DIFFIDENCE.

"I'm after axin', Biddy, dear—"
And here he paused awhile
To fringe his words the merest mite
With something of a smile—
A smile that found its image
In a face of beauteous mold,
Whose liquid eyes were peeping
From a broidery of gold.

"I've come to ax ye, Biddy, dear,
If—" then he stopped again,
As if his heart had bubbled o'er
And overflowed his brain.
His lips were twitching nervously
O'er what they had to tell,
And timed the quavers with the eyes
That gently rose and fell.

"I've come—" and then he took her hands
And held them in his own,
"To ax—" and then he watched the buds
That on her cheeks had blown,
"Me purty dear—" and then he heard
The throbbing of her heart,
That told how love had entered in
And claimed its every part.

"Och! don't be tazin' me," said she,
With just the faintest sigh,
"I've since enough to see you've come,
But what's the reason why?"
"To ax—" and once again the tongue
Forbore its sweets to tell,
"To ax—if Mrs. Mulligan
Has any pigs to sell!"

A NEBRASKA TRAGEDY.

The Sad Fate of Certain Babies in Hackberry Precinct.

[N. Y. Times.]

Hackberry Precinct is a town in Nebraska. It is not a very large town, and the inhabitants are rarely visited by the traveling lecturer, the circus, or any other amusement of that sort. They are thrown on their own resources for amusement, and their principal recreations are social parties and little "difficulties" at the leading "saloons." Not very long ago Hackberry Precinct determined to indulge in a ball, to which all the citizens of the place without distinction of sex or rank should be invited. The largest available house was rented for the occasion; a superb band of music, consiting of a colored man with a violin, was employed, and a magnificent supper, of which sandwiches and hot whisky were the leading features, was provided. Preparations on so grand a scale had never before been made for any Hackberry Precinct ball, and it was expected that the affair would prove a magnificent success.

It so happened that sixteen of the youngest and most popular matrons of the town were in the possession of babies under thirteen months of age. These ladies were extremely anxious to attend the ball, but inasmuch as bottles—except of the variety adapted exclusively for the use of mature citizens—were not to be had in Hackberry at any price, there was a practical difficulty in leaving the babies at home in a hungry and motherless state during the entire night. In this emergency, a man of rare inventive genius, who was one of the managers of the ball, proposed that the sixteen mothers should take their babies to the ball with them and deposit them in a room where they would be easily accessible. This plan was adopted with much enthusiasm, and at 8 o'clock the sixteen babies were brought to the ball and placed on a large bed in the second-story back bedroom.

It had been suggested by a careful mother that the infants should be checked, so that each mother could be sure of recovering her own at the end of the festivities. Unfortunately, no checks could be procured, and it was, therefore, resolved that each infant should be carefully marked with a bow of colored ribbon. Accordingly, this was done, and when the sixteen babies, with their hunger temporarily allayed, and their dresses decorated with distinguished bows, were laid side by side on the bed, sixteen mothers agreed that the spectacle was too beautiful for anything, and the collected infants were one and all perfectly sweet.

Dancing began at 8:30, and absorbed the whole attention of the guests. It was not until 10 o'clock that it occurred to one of the mothers that her infant might perhaps be in want of a little luncheon, or might desire to express its views in regard to pins and things in general. Accordingly, this excellent matron withdrew from the ball-room, assuring her partner that she would return almost immediately. She did not return, however, and the next mother who left the ball-room with a like promise also failed to return. Gradually the mothers, one by one, as they recollected the existence of the babies, retired to attend to their supposed wants, until ten months had thus vanished, not one of whom made their re-appearance in the ball-room.

The remaining six mothers, who were probably exceptionally fond of dancing, entirely forgot their babies until the approach of dawn, and the fixed determination of the band to go to sleep on the floor caused the brilliant assembly to break up. The six mothers repaired in a body to the second-story back bedroom, whence loud shrieks and wild demonstrations immediately arose. Every one rushed to ascertain what was the matter, and, in response to their inquiries, were informed by a distracted mother that the best babies had all been carried off, and that the remainder were inextricably mixed up, owing to the loss of their distinguished bows.

