By Fletcher Cowan.

The village of Racketville was at a town clock; in fact, made himself fever heat.

At fever heat in the middle of Feb-

What an absurd expression that is, by the way. At fover heat in the middle of February, when the general climate is so sternly suggestive of ulsters, arctics, chest protecters and Baltimore heaters. But we use it only in a figurative sense. Racketville was at a perfect fever heat, not according to the thermometrical pressure, but the pressure of excitement and expectation.

What was the cause of this ferment? Why, the following notice, clipped from the "Local Items" column of the

village paper: "It is a well known fact that the annual straw-rides of our esteemed fellow townsman. Farmer Frisker, are the most prominent features of Racketville's winter enjoyments. Tomorrow evening, at half-past seven, the best straw-ride of the season will start from Frisker's house, to travel all the way to Dan Kelly's hotel at Fairview, where quite a surprising sensation is promised to take place. The party will return home in plenty of time for the next day's dinner. Over fifty invitations have been issued."

Is it not likely that such an announcement should cause quite a furore, that everyone in the village who had the least claim to acquaintanceship with the Frisker family should be looking forward to receiv ing an invitation; and that everyone who had not, should determine on going down to the Frisker cottage to see the party off? for, in the opinion of everyone, the starting off of the annual Frisker straw-ride was a sight not to be missed, or eclipsed either, even by the great displays of Christmas and the Fourth of July.

Well, the eventful evening arrived in safety, and a more glorious one for straw-ride could not have been wished for. The moon and stars were out and shining beautifully, the surrounding country presented the most lovely snow landscape the eye could feast upon, and the road over which the party were to travel was in splendid condition.

Half-past seven came, and the great straw-ride started from the Frisker cottage amid the cheers of half the village populace, who had assembled to see them off, and the crash of a brass band that Farmer Frisker had secured to accompany the party. "Music allers seemed to patch up such a sort o' enchantment around the scene," he said

There were four sleighs full of invited guests. They were all ranged in and, festooned with flags, branches of fir trees, bright Chinese lanterns and numerous other decorations, looked quite a prttty sight. The horses were trimmed up fantastically, too, like a lot of animals in the holiday assortment of a New York department store.

As the party moved away from the cottage the scene was lit up magnificently by the glare of brilliant fireworks, which had also been provided for the occasion.

Then away the sleighs sped in fine style over the fleecy road like arrows. and the crisp snow crackled beneath them with sharp, snapping sounds, the bells jingled with a merry unison, and the voices rang out upon the frosty air with a far merrier discord-

The night was superb. The glistening jewels of the sky shed a soft, celestial glow over the snow-clad hills and meadows, and gave the country the appearance of an ermine paradise,

On, on flew the sleighs, past houses, fences, trees and mile posts, like locomotives, until the village was left many miles behind. On they dashed through the hills and valleys, and across the low, white-carpeted meadows, past scattered villages and silent, lonely homesteads, the party enjoying this pleasant diversification of scenery all along the route. Enjoying the

scenery and enjoying plenty else. Ah, how nice it was! How really nice it was! Young Simon Lee, for Instance, sitting with his arm around the waist of Laura Dale, pointing out to her the places of interest upon the road, the old dead sycamore tree, with the apring in its rrunk famed for such good water, the broken-down bridge where he used to fish, the haunted mill beside Brewster's, where he got her that pretty pair of pigeons some time ago, etc. All this while her father and mother, sitting quite near, were in danger of looking; when they were not looking, the conversation was carried on in the silent language of the eyes, and made doubly interest ing by affectionate bouts in hugging and kissing.

All the other young people derived an immense amount of enjoyment in prerisely the same manner.

There was one person there who enjoyed himself as thoroughly as all the others combined, and, however strange It may seem, all alone.

That person was Bachelor Spriggs, pulte an eccentric individual, but the most intellectual man in Racketville.

