

# HINTS ON HOW NEW YORKERS CAN BEAT THE GAS TRUST

On a recent Sunday one of the ministers in a town not many miles from New York preached a sermon on the duty and the beauty of forgiveness. As the worthy people of the congregation streamed homeward, by twos and threes, they discussed the words of their pastor.

"Well," remarked one of the elders of the church, as he mounted the steps of his home, "I'm willing to forgive everybody but the gas company. I can't do that."

Probably he felt as the man did who had just eaten an unusually good dinner. This man stretched his legs out comfortably under the table, drew a sigh of huge content and said to his wife:

"Now, I wish I had an enemy, so that I could forgive him."

"There's the gas company," the wife suggested. "The gas company isn't my enemy merely," said the man, "it's the enemy of the human race. Who am I, to forgive the gas company?"

If the gas company is not the enemy of the human race, at least there is no other institution that is so generally obnoxious, within the grasp over which it sheds its illumination and its bills. See three or four householders talking together, and it is ten to one that before the group breaks up one of them will say:

"Speaking of abuses, my gas bill is getting bigger every month, and here is the season when the evenings are getting shorter. It's extortion, that's what it is, and I told the collector so."

Maledictions do no good, though. You may hurl them at the collector till your tongue is weary, but he merely, with a perfectly blank and wooden face, leaves the bill and goes away. Of course, if you object to your gas bill you can refuse to pay it, but then your gas will be shut off, and then where are you? A wanderer in an impenetrable forest who has lost his matchbox is not so helpless, for he can kindle a fire with two stones and a handful of dry leaves, as is the average New York flat dweller with his gas shut off.

### THERE'S A REMEDY.

But is there no remedy, no way of lessening the steady outgo of money each month from one's pocket to the coffers of the gas company? Assuredly there is. Putting aside legislation, which is a slow and uncertain way and, unfortunately, as the adventures of the 80-cent gas measure are demonstrating, there is another method, or rather there are methods, and they are within the reach of every housewife who cooks her family's dinner and lights her home with gas. They are simple methods, and perfectly honest, being only devices for securing the desired results with a smaller amount of gas.

It would be interesting, if the statistics could be compiled, to know just how much gas is wasted, burnt up needlessly, in the city of New York every year. Most of this is squandered in little ways. For example, a woman starts in to prepare dinner for her husband and children. She is going to have roast lamb, boiled potatoes, peas and some kind of stewed fruit. She lights the oven burners and puts the roast of lamb in the upper part of the oven. When it is time to boil the vegetables she pares the potatoes and sets them over one of the top burners, and the peas over a second, while the fruit is stewing over a third one; and all the burners, probably, going full blast. As the oven burners consume about thirty feet of gas an hour, and each top burner from twelve to fifteen, the gas bill is being augmented pretty rapidly while that dinner cooks.

Now, at any place where gas appliances are sold one can get separable saucepans, as they are called; they cost a little more than the ordinary saucepan, but they pay for themselves in a few days in the gas they save. Some of them are in sets of three, heart shaped, so that

the three fit over one burner, making a perfect round. The bigger ones are half-rounds, two going over one flame. With an outfit of the triple saucepans the housewife could boil her potatoes, peas and fruit with an expenditure of twelve to fifteen feet of gas in the hour, instead of from thirty-six to forty-five feet. One flame gives plenty of heat for the three. Just to put one's hand by the side of a kettle steaming over a gas flame is to perceive that a large part of the heat spreads beyond the bottom of the kettle and goes to waste in the outer air. The open-work construction of the gas stove top is not calculated to conserve the heat; the manufacturers know this, and they make what is called a "flame spreader," an adjustable slot top; but these are expensive, and any housewife can achieve the same result with much cheaper devices.

### HERE'S ANOTHER.

There is another way of cooking the same dinner, even more economical; it could all be done in the oven, which must be lighted in any case for the meat.

"I used my gas stove a year," one Harlem housekeeper was heard to say, "before I discovered the possibilities of the oven; since then I've cut down the bills one-third. A cooking teacher put me on to the fact that I shouldn't try to roast meat in the upper part of the oven. You don't roast meat up there," she said, "you dry it out. Set the pan with your piece of beef or mutton or whatever it is on the floor of the oven, down in the lower chamber, just under the flame. You think it would burn? Not at all. Just baste it frequently, and the outside will sear over quickly, and the inside come out juicy, with the true roast flavor."

