

SKETCHES OF LIFE.

LIFE OF A REPORTER.

Writing of the life of a reporter, Mr. Michael MacDonogh says in the October Cornhill: "I represented the Freeman's Journal (Dublin) in the terrible Orange riots in Belfast in 1858, after the introduction of Gladstone's first home rule bill, and being recognized one night in the Shanklin road, the center of the Orange district, by a group of rioters, I was badly beaten. They laughed to scorn my protestations that I had a little to do as they had with the writing of the leading articles, in which they had been referred to in uncompromising terms. As they could not lay their hands on the editor in Dublin, they grimly decided to 'have it out with me.' Another reporter was sent down from Dublin to relieve me during the fortnight I was confined to my hotel in Belfast; and the publication of rude remarks in the 'Ding' and other papers on all the same. 'The Orange ruffians,' the editor wrote, paraphrasing the well known saying of an Irish landlord, 'are mistaken if they think they can intimidate me by murdering my reporter.' A colleague of mine was once captured by a group of excited females as he emerged from an Irish courthouse, and had his hat smashed and clothes torn. He had been mistaken for the defendant in a breach of promise case.

The late Colonel North, pending at a meeting of the shareholders of the Londonderry mine, in the city, a few years ago, stated as evidence of his confidence in the concern, that he had bought 15,000 shares in the company, and, taking up the huge bundle of certificates which lay beside him, flung it to the journalists sitting below him, with the remark, 'There! you can see them.' The bundle alighted heavily on the head of one of the reporters, who was bent over his notebook assiduously taking notes of the speech, and on recovering from his momentary bewilderment he flung the certificates back at the chairman, though not with so good an aim, for the papers fell harmlessly over the colonel in a shower.

"Not long ago a young reporter attended a Salvation army meeting professionally. As he was walking up the hall a 'lass' stopped him and asked him the usual question, 'Are you saved?' 'Oh, no, I'm a reporter,' he replied in a spirit of intense self-abnegation. What right had he to any of the luxuries of religion?"

THIS SCHEME WORKED WELL.

A novel fraud by which a Minnesota banker was induced innocently to abscond with the robbery of a Montana bank has perplexed recently one of the detective agencies. Inquiries made last week at a St. Paul hotel as to a possible guest who wore a silk hat, a Prince Albert coat, and gray mutton-chop whiskers, revealed the nature of the criminal scheme, says the Pioneer Press. But the inquiring detective would not repeat names.

A few weeks ago, said the detective, the very respectable gentleman with the silk hat bought of a country bank not far from St. Paul a draft on New York for \$1,600, paying for it in currency. He explained that he was going to a small town in Montana and that he did not like to take so large a sum with him in cash. Would the cashier kindly notify the only bank in that Montana town that he had sold the New York draft to Mr. Hat, and that Mr. Hat would cash the draft at the Montana town? Certainly the cashier would write. He did write. And when the owner of the draft appeared a few days later at the Montana bank he found not the slightest difficulty in cashing the draft for the full amount.

"You're Mr. Hat of Philadelphia, of course," said the exchange clerk in Montana. "We received a letter from the bank that said you had the draft. Let's see? Tall, gray side whiskers, very subdued and easy, but with a large right. Description, a matter of form, your know. Your signature? Exact, of course."

So, with apologies for taking the usual precautions, the clerk, upon comparing the signature of Mr. Hat, accepted his receipt and gave him all in gold, as became a banker of the mining state, \$1,600. As the new customer went out he made a particularly good joke about the Montana weather. The old gentleman with the subdued manner had copied the original draft upon a blank that he had somehow secured from the Montana bank. The letter from the bank would naturally have quieted any suspicion in Montana, for the letter gave the usual number of the draft and other details, which were fully corroborated in the forged copy. Inasmuch as the letter proved to the Montana bank that Mr. Hat must possess an original draft for the amount required, the bank would never entertain the thought that a forged copy would be presented by the holder of that original. Thus the cashing of the forgery was easy. At once the gentle defrauder took the next train for Minnesota. He retraced before the cashier of the Minnesota bank, and smiled through an unctuous apology.

THE COSTLIEST SPORT.