It appears that no sooner had the infants been left to themselves than the bright-colored ribbons had attracted their attention. The investigations which they immediately undertook were prosecuted with so much zeal that in a presumably brief time every bow was torn off. The first mother, who arrived at the scene at 10 o'clock, was a woman of great coolness and resource. Finding it impossible to select her own body from the mass of unmarked and conglomerated infants, she wisely selected the largest and best baby of the lot, and carried it home. Her example was followed by the next nine mothers, each one of whom picked out a good, serviceable infant, and hastened away with it. The result was that the last six mothers found nothing but refuse infants, and could not agree as to any method of satisfactorily distributing them. Their indignation was naturally very great. Each one insisted that she had brought with her a baby of exceptional value, which was alone worth more than the entire six that still remained, and each insisted that she should be allowed to make the first choice. In these circumstances, with a view to check the further effusion of hairpins and curls, Judge Doolittle proposed that, inasmuch as the ladies were unacquainted with euchre, the matter should be settled by throwing dice. This was done, and each mother in her turn picked out a baby and went home, asserting that she had been atrociously cheated, but that if her husband was really a man, as he pretended to be, he would secure for her justice and revenge at the mouth of his revolver.

The affair happened three weeks ago, and as yet no redistribution of infants has been made. The mothers who, by going home early, secured the choicest babies, profess to be perfectly certain that they took their own private infants; and the remaining mothers, while they clamorously resent the necessity which compelled them to put up with cheap and comparatively worthless babies, confess that they cannot prove to the satisfaction of a jury precisely to whom the half dozen best infants respectively belong. The husbands, who take the broad, general ground that one infant is about as good as another, are unwilling to interfere, and it is only too probable that the sixteen Hackberry babies will never know their real mothers, and that their own identity will be a puzzle to them for the remainder of their lives. This tragedy shows the necessity of branding or otherwise permanently marking babies, and suggests the question whether the managers of the Hackberry ball are not legally responsible to the dissatisfied mothers, and cannot be compelled to make good the losses which the latter have sustained.

THE END OF THE WORLD.

An Entertaining Description of the Destruction of the Earth by An Eminent French Scientist.

[Paris Figaro.]

Fifty thousand years have rolled over the earth. Industry has thrived; the human race increased with wonderful rapidity until the world begins to be over-populated. All the coal-beds have long since been exhausted, the petroleum wells are dry; the forests cut down. We begin to use the oxygen of the air and the hydrogen of the water as fuel. The earth, fully exposed to the rays of the sun, grows hotter and hotter.

Flowers wither, leaves grow yellow, parchments shrivel, everything dries and breaks to pieces. Animals grow smaller through the effect of evaporation. Man in turn becomes meagre and dries up. All temperaments blend in one—the bilious, and the last of the lymphatics offers with tears his daughter, and 100,000,000 of dowry, to the last of the scrofulous, who has not a cent of fortune and who refuses through pride. The heat augments and the springs are exhausted. The water-carriers rise by degrees to the rank of capitalists, then to millionaires. Finally the great water bearer of the prince ends by becoming one of the first dignitaries of the State. All crimes and infamies which are now done for gold one does then for a glass of water, and love himself abandoning his arrows and quiver, replaces them by a flask of ice water. In this torrid atmosphere one pays for a piece of ice thirty times its weight in diamonds. The Emperor of Australia, in a fit of mental aberration, has a tutti frutti made which cost him a year of his income. A savant makes a colossal fortune by obtaining a hectolitre of cool water in forty-five degrees. The rivers dry up. Lobsters hustle tumultuously, running after threads of warm water which leave them upon the beach changing color and turning to scarlet. Fishes with bursting heart and distended fins are left by the stream extended stomach upward. Humankind begins to weaken visibly. Strange passions, unheard of rage, violent loves, insensate pleasures, make life a series of furious detonations, or rather a continuous explosion, which commences at birth and finishes by death. In this world, torrified by an implacable combustion, all is red, cracking, broiled, roasted, and after the water evaporates, one feels the air diminish as it rarifies.