"I objected that I had burned some chops to a crisp only that morning, trying to broil them. She asked if I had the oven door shut. I said I had. She told me to try leaving the door open an inch or so after the meat started cooking. 'It won't waste the heat,' she said, 'but it creates a slight draft toward the back of the stove, which keeps the flame from catching the meat.'"

"I tried a roast of beef after her plan, and it worked all right. But I hated to see the heat in the upper oven not utilized; as it chanced, I wasn't baking biscuits or anything. I wondered if vegetables would boil in there. I put some cauliflower in a saucepan (one with no handle to melt off), brought the water to a boil first on the top of the stove, and then set the saucepan in the oven. The cauliflower boiled all right, with the advantage that we didn't get the odor of it in the flat at all; the odor passed off through the ventilating holes in the oven. Now when I roast meat I always boil the vegetables in the upper oven, and it makes quite a difference in my gas bill."

"I don't believe it," growls a cynic householder. "You can't convince me that any gas-saving wrinkle will cut down your gas bill. I don't believe they take the trouble to read your meter when they come around. They just make a guess at it, taking care to put the figure plenty big."

### READ YOUR OWN METER.

But there is a very simple way of guarding against any cheating of this kind—learn to read your meter yourself. The gas people will furnish on request a card bearing a printed facsimile of the dials, with movable hands, and underneath the dials full directions for reading the meter. You can practise turning those hands around till you can estimate the gas recorded at a glance. On the reverse of the card is a space in which to note down the records of your meter. They use these cards in some of the public school cooking classes, teaching the children to read the meter. In a little while you will not only know whether the company

## Stop Wasting Gas in Many Careless and Unnoticed Ways, and the Monthly Bills Will be Greatly Reduced Without any Loss of Efficiency.

indexer is reading your meter, but you can, by taking account from day to day of the amount of cooking and lighting you do and comparing that with the amount of gas you burn, form a pretty clear idea of the quality of gas you are getting and the variations in it; whether or not there is too much air mixed with it some days, and so on.

Few women think they waste gas, but as a matter of fact it is the easiest thing in the world to do it. Take the process of ironing, for example. How common it is to see a housewife put each flatiron (two, three, four of them), over a separate burner to heat. A flat metal heating plate, which can be purchased at a department store for 23 cents, will enable one to heat three irons over one blaze. A covered iron heater is better, but is more expensive; besides, the flat plate can be used also for baking cakes, at need. In households where there are careless servants gas stands a good chance of being badly squandered. "I watched my maid getting ready to iron," said a woman who lives in an apartment. "She got the flatirons piping hot, and then it occurred to her that she hadn't sprinkled the clothes. While she performed this opera-

tion she took the irons off to cool a bit, as they were too hot, but she forgot to turn the gas down meantime. Then as they got too cool she put them over the blaze again, but before she began to iron the toeman came, and then the grocer's boy, and when she had finished with these callers the irons were once more so hot that they had to be put through the cooling process a second time before they could be used."

### SOME QUEER TRICKS.

People do queer things with gas stoves sometimes. A Settlement worker on the East Side called the other day on a woman who had just acquired one for the first time in her life. The woman appeared troubled, and a finally she confessed that the gas stove was a disposal she had made. "Sure I've had mate bakin' in the oven twelve hours," she said, "an' it's as red 'n' raw as when it was cut from the baste it grew on."

"Let me look," said the Settlement worker. She investigated. The woman had merely lighted the pilot burner, which is meant just to act as a match for the oven burners, and the said pilot

was flickering lonesomely, consuming perhaps two feet of gas an hour.

That was not so dangerous as the mistake of the bride who received a gas chafing dish as a wedding present. One day the giver got a distracted note. "I can't imagine," the note ran, "what all that pretty chafing dish. I can't light it, and when I turn on the gas and try such a queer, stifling odor comes from it." The bride hurried over and discovered that the friend had carefully fitted the tubing which conducted the gas from the burner in the wall above over one of the curved legs of the chafing dish. "Why, isn't that the place where the gas goes in?" she exclaimed. Why she was not blown up the friend never understood.