To the men immediately interested, international yacht racing is the costliest sport in the world. The bill for the yachts themselves, for building, alterations, and repairs, will amount to fully \$250,000 for each; the expenses of racing them will cost their respective owners easily \$250,000 more. Here is a cool million just for building and racing the boats. The sails alone cost as much as an ordinary sailing yacht. The Columbia's sails are said to have cost even more, for here there was to be ordered from Egyptian and Sea Island cotton mixed with silk. The expense of maintaining the crew was, or rather is, enormous, for the boats are not yet out of commission. It is said that the skipper of the Columbia received \$5,000 for his services. The salary of the mate is \$100 a month; the second mate, \$80; the four quartermasters, \$25 month each, and the thirty-two members of the crew each \$20. Food for the crew costs easily \$500 a month; each tender accompanying the yachts costs \$4,000 for the few weeks of the season, and the dunnage and tonnage cost about \$2,000 more for each yacht. Estimates of the total cost of the Shamrock have

WAR STRICTLY UP-TO-DATE

England is going into battle with an array of modern war equipment. Machine guns, motor cars and bicycles are not so novel, but wireless telegraphy is an up-to-the-minute acquisition. The British will employ, while her balloons are in the air, a recognized as an integral part of her military system. Like all other first-class powers, England has for some years past had an army balloon department, a school of instruction in the use of such "air ships," and staff of trained aviators to attend to their manufacture and working.

For obvious reasons, the utmost secrecy is observed as to the composition of the "envelopes" (or outer casing of the balloon), for upon the material employed therein largely depends the utility of the air ship of any description. In the days when silk "envelopes" were in use, the adventurous aviators continually exposed to difficulty and danger. For instance, if the silk were not thickly varnished, it let the air in—with singularly disastrous results to the occupants of the car. If, on the other hand, it were varnished too thickly, the weight increased, and the balloon became so heavy that it was constantly cracking and thus causing the unwelcome escape of gas.

Consequently the problem with which the military aviator was confronted was that of discovering a material that would combine in one lightweight, strength and imperviousness to the atmosphere. For a long time the task seemed to defy human ingenuity. The art of "bellying" aeronautics," however, is not one that stands for any pronounced backwardness. The various sections are constantly being improved, and the efforts have now been crowned with success. The fabric at present adopted for the manufacture of the "envelopes" of war balloons at Aldershot consists chiefly of ordinary silk, the golden yellow skin which is delicately described by an English journal as the "lining of the internal portions of the anatomy of cattle." This is soaked in a potash solution and treated with isinglass and gum water. The various sections are then sewn together into an air-tight homogeneous mass. The extreme lightness of the material thus prepared may be estimated from the fact that its 2,500 square feet of surface (the ordinary size of a war balloon) weighs but 170 pounds. Such a case is capable of holding 10,000 cubic feet of gas, and of raising a dead weight of 700 pounds.

As a general rule the car in which the aviator sits is made of light wood, with a band of hickory wood to bind it. In size, the following are the measurements usually adopted: Height and width, 2 feet 3 inches; length, 3 feet 5 inches. It is attached to a hoop by means of the best Italian hemp, or similar material. This hoop is connected with the cord network that incloses the whole of the balloon's "envelope." The "breaking strain" of this rigging is something over 500 pounds, notwithstanding the fact that one pound to the square foot of surface area.

With so much paraphernalia about it the complete outfit of a balloon section is necessarily rather elaborate. First of all, there is the balloon itself, with its "envelope," valve, net, car, hoop, grapple, spare rope, aeronautical instruments, etc. Then, there is the wagon on which it is packed, and to which is attached a drum with a wire rope, for holding the balloon captive when necessary, and a telephone apparatus for communicating with the ground. In addition, there is a series of cylinders of compressed hydrogen for inflating the "envelope."

As to the uses to which a balloon can be put in warfare, there are so many and so varied that they cannot be enumerated here. They touch upon here. Foremost among them, of course, is that of reconnoitering the enemy's position, photographing his camp and sending reports (chiefly by means of pigeons) of such observations to headquarters. In addition, balloons have been used against the proposal, it seems extremely likely that they will also be used for dropping explosives from the clouds onto the ground occupied by the enemy. Indeed, special shells for this purpose are a part of the equipment of all war balloons. Accordingly, in the next great European campaign, when both sides are similarly prepared, and war balloons thus meet war balloons, the most interesting and, perhaps, the most dangerous of all "duels of war." Especially thrilling would be a duel to the death, under these circumstances, between two rival aeromantics. It would also be one in which the danger would be equally shared by spectators as well as principals.

