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NEW YORK SNAKES.

Twenty-Five Kinds in the State and Three Are Poisonous.

Edwin C. Eckel of the New York State museum at Albany has compiled facts which show that in New York state 25 kinds of snakes have been found, or can reasonably be expected to occur. Of these several are only varieties, says the New York Sun. The list of snakes is as follows: The worm snake, ring-necked snake, blowing adder, green snake, black snake, racer, pine snake, milk snake, brown snake, De Kay's brown snake, three species of garter snakes, copperhead, masasauga or prairie rattlesnake and the banded rattlesnake. It is of some interest to note that only the last three of the above list are poisonous. Of these, the copperhead is found usually in marshy or swampy land, while the banded or common rattlesnake is commonly an inhabitant of rocky hills. The masasauga is a smaller species than the banded rattlesnake, and has never been found in this state except in one swamp near the Genesee river. Both the copperhead and the rattlesnake are much rarer than is commonly supposed, the latter being practically confined to the Adirondack region and to those parts of Orange and Rockland counties which fall within the highlands of the Hudson. Deaths from their bite are very rare, probably not exceeding, in this state, one case in five years. The copperhead, while smaller than the rattlesnake, and therefore less venomous, is generally regarded as the more dangerous of the two species. This is due to the fact that the rattlesnake will, in general, give warning of his intention to strike, while the copperhead lies silently and motionless until his victim is within reach of his fangs. Though frequently one sees in print descriptions of methods by which poisonous snakes may be differentiated from harmless species, few of the tests commonly given can be applied at a safe distance, and some of them are not applicable to all of our poisonous snakes. For example, it has been often stated that the poisonous snakes have many small scales covering the tops of their heads, while the harmless varieties are covered with a few comparatively large plates. This is true as far as the banded rattlesnake is concerned, but both the masasauga and the copperhead have the large head-plates like harmless snakes. The thickness of the body is also, to some degree, a sign of a poisonous snake, but the harmless blowing adder also possesses this peculiarity. The head of the poisonous snakes is very markedly triangular, looked at from above, while the neck is comparatively thin and well marked off from both body and head. In the harmless species on the contrary, the head is more or less unmarked.

OUR COAL SUPPLY.

Our Bituminous Fields the Most Extensive in the World.

The 194,000 square miles of coal fields belonging to the United States give it a supply averaging one square mile of coal field to each 15 square miles of territory. The meaning of this may be seen when it is remembered that the ration for Great Britain is 1 to 20 and for France 1 to 200. With the exception of anthracite coal beds covering 500 square miles in eastern Pennsylvania, but averaging 60 feet in thickness, and excepting also one or two small patches of coal in Colorado and New Mexico, the above figures refer to bituminous or soft coal. The eastern portion of the United States contains five great coal beds: First, the Appalachian field, extending from the northern boundary of Pennsylvania to central Alabama; second, the Illinois-Indiana field, which extends into northwestern Kentucky; third, a field 150 miles wide extending southward from central Iowa, covering Indian Territory and sending one arm across Arkansas and another in central Texas; fourth, a line of strata in Texas from the northeastern corner of the state to the Rio Grande river; fifth, the central Michigan field. The western fields do not lie in large continuous sheets, but constitute small, isolated pockets averaging 25 miles in width and 50 miles in length. Such beds may be found throughout the entire Rocky mountain region from Montana to New Mexico, numbering in all 45 distinct beds in Colorado, Wyoming and the two states mentioned. To the west of this group of detached fields we find Idaho, having four small beds, Washington four, and California five.

THE LUCKY BARGAIN.

I have a friend, without whose face
(God keep his face from sorrow free!)
The world would be a dreary place
For weary me.

To please him is my chief delight;
I'd rather die than give him pain,
Yet this I've done in my despite,
And shall again.

My friend is kind when I am cross,
Nor ever cross when I am kind;
He rules the sullen waves that toss
My toiling mind.

His gracious spirit gives me joy;
What can I give him for his grace?
A little, useless, battered toy
Of time and space.

A box of prayers with broken wings,
Of shapeless hopes and wasted hours,
Of half a hundred worn-out things
And faded flowers;

Wherein one blossom lives and makes
A light, whereat his lips will part
And smile for kindness, as he takes
The proffered heart.

