

DARKEST DARK ROOM.

Apartment in Washington Arranged for Interesting Experiments.

For certain novel experiments Prof. Elmer Gates, of Washington, has newly constructed a room which is beyond question the darkest place in the world. Ordinarily when one speaks of darkness it is in a comparative sense. The darkest night is not very dark out of doors. The depths of a cavern or coal mine are darker, but not so dark as the so-called "dark room" of a photographer. Yet a very sensitive plate exposed in a photographic dark room is quickly spoiled because some light is present. On the other hand the darkness obtained by Prof. Gates is absolute. Compared with it the deepest darkness hitherto known might be "bottled up and sold for Tyrian dyes." The Vatican of Rome actually possesses a bottleful of the darkness which afflicted Egypt when the Israelites wanted to get away, but it is a rainbow when contrasted with the scientific brand of darkness. Unlike the Egyptian darkness, this darkness cannot be felt; it is too dark for that.

Prof. Gates' dark room is constructed like a box, the walls of which are of wood, saturated with paraffine, to fill the pores. There is a lining of tar paper, and then come layers of orange-colored paper, gray felt paper and lead foil. The purpose of these linings, of course, is to exclude all light rays. Inside of the box described is another box similarly made and lined, and within the second box is a third box, which has walls of sheet lead and of wood painted black. But lead is not wholly opaque to X-rays, and so a fluoroscopic screen is placed beneath the sheets of that metal. Such X-rays as get through the lead are stopped by the screen and turned into light, and the latter cannot penetrate the black painted wood. The wood is covered with 12 layers of paper saturated with chemical substances that are opaque to light of various colors. These are overlaid by three additional layers containing salts opaque to the invisible rays of the spectrum beyond the violet, and finally there is a coat of lead foil. The innermost room rests on rubber cushions; the second room is similarly supported, and the third or outermost is insulated and rests on posts which go deep into the ground. Electricity is conveyed into the innermost box by a wire cable from a friction machine outside. Thus the whole affair is a great Leyden jar, within a Leyden jar, within a Leyden jar.

The innermost box, which is the dark room, is so absolutely dark that the most sensitive photographic plates exposed there for 48 hours have not undergone the slightest alteration. It is likewise impenetrable to X-rays, to the dark heat rays below the red of the spectrum and to the invisible rays above the violet. It is proof even against sound waves of certain classes, such as musical tones. The dark room is entered by a sort of labyrinthine passage, which winds around the nest of boxes until the entrance to the innermost one is reached. It is brilliantly illuminated by electricity, but a touch on the button brings instantaneous blackness. After getting used to it you are able to distinguish a finger before your face very faintly. This is due to a phosphorescence in the eye; after awhile it fades out and you can see nothing whatever.

Certain sense perceptions seem to be more delicate in the dark than in the light, and Prof. Gates wants to measure them. This is one of the purposes for which his black room is built; but its construction renders practicable the solution of the other important psychological problems. As has been said, the room is actually a big Leyden jar; it can be charged with electricity. Already it is more than suspected that the mind works quicker and better when the electric "potential" of the surrounding atmosphere is high and contrariwise when it is low. There is no difficulty in raising the electric potential of the dark room as high as may be desired. Then exact tests may be applied for ascertaining if the senses are rendered more keen and the mental processes more rapid.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Bull-Fighting In Spain.

During the bull-fighting season from April 5 to October 20, 1896, there were 478 fights in Spain, and 1,218 bulls, valued at \$60,000, and 6,730 horses, valued at \$40,000, were killed. The number of matadors, the principal fighters who killed the bulls was 23, and they were paid for their services in all about \$44,500.

He Kept His Word.

"Her husband said when she married him his love would be unremittent."

"Did he keep his word?"

"Yes; he has never given her a cent!"—N. Y. Times.

In Mars — Martian School-ma'am—"Now, what is the name of the planet we are endeavoring to establish communication with?" Martian Schoolboy—"Mud."—Truth.

GEORGE'S EPISTLE.

Writes of His Father's Experiences During House-Cleaning Time.

Dear Uncle Fred: We been havin a awful time to our house this week. I never seen paw so mad before. Maw she's Cleanin house, and paw don't like it. When he Come Home nite before last he stood in the parlor and looked around. They wasnt hardly ennythin in site. But Chairs and Tables piled up on top of one another.

I wonder What a Woman would Do to enjoy Herself if they wasn't any other way but House cleaner to make the men folks miserable," says paw.

"I wonder how the men would ever be able to Crowd in through the Dirt if it wasn't for the women to Clean up," maw ast Him.

"Dirt 'nawthin'—dirt's helthy," says paw.

"You didn't seem to think so when you found that speck in your cream this mornin'," says paw.

Paw he didn't no jist what to say then, so he was agoin' to leave the room, I gess, but he stepped back and set down in a dish pan Full of soap suds.

I would a ruther Been there than to Go to enny tings on erth I don't Care how many rings they Had or if I Could a taken in all the side shows, too.

