

The Almost Tragic Tale of An Easter Hat

By MARION C. SMITH

M. R. ARTHUR AVERY was in a bad humor. He glared suspiciously at the coffee, tasted it, and he knew it was not the coffee, but the man who was making it. "Hard as a brickbat," he snapped. "Can't you get a cook who can read the clock?"

He was one of those men who are always in a bad humor when their consciences are out of order. He had just refused his wife the money for an Easter hat, and she had borne the disappointment with becoming meekness. She did not know the reason for the refusal, but he did, and that was the trouble. He wanted to join another club.

Mrs. Avery surmised that his conscience was uneasy and took heart. She hoped that he would come around there were still four days to spare, and even if he did not come around until after Easter she could bear it if only the one hat she wanted had not been sold in the interval. It was a hat worth waiting for, and it matched her new spring suit to perfection.

Nothing else would do. The hats that year were monstrosities. Mrs. Avery was a woman of excellent taste and knew what she wanted. She also knew that her husband was very much in love with her. Surely he would come around!

He did not come entirely around that day, however. He went so far as to telephone to his friend in the new club, asking him not to propose his name just yet. There was a little uncertainty. He would let him know in a day or two. The next day at lunch time he went uptown and flattened his nose—figuratively—against one of the show windows at Mevor & Milner's.

He couldn't remember the price she had mentioned. Was it \$15 or \$20? Absurd, of course, but not extravagantly high, as hats go. He would just go in and price them.

"It must be blue, because she said it matched her suit, and I know that's blue," he said helplessly to the sales woman.

"Blue? Oh, we have a model hat in blue," said that astute young person.



"AND THEY DON'T EXCHANGE HATS!" going up to one of the many huge glass cases which were dazzling the bewildered eyes of Mr. Avery.

"This is a Parisian hat," she said, with a grand manner that disarmed criticism. "And a wonderful bargain, only \$25!"

"Twenty-five! Well, the dues and initiation fee of the club would amount to more than that. If Edith liked it—'Isn't it rather large?' he faltered.

"I'm sure this is the right thing," she said, with increased confidence. "I think I remember a lady of that description admiring this hat and saying she might come back and buy it if her husband was willing."

"That didn't sound like Edith, but it furnished a clew, and Mr. Arthur Avery was tired and felt very helpless. There really seemed nothing to do but to order the hat sent home.

Mrs. Avery came in with a friend that afternoon and saw the box, which the maid had placed in the middle of the bed.

"Laura, look at that!" she exclaimed apprehensively. "He's bought me a hat—bought it himself!"

"Oh, how lovely!" cried the friend.

"Oh, I don't know about that! I'm afraid to look at it. There was just one but I wanted, and I never allow any one, not even Arthur, to choose for me."

"Oh, Edith, hurry and open it! I'm sure it's all right. It's so good of him! I wish my!" But she stopped short as Edith suddenly opened the box and stood transfixed in horror.

"Laura Glenn, will you look at that! And they don't—exchange hats!"

She slowly drew it from its tissue paper wrappings and held it up in all its blue and pink radiance.

"It's—why, Edith!" faltered Laura. "Isn't so very bad. It's in the very latest style."

"I wouldn't be found dead in it!" broke out Edith. "Latest style! This

blue will fairly shriek at my new suit. My hat was a toque with the most exquisitely delicate flowers, and only \$15! What poor Arthur must have paid for this horror! What shall I do? I can't tell him his gift didn't suit me. He'll never forgive me, and it was a sacrifice on his part too. Poor dear Arthur! O-o-h!"

Meanwhile Mrs. Glenn had been trying on the hat. She was short and dark, and the effect upon her was appalling.

"There, you see!" exclaimed Mrs. Avery. "No one could wear it! It's a monstrosity!"

"But, my dear," said Mrs. Glenn calmly, "the hats this year are monstrosities. I've got one myself."

"Well, I don't care what you've got. I won't wear a monstrosity! The one I chose was a dear, and they don't exchange hats!"

"Perhaps they will this time. I can testify that you didn't try it on. They will never think of my having tried it on."

"Oh, do you think I can persuade them? Come with me at once!"

"Very well," said Mrs. Glenn resignedly. "I suppose I'll have to see you through."

Suddenly Edith dropped into a chair, with a tragic gesture.

