LEARNING TO GO BARE BACK.

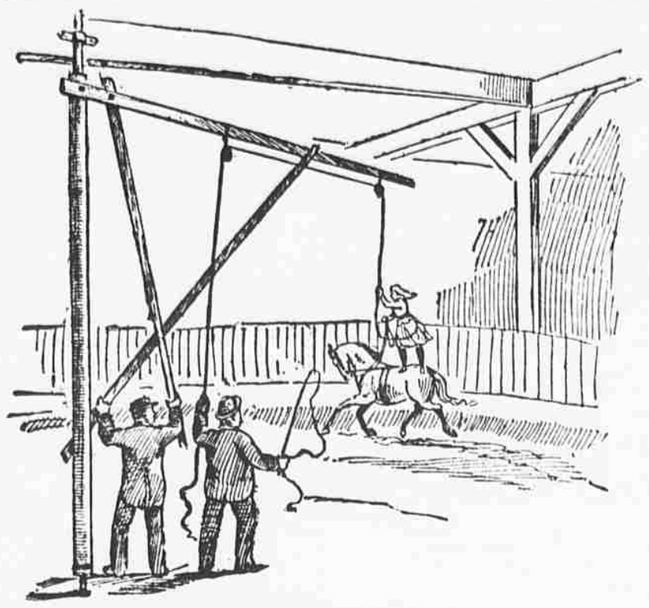
HOW CIRCUS PERFORMERS ARE MADE IN CINCINNATI.

John Robinson's Training Quarters—Men and Women at Work—A Machine to Avoid Danger—Exercise for the Knees.

From the Cincinnati Enquirer.

Training women and men to ride bare back in the circus arena is a business. Cincinnati has such a training school, and it has turned out some of the greatest bare back, hurdle, all-around, somersault, trick riders, and two and four and six horse riders that the American continent has ever seen. The casual observer has little idea of the patience and fearlessness, hours of hard unceasing labor that a rider in the circus arena must go through before proficiency is attained.

Yesterday a reporter spent several hours watching the exercises and noting the peculiarities of the training. Mr. John Wilson, the veteran four-horse rider, is at present in charge of the establishment, and spends eight hours every day in practising the candidates for excellence in the sawdust arena for the John Robinson shows. The training school is on John street, near Poplar, where the winter quarters of the late John Robinson's shows have been for many years. The building for the school is of brick, two stories high, and was erected for the purpose in 1865. It is a barn-like structure, with an office and a room which serves as a dressing room for the women as well as a storeroom for various styles of saddles, bits, and horse medicine. Alongside the office are fifteen newly painted circus wagons, and opposite twelve valuable horses stand in their stalls. Bales of hay are piled up all around, and in the rear of the building is



THE "MECHANIC."

the ring, which is 42 feet in diameter. A horse going around it forty-four times would cover a mile. Formerly a board ring was used, and broken wrists, fractured legs, and dislocated arms were the too frequent result. There are about eighteen inches of tanbark in the ring, covered with from eight to twelve inches of sand and sawdust. The ring is soft, and yet springy, and absolutely free from dust.

In the centre of the ring is a six-inch pole reaching to a strong joist that is one of the roof supports. This pole revolves, and, at a distance of twelve feet from the ground, has an arm extending to the circumference of the ring. To this arm are attached two pulleys, and over them runs a rope, one end of which is attached to a ring in the rider's back and the other end of which Mr. Wilson, the trainer, holds tightly wound around his left hand while in his right hand he holds a long whip, which, as the horse lags, he snaps with a crack, to let the animal know there will be no monkey business.

The machine or contrivance is known as a "mechanic," and its object is to prevent the learner from falling. There is a wide strap, which the new riders fasten around their waists or under the shoulders, in the back of which is a large ring. In case of falling or slipping the rider is held up, while the horse passes on. For women, however, the arrangement is more complicated. Two straps pass over the shoulders, and the ring is set at the back of the neck, attached to a strap running from the waistband, the rope that runs over the pulleys and into the trainer's hands holding the learner in case of a fall erect in the air, her feet dangling and the horse passing from under her. The trainer continually moves around the pole with the horse, watching every motion of the animal's head and every swish of the long tail, as when the ears go back and the tail swishes the animal is going to kick, and he is at once spoken to and held up. Thus if a horse is going to kick, which the trainer at once knows, he can reverse the mechanic and hold the rider aloft in the air comfortably out of danger.

