

# MEMORANDA.

BY MARK TWAIN.

## HOW I EDITED AN AGRICULTURAL PAPER ONCE.

I DID not take the temporary editorship of an agricultural paper without misgivings. Neither would a landsman take command of a ship without misgivings. But I was in circumstances that made the salary an object. The regular editor of the paper was going off for a holiday, and I accepted the terms he offered, and took his place.

The sensation of being at work again was luxurious, and I wrought all the week with unflagging pleasure. We went to press, and I waited a day with some solicitude to see whether my effort was going to attract any notice. As I left the office, toward sundown, a group of men and boys at the foot of the stairs dispersed with one impulse, and gave me passage-way, and I heard one or two of them say: "That's him!" - I was naturally pleased by this incident. The next morning I found a similar group at the foot of the stairs, and scattering couples and individuals standing here and there in the street, and over the way, watching me with interest. The group separated and fell back as I approached, and I heard a man say: "Look at his eye!" - I pretended not to observe the notice I was attracting, but secretly I was pleased with it, and was purposing to write an account of it to my aunt. I went up the short flight of stairs, and heard cheery voices and a ringing laugh as I drew near the door, which I opened, and caught a glimpse of two young, rural-looking men, whose faces blanched and lengthened when they saw me, and then they both plunged through the window, with a great crash. I was surprised.

In about half an hour an old gentleman, with a flowing beard and a fine but rather austere face, entered, and sat down at my invitation. He seemed to have something on his mind. He took off his hat and set it on the floor, and got out of it a red silk handkerchief and a copy of our paper. He put the paper on his lap, and, while he polished his spectacles with his handkerchief, he said:

"Are you the new editor?"

I said I was.

"Have you ever edited an agricultural paper before?"

"No," I said; "this is my first attempt."

"Very likely. Have you had any experience in agriculture, practically?"

"No, I believe I have not."

"Some instinct told me so," said the old gentleman, putting on his spectacles and looking over them at me with asperity, while he folded his paper into a convenient shape. "I wish to read you what must have made me have that instinct. It was this editorial. Listen, and see if it was you that wrote it:

"Turnips should never be pulled—it injures them. It is much better to send a boy up and let him shake the tree."

"Now, what do you think of that?—for I really suppose you wrote it?"

"Think of it? Why, I think it is good. I think it is sense. I have no doubt that, every year, millions and millions of bushels of turnips are spoiled in this township alone by being pulled in a half-ripe condition, when, if they had sent a boy up to shake the tree——"

"Shake your grandmother! Turnips don't grow on trees!"

"Oh, they don't, don't they? Well, who said they did? The language was intended to be figurative, wholly figurative. Anybody, that knows anything, will know that I meant that the boy should shake the vine."

Then this old person got up and tore his paper all into small shreds, and stamped on them, and broke several things with his cane, and said I did not know as much as a cow; and then went out, and banged the door after him, and, in short, acted in such a way that I fancied he was displeased about something. But, not knowing what the trouble was, I could not be any help to him.

Pretty soon after this a long, cadaverous creature, with lanky locks hanging down to his shoulders and a week's stubble bristling from the hills and valleys of his face, darted within the door, and halted, motionless, with finger on lip, and head and body bent in listening attitude. No sound was heard. Still he listened. No sound. Then he turned the key in the door, and came elabor-

ately tip-toeing toward me, till he was within long reaching distance of me, when he stopped, and, after scanning my face with intense interest for a while, drew a folded copy of our paper from his bosom, and said :

"There—you wrote that. Read it to me, quick ! Relieve me—I suffer."

I read as follows—and as the sentences fell from my lips I could see the relief come—I could see the drawn muscles relax, and the anxiety go out of the face, and rest and peace steal over the features like the merciful moonlight over a desolate landscape :

The guano is a fine bird, but great care is necessary in rearing it. It should not be imported earlier than June nor later than September. In the winter it should be kept in a warm place, where it can hatch out its young.

It is evident that we are to have a backward season for grain. Therefore, it will be well for the farmer to begin setting out his corn-stalks and planting his buckwheat cakes in July instead of August.

Concerning the Pumpkin.—This berry is a favorite with the natives of the interior of New England, who prefer it to the gooseberry for the making of fruit cake, and who likewise give it the preference over the raspberry for feeding cows, as being more filling and fully as satisfying. The pumpkin is the only esculent of the orange family that will thrive in the North, except the gourd and one or two varieties of the squash. But the custom of planting it in the front yard with the shrubbery is fast going out of vogue, for it is now generally conceded that the pumpkin, as a shade tree, is a failure.

