

AT THE MINSTREL SHOW

A Conundrum for the Endless That Brings Up Some Painful Reminiscences

"Mr. Dingleberry," said Mr. Bingwhazzle, "I have a conundrum for you to solve."

"Indeed?" responded Mr. Dingleberry, "I will try to solve it."

"What is the difference between a man preparing his poultry for market at midnight— is the market to be at midnight?"

"No, no! He is preparing his poultry at midnight!"

"Did you say poultry, or poetry?"

"Poultry—poetry, sir!"

"Excuse me, I thought if you said poetry, the man would be hungry and the lion wouldn't!"

"Do not be frivolous, Mr. Dingleberry," said the interlocutor.

"The conundrum as propounded by Mr. Bingwhazzle is this: What is the difference between a man preparing his poultry at midnight for the market and a lion after it has eaten its dinner at noon?"

"Well, sir, that's too easy," chuckled Mr. Dingleberry.

"Permitting his left foot to do a jig-step while he remained in his chair. The man who is preparing his poultry is signing on the land, and the lion that has had his dinner is lying on the sand."

"No, sir!" shouted Mr. Bingwhazzle.

"You have no reason to infer that the man is unhappy?"

"Of course he is unhappy. Who wouldn't be?"

"But that is the wrong answer."

"Oh, very well, I can give you another. The lion is wagging his tail, and the man is taking his— But there are no wails, are there? Let me see. There isn't anything about dessert and desert in this, is there?"

"Not a thing."

"Then the man had a bird in his hand, and the lion had two in the bush," ventured Mr. Dingleberry.

"Oh, that is absurd!"

"Well, it's the best I can do this evening. I didn't ask you to ask me any old conundrums, did I? Why is a conundrum like an unsigned letter? Because you can't answer it. That's better than your old market-man, anyhow. What's the answer to yours?"

"It is simple," said Mr. Bingwhazzle.

"The lion is licking his chops, and the man is lopping his chicks."

"Then the interlocutor announced that Mr. Raphael Minningham Woodie would render the favorite classical collection; "When your rabbit-foot's unucky you should throw the dice away."

HIS SELF-DENIAL

He Gave Up All Claim on the Wedding Presents Because There Were Too Many

The honeymoon was over and they had settled down to show themselves staid and steady old married people, relates the New York Times.

"Fred," she said, knitting her pretty brows as if greatly perplexed, "I've been trying to arrange things a little systematically to-day."

"Quite right," he said. "It's time we were settled and had everything arranged properly."

"Yes, but, Fred, the fact is—I—"

"You what? Nothing has gone wrong, has it?" he asked, anxiously.

"Oh, no, but everyone was so kind to us that I find it a little hard to—"

"It wouldn't be proper to sell any of the presents, would it?"

"Certainly not."

"That's what I feared," she said, with a sigh. "You see, I don't know just what to do with them all."

"Do with them?" he exclaimed, with masculine readiness to settle any problem. "Why, use them of course."

"But how, Fred? How?" she asked. "We have seven clocks and only a six-room flat."

"He gave a low whistle. "Then we have six dozen silver spoons and five cake baskets."

"He began to look perplexed himself. "There are 15 butter knives and eight fruit dishes," she added.

"He swore to himself, but made no suggestion. "We have three sets of fruit knives and—"

"Enough," he exclaimed. "Do what you please with them."

"But, Fred, I want you to—"

"They're yours," he interrupted. "They were all given to you, and not to me, weren't they? It wouldn't be fair for me to assume any right to them when they were expressly given to you."

And thus she first learned of man's ability to dodge a difficult problem.

In Constantinople, London.

A New York woman now in London writes to a friend saying that one of his greatest pleasures there is the number of people who speak English. At home his grocer comes from Holland, his butcher is a native of Brazil, his chemist is an Abnathian Jew, his barber is a German, his valet was born in Tokio, his servants are Irish and Scotch, his coachman is a Cuban, his butler comes from Trieste and his fruitageer from southern Italy. A few months ago when he had to call in a doctor suddenly to attend to one of his servants a Parisian answered the summons. He is clothed by a rockey, has a Canadian for a business partner and expects to be buried by a Scotchman.

