

THE MIDDLEBURGH POST.

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Editor and Proprietor

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Texas produces one-third of the American cotton crop and has but three cotton mills.

In France, if a person dies with more debts than can be covered by his estate, the doctor's bill has precedence over all other claims.

Philadelphia is a veritable Eden, at least to the street car traveler. One road at least runs its cars every minute, and limits the passengers to the number of seats.

Sir Walter Besant estimates that the living descendants of the pilgrim fathers in the United States number about 15,000, although not 10,000, he thinks, know the relationship.

The supreme court of Georgia has recently declared that when a man has reached sixty-eight years of age he is "an aged man" in the eyes of the law. The law thus snips off four years from the allotted span of three-score years and ten.

Speaker Gully of the British House of Commons, has just cast his deciding vote for the first time since assuming office, there being a tie vote for the second reading of an unimportant bill. It is thirty years since the speaker has voted.

According to the latest statistics published by the Mexican government, the population of the city of Mexico at the end of 1896 numbered 330,638. The death rate during the year, exclusive of infants still-born, was 47 per 1000 of the population.

Queen Victoria wears the same state bonnet for several seasons. It is a ponderous velvet affair with snowy plumes, and the shape has not been changed in twenty-five years. As a rule women buy new hats when the style changes; men when their hats are worn out.

Swiss children are obliged to attend school six to eight years, fines being imposed on their parents in case of unexcused absence. But as many parents are too poor to provide food and clothing for their children not a few of the cantons have undertaken to provide assistance, and it is estimated that last year 40,000 children were thus aided by the state.

The National Educational association has decided in favor of reformed spelling to the extent of 12 words, and in the reports of the proceedings of the association hereafter the simplified spellings will be employed. The department of superintendence of the association voted to submit the selection of the amended spellings to a committee of three, of which Dr. William T. Harris, United States Commissioner of Education, was chairman, and the committee decided on the following list of words: Tho—(through); catalog—(catalogue); program—(programme); decalog—(decologue); thro—(through); altho—(although); thorefare—(throughfare); thru—(through); thruout—(throughout); prolog—(prologue); demagog—(demagogue); pedagog—(pedagogue).

The bicycle has probably done more to develop the mechanical genius of the people of today than any other agency, remarks the Washington Star. With the old wheel, the ordinary, while a repair kit was carried, it was seldom needed, for the whole machine was built for wear, weighing two and three times as much as the modern safety, and having tires almost unbreakable. The only danger was from a loosened tire. Later on the narrow tire and then the cushion tire came in, each requiring more care, and with them came the sprockets, chains and adjustable saddles and handle bars that required some skill to manipulate. But it was with the advent of the eighteen to twenty-one-pound pneumatic that skill was really called for, and today it is hard to find an owner of a wheel who is unable to take his machine apart, or who does not thoroughly understand its make-up. Good evidence of this is to be had at any of the cycle shows, or even in the regular sales rooms. At the former it is a common sight to see a crowd around some new model, every one—man or woman, young or old—seemingly possessed of accurate knowledge and capable of weighing carefully the advantages offered by each particular make.

The Revised Version. The fine de stele lever puts it thus: "I love the very ground Miss Bloomer bikes over."—Triffles.

NOT TO BE MENDED AGAIN.

You can take a piece of china that's been broken by the maid, And can put the thing together if you know the mender's trade; You can mend the thing so neatly that no one will ever know That it has e'er been shattered by an unconsidered blow.

You can take a heart that's broken by some small flirtatious girl, And can mend the fractured pieces till they're smooth as any pearl, Ay, say that that heart's possessor feels as sturdy as an oak, And forgets that e'er it happened that his heart was ever "broke."

You can fall from a bicycle and make pieces of your nose; You can break your collar-bone, or you can fracture all your toes; You can crush your arm in splinters; you can smash your either leg, And a doctor he will fix it till it's whole as any egg.