—N. S., in the Spectator.

A CULPRIT CORNERED.

As Herbert French was leaving a street car, in which he had ridden for about twenty minutes, a loud exclamation caused him to pause.

"Hi, sir!" shouted the conductor, you've left something behind."

French knew he had left nothing; but he was not the man to lose the chance of obtaining anything for the sake of a lie.

"Here you are, sir," and the conductor thrust a parcel into his hand.

French gave the conductor a dime, and a few minutes later was at the house in which he lodged, and ascended to his room. Here he examined the article which Fate—or the car conductor—had given him. It was a square, bulky package, enveloped in brown paper and tied neatly with a piece of red tape. There was no address on the cover, and, opening it, he found a quantity of closely-written manuscript, inscribed in a firm and clear handwriting, and headed "The Maze of Life."

It was a story, he could see at a glance; and no name or address was upon it. He threw it on one side, with a quiet laugh.

"Not much fear of that being advertised for," he said aloud. "Some poor beggar of an author forgot it, I suppose, who hasn't got a dollar to bless himself with—like me."

Herbert French was an individual who for years had existed in the manner which is commonly called "living on his wits." That is to say he could turn his hand—or his head—to nearly everything, but practically skillful at nothing.

Once upon a time he held a good position in a large business house; but his name became mixed up in some underhand practices, and he had to go. He had drifted from one thing to another, as many a man does, and now he was a canvasser for advertisements for a so-called "society weekly," run by a broken-down journalist. There was a certain amount of money to be made at the work, and French spent his scanty earnings like a prince. How he managed to live was a puzzle to many people and often a puzzle to himself.

His landlady, with whom he settled promptly, regarded him as an estimable lodger, and was loud in her praises of the "littery gent, on the third front." Those of whom he occasionally borrowed money referred to him in quite a different fashion.

For a day or two, French watched the advertising columns of the newspapers in the hope of finding a reward offered for the manuscript in his possession. None appeared, however, and the little pile of foolscap lay in his room almost forgotten for some weeks. Then one night he picked it up and glanced curiously at the first sheet. He read it and turned to the second, and as he did so his interest was aroused. It was seldom he read anything except the police reports, but "The Maze of Life" laid hold of him at once. Page after page he eagerly devoured.

The fire in his room sank lower and lower, and finally sank out in a feeble splutter. A neighboring clock chimed the hour of two, but still he sat leaning over the table, his eyes gleaming with eagerness as he turned the sheets over. Now and again he would pause and wipe his forehead with his handkerchief. As the faint streaks of dawn shimmered coldly through the window panes he came to the end.

"Good Heavens!" he murmured as he sank back, exhausted. "What a story!"

He gathered the manuscript together again.

"Who wrote it, I wonder? It's a masterpiece—a work of genius! The poor devil who lost it—what a blow!"

Then came the thought: "What to do with it?" He knew the honorable course open to him—to advertise it. But Herbert French always preferred to take the opposite course to the honorable one.

Next day an idea struck him. It scared him at first in its insolence, and he put it on one side as impossible and too risky. Thinking it over later, it lost its fearfulness. It was risky, certainly; but he had grown callous to taking risks, especially where money was the inducement. And it might, he thought, be the means of lifting him through unscathed.

"Why not have 'The Maze of Life' published as his own work? That it would be accepted by a publisher of repute on its own merits he felt sure, a work that throbbed with genius, that gripped the reader from the first chapter and held him spellbound to the end, could not fail to be a success. He would be famous, rich. But the chances of the real author coming forward? What then? He preferred not to dwell on that.

Yes, he would risk it, and if he was discovered he would brazen it out to the end.

He took the manuscript to a type writing establishment, and a few days later it was returned with a neatly-typed copy. He burned the original, and felt much safer when this was done. Then he despatched the type-written story to one of the foremost publishers in the city.

The weeks that followed were torturous ones to Herbert French. At times he regretted having taken the step he had done, and wished he had never seen "The Maze of Life." He would laugh at his fears, and picture himself the author of the day. A month slipped by and a polite note reached him from the publishers to the effect that their reader had reported favorably on his work and they would be happy to negotiate for its publication.

