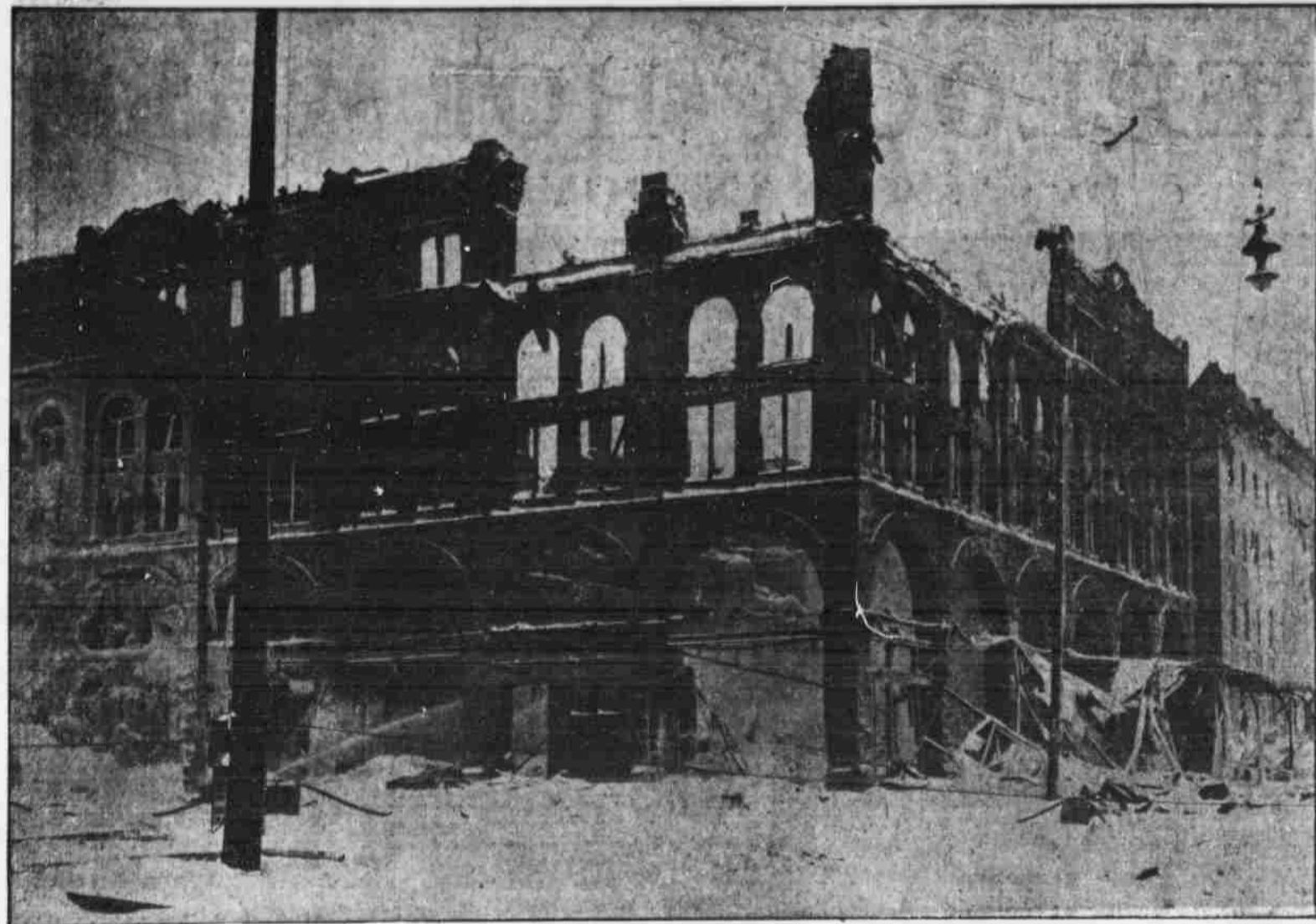