No one, however, seemed to make much of him during the ride, or to care for listening to his queer but humorous conversation. The ladies of the party thought him "perfectly horrid, for he drinks, and the smell of whisky on him is terrible!" they whispered to each other. The men pitied his weakness, pronounced him a very emart and funny men, but did not enavor to draw him into conversation. or, when once started, he ran on like

quite a bore. So the old bachelor, discarded by everybody, "went it alone," nestled in one corner of the sleigh under a cluster of fir branches, with no one but his little brown pocket flask to keep him company, but he had real enjoyment with it, and seemed to prefer its pleasing comfort to all the fun and frolic

taking place around him. His frequent potations soon began to tell upon him, as everyone feared would be the case, for he was known to never be without his flask, and oftentimes the people saw it flash in the moonlight as he raised it to his lips and took what he humorously termed his "astronomical observations."

Farmer Frisker began to get nervous. He had brought Spriggs out upon the ride for a particular purpose-to make a big speech at Dan Kelly's hotel as the opening feature of the "surprising sensation" he had promised in the notice of the village paper.

He began to fear that Spriggs would be unfit for the delivery of the speech. These fears were considerably heightened by the bachelor suddenly bursting out into a boisterous song, and as tipsy men's songs are always as long as your arm, he never finished until the sleighs entered Fairview and dashed up before Dan Kelly's door, where fully half the town were gath-

ered to receive them. "Spriggs!" cried Frisker, seizing the bachelor by the hair so viciously that he yelled like a wild beast. "I didn't think you'd sarve me in this way. Tarnation take your distillery stom ach! You're not fit to grace a mudgutter, let alone a grand affair like this here. You're not fit to spout

now. "Oh, yes, I am, Frisker," said Spriggs, in a quavering voice. "Trust

me-trust Spriggs. He's not gone back on you. He'll make a grand sp-speech. Frisker said nothing, but turning to one of his some who was assisting some of the girls from the sleighs, whis-

"Zach, for mercy's sake, keep Spriggs down in the bar-room, or he'll turn the whole affair into a circus. Don't

let him upstairs, or I'll go mad!" "But, father, I can't hang onto his coattails all the time. I must be pres-

ent upstairs." "Then tell Dan Kelly to get some one to do the job. If Spriggs gets upstairs a cock fight will be nothing to the row he'll raise."

Frisker, Jr., promised he would, but the girl of his heart was waiting to be handed from the sleigh, and as he sprang to do his duty Spriggs fled from his memory.

As the party left the sleighs and filed upstairs into the snug parlor of the hotel, everyone, excepting the members of the Frisker family, and the Darrell family, and a few others, was burning with anticipation as to what the "surprising sensation" was going to be

When all were assembled in the lighted parlor, quite some surprise was manifested at a few certain things.

Farmer Frisker's daughter had thrown off her cloak, and was discovered in a handsome silk dress-a rather too beautiful and costly costume for a straw-ride.

Stephen Darrell was dressed in handsome black, which is not generaly worn upon a straw-ride, either.

Two or three other ladies and gentlemen were dressed in a style not to be expected for a straw-ride, and the families of Frisker and Darrell were dressed in their very best.

All this caused curiosity and ramark.

Suddenly the presence of Parson Brooder, sitting at an adjoining table with a Rible before him, was noted, and this and that put together generated a great deal of suspicion.

In the midst of the mysterious whisperings Farmer Frisker arose, and, with a sly smile, that showed how he enjoyed the deception he had practiced upon his friends, disclosed the nature of the "surprising sensation."

"My friends," he said, "I wanted to provide you with real enjoyment upon this ride. We have had great fun on the road but I have reserved the cream of the amusement to the last. cream we would have churned at my house, but there wasn't enough room there, so we'll churn it here under the roof of good 'Dan Kelly. The great ensation anounced to take place here is the marriage of my daughter to young Stephen Darrell, on which I pray you to shower your blessings,"

What Frisker had done in his few words he had intended Spriggs to make the subject of a splendid speech But, alas! Spriggs had failed him in his hour of need, and he was forced thus to be his own speechmaker, but it is our belief that the great Spriggs, had he been in fit condition, with all his polish and ready command of language, could not have delivered a speech with better effect than had the

farmer in his few blunt words. Then all became silent, and the parson, rising, entered upon his happy duty of joining together two loving

"Keep Spriggs out! Don't let him in!" said Frisker, to one of his friends before the marriage service began, for he had looked around the company and found, to his great relief, that Spriggs was missing, for the tipsy bachelor was at that moment in the bar-room of the hotel below, replenishing his

The bride and bridegroom, with their

attendants, took their places, the parson rose, and the ceremony began But when nearly through, and just arrived at that highly critical part of the ceremony when the couple are questioned as to whether they accept each other as husband and wife, suddenly out went the gas, and the room was left in total darkness.

