

In an old paper was found the confident prediction of General Beranger, who had recently been Spain's Secretary of the Navy, that Spain "would conquer on the sea" because "as soon as fire is opened the crews of the American ships will commence to desert, since among them are people of all nationalities." How curious that forgotten prediction seems now!

A "school of tropical medicine" has been started in London and may be subsidized by the British Government. The school's object is to discover ways of combating the diseases which render the tropics so dangerous to white men, and doubtless continued study will be richly rewarded.

The number of commercial failures in the United States last year was fifteen per cent less than in 1896, and the average liabilities per failure were the lowest on record.

Now that we are to have automobile street cars, trucks, cabs, private carriages, drays, wagons, butchers' carts and all the rest, we shall presently be in position to imitate the Chinese, who exclude horses from all city streets. But there is this difference: The Chinese by arbitrary rule have excluded horses for thousands of years while we were needed. We shall not exclude them, but only dispense with their use so far and so fast as we have something better to take their place. But what a relief it will be and what a boon to humanity when our cities cease to be great stables!

The magnitude of the financial operations of the consolidated city of New York is well illustrated by some statistics given in the annual message of the Mayor. The net bonded debt of the city amounted on January 1, 1899, to \$244,220,435.97. Its issues of bonds and corporate stock during the year 1898 amounted to over \$30,000,000, and the provisions of the Board of Estimate for the year 1899 contemplate issues in excess of \$35,000,000. The largest single item in the proposed issues for this year is for school houses and sites for which \$7,673,540 is set apart.

The output of English shipbuilding yards for 1898 was the largest yet recorded, reaching to 802 vessels, aggregating 1,559,125 tons. The unusually large number of warships now building both for British and foreign governments contributed materially to this, but the increase has been due still more to the effort to fill orders in arrear owing to the engineers' strike. The effect of cheaper material is also to be noted, and in this respect the purchases of American ship-plates is a factor to be taken into account. The amount of such purchases is unknown, but they changed conditions of production by enlarging the market and cutting down the price.

A sad record in criminology is the fact that in fifteen years Russia has sent 624,000 persons to Siberia. The record is relieved of something of its sadness, however, by the consideration that many of these exiles were not criminals really but only adjudged so by the harsh Russian political system. The gloom of the experience was somewhat mitigated too by the devotion of the friends of the exiles, fully 100,000 relatives of prisoners having gone voluntarily into banishment, that they might share with their loved ones the perils and privations of a life in dreary Siberia. The story of Russian despotism is a tale of numerous and varied chapters, involving alike many horrors and many heroisms.

The official reports of the German labor market in 1898, which have just been published, tell a story of steady commercial and industrial prosperity. In almost all branches of industry there was an increase in the number of those employed. The most conspicuous exception was in the textile trade, in which there was a depression, attributed to a diminution in the exports to the United States. In most cases the demand for labor exceeded the supply. In Lorraine Italian labor, which was formerly employed almost solely in building, mining and quarrying operations, was called into requisition for factories and iron works, although the Italian factory hand and iron worker were found to be inferior to the German. In industries where the work is peculiarly hard or disagreeable an increasing scarcity of labor was observed. The general state of the labor market led to a considerable rise in wages in many instances. But the standard of living of the working classes did not show a corresponding improvement. The price of the necessities of life and house rent also rose to an extent which neutralized the higher prices paid for labor. In some industries there was activity very marked there was no general rise in wages, the employers apparently apprehending a reaction.

OUR BROKEN WALLS.

Over a windless, wayside wall, Ragged and rough and gray, There crept a tender and clinging vine, Tiresomely day by day. At last its mantle of softest tint Covered each jagged seam. The straggling wall, half broken down, Became, with that leafy, tinted crown, Fair as an artist's dream.

Oh, for the kindness that clings and twines Over life's broken wall, That blossoms above the scars of pain, Striving to hide them all! Oh, for the helpful, ministering hands, Benevolent, willing feet, That spread rich mantles of tender thought O'er life's hard places, till Time has wrought its healing-divine, complete.

—Laura Wilson Smith, in Youth's Companion.

THE PURPLE EGG.

Omned an Emperor and Created a Suicide.

BY ANATOLE FRANCE.