GLOBE OF FIRE.

Easton (Md.) Special in Baltimore Sun: Some people in Royal Oak and its neighborhood last night witnessed a rare electrical phenomenon—a large globe of fire rolling along in the atmosphere. Mr. Philip M. Pastorfied, a careful observer, has given the following statements, thus describes the phenomenon: "I was standing, looking from my back porch toward the stable, before it had rained much, when suddenly a globe of fire about twenty-five feet from the stable a balloon-shaped mass of fire about as large as an ordinary hoghead. It was like a balloon upside down, with the stem pointing upward. Almost instantly it exploded with a tremendous report like a cannon, and sprays of fire fumed from it in every direction. I am positive it did not come down from the clouds, as I could not have helped seeing it if it had. Strange to say, no damage was done by it to anything around. I was sure that the amount of fire that fell from it in all directions would set something on fire, but on examination I could not find anything injured. The ground was not disturbed in the least, and the whole matter is very mysterious to me. I would like some scientific man to give me an explanation."

A gentleman of scientific attainments says: "I have known only two or three instances of a similar appearance, yet it is a phenomenon that does happen at rare intervals, and one that no one has been able to explain satisfactorily by any of the known laws of electrical phenomena."

W. Reymann, a New York cyclist, who started out from Gotham two and one-half years ago to make a trip around the world on his wheel, has arrived at San Francisco on the United States transport Wardens, having effected his passage from Nagasaki as a dishwasher. His money gave out at Moscow, and his wheel having broken down he had to "foot it" across Siberia and Manchuria.

WAR STRICTLY UP-TO-DATE

The colonel walked out into the garden where the warm, moist smell of the earth announced the advent of spring, and watched Uncle Dick Porter clearing away the winter's litter, preparatory to an early spading.

A plump, speckled hen scratched around in close proximity to the darkey, who, all unconscious of the Colonel's presence, glanced once or twice at the fowl, and several times drove it away with an earnestness that was almost fierce.

"Go 'way!" he said. "Ah done got 'ligion now, yo' heah me? Git yo' beehin me, Satan!" and then as the pullet squawked and flew awkwardly away in answer to the throwing of a pebble, he raised his eyes piously and ejaculated: "Praise de Lamb! Ah done got another victory!"

The Colonel, who understood the darkey's nature as well as he did horses, could keep still no longer, but burst into a laugh. Uncle Dick looked up quickly.

"Ah'm done glad you see mah victory, Mawse Kunnel," he said. "Ah sholy is saved. When a cullud man can 'nist a assy pullet like dis hyah he ain' gwine have no trouble ter reach dem puhly gates. Da's so, Kunnel, it sholy am. An' yo' don need nut no lock on yo' chicken house now, foh Ah done got 'ligion."

The Colonel, who never dreamed of locking his henhouse, counting the "lifting" of a nice fat Plymouth Rock now and then as a natural prerogative of the African race and an unmentioned part of the wages, put on his most judicial aspect.

"Why, have you been stealing my chickens, Uncle Dick?" he asked.

Uncle Dick scratched his head for a moment in perplexity.

"It's dis hyah way, Mawse Kunnel. Dey ain't no cullud puhson ever steal Mebby dey lif a half a dollah and a yellow-legged Dominickah of dey hain' got de savin' grace o' de Lamb in dey souls, but dey don't steal. Dey jes' kain help it. It's jes' lak ole Mose White, what done got scotched by de debil. Ole Mose he done walkin' thro' de woods one day an' he meet de debil face to face, an' de debil he say: 'Mehnin' Louse, Ah'm mighty glad to see yo' lookin' so well dis mehnin' an' he hole out he han' foh Mose to shake. But Mose he look down an' he see de debil's tall buhmin' a ole in de groun' an' he put he hands behin' him."

"Yo' gwain away, Mistah Debblil," he say. "Ah doan want no truck wid yo'." "Den de debil he put he han' in de pocket an' he draw out a dollah."

PRECAUTION.

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"Doan yo' be 'fraid o' me, Mose," he say. "Ah'm gwine be yo' friend." Hyah's a dollah Ah done foun' er while ergo, an' Ah done say, 'Ah'm gwine gib dis hyah to Mose White, 'case he need it. ' "

"Mose he want dis hyah dollah mighty bad, 'case he think he might buy a woodoo bag dat keep de debil away, but he see it gettin' red round de ridges an' he heah to tech it."

