

# SOMEWHAT STRANGE.

## ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE.

### Queer Episodes and Thrilling Adventures Which Show that Truth is Stranger than Fiction.

SOME weeks ago a passenger train on the Erie Road ran into a freight near the Pennsylvania State line and a few passengers were hurt. No one could explain the accident. The conductor and engineer of the freight asserted their innocence, and those of the passenger train were equally confident that no blame could attach to them. The officers of the road worked for nearly a fortnight trying to unravel the mystery, but were unable to do so. At last the facts were made known in the simplest way imaginable. The division superintendent visited the scene of the accident shortly after it occurred, and while loitering about the track happened to look at the switch tower. This tower had received a severe shock when the two trains came together. The division superintendent happened to look at the clock and found it stopped. He made inquiries and learned that it had stopped at the time of the collision. The clock showed that the passenger train had passed there just two minutes and a half ahead of time. The conductor of the passenger train had violated one of the most stringent rules—not to run ahead of schedule—and lost his position. The clock located the blame.

A RESIDENT of Nyack, N. Y., contributes this bit of natural history to a contemporary: "I was crossing a field, when my attention was attracted by a snake rolling over and over. The snake was about three feet long and appeared to be propelled by some power I couldn't see. I knew it was dead from the way it moved, and on looking closer saw that two big beetles were supplying the motive power. They were behind the snake, and by burrowing under it at either end acted as rollers to send the snake ahead. I saw them move it over ten feet. I spent most of the day in watching. They propelled it twenty feet farther and then stopped. One of them went away and soon came back with at least 100 beetles. This little army set to work and actually dug a hole in the ground about five inches in diameter and half a foot deep. It took them half a day to do this, and just about dark they appeared to be satisfied with their task, and the whole army set about dumping its snakes into the hole, which they did by coiling up its body so that it fitted into the space nicely. Then they covered it up and disappeared in the thicket."

A KANSAS cowboy tells of a mastodonic wild steer that has roamed the plains of the southwest for many years, unconquerable by the most daring and skilful herder. He says the steer killed a big silver-tip bear in a fair fight two years ago. The cowboy was on a territorial affair, and was witnessed from a safe distance by two cowboys. The bear attempted to creep up on the steer, but the latter saw him, and at once gave battle. As the steer charged the bear rose to his hind feet and gave the ox a terrible blow with his paw, which served to stagger the bear for a moment, but the hallow roar of rage that he uttered rushed at the bear's face before he could administer another blow had hit him fair in the ribs and sent him rolling on the grass. The fight then became fast and furious, and soon the bear was seen trying to crawl away from his enraged opponent. The steer was too quick for him, however, and headed him off, and at last gored him to such an extent that death ensued.

MR. AUSTIN MALLORY, of Franklin county, Ky., set out not long ago to dig a well. A driver with a witchazel switch picked up the well, and the well was to be found by digging, and the well was begun. Six feet below the surface a solid rock was struck, but Mr. Mallory persisted and blasted his way down forty feet, when a few days ago a blast blew the bottom out of the well, and he found that he had opened the way into an immense cave. Three or four bold spirits ventured down the cave. The water entering about the explorers came upon a small river of crystal clearness, in whose waters strange-looking fish disported themselves, and whose merry ripples had furnish music for centuries with no other audience than the eternal rocks. A pool of water was also found which, so far as they could sound, was bottomless. On the banks of the stream was found the wreckage of what had once been a cabin, and an Indiana canoe, drifted there, doubtless, from some other water course and preserved so long by the pure atmosphere of the cave. The adventurers explored the cave for a considerable distance in each direction, but found no limit or reduction of dimensions.

WILLIAM H. MORRIS, of Ansonia, Conn., recently said that he had kept a daily record of the weather for twenty-five years, and his father and grandfather had done the same before him, and there had been a rainfall on the 25th day of July. The next day was the 25th, and before the Congregational Sunday-school started for its annual picnic the weather recorder told one of the deacons of the church that he would do well to carry his umbrella and rubbers. As the day was a most beautiful one the deacon laughed, but on the advice being repeated he became reckless and offered to bet \$1, even though he was a deacon in good standing, that it would not rain. The bet was made, ten to one, and before 3 o'clock that afternoon the rain poured down in torrents for fifteen minutes. The files of the Evening Sentinel as far back as they run sustain Mr. Morris' statement.