Now, as the warm weather approaches, and the ganders begin to spawn—

The excited listener sprang toward me, to shake hands, and said :

"There, there—that will do ! I know I am all right now, because you have read it just as I did, word for word. But, stranger, when I first read it this morning I said to myself, I never, never believed it before, notwithstanding my friends kept me under watch so strict, but now I believe I *am* crazy ; and with that I fetched a howl that you might have heard two miles, and started out to kill somebody—because, you know, I knew it would come to that sooner or later, and so I might as well begin. I read one of them paragraphs over again, so as to be certain, and then I burned my house down and started. I have crippled several people, and have got one fellow up a tree, where I can get him if I want him. But I thought I would call in here as I passed along, and make the thing perfectly certain ; and now it *is* certain, and I tell you it is lucky for the chap that is in the tree. I should have killed him, sure, as I went

back. Good-by, sir, good-by—you have taken a great load off my mind. My reason has stood the strain of one of your agricultural articles, and I know that nothing can ever unseat it now. Good-by, sir."

I felt a little uncomfortable about the cripplings and arsons this person had been entertaining himself with, for I could not help feeling remotely accessory to them ; but these thoughts were quickly banished, for the regular editor walked in ! [I thought to myself, Now if you had gone to Egypt, as I recommended you to, I might have had a chance to get my hand in ; but you wouldn't do it, and here you are. I sort of expected you.]

The editor was looking sad, and perplexed, and dejected. He surveyed the wreck which that old rioter and these two young farmers had made, and then said :

"This is a sad business—a very sad business. There is the mucilage bottle broken, and six panes of glass, and a spittoon and two candlesticks. But that is not the worst. The reputation of the paper is injured, and permanently, I fear. True, there never was such a call for the paper before, and it never sold such a large edition or soared to such celebrity ; but does one want to be famous for lunacy, and prosper upon the infirmities of his mind ? My friend, as I am an honest man, the street out here is full of people, and others are roosting on the fences, waiting to get a glimpse of you, because they think you are crazy. And well they might, after reading your editorials. They are a disgrace to journalism. Why, what put it into your head that you could edit a paper of this nature ? You do not seem to know the first rudiments of agriculture. You speak of a furrow and a harrow as being the same thing ; you talk of the moulting season for cows ; and you recommend the domestication of the pole-cat on account of its playfulness and its excellence as a rat-ter. Your remark that clams will lie quiet if music be played to them, was superfluous—entirely superfluous. Nothing disturbs clams. Clams *always* lie quiet. Clams care nothing whatever about music. Ah, heavens and earth, friend, if you had made the acquiring of ignorance the study of your life, you could not have graduated with higher honor than you could to-day. I never saw anything like it. Your observation that the horse-chestnut, as an article of commerce, is steadily gaining in favor, is simply calculated to destroy this journal. I want you to

throw up your situation and go. I want no more holiday—I could not enjoy it if I had it. Certainly not with you in my chair. I would always stand in dread of what you might be going to recommend next. It makes me lose all patience every time I think of your discussing oyster-beds under the head of ‘Landscape Gardening.’ I want you to go. Nothing on earth could persuade me to take another holiday. Oh, why didn’t you *tell* me you didn’t know anything about agriculture?”

“*Tell* you, you cornstalk, you cabbage, you son of a cauliflower! It’s the first time I ever heard such an unfeeling remark. I tell you I have been in the editorial business going on fourteen years, and it is the first time I ever heard of a man’s having to know anything in order to edit a newspaper. You turnip! Who write the dramatic critiques for the second-rate papers? Why, a parcel of promoted shoemakers and apprentice apothecaries, who know just as much about good acting as I do about good farming and no more. Who review the books? People who never wrote one. Who do up the heavy leaders on finance? Parties who have had the largest opportunities for knowing nothing about it. Who criticise the Indian campaigns? Gentlemen who do not know a war-whoop from a wigwam, and who never have had to run a foot-race with a tomahawk or pluck arrows out of the several members of their families to build the evening camp-fire with. Who write the temperance appeals and clamor about the flowing bowl? Folks who will never draw another sober breath till they do it in the grave. Who edit the agricultural papers, you—yam? Men, as a general thing, who fail in the poetry line, yellow-covered novel line, sensation-drama line, city-editor line, and finally fall back on agriculture as a temporary reprieve from the poor-house. *You* try to tell *me* anything about the newspaper business! Sir, I have been through it from Alpha to Omaha, and I tell you that the less a man knows the bigger noise he makes and the higher the salary he commands. Heaven knows if I had but been ignorant instead of cultivated, and impudent instead of diffident, I could have made a name for myself in this cold, selfish world. I take my leave, sir. Since I have been treated as you have treated me, I am perfectly willing to go. But I have done my duty. I have fulfilled my contract, as far as I was permitted to do it. I said I could make your paper of inter-

