

A WONDERFUL GIRL.

ST. LOUIS TOT STARTLES THE CITY WITH HER WHISTLING.

Fourteen-Year Old Mary Laughlin Surprises and Delights an Audience—She is Religiously Inclined and Will Not Go on the Stage.

T. LOUIS has a whistler in little 14-year-old Mary Hood Laughlin, who promises to equal, if not rival, world famous Mrs. Shaw. This little girl is the granddaughter of the Rev. and Mrs. William Johnson, and makes her home with them at 2729 Chestnut street, says the Post-Dispatch. Her father and mother went to China as missionaries, and it was there that little Mary was born. Her mother died when she was quite young, and her father brought her here to be raised by Mrs. Johnson. He then returned to his missionary labors among the Heathen Chinese. When three years old, Mary showed a marked talent for music, and it was at this age her grandmother first noticed her following the notes played on a violin by a member of the family. She would pucker up her baby mouth and whistle like a young mocking bird learning its first lesson. The family did not adhere to the old adage about "a whistling woman," but encouraged the little whistler. She has never received any training or instructions, picking up the tunes whistled by the boys on the streets and popular songs. Mary is now a plump, healthy-looking girl with gray eyes and brown hair. Up to the age of 10 she was very frail. Her family attribute her improvement to the lung expansion resulting from her whistling. She has a taste for piano music and accompanies herself when whistling. She also has a sweet voice and sings well for one so young. She is now able to whistle most difficult music and carries her high notes with a volume and clearness equal to the best male whistlers. They are as clear and musical as those of a mocking bird. She does not whistle in that matter-of-fact drawing tone common to girls who attempt to whistle like their big brothers, but every note is distinctly heard just as it is written in the piece of music she is whistling. She has never whistled before any but audiences at Sunday-school entertainments and a few friends until last Thursday night. On this occasion she took a prominent part in the program at Mary Institute with her school com-



MARY LAUGHLIN.

panions. Repeated encores brought her back before the audience with a more difficult piece each time for the enjoyment of the audience. Such range in whistling as little Mary has is seldom heard in men. She is a pupil of Mary Institute and is quite a favorite among her teachers and classmates. She responds smilingly to a request for an exhibition of her whistling and never fails to startle her hearers with her marvelous gift. Mary is a modest little miss and has not yet reached the age where most girls become stage-struck the moment they think they have a good voice or talent of any kind. Her family are church people of standing and would never hear to such a suggestion as her availing herself of her whistling to make a fortune behind the footlights.

As in Days of Old.

"I can undoubtedly clear you, my dear fellow," said the lawyer, "but it will require a considerable sum of money to perfect your defense."

"I have only a small amount with me," replied the scion of a wealthy family, who had wandered away from home and the path of integrity, "but my father will honor my draft for any sum within reason."

"Then," returned the disciple of Coke, Littleton et al., promptly, "draw and defend yourself."—New York World.

Old Books in California.

More rare and interesting books, it is said, can be found on the shelves of the old book stores in San Francisco than anywhere else in the country, except New York. This is accounted for by the fact that many families who went to California in '49 have been forced through reverses of fortune to dispose of personal property, books among the rest.

The Widows of a Mormon.

Reporter: You look worried. What's the matter? Utah Congressman: One of my constituents has just died. He was a soldier in the Civil War and all of his twelve widows want pensions.

A QUEER ANIMAL.

The Australian Duck Bill Carries a Sting in One Leg.