This created some consternation. "Blame the luck!" cried Frisker, and

he bellowed for a match. "I'll go downstairs for one," cried the man on guard at the door, and he opened the door to go; but at the same moment the bridegroom, Stephen Darrell, called out that he had a match in his pocket.

There was no use then of the guard going for one, so he shut the door again; but before he did so a dark figure passed into the room unnoticed in the gloom.

Stephen Darrell was intensely flurried by the interruption, and rushed to light the gas himself. But when he got to the jet he found that he had no match as he had supposed, and that it was only a toothpick he had felt in Then, desperate with his pocket. and - simple fellow! - quite frightened. It must be admitted, at the sudden extinguishment of the light, which he superstitiously took to be a bad omen for his wedding, he rushed out of the room and downstairs to get a light himself.

No one knew who it was that went out, but thought it some one of the young men gone on the errand.

"Confound the thing!" cried Frisker. "There ain't much more jobbing to do, is there, parson? Well, then, let the wedding go on in the dark Darn it! I've heard that it's bad luck to stop in the middle of a marriage; and if that's the case, the dark ain't going to stop my daughter's."

"Yes, let it go on in the dark!" cried Farmer Darrell. "I've heard that it's bad luck to stop, too."

The parson attempted to expostulate: but both the farmers ordered the mar riage to go on in the dark. So the bride took her place beside a figure which she supposed to be that of her husband, and the service went on.

"Do you accept this woman as your wedded wife?"

No answer was heard. Everyone upposed that the bridegroom had poken it, but that, owing to nervousness which sometimes does affect bridegrooms to a great degree, he had spoken inaudibly.

"Do you accept this man for your wedded husband?"

"I do," replied the bride, in a firm voice, "Gracious, Stephen, how you are trembling[" she was then heard to

"Then I declare you man and wife!" said the parson, "and the blessing of God, and of everyone, be upon this union." As he said these words the figure of

the husband bent toward the bride, She thought he wished to kiss her, and presented her lips for the purpose of being so treated Her lins met something, but it was

not the lips of her husband. It was something very cold, and a strange, shivering sensation passed over her as she felt its touch. "His-want some-hic?" asked a

quavering voice, and the next instant the young bride felt a cold stream of some liquid poured over her face. Some of it went down her throat and nearly choked her, and by its taste and smell she knew it to be whisky. She uttered a piercing shrick and

fell back into the arms of her father, who was standing beside her, just as Stephen Darrell entered the the greatest haste, bearing a lamp,

Light being thrown upon the scene a strange tableau was revealed. Stephen's bride lay in a half-faint in her father's arms, and Spriggs, the dark figure who had stood beside her during the latter part of the ceremony, stood in the glare of the light, with one hand grasping his brown flask, and the other clutching the table for support-spriggs, the bachelor, stood half, married to Miss Sarah

Frisker. The excitement that prevailed after this thrilling tableau it would be hard

to portray. "Blame that Spriggs!" roared Farmer Frisker. "Throw him out of the

window!" "Let me at him till I break his neck!" cried Stephen, and indeed the angry pair would have broken the poor bachelor's neck had friends not

interfered and calmed them down, and

bore Spriggs out of sight. Then, when the full ridiculousness of the scene was realized, there was great amusement. The cause of the light going out so suddenly was that somebody downstairs had turned off the gas, but whether designedly or accidentally could not be ascertained. The mirth and excitement over the affair did not subside for fully fifteen

minutes. By that time the bride had recovered from her faint, and the fathtr and bridegroom from their desperation. Then the ceremony was re-enacted,

and the right man was married. After the ceremony there was a splendid supper, and after that, spirited dancing, which was kept up until an early hour of the morning.