est to all classes, and I have. I said I could run your circulation up to twenty thousand copies, and if I had had two more weeks I’d have done it. And I’d have given you the best class of readers that ever an agricultural paper had—not a farmer in it, nor a solitary individual who could tell a watermelon from a peach-vine to save his life. *You* are the loser by this rupture, not *me*, Pie-plant. Adios.”

I then left.

#### THE “TOURNAMENT” IN A. D. 1870.

LATELY there appeared an item to this effect, and the same went the customary universal round of the press:

A telegraph station has just been established upon the traditional site of the Garden of Eden.

As a companion to that, nothing fits so aptly and so perfectly as this:

Brooklyn has revived the knightly tournament of the Middle Ages.

It is hard to tell which is the most startling, the idea of that highest achievement of human genius and intelligence, the telegraph, prating away about the practical concerns of the world’s daily life in the heart and home of ancient indolence, ignorance, and savagery, or the idea of that happiest expression of the brag, vanity, and mock-heroics of our ancestors, the “tournament,” coming out of its grave to flaunt its tinsel trumpery and perform its “chivalrous” absurdities in the high noon of the nineteenth century, and under the patronage of a great, broad-awake city and an advanced civilization.

A “tournament” in Lynchburg is a thing easily within the comprehension of the average mind; but no commonly gifted person can conceive of such a spectacle in Brooklyn without straining his powers. Brooklyn is part and parcel of the city of New York, and there is hardly romance enough in the entire metropolis to re-supply a Virginia “knight” with “chivalry,” in case he happened to run out of it. Let the reader, calmly and dispassionately, picture to himself “lists”—in Brooklyn; heralds, pursuivants, pages, garter king-at-arms—in Brooklyn; the marshalling of the fantastic hosts of “chivalry” in slashed doublets, velvet trunks, ruffles, and plumes—in Brooklyn; mounted on omnibus and livery-stable patriarchs, promoted, and referred to in cold blood as “steeds,” “destriers,” and “chargers,” and divested of their friendly, humble names—these meek old “Jims”

and "Bobs" and "Charleys," and renamed "Mohammed," "Bucephalus," and "Saladin"—in Brooklyn; mounted thus, and armed with swords and shields and wooden lances, and cased in pasteboard hauberks, morions, greaves, and gauntlets, and addressed as "Sir" Smith, and "Sir" Jones, and bearing such titled grandeurs as "The Disinherited Knight," the "Knight of Shenandoah," the "Knight of the Blue Ridge," the "Knight of Maryland," and the "Knight of the Secret Sorrow"—in Brooklyn; and at the toot of the horn charging fiercely upon a helpless ring hung on a post, and prodding at it intrepidly with their wooden sticks, and by and by skewering it and cavorting back to the judges' stand covered with glory—this in Brooklyn; and each noble success like this duly and promptly announced by an applauding toot from the herald's horn, and "the band playing three bars of an old circus tune"—all in Brooklyn, in broad daylight. And let the reader remember, and also add to his picture, as follows, to wit: when the show was all over, the party who had shed the most blood and overturned and hacked to pieces the most knights, or at least had prodded the most muffin-rings, was accorded the ancient privilege of naming and crowning the Queen of Love and Beauty—which naming had in reality been done *for* him by the "cut-and-dried" process, and long in advance, by a committee of ladies, but the crowning he did in person, though suffering from loss of blood, and then was taken to the county hospital on a shutter to have his wounds dressed—these curious things all occurring in Brooklyn, and no longer ago than one or two yesterdays. It seems impossible, and yet it is true.