"I can't, Laura!" she exclaimed. "I can't change Arthur's choice! He will be wounded. He'll think I don't love him."

"My dear, don't be any more foolish than you absolutely have to be. Men are not like that—only women. Arthur won't care a button if only you're pleased."

"You don't know Arthur!"

"I know men, and I don't mind saying that I'm older than you, for you know it already. You can trust me."

"And you think he won't be hurt?"

"I know he won't."

"But I'm not sure!"

"Oh, well, wear the hat, then. It's the only alternative."

Edith shuddered.

"Unless," pursued Mrs. Glenn, "you can make him think they sent the other by mistake."

"What, deceive him? How can I? And yet better deceive him than hurt him. How can I tell him I despised his choice?"

"Oh, come along, Edith; there's no time to waste. Telephone for a cab."

In due course of time Edith was relieving her feelings by reproaching the head saleswoman in the millinery department at Mevor & Milner's for having persuaded Mr. Avery to buy such a hat. The girl looked abashed. She had not believed that the gentleman wanted it for any one like Edith. But she sulkily persisted that it was a Parisian model!

"It's a Parisian horror!" cried Edith. The head of the department was called, and with a man's susceptibility to a pretty woman's distress and upon Mrs. Glenn's testimony that Mrs. Avery had not ever tried it on, he consented to effect the change, provided that the difference in price was not refunded by the firm. Edith accepted the condition and joyously carried off her first choice.

"Thank goodness that's over!" cried Laura as they dismissed the cab and guiltily brought in the box.

"It's over, but I've deceived him, and I'm miserable," bewailed Edith.

"Tell him all about it, then!"

"Never! I must suffer in silence!"

That night upon Arthur's return Edith flung her arms about him and with her face buried in his coat collar, thanked him almost tearfully for the loveliest hat she had ever had.

"The very one I chose!" she gasped. "Good! Let's see it on."

With trembling hands she drew from the box a hat of moderate proportions and graceful arrangement—a very symphony in blue and white—and fitted it upon her golden locks. The effect was magical.

"But—but," stammered Arthur, "it's not the one I bought!"

Edith turned her back and bustled herself with the hatpins.

"N-not the one you bought?" she faltered.

"No; that was much larger and more expensive, I'm sure. This won't do at all! They've sent the wrong one, and they must give me the other or refund the money. It was much handsomer!"

"Oh, Arthur, I want this one! I must keep it! You see yourself!"

"But it isn't worth \$25."

"Twenty-five dollars! Dear, did you pay all that? How extravagant, but how lovely of you!"

"I'll go tomorrow morning!"

"No, no! Leave it to me. Men always muddle such things. I'll settle it. Arthur, please! I'm afraid of losing this hat."

"Very well, but they must refund the difference. Stupid fools! It's lucky they hit upon the hat you liked, but the other was so much handsomer."

"This is ideal," said Edith, but her voice trembled.

"I must get the \$10 out of my savings bank fund," she thought. "Oh, what a tangle of deceit! He'll find it all out and never love me again!"

The next day was Good Friday, and Edith went to church. On Saturday morning she could not get up. He was seriously troubled about her.

"I'll send up Dr. Moore, dear," he said. "You must get well and wear that Easter hat tomorrow. I've set my heart on it."

Upon that, to the poor man's utter amazement, she burst into a torrent of tears and sobs.

"I'll never, never wear it!" she cried. "Oh, I'm a wicked, wicked woman!"

"Edith, my love! For heaven's sake! Wicked? Absurd! You're nervous and worn out. I told you you were going to church too much this Lent and working too hard over Deedy's new clothes. Darling, don't cry. I've got to leave you—business ap-

pointment at 9 o'clock. I can't put it off, and I can't bear to leave you like this. That's right! Try to smile and tell me it's all nonsense."

"It's—it's all nonsense," she quavered piteously.

But after he left her he was not so sure of the nonsense theory. Why should Edith call herself wicked? Was it only the effect of religious excitement or was it anything tangible? He recalled the fact that John Dent had talked to Edith quite a good deal of late whenever they had been out together. Could it be that her fancy had turned that way? Arthur turned cold with horror.

As his luck would have it he met John Dent in the street.