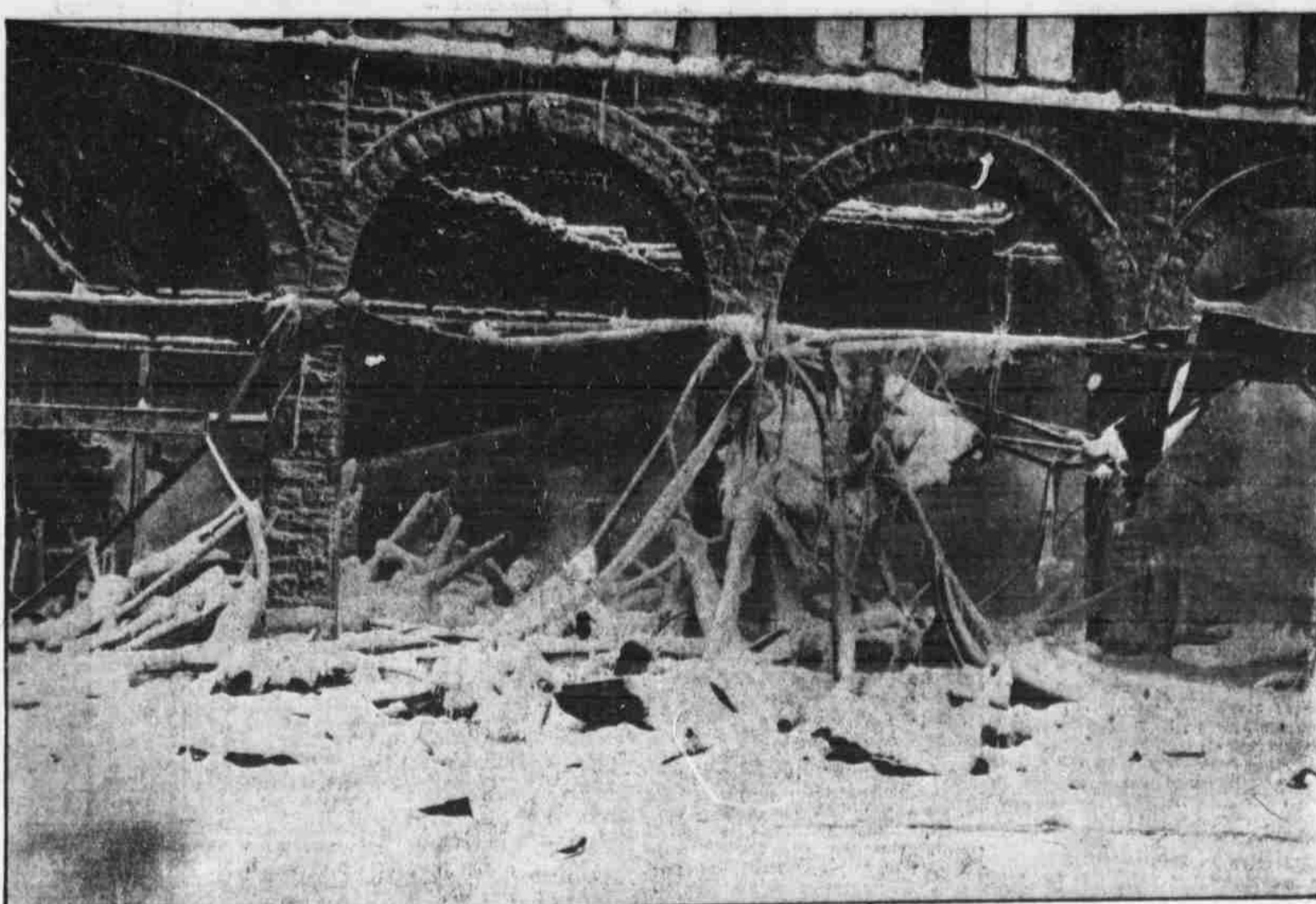