Australia certainly holds the palm for queer and uncouth animals, says the Literary Digest. Chief among these is the duckbill or ornithorhynchus, which Sidney Smith described as "a kind of mole and webbed feet and the bill of a duck, which agitated Sir Joseph Banks and rendered him miserable from his utter inability to decide whether it was a bird or a beast." It was only recently that it was proved beyond a doubt that this curious animal lays eggs like a bird, though this had long been reported by travelers. Now comes the news that it has a sting on its hind leg, capable of killing by its poisonous effects. We quote from the Lancet: "For a long time it was considered to be quite harmless and destitute of any weapon of offense, although the hind legs of the males were armed with a powerful spur, apparently connected with a gland. Then the opinion was advanced that this might be a weapon allied to the poisonous armory of snakes, scorpions and bees, all of which possess a sort of hypodermic poison syringe. Though one set of observers asserted that this was the case, another set denied, and so Dr. Stuart determined, if possible, to solve this question. He received two independent accounts, which coincided perfectly, and from them he concludes that at certain seasons, at all events, the secretion is virulently poisonous. This mode of attack is not by scratching, but by lateral inward movements of the hind legs. Two cases are reported in dogs. One dog was 'stung' three times, the symptoms much resembling those of bee or hornet poison. The dog was evidently in great pain and very drowsy, but there were no tremors, convulsions or staggering. It is worthy of note that a certain immunity seems obtainable, for the dog suffered less on the second occasion and still less on the third. Two cases of men being wounded are reported, in both of which the animals were irritated, one by being shot and handled, the other by being handled only; the symptoms were the same as in the dog. No deaths are reported in human beings, but four in dogs."

SCHEMING FOR WIVES.

How 100 Women Were Lured to Oregon by Skillful Strategy.

There are plenty of women in Oregon now," observed a prominent Oregon politician who is in Washington to see that the state is not forgotten in the manner of patronage, says the Washington Star, "but it is within the memory of many of us when women were very scarce there. We gave it out that we wanted them for school teachers and the like, and encouraged them to come out there, but the truth was the men wanted them for wives."

"I remember once we sent a young man to Massachusetts, where he was well acquainted, with orders to collect 100 young women and to escort them back to Oregon. We guaranteed every one of them a year's employment. The active man in the matter was a fine-looking young man, who afterward served two terms in congress from our state. He spent two months in selecting the party and started west with them."

"On the trip out he courted one of the school teachers on his own hook and actually got her consent to a marriage on the arrival of the train at Portland. The boys howled considerably about it, claiming that he had treated them unfairly in having first choice, but there was a lot of fine, marriageable material left. Some of those women are today the reading ladies of the society of the state. More than three-fourths of the hundred were married inside of three years and many in less than one year. A few of the lot, however, are teaching school there today, not that they did not have any offers, but because they would not accept any of the fellows who offered themselves."

"Now that Senator Mitchell has about given up his contest to return as senator he will likely be succeeded by a gentleman who married one of the party of school-teachers to which I refer. He will bring his wife here with him and your Washington folks can see for themselves the kind of ladies we had out there for school-teachers. They can't be surpassed, even if equalled, anywhere. I may be an interested person, though, for it happens that my wife was one of the party."

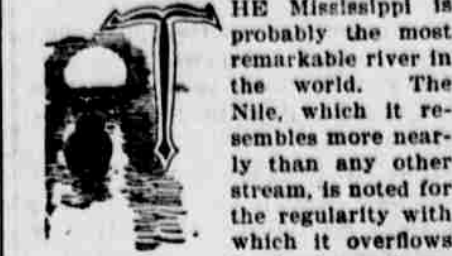
Reading a Library to Write One Novel.

The amount of labor that goes to the making of a good historical novel is rather deterrent to the writer of fiction who is used to turning out regularly two novels a year. It is so much easier to make over again, with a little imagination, the characters and incidents that one has picked up in the ordinary course of life and travel. Thackeray somewhere tells of the tremendous amount of reading that went into the caldron before "Esmond" was brewed. And a little while ago an aged librarian related his surprise at the research the great novelist carried on, month after month, in his accumulation of historical details. A whole chapter could be written in the time devoted to verifying a detail of costume or the turn of an antique phrase. Moreover, the historical novelist realizes that he is taking this tremendous amount of pains for a very few people; that hardly one in a thousand of his readers cares for more than the skill with which he tells the story. But that one is the man who will tell the next generation, with authority, that the book is worth preserving.—Ladies' Home Journal.

OUR MIGHTY RIVER.

ITS MAD CAREER HAS MADE MANY CHANGES.