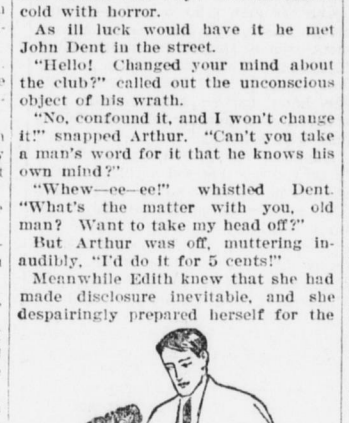
"Hello! Changed your mind about the club?" called out the unconscious object of his wrath.

"No, confound it, and I won't change it," snapped Arthur. "Can't you take a man's word for it that he knows his own mind?"

"Whew—ee—ee!" whistled Dent. "What's the matter with you, old man? Want to take my head off?"

But Arthur was off, muttering indubitably, "I'd do it for 5 cents!"

Meanwhile Edith knew that she had made disclosure inevitable, and she despairingly prepared herself for the



place of solemnity, only to be visited at required intervals and as a duty. Now, under the ministrations of this young zealot, it gradually came about that duty could be approached from many directions and not all of them were necessarily thorny or narrow.

Among other innovations were the Easter sermon and church decoration.

The new minister made the announcement which lay between her social position and the poorhouse.

"Why, you poor soul," she cried sympathetically, "how old you've grown! My hair ain't begun to turn yet, an' here you'n's perfectly white."

"It's been a long time since you and I were young," answered the old woman gently. Then she colored with sudden remembrance and drew herself up stiffly.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" she asked.

"Come, Cynthia; don't talk that way," remonstrated Mrs. Perry. "You know farmers' wives are always working, an'—an' it's a good piece from our place to the—"

"Poorhouse," said the old woman calmly.

"Well, yes, poorhouse," deprecatingly. "But never mind all that. I've brought the minister."

"I don't think I've had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Bray before," said the minister, rising, "and yet I've called here several times."

"No; we haven't met," acquiesced the old woman. "I generally stay in the kitchen."

"I must acknowledge this visit is mostly a business one, Mrs. Bray," he said, resuming his seat. "You see, I am planning for Easter, but the ladies of my congregation assure me that such a thing is utterly impossible. I have come to you as a last resort. Can you help me?"

The old woman looked from one to the other with a sudden yearning in her eyes. Then a soft flush began to steal over her face.

"It isn't easy to decorate without anything to decorate with," she said tremulously. "In the city we used to have palms and Easter lilies and no end of ferns and delicate things to bank with."

"But there are the woods," suggested the minister desperately. "I notice lots of pretty things on my walks."

"Do you mean for me to take charge of the decorating?" she asked.

"Yes, but of course with plenty of help."

He turned hastily and glanced through the window. Something rapturous in the expression on the old woman's face made him lose command of himself for a moment.

"Well, I shall need help in gathering the decorations," she was saying as he turned back. "There will be things to cut and bring home and boxes and boards to build up for the banking. There are some bushes along the creek that I can fix up to look very much like palms at a little distance, and that dark moss below the ledge will make a beautiful bank on which we can arrange the early white flowers."

"But, there," breaking into a low, joyous laugh, which apparently frightened her, she stopped suddenly and looked about in a scared, tremulous sort of way.

"I was only going to say," she went on deprecatingly, "that I haven't seen the church yet. I ought to go there first and look around."

"Of course. We will take you there this afternoon," volunteered the minister, beaming.

"And you can have my horse and wagon every afternoon if you like," added Mrs. Perry warmly. "Then there is my boy Tommy. You can have him to drive you."

The old woman's face was now absolutely radiant.

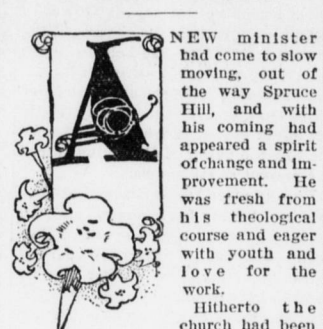
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Aunt Cynthia's Easter.

By FRANK H. SWEET.



NEW minister had come to slow moving, out of the way Spruce Hill, and with his coming had appeared a spirit of change and improvement. He was fresh from his theological course and eager with youth and love for the work.