This was doubtless the first appearance of the "tournament" up here among the rolling-mills and factories, and will probably be the last. It will be well to let it retire permanently to the rural districts of Virginia, where, it is said, the fine mailed and plumed, noble-natured, maiden-rescuing, wrong-redressing, adventure-seeking knight of romance is accepted and believed in by the peasantry with pleasing simplicity, while they reject with scorn the plain, unpolished verdict whereby history exposes him as a braggart, a ruffian, a fantastic vagabond, and an ignoramus.

All romance aside, what shape would our admiration of the heroes of Ashby de la Zouch be likely to take, in this practical age,

if those worthies were to rise up and come here and perform again the chivalrous deeds of that famous passage of arms? Nothing but a New York jury and the insanity plea could save them from hanging, from the amiable Bois-Guilbert and the pleasant Front-de-Bœuf clear down to the nameless ruffians that entered the riot with unpictured shields and did their first murder and acquired their first claim to respect that day. The doings of the so-called "chivalry" of the Middle Ages were absurd enough, even when they were brutally and bloodily in earnest, and when their surroundings of castles and donjons, savage landscapes and half-savage peoples, were in keeping; but those doings gravely reproduced with tinsel decorations and mock pageantry, by bucolic gentlemen with broomstick lances, and with muffin-rings to represent the foe, and all in the midst of the refinement and dignity of a carefully-developed modern civilization, is absurdity gone crazy.

Now, for next exhibition, let us have a fine representation of one of these chivalrous wholesale butcheries and burnings of Jewish women and children, which the crusading heroes of romance used to indulge in in their European homes, just before starting to the Holy Land, to seize and take to their protection the Sepulchre and defend it from "pollution."

#### ENIGMA.

NOT wishing to be outdone in literary enterprise by those magazines which have attractions especially designed for the pleasing of the fancy and the strengthening of the intellect of youth, we have contrived and builded the following enigma, at great expense of time and labor:

I am a word of 13 letters.

My 7, 9, 4, 4, is a village in Europe.

My 7, 14, 5, 7, is a kind of dog.

My 11, 13, 13, 9, 2, 7, 2, 3, 6, 1, 13, is a peculiar kind of stuff.

My 2, 6, 12, 8, 9, 4, is the name of a great general of ancient times (have spelt it to best of ability, though may have missed the bull's eye on a letter or two, but not enough to signify).

My 3, 11, 1, 9, 15, 2, 2, 6, 2, 9, 13, 2, 6, 15, 4, 11, 2, 3, 5, 1, 10, 4, 8, is the middle name of a Russian philosopher, up whose full cognomen fame is slowly but surely climbing.

My 7, 11, 4, 12, 3, 1, 1, 9, is an obscure but very proper kind of bug.

My whole is—but perhaps a reasonable amount of diligence and ingenuity will reveal that.

We take a just pride in offering the customary gold pen or cheap sewing machine for correct solutions of the above.

#### UNBURLESQUABLE THINGS.

THERE are some things which cannot be burlesqued, for the simple reason that in themselves they are so extravagant and grotesque that nothing is left for burlesque to take hold of. For instance, all attempts to burlesque the "Byron Scandal" were failures because the central feature of it, incest, was a "situation" so tremendous and so imposing that the happiest available resources of burlesque seemed tame and cheap in its presence. Burlesque could invent nothing to transcend incest, except by enlisting two crimes, neither of which is ever mentioned among women and children, and one of which is only mentioned in rare books of the law, and then as "the crime without a name"—a term with a shudder in it! So the reader never saw the "Byron Scandal" successfully travestied in print, and he may rest satisfied that he never will.

All attempts to burlesque the monster musical "Peace Jubilee" in Boston were mournful failures. The ten thousand singers, the prodigious organ, the hundred anvils, and the artillery accompaniment made up an unintentional, but complete, symmetrical and enormous burlesque, which shamed the poor inventions of the sketchers and scribblers who tried to be funny over it in magazines and newspapers. Even Cruikshank failed when he tried to pictorially burlesque the English musical extravaganza which probably furnished Mr. Gilmore with his idea.

There was no burlesquing the "situation" when the French Train, Henri Rochefort, brayed forth the proclamation that whenever he was arrested forty thousand *ouvriers* would be there to know the reason why—when, alas! right on top of it one single humble policeman took him and marched him off to prison through an atmosphere with never a taint of garlic in it.