"Yo' gwain away, Mistah Debblil," he say. "Ah ain' neveh done yo' no hamm." "Den de debil he scratched he hand an' think a minute, an' den he reach in he coat tail pocket an' hand out a waterhmelon an' he say: 'Hyah's a fine waterhmelon Ah done fotch along foh yo' Mose, an' den he fotch it open on he knee an' de red hyah done stick up lookin' cool an' sweet an' crumbly like, an' Mose's mouth done watah so bad he kya'm't hardly hole he self. But he look down at de debil's hoof, fohkerin' aroun' an' he hole he honor."

THE VOLCANIC BATH.

In Parts of California the People Take Plunge in Ice-Cold Mud. Volcano baths are the proper thing nowadays in certain parts of California and Mexico. Down in Mendocino county, California, such baths have become most frequent.

The volcano bath is not a water bath, says the San Francisco Bulletin, nor is it a fire bath or a lava bath, as might be supposed. It is a mud bath, and no ordinary mud bath at that. Ice-cold mud of a bluish tint and the consistency of freshly mixed mortar is the element into which the bather plunges, splashing and spluttering. The way they manage is unique. A sapling is felled from the forest near the volcano craters, stripped of its limbs, carried to the crater and placed across it, so that each end of the pole rests on firm ground. Fancy yourself sliding out on one of these saplings stretched over off into the middle of a gurgling, bubbling, ice-cold mass of mud and swinging yourself there, suspended by your hands, until fatigued! Then, with just life enough left to crawl back along the log you reach unyielding ground again.

Once plunged into one of the craters of mud with all ties to the sapling severed, a person would be lost forever, being swallowed up in the murky depths in an instant, for vastly quicker in action and surer of its victim than quicksand is the mud of Mendocino county's mysterious volcanoes.

Cleanliness has nothing to do with it. It is not for that that people face the dangers of the volcano bath. The mud which is belched forth from the earth's interior is supposed to contain important medicinal properties.

There are about twenty-five of these singular mud-belching volcanoes in Mendocino county, and they are among California's many wonders. They are situated high on a mountain side, seven miles from Cahto. At this time of year they are unusually active. Their gurgling roar may be heard for a distance of several miles when they are most violent. The mud frequently shoots over the rim of the crater, flows down the mountain side like a lava stream and enters one of the Eel river's tributaries called Mud creek. It fills the crater, which are about five feet above the earth's surface and bounded with a circular base or miniature crater from four to seven feet in diameter at the base and two or three feet at the top. Prospecting parties have hewn down saplings fifty feet in length and pushed them into the mouth of a crater. Some of these have disappeared altogether. Others remain near the surface, playthings of the muddy element, which tosses them about like fishermen's bobbins in a rough sea. A significant coincidence is the fact that when the coast, twenty miles away, is unusually heavy and rough the volcanoes become intensely active, belching forth not only their burden of ice-cold mud, but volumes of warm vapor. In some mysterious way the ocean seems to control their action.

A Woman Seip at Auction.

An unfortunate old woman, poor, her usefulness gone, her friends driven from her by her peculiarities incident to old age, has just been sold at auction to the lowest bidder by the overseer of the poor of Lackawanna township, Pike county, according to the Milford (Pa.) correspondent of the Syracuse Post-Standard.

Despite her age, however, her mind is active, and she startled the auctioneers by bidding in herself.

The woman who was put on the block is Mrs. Elmira Quick. She is 77 years old, and has resided nearly the whole of her life in Lackawanna township.

Her sale at auction was in pursuance of a custom which has long prevailed in that township.

It has been customary for the various poormasters to sell the poor of the township each year to the lowest bidder in preference to being annoyed with the case themselves, and about the beginning of the year a large sign with the glaring headline of "A Woman for Sale," can be seen posted about the township, for it seldom befalls a man to become dependent upon the district.

HOME GOING.

A spirit of melancholy had settled down upon the divinites at the madhouse down in the alley. Conditions in general favored such a mood. GINGER Kelleigh had come to out of a disagreeable lethargy of longer than the usual duration, and was pouring balsam over his wounds at the bar. "Bughouse" Pete was painting his hull black and getting ready for action. Gloom had settled with the soot over every countenance.

