

THEIR PLUMAGE LUMINOUS

Birds With Shining Feathers Probably Have Been in Contact With Decaying Matter or Touchwood.

No! This is not a "nature faker" story. Stay your hand, gentle reader, and hear the explanation before you begin to hurl "short and uglies" from your sling.

A gentleman writing to Le Chasseur Francals describes a singular phenomenon observed by him on a recent hunting trip to the Pyrenees. In the early morning of a gray and lowering day he heard a muffled, whirring sound like that of the propeller of a distant aeroplane, and looking at the sky, beheld the soft glow of two lights—electric bulbs, apparently, of five or six candle power.

But to his amazement the supposed ship of the air resolved itself on a closer approach into two large birds with softly luminous plumage. A lucky shot brought them to earth and it was found that the extinction of life did not diminish the luminosity, which seemed resident in the feathers.

In commenting on this case, La Nature declares that the phenomenon is by no means rare and is susceptible to a very simple explanation. The bird has merely soiled its feathers by contact with some luminiferous animal or vegetable matter such as decaying fish or touchwood.

The latter source is especially probable, as owls, on which the luminosity has been especially observed, commonly live in hollows of trees and thus particularly liable to come in contact with touch wood.

Doubtless many picturesque legends of wandering lights and fitting fires ascribed to ghostly, demonic or angelic visitants, according to the prejudices of the observer, may be easily explained in this simple manner.

LIKE CROSSING THE RED SEA

Seemingly Miraculous Occurrence Saves a Blind Ladder Day Israelite From a Bad Ducking.

The hosts of Israel crossing the Red Sea encountered no greater miracle than that which saved a representative of their race a ducking in Broadway the other day. The latter day Israelite was blind. With a stick he walked slowly past Grace church, inside Huntington Close a large sized hose that was for the moment unattended had wriggled itself around nozzle end toward the street and was playing a stream of water shoulder high clear across the sidewalk.

To avoid a shower bath in their good clothes pedestrians had taken to the middle of the street and when they finally noticed the blind man's approach to the waterspout they were too far away to stop him. Three steps away, two steps, one step, then the miraculous intercession occurred. For a moment the water ceased to flow, the blind man passed on, then the stream shot out with renewed force. The bystanders caught their breath, Huntington Close was still deserted, there was no visible agency responsible for the interruption.

"Must have got clogged up for a minute somehow," said on practical soul.

"Must have," the others murmured, but they went away looking very serious indeed.—New York Times.

In the Bookstore.

The man behind the bookstore counter was watching the fellow next to the magazine stand. As the latter started out the clerk went after him. "See here, sir, you'll have to pay for that magazine or put it back," he said. "I'm committing no theft," said the person accosted; "can't you see I am only taking an Outing?"

"Well, just let me tell you, my man," answered the dealer, "Success in Life depends on a lot of work, and if I am any judge, Everybody's apt to hold the Mirror up to you and let you reflect on your peculiar manner of taking an Outing."

Whereupon, musing that the Outlook was dark as a Black Cat, if he didn't pay up, the culprit forked over.—St. Louis Star.

Fences Ward Off Rabbits.

Owing to the increase of rabbits in certain parts of Australia a movement has been started in the Armidale district to construct a barrier fence along the eastern side of Central New England. This will serve to ward off the rodents, which now abound in the rough country along the edge of the tableland. These rabbits are beginning to crowd westwards, and are already making their presence felt on the adjoining country. The suggestion is to link up the rabbit-proof fences which already exist along the edge of the more settled area from Waucho to Glen Innes districts, and thus cut off the rough country where the rabbits are thick, and where there is no chance of keeping them under.

Why They Did Not Comply.

Sunday, January 22, always will be remembered in a New York family, because of an incident which happened in Charleston, S. C. in 1865. On that date a baby girl was born there. On the day of her birth the mayor of Charleston issued a proclamation ordering all noncombatants out of the city, so that they might be in no danger from the "Yankee troops" under Sherman, who was threatening to destroy the city. A copy of the mayor's order was framed in her home. On the margin of the paper is written in the hand of the woman's mother: "Martha and I were noncombatants, but we remained."

DO BABIES CRY LESS NOW?

This Man Is Told So, and Has the Corroborative Testimony of His Senses.