Hitherto the church had been to Spruce Hill a place of solemnity, only to be visited at required intervals and as a duty. Now, under the ministrations of this young zealot, it gradually came about that duty could be approached from many directions and not all of them were necessarily thorny or narrow.

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"No; we haven't met," acquiesced the old woman. "I generally stay in the kitchen."

"I must acknowledge this visit is mostly a business one, Mrs. Bray," he said, resuming his seat. "You see, I am planning for Easter, but the ladies of my congregation assure me that such a thing is utterly impossible. I have come to you as a last resort. Can you help me?"

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"Yes, but of course with plenty of help."

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"I DON'T THINK I'VE HAD THE PLEASURE OF MEETING MRS. BRAY." ment one Thursday evening after prayer meeting and added that he hoped all would be present and that the ladies of the church would arrange for a tasteful and appropriate decoration.

After service the women stood about irresolutely, looking at each other with blank, questioning faces.

"I guess you'll have to excuse me, Mr. Kent," one of them said at last bluntly. "I ain't got any flowers, an', besides, I don't know anything about decoratin'."

"Nor me," "Nor me," "Nor me," came in rapid succession and in evident relief from the other women.

"Tain't time yet for flowers to bud bloom." "Can't we find a few callas and Easter lilies and narcissuses and perhaps some other white flowers?" asked the minister, with less confidence in his voice.

"All the houses in the neighborhood can't scare up white posies enough for a buttonhole bouquet," declared one woman aggressively. "As for Easter lilies, I ain't never seen one, an' narcissus I ain't even heard of. The idea of decoratin' a whole church at this time of year!"

"I've heard Mrs. Bray speak of narcissus," said a woman reflectively, "she that was the florist's wife, you know. An' come to think, she's likely a master hand at this decoratin' business."

"Who is Mrs. Bray?" asked the minister quickly. "Perhaps she can help me out with this. Curious I have not heard of her before."

"Oh, I don't know," dryly; "folks sort of die away from the world after they go into the poorhouse. Mis' Bray's husband was for gettin' on, so he went to the city an' learned the florist's trade. For a time he done well, then his business broke, an' he died. An' his wife come back here an' lived up, what little she had. After that there was nothin' but the poorhouse."

"Well, we will find her," eagerly. "Will you go with me, Mrs. Perry?"

"Why, yes; I don't mind if I do. Cynthia Bray was as much of a lady as anybody round."

The next afternoon the minister's backboard stopped in front of the poorhouse, and he and Mrs. Perry alighted. Several men and boys were slouching about the yard, and on a bench near the door were four or five old women. Mrs. Perry looked them over critically.

"Not there," she declared concisely. "Cynthia wouldn't grow to look like that. We'll go in."

In answer to their knock a hard featured woman came to the door.

"Mis' Bray?" she repeated. "Oh, Aunt Cynthia, as we call her, is a good worker, so we keep her in the kitchen. I don't s'pose she's had a visitor afore in five years. Won't you come in?"

They entered. Five minutes passed; then a little old woman, with a deprecatory manner, stole softly into the room.

"Did—did you wish to see me?" she asked tremulously.

Mrs. Perry sprang forward in quick forgetfulness of the immeasurable distance which lay between her social position and the poorhouse.

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TRICKS IN SMUGGLING

The Hair Uncle Sam Is Swindled Through the Mails.

WATCHES IN WEDDING CAKE.

A Scheme That Was Disclosed by a Gleeful Girl Who Could Not Hold Her Tongue—Gloves That Came On at a Time and Corsets in Sections.

Too few people think it a crime to swindle the customs. For that reason many bright and brainy persons think hard how to get goods from abroad without paying toll to Uncle Sam. As most of the successful operators in this line are women, who have more time to think about such things than men, it can be imagined that the customs officers have to be eternally alert to protect the government.

The avenues through the steamship passenger route are pretty carefully guarded, and as comparatively few people go abroad the great mass of dwellers in this protected land are debarred from sharing in the humorous little game of hide the diamond or smuggle the silk. But there is another avenue that is being used enthusiastically by the anti-duty aggregation.

It is the United States mail.

With the immense volume of foreign mail delivered to this country it is manifestly impossible to open and examine every package that seems to contain newspapers or merely a bulky letter to see whether or not some dutiable article is concealed therein. So far as it is possible, however, it is done, and the addressee has to go to the postoffice and pay duty on the amount at which the dutiable article is appraised.