TO PLAN GREAT FEATS

American Engineers to Undertake Big Tasks in 1904

Will Tunnel Under Rivers, Cut Canals and Put Through Many Mammoth Enterprises the Present Year

The year 1904 promises to be one of unusual importance in the annals of engineering progress on the North American continent. In all human possibility, says the Engineering News, we will see inaugurated in the coming year several great engineering works, great not only in the magnitude of the operations involved, but in their prospective influence upon commerce and industry, both national and international.

The first of these great tasks to be undertaken is the construction of the isthmian canal. The dimensions of this problem are vast, as measured by similar enterprises in other parts of the world and the opportunity will now be given to American engineers and American contractors and builders of machinery to utilize all that knowledge, skill and experience in conducting public works that has already done so much to make our own country great. The economical solution of the problem calls for mechanical appliances to a degree almost unprecedented, and for this machinery we confidently look to our own engineers and to our own shops.

The climatic conditions will demand the utmost endeavor in the way of organization and the care and handling of labor, and last, but not least, the engineering features involved are so unusual and of such huge dimensions that the latest sum of engineering genius and experience can alone bring about successful results.

Another great engineering enterprise, already started, but to be energetically pushed in 1904, is the plan of the Pennsylvania Railroad company to connect its system with the cities of New York and Brooklyn by tunneling under the Hudson and East rivers. Here again is a problem that in its solution includes new and practically untried engineering methods.

In the state of New York the popular vote technically approves of the expenditure of a hundred or more millions upon the 1,000-ton barge canal, connecting the great lakes with the Atlantic seaboard. In many of the inland states the companies controlling the great railway system have an enormous volume of work either in progress or contemplated, which has for its object the creation of new works to take the place of those planned and executed by a past generation of engineers.

The enormous traffic developed by the growth of our domestic commerce has brought into use heavier locomotives, larger cars and stronger bridges, and the resulting saving in operating expenditures now warrants an outlay for reduction in distances, gradients and curvature that would have been deemed wasteful extravagance by the preceding generation.

Northward, in the Canadian possessions, the coming year will doubtless see a notable beginning made in what will become another great transcontinental railway. This Grand Trunk Pacific railway will be nearly 4,000 miles long, and will connect the Atlantic seaboard at Halifax with the shores of the Pacific ocean at Port Simpson. It will be the most northerly railway line of importance on the continent, the great divide separating the waters of the St. Lawrence basin from those of Hudson bay. Its purpose is to open up to population, trade and commerce vast areas of what land, timber land and mines that are now valueless by reason of the lack of transportation facilities.

With these enterprises now fully started as they will be in 1904—there should be abundant demand for the services of the engineer, for the designer and maker of all types of engineering machinery and materials, for the men who handle machines and labor, and for labor itself.

Hawks and Owls Caeful

A scientist of the department of agriculture has demonstrated that hawks and owls are the friends and not the enemies of farmers. These birds were formerly shot because of the belief that they lived on young chickens and ducks, and in other ways acted the role of pirates. After spending the greater part of ten years in examining the contents of the stomachs of hawks and owls, however, this scientist announces that these birds belong to the category of beneficial and not harmful species. He scrutinized the food in the stomachs of thousands of owls and hawks. It was found that while the hawk will occasionally pick up a young chicken, it depends largely for food on the animals which are known to be highly injurious to farm crops. The owl lives almost entirely on field mice, which are great pests in certain sections.

Fireproof City

From the character of the buildings fires cannot well occur in Turin. A prominent citizen, says United States Consul Cuneo, says that no fires worthy of mention have occurred in that city for over 35 years, and another business citizen, who has resided there for more than 45 years, says that he cannot remember a single fire of any importance during all that time. Such being the record, insurance rates are almost nothing.

Japan Second in Book World

In the publication of books and pamphlets, Germany leads with 26,609, Japan second with 21,266, and surprising as it is, Russia makes a good third, with 17,895. France, 12,199; Italy, 9,975, and the United States is sixth on the list, with an output of 7,993, or about the same as British India.

BULLET-PROOF CLOTH

Material Adopted by the Italian Army Is Possessed of Wonderful Properties

The world is at present intensely interested in this Italian invention, and since the Italian government is negotiating for its use it is of importance that we see just what the results are, although it is necessary to state that the invention remains a secret, and this notwithstanding attempts to discover its details. Thus, says Cosmos, we shall have to deal with a general description and with the results of experiments.