When one considers what ticklish stuff gas is to "monkey" with, it seems rather remarkable that there are not more accidents with it. How often, for instance, does one recollect to open the oven doors wide before lighting the oven burners? And yet there is always the possibility of the oven being filled with escaping gas. Experts say that flue pipes are a fruitful source of explosions; they are specially perilous on high ground, as along upper Riverside Drive. The wind, blowing down the pipes, puts out the oven gas. After a while the cook opens the door to see why the gas isn't burning, at the same time striking a match to ignite it, and then is surprised to find herself against the opposite wall and the kitchen in flames. But "Give me a flue pipe" is a frequent demand, owing to a belief that it makes the stove work better. As a matter of fact, it does not; when the stove works badly it is because the stove itself is out of order, not that a flue pipe is needed.

### A STOVE HAS LUNGS.

It is very important to keep the lungs of the gas stove clean. These lie along the upper front edge of the stove, the little projecting knobs, one for each burner, with shutters in them that open and close, looking like a miniature copy of a damper in the pipe of a coal range, and designed to let in the proper amount of air to mix with the gas. If the burner acts badly, if the flame is yellow and unsteady, or blasts out with a loud report when one tries to light it, that shows that the shutter is not rightly adjusted, letting in too much or too little air, or else that there is dirt in the gasway. The gasway being very small, no larger than the head of a pin, a mere speck of dirt there may make trouble. Or perhaps the gasway is not perfectly round, as it should be, and requires reaming out a little. The stove's lungs should be cleaned every day with a cloth, and in case of difficulty re-adjusted by an expert.

Sometimes, however, the burner blasts out because one makes the mistake of putting the match at the front of the burner, instead of at the back, as should be done in lighting it. Sometimes it burns badly because it is turned too high, which latter, by the way, is a common way of wasting gas. All that is necessary is to turn the gas just high enough to produce the clear, blue flame, the intense concentrated heat on the bottom of the cooking vessel, not a flaring, yellow flame shooting wastefully out around the sides.

A meter that is growing rather popular in New York is the quarter meter, or slot meter. There are about 116,000 of these in the city, it is said. There are some in apartment houses; one of the largest model tenement associations has installed them throughout its buildings; there are some in shops, in stores and in private houses. There is a difference of opinion as to whether this is a more honest meter than the other kind. Many consumers think it is. One Yonkers man who had a slot meter put in his house not long ago declares that he does not spend half as much on gas as under the old system of paying once a month.

The gas people, on the contrary, say that it is no more honest than the other meter, but that it makes one more economical of gas, because it is constantly reminding one how much has been used. There is something in the latter theory. Here is a typical conversation in the Yonkers home above mentioned:

Youngest Hopeful (shrilly)—Papa! The gas is going down!"  
Interval filled with a wild search for a quarter, while the house grows dark rapidly. Like a twilight scene in a theatre. Papa at last finds a lone one in his trousers pocket, plunges down the cell, stairs and inserts it in the meter.  
Mamma Yonkers (as Papa and the gas come up)—Seems to me that last quarter was used up quickly. I put it in at 6 o'clock last night and no cooking was done after that. What's been wasting gas? (Gazes around on family severely.) Ethel, did you leave it burning in the parlor when you came upstairs last night?  
Ethel (guiltily)—I guess I did.  
Youngest Hopeful—Tom fell asleep and left it burning in his room. I saw it burning this morning.

Mamma Yonkers—We must really be more careful. (Goes around the house turning down superfluous lights, and goes out and lectures the cook on the necessity of being saving with the gas stove.)

Now, it is obvious that a reminder like this, coming every day or so, is more effective than the bill that comes only once a month.

