BRACING UP.

A Story of Camp Life in War Times.

By John Habberton, Author of "Helen's Babies," "All He Knew," Etc., Copyright 1891 by the Author.

CHAPTER III.

A GAME OF FOOT BALL.

Man by man the whole tentful followed their leader. It is but just to say that they were equally faithful in following him as, after a very short stay in the brook, Tom hastily donned his blanket and shoes and returned to the tent at a brisk run. Then there was some rapid dressing, and one by one the bathers emerged looking entirely satisfied with their experience and declaring they would not have missed it for a month's pay.

The second relief therefore demanded to be admitted, and as there was still a great deal of heat in the bricks Tom "personally conducted" fifteen more men through the mysteries of a steam bath after the original plan. Then he felt obliged to appoint a deputy, but before he did this he was complimented by having a deputation of officers ask for the use of the tent between dark and tattoo.

During the remainder of the day Tom was the camp hero. No matter where he went men followed him, stared at him and wondered what he would do next. In this latter respect he was quite in accord with them, for that something else should be done he did not for an instant doubt. Camp interest in athletics could not be steadily maintained by Russian baths and Indian clubs unless reinforcements of some sort could be obtained. What should they be? Foot races were well enough and could undoubtedly be started in any number—for prizes, but the pay of a private soldier could not be expected to provide material incentives to action. He was equally unable to order gymnastic apparatus from New York.

Unconsciously he began striding to and fro on the parade ground, his hands behind his back, his head bowed and his brow contracted, until he heard an admiring Irishman exclaim:

"Luk at the young Napoleon!"

Then he hastily unbent and returned to his quarters, where he was astonished to find the door wide open and Jim Fait without a pipe in his mouth and looking very much awake about something.

"See here, Tom," said the big fellow to his astonished tent mate, "you're the coming man and Homer and I are so conscious of the honor reflected upon us—by living in the same hut, you know—that we're trying to get up a point for you. Why wouldn't it be a good thing to rig a trapeze as a hoisting bar?"

"First rate," said Tom; "but how and where?"

"Three of the corporals have a hut ten feet high," said Fait, "and actually had the energy to frame it in regular style, with a ridge pole to support the roof. If we could arrange to trade hats with them I don't think it would be hard to get up a trapeze to hang from that ridge pole. Perhaps the whole roof will come down some day when an extra heavy fellow is hoisting himself, but even that would be exciting, which is what we want."

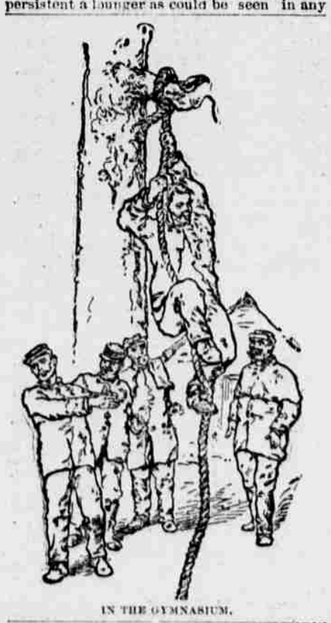
"Good!" exclaimed Tom. "That Russian bath seems to have waked you up."

"It brought my brain to the surface," Jim admitted.

The three corporals were interviewed. They were willing to trade if anything could be made by it, so Tom, trusting that the paymaster would arrive in time to provide the funds for the Indian club prize, paid his last five dollars to the corporals and the two parties exchanged quarters. Another appeal to the quartermaster secured some rope, a bar was made from a billet of wood cut from a broken tent pole, the trapeze was made, the door thrown open and the passers-by accepted as an invitation the spectacle of Tom, Jim and Homer taking turns of hoisting themselves.

This suited the company loungers exactly. The hut was warm and it had plenty of standing room, so soon the wall was lined with men with their hands in their pockets and their pipes in their mouths. But Tom speedily ended many dreams of bliss to be enjoyed in this new elysium; he announced that as the trapeze had been put up for the physical benefit of the company, no one would be admitted who did not use it or who did make the air bad by smoking. One by one the pipes were sadly emptied, but nobody went away; each man "tried his muscle," if only to have an excuse to stay and look at the others, and although each found, to his own mortification, that he had but little to try, he had the consolation of discovering that he was no worse off than his companions.