"I dunno," said the outlaw, "how it's to be done, but I've got to go home and butt in. We signed a treaty uv peace last Chewsday at home, and I agreed to come back regular and get my laundry, but now it's all off again. The impression of my last meeting with my wife will go with me to the grave. I trudged up Nannygoot Hill widout an idea in the world as to how I could bow myself in. Then just in the nick uv time I wux struck wid a inspiration. I sniks into a penitential air and unpacks a few boxes of Mexican an' gits ready. I unlocks the parlor door, goes in and sets down. My wife comes in and I don't say a word, but looks fohorn at de carpet an' sighs."

"Well, what's de matter wid you?" says she. I don't answer, but rips out anudder sigh. She stands and looks at me wid her arms at her side. Den I breaks de los. "Marry," says I, "there's one al unworthy us a good woman lika youself and de comfortable home you keeps so clean an' tidy. I'm gwin' to de dogs; dere's nuttin' to it."

"Why don't you go to bed?" she says, moderatin'.

"No," says I, "I ain't worthy uv a civilized bed. I'll jes' lay down here on the floor an' sleep, or lay out on the steps."

"Well, by George! she stod for it and put me to bed, uv course. I sneaks out de nex' mornin', when I ketch her off watch an' hain't been back since."

"Last night I wux comin' home by de White Elephant an' I meets One-eyed Williams, who has ben wadin' troo de rye for upwards of two weeks, an' he carries a bundle dat looks like wash under his arm.

"Where you goin'?" says I.

"Goin' home," says he, wid tears in his whiskers. An' den he explains about not havin' seen his wife and family for so long, an' how he wux takin' her a little present in order to round himself up wid her. At first I didn't know what to purchase, but at last I gits me lamp on the proper article to fetch her, an' he puts the bundle under his arm in a fatherly way.

DOMESTIC PLEASANTRIES.

Detroit Free Press: "You will not forget me, won't you, dear?" she pleaded by way of softening the harshness of her refusal. "Sure thing!" said he, "you know I'd do anything to please you."

Boston Transcript: Coddle-Well, I suppose it's time to get up. Mrs. Coddle-Why, has the alarm clock gone off? Coddle-I don't know; but the baby has gone to sleep at last.

Indianapolis Journal: "Undone—hic—by a woman!" said Mr. Lushforth, weepingly. Mr. Lushforth, at that psychological moment, was gazing dreamily at the shoes of his feet that the wife of his bosom had kindly unlaced.

Chicago Tribune: "Millee, dear, what is your papa's objection to me?" "He says you don't seem to have any definite object or purpose in life, Harry."

"Yet he knows I've been coming to see you for five straight years!"

Detroit Journal: "I understand they fell out the next day after they were married." "Yes, the newspapers gave a column to their wedding, and they disputed as to whether it was because of the prominence of his family or of hers."

Chicago News: Her Father—And I s'pose you expect, if I consent to let you have my daughter, that I will set you up in business and make you rich? Mr. Sapplegain—No, I really haven't any such extravagant expectations as that. I'm willing to take her just for my board and clothes.

Washington Star: "A woman," remarked the man who assumes superior airs, "has no sense of humor." "Well," answered his wife, "when you consider how often she is requested to laugh over serious matters like housecleaning and Easter bonnets, I don't think you ought to blame her."

Chicago Tribune: "I have called, Mr. Billwink, to tell you I love your daughter, Miss Fanny, and I want to marry her." "Well, it will not take me long to answer you, Mr. Harkaloug. You can't have her." "Your refusal pains me deeply. By the way, Mr. Billwink, are you carrying all the life insurance you want?"

PRATTLE OF THE YOUNGSTERS.

Tommy—I'm going to be a lawyer when I grow up. Uncle—I thought you were going to be a minister. Tommy—So I was, but there's more fun play in law. Ministers is always jumping on Satan, and he don't get a chance to talk back.

"Pa, is Admiral Dewey a full admiral?" "Yes, my son." "He's a salt water admiral, isn't he?" "Certainly." "And you are sure he's a full admiral?" "Of course he is." "Well, how can he keep full on salt water?"

A little boy of 4 years had a way of referring with great deference to his sister, not yet 8. She was learning a verse for Sunday school, the last line of which was: "Drive the shades of sin away." "Marry," he said, earnestly, "what is 'sin away'?" "I don't know, Johnnie," she answered, just as seriously. "But mamma puts common sense into cake; let's go and ask her what 'sinaway' is."