Then the straw-ride party left Dan Kelly's and reached Racketville not only in time for dinner, but in plenty of time for breakfast.

"We have had a first-rate time. Haven't we, Frisker?" said one of the farmer's friends.

"Yes, a spankin' time," said Fris-"Straw-rides are very well in their way, but the next straw-ride I get up will be a straw-ride and nothing else. Never while I have brains enough left to raise carrots, will I cart one of my daughters to another man's house to be hustled into wed-Then I'll know she'll not be lock. married in the dark."-New York

Independence for Ireland

It Would Lead to an Irish Alliance With England and Strengthen the Empiro . .

By Thomas J. Regan.

F Ireland were given her freedom, the first thing she would do would be to form an alliance with England. Her first formation of a foreign policy would be an official declaration of the obvious fact that the prosperity of Ireland, when a nation, must depend upon the prosperity of England, her safety upon England's safety, her welfare upon the maintenance of the British Empire. If Ireland were a nation she would need England's navy to defend her and protect any shipping she could create. She would be too poor to waste any money or energy on the maintenance of

to domestic concerns. It would mean that Ireland could never be attacked by any Continental nation. Such an alliance would be Ireland's only foreign policy, and it would be maintained as stoutly as we maintain the Monroe doctrine. Ireland's welfare and prosperity would be at stake whenever England was attacked. England's prosperity would be the source of Ireland's riches, because England would be the consumer of the surplus products of Irisir farms. Ireland when developed would seek an English market for her surplus foodstuffs, for her fowls, eggs, and dairy products. She would supply England with high priced grades of meat, which cannot be obtained from the

military and naval armaments to be used against England or any other na-

tion. An alliance with England would leave her free to give all her attention

for herself. This English market for Irish products would be a community of interests between the two. Ireland would be the warmest friend that England could have, because her friendship would have the warmth of self-interest, which is the warmest thing on this side of the grave.

muscular cattle of our western ranches and which England cannot provide

England's alliance with Ireland would do more than anything else could to strengthen her union with her colonial possessions. She has seen the necessity of a closer union with her colonies. During the South African war she called for their help. The gratitude of the Irish race would bring her more help from her colonies than she can see any other way of gaining. If the green flag were waving beside the flag of England there would not be a true Celt in Canada or Australia whose heart would not leap with enthusiasm for an Anglo-Celtic cause. If there was an alliance between England and Ireland the British Empire would renew its youth,

removed The furnish Incomparable Value of Business Tact

By E. E. Perkins.

** The public and whose success de pends on the public's attitude toward him needs to study himself constantly that he may become tactful. How easy to say the wrong word, to make an unfortunate impression, to canvasa a prospect at an inappropriate time, or not to realize when to stop talking. There are two eminent examples of what tact will do

James G. Blaine was a most adroit man. He was a friend maker, a moulder of men. A wonderful memory for names and faces aide him. He used to know and call by name people whom he had seen but once many years before. That was one of the secrets of his great popularity. He approached people right. So did Mr. McKinley, who was remarkably considerate of the opinions of others. He was so tactful that political enemies often were transformed by him into friends at a sitting.

Qualities like these are necessary to the successful, high-grade insurance solicitor. They should be cultivated at every turn. You are in "public life" and daily have to meet people. It is absolutely necessary that you employ diplomacy as did these two eminent tacticians. You know how you warm up to the man who treats you as you like to be treated-in a business-like way -because he has properly sized you up. You know how susceptible to such influences you are. If he went at you properly he could get your signature or your last dollar, as the saying goes. Turn it around; get yourself into the same relative attitude toward the other fellow, from whom you want first an interview, then an application. 'Twill enhance your success. In other words, constantly study the art of being tactful in order that you may excel in it.

There is Nothing That Will Endure

By President Eliot, of Harvard.

******** HAVE often wondered if our civilization will leave anything to the archaeologist of 2000 years hence to study. You have studied materials that have endured under the earth for 3000 years. I have found it difficult to find any such durable things in our buildings, arts and great manufactures.