"Being without knowledge of my own in that line," said a bachelor young man, "I can't speak by experience; but they tell me that the reason we see now fewer of those comic pictures of harassed fathers walking the floor at midnight, or at 1:00, 2:00 or 3:00 a. m. trying to quiet crying infants is because infants don't cry now as they once did.

"They tell me that a new era has come in the care of infants and I am ready to believe this from what I see of babies in public places. Surely babies don't cry so much as they did in the streets and in street cars and on excursion boats and so on.

"There is more peace in the world, and more quiet, and I am told that the reason for this is found in the more enlightened care and attention that infants now receive. They tell me that in recent years there has been a great advance in this respect: that the infants not only of the rich but of the so-called poor as well are now far more intelligently looked after; that all small children now get more air than they once did, and more suitable and more nourishing food, with the result that the babies are better, stronger and healthier, livelier and jollier, less restless and uncomfortable and less disposed to cry; all these happy things being due to modern science and hygiene.

"And if all these things are true, as I believe they are, the comic artist has lost a subject but the world has gained a blessing."

BARE KNEE STYLE IS SCORED

English Medical Writer Says It Undoubtedly Militates Against Good Health of Children.

Medical men in England now have turned their criticism upon parents who clothe their children after the fashion of the Highlander, leaving the knees exposed by having them wear stockings which reach only half way up the leg.

"It is true," says the Hospital, "that this type of costume is popular in Scotland; but it is permissible to point out that even there it is a relic, if not a barbarism, at any rate of the time when a Highland boy, to sleep warmly on a winter's night, dipped his plaid in water, wrapped it round his body and awoke the next morning without the slightest need for a dose of aspirin.

"We no longer have that race, either in the Highlands or elsewhere, and certainly not in crowded cities where the practice of the open knee is peculiarly popular. It need only be added that while such a practice may harden three per cent of growing boys and girls, it undoubtedly militates against the good health of 97 per cent."

Pet Dog's Faithfulness.

A Paris contemporary gives a remarkable instance of a dog's fidelity near Limoges. Two little girls, one a mere child of four and the other ten years of age, got separated and the younger one seemed to be lost. They were accompanied by a dog, which fortunately followed the younger child all day, and in the evening when the parents and given up hope of finding the little girl she was discovered by a shepherd in a field. She had gone a considerable distance and had even crossed a brook on a narrow plank. She probably even fell into the water, for her clothing was soaked.

But the faithful dog had pulled her out. As it bore the name of its owner on its collar, the little girl, who was unable to give any account of herself, was taken home.

Damp-Proof Shoes.

When one is sensitive to dampness, yet dislikes to wear rubbers, the only alternative to most women seems to be rubber soles. The chief objection to such soles is that they are heavy for the house and necessitate the changing of shoes. A better way to keep out dampness is to rub the soles of shoes with boiled oil. Dip a soft rag in the oil and rub lightly over the bottom and edges of the soles, then turn the shoes upside down to dry thoroughly. Not only does this treatment keep out dampness, but if repeated once a week when the shoes are new will make them last much longer and prevent cracking. As oil is inflammable, it should be bought already boiled from an oil shop. This is much better than attempting to prepare it at home, especially as the boiling operations are attended with some danger.

Easy to Put Right.

A woman handed the cashier at the Wolcott the other day the check of the cashier of a Denver bank on a local bank.

"This check is no good, madam," he informed her.

"But why? The cashier of the Denver bank sent it to me."

"It is unsigned," explained the cashier.

"Oh, is that the trouble? Well, here I have a letter from the cashier himself telling me he is enclosing the check."

"But that will do the check no good," said the patient hotel cashier.

"But why," persisted the woman, "can't you cut the signature of the letter and paste it on the check? That would make it all right."—New York Sun.

STRANGER CASHED THE BET

Gerald Egan, Society Athlete of Washington, Agreed That Discretion Was Better Part of Valor.

This is the story of the one time that Gerald Egan of Washington, society man and all-round athlete, refused to fight.

It happened in the lobby of a small hotel in a West Virginia town in the dead of night. Egan was talking to the hotel clerk when a stranger, six feet tall and built on the lines of Samson, lounged in and carefully looked him over. Egan paid no attention to him.