The custom house experts at the postoffice have their hands full checking the clever moves of those who are constantly devising new ways to disguise dutiable things as innocent looking parcels.

"We used to pass cakes through without question," said one of the examiners. "It seemed too bad to lay hands on a Christmas pudding sent by relatives in England to some exile in this country. It also disturbed the sentimental side of a customs officer to demolish a section of wedding cake that had been sent from the old home in Germany to Fritz in America. So we let these sacred things pass through. But one day we had an awakening. One of the customs men heard that a neighbor had obtained a new watch from abroad. It had come through duty free, and the gleeful girl who was wearing it could not keep quiet about the clever way the postoffice had been deluded. It seems the watch had been baked right into the cake and had come through without discovery. Now, this forced us to take some step to prevent a repetition of such smartness, and ever after that we held on to all cakes or puddings that came in packages through the mail. A letter is sent to the person to whom the package is addressed, and this person (it is almost always a woman) has to come to the postoffice and cut the cake or slice the pudding right in front of the customs officer. Do we catch a Tartar occasionally? Well, you may take it for granted that any one who would try this trick is a Tartar. To begin with, and so we don't get off without a scene when the cutting time comes."

"A trick that fooled us for a time was the sending through the mail of one glove a trifle creased to give the idea that it was merely a worn glove that had been left in Europe by a traveler. With the glove would come a letter to that effect, 'You went away without one of your gloves, etc. Of course we passed it through unsuspectingly. But we got so much of these that it began to look suspicious. So we held on to one of them, and by the next mail there came another glove from the same address to the same person. The glove was the fellow to the other. Then we got another left-hand glove and later the right-hand glove to match it. The trick was simple and admirable in its simplicity. Gloves were being sent through in quantities, one at a time."

"But the queerest trick we exposed the other day. A woman was accumulating a large stock of fancy corsets without troubling about the duty that should have been paid on them. The trick was to send half a corset through the mail. We knew of no rule about paying duty on half a corset. It appeared to us to be a mere remnant of the up to date woman's attire and not important enough to consider as dutiable.

"So we passed the half corset along and thought no more of it. But half corsets began to drop in with all too great frequency. It looked as though considerable importance in some one's estimation. So one of the men put it up to his wife, and she took something less than a fraction of a second to puncture the scheme. The half corset was useless in itself, but when the other half arrived there was a French corset ready for wearing."

"We find fine silks done up in packages of herbs, watches, diamond rings and bracelets concealed in the leaves of books in holes cut for the purpose and separate diamonds hidden away in bottles of transparent liquid where the gem is scarcely visible. No doubt many dutiable articles escape us, but we are getting wiser every day to the tricks of the mail smugglers."—New York Tribune.

A HOTEL DINNER.

The Husband Ordered It, and His Wife Criticized It.

On the midnight train ride from town, where he and his wife had been entertaining one of his best patients at dinner and the theater, the suburban doctor spoke bitterly:

"What a dinner! And it cost \$15." The cooking in these big hotels is atrocious. They smear stucco over everything. I suppose it is to hide poor materials."

"It isn't the fault of the cooking that your dinner was a failure. It was its selection that doomed it."

"What was the matter with the selection?"

"You should not have done the ordering. You have your meals chosen for you almost every day in the year. It is the women of people in our circumstances who ought to arrange the menus at restaurants. Look what you ordered! Bisque of lobster—a soup with a body of thick white sauce. Sweetbread—cooked, as usual, with a cream dressing—Virginia ham with champagne sauce—a brown sauce as thick as molasses. Then for dessert you took a chance on pudding Reine Victoria—candied fruit and lady fingers swimming in soft custard."

"Well, how is a fellow to know? Lobster soup, sweetbreads, Virginia ham and pudding Reine Victoria—it sounds fine."

"But a woman knows that it is a wretched combination of splendid dishes. It is the woman's dull duty to choose menus for 365 days in the year. She learns a good deal about selection. Yet when a sum of money, equal to a week's food expenses, is to be squandered on one dinner at a hotel it is the man who seizes the menu and tries to look capable. He makes a failure frequently, as you did tonight. It would have been a pleasure for me to order a fifteen dollar dinner—a change from manipulating dinner for four on \$1. But men feel too important in a restaurant to submit the menu to their wives for assistance."—Exchange.