* * * * * * *

Three months later the literary world was in a state of excitement. On every hand people were talking of the new book which had been launched upon the sea of literature with such signal success. The critics had, with few exceptions, spoken of "The Maze of Life," by Halifax Flanders, as a work of genius. Edition after edition had been issued, and still the booksellers clamored constantly for more. The book was discussed by all classes, by the mechanic as well as by the professional man, learned men and women, and one and all joined in voluminous praise of the man who had written it.

But who was Halifax Flanders? No one seemed to know. Paragraphs were appearing in the papers daily setting forth in one quarter that the author was a lady of the best society, and in another that "Halifax Flanders" was the nom de plume of a man of letters already famous under his own name. The publishers would give no information beyond stating that the author desired his identity to remain unknown.

And what of French? He had intended to change the title, but some fatal influence compelled him to retain the original name. "Halifax Flanders" he regarded as a cleverly conceived nom de plume—a name that would attract by reason of its uncommon sound.

But if he had been unsettled before the book appeared, his agony was tenfold worse now. As the sale of the book increased by leaps and bounds, his fears of exposure rose accordingly.

"Don't under any consideration divulge my real name," he had said to the publishers; but daily he expected the author to come forward and hold him up as a thief and a fraud.

One evening he was sitting in his room when his landlady tapped at the door.

He started up guiltily.

"What is it?" he shouted, a nervous apprehension seizing him.

The landlady entered, closely followed by a young woman in walking costume.

"If you please, sir," blurted out the former, "this young woman called to see you, and although I told her you wasn't going to see anybody, she would follow me up the stairs, saying it was very important business," and she surveyed the visitor with an eye of disgust.

Herbert French rose from his chair. "It's all right, Mrs. Coomber," he said; "you may go."

"Won't you be seated?" he asked the young woman, when they were alone.

"Thank you," was the answer, in a pretty feminine voice, "I've come from the Bulletin to interview you, if you will allow me."

The man turned pale.

"How did you obtain my address?" he asked, with a quiver in his tone.

"I will tell you later on," responded the interviewer. "You are Mr. Halifax Flanders, aren't you?"

"I am," came the strained reply.

"But that is not your real name—is it, now?" queried the young woman. "Isn't it Herbert French?"

"Herbert French! How do you know?"

"I got it from the same source whence I obtained your address. I got it from Miss Jerning's typewriting agency, in Nassau street. Ah! I see you recollect." The answer was given in a taunting manner that stung French to the quick.

"What is it you want?" he raved. "Who are you? What do you want of me—"

"Pray calm yourself, my dear sir," interrupted the other. "If you will resume your seat, I will tell you what I want with you. Come now, sit down."

Like a child he obeyed. There was something in the keen eye of his visitor that forced obedience.

"Now, Mr. French, I will tell you who I am. My name is Nellie Searle—a name which I suppose you don't know. It is I, and not you, who wrote 'The Maze of Life,' now so famous. Don't interrupt," as French began speaking; "listen to me first. I wrote that story—wrote when I was nearly starving. Not a friend had I in the whole world—not one. Night after night, after I had toiled uselessly through the streets looking for work, I have sat in my room writing for dear life, every word I wrote being like a drop of my own life's blood oozing away. Then at last I finished it; I was almost destitute then. You know the rest of my story. Don't lie, man! What's the use? Somehow I left my manuscript in the street car, when I was taking it to the publishers—one of those things one does through trying too much to be extremely careful. You found it—liar, you must have done so—and you kept it. I applied to the office of the car company, I searched the newspapers, expecting to discover that some honest man had found and advertised it; but it never came back to me. Gradually I gave up hope, and then I saw the book for sale, with 'Halifax Flanders' on it as the author. I knew then how I had been cruelly robbed. I had obtained a situation on the Bulletin in the meantime—"

"But how did you discover me?" jerked out the cringing man.

"Yes, you may well ask. Yesterday I ran across a friend whom I had lost sight of years ago. She had set up a typewriting agency—yes, Miss Jerning, you know her—and from her I gathered who the man was that had robbed me. It was you—you cur—you thief—whom I have come to interview for my paper. To-morrow that interview will appear. All your knavery will be exposed to the world. You nearly killed me by stealing the child of my brain, the child I've wept over and nearly starved over, and now I'll have my revenge."

