

A NEWSPAPER YARN.

RECEIVED MEDICAL AUTHORITIES ALL OVER THE WORLD.

A Mental Hospital, the Subject.—In Spite of its Absurdity It Was Wholly Copted, Discussed, Discussed, and Honestly Considered.—A Big Head.

It has been a favorite pastime of mine for years to study popular fallacies and to make calculations as to the percentage of acceptances thereof by people of everyday common sense. It is as astonishing as it is interesting when you come to figure it out how a statement, plausibly put and leavened with just enough fact to give it life, will be swallowed without question by men who should refuse to accept bald assertions as fast by the very logic of their positions. I mean by this that a bit of ingenious sophistry should not convince a logician. A problem fails in its proposition should not confuse a mathematician, and, to come to the concrete and more practical, the description of a surgical operation that never did and never could take place ought not to deceive an amateur and surgeon. Let me illustrate this point first.

I cannot recall the precise date, but it was in the latter part of 1881 or early in 1882 that a New York newspaper contained an article describing a most remarkable operation in cranial surgery, which, it was alleged, had been performed by a Philadelphia physician upon his servant. The operation was not one of necessity nor of expedience—it was made simply to satisfy the operator by cedar demonstration that the functions of the motor and sensory centers were independent, or, more specifically speaking, that the motor could exist and act without the presence of the entire sensory system. To demonstrate this our experimental friend induced his faithful servitor to surrender a few ounces of his brains. He was placed under ether, and after a flap of scalp had been thrown back a circular incision was made in the right and left parietal region of the skull. The pieces of bone cut out by the trephine were placed in an antiseptic liquor, a surgical spoon was introduced, first into one cavity and then into the other, and the operator removed from each side about an ounce of brain from the convolutions which his researches led him to believe governed the seat of cerebral activity. The bony lids were replaced over each circular opening, the scalp flaps put back, and the patient was ready for bed, where he remained for several days apparently oblivious to his surroundings. All the involuntary functions of the body proceeded as before, and when the man had sufficiently recovered from physical shock he was put on his feet.

He could not maintain his equilibrium in a stationary posture, but when started walking would continue the motion of legs and feet until he brought up against an obstruction that hindered further progress. The physician congratulated himself on the nicely of his measurements and calculations, but as time went on he realized that while he had committed no crime for which the statute books provided a penalty he was nevertheless, to all intents and purposes, a murderer. He had not extinguished the spark we call life, but he had destroyed the ego, or, if the term might be employed, he had committed mental homicide. The story went on to tell how the victim was eventually placed in an asylum for the insane, where he was regarded as a congenital idiot and so entered on the books of the institution. His master, it was said, brooded to such an extent that he eventually died of remorse, leaving behind him a history of the operation and its melancholy result, and from this posthumous paper the story was written.

It so happened that I was an intimate friend of the author of the queer yarn, and he was anxious to learn whether the scientific world would give even a contemptuous denunciation to it. With that purpose in view he marked the article in 15 or 20 papers. These he mailed to various medical journals and scientific societies both in Europe and America. I'll confess surprise when some three weeks later I saw an Edinburgh periodical take up the subject, accept it as a fact and criticize the physician in the severest terms for having dared to trifle with the human brain when there was no necessity and where there could be but one result.

The gravest apprehension was entertained for any medical society that would permit its membership roll to be disgraced with the name of any practitioner who in a mistaken devotion to science could forget that he was a man and the member of a profession whose mission was not to destroy, but to build up, not to add to the weight of human woe, but to take from it. To clinch the argument it was shown that an operation on one of the lower animals would have been of equal value to determine the exact seat of certain cerebral functions as though made on a human being.

One or two western newspapers reproduced the article without comment, and a Melbourne weekly, copying from one of these, said in a footnote that it was an "audacious act that none but a Yankee surgeon, regardless of criticism or results, would undertake." In none of these publications was there any challenge of the veracity of the statement per se. As a matter of fact, the only basis of truth for the publication was the fact that a medical student, who had a strong predilection for the study of nervous diseases, had evolved a theory that a condition like that described might be produced by such an operation. He did not place his thoughts in the presumptive future, but in the assumption past, and his written record made it appear that a surgeon had actually found a man fool enough to permit himself to be deprived of his senses completely without reward and without hope of recovery.

From this the story was woven, with such ingenuity as to completely cloak the vital point—viz., that in 10,000 men it would be impossible to find one, even if weary of life, who would be willing to undergo such a transition even for a previous reward of temporal comforts. This particular fallacy is one that would possibly be maintained by the thoughtless more than by the thoughtful.—New York Mail and Express.

Couldn't Fool Him.

Walter (to party from the country, just seated)—Here's the bill of fare, sir.

Countryman—Now, look here, if you think I'm givin' to pay any bill of fare till I've had somethin' to eat you'll be foolin' yourself. Fetch on your vittles first.—Texas Sittings.

The Other Man.

Benedict—Why won't she marry you? Is there another man in the case?

Singleton—I'm afraid there is.

"That so! Do you know who it is?"

"Yes—her father!"—Boston Traveller.

A BUSHEL OF CORN.

Its Progress From the Farm to the Consumer of Whisky.