The first horse that came into the ring was a six-year-old gelding of Arabian stock, which had never been before an assemblage and was a stranger to the plaudits of the arena. He had on a bitting machine, consisting of a wide girdle over the back just behind the shoulders, in which were the hand pieces to assist the rider in vaulting on and off. A rubber bit was used, and the curb held the horse's head in a firm and graceful attitude.

"The horse had been a kicker," said Will Darr, a stout-built, athletic young man of 28, with a cigar stump in his mouth, clad in a pair of trousers, woollen shirt, and in his stocking feet. Vaulting to the nag's broad back, the animal loped around the ring. Then Darr got on his knees, next stood upright balancing himself on the horse's back, while with his left hand he held the cord that ran over the pulleys of the mechanic. Now on one foot, now on the other, he danced back and forth with the motion of the horse, while in his right hand he held the reins. All the time he spoke to the horse. "Good boy! good boy! good man!" The young man was an expert rider and has been two years in the ring. He was as much at home on the horse's back as most people are on terra firma. Half an hour's practise sufficed for this horse.

Mrs. Marks, a compactly built, gracefully formed woman, clad in gray flannel skirt to her knees, gray flannel knee breeches, and striped blue stockings, next entered the arena. Her feet were encased in opera slippers, and she wore a tight-fitting basque. She was also an expert rider and perfectly at home on the horse. She stood on one foot, then on both, walking backward and forward on the horse's broad back as easily and as gracefully as though on a parlor carpet. She stood perfectly erect, then jumped up eighteen inches or two feet, alighting steadily on the horse's rump; then turned with her face to the horse's tail, and at last came down in a flush. The horse was of Norman breed, with back and rump very broad. Resting for perhaps five minutes, the horse slowly walking around the ring, she chatted with the ringmaster and then started in again. For a time she sat upon the horse, working her body all over his back and accustoming the animal to every change of position. This horse is called John and is valued at $1,500.

A plump young woman of 18 years, who formerly worked on the trapeze, was next. She had only been riding four days, and was training for the hurdle races and the Roman chariot hippodrome races. She seemed perfectly fearless, and mounted with the aid of an attendant, and in a jiffy was up and off. She was training to do the vaulting act, where the horse leaps over a bar gate or a hurdle, and the rider dismounts and vaults on again after the horse has cleared the hurdle.

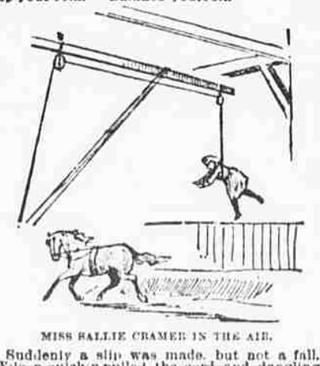
"Now, down!" shouted Johnny Wilson after she had ridden around several times. Grasping the handles around the surcingle, she gracefully leaped to the ground, and Wilson gently pulling the rope that was attached to the ring back of her neck she vaulted back again. This was repeated until she at last vaulted without the aid of the rope. The exercise was violent, and her cheeks glowed with a flush of health, giving a roseate tint to her fair complexion that would have cut to the blush any painted carmine stage beauty that ever trod the boards. The horse kept on the lope, Wilson cracked his whip, the rings and chains rattled and cracked, the horse puffed and panted, and the young lady rose to her knees and then on both feet. "Clear on your toes!" shouted Wilson. Crack went the whip. "Walk up and down!" "All over the horse!" "Bully for you!" "Toes down!" "Outside shoulder in more!" "Stay there!" "Watch your toes!" were the quick, short orders that came in rapid succession between the cracks of the whip and pants of the horse.

"My knees are giving out," at last she said.

"All right; come down," responded Wilson, and the lady was seated on the horse's rump. Such was Miss Sallie Cramer, who enters the arena next season as a hurdle rider, and pockets her snug little salary of $45 a week.

"The hardest thing to teach the ladies," said Johnny Wilson, "is jumping on the horse—dancing on him. There is also a good deal of trouble in teaching beginners their proper positions. You see, they must stand erect. Robinson's method was to first teach all his pupils to stand correctly on the horse. What is to stand correctly? When the head is erect, heels together, knees straight and toes out, the right shoulder turned in facing the horse. They must get the spring from the ball of the foot, and not from the knees. The tendency is to ride on the heel, and that is what we have to overcome in all new riders. That is why you hear me continually shouting: 'Keep your toes into the horse.' When a lady first begins to ride the tendency is to scrouch, as if to grab the horse by the mane, and all that has to be overcome."