She ceased, and the man looked up into her face.

"How do you think you can prove that you wrote the story?" he gasped.

But the woman turned to the door, and was gone.

Next day the Bulletin came out with an interview with the great "Halifax Flanders" set in double-leaded type, and an exposure of his infamy. People smiled incredulously when they read it, and wondered how such a wild statement could have squeezed itself into the columns of so reputable a journal.

A few hours later the evening papers contained the news of the suicide of the author of "The Maze of Life," a man named French, who had hidden his identity under the peculiar pseudonym of "Halifax Flanders."—New York Weekly.

Father Time's Own Clock.

"The transmitting clock at the Naval Observatory, Washington, is the absolute monarch of American timekeepers," writes Evander McIver Sweet in the Ladies' Home Journal. "Every day in the year except Sunday, by one pendulum stroke it speaks directly and instantaneously to every city and considerable town between the peaks of the Rockies and the pines of Maine, saying to them that on the seventy-fifth meridian it is now high noon to the fraction of a second. A duplicate mechanism, stationed at the Branch Naval Observatory on Mare Island, performs a similar service for the people of the Pacific slope. And by this one clock at the national capital (together with its duplicate on the Pacific), is set nearly every timepiece in the United States and Cuba, most of those in Mexico and many on the border of Canada. A number of clocks—from three to 3000—in nearly every city and large town are wired together into a local family, and, by means of a switch key at the telegraph office, are put into direct contact with the parent clock at the national capital. So that the instant the electric touch is given from Washington every clock in the circuit—whether it be at Boston, Minneapolis or New Orleans—begins a new day in perfect accord with its national deity."

Causes of Former European Supremacy

A thousand years ago, when Constantinople was the capital of the world, the eastern trade reached Scandinavia by this route, Kiev being the outpost of the Greek economic system, and Nogorod the northern emporium, says Brooks Adams in the Atlantic. Within the northern commercial thoroughfare lay the cradle and hot-bed of western civilization; beyond lay desolate wastes, impenetrable alike to the trader and the soldier. These wastes cut Europe off from the Pacific coast, a region singularly favored both in soil and minerals. Europe, on the contrary, has never been remarkable either for the fecundity of its soil or the wealth of its mines. It reached high fortune rather because, before railroads its physical formation lent itself in a supreme degree to cheap transportation.

A tongue of land deeply indented by the sea and penetrated throughout by navigable rivers, it could market what it had when the treasures of Asia and America lay inaccessible. This advantage Europe retained until within about twenty years, and the new industrial revolution has been at once the cause and the effect of its loss.

Observations.

A real home is less picturesque than an ideal one, but a deal more comfortable.

Many will ask for your candid opinion, but none will thank you for it.

Egotism and cowardice have the same mother.

No world-wise woman ever assured a man that she was "always the same."

Unless the Sphinx has broken silence the riddle of woman is yet unsolved.

Man's first thoughts need revision; not so woman's, which are intuitions.

Woman has put more spokes in the wheel of destiny than man.

Take a good look at a girl's mother before you commit yourself, is very respectfully submitted to wooers.—Philadelphia Record.

Cause of the Deficiency.

A home for indigent lawyers has been established in Madison, Wis. This would seem to indicate that not enough rich men in Wisconsin are leaving defective wills.—Boston Commercial.

FATE OF THE T. F. OAKES

POSTED AS LOST THE SHIP TURNS UP AFTER NINE MONTHS.

One of the Most Remarkable Cases Ever Known in Marine History—A Grewsome Yarn of Storm and Calm and Sickness—Heroic Deeds of the Skipper's Wife.