You can smash an ocean record, but that record still is there, You may break a trotting record with a rapid little mare, And leave the old one standing just as whole, quite as complete, As when it sent the jockeys a-buzzing through the street.

But alas! if you are angry, and have angry words to say, Beware a broken silence, or you'll surely rue the day. For a silence that is broken, by the women or the men, Is a thing that can't be mended, can't be rendered whole again.

THE CAVERN OF FLIES.

VERA CRUZ, Mexico, June 21.—At Fecoh, State of Yucatan, and at other places in that State, the sun has been obscured for several days by clouds of flies, which came from the interior country.—The New York Sun.

Is this the proof of the story told by the late General Jo O. Shelby, the Confederate who never surrendered, but who, nevertheless, died United States Marshal for the Western District of Missouri? Has the Cavern of Flies broken loose?

It was near this same Fecoh, according to the General's story, that Walter Andrews Balister, formerly living near Kansas City, Mo., won a fortune by entering the famous Cavern of Flies.

The Cavern of Flies is one of the most wonderful and, at the same time, one of the most hideous places in the world.

Balister's adventure, in daring and inexorable terror, is not exceeded by the most extravagant flights of fiction. The memory of his experience undoubtedly wore upon Balister's mind, for he packed up six years ago and left his home, saying:

"I am going to Greenland, where it is too cold for flies."

It is not known in what year he went to Yucatan. By a strange whim of fortune this tall, thin youth, from the district of Missouri, where the James boys had their haunts, found himself shipping from New Orleans as one of a party to explore the ancient ruins of Yucatan.

When he returned to Jackson County in 1880 his old friends did not know him. His face and hands were covered with countless tiny blue spots, as if he had been tattooed. He had plenty of money, although he went from the Missouri hills with nothing except the six-shooter in his hip pocket.

He built a fine house. Each window of the house was provided with firm wire netting. A summer house in the grounds was built, enmeshed entirely with netting. When asked why he used all this expensive wire netting, Balister replied, gruffly:

"To keep out flies!"

Soon his black servants told a strange story. Their master's chief requirement was that they should let no flies into the house. If he heard one buzzing, every person in the house was ordered to kill that fly, to do nothing until the fly was killed.

One day Balister found a black boy asleep with a fly perched on his nose. He struck the boy a blow that all but killed him!

It was too near the big up-to-date town of Kansas City for black boys to be struck down by their masters, hence Balister was arrested for assault with intent to kill.

He declared he aimed at the fly, not the boy. This excuse was considered a bit of grim humor.

It was this circumstance that led the strange man to tell to the late General J. O. Shelby the story of the "Cavern of Flies." General Shelby told the story several times in convivial moments.

Balister's father was one of my bravest soldiers," said General Shelby, "and rode to Mexico with me rather than surrender to the Yankees. I met young Balister, but never asked him what made his face blue. Gentlemen, that man was blue all over! When he was charged with trying to kill the boy, he said to me:

"General, it is no joke—I did aim at the fly!"

"Then he told me the story which, he said, had never passed his lips before, it was so painful for him to tell."

"The next day they tried again, and were rewarded by signs of light. Encouraged by the light, they fought through the swarms of insects and entered what seemed the crater of an extinct volcano. The terrible smell was from masses of flies underfoot. Warm fumes still arose from the rocks. High above them were the apertures through which came the daylight.

"It is a burial place!" exclaimed the explorers. "Balister knew nothing of the delight of unearthing the traces of extinct nations, his business was to manage mules, but he was filled with wonder to behold rows upon rows of erect skeletons along the walls. The bones of the mysterious dead were covered with flies."

"The next discovery was that the arms and ankles of the skeletons were decorated with bracelets. Pendants hung from grisly necks upon empty ribs and diaphragms!

"It was Balister who cried, 'They are gold!'

"Almost blinded by the attacks of insects, the men began to wrest the treasure from the spectres of an unknown past."