# Fighting Fire with Freezing Water and in Below Zero Temperature



RUINS OF THE MERCER BUILDING AT THE CORNER OF ELEVENTH AND HOWARD STREETS—Photo by a Staff Artist.



ELEVENTH STREET SIDE OF THE MERCER BUILDING, WHERE THE FIRE STARTED—Photo by a Staff Artist.

**W**HEN the fire fiend flings his blazing banners skyward on a day or a night when the frost king is busy in the soil and the air, then is the time when the city fireman is called to a fighting line that there is none more disagreeable or dangerous than the imminent thunders of actual war. To the onlooker, dry and warm, and the beauties of the city of color topping the conflagration appeal with a charm not to be denied. To the man in the slicker and the rubber boots (though sometimes emergency deprives him of this measure of protection) the fire is a straight proposition of labor, danger, cold and strenuous. Smoke may choke and blind, heat may daunt and blister, fire-shot walls may threaten or collapse, his business is to be at the closest point of contact possible to attain. There he must stick and strive, even though the roof overhead or the floor beneath may at any moment make him a victim of the stern call of duty he is obligated to answer. And appealing it is to the strong pride of full manhood that very seldom indeed is the record of the fire fighters marred by the sinister stain of the cowardly quitter.

The fire of last Saturday, January 25, at Eleventh and Howard, was a winter fire, but fortunately the cold was not severe enough to be especially distressing—to a fireman. There have been other winter conflagrations that had all the elements of smoke, flame and fury and at the same time were accentuated by the most intense cold. A talk with Chief Salter of the fire department and Assistant Chief Simpson recalled many of these and brought to light circumstances which made them memorable in the annals of the Omaha battalions.



PORTER-RYERSON-HOOBLER AND VOGEL-DINNING QUARTERS AFTER THE FIRE—Photo by a Staff Artist.

**Some Fires of the Past.**  
Water in a rubber hose stretched along the frozen, snow-covered ground will freeze so quickly that it must be kept booming along on its errand of suppression with a force not at all necessary in the balmy season. Chief Salter cited a fire many years ago in the A. J. Poppleton residence, located at Nineteenth and Dodge, then one of the finest and best built houses in Omaha. It was back about the close of the volunteer days, said the chief, "and I recall it was about the closest engagement we ever had. I was an engineer at the time and remember that after getting the water started through the pipes we had to move the engine a block farther away. The pipemen could not control the nozzle. Even at the increased distance, owing to the high engine pressure necessary to maintain, the difficulty was not remedied. Chief Galligan sent back word to 'cut her down.' When this was done she began to clog at once, so I forced her up again. The chief repeated his order for reduced pressure, but the hose was guttering in spite of all we could do. The hose supplied by No. 2 engine froze up solid that day almost as soon as it was laid and many of the boys had their hands and ears frozen."

**Incident of the Max Meyer Fire.**  
Very cold weather was on tap when the Max Meyer building, on the corner of

Eleventh and Farnam, burned. It was a four-story brick and was completely gutted, only the walls being left standing. A few days afterward a gale of wind blew one of the walls over onto an adjoining building. The department was called and several people in the building were taken from the ruins by firemen working at the front and rear. One man was caught under the roof, but could not talk to the rescuers. After a spell of hard work he was gotten out and surprised the men who released him by getting up without a scratch of any consequence. Next day, as the firemen were sitting in the engine house, of which Chief Salter was captain at that time, a stranger walked in and said he wanted to thank them for getting him out from under the roof the day before. He said he wanted to treat the boys and at the same time laid a \$20 bill on Salter's knee. He was told they didn't want his money, that they were paid for their work and had no right to take money in that way. His bill was handed back to him and when the man thought the incident was closed and the visitor was about to go he turned and thrust the bill on the floor and then ran away as fast as he could.

## Quaint Features of Current Life

**The Amused Honorable.**  
AN EXCITED military looking man entered the editorial sanctum of the Omaha (Mo.) Democrat, exclaiming: "That notice of my death is false, sir. I will horse-whip you within an inch of your life, sir, if you don't apologize in your next issue." The editor inserted the following the next day:  
"We regret extremely to announce that the paragraph which stated that Major Blazer was dead is without foundation."

**Declines a Seat.**  
Three young women and their secrets entered a Chicago "L" car the other evening and they were compelled for the time being to become strap-hangers. Near the center of the car were two high school boys—one seated on the other's lap. The first of the young women to enter took her station directly in front of the car-free pair. The bustling wind had disheveled her hair and painted roses on her cheeks. Occasionally she gazed at the boys, while the youth who was being jolted on his friend's knees shot roguish glances at her pretty face.

Then a happy thought struck her. Arising from his companion's lap and donning his little cap that was perched on the top of his head, he said, coyly, to the first damsel:  
"Won't you please take my seat?"  
There was an answering peal of laughter from the passengers, but the young woman remained dumb with astonishment. One could see that the rosy tints on her cheeks had assumed a scarlet hue, and she still was blushing violently when she left the car at the next station.