The armor is a sort of felt, the stuff being capable of adaptation to any form whatever, for example, a breast plate with a collar or a sort of coat which completely envelops the wearer, and absolutely guarantees him from gunshot wounds. The thickness of the protector varies from one-sixteenth to seven-eighths of an inch, according to the arm the effects of which it is designed to destroy. Against the armor of seven-eighths of an inch the regular ordinary revolver with steel-covered ball is powerless, and also the gun of the 1891 model charged with smokeless powder. In the numerous experiments which have been made—in firing at a distance of several yards—the ball, whether it be of lead or steel, when it strikes the protector is arrested and deformed, in some cases rebounding and in others being almost reduced to pulp. Thus there is not only an arrest of the ball, but deformation as well, and in this deformation the force of the ball is converted. While there should be a high degree of temperature at the point touched by the ball, it seems that the ball alone feels the effects, for the protector does not seem to be burnt in the slightest.

These results are not limited to ballistic effects, for in the recent experiments it was sought to pierce the armor with a dagger driven with all possible force. The point of the arm, however, could not penetrate the felt and was bent into a shapeless mass.

It is natural to suppose that the force of the ball would be communicated to the armor, and that this would be driven violently backward, resulting in a disagreeable shock and one which at times would be dangerous to the wearer. To demonstrate the incorrectness of this view Sig. Benedetti attached his protector to a horse and fired upon the animal only six feet away with an ordnance revolver, the ball falling at the feet of the horse, while he, fired from his halter, walked away as if nothing had happened. It is to be noted that with the same revolver a piece of steel had been previously pierced. The same experiment was made with a chicken covered with a breastpiece of the felt, the cock, after being rid of his new shell, quietly pursuing the even tenor of his way.

HE WOULDN'T LET GO

When There Was Money in Anything He Took Hold of He Hung On for Keeps

It was a most peculiar case, so the insurance men said, with wags of the head that meant much more than they might easily be induced to say, with a little more provocation, relates the Baltimore American.

The building had been destroyed by fire, and its occupant, one Theodore Titewad, testified that he had held the office safe suspended from a window until the firemen had come to his relief.

The attorney for the insurance companies who were contesting the claim on the building looked scornfully at Theodore, and the following cross-examination took place:

"Mr. Titewad, will you kindly tell the jury what your approximate weight is?"

"About 110 pounds."

"Have you ever been known as an athlete?"

"No, sir."

"Have you ever before performed any noteworthy feats of strength?"

"No, sir."

"Very well, sir."

"Now, what is the weight of the safe you claim to have held suspended from the second-story window for five minutes, with one hand and unassisted?"

"One ton."

"That will do. The witness may step aside and Fireman O'Rourke will take the stand. Ah, Mr. O'Rourke, will you tell the jury whether Mr. Titewad performed this feat of strength he has just sworn to?"

"Sure, sir, it weren't in his fate, but in his hands that th' shringing were, sir."

"I mean did he hold this safe as he says he did?"

"Yes, sir."

"What?"

"Yes, sir. Yez see, sir, yez don't know Mister Titewad folks th' rist av us does, or yez wuddn't be surprised. Yez see, th' sa-af had money in it, an' Titewad was aiver knowin' I'll go av anything thot had money in it, sir."

Seeing that they were defeated by overwhelming evidence, the insurance company at once arranged for the payment of the claim in full.

Shylock of the Trolley

"Yes," said the conductor on the Gay street car, as he called Eutaw street, and gave the motorman the double ring. "I can tell what day of the week it is by the size of money these young fellows have. Now, there is that kid in front just gave me a five note and made me hustle for change. That's his salary. He'll be walking down town next Friday morning. That young wunner there, who just gave me a dollar bill, had to look through a pocketbook full of samples on Saturday morning to find a nickel."

"That's Monday," remarked the motorman, "and I saw a man give you five pennies just now. How do you account for that?"

"Oh, that's easy," said the knight of the cord; "he's married."—Baltimore News.

