

## "Easy Reading" Page.



### TANNERIES.

The other day while coming past the mammoth tannery at Laporte, we looked into the field just over the road and saw a number of cows grazing contentedly. We were struck by the irony of the situation. Here the cow stood feeding without a thought of anything beyond the next bite of succulent graass, and just yonder, with clanking, roaring wheels, thumping hammers, splashing vats, thundering rollers and hissing steam stands a factory erected and operated for the express purpose of tanning her hide, and the hides of all her sisters and brothers.

The old cow feeding across the way knew nothing about that. Unless her smellers were pretty blunt, she could not help noticing an odor that never exuded from a buttercup nor a clover blossom, but if she noticed it she said nothing to us on the subject. To the best of our knowledge and belief she had no idea that

The sweet perfume upon the air,  
Was borne from cow skins over there.

It seems a pity that cows don't know more. Aren't you glad you are a man and know more than a cow? You would never be caught eating your grub in the shadow of an institution built for the purpose of tanning your hide, now would you? Let's see.

Don't suppose it was you that we saw a few weeks ago licking your chops as the unctuous candidate sozzled you with taffy and made you believe his election would make baled hay grow on the prongs of your stump fence. He is a tanner, sir. He wants your hide.

Frequently we have astonishing offers of stock in some gold mine in the west. We are immune from temptation owing to the fact that we have nothing to invest. Probably if we had, we would bite and get our hide tanned. Lots of our rich brothers do.

Here I see a youth who wants to be a man. He has a bottle in his hand. There is something in the bottle and there is something in the youth. Shy around that stuff, my boy. That is an extract which will tan a hide more thoroughly, and more rapidly than any other process known to science. We are now passing a saloon; do you smell that odor? Well that is a tannery for human hides. This is where the Devil gets most of his "soul" leather. If you don't want him to get your cherished hide, don't pasiuere around here.

A few evenings since we were at the station waiting for the train. A motherly looking foreigner was there with divers bundles and parcels. Among the baggage was an infant which wailed in a foreign tongue we could not understand. The mother however knew what was wanted, but was disinclined to grant the favor. The child was persistent the mother obstinate. She turned him over and tanned his hide a bit, but that only added a few fresh tones to his tale of woe. At last in despair she yielded the point in controversy, drew forth the vials of nourishment and the little rascal closed his argumedt at once. So we thought we had no longer a place in those feeding grounds, and went outside to do some systematic waiting. Directly we saw two young fellows approaching. One had an air of proprietorship and the other a look of ex-

pectancy. He followed at the other's elbow, listening with rapt attention to what he was saying, giggling and grinning at a great rate. As they passed around the corner of the station we saw the self contained young man reach in his bosom for something. Good lands of shredded codfish! we thought, he is going to set 'em up the same as the lady inside has done to her baby, but not so. He drew out a bottle of something that had a familiar tint and odor. The other fellow grasped it with evidences of delight, and made it stand bottom side up on the end of his mouth for a big round minute by the second hand. That chap is headed for the tannery and unless he breaks away from the essence of corn nubbins, his hide will be soaking in the vats of the family graveyard before he knows it.

Tanning is a great industry, and extends all the way from congress to the unbusted trusts of the commonwealth. It even percolates the moral ethics of horse trading and has branch offices in the haunts of contractors who build state capitols. It is an unwelcome fact that men in their greed for gain, study schemes to skin the unlucky sons of Adam instead of patching the punctures made by the thorns of life's hedgerow with court plaster and salve.

After all, the great majority of us are not so much wiser and more witty than the old cow. All around us the tanneries roar and grind but as long as we can see a wisp of grass ahead, we go on in the even tenor of our way, unconcerned and untroubled except when the landlord or tax collector make their regular visits.

If we really were wiser, we would realize that we have that greatest of privileges--the ballot; and when conditions became unsatisfactory, we would simply initiate new conditions and go to the polls and back them up by our vote. If taxation became burdensome or an arogant trust goaded us with the rowels of immoderate prices, our remedy would be the same--square away with our mighty weapon, the ballot of an American freeman, and all the tanners of human hides in the nation would quail and cower like curs before the lash.

But the pity of it is, we have not yet discovered the power that lies within our grasp. A nation for one hundred and thirty-three years with the inalienable right under the declaration and the constitution, to free speech, free press and free suffrage. Speech has been unrestrained, the press has hurled its thunderbolts without interference, but suffrage has been but a fiction for years; and why? Only because the people have failed to comprehend that in the ballot lies the potent remedy for every political, business and social evil in the nation.

We certainly are slow. It is highly probable that it will take another hundred years for the people to discover themselves. The bunoko steerers of high finance, the political boodlers do not need to become alarmed, expecting the people to rouse up suddenly from the doze in which they have been oblivious to all that so closely and persohally concerns them. Generations will be born, flourish and expire, and the industrious tanner will still find hides to be had for the asking. The perfecting of the human race is no lightning process.

Still progress is being made. It is not so dead easy to fool all the people all the time as it was once. There was a time when a man of wealth and prominence could indulge in all kinds of excesses and go on his way unrebuked, but he can't do it today.

Our thoughts go back to the time when we were a chick under mother's wing. Sometimes we got our hide properly tanned then, and thought it rather harsh medicine, but it did us good, and for the sake of those care free days we would stand to be tanned some more.

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