

MISSILES FROM THE HEAVENS.

Billions of Them Fall, but Comparatively Few Reach the Earth.

"It is a mistake to suppose that meteorites burst in the proper sense of the word," said a scientist to a writer. "But it often happens that they are broken to pieces on striking the atmosphere of the earth. This may seem surprising, but let me call your attention to an analogy. Strike the surface of water with your fist, and, though a fluid, the resistance it opposes to the blow seems almost as strong as if it were solid. Now, the meteorite is moving at a tremendous rate of speed. If small, it is set on fire in an instant by the friction of the air, and after glowing for a moment brightly is consumed.

"On any night in summer you will see 'shooting stars' now and then. They are meteorites, which on coming into contact with the earth's atmosphere are set afire. This is not surprising, inasmuch as they approach the planet on which we live at a speed which often attains 44 miles a second. By causing the destruction of meteorites the atmosphere serves as a protection for people on the globe, who would otherwise be pelted by such missiles to a dangerous extent. It is estimated that not less than 10,000,000 of them, big enough to be visible to the naked eye, strike the earth every 24 hours.

"By contact with this planet the meteorites are raised to a temperature which reaches from 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 degrees—high enough to consume the hardest known substance almost instantly. Thus only those of large size reach the earth before being entirely burned up. The greatest number of such bodies can be seen just before daybreak, because by that time we are on the front side of the globe as it moves through space. The elevation at which most of them are visible has been found to be between 45 and 80 miles, very few being seen at a greater height than 100 miles.

"It is believed by most astronomers that some very large meteors have entered our atmosphere and have passed out into space again, their great momentum being sufficient to take them away from the earth's attraction. What these flying bodies are is a question that has been much disputed, but it is considered most likely that they are the debris of broken up comets. In one recent instance the correctness of this theory has found striking proof. That was the case of the comet of Biela. It was discovered in 1826 and was again observed in 1832, 1845 and 1852. In 1845 it had split into two parts, and in 1872 it failed to appear when and where it should have done. Evidently it had been smashed up, and prediction was made that there would be a great meteoric shower composed of the remains of the lost comet. This prediction was fulfilled.

"Certain groups of meteors move in elliptical orbits around the sun. Occasionally the earth passes through their clusters, producing what are known as meteoric showers. Such showers occur annually from the 9th to the 12th of August, and there is a similar display in November once every 33 years. The stream of the August meteors is estimated to be from 5,000,000 to 10,000,000 miles thick. The earth, though traveling with the velocity of 3,000,000 miles a day, is immersed in it for several days.

"The fall of meteorites to the earth is sometimes accompanied by a great display of light, occasionally illuminating an area of many thousand square miles. When such an event occurs at night, and with loud detonations, so great in some instances as to shake houses and frighten men and animals, the explosions are caused by the breaking up of the meteor. Ordinarily you will find that such meteoric bodies are coated on the outside with a black substance, which is the effect merely of fusion of the superficial material by great heat. A piece of Biela's comet was actually picked up in Mexico in 1872 at the time of the shower of its remains. Naturally it is considered interesting.

"Such great interest is taken in meteorites that all of those collected have been carefully catalogued. They are mostly composed of iron, with usually a percentage of nickel and cobalt and sometimes copper and tin. It is customary to saw them into slices, which is a laborious process, for sale or for exchange among museums. Sometimes the slices are prettily polished, or the cut surfaces are etched with acid so as to expose the crystalline structure. This structure is in no two such bodies exactly the same, and the differences are thought well worth studying. Attempts have been made to counterfeit meteorites because they are so valuable, but without success."—Washington Star.

Fortunes From Rags.

It is astonishing what immense sums ragpickers receive in the course of the day. The combings of women's hair sell at 80 cents a pound. This means \$300 to the knights of the hook. "Merinos," as they are called, are another source of profit. These are the scraps of tailors and dressmakers and bring about \$30,000 a year.

The old bones are another source of profit and bring about \$100,000 a year. The papers, corks and crusts of bread all go to different industries and bring a not less fabulous sum.

As for the election bulletins, which to the number of 1,325,000 are pasted upon the walls of Paris, they are much sought, especially immediately after an election, for the making of buttons.—Paris Letter

Wonderful Smokeless Coal.

Some wonderful "smokeless coal" is reported from the Ouachita river district in Arkansas. The vein is 42 inches wide. The coal burns without smoke or poke, and one ton will go as far as 10 of the ordinary variety. Twenty per cent of it is oil, which makes a paint you can't burn at all.—New York Recorder.