The Mississippi Easily the Most Unruly Stream in the World—Efforts of the Government to Keep It Within Its Bounds.



HE Mississippi is probably the most remarkable river in the world. The Nile, which it resembles more nearly than any other stream, is noted for the regularity with which it overflows its banks and recedes again to its former course. This yearly action of the Nile in flooding the adjacent country and leaving it covered, when it withdrew, with a surface of rich, fertile mud, made a deep impression upon the ancient Egyptians and they worshipped the river as a great god. The Mississippi acts in the same way, with the exception that it is as irregular and uncertain as the Nile is regular and certain. It is also, in conjunction with the Missouri, the longest stream in the world, having a total length of 4,200 miles.

While the Nile has been rolling along for ages in the same channel, the Mississippi has been roaming all over its valley, twisting hither and thither, building up banks and then cutting through them and suddenly abandoning the old channel for a new one. It is doing the same thing today, and for the last thirty years the government and its ablest engineers have been studying the difficult problem of how to make the Mississippi river stay where it is and keep within its banks.

The cause of the trouble lies in the large amount of silt, a fine earthy sediment, or slime, which the Mississippi is constantly carrying down and emptying into the sea. The vast length of the Mississippi and its tributaries, measuring 9,000 miles of navigable waters and draining an area of 1,244,000 square miles, must account in a large part for the great quantity of this matter, but even when these facts are considered the estimate must still



A LEVEE ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

appear enormous. It is stated by experts who have made long and careful observations that the matter thus carried down by the Mississippi in a single year amounts to a solid mass one mile square and 163 feet deep. This sediment is being constantly deposited along the shores and upon the bars and islands that abound in this remarkable stream. Most of it, however, is carried down to the gulf, where it is added to that already there, forming the delta. This process has been going on for such a long time that the delta, which at some former age was located in the vicinity of the Red river, has been moved into the Gulf of Mexico a distance of 300 miles or more. All the country on both sides of the river for this 300 miles has been built up in this way. The land upon which the city of New Orleans is situated is part of this territory which the river has made.

Along the lower course of the Mississippi the natural banks of the river are in many cases in the nature of levees, having been added to by the stream until they are higher than the surrounding country. The strange phenomenon of having to walk "up" to the shore of the river, instead of "down," is frequently met with in this part of the country. But the very nature of the soil with which the bars, islands and banks of the Mississippi have been built make them of very uncertain length of life. Being composed in the first place of so much water and being deposited in or near the river, it is very soluble. The water enters into it easily, undermines and eats it away until suddenly the bank, island or bar gives way and in a few moments the course of the river undergoes a great change.

It is this uncertain habit the river has of suddenly shifting its course or changing its appearance that adds an element of danger to life in its vicinity and makes it so difficult to navigate. Sometimes a steamboat in coming up the stream will pass directly over the spot where stood an island when it passed down a few days before. Or perhaps it will find a new island or bar where the water was formerly clear,

or have to sail over what was before a farm or plantation, and leave the previous course some distance to one side. This has frequently led to disputes and law suits between farmers whose lands had been seized by the river and those on the other side who suddenly found large tracts of rich, fertile soil added to their domains.

To this habit the river has of depositing sediment along its banks must also be ascribed the numerous twistings and turnings in the channel which follow one another so closely. A small bar or other obstruction starting out from the shore catches the silt as it comes down and soon builds up a curving bank that turns the course of the stream. Still the water keeps adding more matter to it and extending it further and further around until the river is flowing in an opposite direction to that it ought to follow. Sometimes it almost describes a complete circle before it is turned again in the right direction. The whole course of the Mississippi, from the mouth of the Missouri down, is a series of large, graceful bends, one after another. The distance from St. Louis to the sea as the river makes the journey is 1,300 miles, but in a straight line it is not quite 700 miles. Thus, because of the obstructions which the river is constantly carrying down and placing in its own path, it is obliged to travel nearly twice as far as is necessary between these two points.