WILL RECLAIM FARMS

Evicted Irish Tenants Residing in the United States

Passage of New Irish Land Act Stirs Them to Action—Movement Started to Secure Reinstatement

Perhaps the most novel feature of the Irish question which has ever presented itself to the people of America is the movement now on foot in various parts of the United States among the people who were evicted from their former homes in Ireland in the course of the land struggle of the last twenty-five years, to get back their former places and return to the old country to live, says the Boston Globe.

The passage of the new Irish land act has proved that there are hundreds of such people scattered all over America, most of whom are anxious to secure reinstatement in their old homes. Some desire it as a matter of poetic justice and for the satisfaction they would feel at returning to the homes from which they were driven ruthlessly forth by Irish landlordism.

Others believe that under the altered condition of affairs life in the old country would be more pleasant for them than that which they have been experiencing here. Others still think they are entitled to some compensation for the loss of their property in Ireland, and reinstatement to their farms being the only means of securing it, they are desirous of trying that method.

The new land act empowers the newly formed land commission to take measures for the reinstatement of people thus evicted since August, 1878, or the beginning of the Land League agitation. This can only be done, however, in cases where the landlord's property is put up for sale under the act. But the national leaders believe that within a few years the entire land of Ireland will have been thus disposed of by the landlords.

The land commission is authorized by the act to advance to the evicted tenants money for the purchase of their former holdings with the consent of the present occupier, where the land is occupied, and provide compensation for those who now occupy it. Where the land is still on the landlord's hands the process of reinstatement will be much simpler.

In practically every instance where negotiations have been going on for the purchase of their holdings by the Irish farmers since the passage of the act, they have demanded wherever evictions had taken place on their landlord's property that the evicted tenants must be restored to their former holdings before any purchase is effected. Some of the landlords at the outset held out against this proposition, but as in the case of the Knight of Glin, son-in-law of Lord Dunraven, they later on acceded to the demand of the tenants.

The officials of the United Irish League of America and the officers of its branches all over the country have for several months past been actively engaged in bringing the cases of these evicted tenants to the attention of the organization in Ireland, and since the land bill went into operation on November 1, to the attention of the land commission itself, with the promise of excellent results.

The United Irish League in Ireland has taken steps to secure the best legal assistance in behalf of all the evicted tenants as part of the programme of the national organization. Should the movement toward reinstatement prove a success it will not be the least of the revolutionary steps which have been taken in regard to the Irish land league and carried on to-day by the United Irish league.

Some 50 cases have already been brought before the land commission by the officials of the United Irish League of America, and of that number about one-half of those affected are at present residents of Massachusetts, particularly in the vicinity of Boston.

Sensitive Horses

The horse does not like a nervous, fidgety, fussy or irritable man. He is too nervous and irritable himself. "Why is it," one teamster was heard to ask another, "that Phin's horses are always quiant? Phin feeds well."

"Yes," was the reply; "but he's like a wasp around a horse." A well-known owner of race horses, not at all a sentimental person, recently made an order forbidding his employes to talk in loud tones or to swear in the stable. "I have never yet seen a good-mannered horse," he says, "that was being sworn at all the time. It hurts the feelings of a sensitive horse, and I'll keep my word good to discharge any man in my employ, if I catch him swearing within the hearing of any horse in this stable."—Country Life in America.

The Mendelian Law

The great interest with which the Mendelian law is regarded by biologists is evidenced by the fact that in a recent number of Biometrika no less than three articles are devoted to it. In accordance with this law, the characteristics of parents are distributed in hybrid offspring according to a numerical law, and the hybrids are not intermediate in their characteristics between their parent forms, but have certain unchanged characteristics of one parent or the other. The law was originally worked out in regard to certain plants.

Revert to Ancient Method

The removal of mine water by hoisting in tanks, instead of pumping, while somewhat of a reversion to the methods of the ancients, has come very rapidly into favor in the mechanical region of Pennsylvania during the last few years, in fact, so much so that at the present time there are at least eight large collieries at which all the water is hoisted, and six more plants in preparation.

DIFFICULT LESSONS

In the Study of Questions Pertaining Vivially to the Conduct of Political Candidates

It is announced that a chair of public life will be established in one of the western colleges, observes Judge.