The other night, while with a number of friends, I heard a story of a woman who had been driven to a strange suicide by terror and remorse. She was highly bred and cultured. Suspected of complicity in a crime of which she had been a mute witness, in despair at her irreparable cowardice, tormented by a perpetual nightmare that showed her her husband pointing her out with his rotting finger to the magistrates, she became the helpless prey of her overwrought nerves. A trifling circumstance determined her fate. Her little nephew was living with her. One morning, as usual, he was learning his lesson in the dining room; she was sitting near by. The child began to translate, word for word, some verses from Sophocles. He said over the Greek and French terms as he wrote them out: "Kara teion, the divine head; Iokastes, of Yocasta; letneked, is dead."

Sposa konnen, tearing her hair; kalei, she calls; Liaon nekron, dead Lais. . . . Eiseidomen, we saw; teni gennika kremensten, the woman hanged." He wound up with a flourish of his pen, struck out his tongue violet with ink and sang: "Hanged! hanged! hanged!" The wretched woman, her will-power utterly destroyed, obeyed the suggestion of the three-headed word. She rose without a word, without a glance, and hastened to her room. A few hours later the commissary of police, called in to investigate her violent end, made this reflection: "I have seen many a woman who has committed suicide. This is the first one I've known to hang herself."

This case recalled a similar one to my mind, that of my unfortunate comrade and friend, Alexandre Mansel. In the foregoing story the heroine was killed by a verse of Sophocles; my friend's life was brought to an end by a sentence of Lauprides.

Mansel, who was a schoolmate of mine at the Lycee of Avanches, was different from all other boys. He seemed both older and younger than he really was. Small and slight, at fifteen he was afraid of all the bugaboos that terrify children of five. He had a horror of the dark. We were not fond of him; he would have become our butt if he had not impressed us by a certain fierce pride and his record as a clever scholar. Though he worked spasmodically, he often stood at the head of his class. They used to say that he talked all night in the dormitory and walked in his sleep. None of us could swear to it, for we never woke after our heads once touched the pillow.

For a long time I was more curious about him than I found of him. We suddenly grew great friends on an excursion that we all took together to the abbey of Mont St. Michel. We had walked barefooted along the shingle, carrying our shoes and our luncheon on the end of our sticks, all singing at the top of our voices. We crossed the drawbridge and saw down side by side on one of the old cannon, rusted by five centuries of rain and spray. Looking with his dim eyes from the old stones to the sky, swinging his bare feet, Alexandre abruptly spoke to me:

"I should like to have been a knight in the old wars. I would have taken a hundred cannon. I would have fought single-handed on the ramparts, and the Archangel St. Michael would have stood over my head like a white cloud."

From that day on I understood far better than before my schoolmate's character. I discovered that it was founded on an immense pride that I had not suspected. I need not tell you that at fifteen I was not a profound psychologist, and Mansel's pride was too subtle to be at first evident. It extended itself to vague chimera and had no tangible form. Yet it inspired all my friend's sentiments and gave a sort of unity to his whimsical, incoherent ideas.

During the vacation following our excursion to Mont St. Michel, Mansel invited me to spend a day at his parents' home at St. Julien. Securing my mother's rather unwilling consent, I started off, in a white vest and blue tie, early one Sunday morning. Alexandre, smiling like a happy child, was waiting for me on the threshold. He led me by the hand into the "half rustic" house—half bourgeoisie—was neither poor nor disorderly, I was oppressed on entering it, so silent and sad it was. Near the window, whose slightly parted curtains denoted a certain curiosity, was seated a woman to all appearances old—perhaps not so old as she looked. She was thin and sallow; her eyes glittered in their dark sockets under their reddened lids. In spite of the warm summer day she was swathed, head and all, in black garments. But the strangest thing about her was the metal circlet that clasped her brow like a diadem.

"Here is my mother; she has her neuralgia." M. Mansel made me welcome in a faint voice and, observing my puzzled look, said, smiling: "My young sir, what you take for a crown is a magnetic circle I wear to cure my headaches." Mansel led me into the garden, where we caught sight of a little bald man gliding down the path like a phantom. He was so frail and slight that he looked as if the wind would blow him away. His uncertain gait, his long thin neck craned forward, his sidewise glance, his hopping steps, his short arms raised like wings, gave him quite the appearance of some new sort of fowl. My companion told me that it was his father, but that we must let him go to the poultry yard,

which he infinitely preferred to all the rest of his domain; he lived among his hens and had almost lost the habit of talking with human beings. The odd little figure at this moment vanished, and loud cackling rose in the air.