There is no burlesquing the McFarland trial, either as a whole or piecemeal by selection. Because it was sublimated burlesque itself, in any way one may look at it. The court gravely tried the prisoner, *not* for murder, apparently, but as to his sanity or insanity. His counsel attempted the intellectual miracle of proving the prisoner's deed

to have been a *justifiable homic'ide by an insane person*. The Recorder charged the jury to—well, there are different opinions as to what the Recorder wanted them to do, among those who have translated the charge from the original Greek, though his general idea seemed to be to scramble first to the support of the prisoner and then to the support of the law, and then to the prisoner again, and back again to the law, with a vaguely perceptible desire to help the prisoner a little the most without making that desire unofficially and ungracefully prominent. To wind up and put a final polish to the many-sided burlesque, the jury went out and devoted nearly two hours to trying for his life a man whose deed would not be accepted as a capital crime by the mass of mankind even though all the lawyers did their best to prove it such. It is hardly worth while to mention that the emotional scene in the court room, following the delivery of the verdict, when women hugged the prisoner, the jury, the reporters, and even the remorselessly sentimental Graham, is eminently unburlesquable.

But first and last, the splendid feature of the McFarland comedy was the *insanity* part of it. Where the occasion was for dragging in that poor old threadbare lawyer-trick, is not perceptible, except it was to make a *show* of difficulty in winning a verdict that would have won itself without ever a lawyer to meddle with the case. Heaven knows insanity was disreputable enough, long ago; but now that the lawyers have got to cutting every gallows rope and picking every prison lock with it, it is become a sneaking villainy that ought to hang and keep on hanging its sudden possessors until evil-doers should conclude that the safest plan was to never claim to have it until they came by it legitimately. The very calibre of the people the lawyers most frequently try to save by the insanity subterfuge, ought to laugh the plea out of the courts, one would think. Any one who watched the proceedings closely in the McFarland-Richardson mockery will believe that the insanity plea was a rather far-fetched compliment to pay the prisoner, inasmuch as one must first have brains before he can go crazy, and there was surely nothing in the evidence to show that McFarland had enough of the raw material to justify him in attempting anything more imposing than a lively form of idiocy.

Governor Alcorn, of Mississippi, recom-

mends his Legislature to so alter the laws that as soon as the insanity plea is offered in the case of a person accused of crime, the case shall be sent up to a high State court and the insanity part of the matter inquired into and settled permanently, *by itself*, before the trial for the crime charged is touched at all. Anybody but one of this latter-day breed of "lunatics" on trial for murder will recognize the wisdom of the proposition at a glance.

There is one other thing which transcends the powers of burlesque, and that is a Fenian "invasion." First we have the portentous mystery that precedes it for six months, when all the air is filled with stage whisperings; when "Councils" meet every night with awful secrecy, and the membership try to see who can get up first in the morning and tell the proceedings. Next, the expatriated Nation struggles through a travail of national squabbles and political splits, and is finally delivered of a litter of "Governments," and Presidents McThis, and Generals O'That, of several different complexions, politically speaking; and straightway the newspapers teem with the new names, and men who were insignificant and obscure one day find themselves great and famous the next. Then the several "governments," and presidents, and generals, and senates get by the ears, and remain so until the customary necessity of carrying the American city elections with a minority vote comes around and unites them; then they begin to "sound the tocsin of war" again—that is to say, in solemn whisperings at dead of night they secretly plan a Canadian raid, and publish it in the "World" next morning; they begin to refer significantly to "Ridgway," and we reflect bodingly that there is no telling how soon that slaughter may be repeated. Presently the "invasion" begins to take tangible shape; and as no news travels so freely or so fast as the "secret" doings of the Fenian Brotherhood, the land is shortly in a tumult of apprehension. The telegraph announces that "last night, 400 men went north from Utica, but refused to disclose their destination—were extremely reticent—answered no questions—were not armed, or in uniform, but *it was noticed that they marched to the depot in military fashion*"—and so on. Fifty such despatches follow each other within two days, evidencing that squads of locomotive mystery have gone north from a hundred different points and rendezvoused on the Ca-

nadian border—and that, consequently, a horde of 25,000 invaders, at least, is gathered together; and then, hurrah! they cross the line; hurrah! they meet the enemy; hip, hip, hurrah! a battle ensues; hip—no, not hip nor hurrah—for the U. S. Marshal and one man seize the Fenian General-in-Chief on the battle-field, in the midst of his "army," and bowl him off in a carriage and lodge him in a common jail—and, presto! the illustrious "invasion" is at an end!