The bulk of the quarter meters, though, are in the tenements where the poor live, and they yield, it is said, on an average a quarter a week for each family. Here, too, they perform their mission of preaching economy. If the wife puts a quarter in the meter on Saturday and knows from experience that that generally supplies gas for a week, and on this particular week the gas gives out on Thursday, she perceives that something is wrong or that she has been wasteful. A quarter's worth of gas a week is not much, but in these cases the family does not cook with it. Now that "hot plates," the little two-burner gas stoves, are more generally used by the families of workmen, being such a convenience for the man when he wants to get a hasty early breakfast before he goes to work, more gas will be burned on the East Side. But it is hard for an individual to get a slot meter put in. The gas people say they prefer them, because the system of paying for the gas in advance by the quarter's worth saves them the expense of indexers, the men who go around and read the meters, and relieves them of a lot of bill making; but, all the same, they will seldom put in slot meters unless a number are wanted in one building or street.

If a quarter slot meter seems rather small potatoes, how would a penny one seem? Those are what they have in London. It is said that when the company collectors go around to gather up the pennies they have to be met here and there by cabs, because the bags of copper are too heavy for them to carry. Occasionally, toward collecting time, there is a regular famine of pennies in the city. "Reminded me," said an American who visited there, "of the famine of 16 cent pieces in this country once when the toy dime savings banks were so popular with the kids."

The London company charges 10 cents a thousand feet extra for gas to those who have the penny meters, to pay for the expense of installing the meters and so on. But as the regular rates for gas are lower there than in New York the Londoners on the whole have little to complain of on that score.

### REGULAR OSTRICHES.

"This, ladies and gentlemen," said the guide, "is a real theatrical chophouse. You will notice the signs on the wall. 'Watch your hat' and 'Keep an eye on your umbrella.'"  
"Great gooseberries!" exclaimed the old farmer in the party. "I often heard tell that these here actor folks were half starved, but I didn't think they would eat hats and umbrellas."—Chicago News.



A PEASANT FROLIC IN POLAND. As the young peasant women come from church after mass on Easter Monday the young men do not consider it unchivalrous to throw pails of water over them. "Nothing," says our artist, "could be more amusing than this scene, although the poor girls may have reason to regret that their dresses were so pretty."—Illustrated London News.

# FIVE-CENT NOVELS READ BY TOO MANY AMERICAN BOYS

The Berlin police have forbidden the street sale of American boys' novels," says a European dispatch, and the reason given is that two little boys who had been reading a copy of this kind of literature had been captured in Unter den Linden armed with revolvers and had held up and robbed the passerby. This article gives a good idea of the contents of these novels, which are so greedily read by the American boy to-day.

What do the average people in New York read? Are they becoming more exacting in their tastes? Does the amusing or the instructive book find greater favor? Has the multiplication of libraries produced any marked effect in popularizing literature? How fares the mechanic, whence come the tears of the factory girl, and what does the messenger boy furtively devour?

A full and conclusive answer to these questions could not be given without months of labor and a corps of extremely brazen census takers. It would be a task merely to mark off the average people, adjudging the case of the well-to-do but illiterate shopkeeper, the indigent but cultured clerk, the foreigner educated in home classics yet innocent of ours. Generalities are dangerous. Too many exceptions turn up. Even facts and figures mislead when the precise circumstances are unknown.

However, an investigation by a Tribune reporter yielded interesting results. It seems that sociological and socialistic books are being largely read by the workman in New York who, for the rest, selects what will help him in his special trade. Novels of the "ten best" list appeal to the women folk of Americanized tollers, but the East Side sternly rejects them and calls for Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Irving and the beloved Russian masters. The factory girl still asks for what an English writer quotes as "the rocky book; there must be abounding love and romance; yet she is so far advanced in patriotism or discernment that the homemade millionaire here is preferred to the noble lord of former days. The multiplied libraries have caused a vast increase in reading for diversion, practical study and school work. Messenger boy literature is believed to have improved in morals and art quality; it is as strictly up to date as anything in the market. New York publishers put out weekly some seven hundred thousand copies of five-cent thrillers, which, it is alleged, business men and judges of the Supreme Court read occasionally.

"Mary, which book do you like better, the one you were reading or the one I tell you have?" asked an uptown woman.  
"Well, ma'am," said Mary, the janitress, who had had her share of trouble, "your book tells about a man who dresses fine, talks noble and sends his wife \$50 spending money. My book tells how a man gets full, grabs his wife by the neck hair and throws her downstairs. I guess that's more true to life, but I like the other story better, ma'am."