Illinois is the great corn state, and Peoria is the center of its most prolific belt. Peoria is a great grain market, and especially for corn. Vast quantities of the golden grain are shipped into this city for general distribution and loaded into its numerous elevators to the hundreds of thousands of tons. A great deal of corn is shipped from Peoria, but a vast quantity is used at home. There is more corn used to Peoria than in any three cities in the Union, even though these cities be New York, Philadelphia and Chicago. The reason is obvious. Peoria is not only the center of the great distilling interests, but here are located two of the greatest sugar houses in the country. Down the capacious maws of the great distilleries are poured every day 20,000 bushels of corn. The sugar houses use from 5,000 to 10,000 bushels more each day in the year. To supply this demand the product of 1,000 acres of rich corn lands are duly shipped into Peoria for home consumption. Aside from these fully 5,000 bushels are used daily for other purposes. So that it is safe to estimate that fully 9,000,000 bushels of corn are used in this city annually for manufacturing and other purposes. The greater part of this is manufactured into spirits.

It is wonderful to consider the changes made by a bushel of corn in its transition from the owner's crib to the glass of the consumer. These changes are various and far-reaching. They are other than financial. But consider simply the mere element of value. Corn was selling, we will say, for 35 cents per bushel. It came all the way from Nebraska perhaps, where it brought but 25 cents. In transit two dealers received a commission of a cent each. The railroad company received 8 cents for its freight and other charges. The distiller paid 35 cents. He took and converted it into 4½ gallons of finished spirits and fed one of his steers on the refuse. The distiller sold the spirits to a local dealer for \$12.15, of which Uncle Sam received \$4.05 as tax on the spirits, leaving a balance to the distiller of 72 cents after he had paid 35 cents for his corn.

The spirits, after being well watered and compounded, are sold at a profit by the compounder and rectifier to the dealer, who sells it out at 15 cents a drink. The 4½ gallons have swelled to nine, and before it gets through it swells many a head and also the revenue of the city where its lines may be cast.

So that in its travels from the Nebraska crib to the Chicago saloon that bushel of corn has increased, in value from 25 cents to many dollars, and with its constant running mates has furnished employment at least to 50 men or more and has contributed to both the national and municipal revenues.

To resume, that bushel of corn was thus scattered on the highways of business and pleasure: Farmer, 25 cents; railroads, 88 cents; commission men, 2 cents; distillers, 72 cents; feeder, 10 cents; Uncle Sam, \$4.05; compounder and rectifier, 25 cents; retail dealer, \$10; city, \$5. The consumer got whatever was left in the spirits, each according to his strength or weakness.—People's Herald.

Henry Villard Quotes Mr. Edison.

Henry Villard is said to be a man with a total lack of appreciation for humor. This story is told of him as happening when he was president of the old Edison General Electric company. Mr. Villard got the idea that the Edison company ought to build an electric locomotive. He went to Thomas A. Edison and asked him to design one. Mr. Edison gave him his reasons for not wanting to undertake the task and refused to do it. Mr. Villard then ordered 10 of the engineers of the Northern Pacific railway to submit designs for electric locomotives, intending to have Mr. Edison combine the best points of all into one. The drawings and specifications arrived in the course of time and made a formidable mass of data. Mr. Villard had it all sent to Mr. Edison with the request to evolve a design from the plans. Mr. Edison replied by letter to the effect that "the only man who could design an electric locomotive from this stuff was crucified 1,800 years ago." Mr. Villard soon after met Mr. Edward H. Johnson and told him of the trouble he had been to, and that Mr. Edison had refused to make the design.

"And do you know, Johnson," said Mr. Villard in conclusion, "Edison said that all those Northern Pacific engineers ought to be crucified."—Electrical Review.

Memory.

"The science of memory," said James W. Dodd, "is very little understood, and the more it is investigated the further one gets from the solution of the difficulty. I am acquainted with a man who could never learn to write or to calculate, although a large sum of money was spent by his wealthy parents in attempts to educate him. To this day he can scarcely distinguish one letter from another, but he can read easily from sight in some manner neither physician nor philosopher can understand."

"He is fond of reading out loud and seldom stumbles over a hard word, although he cannot spell out the easiest ones. Strange to say, he has a most wonderful memory of what he reads and will repeat the plot of a book, with the exact quotations of leading incidents and expressions, after reading it once. His general habits indicate mental weakness in various ways, and the only memory he seems to have is in regard to printed matter."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

The Cause of Sties.

Sties usually occur in succession. Whether one or more appear at the same time we will find that the first is usually the forerunner of a number of others. This points to the fact that some constitutional disorder, some slight modification of a normal condition of the body, usually underlies the sty forming tendency. Constipation will very often be found at such periods.

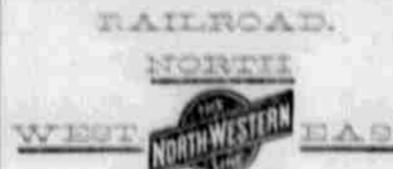
Often we will find that it occurs when there are other evidences of derangement—skin eruptions, poor appetites, general malaise, etc. So called "delicate children" are more liable than others. Hence the frequent occurrence of sties may indicate the desirability of consulting the family physician.—Babyland.

She Checks Horses.

It is related of Miss Trella Foltz Toland, an actress in San Francisco, that she persistently unchecks horses that she finds standing with their heads strained back according to the present ungraceful and indefensible custom. She says she did this for over 100 horses in Kansas City and Denver and received a letter of thanks from the president of the Kansas City Humane Society. Here's a practical philanthropy open to everybody, without waiting for organization or officers.—Woman's Magazine.

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