Meanwhile, it slowly dawned upon Tom Mottray that he had taken a very heavy contract. Every one who wanted to use clubs or take a Russian bath or use the trapeze went to Tom personally, until, from being as persistent a lounger as could be seen in any



IN THE GYMNASIUM.

camp, he found himself busier than he had ever been in the busiest days of his hardware trade experience. His best energies, however, were devoted to the work of fomenting a spirit of rivalry between the various companies. To this end he gave all his spare moments to visiting and boasting; he was not unwilling to admit that his acquaintances other than his own had some muscle, but he declined to recognize their physical quality with the men of company C. He expatiated at length, and with the aid of his lively imagination, on the breadth of Denny Gallaty's shoulders, the powerful arms of Jim Fait, the graceful suppleness of Homer's wrist and the quickness of motion of Wurrekin's Mouse, until men grew almost frantic at his company conceit and brought out one after another of their own company's prodigies for his inspection. Even then Tom maintained his conceited manner. He often wondered afterwards why he was not knocked down for the arrogance, the shrugs of shoulder and the general air of condescension with which he regarded all men whose caps did not bear the letter C.

The results were exactly what he had hoped and expected. Before the first week of the muscular revival had ended there were six companies of the ten the regiment embodied where Indian clubs were daily swung by twenty or more men, and at least two dozen trapezes had been rigged in as many different huts. Company F had obtained a Russian bath of its own—a structure superior to Tom's—for two men who lived in the same hut were so enraged at "that Company C" fellow's airs that they, after first making arrangements to lodge elsewhere, loyally presented their building to the company, moved it—with some assistance—log by log to the brookside, dug a pit inside it, placed benches around the sides, stopped all chinks with clay and opened it as an opposition Russian bath. Had they not confined their invitations to members of their own company Tom might have lost prestige; as it was, however, he turned the opposition to his advantage by making it the excuse for borrowing from the quartermaster a hospital tent to replace the Sibley.

As the regiment's sick were in huts the tent had never been used; it was clean and at least twice as large as any hut in the camp. Beside, Tom had the pleasure of putting outside a notice, inscribed on a cracker box top with a bit of red hot wire: "No Mud-Chinked Walls Here." He also was cheered by a bit of open recognition. The guard house "gang"—men who were imprisoned for petty offenses—were daily taken under guard to the woods and compelled to cut wood for the original Russian bathing establishment, while the opposition and exclusive place had to be supplied with fuel by the company that owned it.

Tom visited all the new indoor and outdoor gymnasia and sometimes condescended to commend someone or something, but he took care to remain true to his policy of keeping up the fever of rivalry. He seldom ended a visit without having said or done something to rouse his hosts to a degree of exasperation that was productive of new devices and greater vigor of exercise.

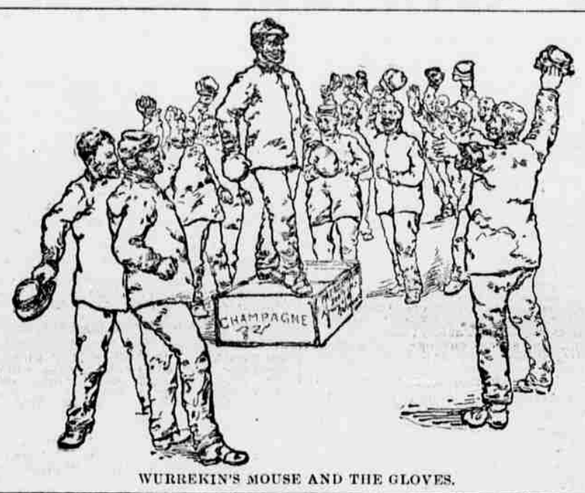
But the path of progress was not without its stumbling blocks and obstacles. To maintain his personal prestige seemed to Tom quite necessary, on practical as well as personal grounds, and he soon found that to do it would require all of his ability, for he had rivals. One evening he learned that two sergeants of company E had announced their intention to send east for boxing gloves as soon as pay day would enable them. This information made Tom despondent for the space of an hour; then a happy thought struck him and he made haste to visit his trusty "Jack of Clubs," as Wurrekin's Mouse had been called since he took charge of company C's athletic class.

"Gloves, d'ye say?" remarked Wurrekin's Mouse, having first closed his teeth and drawn back his lips, as is the custom of young men affected by the pugilistic mania. "Gloves! Why, I've got four pairs of my own at home in a box. Two of 'em was presented to me, with speeches, after I used up the Philadelphy Bantam. One of em's got a set of resolutions drawed on it, tellin' how many rounds we fit, what our weight was an' everythin'."