During the short stroll we took in the garden, Mansel told me that at dinner I would meet his grandmother; that she was a good old soul, but that I must not pay much attention to what she said, as she was often a little out of her mind.

The bell rang for dinner. M. Mansel followed us into the house, carrying a basket of eggs. "Eighteen today," he said, in a clucking voice. A delicious omelet appeared. I was seated between Mme. Mansel, sighing under her diadem, and her mother, a round-cheeked, toothless, old Norman woman, who smiled with her eyes. She seemed delightful to me. While we were eating our roast duck and creamed chicken the old lady told us amusing stories that showed no signs of weakening faculties. On the contrary, she appeared the merriest and sanest member of the family.

After dinner we went into a parlor furnished in black walnut and yellow Utrecht velvet. Under the globe of the gilt clock on the mantel lay a purple egg that at once drew my attention. "With a child's inexplicable curiosity I could not take my eyes off it. But I must add that the egg was of a strange and splendid color—a royal purple, not in the slightest manner recalling the wine-colored Easter eggs, dipped in beet-juice, that delight the children at all the fruit-stands. I could not resist making a remark about it.

M. Mansel replied by an admiring exclamation: "My young sir, that is not a dyed egg, as you seem to think. It was laid just as you see it there by a Cingalese hen of mine. It is a phenomenal egg."

"You must not forget to add, my dear," sighed Mme. Mansel, "that it was laid the very day our Alexandre was born."

"Just so," returned the father. The old grandmother, in the meantime, looked at me with mocking eyes, and with an expressive movement of her lips betrayed her skepticism.

"Hum!" she murmured, "hens sometimes hatch what they haven't laid, and if some mischievous neighbor should happen to slip into their nest a—"

"Don't listen to her!" broke in her grandson, violently. "You know what I told you! Don't listen to her!"

"It's a fact," repeated M. Mansel, fixing his round eye on the purple egg.

Not long after I lost sight of Alexandre. My mother sent me to Paris to finish my studies. I entered the School of Medicine. About the time that I was preparing my doctor's thesis, I received a letter from my mother, in which she told me that my friend had been very ill; he had had some strange seizure, on recovering from which he had become exceedingly timid and suspicious; but he was quite harmless, and in spite of his troubled health and reason, he showed a remarkable gift for mathematics. This news did not surprise me. Many a time, while studying diseases of the nerve-centres, I had called up mentally my poor friend from St. Julien and, in spite of myself, had made a prognosis of general paralysis threatening this son of a neutralist mother and a microcephalic, rheumatic father.

At first I seemed to be on the wrong scent. Alexandre Mansel, on reaching manhood, regained normal health and gave unmistakable proofs of his fine intellectual gifts. He carried on extensive mathematical studies; he even sent to the Academy of Sciences the solution of several difficult equations. Absorbed in these and kindred subjects, he rarely found time to write me. His letters were clear, friendly, well composed; nothing could be found in them to attract the attention of the most suspicious neurologist. Soon, however, our correspondence came to an end, and for ten years I did not get a word from him.

I was greatly surprised last year when my servant handed me Alexandre Mansel's card, saying that the gentleman was waiting for me in the antechamber. I was in my office discussing a professional question of some importance with a colleague. Excusing myself for a moment, I hastened to greet my old school-fellow. I found him much aged, bald, haggard, fearfully emaciated. I took him by the arm and led him into the drawing room. "I am delighted to see you once more," he said, "and I have a great deal to tell you. I am a victim of unheard-of persecutions. But I am brave, I shall fight to the end, I shall triumph over my enemies!" These words alarmed me, as they would have alarmed any neurologist. In them I traced a symptom of the affection by which my friend was threatened according to every law of heredity and which had appeared dormant till now. "My dear fellow," I said to him, "you shall tell me all this later. Stay here a moment. I am settling a little matter in my office. Take a book to kill time till I join you."

room where I had left Mansel. I found the unfortunate fellow in a alarming state. He was showing blows on his back open before him that I at once recognized as a translation of the "History of Augustus." In a loud voice he kept repeating this sentence of Lauprides: "On the day when Alexander Severus was born, a hen belonging to the father of the babe laid a red egg, a presage of the imperial purple which the child was to assume."