Do we make any vases that record, as the Greek vases, our costumes, arts, religion, etc.? None. It may be that ours are not worth recording. Instead we attempt to put the records of 2000 years ago on our vases, much to the confusion of the archaeologists 2000 years hence. Across the river there is a structure of concrete durable in spite of the

frost of winter and the heat of summer. Will it stand?: What will be the ruins of the Stadium 2000 years hence, or will the structure of steel and con-All the products of our trade and commerce are the temporary. Our

stone walls are mere veneers of three or four inches thick backed up by bricks. If you examine the producers of our great industries, they are perishable in a high degree and all are becoming more so. The old books of Germany will last, but ours will not, for the paper will

rot or dry in a short period hence. Where, then, shall we find meterial for the archaeologist 2000 years hence?

There is only one thing that will last-our subways. There are our chances. The Brooklyn Bridge, which is the foremost of our engineering structures, needs constant care.

I trust that out of your labors as they penetrate the minds of our people will come worthier arts and buildings to record our civilization to the future.

Paying Too Much for Success

By Orison Swett Marden.



***** F a vigorous young business man, anxious to push his business and make money, were offered a million dollars to shorten his life ten years, would he accept the money on such terms? For what stocks and bonds would be exchange the peace and tranquility of his mind for the rest of his life? What price would tempt a man to trade his steady nerves for shaky ones scarcely enabling him to sign his name, or substitute for buoyant spirits and a vivacious mander jaded ennui and dull apathy? What would he ask for his bright

youthful countenance, if it was to be immediately replaced by a wrinkled careworn visage, stamped with anxiety? How much would he take for his athletic figure, his quick, clastic step, if offered in exchange a bent form and shuffling gait? How much real estate would be consider a fair compensation for the companionship of his wife, the joy and comfort of his home, and the sweet love of little children?

Suppose that a bright, hopeful college graduate were asked to sell, offhand, the result of his four years' work, to give up his grasp of human nature. and to close forever all the doors of intellectual progress that his studies have opened to him,-how much money would close the bargain? Ask some man what he would take in exchange for the friendships that

have made his life rich with hallowed experiences and perpetual inspiration, and which promise him pleasure and profit in future years. Ask some respected citizen, influential for good in his community, whose advice is sought, who is held up as an example to growing youth, to sell his good name, his influence, his community's respect, what sum would he name?

COMMISSIONER CARFIELD'S REPORT It is Found to Be Favorable to the Grea Packers.

The report of Commissioner of Corporations Garfield on the beef industry, after about eight months' investigation in Chicago and elsewhere, shows that there has been an enormous amount of exaggeration in the statements that have appeared for some time past in regard to the beef business. This investigation was set on foot by a resolution of the House of Representatives adopted March 7, 1904, and the ascertained facts after a most rigid examination of the methods and general conduct of the business are contained in a report covering 208 pages. Its figures and tables conclusively show that the popular belief in enormous profits made by the large packers, such as Armour & Co., Swift & Co. and Nelson Morris & Co., and in the exclusive control of the busi-

ness which many think they enjoy, is really without foundation. The report made to President Roose velt by Commissioner Garfield is really the first official statement of the actunl conditions of the beef business that has been made, and as all the condusions arrived at are based, as shown by him, upon data officially obtained there seems to be no reason why they should not be regarded as reliable and in all respects trustworthy.

This report shows why the price of both entile and beef advanced to the highest level ever-known after the short corn erop of 1991, and states that because of the decrease in number of cattle and also in decreased weight, "the high prices of beef which caused so much complaint among consumers at this time were attributable wholly to these abnormal cattle prices."

All the figures of the live weight and live cost of all dressed beef cattle were obtained from actual killing records, and all information of every kind obtained by the Commissioner was voluntarily and freely offered by the packers, all books of record and papers c, anected with the business having been placed at his disposal.