One of the most remarkable cases of a vessel being posted at Lloyd's as missing and then turning up was that of the sky sail clipper T. F. Oakes, the first American iron square-rigger ever launched. She left the port of Hongkong on July 4, 1896, for New York. Her usual time from China to Sandy Hook was about 125 days. After she had been out about 250 days, and was not reinsurable, she was posted. Her agents had given her up as lost, and the relatives of her skipper, Captain Edward W. Reed, and his wife, who accompanied him on the voyage, had gone into mourning. The nautical world was startled when, on Monday, March 22, 1897, the old iron ship appeared in the port of New York, 260 days out of Hong Kong. She brought as grewsome a yard of storm and calm and sickness as was ever spun in forecastle or cabin. The missing ship came in tow of the oil-carrying steamship Kasbek, which sailed from Philadelphia on March 13 deep laden for Fiume. When she was about three hundred miles southeast of Sandy Hook one of her officers who was on the bridge, saw a blue light gleaming through the frosty air, thick with spoondrift. The tank bore down toward the signal, and when she was within hailing distance of the Oakes, Captain Muir, who had been summoned from his cabin, shouted across the troubled sea: 'Heave to, you are moving too fast for us!' A feeble voice returned this strange answer:

"'We can't do it; send a boat to us.'

"The Oakes was on the starboard tack, pitching into the swells with only her fore, main and mizzen lower topsails set. Captain Muir lowered a boat with three men, in charge of Chief Officer Helsham. The scant sail of the clipper forced her barnacled hull through the seas at less than two knots, and the muscular oarsmen of the tank, by hard rowing, were able to overhaul her within half an hour. Before dawn Helsham was alongside. A voice from the ship said: 'We want a tow.'

"'What do you want to pay?' Helsham asked. Then the voice, which was that of Second Mate Abrams, responded, 'We'll settle that by arbitration; six of our crew are dead, twelve are sick in the fok's'le and only two of us can move about ship.' Helsham returned to the Kasbek, reported the clipper's condition to Captain Muir, who shouted to the Oakes: 'We'll stand by you.'

"The British sailors got out a nine-inch manila hawser and bent it on a two-and-a-half-inch line. The line was passed through a hawser pipe astern and got afowl of the propeller. About 125 fathoms of it spun and slashed around the propeller blades, and the outboard part of the tail shaft. The propeller was jammed and the engine came to a stop before Chief Engineer Stevens could shut off steam. The tank was to windward of the square-rigger and drifted directly into her course. The chief engineer tried to start the ship again by using the auxiliary turning engine, which broke down. The iron prow of the Oakes would have pierced the hull of the Kasbek if her sailormen had not hoisted on her three pole masts fore-and-aft sails which she used in emergency. As it was, there was only a boat's length between the two ships when the Kasbek backed out of the Oakes' course. The tank was helpless about eight hours. A westerly gale sprang up and the Oakes vanished below the horizon. The chief engineer uncoupled the propeller shaft and forced it aft until the propeller boss was clear of the stern post. He and his men had been unable to free from the tail shaft the two and one-half inch line, which had been jammed about it. After uncoupling the propeller shaft there was a space of about an inch between the separate flanges of the couplings, and into this space the chief engineer fitted pieces of tough oak; the shaft was thus made an inch longer, and that inch was enough to loosen the line on the tail shaft. It was practically adding a wooden section to the shaft. The engines were started, and the Kasbek's captain decided to save the old clipper if he could. He came in sight of her late in the afternoon. A gale persisted with snow was howling out of the north. It was too rough to launch a boat, and the Kasbek stood by the crippled ship nearly two days. The sea had subsided somewhat, and the port life boat was loaded with flour, tapioca, potatoes, lime juice, whisky and medicine. The Kasbek steward gave up all his provisions. Captain Muir had surmised that there was scurvy on the ship, and this prompted him to send the antidotes. As Chief Officer Helsham said later, 'The only able seaman I found aboard the Oakes was Mrs. Reed, the wife of the captain.'

"Captain Reed said that every soul except his wife was sick with scurvy, of which five seamen had died.