**Temporarily Justice with Mercy.**  
A Virginia Justice of the peace undertook to temper justice with mercy in the

case of a boy charged with "petty larceny." The evidence against him was conclusive, but he was very young; it was his first offense and there were some extenuating circumstances. The old farmer justice decided to give the boy a stern lecture. He looked at the culprit severely through his glasses and began his lecture. "Young man," said he, "this is awful, this is right down awful, and I want to warn you—I want to say"—Here the old man's sense of justice conflicted with the boy's awkwardness before him. He cleared his throat twice, and then, half in mercy and half in indignation at his own weakness, he cried, "Clear out of my sight, you ornery scamp," and sat down to mop his forehead amid the merriment of the court room.

**Loss of Hands No Obstacle.**  
H. L. Dickson of Prescott, Ariz., is probably the only district attorney of any county in the west who has no hands. Several years ago District Attorney Dickson was the victim of an explosion in a Colorado gold mine, in which both of his arms were blown off below the elbow. He was mining at the time, but, being no longer fit for that kind of work, took up the study of law and was shortly after admitted to the bar.  
Though he is handless, Attorney Dickson is able to perform all the tasks that fall to the lot of a man in his profession. He sits and dresses with no more difficulty than people who have the full use of their hands.  
Dickson has the reputation of being one of the swiftest performers on the typewriter. In using the typewriter Dickson fastens two short sticks, especially made for him, to the ends of his arms and, seated well above the typewriter, strikes down with unerring aim and with a rapidity that is marvelous.



THE STEAMER "FRANK E. MOORE" IN THE COLD, GRAY DAWN OF THE MORNING AFTER—ENCASED IN ICE, BUT STILL PUMPING WATER FOR THE MONITOR THAT APPEARS AT THE LEFT OF THE PICTURE.

or. Of course, the boys kept the money then and bought cigars with it.

**One Thrilling Experience.**  
A bad winter fire, on December 1, 1901, was that which destroyed the four-story brick building of the Creamery Package company, which was situated on Jones street. The fire had made rapid headway before the department arrived and soon the whole structure was blazing strong. While a hose company was handling a stream on the second floor the part of the floor on which they were standing went down with them. It did not drop flat, but rather in a slanting position. The stuff on it and the debris fell on the men and knocked them off their feet.  
"All were up quickly," said the chief, "except one man. He was pinned down in such a way as to make it seem an impossible task to release him. His mates worked with eagerness at first, and finally with desperation, to free him. They couldn't pry him loose, and as I remember it he begged to be killed rather than be left to burn. The fire was shooting out on all sides with a ferocity that made the walls liable to fall at any moment, and soon it was a question of sacrificing one man or a company or two."  
"That was the tightest corner I ever was in or ever want to be in. After giving the situation all the consideration that seemed possible and hesitating until what seemed like the last moment when delay would be justified, and when the rescuers had exhausted themselves and every expedient that seemed feasible without budging the pinned man an inch, I reluctantly gave the order to retire. It was the most distressing order I hope to ever have to give. With superhuman tenacity the boys hung on and begged for just two minutes more

time to try to release their comrade. I consented, and by some hook or crook, with a lift and a pull that seemed beyond human strength to make, they got the man out. I think he was on duty again in a few days."  
**When the Big Distillery Blazed.**  
A most spirited affair, if the term may be pardoned, was the fire which broke out in the Willow Springs distillery at 1 o'clock on the morning of December 7, 1899. The weather was intensely cold, but there was no wind. All that might be lacking in this regard was more than made up for by the character of the fuel. The flames found to feed on. All sorts of hot drinks were offered as a libation to the red fiend of fire. Alcohol, high wines, distilled stuff, blends, bottled goods, cordials and burnt brandy—all were involved in the loss. The firemen faced a very difficult task in preventing the fire from spreading. They had much dangerous climbing to do and their ladders, as well as the sidewalks and the window ledges, were soon thickly coated with ice. Even these handicaps did not prevent them from conquering the flames a long way this side of where it was predicted they would extend. At one stage the danger, so threatening that assistance was asked from Council Bluffs. An engine and a big bunch of hose came over. By 6 o'clock in the morning the fire was under control, largely owing to the character of the fuel. The hydrants froze up, as did the hose, and the men's clothes, mittens and boots. Still they fought on, with an occasional hot nip from the saloons in the neighborhood and coffee and food from the restaurants. That was one night when everything was thrown open to the fire fighters, and all free. Ice coated the sidewalks, made great white canopies of the telegraph poles, the wires