After a few minutes the stranger, walked to the main door, sprang up and caught hold of the door and drew himself up three times, each time making his chin go up to the level of the beam. It was the athletic stunt known among boys as "chinning the pole."

Having completed his exercise, the West Virginia giant walked up to Egan and said:

"Pay me."

"Pay you for what?" asked Egan.

"Why," said the stranger in great indignation, "didn't you just bet me \$5 that I couldn't chin myself?"

"I never said a word to you in my life," contradicted Egan.

The stranger, now thoroughly incensed, turned to the hotel clerk.

"Jack," he demanded, "didn't this guy just bet me five that I couldn't chin myself three times?"

"I don't remember what was said," was the diplomatic clerk's contribution to the argument.

Egan started out of the hotel, but the big man sprang in front of him and closed the door.

"No, you don't!" he snarled viciously. "You pay me or you don't get out of here."

"But I never bet you anything," protested Egan.

"Don't crawl!" warned the stranger. "Pay up, I'm going to cash this bet or bust. I ain't going to be an easy mark all my life."

Egan paid.—The Popular Magazine.

BEARD'S ORIGINAL FUNCTION

Hirsute Adornment of Man Was Intended to Shield the Face, Throat and Chest.

Why has nature provided man with a beard, and why has woman not been blessed—or bothered—with the same facial adornment. Dr. James J. Walsh, a well known writer and lecturer on medical subjects, declares there is no doubt that the beard was originally a provision of nature for the protection of the face of man, an out-door creature, against the elements. It was a shield for the face, the throat and the chest. Man in earlier days wore very little in the way of clothes. The upper part of his body, the shoulders, chest and neck, were entirely bare, as far as we know, and in need of some kind of protection. So nature gave him a thick beard. Another theory is that propounded by Doctor Hunt of Boston, who in the course of a paper on the subject recently observed:

"Woman finds a natural protection for her throat and chest in the fine layers of fat that lie just under the skin covering her neck, shoulders and chest. Consequently she needs no mat of hair to shield her chin and throat. The larynx and trachea are removed further from the surface of the skin in a woman than in a man. Hence nature has provided a beard for a man for the purpose of protecting him, just as the layers of fat protect a woman. You rarely find a very heavy growth of beard on a fat man."

Literal Explanation.

Sturdy young Archibald, perplexed by the behavior of a visiting Indian lecturer, inquired the reason of the man's peculiar method of salutation—fingertips touching on breast, the body bent in a deep bow. Archibald's mother explained that the movement meant: "I bow to the spiritual within you!" adding, sotto voce, to her amused husband: "And it's just as well he doesn't care for personal contact with Americans, for I for one, really wouldn't care to shake hands with him."

Sawdust Contaminates a Stream.

Sawdust contaminates water, according to the decision of a Virginia court in the case brought by residents along the banks of a stream to prevent the owners of a sawmill from dumping the dust from their mill into the water.

The farmers testified that the sawdust gave the water such a color and offensive odor that the cattle would not drink it. On the strength of this testimony and other facts brought out the court ordered the sawmill people to make other disposition of their refuse.—Popular Mechanics.

A Day's Work.

"I call it a good day's work that I did today," a friend said to me the other day, and, of course, I asked him what it was.

"Well," he replied, "I put down a linoleum, laid a hardwood floor, put down two carpets, papered four rooms and set up a stove."

"I looked at him incredulously, when he hastened to add: "In a doll's house."

NOT A RETIRING PEOPLE

Chinese Eat, Wash, Sleep and Are Shaved in Public—Story Tellers Are Popular.

The Chinese cannot be called a retiring people. As they eat, wash and sleep in public, so in Canton you will see the barber shaving his customers in the streets, the dentist (wearing a necklace of fangs) extracting a painful tooth in the presence of an admiring crowd. Here, as in all large Chinese cities, wherever there is a favorable spot, story-tellers may be found amusing the people by way of making a living. At the close of a recital the large and attentive audience are invited to throw down their "cash" at the feet of the story-teller, in appreciation of the entertainment to which they have listened. The appeal is seldom made in vain. The strange, conglomeration of ideas that finds a home in the brain of the average Chinese, and the medley of beliefs that people his unseem world make it peculiarly easy for the story-teller to win the credulity of his audiences. And as ninety Celestials out of every hundred are even yet in complete ignorance of the laws that govern the world in which they live, there is no difficulty in inducing the masses to give credence to any story, however grotesque. The faith of the people in the transmigration of souls lends itself to all kinds of metempsychosis. Foes of vindictive intention are made to appear as sirens in order to work evil on objects of their hatred. Princes seek the elixir of immortality under the most thrilling circumstances. Just as they are about at last to lay their hands on the long-sought and much-coveted treasure, it, of course, eludes their grasp.