The five minutes' rest being over, Miss Sallie signified her willingness to finish out her half hour, and the horse broke into the lope. This differs from the canter, in that both the inside feet of the horse—that is, the front and hind foot toward the ringmaster—are in the air at once, while every muscle in the horse's body seems to be in motion. As she stood up, holding the rope in her left hand and the reins in her right, whisking around the ring, now on one foot, now on the other, Wilson kept shouting in a melodious monotone: "Keep on your toes," "Keep on your toes," "Walk all around on 'em," "Don't lean back on 'em," "Stand up straight," "That's good," "Hold on to your skirt," "There, take hold of the rope," "Pull up your rein," "Balance yourself."



MISS SALLIE CRAMER IN THE AIR.

Suddenly a slip was made, but not a fall. Wilson quickly pulled the cord, and dangling in the air perfectly unconcerned the lady hung, while the horse cantered unconcernedly on. It was the work of a moment to let her easily down into the ring and as the horse came around she vaulted on to his back again.

"She is going to make a great rider," remarked Wilson, "for she has not the slightest fear of the horse," and after her ride was over she repaired to the dressing room and soon came out in a blue dress, and, joining Wilson at the pole, walked around by his side, watching every order and studying the horse's motions as the other riders went through their exercises.

Thomas B. Hughes, training for the hippodrome and as a four-horse rider, came out clad in stocking tights and a red jockey cap. His horse was a half-brother to an Arabian horse. He rode around several times bareback, and then moved all over the animal's back so that no amount of tickling would make him kick, saying all the time, "Steady, boy." Then he stood up, jumped up and down and turned about with his face to the animal's tail. He was a splendid specimen of a man physically, muscular and agile, tall, with no surplus flesh, his motions graceful, self-possessed and easy.

JOHNNY WILSON, THE TRAINER.

THOMAS B. HUGHES IN PRACTICE.

"Uncle John Robinson trained a great many people," said Johnny Wilson, "and some of the finest bareback riders the world has ever seen were the creations of his nerve and skill. He trained Jim Robinson of Louisville, the champion rider of the world; James Hernandez, Cordelia Gullich, one of the greatest female riders in the business; Frank Robbins, a somersault and trick rider; John Robinson, Jr., the present owner of the show, and myself, who was with him for thirty-one years, and John Robinson, a son of his brother, Aleck, as well as Louis Willis, the only colored rider ever in the business in America."

The horses at the training quarters include Menenger, a jumping horse who jumps over seven feet, and is so well trained and easily handled that a lady—Miss Mabel Read—manages him. There are four Norman horses, with broad backs, large and strong limbed, perfectly gentle and tractable, and all white or dapple gray. They are known as John, Sunday, Don, and Biel. Hiram is a gray Eagle Eye, a barrel mare of Glencoe stock, blooded; Prince, a large, fine broncho pony, broke for a lady or gentleman in the hurdles. There is also a span of black mares, for Roman races in the hippodrome. They are of Morgan stock, and small, chunky horses, and the two that run against them are a pair of thoroughbred bays, Ellen Tree and Harry.

THE FENCING PROBLEM.

SOME EXPERT VIEWS ON THE NECESSITY OF A RADICAL CHANGE.

An Interesting Letter from a Correspondent—The Turn Verein is Dissatisfied—A Suggested Way Out of the Difficulty.

A great deal of dissatisfaction has been the outcome of the last fencing championship meeting of the Amateur Athletic Union, both at the decisions rendered and the manner of conducting the competitions. The New York Turn Verein fencers are the most disgruntled lot, and with some little cause. Not only did the judges seem to deal especially severe with them, but the system is at variance with their own and they were at a great disadvantage. The present way of arranging contests is at fault, for the best fencers do not meet in the finals by any means. For instance, the very first preliminary bout may bring the two most expert fencers together. If evenly matched, the score will be close, probably 5 to 4. This is not exactly a conclusive test of the winner's superiority, particularly with such judging as marked the last meeting. But the loser has no chance to retrieve his lost laurels. Like the unfortunate marksman at some pigeon-shooting sweepstakes, one miss puts him out, and he is compelled to look on and see inferior swordsmen, who have drawn opponents of their own calibre, contest in the final bouts of the championship. In the second round of trials the successful winner of the first bout may meet the next best man left; this time, through the judge's decisions or a little hard luck he is defeated. He must step down and out, and the two best swordsmen in the class stand side by side and watch the championship go to some contestant whom they could easily outpoint 5 to 0.