"Murt!" exclaimed Tom, grasping the little fellow's hand and speaking with a voice husky with emotion, which Wurrekin's Mouse attributed to admiration of the Philadelphy Bantam's vanquisher, "Murt, if you'll get those gloves on here right away—order them by tonight's mail—I'll pay the expressage and I'll buy a pair or two of you, if you like, when pay day comes."

"I'll do it," said the diminutive pugilist, "but I wouldn't like any of the fellers to use the ones with the resolutions drawed on 'em."

"Certainly not," said Tom. "Hang those up in your own hut for the boys to look at. You owe it to your reputation; you're not appreciating your privileges, my boy. And if you want any resolutions put on the other, in India ink, I'm the man to do it."



WURREKIN'S MOUSE AND THE GLOVES.

"I wish I had some," said the Mouse thoughtfully, "but the trouble is I haven't. Say, maybe—I s'pose—you couldn't put on a picture of a-knockin' out the Philadelphy Bantam, could you? I've got his picture in my knapsack."

"It shall go on the gloves, then," said Tom. "The Mouse on one glove of a pair, the Bantam on the other, or any other way you like. I want this whole camp to know how much of a fellow you are."

Wurrekin's Mouse did not say much by way of acknowledgment—the tongue was not the member with which he expressed himself with most ease—but the smile of satisfaction that overspread his little face showed that Tom might afterward demand whatever assistance he wanted from the Bantam's conqueror.

The request for the gloves went by the mail of that evening, and by the same carrier went a letter from Tom to an old friend, begging a short loan of $10 and asking also that a stick of India ink and some crow quill pens be sent him by mail. As New York was but twenty-four hours from the camp of the Two Hundredth, the expectant couple counted on returns within three days at the farthest. In the meantime, however, something new must be done to maintain Tom's prestige, in case the gloves through any accident should fail to arrive. What should it be? Tom ran over, mentally, a list of everything he had ever seen in a gymnasium, but the only thing he could think of that was within the resources of the camp was rope climbing. The quartermaster had some picket ropes, but the diameter was only half an inch, so they were too small for the hand to cling to securely when a hundred and fifty pounds or more of humanity was clinging securely to the hand. Tom studied those picket ropes for an hour, first hopefully, then hopelessly, but the idea came at last. He got three and plaited them together, the result being a rope large enough to keep the nails of the longest fingers from reaching the palms; it was also rough enough to serve, without knots, the purpose of the merest beginner at rope climbing. Where to put it was the next question, and the answer was not long deferred, for Company C's cook house was shaded by the only tree actually within the camp limits. It would have been cut down long before had it not been a sweet gum—a tree the wood of which will not burn at all when green, and cannot be split, except by almost superhuman exertions, when either green or dry.

The old tree had been so gratefully regarded during the few hot days in late autumn that there was a general protest of "Woodman, spare that tree!" when Tom and a hatchet began to lop away several of the lower boughs, but when the rope was adjusted to a stout limb growing almost at right angles to the trunk, and Charley Pyke, an ex-sailor, uttered a gleeful shout and went up "hand over hand" with no perceptible assistance from his legs and arms, some one demanded

"Three cheers for Tommy the swell!"

For the remainder of the day the rope was the centre of effort in the camp and seemed productive about equally of delight and misery. It was a great sport to the crowd to see some ambitious fellow, not accustomed to rope-climbing, try to ascend as if he were climbing a tree. The slightest effort to use the legs would cause the rope to sway wildly; then the climber would renew his efforts. When about half way up the climber would lose his strength, cling convulsively to the rope and be "chaffed" by scores of his comrades. When nerve and muscle could no longer endure he would slide down, his trousers almost smoking with the heat caused by friction and his palms so scratched and bruised by the rope that his face would express agony to a degree which greatly delighted a large proportion of the spectators. Nevertheless a great deal of practice was indulged in and the rope was in steady demand, for there was no other place in camp for an opposition to start in business.

But all other forms of exercise were cast in the shade by a hint which Tom Mottray took one day, when, during a visit to a friend in a cavalry camp he saw several troopers amusing themselves by kicking an old hat from one to another. He got his friend to introduce him to the troop's saddler, with whom he had a long and confidential conversation. Two days later he revisited the saddler and paid $3 for a football, made by packing hay tightly in a ball-shaped bag made of sacking which afterward was covered carefully with rubber cloth, cut from a rubber blanket. It almost cost him his life to protect this treasure until he reached his own camp, for he had a following which, if armed, could have made a reconnoissance in force. Tom knew no more of football than he did of statemanship but, as he correctly stated to himself while devising the ball itself, the most ignorant human being knows instinctively how to kick and the laziest of mortals would a little rather kick than lounge.