His excitement rose to fury. He foamed at the mouth. He shouted: "The egg, the egg that was laid on my birthday! I am an emperor! I know you want to kill me! Don't come near me, wretch!"

He paced rapidly up and down. Then coming back toward me, with his arms spread wide, he said: "My friend, my old comrade, what do you want me to give you? Emperor!—emperor!—my father was right—the purple egg was for I shall and must be—scoundrel! why did you hide that book from me? I will punish you for high treason—emperor!—emperor!—I must be it!—yes, it is my duty!"

He rushed out. I vainly tried to stop him. He escaped from me. The rest is well known. All the papers told how on leaving my house he bought a revolver and blew out the brains of the sentinel who barred the gate of the Elysee palace against him.

Thus a phrase written in the fourth century by a Latin historian causes 1500 years later the death of an unlucky French soldier. Who will ever unravel the skein of cause and effect? Who can be sure of saying, "I know what I am doing," as he performs some trifling act? This is all there is to tell. The rest concerns only medical statistics and can be summed up in a few words. Mansel, placed in a private asylum, remained there a fortnight in a state of violent madness. Then he lapsed into utter imbecility, during which his gluttony led him to eating the wax used for polishing the floors. He choked to death, three months ago, swallowing a sponge.—Argonaut.

QUAINT AND CURIOUS.

Tame snakes are used in Morocco to clear houses of rats and mice.

A Sicilian tribunal sentenced a noted forger to imprisonment for 189 years.

Tavelara is the smallest republic as to population, having only 53 men, women and children. It is 12 miles from Sardinia.

Besides the rinderpest, South Africa's worst plague consists in the myriads of grasshoppers, which are sometimes so dense that they stop railway trains.

There is a creature known as the hagfish, or myxine, which is in the habit of getting inside cod and similar fish and devouring the interior until only the skin and the skeleton are left.

Giles de Retz of France, the original "Blue Beard," was executed on Christmas Day, 1430, in atonement for a multitude of sins, which included the killing of six wives, from which the popular nursery story is derived.

There is a plant in Jamaica called the life plant, because it is almost impossible to kill it, or any portion of it. When a leaf is cut off and hung up by a string, it sends out white, thread-like roots, gathers moisture from the air, and begins to grow new leaves.

The seven principal Bibles in the world are the Koran of the Mohammedans, the Eddas of the Scandinavians, the Tripitakas of the Buddhists, the Five Kings of the Chinese, the Three Vedas of the Hindus, the Zendavestas, and the Scriptures of the Christians.

A peculiar style of advertising reported to in China is effective and inexpensive. When a Chinaman has a daughter closely approaching marriageable age an inverted jar on the roof of his house announces that fact. When she has attained the proper age the jar is laid on its side, with the top toward the street.

Decadent Dogs. To the casual and unsuspecting observer of dogs the canines of Frankford present a very fantastic and incongruous appearance. In this quiet suburban section there are roaming at large dogs whose hairy coats are tinted with the colors of the rainbow, and whose general effect puts the most daring of poster creations to shame.

If the citizens of that locality were to hold a dog show they could exhibit such a variety of parti-colored canines that would eclipse entirely the small functions of Germantown and Chestnut Hill. How the Frankford howls came by their bizarre appearance is a mystery which many indignant owners of dogs would like to solve. Some unknown person, who apparently has access to a dye factory, has taken upon himself the task of relieving the awful monotony of dog flesh in the neighborhood, and playfully dips a poor little cur into a vat of dye so that one half of the dog is colored a bright and unmistakable pink or green, as the case may be. This unknown artist takes the greatest pains in his color combinations, and if green and white, and pink and black are not exactly harmonious, the effect is at least startling. As there are many dye works in Frankford, the dog owners are at a loss as to whom to suspect, but we betide this canine decorator when he is captured.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

The Costliest Bean on Earth. It is not generally known that the vanilla bean is the costliest bean on earth. It grows wild and is gathered by the natives in Papantia and Misantla, Mexico. When brought from the forests these beans are sold at the rate of \$12 per 1000, but when dried and cured they cost about \$12 per pound. They are mainly used by druggists, and last year over 90,000,000 were imported into the United States.

The cremation law in Norway provides that all persons over fifteen must have made a declaration before death in the presence of two witnesses desiring cremation. For those under fifteen the declaration must have been made by the parents.

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