

DIDN'T BELIEVE IN SIGNS

SIGNS?" said the man who was trying to evade a conversation on occult topics. "No, sir. I don't believe in them."

"But" said the thin man whose long Prince Albert coat strongly resembled a stovepipe with buttons on it, "you know there are certain events which always accompany certain other events. If it rains, there is thunder. Therefore, let us admit that thunder is a sign of rain, not a sure sign, but still a sign. This being the case, let us ask ourselves whether there are not similar relationships between phenomena not so easily observed and comprehended by the limited intelligence which is at present vouchsafed the human race."

The skeptic looked at him a moment, and then vaguely exclaimed: "Huh?"

"I say that there may be co-relationships between events which we cannot account for, and yet which may have been more or less definitely established by the coincidence upon which the laws of chance rely for their only practical demonstration."

"Look here!" was the rejoinder. "Is what you are trying to tell me this. When a man tells you something is a sign of something else there is a possibility that he may be talking sense?"

"Of course. Now, you won't deny, for instance, that to see a man walking along the street with an umbrella hoisted is a sign of rain."

"Yes I will! I was walking past a factory with a friend a short time ago. The day was cloudy, and when we felt the moisture from a steam exhaust overhead my friend put up his umbrella. The sun came out, but he didn't notice it. I thought it was a good joke, and said nothing. A man came out of a store as we passed and as soon as he saw us he hoisted his umbrella. Two people who saw him did the same, and in a few minutes I counted nine umbrellas in our trail. What you want to do to convince me is to stick to coincidences and co-relationships and phenomena. When you talk umbrellas, I can't help getting obstinate."

AN UNFORTUNATE COMPARISON

HOW did I lose her? My dear boy, as easily as tumbling off a log—by sending her a box of rare flowers. You are astonished that this could lead to an estrangement? Wait till you hear what happened. I was in Florida, and she was in Chicago, and I thought I'd clinch the thing by sending a box of orchids for her birthday celebration. This is what I wrote on the card accompanying the flowers: "Sweets to the sweets. To one as fresh and sweet and blooming as these flowers, which are only the type of her own beauty." Poetical, wasn't it? Unfortunately, though, the box miscarried, and didn't reach her in three weeks. By that time the orchids were as dry and shriveled up as last year's leaves.

And I had written: "To one as fresh and sweet and blooming as these flowers!" I don't know what she said about me when she opened the box; but I do know that that was the last of me as far as she was concerned.

HIS METRICAL PASS

WHEN the late William F. White was traffic manager of the Santa Fé Railroad he received a letter from a Kansas politician returning an annual pass of the year before. For some reason another pass had not been sent to the politician, who sent the following verse with the expired pass:

"Alas, it is said no more I'll deadhead
My way o'er the glistening rail,

Unless Mr. White will consider it right
To send me a pass by the mail."

This communication pleased White. He took the expired pass and made an indorsement across the face in red ink, and then added his signature, a complicated series of scratches familiar to every Santa Fé conductor. This was the inscription:

"The conductors will pass this bundle of gas
From March till the middle of Lent,
Like any deadhead without a red,
Let him ride to his heart's content."

The pass was used by the politician, and was accepted unquestioningly by conductors.

A QUESTION OF CEREALS

A MAN sat on the veranda of one of the exclusive club-houses which line the north shore of the government channel connecting Lake St. Claire with Lake Huron, known as "The Flats."

As he sat there idly, a huge steam freighter bound for Detroit came within hailing distance of the veranda. Seeing two men who were evidently passengers returning his gaze with interest from the ship's deck, he picked up the club megaphone and called out lustily:

"What are you loaded with?"

"Corn," was the prompt reply. "What are you loaded with?"

"Rye," came sadly over the waters to the ears of the men on the deck as the vessel steamed away.

When Daddy Was a Boy

By Hubert Arthur Hensley

I'm very, very naughty and I play most awful tricks!
My daddy says he wasn't half as bad when he was six;
He never ran away from school, nor broke his pretty toy—
They simply couldn't do such things when daddy was a boy.