Frightful calamity! The streams and rivers have disappeared. The seas begin to grow warm; then become heated. Behold them already simmering as under a gentle fire. At first the little fishes, asphyxiated, turn over upon the surface. Afterward come the seaweed that the heat has detached. From the depths finally arise, cooked blue and giving out their fat in large drops, the whales, the enormous pleuvre, the shark and the kraken, believed to be fabulous; and the sea serpent, so much contested. With these fat things, herbs and fishes cooked together, the smoking ocean becomes an immense bowl of soup. A penetrating kitchen odor spreads over all the inhabitable earth. A century of this reigns. The ocean is evaporated; no traces of its existence remain save some heaps of fishes scattered over the desert plains.

The end commences. Under the triple influence of heat, of asphyxia and of dessication humankind is annihilated little by little. Man is exhausted, scaly, and at the last shock falls to pieces. In the place of vegetables nothing remains to him but some metallic plants which are made to grow by dint of watering them with vitriol. To quench the thirst which devours him, to reanimate his calcined nervous system, to liquefy his albumen, which coagulates, he has no other liquids than sulphuric acid or aquafortis. Vain efforts! At each breath of wind which agitates this anhydrous atmosphere thousands of human creatures are instantly dried up; the cavalier upon his horse, the advocate at the bar, the judge upon the bench, the acrobat upon his rope, the workman at his window, the king upon his throne, are suddenly mummified.

And then comes the last day. There are now but thirty-seven left wandering like spectres of touchwood in the midst of a frightful population of mummies, who regard them with eyes similar to Zante currants. And they take hands and commence a furious round. At each turn one of the dancers stumbles and falls dead, with a dry noise. The thirty-six turns finished, the survivor remains alone in presence of this miserable heap, in which are gathered the last debris of the human race. He throws a last glance over the earth. He says adieu to the name of all, and from his poor burnt eyes falls a tear—the last tear of humanity. He gathers it in his hand; he drinks it and dies looking at the skies.

Pouff! A little bluish flame rises tremblingly; then two, then three, then a thousand. The entire globe is embraced, burns an instant, is extinguished. All is ended. The earth is dead.

Mournful and frozen, it rolls sadly through the silent deserts of the infinite, and of so much beauty, so much glory, so many joys, so many tears, so many loves, no more remains than a little calcined stone—miserable wanderer across the luminous spheres of the new worlds.

Adieu, earth! Adieu, touching souvenirs of our history, of our genius, of our sorrows, of our loves! Adieu, nature! Thou whose sweet and serene majesty consoled so well our sufferings! Adieu, cool and shady woods, where during the beautiful summer nights by the silvery light of the moon we heard the nightingale sing! Adieu, terrible and charming creatures who lead the world with a tear or a smile, and whom we call by names so sweet! Ah! sina, you are no more! truly all is finished.

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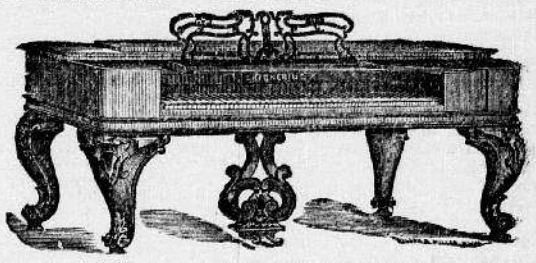

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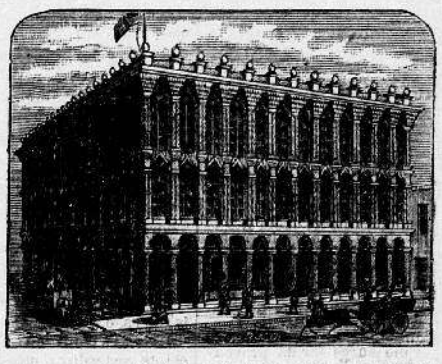

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