All agree that there is imperative need for a new system, but none seem ingenious enough to concoct one. In the following interesting communication from an enthusiast, the Turners' method of separating the chaff from the wheat is advocated, but while it is the fairest of all, it is too complicated. It is the billiard-players' plan, by which every contestant is given a "run for his money," but is impracticable, as Mr. Eugene Van Schaick further on in an interview demonstrates by cold figures. The letter in question is from an influential N. Y. T. U. member, and is commendable for its impartiality and instructiveness:

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—Sir: Notwithstanding that too much credit or appreciation cannot be given to the Amateur Athletic Union for its efforts in the behalf of furthering the art of fencing, yet competitions of the nature of the last one are apt to give the general public, especially amateur gymnasts and athletes, who should be taught to appreciate the physical benefits of this exercise, a wrong impression of the art. All those who know the least thing of fencing are aware that giving "touches" does not constitute real good fencing, and where the unmitigated will applaud a fierce, rushing point, the knowing ones will appreciate a clever passe "at more, and will rate the cool, clever parry, ing fencer above the rusher, who, however, in a tournament generally receives—but does not merit—the applause. The system of competition of the Amateur Athletic Union is too well known to demand further explanation; it certainly leaves a great opening for chance, aye, it is liable for two good second-class fencers to fight out the deciding bout. Then again in these competitions no attention whatever is paid to the position, the missing of a parry when making a thrust, as for instance A scores on B, and instead of covering himself is touched by B as a return, this should be considered a grievous fault on A's part. There is another association of gymnasts in this country, the Sonderverein, Lucher Turnerbund, who are as a rule ignored by the American press because it does not furnish record smashers or athletes, but develops men and boys as gymnasts, i. e., develops their muscular abilities to the full extent of true sound health, which considers fencing one of the prime means to this end.

In these associations, societies and over 30,000 members) there are fencing sections comprising, say, 80 fencers. Fencing tournaments are held at the "Kreirskutsfest," i. e., district gymnastic exhibitions or festivals, and the "Bundesfest," or the league gymnastic festival. The one held in Cincinnati last year was attended by over 2,000 Turners, and fencing went on for three days, between thirty and forty fencers taking part. The system of judging is this: Each pair of fencers (fechtenpaar) has two judges, who note the touches made and the position of the fencers. The man who scores five points out of ten, and the general position secures a laurel wreath and diploma. He has crossed foils with every fencer, good or bad, who has entered. Let us take for example four fencers, A, B, C, D; then A must fence with B, C, and D; B with A, C, and D; C with A, B, and D, and D with A, B, and C.

Now A may score with B 5 to 4, and B may touch C 5 to 4, and yet according to the rules laid down by the Amateur Athletic Union, the natural inference drawn would be that A could easily overcome C, but this is seldom so. For instance, I have before me a case in which 10 fencers took part, when No 3 scored 5 to 0 with No 9, No 5 scored 5 to 2 with No 2, and No 9 badly beaten by No 3 scored 5 to 0 with No 5. According to the Amateur Athletic Union rules, No 5 and 3 would have been barred out, whereas they stood rather high at the end of the tournament (No. 3 won with about 40 points out of 50), this shows that the system of preliminaries and finals is not by any means the correct way to pick out the best fencer. The immediate cause of this note is the last tournament and the entirely unexpected (at least to me) outcome of the same. The New York Turn Verein sent some first and second-class men to compete; one contestant, who has earned laurels and diplomas time and again by the Turners' system, was beat twice in the preliminaries, and also in the final. Men who admit that he is their superior as a swordsman have shown off to much better advantage in the general public, and the sin headedness of good Prof. Friederich certainly does not remedy or improve matters. The competition of the nature as it was, was probably as fair as it could be. But is it right that competitions of this kind make champions of men who have not done what others have done and are still able to do? And is it right to make fencing merely a sticking-to-it-ness, when only touches are counted and the real, the skilful parry, the graceful lunge, position, the quick execution are entirely ignored?