It's "Baby don't do such naughty, naughty things as that!
Baby, let doggie be! Don't tease the pussy-cat!"
It's "Baby" this, and "Baby" that, and "Baby, don't annoy;
Your daddy never did such things when daddy was a boy!"

They never put a scuttle full of coals on kitty's tail,
Or tackled dogs to empty cans to hear them yelp and wail,
Or stood the cat in walnut-shells to see her jump for joy,
Or cripple frogs, or anything, when daddy was a boy!

Then what's the use of pussy-cats, or coals, or cans, or dogs,
Or kittens, or of walnut-shells, or croaking, thrilling frogs?
And why should not my Sunday clothes be freshened up with paint?
But daddy never did such things, for daddy was a saint.

But, if they never lost themselves, nor greased their hair with glue,
Nor speckled sister's frock with ink, nor chopped themselves in two,
Nor stirred the bee-hives up with sticks, nor howled for very joy,
I wonder what on earth they did when daddy was a boy!

I s'pose I'm very wicked, not fit on earth to stay—
In fact, if I must be so good I'd rather fly away.
If all that daddy tells me is the truth without alloy,
I guess they didn't have much fun when daddy was a boy.

Children Made Welcome

By H. W. Francis

HE was weary-eyed, foot-sore, exhausted—the picture of a human wreck. He was the father of three children, and had tramped in vain all day hunting for a flat in which to shelter them.

If he had been a cannibal, a murderer or even a stock promoter, he would have had no difficulty in finding a resting place, but he was that terrible, unspeakable wretch, a father. And there was no room for his products. He had contemplated drowning them like kittens, but the law forbade; so there he was between the two horns of a terrible dilemma: drown them and be electrocuted; keep them and go shelterless.

At the close of the day he felt his brain giving way, and it was with little hope that he spoke to the fine-looking old man who stood in the entrance of the handsome apartment building as he made his last call.

"I see you have apartments to let here?" he ventured timidly.

"Yes, sir, very fine ones. I'm sure you can be suited. Have you any children?"

The fatal question! His heart sank within him.

"Yes," he faltered, "I—I am unfortunate enough to have three."

"Unfortunate? My dear sir, what are you talking about? Children, sir, are the angels of this world. You should be sorry, sir, that you haven't a dozen—a dozen at least!"

His spirits rose; his eyes brightened. At last he had found a haven. Here was a man who had not been turned into a heartless

brute by the ownership of a pile of stone, bricks and mortar. Here was a landlord who remembered that he had not been born of age.

"Do you mean to say," he stammered in a voice choked with gladness and surprise "that you don't object to children?"

"Object, sir? You must be crazy! Children are my delight. Let them romp about the halls, stuff the basins with old rags, tear the paper from the walls, bore holes in the floors, carve their initials on the woodwork—let them enjoy themselves, the darlings, and the more they do it the better. Come right in, sir, and choose the finest apartment I have. And if there's anybody in it they shall be put out for a man with children."

The father felt his brain reel. He thought he must be dreaming. He did not see the two burly fellows who just then came along, and who, spying the old man, rushed up and seized him, until one of them spoke.

"Ah, we've got you at last! A nice chase you've given us! Now come along quietly."

"What? What?" gasped the father. "What's the matter?"

"Matter? Why, he's crazy as a bug! Escaped from the asylum this morning. Come along now."

The father took hold of the burly fellow's arms.

"Take me also," he said weakly. "I guess I'm crazy too. I must have been crazy all these years or I'd never have had any children. Take me!"

The Face in the Mirror

By Cornelia Baker

All Hallowe'en, the mystic night
When witches forth on broomsticks fare,
Witches gray and brown and white,
Flying through the frosty air!

From out the shadows goblins spring,
And fairies in their woody dells
Their weird, enchanting lyrics sing,
And over mortals cast their spells.

And Grace to-night her fortune tries
With nuts and keys and molten lead,
And laughing to a mirror flies
To see the one whom she will wed.

She counts with midnight's clanging bell,
With closed eyes and with accents low,
Then looks to see if it can tell
This mirror what she fain would know.