The Fenians have not done many things that seemed to call for pictorial illustration; but their first care has usually been to make a picture of any performance of theirs that would stand it as soon as possible after its achievement, and paint everything in it a violent green, and embellish it with harps and pickaxes, and other emblems of national grandeur, and print thousands of them in the severe simplicity of primitive lithography, and hang them above the National Palladium, among the decanters. Shall we have a nice picture of the battle of Pigeon Hill and the little accident to the Commander-in-Chief?

No, a Fenian "invasion" cannot be burlesqued, because it uses up all the material itself. It is harmless fun, this annual masquerading toward the border; but America should not encourage it, for the reason that it may some time or other succeed in embroiling the country in a war with a friendly power—and such an event as that would be ill compensated by the liberation of even so excellent a people as the Downtrodden Nation.

#### THE LATE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

[Never put off till to-morrow what you can do day after to-morrow just as well.—B. F.]

THIS party was one of those persons whom they call Philosophers. He was twins, being born simultaneously in two different houses in the city of Boston. These houses remain unto this day, and have signs upon them worded in accordance with the facts. The signs are considered well enough to have, though not necessary, because the inhabitants point out the two birth-places to the stranger anyhow, and sometimes as often as several times in the same day. The subject of this memoir was of a vicious disposition, and early prostituted his talents to the invention of maxims and aphorisms calculated to inflict suffering upon the rising generation of all subsequent ages. His simplest acts, also, were contrived with a

view to their being held up for the emulation of boys forever—boys who might otherwise have been happy. It was in this spirit that he became the son of a soap-boiler; and probably for no other reason than that the efforts of all future boys who tried to be anything might be looked upon with suspicion unless they were the sons of soap-boilers. With a malevolence which is without parallel in history, he would work all day and then sit up nights and let on to be studying algebra by the light of a smouldering fire, so that all other boys might have to do that also or else have Benjamin Franklin thrown up to them. Not satisfied with these proceedings, he had a fashion of living wholly on bread and water, and studying astronomy at meal time—a thing which has brought affliction to millions of boys since, whose fathers had read Franklin's pernicious biography.

His maxims were full of animosity toward boys. Nowadays a boy cannot follow out a single natural instinct without tumbling over some of those everlasting aphorisms and hearing from Franklin on the spot. If he buys two cents' worth of peanuts, his father says, "Remember what Franklin has said, my son,—'A groat a day's a penny a year;'" and the comfort is all gone out of those peanuts. If he wants to spin his top when he is done work, his father quotes, "Procrastination is the thief of time." If he does a virtuous action, he never gets anything for it, because "Virtue is its own reward." And that boy is hounded to death and robbed of his natural rest, because Franklin said once in one of his inspired flights of malignity—

Early to bed and early to rise

Make a man healthy and wealthy and wise.

As if it were any object to a boy to be healthy and wealthy and wise on such terms. The sorrow that that maxim has cost me through my parents' experimenting on me with it, tongue cannot tell. The legitimate result is my present state of general debility, indigence, and mental aberration. My parents used to have me up before nine o'clock in the morning, sometimes, when I was a boy. If they had let me take my natural rest, where would I have been now? Keeping store, no doubt, and respected by all.

And what an adroit old adventurer the subject of this memoir was! In order to get a chance to fly his kite on Sunday, he used to hang a key on the string and let on to be fishing for lightning. And a guileless

public would go home chirping about the "wisdom" and the "genius" of the hoary Sabbath-breaker. If anybody caught him playing "mumble-peg" by himself, after the age of sixty, he would immediately appear to be ciphering out how the grass grew—as if it was any of his business. My grandfather knew him well, and he says Franklin was always fixed—always ready. If a body, during his old age, happened on him unexpectedly when he was catching flies, or making mud pies, or sliding on a cellar-door, he would immediately look wise, and rip out a maxim, and walk off with his nose in the air and his cap turned wrong side before, trying to appear absent-minded and eccentric. He was a hard lot.

He invented a stove that would smoke your head off in four hours by the clock. One can see the almost devilish satisfaction he took in it, by his giving it his name.

He was always proud of telling how he entered Philadelphia, for the first time, with nothing in the world but two shillings in his pocket and four rolls of bread under his arm. But really, when you come to examine it critically, it was nothing. Anybody could have done it.