PARADISE FOR THE CURLER

Scotchmen Flock to Van Cortlandt Park, New York, Where They Have Exclusive Clubhouse.

Scotchmen who still keep alive in this vicinity the ancient sport of curling have finally received recognition from the park officials and have had a clubhouse built for their exclusive use at Van Cortlandt Park. The Scots were happy enough when a lake was made on which they might curl without the interference of skaters, who cut up the ice so that the "stones" would not run true, but now that they have a little house where there are lockers in which to keep brooms and other appurtenances of the sport there have been some lively days.

The curlers come to Van Cortlandt from all over Greater New York, Jersey and several towns in New Jersey, and rich and poor alike indulge in the Scotch national game. Practically every "stone" in use at Van Cortlandt was quarried at the historic island of Ailsa Craig in Scotland. The Scots feel that there are some canny qualities in this granite that makes it far superior to anything of a domestic nature. They weigh from thirty-eight to forty-two pounds, and it takes a lot of skill to slide them properly.—New York Herald.

When the English Laugh.

A correspondent recalls a pointed but discourteous and yet not wholly undeserved interjection made at a local political meeting.

A woman, whose husband had temporarily lost his voice, loyally appeared to make a speech on his behalf. She said a good deal at the outset about the state of his larynx, and then plunged into politics. Having exhausted that theme, she returned to her husband's health, and described, not only his disappointment at being unable to address them, but her own efforts to patch him up for the fray. She had tried hot fomentations, she had tried poultices, she had made him gargle his throat, she had steamed his throat for him, she had sprayed his throat and made him try every kind of lozenge. Was there anything else she could do for his throat? And a voice said: "Aye, mem, cut it."

On Staying at Home.

It is for want of self-culture that the superstition of traveling, whose idols are Italy, England, Egypt, retains its fascination for all educated Americans. They who made Italy, England, or Greece venerable in the imagination did so by sticking fast where they were, like an axis of the earth. In many hours, we feel that duty is our place. The soul is no traveler; the wise man stays at home, and when his necessities, his duties, on any occasion call him from his house, or into foreign lands, he is at home still, and shall make men sensible by the expression of his countenance, that he goes the missionary of wisdom and virtue, and visits cities and men like a sovereign, and not like an interloper or a valet.—Emerson.

A Clock of 1790.

An interesting specimen of a long clock, made in 1790, is owned by a gentleman at Lutterworth, England. It has an oval face, a hand which points to the days of the week, completing the round in seven days. One which shows the true dead beat, and another which points to the chimes and quarters.

A Bad Boy in Colonial Days.

A notebook of a justice of the peace in Connecticut, in the year 1750, specifies the behavior of a certain small meeting house boy as follows: "A rude and idle behavior in the meeting house such as smiling and laughing and talking to others to the same evil. Such a laughing or smiling and pulling the hair of his neighbor behind him in the time of public worship. Such as throwing Sifter Pentecost, Perkins on the ice it being Sabbath Day or Lord's Day between the meeting house and his place of abode."—Bliss, "Side Glimpses."

Alas, Alaska!

"My wife is always borrowing trouble."

"What kind of trouble is she borrowing now?"

"She's afraid whiskers will be in style when our little boy grows up, so that he will not have a chance to show the cunning dimple in his chin."

Discretion.

"He's awfully touchy, isn't he?"

"I should say he was. A man who had a grudge against him defied him to come out and fight, and he got so mad at the fellow that he locked himself in his office and stayed there two days."

HIS \$50 WERE NOT LOST

Though the Old Vest Went to the Ragman, Wife Appeared in a Fine New Hat.