A woman says that a man can be a senior wrangler and acquire fame as an authority on the most abstruse subjects, but he cannot answer the questions of a 3-year-old child without revealing his ignorance.

Difficulty of Sailing a Boat.

Watched from the wharf, a sailboat seems an easy sort of craft to manage. The wind appears to do everything. The casual guest of a skilled skipper likewise is apt to think that as his host takes things so easy it cannot be so very difficult to handle a sailboat after all. He regards the warning of experience as based on the jealousy of competition. Let him who thinks sailing a science which its followers try to represent as hard to learn because they want to keep it to themselves take a trick at the helm once.

It looks easy to keep the boat on her course. Your friend who takes you out sailing barely touches the tiller once in a while. Some day he asks you to take the tiller while he goes forward. He tells you to keep that spire and that tall chimney in line. You take the helm; you do what you think you have seen him do. The chimney and the steeplemast as if they were bewitched. They positively will not come into line. You observe in a knowing tone, "She doesn't seem to mind her helm." But she is minding her helm, and pretty soon you find out what jibing means.

Most of the fatalities of summer sailing are due to the errors of the man who thinks sailing is easy, who is confident that he knows all about it. In reality many a sea captain who can handle a big ship without difficulty does not feel at ease in command of a sailboat. Boat sailing is a course at the Naval academy in which the cadets undergo arduous training under the most skilled instructors.—Boston Transcript.

The Fox, the Badger and Rabbits.

The fox noses the rabbits out at times and scratches them out. As to the badger, what could be more delicate for his very accommodating appetite than tender young rabbits? They put flesh onto his ribs after his fast—often a long and compulsory one—in winter. So he digs for them in the most businesslike manner, just like a mole. He knows where they are exactly—his nose tells him that—and in less than two minutes the fore part of him is buried. All you will see will be his hind legs working vigorously and a lot of earth moving. But he gets his rabbits. Hungry stomachs are hard to reason with. The badger is, I know, as a rule, nocturnal in his habits, so is a fox; but where the places that they frequent are quiet and secluded they will at times hunt by day for their food. A vixen and her mate at times reverse the order of things. Like humans, woodland wild creatures are governed by circumstances.

I have at different times met with the fox and the badger in spots where I certainly did not expect to see them. And when I have gone where, according to my reckoning, they ought to have been—so far as locality could be relied on—they were not there. Very contradictory experiences one has in looking for wild things.—Blackwood's Magazine.

The Habit of Carelessness.

In youth men are self-reliant, self-assertive and self-sufficient. Soon they find themselves mistaken, possibly in little things at first, for the fact is they are still small in knowledge and influence. Hence the chagrin of the first errand is softened by the reflection that its consequences cannot work much harm. Too often they fail to emphasize the importance of the value of their utterances as their personal influences widen. Hence their testimony without sufficient proof for themselves begins to work mischief for others. Then follow surprises, misunderstandings, alienations, criminalities, heartaches and occasionally something worse. Friendships are broken, integrity is wounded, confidence is shaken, human testimony is suspected.

Now all this is not the result chiefly of any essentially bad trait in human nature. It arises rather from carelessness and a sort of insincere habit of condoning the fault on the score of personal insignificance. "Oh, I didn't mean it!" covers a multitude of these sins among our younger friends. But, alas, "younger friends" soon grow into middle, and the careless habit, once indulged, barnacles itself upon age.—Boston Commonwealth.

Robert Louis Stevenson's Story Writing.

Mr. R. L. Stevenson says that he begins work every morning at 6 o'clock and sometimes keeps at it all day in spite of an impression that three hours of writing is enough. "I am a laborious writer," he avers, thereby encouraging the worthy band whose motto is "Labor Omnia Vincit" and who have faith that nothing is beyond the reach of hard work. But straightway he dashes their hopes when he says, "I inherit a taste for story telling from my father, who used to tell a story every night before he went to bed."

Is not that a most unfair advantage for a romancer to take of his contemporaries, to burst upon the current story market with the prodigious endowment of descent from a Scotchman who out of mere love of yarning was used to tell a story every night? Frankly it seems a worse blow to ordinary competitive endeavor than for an Astor to take up the business of publishing magazines.—Harper's Weekly.

Toys on a Tombstone.