"He himself was only slightly ill. The second mate's legs and feet were swollen nearly twice their normal size, and he and the third mate were unable to go aloft. The Chinese steward was too weak to work ship, and a good deal of the labor had fallen on the skipper's vigorous wife, who is a lineal descendant of the Revolutionary heroine, Mollie Stark. She did almost everything except go aloft. Her chief duty was at the wheel. The Kasbek's men were made sick by the spectacle in the Oakes' forecastle. Twelve utterly helpless men lay in their bunks in various stages of delirium. Some had lost all their teeth. They were nursed by the sailors of the Kasbek until the ship got into Sandy Hook. The Kasbek's able seaman furled the old clipper's sails, and she was taken in tow. After she got into quarantine Captain Reed, his wife, and those of his men who were able to talk, spun the yarn of the hapless ship's protracted voyage. When she sailed from Hong Kong her crew were in good health. The skipper was recovering from a paralytic stroke. This affected his tongue, and he was unable to talk so his men could readily understand him. He gave his orders to his wife, who has a good, deep sea voice, and she, in turn, gave them to the men. In the China sea the ship was struck by two typhoons, which blew her out of her course. Captain Reed had intended to sail by way of Cape of Good Hope, but she was so far off his course that he decided to make for the Horn. He had very little lime juice and vegetables, but plenty of 'salt horse.' He had expected to make the while voyage before the time it took him to reach Cape Horn. Light airs and calms held him back. He lost his Chinese cook by pneumonia, and in December, 1896, scurvy broke out in the forecastle. Seaman Thomas King died of it on December 26. Thomas Olsen succumbed in January. Thomas Judge died on February 17. He wrote a letter in his delirium, in which he said that he believed the captain was giving the seamen something to make them swell up, and he believed that the mate and the young Chinaman aft knew something about it. Mate Steven G. Bunker and Seaman George King also died in February. On March 1 only the skipper, his wife and the second and third mate were able to work. The wife kept the log, as neither of the mates were able to work because of swollen hands. A brisk gale sprang up, and the crippled mates went aloft to furl the main topsail. Captain Reed's wife said that at this period of the voyage she began her hardest work. 'The captain came to me, she said, in telling the marine reporters her experience, 'and asked me to take the wheel while he helped those on deck. I did so. It was bitter cold and I was not prepared for the weather, but I stuck to the wheel until my husband came aft and relieved me until I could go below and get a big ulster of his to wrap myself in. I was steadily at it that day from 7 o'clock until noon. I was pretty tired before I was relieved. I went back to the wheel after I had a little rest and something to eat.'

"Mrs. Reed worked gallantly for the helpless sailors, making broths and gruels of oatmeal for them. They begged for salt meat, but, as that would have added to their illness, they were not allowed to have it.

"Llodys' agent in New York read of the heroism of the skipper's wife and found that the story was not exaggerated. Lloyds decided that the heroism was worthy of recognition, so they authorized Captain Clark to give her a medal."—S. A. Wood, in Ainslee's Magazine.

QUAINT AND CURIOUS.

"An open door will tempt a saint." This rather unusual proverb was engraved on a key-ring, the property of a man found drowned in the Lea, in England.

The colors of a kingfisher become dull after death. No one who has seen only the stuffed bird can form any idea of the brilliance of its plumage when alive.

Professor Lewis of Berlin has found among 300 laborers who constantly handle copper, eight men whose hair had in consequence obtained a greenish tinge, which no washing would remove. The phenomena has been known, he says, 250 years, but it takes several years to produce it.

More animals are lost to the stage through fear than viciousness. The show people dread a timid lion or leopard, not only because in its panic it is likely to injure the trainer, but because it is unreliable, and may take fright and spoil a performance at any moment from the slightest causes.

A monster conger eel, measuring eight feet, eight inches in length, two feet four inches in girth, and weighing 148 pounds, has been caught on the beach at Snettisham, near Huntstanton, England. The fisherman's attention was attracted to it by some seagulls hovering over shallow water, where the eel was captured after a long struggle.

One of the curious and suggestive details in the latest report of the Swiss factory inspectors relates to the attitude of the operatives in a certain factory in regard to an improved ventilating apparatus. They objected to it because it would breed rheumatism. Two years later the same laborers refused to go to another building because it lacked the ventilating apparatus.

A man with two brains is surely a novelty, yet Dr. Charot, the French specialist, inclines to the idea that Mandi, the lightning calculator and human phonograph, is so blessed. This phenomenon made his first appearance at the Paris hippodrome, and he is certainly a new attraction to the already long list of "stars" at that house. His memory for figures is mainly auditive. One of his feats is the addition of six lines of six figures, a multiplication of six figures by six figures, the division of six figures by five figures, and the extraction of the square and cube root of five figures all at once.