A face she sees with charms of youth
And shining tresses, golden threaded—
It is her husband's face in truth,
Or will be his—when they are wedded.

WILES OF A CIRCUS MANAGER

CLEMENT SCOTT, the late English dramatic critic, wrote verse in his leisure moments. By this verse he is not known, for his fame comes as one who spoke the final word concerning the merits of a play. He achieved a high reputation through his power of criticism and his authoritative expression of it. Of this he cared less than for his verses.

Frank Perley, the veteran circus manager, found out this with good results for himself. Perley had charge of "the greatest show on earth." It is of him that the story was told that he stammered so badly that he had to be the manager for Barnum and not for Perley, as he could pronounce the first name and not the other.

Perley took "the greatest show" to England. It was an event. He determined that he would have a notice from Clement Scott, though his friends in London told him it was impossible. Scott would not condescend to notice a circus. Perley made a heavy wager that he would not only get a notice, but one in advance.

A woman told him that Scott wrote verses, and that he was fonder of his poetry than of his dramatic criticisms; that he had published them and sent copies to his friends.

After this information the circus manager called on the dramatic critic. He apologized for sending up his business card, saying that had no personal ones with him. Scott was icy. Perley explained that he had not called on business, but wanted to see the man who had given him pleasure. Then he talked of Scott's verses with enthusiasm. He told him how as manager of a circus he traveled from one end of the world to another, and always carried Scott's verses with him. Scott was in a melting mood, and Perley recited his quatrains with fervor.

The next day the English public gasped with astonishment when it read a brilliant advance notice of America's "great circus" signed by Clement Scott.

SOUTHERN AS SHE IS SPOKE

WHILE on a trip through the sparsely settled districts of Georgia a Northerner hired a colored native to guide him across country to his destination. Reaching the banks of a swift-flowing, unbridged stream, the Northern man spotted a boat moored at the edge, and asked the negro if he could row.

"Ro, boss?" No, suh. Ah kin't ro' no-how."

"Well, how can I get across, then? There isn't any bridge."

"W'y, boss, Ah'll take yo' across in no time in that 'ere punt," answered the negro.

"But I thought you said you couldn't row!"

"No, suh, Ah kin't ro'," answered Sambo, rolling his eyes in ludicrous astonishment.

"but Ah kin git yo' across de ribber all right, suh."

The Northerner with some trepidation and considerable curiosity stepped into the boat, and the negro rowed him swiftly and surely over the turbulent stream to the other side, proving himself an experienced oarsman.

"Why, Sambo, what did you mean by bring to me?" asked the perplexed traveler. "I thought you said you couldn't row a boat?"

Sambo opened his mouth in a grin so wide that he appeared to whisper in his own ear as he replied: "W'y, boss, Ah suahly thought you meant ro'—ro' like a lion!"

A QUESTION OF KNOWLEDGE

TWO men in Kansas City were having a heated argument concerning the location of a certain theater in New-York city. The one insisted that the house stood on lower Broadway, while the other was equally confident that it was up town.

Finally the first man, becoming angry, exclaimed: "Perhaps you think you know more about New-York than I do? How often have you been there?"

"Once," was the epigrammatic reply.

"Well," exclaimed the other, in triumph, "I've been there five different times, and I ought to know more about it than you do."

The vanquished one was silent for a moment. Presently he spoke with a smile on his face: "How long did you stay in New-York on each of the five visits you made?"

The other scratched his head a moment before replying, and said: "Well, each time I was there for two or three days. How long did you stay on the only visit you made?"

"Seventeen years," was the calm reply. That ended the conversation.

PUTTING IT DELICATELY

HENRY," said Mrs. Fussy as they went in to dinner. "I wish you would tell Willie in some way, so it will not offend him, that he takes too much sugar in his coffee. It isn't good for him, and I know his mother wouldn't allow it."

"Willie," said Mr. Fussy a few minutes later, turning to the young nephew who was visiting him, "you don't mix quite enough coffee with your sugar."