A certain thrifty Sewickleyan, who contrives to "hold out" a little for sundry personal purposes despite the alertness of his better half, is often put to queer shifts to keep his private bank roll from her prying eyes. When he some time ago began a systematic conservation of his resources, with an eye to attractive odds in the baseball betting on the pennant, he bethought himself of an old vest that he had seen hanging in a dark part of the cellar, which he wore when he was making garden in the spring. The vest would make an excellent depositary, so he thought.

Deciding on Tuesday morning to come up to the city and "look 'em over," he repaired to the cellar. Horrors! The vest was gone. Search as he might it was nowhere to be found, and with a fallen heart he resorted to the last desperate expedient and sought his wife.

"Why, yes," she replied with a frown on her pretty face. "It smelled of mold and paint, so I just had to get rid of it, and I sold it to the ragman."

She watched him sink limply into a chair with a groan that shook the china in the china closet.

"But don't worry, pet, the \$50 you go carelessly left in the vest is not lost, but is safely invested in this beautiful fall hat. Isn't it a beauty, dear?"

And she produced one of the latest bucket-shaped monstrosities as big as a water pail, he pulled a long breath and fell into a faint on the dining room floor.—Pittsburg Gazette-Times.

NIETZSCHE'S VIEW OF WOMAN

Everything in Her Is a Riddle, and She Is Man's Most Dangerous Plaything.

Nietzsche, the German philosopher, has little to say of women. In his philosophy there is to be no over-woman. "Everything in woman is a riddle," he says. And again, "The true man wants two different things—danger and diversion. He therefore wants a woman as the most dangerous plaything." In his Wagner book, he puts women in a strange category.

"In the theater," he declares, "one becomes mob, hero, woman, Pharisae, young animal, patron, idiot, Wagnerian." "As yet," he says, in Zarathustra, "women are incapable of friendship."

"In a woman's love," Nietzsche says, "there is unfairness and blindness to all she does not love. And even in woman's enlightened love there are still outbreaks and lightnings." In his Wagner essay he says: "Woman would like to believe that love can do all. It is a superstition peculiar to herself. Alas! he who knows the heart finds out how poor, helpless, pretentious and liable to error even the best, the dearest love is; how it rather destroys that saves."

The Ignoble George IV.

Then there was the precious regent. What a creature! Godd men and bad men unite in saying that he was absolutely without a virtue; the shrewd, calculating Grenville described him in words that burn; the great duke, his chief subject, uses language of dry scorn. "The king could only act the part of a gentleman for ten minutes at a time," and we find the commonest satellites of the court despised the wicked riddle who wore the crown of England. Faithless to women, faithless to men, a coward, a liar, a mean and grovelling cheat, George IV. nevertheless clung to a belief in his own virtues; and, if we study the account of his farcical progress through Scotland, we find that he imagined himself to be a useful and genuinely kingly personage. No man, except, perhaps, Philippe Egalite, was ever so contempting and hated; and until his death he imagined himself to be a good man.—Runciman, "Sidelights."

Had His Last "Load."

A story is told by a member of congress whenever his brother is present. That brother, now a prosperous merchant, was incontinently discharged from a position as bookkeeper in a wholesale grocery store in St. Louis. A curt note dismissing him, containing no reason for the discharge, was all that he received. Dejected to have an explanation, he went to the private office of the merchant and asked:

"Why did you fire me?"

"Because you were dangerous," said the merchant quietly. "You were loaded all the time."

That cured the young man completely. He hasn't been "loaded" since that day.—The Sunday Magazine.

Central African Tree.

A remarkable tree has been discovered about the region of Lake Chad, Africa. Its power of increase in every way is remarkable. In a few months an extensive tract of land, we read, became an impenetrable forest. In one season it is said to grow to the height of from four to five meters; in other words, from 13 to over 16 feet.

Its foliage is said to resemble the mimosa and its branches are thorny. The wood can be cut into planks, and the natives work it up into canoes. The Nilotic mission has utilized the wood for making tables and doors.

A Long-Winded Speaker.

During the delivery of one of those tedious speeches that are so often inflicted upon the house of representatives, a member who had occupied the floor for many hours was called to order on the ground that his remarks were not pertinent to the question before the house. "I know it," said he, "I am not speaking for the benefit of the house, but for posterity." "Speak a little longer," said John Randolph, in an undertone, "and you will have your audience before you."—From Arvine's Cyclopaedia of Anecdotes.