He Came Back Hard.

"That boy," said the Billville farmer, "beats my time! Jest now when I quoted Scripper to him he come back at me hard!"

"You don't say!"

"Shore! I told him to git a hoe an' feller the furrow. 'That's gold in the land,' I said. An' what do you reckon he made answer?"

"You tell it."

"'Father,' he says, 'I don't keef fer the gold o' this here world. I've laid up treasure in heaven!'"—Atlanta Constitution.

Fair Warning.

Year after year an old farmer had listened in grim silence to the trains thundering by his land. Finally one day, his patience at an end, he dropped his plow and shook his fist at the passing express.

"Ye can puff an' blow all ye like, got durn ye," he cried, "but I'm goin' to ride ye Saturday!"—Everybody's.

The Zones.

Teacher—How many zones are there? Small Boy—Six. Teacher—No; there are but five. However, you may name six if you can. Small Boy—Torridd, north temperate, south temperate, north frigid, south frigid and ozone.—Chicago News.

His Belief.

A drunken carter came into a carriage of the Greenock train and sat opposite a clergyman who was reading his paper. Recognizing the profession of his vis-a-vis, the carter in a little while leaned forward and in a maudlin way remarked, "I don't believe there's any heaven."

"Do ye hear me?" persisted the carter. "I don't believe there's any heaven."

Still the clergyman remained silent behind his newspaper.

The carter, shouting his confession this time loudly, said, "I tell ye to your face, and you're a minister, that I don't believe there's any heaven."

"Very well," said the clergyman, "if you do not believe there is a heaven go elsewhere, but please go quietly."—London Graphic.

Not Misplaced.

Hotel Clerk—I found the "Not to Be Used Except in Case of Fire" placard those college boys stole out of the corridor. Manager—Where? Clerk—They'd nailed it up over the coal bin.—Boston Transcript.

Gritty.

"Fifty miles an hour! Are you brave?" She (swallowing another pint of dust)—Yes, dear; I'm full of grit.—Chicago News.

A Deserter.

Hewitt—Green has been arrested for being a deserter. Jewett—Wife or army?—New York Press.

We do not know how cheap the seeds of happiness are or we should scatter them oftener.—Lowell.

SOMETHING NEW!

A Reliable TIN SHOP

For all kind of Tin Roofing, Spouting and General Job Work.

Stoves, Heaters, Ranges, Furnaces, etc.

PRICES THE LOWEST!

QUALITY THE BEST!

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Opinion of an Actress.

Miss Ellen Terry at a reception once talked about the innumerable women who ask her to help them get on the stage. "The fact is," she said, "every woman under thirty believes she is an actress. And every actress," she added, "believes she is under thirty."

Economical.

"I'd rather wait than eat," confided the sweet girl.

"Then we'll have another dance instead of going to that fashionable restaurant," remarked the thrifty swain. "And," he added mentally, "that's \$6 saved."—Kansas City Journal.

Found Him Guilty.

Counsel to the jury—The principal fault of the prisoner has been his unfortunate characteristic of putting faith in thieves and scoundrels of the basest description. I have done. The unhappy man in the dock puts implicit faith in you, gentlemen of the jury!

Quit a Difference.

A man spends two hours trying to discover what is the matter with his motor and two minutes trying to find out what is the matter with his wife.—London Telegraph.

Just Goes Out.

"Mother, when the fire goes out, where does it go?" asked a child of her parent.

"I don't know, dear," replied the mother. "You might just as well ask me where your father goes when he goes out!"

His Genius.

"Why do people think he's a genius? Nobody can understand what he's talking about."

"No, but he can make people believe that he does."—Exchange.

Digging For Money.

The honest workman was engaged in excavating operations—i.e., he was digging. The stray wayfarer of the inquisitive turn of mind stopped for a moment to look on.

"My man," said the S. W. at length, "what are you digging for?"

The H. W. looked up.

"Money," he replied.

"Money?" ejaculated the amazed S. W. "And when do you expect to strike it?"

"Saturday," replied the H. W. and resumed operations.

An Old Timer.

"He's an old newspaper man."

"About how old?"

"Well, he can remember when they only issued extras when something happened."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Europe is less than one-fourth as large as Asia.