UNCLE BILLY BOSH, of Cabarrus county, says the St. Joseph (Cal.) News, who has just died at the age of eighty, was a queer old bachelor whose only companions were two dogs and an old negro. His real estate consisted of 1,800 acres of land, some of which was thought to hold thousands of dollars, but when it was opened the only money found was a nickel. However, in bureau drawers, in old cupboards, in pitchers and jars, in old clothes closets, in old stockings and in cracks in his miserable house was found \$10,000 in gold dust, besides a large quantity of gold and silver and a few hundred dollars in greenbacks. In the search for the money a Charlotte bank was found containing \$700 that had never been opened. This was received by him in 1880. He had corn and bacon on hand four years old, and some hay that had been stacked for twenty-five years.

The first Russian visitor on board the French man-of-war at Cronstadt effected his appearance among them in a somewhat peculiar manner. He was a Russian soldier who had an extended swim in the Baltic off Cronstadt, to where the French squadron was approaching. When he reached the first vessel, which was just about to anchor, he jumped to the side, shouting with all his might the only French words he knew: "Vive la France!" Great were the rejoicings when the unclad enthusiast was hauled on board. He was treated to any number of cognacs, wrapped in a French naval cloak and preparations were made to convey him back to quarters in the ship, when suddenly he threw off the cloak, plunged into the sea, and still shouting "Vive la France!" returned home as he had come.

DR. VERGAARA, of Villalcienzo, in the province of Burgos, states that there is in that village a married woman, aged forty-eight, who for the last seventeen years has taken no nourishment of any kind; in fact, we are asked to believe that nothing whatever has passed her lips except a small amount of water, which she takes every three or four days. During all that time she has not left her bed for a single moment; she lies there in a state of lethargy, which might be mistaken for death but for occasional slight movements of her body and a feeble moan which she utters when disturbed by the light falling on her face. There seems to be no question of making the case a paying exhibition, as the husband resolutely shuts his door against mere sight-seers.

DR. L. B. CLIFTON, a Georgia scientist, claims to have made rather an odd discovery. By the aid of a microscope of high magnifying powers he has detected a peculiar insect that infests paper money and is found nowhere else. It is very minute in size and multiplies with surprising rapidity. Dr. Clifton counts upwards of 3,000 of them on an old \$5 bill. He says that the money paper is acarus, and is closely related to the spider. It is not a pretty animal; its shape is oblong and flat, and it is provided with four legs and a sharp bill. It is never known to leave the paper on which it lives, and it never becomes a parasite on the human body.

EX-GOVERNOR FURNAS of Nebraska tells this story of Judge Broady of Omaha. On one occasion Judge Broady left his office, and on the outer door posted a card which read: "Back again in ten minutes. Take a seat and wait." "At the foot of the stairs," says Gov. Furnas, "Judge Broady happened to remember that he had forgotten something. Slowly he climbed the steps and once more he became submerged in his own thoughts. At the door of his own office he paused and read the card on the door. Then the Judge deliberately sat down and waited for himself to come back."

THERE is a girl ten years old near Pittsburgh, Pa., who speaks only in a language of her own invention, though she reads and understands English. The single person who can translate the peculiar tongue is an elder sister. A portion of her vocabulary is as follows: "Chy-chy-kyk," a cot; "sofa," angry; "phatou," pleasure or fun; "tooky, tuba," a strong rope; "mell," mamma; "beloh," papa; "popo tikou," to swing to and fro. Certain philologists are studying this new speech with the hope of discovering some facts as to the origin of language.

A FARMER named Shutt, living near Sulphur Springs, was up at the cranberry marsh at work, says the Cincinnati Enquirer, when he found six pretty round eggs, and so greatly pleased was he at their appearance that he picked them up and put them in his pocket to take home to the children. The warmth of his pocket spoiled the eggs as playthings for the children, for when he reached home Mr. Shutt found that he had five little black snakes in his pocket, one of the eggs falling to hatch.