This statement illuminates generally. A preference for the ideal and pleasant is shown by the hardworking class as well as those in moderate circumstances. The janitress knows that she can do no harm out of \$50, often, the factory girl has never come within remote touch of romance, and the messenger boy's experience must teach him that Jack Harkaway is a fraud; yet

these readers continue to dream over delightful impossibilities. A tired mind in a weary body may be a partial explanation. If the educated but worn out sons of Wall Street recreate themselves with rapid musical comedy and novels of historical humbug, small wonder that the common people take to wares a little worse. After nine hours' work in a stuffy shop, the mind is no more able to assimilate a serious book than the body is able to digest a large, substantial meal.

### READERS IN FACTORIES.

In some trades, like cigarmaking, where there is no noise of feet or machinery, it is a practice to have a hired reader who entertains the workers. Each man contributes to the expense. Novels, extracts from sociological books, editorials from a radical newspaper, the news of the world, magazine stories and jokes from the comic weeklies variously interest and amuse. The Spanish cigarmaker is particularly fond of the well written stories of his own country, the epic Lusitania and the romances of the Cid. This plan of giving food to the mind of those who work at monotonous bodily tasks is capable of wide extension. One can imagine every tinner of the future (except railroad men, steeplejacks and the like) having an individual phonograph to deliver fiction, poetry and drama in his ear.

A typical classifier of Americanized Irish, German and fewer French working people is served by the Jackson Square branch of the public library. Old Greenwich Village stretches about here, and the inhabitants are as native as can be found in the city.  
"The men are reading considerable sociological literature, the books of exposé and some pure socialism," said the librarian. "I do not know whether it is an independent movement or part of the general interest in these subjects. They're in the air. A big strike usually creates a fresh demand for sociological books. The employed workman takes to useful trade works on electricity, mechanics, engineering and so forth. He reads a little travel and history. His rare novels must be of the strong kind, done by Frank Norris, Jack London and David Graham Phillips. He reads Henry George, Hunter's 'Poverty' and Spargo's 'Cry of the Children.' 'The Jungle' is popular with every one of both sexes."

"There was a slight winter demand for Huxley and Darwin, but now the same readers call for books on flowers, birds, country life and chicken farming. I do not suppose that 1 per cent of these readers expect to get to the country. They know it is spring by the almanac, the sparrows and the greenery of park spaces, and they like to imagine the rest by the aid of rustic books. In fancy they all emigrate to Walden and Concord and the Adirondacks."

The working girl in this neighborhood still wants a strong love tale by Miss Carey, Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Alexander and other heartrending authors. There is a slight improvement in taste and a desire for American heroes. A maiden who would have turned up her nose at a pork magnate ten years ago now accepts his addresses providing he is genteel and debonair.

## Remarkable Kind of Literature Which Fascinates Their Minds—Much Better Sort Demanded by Our Foreign Born Population.

She condescends to a railroad king who isn't bald and dyspeptic. Mothers and spinners read some of the best sellers, cookbooks and housekeeping works. Almost nobody here cares for poetry and the drama.  
The younger generation seems to have gone back on "Robinson Crusoe," while remaining loyal to Jules Verne, Dickens, Scott's "Ivanhoe" and "Kenilworth." The boys are described as absolutely crazy over the works of Horatio Alger, who tells of bootblacks becoming rich in one night. They devour Alger two or three times in succession and then reluctantly turn to something less exciting. It is doubted by authority whether a public library confers any benefit by providing boys, who ought to be playing outdoors, with such papulum. Ten to eleven year old children spend evening after evening in the library reading room poring over Alger. Their parents, it is presumed, neither know nor care what they are doing.

### SHAKESPEARE ON TOP.

"We have no call for current fiction," said the librarian at the Rivington street branch. "Shakespeare is the most popular author. Few girls down here read for mere recreation, and the sentimental story is not favored. All the English classics, including the works of Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Washington Irving and Hawthorne, are popular. We never have enough copies of 'Twice Told Tales,' 'Mill on the Floss' and 'The Sketch Book.' Among the books in foreign languages the Yiddish lead, and are followed by German, Rumanian, Russian and French. There is a large demand for Tolstoy, Dostoevski, Turgenieff and Gorky in the original. We think this compares favorably with the best sellers of uptown branches."