"Balister knocked grinning skulls of queens and nobles from their shoulders and strung his arms with rich necklaces of virgin gold."

"Then arose a sound like the gibbering of ten thousand fiends."

"Frightened and half running for the mouth of the tunnel, the men realized that it was not the angry murmurings of the ghosts of a forgotten race, but the uprising of countless millions and billions of flies!"

"The swarms blotted out the rifts of daylight. The torches were extinguished, and the men fell upon their faces to escape the attack.

"Then, joining hands, they sought to find the tunnel through which they had entered. The pests got under their clothes, under the cloths over their faces, and they were bitten in a thousand places."

"Balister said his companions screamed with agony!"

"They groped along the sides of the cavern, but everywhere their frantic hands felt nothing but the bony legs of the dead."

"Balister, gentlemen, was not a fat, spectacled scientist. He was a strong, fearless young man of the stuff that never surrendered. Yet he said that he felt his mind melting like a snowball in an oven. He wanted to scream and gibber!"

"But, observe Missouri instinct all this time—he clung to his booty!"

"He does not know how long the three men struggled in that avalanche of insects that choked them, that bit them in the gullet even as they were swallowed."

"Balister lost hold of his companions. Their screams, he said, sounded muffled in the angry roar of the myriads of flies which were eating them alive!"

"Almost ready to fall and have his bones picked, Balister, by Missouri instinct, drew his gun and began to shoot!"

"Although shooting at flies was mere madness, Balister said that the act of shooting saved his sanity. It was a natural act for a Missourian, gentlemen!"

"I yelled," Balister said to me, "when I saw, by the flashes, the mouth of the tunnel!"

"Come on!" he shouted to his companions, shouting as he ran and stumbling through the tunnel. The flies pursued him every step.

"He plunged into the court of the ruined temple, threw down his booty, and there tore off his clothes and brushed from his flesh the flies that clung like leeches. He was black with them, black and red—for the blood ran in streams."

"Running to the camp he smeared himself with ointment."

"So engrossed was Balister with his own torments that he did not, for the time, think of his employers."

"Gentlemen, they never came out!"

"Balister assured me on his honor that he went back the whole length of the tunnel, in vain, thinking he might find them lying there unconscious."

"He told me he remained among the ruins several days. He couldn't sleep because, at night, he thought he heard screams in the tunnel."

"I am perfectly sane," he told me, "but I can't bear the sight of a fly." —New York Journal.

"SCOTTIE" WAS REVENGED.

Sure Vengeance For Being Duped Into "Cooning" an Imaginary Log.

"I played a trick on one of the cowboys we called 'Scottie,'" said the excowboy. "But he got even with me in good shape. We were on the round-up, and within two days' drive of Raton, but 'Scottie' couldn't stand it any longer, so he struck off for town early in the morning to fill up. We didn't see anything of him till night. After the cattle had been bedded and the night herders stationed he came into camp maudlin drunk. The boys began to tease him about being drunk, but he swore that he was perfectly sober, and offered to bet that he could walk a scratch."

"I noticed just then that the moon cast my shadow like a log across the creek. I said, 'Scottie, I'll bet you can't walk across the creek on this log.' Scottie looked at it a moment rather dubiously, then said: 'I don't know as I can walk it, but I'll bet I can coon it.' 'All right,' I said, 'coon it.'"

"So he got down on all fours to 'coon' it, and, of course, crawled splash into the creek. The boys set up a howl. He scrambled out, spluttering and cussing, pretty well sobered and swearing that he would 'get even' with the kid for that trick." And he did.

"I had in my string of cow ponies the meanest broncho in New Mexico. No matter how often I rode him he had to have his pitch-out every time he was saddled. I made it a point to get off before the rest of the boys were ready to start. Failing in that, I waited until they were out of the way. One morning, nearly two years after 'Scottie' had 'cooned' the log, I saddled up and mounted. The broncho put his head down to buck. I jerked him up sharply, and the bridle bit broke and let the bridle off over his head. Then he began to pitch and run right toward a barbed wire fence."