A COLEMBUS (Ind.) musical freak is called "Singbilly," though his proper name is William Isintrigger. He plays in a peculiar manner with his lungs as well as with a distinctness and clearness that brings out every note as fully as it can be brought out on any piano or other musical instrument by the most accomplished performer. The effort frequently causes his body to writhe with contortions and his features to pinch with apparent pain, but he says it does not hurt him.

The oldest married couple in the world is to be found in La Quippara, Minn. Mr. Daniel Salisbur completed his one hundred and third year on December 14, and his wife is seven years older. Until recently this venerable pair lived by themselves in a log house on the Yellow Bank River, and both are described as being still in good health. On his one hundred birthday Mr. Salisbury walked to Bellingham and back, a distance of seven miles each way.

A QUEER looking animal, that might possibly be a young sea serpent, has been seen on the banks of a stream near Chickville, Minn. It was seen by only one man, and he got but an unsatisfactory look at it, the animal disappearing when he got close to it. He describes the "what is it" as being the shape of a cigar, brown in color and about twenty-five or thirty feet long. It is alleged that a beast that answers this description was seen in the same neighborhood about three years ago.

A CURIOUS wedding took place recently in the shabby Northamptonshire, England. The contracting parties were a man aged seventy-six and a woman aged seventy-seven. The bans had been published in church fifty-six years ago, but they separated and married different people. The wife of one and the husband of the other dying, they found themselves at liberty to renew their engagement, and have now married, presumably for the last time.

A HORSE belonging to a man living near Baltimore while grazing cut its tongue with a blade of sword grass, from which it bled to death.

A CITIZEN of Hart county, Ga., who is over one hundred years old, has lived within five miles of his birthplace all of his life.

### To Start a Balking Horse.

The following suggestive directions for the treatment of balking horses are recommended by the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals:

1. Put the horse on the neck; examine the harness carefully, first on one side and then on the other, speaking encouragingly while doing so; then jump into the wagon and give the word; generally the horse will obey.
2. A teamster in Maine says he can start the most balky horse by taking him out of the shafts and making him go around in a circle until he is giddy. If the first dance of this kind doesn't cure him, the second will.
3. To start a balky horse, place your hand over the horse's nose and shut his wind off until he wants to go, and then let him go.
4. The brain of a horse seems to entertain but one idea at a time; therefore continued whipping only confirms his stubborn resolve. If you can by any

means give the horse a new subject to think of, you will generally have no trouble in starting him. A simple remedy is to take a couple of turns of stout twine around the foreleg, just below the knee, tight enough for the horse to feel it, and tie in a bow-knot. At the first cluck the horse will generally go dancing off, and after going a short distance you can get out and remove the string to prevent injury to the tendon in your further drive.

5. Take the tail of the horse between the hind legs, and tie it by a cord to the saddle-girth.

6. Tie a string around the horse's ear, close to his head.

### A BATTLE OF BIRDS.

#### An Eagle Pounces on a Pelican in a San Francisco Park.

A most remarkable battle took place in Golden Gate Park recently. It possessed great interest to the few who were so fortunate as to witness it. The contestants were a large bald eagle and the big white pelican that graces the pond near the Haight street entrance. Very often a pair of eagles have been seen sailing in the air and hovering over the park. They have been known to catch quails in the deer paddock, and have even scooped in a ground squirrel now and then to carry off to their young in some crack on the coast. The bald eagle usually selects the highest and most inaccessible cliff on which to build its nest, and it is thought the pair of marauders in question have for years had their home at some point two or three miles below the Cliff House.

Yesterday morning several park visitors observed these two large birds hovering over the duck pond. They sailed around in gradually diminishing circles, rising higher and higher until they were but specks against the sky, when suddenly they disappeared from view altogether.

Perhaps half an hour had passed when the people seated on the benches watching the ducks and black swan lazily paddling about or adorning the unglazied dignified pelican rearing motionless in the water were startled to see a black streak shooting through the air with a noiseless rush. All of the ducks scurried to the edge of the pond and hid in the bush. The pelican alone remained unconscious of danger.