In the cemetery of Marietta, Ga., there is an infant's grave that attracts attention of visitors to that place. There is no headstone, but resting on the top of the grave is a glass box containing the playthings the little one had before its death. There are dolls, rubber and china, rubber ball, rattle, china cup and other toys. On the sides of the grave are three bottles of medicine, that which was in use presumably during the last sickness.—Exchange.

The Art of Leave Taking.

The art of going away gracefully is one of the most difficult of social observances. Women err in lingering too long after the start is made; men in bolting too suddenly, making sometimes the exit almost a blow in the face. There is a golden mean of leave taking, whose aroma of graceful courtesy is not soon dispelled, and happy is he or she who finds it.—New York Times.

Two Strange Brothers.

It had always been the habit in the Ward family if two relatives differed strongly to arrange not to be on speaking terms. Dr. William G. Ward was once asked how much he had known of his father's first cousin, Sir Henry Ward. He replied quite gravely: "I only saw him twice—once as a boy, when he came to see my father, and then again I had an interview with him about a matter of business soon after I came into my property. We arranged at the end of it not to be on speaking terms," quite a superfluous arrangement, as Sir Henry Ward lived at that time in Ceylon, of which he was governor, and in fact never came again to England for a prolonged visit.

Dr. Ward and his brother Henry had been estranged for a year or so, and one night they met at the Haymarket theater. Each of them had for the moment quite forgotten the quarrel, and friendly greetings passed, and they had a talk about the play. Next morning came a letter from Henry Ward:

DEAR WILLIAM—In the hurry of the moment I quite forgot that we had arranged to meet as strangers, and I write this, lest you should misunderstand me, to say that I think we had better adhere to our arrangement, and I remain, dear William, your affectionate brother. HENRY WARD.

Dr. Ward replied: DEAR HENRY—I, too, had forgotten our arrangement. I agree with you that we had better keep to it, and I remain your affectionate brother. W. G. WARD. —San Francisco Argonaut.

The Epidemic of Liberty.

The idea embodied in American institutions is the most radical that ever took the concrete shape of legislation. We may say, without being charged with a wholesale spirit, that we have on the whole the best government on the planet. That is to say, the government which offers the largest opportunities and produces the greatest amount of contentment and prosperity.

It is a good thing for 100,000 of our citizens to visit Europe every summer in order to compare the condition of affairs abroad with that enjoyed at home. And it is safe to assert that no man can travel in England or Germany or Russia or Italy without reaching the proud conclusion that the American flag represents more popular rights and a more advanced political economy than any other strip of bunting that floats in the breeze. The tourist who reaches Sandy Hook after a three or six months' journey in foreign lands without having his pulse jump into the nineties ought to have been born in Nova Zembla or Timbuctoo.—New York Telegram.

Harmony and Ereditition.

There is a popular fallacy among parents that harmony means erudition, and erudition of so abstruse a nature as to be quite beyond the reach of the every day child and to be reserved for the later years after he is grown up, if undertaken at all, and then chiefly when the youth or maiden has what is called "talent." Ah, the much abused word! How gladly would all artists banish it from the vocabulary and from the ears of the American child! Harmony is only grammar, and grammar of such an entertaining kind that if rightly presented it is fascinating, and of a nature so essential that the musical nonpossessor of it, young or old, is crippled.—Harper's Bazar.

Waited Twenty Years For a Solution.

A bit of pure and harmless mischief at recitation at Yale was the device of a member of the class of 1872, who introduced at recitation a turtle covered by a newspaper pasted on the shell. The tutor had too much pride to come down from his perch and solve the mystery of the newspaper's circulation, but 20 years after, meeting a member of the class, his first and abrupt question was, "Mr. W., what made that paper move?"—New Haven Cor. New York Post.

The gold mines of Peru were so rich that Atahualpa, to buy his ransom, filled a room 23 by 17 feet to a height of 9 feet with golden vessels. When melted they produced \$15,480,710 of gold.

The Yezidees, a peculiar Turkish sect, cut off the head of any one who inadvertently speaks the word "devil," "satan" or anything with a similar meaning.

It is a time honored custom in Quincy, Fla., to salute a newly married couple by firing a cannon. This is to remind them that the battle of life has fairly begun.

Chinamen to the number of 13,179 have registered so far, while 96,821 have not. Seven hundred and twelve Mongolians residing in Pennsylvania are among those who have registered.

An English showman advertised a "transparent balloon headed baby," which turned out to be a baby with water on the brain hired for show purposes from a gin loving mother.



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