To the subject of this memoir belongs the honor of recommending the army to go back to bows and arrows in place of bayonets and muskets. He observed, with his customary force, that the bayonet was very well, under some circumstances, but that he doubted whether it could be used with accuracy at long range.

Benjamin Franklin did a great many notable things for his country, and made her young name to be honored in many lands as the mother of such a son. It is not the idea of this memoir to ignore that or cover it up. No; the simple idea of it is to snub those pretentious maxims of his, which he worked up with a great show of originality out of truisms that had become wearisome platitudes as early as the dispersion from Babel; and also to snub his stove, and his military inspirations, his unseemly endeavor to make himself conspicuous when he entered Philadelphia, and his flying his kite and fooling away his time in all sorts of such ways, when he ought to have been foraging for soap-fat, or constructing candles. I merely desired to do away with somewhat of the prevalent calamitous idea among heads of families that Franklin *acquired* his great genius by working for nothing, studying by moonlight, and getting up in the night instead of waiting

till morning like a Christian, and that this programme, rigidly inflicted, will make a Franklin of every father's fool. It is time these gentlemen were finding out that these execrable eccentricities of instinct and conduct are only the *evidences* of genius, not the *creators* of it. I wish I had been the father of my parents long enough to make them comprehend this truth, and thus prepare them to let their son have an easier time of it. When I was a child I had to boil soap, notwithstanding my father was wealthy, and I had to get up early and study geometry at breakfast, and peddle my own poetry, and do everything just as Franklin did, in the solemn hope that I would be a Franklin some day. And here I am.

#### THE EDITORIAL OFFICE BORE.

HE arrives just as regularly as the clock strikes nine in the morning. And so he even beats the editor sometimes, and the porter must leave his work and climb two or three pairs of stairs to unlock the "Sanctum" door and let him in. He lights one of the office pipes—not reflecting, perhaps, that the editor may be one of those "stuck-up" people who would as soon have a stranger defile his tooth-brush as his pipe-stem. Then he begins to loll—for a person who can consent to loaf his useless life away in ignominious indolence has not the energy to sit up straight. He stretches full length on the sofa awhile; then draws up to half length; then gets into a chair, hangs his head back and his arms abroad, and stretches his legs till the rims of his boot-heels rest upon the floor; by and by sits up and leans forward, with one leg or both over the arm of the chair. But it is still observable that with all his changes of position, he never assumes the upright or a fraudulent affectation of dignity. From time to time he yawns, and stretches, and scratches himself with a tranquil, mangy enjoyment, and now and then he grunts a kind of stuffy, overfed grunt, which is full of animal contentment. At rare and long intervals, however, he sighs a sigh that is the eloquent expression of a secret confession, to wit: "I am useless and a nuisance, a cumberer of the earth."

The bore and his comrades—for there are usually from two to four on hand, day and night—mix into the conversation when men come in to see the editors for a moment on business; they hold noisy talks among them-

selves about politics in particular, and all other subjects in general—even warming up, after a fashion, sometimes, and seeming to take almost a real interest in what they are discussing; they ruthlessly call an editor from his work with such a remark as: "Did you see this, Smith, in the 'Gazette'?" and proceed to read the paragraph while the sufferer reins in his impatient pen and listens; they often loll and sprawl around the office hour after hour, swapping anecdotes and relating personal experiences to each other—hairbreadth escapes, social encounters with distinguished men, election reminiscences, sketches of odd characters, etc. And through all those hours they smoke, and sweat, and sigh, and scratch, and perform such other services for their fellow-men as come within the purview of their gentle mission upon earth, and never seem to comprehend that they are robbing the editors of their time, and the public of journalistic excellence in next day's paper. At other times they drowse, or dreamily pore over exchanges, or droop limp and pensive over the chair-arms for an hour. Even this solemn silence is small respite to the editor, for the next most uncomfortable thing to having people look over his shoulder, perhaps, is to have them sit by in silence and listen to the scratching of his pen.

If a body desires to talk private business with one of the editors, he must call him outside, for no hint milder than blasting powder or nitro-glycerine would be likely to move the bores out of listening distance.