Like a flash the eagle, for such it was, fastened its talons on the pelican's back and attempted to fly away with the long-necked bird. The pelican, however, proved too heavy for the eagle to carry, and after a rise of eight or ten feet the king of birds was forced to relinquish its hold upon its prey, which dropped back into the water. The eagle was not to be robbed of its prize, however, and it made another swoop.

By this time the pelican had recovered from its surprise. It got into fighting position and received its enemy with outstretched neck and flapping wings. The eagle failed to secure a hold and received a hard pinch from the strong bills of the pelican that caused it to fly away screaming with rage and pain.

Again the eagle pressed the attack. As if to gain some advantage, the pelican reached the land and awaited the onslaught. The eagle accepted the challenge, and for a time all that could be seen was a mixed-up mass of feathers. The long neck of the pelican proved to be an effective weapon, however, and the hard bill was repeatedly driven into the eagle's side, at times knocking it over. Only once did the eagle get a hold with its beak and talons, but the slight advantage was to no purpose, as he was immediately shaken off by the big white bird.

Finally the battle, which lasted about four minutes, ended by the eagle taking wing and beating a sullen retreat in a dilapidated condition.

The pelican is in almost as good condition as when it entered the affray, save the loss of a few feathers, and after the battle it sailed about the pond with a dignified stroke as if conscious of its clever victory.

Park Policeman McManus and about fifteen others witnessed the battle. (San Francisco Chronicle.)

### Description of a "Whaleback."

A correspondent gives the following description of a "whaleback."

"The ships are the invention of Captain McDougal, a Scotchman, who has been navigating the great lakes for many years past. These "whalebacks" are they are expressly called, are shaped like a boiler or a cigar. When loaded the mass of the vessel is nearly submerged, only a turret supported on pillars remaining above water, from which turret the ships are navigated by the very limited crew required. Masts and sails there are none. The vessels are "operated" three or even four together, the engine power of each being supplied by one being in the steam barge, the three consortships which are towed being clear of all machinery, and are loaded down with twenty-five with wheat, coal or other cargo. These four vessels can together carry some 10,000 tons of wheat with a draft of less than fourteen feet.

The advantages claimed for these "whalebacks" are chiefly these: (1) An economy of forty per cent in cost of construction; (2) a saving at the same rate of speed of nearly six per cent in horse-power, 800 horse-power and two boilers doing the work at present done by 2,000-horse-power and six boilers, with all the resulting economy in space for coal, etc.; (3) almost entire freedom of rolling and pitching in stormy seas; (4) great carrying capacity with light displacement. The ships are equipped with powerful steam pumps, and should they encounter extraordinary rough weather the bulkheads between their double keels are filled as if in water ballasting, and thus loaded down to the point of submersion.—[Pineyune.]

### A Parrot's Remark.

There is a parrot in St. Louis which exclaims whenever a man enters the room: "You're drunk, sir, and had better go away. I don't want you sitting by your own door." People wonder how the bird "catches on," but the explanation, says an exchange, is simple; it doesn't know how to say anything else, and of course in making the remark to every man it occasionally gets near home. One gentleman who called thought it was the lady of the house speaking, and rushed out of the parlor. She sat down to write a note of explanation to him, when to her amazement a servant brought her a note from the gentleman she was writing to, in which he stated that he acknowledged with humility that he had perhaps taken too much wine with his dinner, but he had hoped, on calling on her, that she would not have detected it. As she had done so, however, he offered his most abject apologies and a prayer for forgiveness.

### One of Nature's Wonders.

A remarkable freak of nature is found among the hills of Delaware Co., N. Y., in a sunken lake covering about three acres of surface, which lies between two parallel ridges not far from New York, Ontario and Western Railroad. The whole surface of the lake is covered with a thick growth of moss, whose stems extend to an unknown depth, but certainly further than the arm can reach. Each tuft of the moss is of a different color from its neighbor, so that the surface looks like that of a beautiful colored carpet. In walking over the velvety surface the foot sinks down a few inches without encountering the water, which is at least two feet below the surface. Near the shore, in a few places, the water comes to the top. The buried pond is a wonderful natural curiosity.—[Detroit Free Press.]