Although as yet only a beginner, I have the interest of fencing much at heart, not only as an exhibition of prowess but also as a most beneficial and healthy exercise, and trust that it will receive the place it deserves in gymnastic exhibitions.

Mr. Eugene Van Schaick of the Manhattan Athletic Club, an enthusiast on fencing, and who has given the subject much intelligent consideration, was shown the foregoing letter and after a careful perusal, replied: "I heartily approve of the desire for better fencing therein indicated. It would certainly be very much better if a system of handicapping could be adopted, if it were possible to make every fencer have a bout against every other fencer who is entered. The case which 'On Guard' takes is that of four fencers. This must necessarily result in twelve bouts. At the end of the twelve bouts all the fencers might be at the same position as before crossing swords. What I mean to say is this: That in the last contest we had some fifty-six entries; if they had made every man fence against every other man entered, there would have resulted some three thousand competitions. Supposing that each bout for two points took but less than five minutes (one of mine, that with Mr. Shaw of the New York Athletic Club, took over half an hour), and supposing that they fenced every minute of the twenty-four hours, it would take at least ten days to determine the championships. This, of course, is not to be thought of. I thoroughly believe in a different system of deciding the championships, and I have no doubt but that next year's will be held under different rules. I have had some conversation with Mr. Anderson of the New York Athletic Club, Mr. Sullivan of the Amateur Athletic Union, and prominent fencers, and we have agreed to get together and formulate a new system according to the latest Parisian rules, and to present it for the consideration of the A. A. U.

"The difficulty about avoiding bouts on other grounds than 'touches' is that each master in New York has a somewhat different method of fencing. Take, for example, that very clever swordsman, Mr. Sinicalco. His success with the foil is undeniable, yet he attains that success by other means than Mr. Senac or Mr. Jacoby; so that although he and his pupils might be extremely successful on the field of honor, they would be absolutely debarred from any chance in championship competitions, simply from their position when assuming the guard. The chief trouble so far with fencing is that there has been unfriendliness and even quarrels between the different fencing masters. This of late has almost disappeared through the efforts of the more prominent amateurs, and it will undoubtedly result in some understanding or some lines whereby competitions in the future will be better and more satisfactorily judged. I cannot commend too highly the sentiments expressed by 'On Guard,' and by all others who will endeavor to improve the beautiful art of fencing and show it to be the pastime of gentlemen."

Mr. W. B. Lawson of the New York Athletic Club, an ex-champion swordsman, who is a member of the Fencing Committee of the Amateur Athletic Union, thought the letter very lucid, with some merit in the suggestions. "But," he said, while it will readily be conceded to 'On Guard' that the present system of 'Miss and Out,' by which the defeated competitor for the championship retires altogether from the contest on his first reverse, leaves very much to be desired as a crucial test of a fencer's real quality, it may quite safely be maintained, on the other hand, that it is certainly the best and fairest method, and practically the only method of conducting such championship competitions. If it does not go so far as to insure that the most skilful fencers shall win, it certainly affords a very fair test of merit, while the championship displays themselves, popularize the science, and make it both intelligible and attractive to the public as a noble, manly, and graceful art. The fact is, however, indisputable, that individual fencing championships are as useless as, say, individual cricketing or football championships. The substitution of a championship class, limited in number to say a dozen members, would rob championship contests of all their objectionable features. Such a change is, of course, inadmissable under the existing rules of the Amateur Athletic Union, but it is probable that these will before long be modified in such a manner as to allow of the championship course. I am aware of the dissatisfaction which, however softened by the courtesy and mutual amenities of the prominent members of the competing institutions, are still inseparable from all contests of the kind between rival clubs when such are brought to a decisive issue on a single trial, as a championship class with specific prizes to be awarded for certain events would keep alive and promote public interest in the fencing movement, and the mooted question of the superiority of any particular member over another, if it became a burning question, could be settled without running the risk of making it a party question."

All fencers interviewed acknowledge that the practice of deciding championships by contests between winners of bouts only leaves too much to chance, and that victory by "touches" is apt to unduly reward inferior fencing while neglecting the finer points of science, and that it is a mere toss-up whether the best man wins at such exhibitions, while it is a certainty that the highest interests of the art lose by them.