To have to sit and endure the presence of a bore day after day; to feel your cheerful spirits begin to sink as his footstep sounds on the stair, and utterly vanish away as his tiresome form enters the door; to suffer through his anecdotes and die slowly to his reminiscences; to feel always the fetters of his clogging presence; to long hopelessly for one single day's privacy; to note with a shudder, by and by, that to contemplate his funeral in fancy has ceased to soothe, to imagine him undergoing in strict and faithful detail the tortures of the ancient Inquisition has lost its power to satisfy the heart, and that even to wish him millions and millions and millions of miles in Tophet is able to bring only a fitful gleam of joy: to have to endure all this, day after day, and week after week, and month after month, is an affliction that transcends any other that men suffer. Physical pain is pastime to it, and hanging a pleasure excursion.



"THE church was densely crowded that lovely summer Sabbath," said the Sunday-school superintendent, "and all, as their eyes rested upon the small coffin, seemed impressed by the poor black boy's fate. Above the stillness the pastor's voice rose, and chained the interest of every ear as he told, with many an envied compliment, how that the brave, noble, daring little Johnny Greer, when he saw the drowned body sweeping down toward the deep part of the river whence the agonized parents never could have recovered it in this world, gallantly sprang into the stream and at the risk of his life towed the corpse to shore, and held it fast till help came and secured it. Johnny Greer was sitting just in front of me. A ragged street boy, with eager eye, turned upon him instantly, and said in a hoarse whisper :

"'No, but did you though?'"

"'Yes,'"

"'Towed the carkiss ashore and saved it yo'self?'"

"'Yes,'"

"'Cracky! What did they give you?'"

"'Nothing.'"

"'W-h-a-t!'" (with intense disgust.)

"'D'you know what I'd a done? I'd a anchored him out in the stream and said, *Five dollars, gents, or you carn't have yo' nigger.*'"

#### A DARING ATTEMPT AT A SOLUTION OF IT.

THE Fenian invasion failed because George Francis Train was absent. There was no lack of men, arms, or ammunition, but there was sad need of Mr. Train's organizing power, his coolness and caution, his tranquillity, his strong good sense, his modesty and reserve, his secrecy, his taciturnity and above all his frantic and bloodthirsty courage. Mr. Train and his retiring and diffident private secretary were obliged to be absent, though the former must certainly have been lying at the point of death, else nothing could have kept him from hurrying to the front, and offering his heart's best blood for the Downtrodden People he so loves, so worships, so delights to champion. He *must* have been in a disabled condition, else nothing could have kept him from invading Canada at the head of his "children."

And indeed, this modern Samson, solitary and alone, with his formidable jaw, would have been a more troublesome enemy than five times the Fenians that did invade Canada, because *they* could be made to retire,

but G. F. would never leave the field while there was an audience before him, either armed or helpless. The invading Fenians were wisely cautious, knowing that such of them as were caught would be likely to hang; but the Champion would have stood in no such danger. There is no law, military or civil, for hanging persons afflicted in his peculiar way.

He was not present, alas!—save in spirit. He could not and would not waste so fine an opportunity, though, to send some ecstatic lunacy over the wires, and so he wound up a ferocious telegram with this:

WITH VENGEANCE STEEPED IN WORMWOOD'S GALL!  
D — D OLD ENGLAND, SAY WE ALL!

*And keep your powder dry.*

GEO. FRANCIS TRAIN.

SHERMAN HOUSE,  
CHICAGO, Noon, Thursday, May 26.

P. S.—Just arrived and addressed grand Fenian meeting in Fenian Armory, donating \$50.

This person could be made really useful by roosting him on some llaters light-house or other prominence where storms prevail, because it takes so much wind to keep him going that he probably moves in the midst of a dead calm wherever he travels.

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

To those parties who have offered to send me curious obituaries, I would say that I shall be very glad to receive such. A number have already been sent me. The quaint epitaph business has had a fair share of attention in all generations, but the village obituaries—those marvellous combinations of ostentatious sorrow and ghastly "fine writing"—have been unkindly neglected. Inquirers are informed that the "Post-mortem Poetry" of last month really came, without alteration, from the Philadelphia "Ledger." The "Deaths" have long been a prominent feature in the "Ledger."

Those six or eight persons who have written me from various localities, inquiring with a deal of anxiety if I am permanently engaged to write for THE GALAXY, have been surprised, may be, at the serene way in which I let the days go by without making any sort of reply. Do they suppose that I am one of that kind of birds that can be walked up to and captured by the process of putting salt on its tail? Hardly. These people want to get me to say Yes, and then stop their magazine. The subscriber was not fledged yesterday.