Look on any large map of the Mississippi valley south of Mason and Dixon's line, you will see on either side of the river, and quite distinct from it, a large number of small, circular lakes. Some of these have merely a slight bend, while others have the shape of horseshoes. These crescent-shaped lakes indicate the fact that at sometime in the past they formed part of the course of the Mississippi. But finding that it was going in the wrong direction, the river must have broken a new path through its soft banks and left the curve to one side. Besides these "cut-offs," as they are called, a great number of peculiar mounds, such as form the banks of the stream, are scattered through the territory adjacent to the river, showing that the Mississippi must have passed over a good part of the valley at different times in the past while on its way to the sea.

This fact explains the remarkable fertility of the land near the lower

the forests are supposed to contribute largely to the severity of the floods of late years. The spring rains that formerly took months to reach the main river are now precipitated almost at once upon the lower Mississippi, causing great destruction of life and property. If all this extra water could be carried off as fast as it arrives, there would be no danger, but owing to the tortuous nature of the channel and the obstructions of the delta, this is impossible.

In 1875 congress authorized Capt. Eads to begin the construction of jetties in the branches of the delta. When the river reaches the delta it divides and flows into the sea through five different outlets, called passes. In these passes Capt. Eads built long walls of masonry, confining the stream to a narrow channel. This had the effect of quickening the current, which scoured out the bottom of the channel, deepening it and carrying off all obstructions. Extensive dredging operations were also begun for clearing the passes and allowing the water to reach the gulf more quickly.

These are the plans upon which the work of confining the Mississippi to its present channel is being carried on. But it will probably be some time before the levees and jetties are of sufficient strength and extent to remove all danger of floods. Whether the current can be quickened enough to carry off all the sediment and thus remove the possibility of shifting bars and changing the channel is a doubtful question.

LITERATURE.

The Diseases of Modern and the Health of Classic Styles.

Modern literature has been more or less sentimental since Petrarch, a morbidly subjective strain has existed in it since Rousseau, while of late a quality is beginning to appear which we cannot better describe than as neurotic, says the Atlantic. We simply say, to paraphrase an utterance of Chamfort's, that the success of some contemporary books is due to the correspondence that exists between the state of the author's nerves and the state of the nerves of the public. Spiritual despondency, which, under the name of acedia, was accounted one of the seven deadly sins during the middle ages, has come in these later days to be one of the main resources of literature. Life itself has recently been defined by one of the lights of the French deliquescence school as "an epileptic fit between two nothings."

It is no small resource to be able to escape from these misanthropic exhalations of contemporary literature into the bracing atmosphere of the classics, for of him who has caught the profounder teachings of Greek literature we may say, in the words of the "imitation," that he is released from a multitude of opinions. We may apply to authors like Sophocles and Plato, and to those who have penetrated their deeper meaning the language the Buddhists used to describe their perfect sage—language which will at once remind the scholar of the beginning of the second book of Lucretius: "When the learned man has driven away vanity by earnestness, he, the wise, climbing the terraced heights of wisdom, looks down upon the fools. Serene he looks upon the toiling crowd, as one that stands on a mountain looks down on them that stand upon the plain."

An Inquiry.

Inventor—This is a new gas meter. While the gas is burning the meter acquires such a momentum that it keeps going after the gas has been turned off. Gas Official—I understand. But in what respect does it differ from the meters now in use?

Information and Advice.

Jones—I think you are carrying too heavy an account in your bank. I've heard some unfavorable rumors as to its solvency. Smith—Nonsense! I am a director of the bank. Jones—I know. That's why I thought I'd give you a tip.

RAM'S HORNS.

Make a call too short, rather than be yawned out. Whoever knows God well wants to know Him better. Some would rather face a cannon than their own evils. Prayer is always easy, when we kneel on praying ground. Our prayers for guidance will not be heard, unless we are willing to be led. The man who knows how to live well, will not have to learn how to die well. The devil has to fight hard for all he gets in every home where Christ is king. In the robin redbreast speaks the same Christ who came to "seek and save." Nature is God; botany and geology are man's; so religion is divine; theology human. The prohibition that gives society the children who never saw a drunkard can't be such a failure. The Creator expends so much force in sunsets and apple blossoms that there must be some great use in mere beauty. If you want to know the spring, open your heart; so, also, if you would know Christ. Knowledge bloats; love develops. God never made the world for an apothecary shop or a chemical laboratory, but for a temple: the final word of nature is spiritual.—Ram's Horn.