"Works on pure socialism by Karl Marx, Kautzky and Sombart, Kropotkin's 'Theoretical Anarchy' and London's 'War of the Classes' are read by many, along with sociological books like Spargo's 'Cry of the Children,' Hunter's 'Poverty,' Brooks' 'Social Unrest,' 'The Long Day,' by Miss Richardson, and Stieglitz's socialistic novel 'The Jungle.' The debates at the University Settlement clubs create a demand for all kinds of books on immigration, civil government and what not. Twelve-year-old girls come in and ask for information on weighty topics, so they can use it in a school debate. The call for serious and instructive books might be partly explained by the fact that school children and young collegians of this neighborhood are unable to afford books of their own. It is presumed that uptown readers of the best sellers have gone through the English classics in their early days, while our readers are just catching up to Shakespeare and Irving, but I do not quite agree in the presumption. The Russian people particularly are noted for their solid taste

in literature. Although we have about thirty thousand volumes read here and at home in a month, it is remarkable how well kept and clean the books are. No covers at all are used."  
The East Broadway branch of the public library is believed to supply better literature to working people than any other branch in the city. The sweatshop tailors read the European masters, and pushcart men delve into the mysteries of psychology. Radical politics, agnostic and controversial works, ethics and metaphysics, written in half a dozen languages, appeal to these people. It is told of a young student who was getting material for an essay on moral philosophy that, unsatisfied with an English opinion, he said:

### TOLSTOY VS. DAVIS.

Some time ago a publisher, addressing an East Side boys' club, offered to present them with a set of Richard Harding Davis. The boys went into anxious whispered conference, and finally the spokesman, with flowery, polite circumlocution, brought out the following:  
"If you don't mind, we would rather have two little paper bound books of Tolstoy."  
Humor, invention and mathematics are subjects neglected by the East Side readers of good literature.

The five-cent novel industry is controlled mainly by two New York houses, who issue weekly about seven hundred thousand copies of sixteen different tales. Each is about thirty thousand words long. These are circulated all over this country, in Canada and somewhat abroad. Formerly these stories had a love interest for the benefit of factory girls, but now they are written solely for boys. A 10-cent series of love and romance containing about ninety thousand words apiece is provided for young women. The authors are bearded and miscellaneous men, but they use copyrighted feminine pseudonyms that have been popular for a generation.

All the up-to-date features of automobiles, airships and submarines used in high class fiction are found in the five-cent "thrillers." They are said to be better written than formerly, have less padding, and are of the purest moral tone. None of the characters are allowed to swear, and only the villain smokes and drinks. The hero is the model of all the virtues, being brave, modest, generous and energetic. He is quick with a gun, apt at disguises, and can do anything, from peddling a newspaper to governing a state. The adventures of one hero are continued from week to week by the same author for a period of several years.

A favorite character, Frank Merriwell, was introduced to readers nine years ago, when his father had just died and he had to leave Yale.

He went West, fought enemies horseback and foot, got into the show business, wrote plays and managed a theatre; went back to college to complete his athletic education, became a traveller, married, had adventures on his honeymoon, and is now conducting a school of physical instruction in this city.

A baseball story about Frank Merriwell begins so rationally that one wonders how any A. D. T. youth can be interested in it. Suddenly an enemy rises up while Frank is walking on the edge of a precipice and hits him on the head with a stone. The hero topples over, and for two pages the assiduous sufferer terrible remorse. Returning to the precipice, it is found that Frank is sliding feet first into the abyss. His feet hit a ledge, but the ledge breaks. He grasps a bush when the bush slowly gives way. The reader is called off to consider something else and get his mind rested. This time, returning to the precipice, the bush actually yields, and the hero's body plunges through the air and is lost to view in the roaring dark waters beneath. Half an hour later a comic countryman, who has been playing wonderful ball in place of the missing Frank, throws off his disguise and reveals himself as the invincible hero.