"I heard 'Scottie's' voice say 'I catch him for you.' Then his lariat whizzed by my head and caught the horse around the neck. I glanced over my shoulder and saw 'Scottie' set his horse back. It came over me in an instant that he was going to throw my horse and 'get even' with me. So I jerked my feet out of the stirrups and got ready to fall. I landed about thirty feet away, flat on my back. After the boys had brought me around, examined me and found me all there and no harm done, 'Scottie' turned to one of the boys and said: 'I told you I would get even with the kid.'" —Chicago Times-Herald.

Moving Hospitals.

The railway hospital car is the latest novelty in foreign railroading. In the event of a serious accident, these cars can be run to the place of the disaster, where the injured may be picked up and carried to the nearest large city for treatment instead of being left to pass long hours at some wayside station while awaiting surgical attendance. It also enables the railway companies at certain seasons or upon special occasions to transport large numbers of invalids to health resorts or places of pilgrimage. The interior of the car is divided into a main compartment, a corridor on one side and two small rooms at the end. The largest compartment is the hospital proper; it contains twenty-four isolated beds. Each patient lies in front of two little windows. Each bed is provided with a movable table, and a cord serves to hold all the various small objects which the patient may require. The corridors on the outside lead to the linen closet and the doctor's apartment. Various trap doors in the floor, when opened, disclose to view an ice chest, a compartment for the disinfection of soiled linen, and a provision cellar. If necessary, a portion of the hospital chamber may be transformed into an operating room for urgent cases. Finally, as customary abroad, a small chapel for religious worship is provided. This car will be put in charge of a surgeon and nurses, and will be chiefly used to carry invalids from Belgium direct to the health resorts of France.

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Crime in Italy.

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IF WE ONLY KNEW.

Ah! sisters, if we only knew each grief That rends the other, we could never hate, Nor even think remorse could come too late.

So she brought with her a more kind belief, Most surely prejudice is a foul thief Who steals love's blossom through the very gate. Which he would shut against him. It is false.

Press down upon its thorns our coronet, And when we sob for water reach us gall, And when our hearts ache thrust our sides with scorn. Oh, women, women! do ye then forget How all must stumble, though some only fall?

How ye might stay with hope the feet forlorn? —Amelie Rives.

PITH AND POINT.

"Give a poor fellow a lift," soliloquized the burglar, and he lifted a dozen diamond rings.—Washington Capital.

Lady—"Where is my trunk?" Porter—"I couldn't find any trunk, mum, but I've got the handle with the label on." —Standard.

Freshman—"What makes you think these eggs were stolen?" Clubmate—"You can see yourself they've been poached." —Princeton Tiger.

Doctor—"Your friend shows some improvement." Patient's Friend—"Does he?" Doctor—"Yes; he admits that he's a crank." —Puck.

Wife—"How people gaze at my new dress. I presume they wonder if I've been shopping in Paris." Husband—"More likely they wonder if I've been robbing a bank." —Tit-Bits.

Hamm—"From the very first time I went upon the stage my aim has been a high one." Tom Mentor—"Yes, I've always noticed that you invariably played to the gallery." —Boston Transcript.

"What does that man Slickly do for a living?" "For board and lodging he does the hotels, and for clothes does his tailor. Outside of that he does the best he can." —Detroit Free Press.

Chambermaid—"Last evening Monsieur took me for his wife." Cook—"Ah! He kissed you, I suppose?" "Not in the least! He called me names and made a terrible scene." —Lo Figaro.

"I guess there's something the matter with our rubber-tree," observed the small boy. "I've been watching it for a year or two now, and it hasn't sprouted any overshoes yet." —Harper's Bazar.

Mr. Bedford—"I believe in reciprocity in underwear." Mr. Webster—"What do you mean by that?" Mr. Bedford—"Stick to your winter flannels until they stick to you." —Pittsburg Chronicle-Telegraph.