A Kansas City barber has put up a blackboard on which he daily bulletins the fresh local and general news brought in by customers and caught over the telephone.

TORTURE IN THE EAST

HOW CONVICTS ARE EXECUTED IN PERSIA.

There is No Stay, and After Sentence Has Been Pronounced, the Culmination Quickly Follows—Horrible Cruelty in the Land of the Shah.



EW explorers and travelers have given accounts of the various kinds of capital punishment suffered by criminals in semi-barbarous countries. For horrible and unbridled cruelty in modes of putting criminals to

death the chief dishonor should be awarded to the land of the lion and the sun—Persia. In Bagdad in July, 1888, the writer was ordered to proceed to Teheran, the capital of Persia, on business connected with a foreign embassy at that city. He recounts what he saw in Persia in the following: Crossing the Shat-el-Arab river, we left the land of the Turk and were on Persian soil. At Shiraz, a small town, I saw for the first time a Persian execution. For attacking a foreigner's commercial agent with a sword, Yacoub Khan, a Persian date merchant, suffered death. The culprit had been taken to Teheran, loaded with chains, had there been tried for his offense and was sent back to Shiraz to be executed. At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon we saw some burly Arabs carrying a huge cauldron toward the



BOILING A VICTIM.

town square, in the center of which was an iron grating, raised about two feet. On this the cauldron was deposited and the Arabs proceeded to chain it securely to large stakes. A few minutes more and the culprit, bent with the weight of chains, moved into sight between two monster Nubian eunuchs, who were carrying bundles of brush and wood, others bearing buckets of oil. The procession ended with the Cadi, or Judge of Shiraz, and a few guards and soldiers. On the arrival of the Cadi at the center of the square the guards at once seized the prisoner and, after tying his feet, lifted and put him in the cauldron. His hands were then chained to two rings on the edge of the huge kettle and the cooiles began to move forward. Those of them who were carrying oil emptied it into the cauldron, the others piled the wood and brush under and around the big vessel. The Cadi then took a lighted torch and pushed it in to the heap of fuel under the cauldron and the flames began to dance, to the intense enjoyment of the assembled crowd. In half an hour the oil became so hot that the yells of the man were agonising. Ten minutes later the victim's cries began to grow fainter and fainter, till at last they ceased. The man was dead. It is a far cry from Persia to Nepal, India. Nevertheless we will take a look at an execution in the country of the Gorkas. We were on a hunting expedition and after two days' shooting we arrived at a small town called Gunga Hat. The place was in a great state of excitement over a trial of a man for the crime of assault. After a trial the accused was convicted and sentenced to die the death of the "Hati ka pao," or elephant's foot. One hour after the trial the condemned was led out for execution. A very fine elephant was brought up and the wretched culprit was attached by each leg to each hind leg of the elephant by a length of about 12 feet of chain. The elephant was then sent at a jog trot for about a quarter of a mile, with the wretch of a victim dragging at his heels. The beast was then stopped and the condemned man, more dead than alive, and groaning with agony, was released from his chains. Then began the refinement of cruelty. The culprit was revived with copious draughts of milk and arrack, a substitute for whiskey, and was brought back on a stretcher to the starting point. After he had revived sufficiently to be able to speak, his victim, of about 12 years of age, was brought forward and identified the assailant. Then the last act began. A large, flat, circular stone was rolled forward and the condemned man, with his arms and legs tied, was laid at full length on his back on the ground, with his head on the stone. The elephant then came up with mahout, or keeper, on his back, and at the word of command placed one of his enormous forefeet on the condemned man's face. One instant and the mighty brute threw the whole of his weight on to the foot, and all that was left of the wretched victim's head was an unrecognizable pulp.