To make certain that the results of the investigation should be absolutely accurate, the Commissioner states that a double method of ascertaining profits was adopted, and, without going into detail here, it is found that the conclu sion arrived at shows an average profit of 99 cents per head. The Commissioner says "the close parallelism in the results of the two methods of ascertaining the profits confirms completely the correctness of the general conclusions." It is clearly established that "Western packers do not control more than half of the beef supply of the United States," the conclusion of the Commissioner being that the bush ness done by them amounts to "about 45 per cent," of the total slaughter of the country,

The whole report is extremely interesting and well worthy of careful perusal. As an official report it may be regarded as worthy of confidence, and it certainly leads the reader to the conclusion arrived at by the Commis sloner when he states that "the capltalization of none of these concerns i excessive as compared with its actual investment," and that from thorough and rigid examination of original entries in books and papers to which he had access there was also "indirect evidence that the profits of the packers in their beef business are less than is frequently supposed," as shown by comparison between the total profits and the total amount of sales.

Smallest Republic.

Tavolara is said to be the smallest republic in the world. It is situate on the little island of the same name. some seven or eight miles south of Sardinia. Tavolara is about one mile in diameter and inhabited at present by 55 people- men, women and chill dren. In 1886 Karl Albert, then wing of Sardinia, bestowed the supremacy over this little isle upon the Barto leoni family, and for 46 years "King" Paul I, reigned in peace in his domain He died on May 30, 1882, and shortly before his demise called all his faith ful subjects to his bedside and de clared it to be his carnest wish the none of his relatives should succeed him as head of the government in the island, and that he considered it for the best that the good people of Tavolara should govern themselves. After this last wish no candidate for the vacant throne could be found among the family of the deceased. who were used to consider their "king's" wish law, and the little is land remained ungoverned for four years. At last, in 1886 the little island was declared a republic. constitution gives the elective fran-chise to both men and women. A president is elected to serve six years. None of the officers receives any

But Few New Living.

The recent death of Jomes N. Typer at Washington leaves only three the thirteen men living who cast the electoral vote of Indiana for Abraham

Effects of Prosperity.

In the six years of the country's greatest prosperity, from 1897 to 1903, average prices of breadstuffs advanced 65 per cent.; meats, 23.1 per cent.; dairy and garden products, 50.1 per cent., and clothing 24.1. All these were products of the farmer and stockman, who profited more than any other class of the community by these advances. The miner benefited 42.1 per cent, by that advance in the average price of metals. The only decrease in the average prices of commodities in that period was in railway freight rates, which decreased from .708 per ton-mile in 1897 to .763 in 1903, a loss of 4.4 per cent. The report of the Interstate Commerce Commission shows that the average increase in the pay of railroad employes in that period was a tride above 8.5 per cent.

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 6.25

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 5.75

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 4.00

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 5.50
 8.75

FEMININE PANCIES.

Shapely hands are no rarity among Nearly one-fifth of the students at Swiss universities are women.

hair so that it sticks straight up from their heads. Mrs. Ingeliorg Noison, mother of United States Securior Knate Nelson,

Wives of Slamese noblemen cut their

of Minnesota, is over ninely-nine years of age. Miss Edith Phoins of Columbia, Mo., who has been elected as librarian by the Carnegie Library Board of Oklahoma, is the granddaughter of Govern-

or John'S, Phelos, of Missouri. Miss Frances Benjamin Johnston, of Washington, D. C., has lately been notified by the French Government that the decoration Palmes Academiques has been conferred on her by that

Government. While women are invading nearly all of the employments heretofore beonging to men, milliners, both here and abroad, report a growing difficulty in finding girls willing to devote them-selves to the art of making hats.

Queen Elena of Italy is said to believe in the Montenegrin superstition that it is unlucky for a child to sleep in a room into which any light pene-trates, and light proof shutters are the order in the nursery in Rome. Sophonisba Benini, a peasant girl

who has been discovered in the Italan village of Copparo, near Ferrara. although only thirteen years, stands pounds and is fifty-eight inches around Princers Christian and Princess Vic-

torin of Schleswig-Holstein, who visited Rhodesia in September last year, were the first members of the lew the famous fails of Zambesi River, named by Dr. Living-stone after the late queen.