You no paw's a purty good sized man and the feller what made the Dish pan Couldn't a struck a Better fit if He would a tried to do it. The Water flew every way, and little Albert was nearly drowned. There set paw for about a Half minute, and I could see the Way His mouth was a workin' that he was gittin ready to Say sumthin real Harsh and mebby true.

Then He tried to git Up and the dish pan Stuck to Him. Maw she looked Scared, But she nearly died lffen All the sain, and paw's face was awful red, and He was Sayin things that I'm afraid is agoin to part our family when we die. So I thought I would be pleasant to paw and I says:

"Well, its a good thing paw don't Care for dirt ennyhow. Some foulks might a Been mad because the water wasn't Clean."

Then He got up, and they was a Sprintin match where I Had all the Best of it. When I run out through the Swing door between the kitchen and the pantry, it flew Back just in Time to let Paw run bang against It. I was awful Sorry paw Got Hurt. It skinned his nose and nearly Broke One finger, and Before He got his wind agin I was Behind Thompson's jar.

I was afraid to Go Home That nite, But after paw Got on Some dry clothe and Had His wounds fixed up Mrs. Hunt What paw Thinks is so Good to Call, and She thot it was all such a Good joke that paw He got to laffen about it too, so the hole thing turned out all rite, and I didn't git Licked.

GEORGE.  
—Cleveland Leader.

FISH CHANGE COLOR.

Have Different Markings and Assume Peculiar Positions When Asleep.

While investigating the nocturnal habits and colors of some of our native marine fishes, says a writer in Nature, I made the unexpected discovery that a number of species had the peculiar habit of assuming, while asleep, a style of coloration quite unlike that seen in the daytime.

Most of my observations were made late at night, between midnight and two o'clock a. m. The gas jets near the aquaria were turned down so low as to give barely light enough to distinguish the forms and colors of the fishes. Under these conditions, by great care not to cause any jar of the floor, nor sudden movements of any kind, I succeeded in observing many species asleep. Most fishes sleep very lightly, and are aroused by almost imperceptible vibrations of the air or water. Some of these fishes took unexpected attitudes while asleep.

In many cases the change of color from that seen while awake, or in the daytime, consisted in a simple increase in the depth or intensity of the colors, the pattern of colors being the same. This was the case with several species of flounders. Those that are spotted or mottled with dark pigment showed their markings much more strongly, or in greater contrast with the ground color than by day. Several species of minnows (*Fundulus*), which are marked either with longitudinal or transverse dark bands, have these markings more decidedly black and better defined than by day. The same is true of the kingfish (*Menticirrhus nebulosus*), in which there are obliquely transverse dark stripes that come out more strongly at night than by day.

It is well known that trout, flounders and some other fishes are able to change their color, even in the daytime, according to the color of their surroundings. Therefore, a darkening of the colors at night is to be expected, even if not asleep. But in all the cases mentioned above the nocturnal change of color is of a protective character.

MICE IN FOLK-LORE.

A Bohemian Legend Declares They Were Created by the Devil.

Mice do not play a great part in folk-lore; even the legend of the "Pied Piper" associates them with rats. But one recalls a few cases not uninteresting. A Bohemian legend declares that they were created by the devil, whereupon Beneficence produced the cat. When Noah received a pair of them into the ark they straightway began to gnaw a hole through the bottom, instigated by their unholy parent; water was pouring in when the serpent, with admiral presence of mind, stopped the leak with his head. We should conclude that mice are specially destructive in Bohemia, and so it proves to be. Both the white and gray varieties flourish there, but the former is thought offensive. When harvests are ripening the peasants anxiously catch a white mouse, put it in a comfortable box upon the windowsill, feed and pet it and call it "the luck of the house." If satisfied with these attentions the animal will banish all its gray kinsfolk.

In that very interesting island of Bali, also, where Brahmanism and Buddhism inextricably mingled, survive, while all the populations round have long been Moslem, some fortunate mice receive like honor. The Balis catch a pair, clothe them in white linen, and set them in a public place, where all the inhabitants of the village bow down before them; then they release the prisoners and straightway, with an easy conscience, trap and kill every mouse that can be found, for they are terribly destructive in the rice fields. Mr. Fraser cites an old Greek charm in "The Golden Bough," which is worth quoting: "Take a paper and write" it says, "I adjure you, ye mice now present, neither to injure me nor to let others do so. I give you yonder field (specifying one not far off), and if ever I catch you here I swear by the mother of the gods I will tear you into seven pieces." Write this, and fix the paper on an unhewn stone in your field, taking care that the writing lies uppermost." Thus a man directed all his mice to a neighbor's property, and straightway, with an easy conscience, trap and kill every mouse that can be found, for they are terribly destructive in the rice fields.

Conditions of the vente—Comptant; anjet, néanmoins, sur la dite propriété de 100 francs le mètre carré, à verser le 1er janvier 1897. J. V. GUILLOTTE.

Marshal des Etats-Unis pour le District de la Louisiane.

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