"Will the class come to order, please? I am gratified, indeed, with the progress made in your studies. Yesterday's lesson was well-nigh perfectly mastered by all of you. If it is possible to make any distinction, I might say that Mr. Spithkins is perhaps a shade more proficient than some others in his understanding of the best method of talking to an audience with one hand tucked in the bosom of his frock coat. However, as an offset to this, let us remember that Mr. Spithkins has not yet fully mastered the art of shaking hands with a perfect stranger and making him think he is an old acquaintance. None of you has yet equaled the performance of Mr. Connor in memorizing the names of all the men, women and children in a congressional district, together with a complete data as to the illnesses of each family and the personal likes and dislikes of the voters. Do not be discouraged over this, though, for it is more a natural gift than a faculty acquired by education. In the matter of looking happy when an enthusiastic, but unknown person slaps you on the back and calls you 'Old Sport,' I believe Mr. Nimmerhammer and Mr. Bjuders are the leaders of the class. I trust the rest of you will renew your consideration of this important feature of public life and secure a better command of your facial expression, as well as of your language. The average voter does not rejoice to see a frown or to hear a profane ejaculation when he, as he thinks, is merely manifesting his deep and abiding admiration for his candidate. All of you, it is a great pleasure to state, are making marvelous progress along the line of delivering a speech of acceptance with such hesitation and embarrassment as to make it appear entirely impromptu. I sincerely trust that you may all some time enjoy the experience in real life. Now, our lessons, as you know, are growing harder as we go along. For to-morrow we will have one of the most difficult tasks yet set for us. You will all be expected to show by thesis and by actual demonstration, the best way of dodging the campaign cigar."

LUXURIES FOR PETS

Number Robes and Beds Are Now Appurtenances of Upside-Down Squirrel Cages

The glittering cages and cage comforts that are provided for pet birds to-day seem to quite reconcile little songsters to captivity, says the Washington Star.

The prettiest of the new-style cages for small birds is an affair of brass, with a broad band of brass wire letting around the lower portion. These are supplied with dainty drinking cups and plates and bath-tubs, in which the bird may take his morning plunge. Canaries are satisfied with one swinging and one stationary perch, but mocking birds require five or six perches and quite a large cage.

Stands for parrots vary in elaborateness from a plain zinc tray, with its complement of cups and perches, to a gorgeous tray of brass, of lacquered wood, studded with ivory, and inlaid with ornamental designs. A fancy chair is there to hold Polly to her rod, and a big brass cage can be fitted on top of the stand. To hang the cage, one holds on to a piano lamp and the same stands, with curved tops and hooks, are made to hang small bird cages from. Some cages have glass globes about the outer tray to keep away from the bird on the floor, and all are supplied with slumber robes, fashioned of bolting, lace, embroidered velvet or fancy silk.

Little traveling cages, with a flap lid, are a New Year novelty.

The newest squirrel cages are fitted up with turning wheels, perches, drinking vessels, slumber robes and even a bed, shaped like an overgrown tin mushroom with a hole in the top and perforations in the bottom. In this the squirrel curls up and tries to fool himself into believing that the hard sides of the tin are the crumbling wood-lined sides of a cozy hole in a hollow tree.

Parisian French

The sound of the French language possesses variations almost esoteric in the hidden nature of their being and—according to the Parisian—these are everlastingly beyond the possibility of imitation by the American. Pol Plancon said once to an American who has lived ten years in Paris and speaks French to perfection, in the American colony: "Your French causes me unpareille agony. The matter of fact is, no American can ever learn to speak French. It is neither in your soul nor in your vocal organs. Penelope (the ten-year-old daughter of the American, born in Paris and living there unintermittently all her life) is just barely tolerable in French. There is something in the United States so antagonistic to the utterance of perfect French that after I am over there six months I come back to Paris with my language marred, and I make it a point to get back as soon as I can in order not to suffer permanent loss of utterance."—Harper's Bazar.

Perforating Iron Plates

The well-known combustion-supporting properties of oxygen are turned to advantage in a new German process for perforating thick iron plates. The part in question is heated to incandescence by an oxyhydrogen blowpipe, and then subjected to the full action of a jet of pure oxygen. A hole of a determined size is bored within four minutes through a 12-inch iron plate.