character was that which wiped out the old Boyd packing house, on the night of January 25, 1890. It broke out at 9 o'clock and burned all night. Thousands of people found it a spectacle well worth watching from the high bluffs and from the bottom. Meats of all kinds and lard and byproducts furnished just the stuff the flames needed to encourage them to artistic effort. After a while grease began to flow to the river in such streams that some thoughtful person suggested the building of a dam to save it. This was done, and then embankments were thrown up all about a long stretch of ground until there was a lake of grease, stiff and cold. The fire was not quenched until morning, and when it was under control most severe at once set to work dipping up the grease into barrels. That was about all the salvage there was.

**Everything Froze Up.**  
On the night of the recent big fire several keepers of liquid refreshment parlors were arrested for keeping their saloons open after hours. On the night of January 25, 1898, the thermometer was stationary below zero, and a different story was told. Just after midnight a fire broke out in the wholesale drug store of McMahon & Albert, in the Caldwell block. The firemen labored under so many handicaps that volunteers were called on from the crowds gathered to watch the conflagration. The hydrants froze up, as did the hose, and the men's clothes, mittens and boots. Still they fought on, with an occasional hot nip from the saloons in the neighborhood and coffee and food from the restaurants. That was one night when everything was thrown open to the fire fighters, and all free. Ice coated the sidewalks, made great white canopies of the telegraph poles, the wires

became steamers trimmed with dangling icicles and confusion often followed the efforts of a gang of men to drag a line of hose to any particular point. Explosive material in the stock of the drug company lent vim to the steady havoc of the flames and altogether the firemen put in a bad night.

**Some Magnificent Spectacles.**  
There have been numerous other fires of great magnitude as to loss and of picturesque characteristics which have thrilled gazing thousands. The old street car barn at Twentieth and Harney, with its network of interior steel work, was like a blazing gridiron on the night it burned, and next morning presented a beautiful picture of destruction softened by the molding of the frost king's minions. The Orchard & Wilhelm concern sent a lurid and a magnificently painted message to the bending blue of the firmament on the night of December 27, 1902. The interior of the building soon became a raging inferno of pure flame. When the skylight went down the four walls surrounded a great draft furnace out of which shot, blasting and whirling and scattering, many half-consumed articles or pieces of what had been artistic creations. Rolls of carpet were sucked skyward and

went sailing up for all the world like long lines of multi-colored lights. Table tops were not too heavy to be drawn up from the vortex by the tremendous suction. For several hours this impromptu display of strange fireworks continued intermitently, and perhaps a more attractive sight in the line of a fire has not been witnessed in the city.

The Boston store and many others have contributed of their richness to feed the insatiable appetite of the destructive element which creates temporarily beautiful pictures as if in some measure to recompense for the costly spree of destruction it indulges in.  
Taken in the light of the fortunes of other cities with disastrous winter fires, though, Omaha has not fared at all discouragingly in the frozen season. All disadvantages natural to a sometimes acrid climate have been overcome by expertness, persistency, endurance and bulldog tenacity. The firemen have gone wherever men could go and have done to the very best of their ability what men might do in the fearless performance of their duty. Criticism must rest in the face of stubborn, upward conditions, and allow for the fallibility of human judgment in fighting an often concealed and always treacherous foe.

## Curious and Romantic Capers of Cupid

**Married on a "Dare."**  
BY a decree of a New York court a marriage, which was entered into February 5, 1904, between a young woman and a youth, whom she had known since childhood, simply because she would not take a dare, has been annulled.  
The parties to the ceremony are Harry Woodcock and Caroline Violet Ott, a daughter of Philip Ott. She had known him seven years, and he often visited her, but their parents had no idea they contemplated marriage. He "dared" her to be married that night.  
They were married and returned to the theater. Woodcock escorted the girl home and then went to his own home.  
The girl was only 18 years old March 26, 1902, and her husband about a year her junior. He was not permitted to see her after their secret became known, and her father brought suit to have the marriage annulled.