The Judge—"Didn't I tell you the last time that you were here that I wanted to see your face in this court no more?" Weary Watkins—"You did, yeronor, and that is exactly what I told the cop." —Indianapolis Journal.

Telescope Proprietor—"Step up, ladies and gents, and view the planet Mars. One penny, mum." Old Lady—"Oh, law! Hain't it round and smooth?" Telescope Proprietor—"Will the bald-headed gent please step away from in front of the instrument?" —London Tit-Bits.

Husband—"Dearest Mathilde, I have made up my mind to grant all your wishes. You shall go to the mountains six weeks, you shall have a new dress, and the parlor shall be supplied with new rococo furniture." Wife—"Oh, Charles! What have you been doing?" —Fliegende Blätter.

"Mercy!" cried Mr. Barker at the restaurant. "Waiter, is this Neuf-chatel cheese?" "Yes, sir," said the waiter. "Well, I must say it tastes like very old chate cheese. Bring me some cottage cheese instead, and be sure it is made of some cottage since the original Queen Anne period." —Harper's Bazar.

Importation of German Birds.

In the years 1889 and 1892 a society in Portland, Oregon, introduced 400 pairs of song birds from Germany into that State at an expense of little more than \$2000. Of these the plain and blackheaded nightingales have probably become extinct, because few of them survived the long trip, and none has since been seen, but the other species have multiplied with great rapidity, especially the skylarks, which rear from two to four broods every year, so that the whole Willamette Valley, from Portland to Roseburg, is full of them. Besides these there are black starlings, wood larks, song thrushes, black thrushes, goldfinches, chaffinches, ziskins, greenfinches, bullfinches, crossbills, robin redbreasts, linnets, singing quails, goldhammers and forest finches. When it is remembered that the insects and fungus diseases most dangerous to our vegetation are those which have been imported into this country from abroad, and that animals and birds which are held in check by some balance of forces in their native land often become a nuisance in a foreign country, just as rabbits have been in Australia and English sparrow in this country, it is possible that some of these songsters may prove injurious to crops. The chances are, however, that they will do more to help the farmer by keeping insects in check than they will to injure them. —Detroit Free Press.

Chinese Idea of Justice.

A German missionary named Elwin recently delivered a lecture at Shanghai in which he stated that the Chinese believe that "justice" will be administered in the next world very much as it is in this—that is, chiefly by means of bribery, and that consequently it happens occasionally that one of two litigants commits suicide with a view to getting at the judge in the other world before his rival.

SELECT RELIGIOUS READING.
FRESHMANT THOUGHTS FROM THE WORLD'S GREATEST AUTHORS.

June and July—Climb Up to God—A Song of Praise—Trust God for Each Day—They That Sow Must Reap—After Christ—What You Do, Do Now.

June, with sunshine in her eyes, Passed her hand across the skies, Then, with archly smiling lips, Blew upon her finger-tips.

Soon the air grew wondrous sweet, Overhead, and overhead, Under feet, and under feet, Trooped the roses, white and red; Trooped the roses—crimson, white, Pink and yellow, pale and bright; Till they perfumed earth and air, Blossoms, roses, everywhere.

Byron makes the illustrious Bonnard dig footholds in the walls of his dungeon by which he climbs to the lofty window of his cell to get a look at the impressive mountains of his native Switzerland. For weary years he had been confined in the prison of Chillon below the level of the waters of Lake Geneva. He could hear the waters rippled, and night. They formed as if were, a second, and a third, and a fourth, a bird sang at the prison window to him. He sat on the prisoner dug footholds in the plaster of the wall and climbed to the windows above. He looked out and he saw the mountains unchanged by the snow of a thousand years and the patience. That look put new life into him and gave him a vision that lasted him to the end. From that sight he obtained strength, solace. I mean to climb up to God that I may get God's vision of life as he sees it.

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