As soon as he entered camp, by way of guard headquarters, which in all camps is the only lawful point of egress or ingress, all men of the guard relief off duty left the guard house and followed him. The crew was swelled by every one who saw it, and although the off-duty guard had to be recalled to help repel the mob that had followed Tom from the cavalry quarters and insisted on entering camp, they were not missed, so quickly did "the boys" come from every direction. Tom made his way to his own hut, to show his acquisition to his mates, but some one roared: "To the parade ground," and the shout was echoed by a hundred voices. The owner of the ball endeavored to carry out his original plan, but the crowd closed around him and carried him with them, in spite of himself, toward the broad space, two hundred yards long, where all parades and drills occurred. Everybody talked at once, and the noise grew so loud that all huts were emptied to learn what was going on; even the officers, who were quite as expert as their men in the soldierly accomplishment of devoting themselves to lounging indoors, came out to see what was going on.

"Who knows the game?" Tom finally asked. The noise stopped suddenly. No one answered for a moment, then the silence was broken by Preacher, who roared:

"Everybody, of course. There's nothing to it but kicking, is there?"

Tom could not answer to the contrary, for he never had seen but one game played, and in that no system or rule was perceptible. As nearly as he could recall, there were two sides, each of which had a goal to which it tried to kick the ball. From this slight knowledge Tom rapidly formulated, aloud, the game as follows:

"Let's play right wing against the left. I'll drive four sticks to indicate the goals, while you fellows separate yourselves according to the wings of the regiment your companies belong to."

Then there was a great hubbub, but by the time the goals were marked out two great gangs eyed each other across a clear space about a hundred feet wide. Each man of the five hundred or more wanted to be in the front rank of his side and considerable time was consumed in "dressing back." Then Tom, stepping out on one flank with the ball, and facing the prospective battlefield, shouted:

"The signal for the rush will be the ball striking the ground."

"Let her come," "Give her to us," and similar cries arose. Tom poised the big black sphere as if he were in a bowling alley, but delayed an instant just to enjoy a glance at the two long walls of eager faces and advanced shoulders. Then he gave it a quick toss in the air.

A tremendous roar arose at the same time and without waiting for the ball to strike ground the two great crowds dashed at the ball and each other. One man succeeded in giving it a kick and getting an equally vigorous kick upon his own foot at the same instant; from that time forth, for a period of at least three minutes, the ball was utterly invisible, being buried under a small mountain of humanity that was kicking, struggling, wriggling, roaring and swearing, while those who were not part and parcel of it tried to become so by dragging away comrades so as to make place for themselves. This endeavor led to at least a dozen short but vigorous fights and an ocean of talk, in the midst of which one man who was at the bottom of the heap managed to work out backward, carrying the ball with him, and dashing toward his own goal. He found his way blocked by a whole "relief" of the guard, standing at the position of "charge bayonets." Then Tom heard the voice of the colonel saying, sternly:

"Take the ball from that man and bring it to me."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOXING GLOVES.

From the parade ground to the colonel's hut was not a hundred steps, and Tom Mottray, as he and the football followed the colonel at a respectful distance, was not aware of walking slower than usual, but he had time enough to imagine all sorts of woes as being in prospect. The colonel had condoned the disturbance caused by the foot-race a few days before, but that was a mere flash of spirit compared with the results of the ball match. Tom wondered what would be his fate. That the promised lieutenantcy was now impossible he admitted without argument; what he wondered was whether his additional punishment would be ten days in the guard house, by the colonel's order, or a heavier penalty by sentence of court-martial.

The colonel left the door open and dropped into his chair. When Tom presented himself the colonel brusquely said:

"Come in; shut the door."

Tom obeyed.

"Give me the ball," said the colonel.

Tom dutifully delivered the offending plaything and unconsciously stepped aside to dodge a possible blow from the ball itself, as the colonel was violent when angry; he had been known to so far forget himself as to knock down an officer of the guard who was drunk on duty. The colonel looked at the ball, weighed it in his hand and asked:

"What did you stuff it with?"

Tom gladly explained the construction of the ball. Then the colonel said:

"It does you great credit, young man—great credit; but it is too heavy and not elastic enough. If you've no objection, I'll order you one from New York at my expense. Did you ever play football yourself?"

Tom confessed he had not.