# HOW TO GET TO SLEEP.

## The Rocking Motion of a Steamboat a Cure for Insomnia.

Sleeplessness or insomnia is familiar to most persons who make their living by any kind of mental labor, and in a majority of cases the sufferer seeks in drugs for relief. These soon lose their effect unless taken in large quantities, and the unfortunate victim is liable to become addicted to a habit not easily shaken off.

"In all my practice," said a physician to a New York News reporter, "I have never prescribed a drug for insomnia, except in cases where the sleeplessness was occasioned by excruciating pain or an acute disease. Where mental exhaustion, overtaxed nerves, or business anxiety has caused the trouble, I depend upon other means of relief. One of the best means, as everybody knows, is regular physical exercise. For mental exhaustion bodily fatigue is the best sleep-producer I know of. But it will not cause slumber in every case, for insomnia is a very stubborn ailment when it once gets hold of a person. I had a case not long ago that taxed all my resources to cure. It was that of a man whose nervous system was completely shattered. He dreaded the approach of night, for it brought him no rest.

"Doctor," he said to me, "unless I can get sleep I know I shall lose my mind. Night after night I walk the floor of my room until my mind and body together seem ready to fall with exhaustion. But when I lie down to get the rest I so much need, I toss from one side of the bed to the other, until in sheer desperation I rise again to tramp the carpet."

"I recommended a five-mile-walk every night before retiring. It did not produce the desired effect. A nightly bath of warm water and ammonia, followed by vigorous rubbing, was next tried, but in vain. His diet was regulated, tonics were administered, and an entire rest from work and a change of air enjoined. It was all to no purpose. In despair he said to me:

"Oh, if my mother were only alive! I feel that if I could rest in her arms and be rocked by her, as I used to be when a child, I might obtain some rest."

"Capital idea!" I exclaimed, with a sudden illumination. "Motion, rocking, that's just what you want. Here you have been tossing yourself to and fro whenever you lie down. Now we will furnish the tossing for you. Go down to the Albany boats to-night and engage a berth in the paddle wheel as you can. Get into it as soon after the boat starts as you can. Return on the same boat to-morrow night and report to me."

"When he came to my office two days afterward his eyes were bright and the expression of haggard misery that had become habitual to him had left his face."

"Well," said I, "what luck?"

"I am a new man," he answered. "I have enjoyed two nights of delicious slumber."

"When asked to recount his experience, he said:

"I followed your directions explicitly, got a berth nearest the paddle wheel—which was easily procured, for nobody else would take it—and turned in as soon after supper as possible. I did not get to sleep, but anticipated a night of tossing. To my surprise I did not get to sleep. With every revolution of the paddle-wheel I received a thorough shaking up. The motion soothed me, and I soon fell asleep."

"And now," concluded the physician, "that man sleeps every night in a cradle, and is rocked to slumber by his valet, and I would advise all persons who are kept awake at night by tossing on their beds to follow his example."

### An Extraordinary Scene.

A very curious spectacle was to be seen on the outskirts of Gainesville last week, says a Jacksonville (Fla.) letter to the Atlanta Constitution. Alchua lake, a sheet of water from ten to fifteen miles in length and covering some forty thousand acres of land, is no more. On its banks were lying thousands of dead fish; dead alligators floated ghastly in pools of black water, and the atmosphere was a poisonous gas. Men and boys were there in throngs, crowding around the pools left by the receding waters, and with hoes and rakes dragging to shore hundreds of fish which had sought their depths for refuge. The waters were fairly alive with their struggles for existence.

Except for a small stream known as Payne's creek, flowing from Newman's lake into the Sink, the two main basins of the Sink and a few stagnant pools, no water is now to be seen where a few years ago steamers were plowing their way. This is the second time since 1823 that a similar occurrence has taken place. At that time, the earliest year in which there is any record of that part of the country, the head of the lake was a large prairie. Payne's prairie, having in it a body of water called the Sink and a small creek. In 1828 heavy rains filled up the prairie, but the water disappeared after a short time and the prairie was again dry land. In 1873, after a series of heavy rains, the Sink overflowed and the creek swelled to the dimensions of a lake. During several years the waters increased until a larger lake was formed, and for fully fifteen years sufficient depth of water stood over the prairie to allow of the plying to and fro of small steamers. During the last two years, however, the waters have been gradually lowering, and about three weeks ago they commenced going down with surprising rapidity, the lake falling about eight feet in two days, until all that was left of Alchua lake but the memory of it. The Sink is considered the cause of this change. There is evidently an underground passage connected with it, and for some reason not understood this underground passage has been acting as a drain until all the water in the lake had been drawn off.

