain literary woman that she is never at loss for a reply, and never misses an opportunity to say a bright thing. One day, a friend was describing to her a noted artist, about whom her curiosity had been greatly aroused, but whom she had never seen. "To begin with," remarked the friend, "he has a perfect Niagara of a forehead!" "What!" said the other; "do you mean to tell me the poor man has a cataract over both eyes?"—Argosy.