NO MOPE LAGNIAPPE

Old New Orleans Custom Went Out with the Old Year

Gifts with Purchases Are No Longer to Be Made by Shopkeepers in the Crescent City

The grocers and retail dealers of New Orleans abandoned on January 1 one of the oldest trade institutions of that city—the lagniappe. It was a system which starting here nearly a century and a half ago, during Spanish days, spread to many other parts of the country in a more or less modified form, says the New York Sun.

Lagniappe was instituted in New Orleans in 1770, during the Spanish domination. The word originally was "lagnapa" Spanish for "gift," but ultimately it was softened by the Creoles into "lagniappe." The Creole and Spanish retailers adopted the practice of making gifts with every sale, however small. The gifts usually consisted of candy, cake or tobacco. The lagniappe was one of the chief perquisites of the negro slave who did the purchasing or marketing for the family, and the grocer, butcher or other retailer who gave the largest lagniappe secured the best slave trade.

With the negroes this gift continued a great institution through all the days of slavery. The white children also took to it, and in time the practice of giving lagniappe became so popular that every dealer was compelled to give it or lose trade.

Various attempts were made to get rid of lagniappe, but they all resulted disastrously, nor could the dealers, even by combination, secure a release from their heavy burden. Lagniappe had prevailed for half a dozen generations and so pervaded the whole life of the community that the people would not surrender it.

The introduction in recent years of new forms of lagniappe such as the trading stamps, coupons, gifts, prizes, etc., never eradicated the old system, and nearly every grocer had on the counter until a few days ago a half dozen glass jars filled with candy, cakes, raisins, nuts, etc., from which the purchaser could select such lagniappe as he preferred.

The fall of that old institution is due to the labor unions. The central trades and labor council found lately that lagniappe was proving injurious to union interests.

The largest lagniappe, it is declared, was given by those dealers who sold the products of penitentiary, child and scab labor, and the wives and children of union laborers were tempted. It was declared by lagniappe to purchase a class of goods whose sale was injurious to the interests of their husbands and fathers.

The labor council accordingly adopted resolutions denouncing lagniappe and requesting the friends and members of organized labor to refrain from encouraging the practice. These resolutions have given the grocers and retailers the opportunity they have not been looking for, and they decided that no more lagniappe should be given after January 1.

All the stores now exhibit big signs notifying customers that lagniappe and all similar gifts have been abandoned. So far the customers have not been heard from, but it is predicted that the edict will have to be withdrawn, at least for the French part of the city, the people of which believe that they have been cheated unless they get their lagniappe and get out.

LEATHER FROM FISH SKINS

Many Kinds Have Long Been in Use in European Countries for Various Purposes

Fish leathers are now being largely manufactured. The skins of some sharks are studded with horny protuberances which are so hard as to take a polish like stone. They are waterproof and are used for covering jewel boxes and card-cases, as well as for a great variety of ornamental articles, says Illustrated Footwear Fashion.

The hide of the "diamond shark" is employed for covering the sword-grips of German officers. A Paris manufacturer has made a reputation by tanning the skin of a species of Malabar shark called "shagreen," made from the skin of the angui-shark of the Mediterranean, has long been a familiar article of commerce.

Good leathers can be made from the skin of the cod and salmon and the hide of the wolf-fish is being largely used for card-cases and shopping bags. In Egypt fish skins from the Red sea are utilized for shoe soles and seal skins are extensively employed in Europe for binding books, while in Tartary dried, and oiled skins serve as a substitute for glass in windows.

Sturgeon skin affords a handsome ornamental leather and the hide of the armored garfish is much valued, being covered with horny plates which may be polished to an ivorylike finish. Along the Lukon River, in Alaska, the skins of salmon and cod are utilized as clothing, the material resembling kid in appearance and softness while almost as tough as parchment. Even the skins of frogs and toads are being employed to some extent, two or three factories in France paying much attention to tanning them for card-cases and other fancy articles.

Radium in the Sun

In a lecture in London Sir William Ramsay claimed that the new substance, radium, gives off helium gas. Helium gas has long been known to be one of the constituents of the sun, and there is, of course, a suggestion that the sun may contain large quantities of radium, and that this is the chief source of its power and effects upon the earth.