### SOME SAMPLE TID-BITS.

"Nick Carter the Detective," "Buffalo Bill," "Young Rough Riders," "Old Diamond Dick," the pioneer of modern thrillers; "The Liberty Boys of '76," "Old King and Young King Brady," a New York detective series, and one of "Boys Who Succeeded in Business" are leaders in the list. Original plots and plenty of incident are demanded. Things must seem fairly natural. A recent phonograph detective story was founded upon a Custom House auction sale of a phonograph record, which, being placed on a machine, gave forth the shrieks of a murderer's victim. Another writer used the kinetoscope and a telescope in a gambling house that was illuminated by the new vacuum light. Robberies on Long Island gave rise to a series of the "Sound Pirate."

The following is an example of the terse style now used in place of the old fashioned exclamatory padding:  
"By Jingo!" he finally exclaimed. "Am I awake or am I only dreaming?"  
"I guess you are awake, all right," was the reply. "Do you still insist on relieving me of my cash and valuables?"  
"No! That is nonsense. You have got the upper hand now. You are a wonder, young fellow. Just tell me who you are and my mind will be easier."  
"Well, if it will do you any good I'll tell you who I am. I go by the name of Young Wild West because I have no other to go by."  
"Young Wild West, the Prince of the Saddle and Champion Kidnaper of the West?" muttered the man just loud enough for the boy to hear it.  
"Yes, that's me. Now, who are you?"  
"I am Eandy Lou, the Outlaw King. I have never yet met the man I am afraid of, and I have operated successfully in seven states and territories."  
"Outlaw King, eh?" said the boy, with a laugh. "I have met several outlaw kings in my day, and they all seem to be alike to me. If they can catch a fellow naming them all right, but if a fellow happens to turn the tables on them they are as weak as a newborn lamb. Dandy Lou, the Outlaw King, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

They fight a duel with bowie knives, and this is the outcome:  
"Purlee!" roared the Outlaw King. "Put the

steel point in my heart and have done with it, boy. You are a master of the art!"

"This is a real theatrical chophouse. You will notice the signs on the wall. 'Watch your hat' and 'Keep an eye on your umbrella.'"  
"Great gooseberries!" exclaimed the old farmer in the party. "I often heard tell that these here actor folks were half starved, but I didn't think they would eat hats and umbrellas."—Chicago News.

### FIFTY GIFTED AUTHORS.

A cover lithographed in gaudy colors and large type makes the thriller outwardly attractive. "Smashing the Auto Record; or, Bart Wilson at the Speed Lever," shows the hero passing the grandstand in a vermillion racer, and the blue coated villain is falling backward in a cloud of dust. "The Bradys and the Kansas Come-ons; or, Hot Work on a Green Goods Case," depicts a terrific combat on a red house-top between a blue detective and a yellow trousered villain brandishing a packing hook. A red shirted "Rube" in long boots is prostrate with a bullet in his heart, while a second detective holds a revolver to a brown coated, scowling green goods man. According to the inscription, Old King Brady, covering the green goods man with his revolver, cried, "This is yours if you move, Martinigney!"

The publishers receive every week hundreds of letters from appreciative readers, whose ages in general run from nine to fourteen years. Many grown-ups confess their enjoyment. One woman wrote that "me and my husband liked this book best of all." A negro elevator man scornfully repudiated the writer's suggestion that he read "thrillers," but admitted that his wife did. It is said that young mechanics who have acquired the habit of boys find it difficult to break off. The reason why college graduates, jurists and men of affairs occasionally indulge may be similar to that which impels them, after smoking many 25-cent cigars, to recuperate jaded appetite on the rankest stogies.  
The writing of 5-cent literature is an art in its way, and there are only about fifty authors in the country. They form a close corporation, many have been at the business for twenty years. Some are ex-newspaper men, others former globe trotters and old graduates of the old "Ledger" school of story writing. It is told that one man produces "thrillers" with his left hand and dramatic criticism for a weekly journal with his right; another pens "5-centers" under a pseudonym and uses his own name for the title page of dollar and a half romances. Each author is under contract and is expected to produce a thirty-thousand word story every week. The champion writer, who is alleged to get a salary of \$10,000 a year, rides about the country on railroad trains, and in two days' time, or at the rate of about thirty-five words a minute and two thousand words an hour, dictates an entire thirty thousand word story to his stenographer. He spends the rest of the week revising the typewritten sheets and doing other literary work. The average salary of the authors is stated to be \$4,000 a year.