"So I thought," said the colonel, "for you had far too many men on each side. Twenty men to a side is enough. I've played it often. Perhaps you've noticed I walk a little stiff in one leg?"

Tom raised his eyebrows in surprise but did not dare to voice his thoughts, for he was thinking that the colonel always walked stiff on both legs, and also as if his vertebrd hod been strung on a ramrod.

"Yes," continued the colonel, "when I was preparing for college, and Fourteenth street in New York hadn't yet been heard of, I've many a time kicked myself breathless at football on the old Washington parade ground. One day I had my lower left leg broken by a kick which was meant for the ball. Ah, that was a glorious day; I wish—but that is neither here nor there; just look through the regiment for some college graduate and find out what are the rules of the game nowadays. There's a Yale man in company G whose father is steadily pestering me to recommend the fellow—a worthless scamp he is—for a commission. Pump him industriously during the next two days the new ball will probably be here a day later. Of course the news will get about that football is played in this camp and we will have a lot of visitors who know something about it, so I want the game played according to tactics—according to rule, I mean. That is all."

Tom saluted and said: "Thank you," and turned to go, when the colonel stopped him with:

"And just talk it about in every company that the colonel says that hereafter every man who gets into a fight over a game of football will get into the guard-house and remain there as long as the law allows."

Again Tom saluted and started, but again the colonel stopped him saying:

"You better take the ball with you or the men will think you've got into trouble on account of it. Just say, though, that you'll have a proper ball within three days and that you won't risk another game until then. By the way, would you think the new ball a fair equivalent for this? If so I'd like to keep the old one as a relic of the service. I'll will it to you if I die before you, as in the natural course of events I suppose I shall if rebel bullets spare you."

Tom was too grateful to know what to say, but he finally fell back upon the universal American substitute, "Certainly," which he repeated several times with every intonation that gratitude could inspire; then he hurried away to his quarters feeling as if he was walking on air. A dozen anxious groups waylaid him to know what happened, but the colonel's dictum about fighting was sufficient as explanation and answer.

Arrived at his own hut he found Wurrekin's Mouse, sitting upon a very large box and with an expression of countenance befitting a soldier guarding an army's pay chest or a magazine of ammunition. The hut space not occupied by the little man and his big box was filled with men almost frantic with curiosity, for the Mouse had resolutely declined to show anything or tell anything until the master of athletics should arrive. As Tom entered the weazened face of the Mouse broke into a triumphant smile and the fist which had proved too much for the Philadelphy Bantam rapped significantly upon the big box. Then there was a whispered consultation, after which Tom stepped upon the box shouted "order!" and said:

"Gentleman, we have all heard of what sacrifices the stout arms of freedom have made for the purpose of preserving the integrity of our beloved country, but it is to the stout arms and self-sacrifice of one of our own comrades that we are about to be indebted for some sport worthy of men whose delight is war—or should be—and who at present are deprived by the weather of the opportunity to fight with military weapons. Our good friend here, who in his capacity of Wurrekin's Mouse is named admiringly in every barroom from the Atlantic to the Pacific, has shown his regard for our physical welfare and manly spirit by ordering from the honorable seclusion of his home his whole stock of boxing gloves, the tools of his trade, so to speak—tools by which he was enabled to conquer in a battle such as it was never the fortune of you or I to indulge in. Did any man present ever knock out the 'Philadelphy' Bantam? I pause for a reply, but no reply comes. Gentleman, in consideration of our comrade's thoughtful kindness, I move to express our thanks, in true military style, by giving three cheers for Wurrekin's Mouse. Hip—his—"

"Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!" roared the crowd; then there was a combined bleat in which the word "tiger" was faintly perceptible.

The Mouse looked, as Preacher said afterward, like a saint receiving the reward which he was not unconscious of deserving, and as soon as the speech ended he expressed his thanks by taking the hand of the speaker. Tom took the little fellow by the shoulder and stood him upon the box. The crowd understood the movement and shouted:

"Speech! Speech!"

"Well, gentlemen," said the Mouse, suddenly sobered by the weight of this unexpected responsibility, "I can only say that—well—I think—that it, I mean—my good friend and feller sojers here—there's one thing I want to say an' it's—"

Then the Mouse looked at the roof, into the fireplace, through the window, upon the table, at his own coat sleeve, at Preacher's hat and elsewhere for what he wanted to say, but he could not find it. Then he looked at his own buttons, his knees, and soon down to his feet, until his eye fell upon the box. Then he looked up quickly and continued:

"What I want to say is just this—Ain't any feller got somethin' we can open this box with?"