# The Minister's Cat.

It's a pretty big story, but it's true, and the minister will tell you so. It's about Deborah, the minister's cat. She was a very large tabby, with three white stockings, two green eyes, and a wide old head.

Once upon a time Deborah had six little blind kittens, and they and their mother lay fast asleep in a round basket behind the stove in the minister's study.

Deborah was sleeping so hard that when Mr. Neal, the millman, came into the room she only pricked up her left ear and then went on snoring. She did not know that Mr. Neal had come to borrow her to kill off the rats in his house. Indeed, she did not know that he had any house, or any rats, either. He lived a mile away across the plain, and she caught her rats nearer home.

But Mr. Neal knew all about Deborah. He had not for years sold milk at the parsonage without hearing what a famous mouser she was; and he said now to the minister:

"Good evening, Mr. Feen. I've called this stormy night to ask if you'll be kind enough to lend us your cat?"

"Certainly," answered the minister, laying aside his pen; "only you'll have to take her family, too."

"Of course," said Mr. Neal; "and I'm glad she has the kittens; they will keep her happy."

Mr. Neal had brought a great strong bag, and by the help of the minister he put Deborah into it—basket, kittens, and all. She tried her best to get out, but Mr. Neal tied up the bag and held it firmly while he walked to his wagon. There he dropped the bag into a box that stood under the seat, and fastened down the cover. Then he drove away.

"Poor Deborah can't see where she is going any more than her blind kittens can," thought the minister, with a little smile, as he turned from the window. "I hope she won't be homesick, for I'm sure she could never find her way home. Why, why, the ground is getting really white with snow!"

Presently he sat down again to his sermon, and he wrote, and he wrote till everybody else in the house was asleep. All at once he was startled by a sound from the porch. It was the mewling of a cat. He threw open the door, and in ran Deborah, carrying in her mouth a kitten.

"Dear me," Deborah can this be you?" he cried, in great surprise.

She dropped the kitten on the rug at his feet and ran out before he could close the door. He put the little wet, cold kitty on a warm cushion, and went to bed; but he was awakened from his first nap by another mewling on the porch. Deborah had come with her second kitten. An hour or two later she came with the third, and by the next noon she had them all home—all six of them.

Soon Mr. Neal followed, bringing the empty basket.

"I thought I must return it quickly, or Deborah would come for it," said he, laughing. "You may tell her that I've bought a rat trap, and I'll never disturb her again. A puss that will travel eleven miles in the snow for the sake of getting her family back to its old corner deserves to live in peace."

Now, isn't this a pretty big story? I shouldn't have dared to repeat it if the minister hadn't told it to me himself.—Penn Shirley, in Our Little Ones.

"I NEVER carried a watch in my life," said a New-Yorker of fifty. "A watch is a habit, not a necessary article. No man who carries a watch can be any more regular in his habits than I am. I can get up at a certain minute and do so every morning. I can tell the time of day by feeling my face. The beard grows exactly so much, and you can come within a reasonable time of the hour by passing the hand over the chin. Not that it is often necessary, because regular habits soon become second nature and you never think of wondering about the hour. Of course the man who lives on trains and boats a good deal has to wear a timepiece and a time table."

A Del Norte teacher, trying to impress upon a hearer the advantages of the system, told of the great benefit the instruction had been to a very stout pupil. "When she first came to me she stood so improperly that all her dress was in her habits in a moment. Now," triumphantly, "they are all too short behind."

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# Two Prayers.

Mr. Spurgeon had been reviewing a book on "Primitive Methodism on the Yorkshire Wolds," and was especially pleased with a story of a most devout young man, who being in the habit of saying in his prayers, "Lord, help me to pray!" was answered one night by an old man's ejaculation, "And the Lord help thee to give over!"

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A special train of five cars, constructed entirely of steel, is on exhibition at Chicago.

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