**Indian Girl and Kansas Man.**  
A romance involving the accidental meeting of a Kansas City young man and the richest girl of Indian blood in Indian Territory, and a present of a check for \$100,000 to the groom at the conclusion of the wedding ceremony, will reach a climax February 1, in Erin Springs, I. T., where Miss Erin Murray will become the wife of William W. Winstanley of 1236 Garfield avenue.  
Winstanley met Miss Murray during the St. Louis exposition. She is a half-breed Cherokee. The young people found that their affections were involved, and after Mr. Winstanley had made a few trips to Erin Springs the engagement was announced.  
The dot of \$100,000 that is to be Mr. Winstanley's is vouchered for by his connections in Kansas City. Miss Murray's fortune came from her father, who became rich parturing his herds on the tribal lands.

**Marriage in Old Longfellow Home.**  
Miss Frances Appleton Dana, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Richard H. Dana of Cambridge and granddaughter of the poet Longfellow, was married in the historic Craigs house, in Brattle street, the home of Longfellow, to Henry C. de Rham, second, Harvard, 1904, son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles de Rham, who are well known in New York society.  
The ceremony was attended only by the immediate families and close friends of the young couple. Miss Della Dana, sister of the bride, was maid of honor. Frederick de Rham, brother of the bridegroom, was best man.  
The bride wore a cream satin princess gown, trimmed with duchesse lace, which was worn by her mother at her wedding. She also wore a tulle veil.  
After a short wedding trip Mr. and Mrs. de Rham will reside in New York.

## Tricks Played on People Who Were Easy

**A GENTLEMANLY-LOOKING** man, with the merest suspicion of a Yankee accent, had recently been going the rounds of the West End bars and billiard rooms, winning all sorts of queer bets from people who fondly imagined they "knew a thing or two." One that hardly ever failed to net him a few shillings or sovereigns as the case might be, he called his "fly wager." He would offer to bet that he could make a fly take all the matches out of an ordinary stone match stand, such as is generally to be found on the counters of most saloon bars. As soon as the money was staked he would catch a fly from the wall, take it by the two wings and keep putting it on the matches one by one, the insect meanwhile picking them up with its legs instinctively and with almost monotonous regularity.  
The shabby-gentleman, with the iron jaws and the gaunt cheeks, who used to haunt the Fleet street bars and bet unwary wights that he would swallow a beer glass there and then, has lately joined the great majority. He did so from an overdose of ground glass, for, of course, he took good care to pound the tumbler to dust before attempting to ful-

fill the terms of his wager—the which, by the way, he invariably won.  
A variation of this trick bet, however, seems to be rife in Paris, where a certain M. Alexander offered the other day a wager 5,000 francs (4290 that he would swallow a yard of galvanized iron stove piping. His challenge was promptly accepted by a curious and guileless American. Whereupon the intrepid Alexander repaired to a whitewash, armed with the piping, which was one-sixteenth of an inch in thickness and five inches in diameter, with the request that he would reduce it to powder. The request was promptly carried out. Then, in the presence of the other party to the bet and a couple of witnesses, the layer of the wager divided the filings into five portions, mixed them into five "books" of larger bore and tossed them off at intervals of ten minutes.  
Roger Crab wagered £1,000 that he would live for a year on 2 shillings and 6 pence, and won his bet. Indeed, he more than won it, for at the end of the twelve months he had managed to save 3 pence out of his "housekeeping money," his expenditure for food, therefore, averaging £1 over 3 farthings a week. For this, even the cheapest of ordinary vegetarian diet—such as lentils, for instance—was quite out of

the question, and he had to content himself with nuttle soup thickened with corn flour, pudding made of bran and tuppence, choped together, etc. Yet on this diet Crab lost only 100 pounds, but actually gained some few pounds in weight, while as for his general health he declared that he had never felt better than he did at the termination of his self-imposed ordeal.  
Just a simple American example—a well authenticated one—in conclusion. During the excitement that raged in 1896 over the presidential contest between Bryan and McKinley a Mr. R. P. Pitcher Woodward backed the former on the following terms: Woodward won he was to receive £1,000, if he lost he was to ride on donkey-back right across the American continent from New York City to San Francisco, attired in a top hat and frock coat and wearing a pair of large spectacles. His steed was also to wear spectacles.  
As everybody knows, Bryan was defeated, and within a few days of the declaration of the poll on November 27, 1896, to be exact Mr. Woodward set out to fulfill, if possible, his part of the bargain. He arrived at his 1,600-mile distant destination exactly a year later, tired, but happy, and weighing over twenty pounds heavier than when he set out.—Pearson's Weekly.