One man hurried to the cook house for the cook's hatchet, and another robbed his own chimney of a brick; meanwhile Preacher drew from his boot a cleaver-like knife and quickly pried off the cover of the box.

"Ah-h-h!" chorused the crowd as the gloves were exposed to view.

"They luk as pritty as babies in a cradle, so they do," remarked Denny Gellaty.

The Mouse tossed them out upon the floor, glove by glove; he seemed anxious about something, but he finally arose, smiling, with the bottom pair. He put them on his hands and held them up to view, saying:

"I ain't a man of many words, an' I don't ask nobody to believe what I say, but read the resolutions on 'em—them's my record."

Several men began to read the resolutions aloud; meanwhile Denny Gellaty was putting on another pair of gloves; as soon as he succeeded he cleared the readers right and left by raps on the sides of their heads; then he struck another attitude and shouted:

"Whurroo!"

The Mouse understood him. Denny was a little the taller and at least fifty pounds heavier, but the Mouse would have fought the great Goliath at "catch weight" that day. There was a little sparring, two or three hard blows, and then Denny went backward and doubled up in the fireplace, regardless of the utter inappropriateness of the spot and the heat of the coals.

"Don't let the gloves get burned!" was the crowd's expression of sympathy as Denny was dragged out of the fire and the Mouse flapped his elbows as if they were wings and crowed like a little gamecock.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

When the lord chief justice of England orders Cook's Extra Dry Champagne, it's a sad commentary on our Anglomaniacs.

SINGULARITIES.

A Glasboro, Pa., dogs raised a litter of kittens, the mother of which had her life snuffed out by car-wheels.

James Clark of New Moorefield, O., has a cat which has adopted an infant skunk and is as much attached to it as to her own kittens.

George L. Sturgevant, a young man who died recently in Berkeley, Cal., during the last seven months of his life turned from a light complexion to as dark as a negro.

Among a brood of chickens hatched in Bayonne, N. J., was a four-legged brown Leghorn. It was bought by members of the New York stock exchange for a mascot.

Miss Belle Rowe, who was killed at Waterville, Me., had auburn hair, but when her friends saw the body after the accident they were astonished to notice that the color of her hair had changed to brown.

An artesian well near Albert Lea, Minn., which spouts both oil and water, often changes the programme and sends out a stream of small minnows which are wholly unlike any known species of fish found in that vicinity.

An Atlanta citizen says that a crow was killed in Dougherty county a few weeks ago that had "37" branded on his back. "I can see but one meaning to that," said he, "and that is that some one caught the crow in 1837, branded the figures on his back, and then released him."

The "angry tree" a woody plant which grows from ten to twenty-five feet high, and was formerly supposed to exist only in Nevada, has recently been found both in eastern California and in Arizona. If disturbed this peculiar tree shows every sign of vexation, even to ruffling up its leaves like the hair on an angry cat, and giving forth an unpleasant, sickening odor.

Mr. and Mrs. Louis A. Piers' little baby, in Litchfield, Minn., has an eye for figures, or, rather, has figures on its eye. When the baby was about a month old a figure 1 was discovered just above and at the left of the pupil of the baby's left eye. A short time a figure 2 appeared just below the figure 1, and a few days ago a figure 3 became visible just below the figure 2.

When the body of William Imes, which was buried at Corunna, Ind, two years ago, was disinterred for shipment recently, it was found to be petrified, with every feature preserved even to the hair. At the time of burial Imes weighed 180 pounds, while his petrified body now weighs 405 pounds. The rock which has taken the place of the flesh seems mostly a hard limestone.

Botanists made a discovery in Tehuantepec that the native "hinta" has a flower that changes its color three or more times each day when the weather is favorable. In the morning it is white; at noon it has changed to a deep red; at night it is blue. It is even claimed that some individual trees of this species have a flower that changes to many intermediate hues during the night. There are only two hours out of the twenty-four—from 11 a. m. to 1 p. m.—that this rarity gives out a perfume.

Robert Hansborough of Chillicothe, O., is the possessor of a cow that gives black milk. The cow is a mixture of Jersey and Dunham with a strain of Ayrshire. Mollie, as this phenomenal creature is called, has raised five calves of her own, all of which have lived and grown fat on their mother's black milk. This milk produces a fair amount of cream, which is a trifle lighter in color than the milk, and which, when churned, resembles coal-tar of the sablest of sable hues. Paradoxical as it may seem, the black butter is as palatable as though of a golden yellow and is highly relished by the Hansborough family.