It is understood that the Fencing Committee are trying to evolve a new plan of conducting the championships, and the following suggestion might be worthy of consideration. Let each of the interested clubs hold a preliminary fencing tournament for its fencers, the winner of each class to be sent to the championship meeting to represent the club. Then let the A. A. U. select judges totally disinterested, not as heretofore have the teachers of the contestants acting, and adopt "On Guard's" plan of having every contestant meet the other, the bouts to be decided on the general experience and merit of the competitors. This would do away with the unsatisfactory preliminary bouts of the A. A. U., and in the various clubs the trial bouts would stimulate the sport, for the members, with expectant hearts, would vie with each other for the honor of being the club's knight at the great tourney. Judging by the past, there would not be more than six champions in each class. Thus the foils might be finished in one evening, the duelling swords the next, and the sabres the third evening, exactly the same time as and a far more interesting programme than the last meeting.

By this plan the A. A. U. could quadruple its present revenue, and in case of ties the interest would be still greater.

Odd Matters in Maine.

BANGOR, March 8.—Ivory Clark of South Sanford is the most tender-hearted man in Maine, and he makes such pets of all the domestic animals on his farm that they are of little profit to him. He owns a large flock of hens, but never kills one. His aged cow gave no milk for several years, yet he kept her fat on boiled hay and meal, carrying the meal on his back from a mill two miles away. Last week the old cow, having reached the age of 29 years, was unable to stand on her feet, and out of pity her owner killed her.

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Mrs. Ruth Jewell of Limington celebrated her 102d birthday recently, and last week Mrs. Mary Batson, a wide-awake old lady of Addison, turned her 99th year.

The present winter in Maine is full of freaks. While every other river in the State is frozen solidly over, the Machias has been entirely clear of ice all along; and one of the largest ponds on Mount Desert Island has thus far failed to freeze up, there being a skirt of thin ice along the shore, but none whatever in the middle of the pond.

Private Ownership Against Yankee Custom.

STONINGTON, March 8.—The millionaire Ferguson family of Pittsburgh, Pa., who recently bought Fisher's Island for a pleasure ground, and the free and independent fishermen all along shore are at cross purposes. After buying the island, which is nine miles by a mile and a half in size, and declaring their intention to put a colossal wall across the middle of the island and lay out the eastern half in a game preserve, they issued a proclamation forbidding all fishermen to gather seaweed along the island strand or fish in the adjacent waters, which privilege the Yankee fishermen had been doing since an immemorial date. The mandate was heard by them with chagrin and resentment, and after a day or two they sent back this defiance: "All right about the seaweed raking, you've got the law to do that; but you can go and tell those Fergusons they can't own Fisher's Island, but Uncle Sam owns the Atlantic Ocean, that part of it that sloshes round his outside door, and we shall keep right on fishing in the adjacent waters of Fisher's Island."

Thus the relations between the mainland and the island remain strained. The fishermen say they shall keep on fishing, and they do fish now, in the "adjacent waters," while the Fergusons say they shan't fish any more. The clash of resounding arms between the two powers is expected daily.

Alcoholic Lunacy Increasing in France.

Recent investigations conducted by M. Paul Garnier and embodied in a report to a convention of French doctors gives startling facts as to the increase of insanity in that country, and especially as to the increase of that form of insanity due to the excessive use of alcoholic drinks. From 1871 to 1888 insanity increased in France by 30 per cent. Fifty-six per cent. of the insane are men and 44 per cent. are women. The increase during the last seventeen years has been almost entirely in the branches of alcoholic insanity and of general paralysis, or paresis. There has been very little increase in mania, melancholia, and chronic delirium. Alcohol and overwork are therefore held responsible for the greater part of the increase of insanity during recent years. The frequency of alcoholic insanity has doubled in fifteen years, and the cases have increased 25 per cent. in the last three years. Fifteen years ago the proportion of women among the cases of alcoholic insanity was one-sixth. Now it is one-fifth. A singular fact noted is that the number of new cases of insanity is greatest in the spring, and that this is especially true of general paresis, of which the month of May seems to inaugurate annually an epidemic.

Asbestos Mining in Canada.

From the Popular Science Monthly.

Mining is carried on by cutting down the hills of asbestos-bearing serpentine, much as a farmer cuts down a stack of hay or straw, or by open quarrying on the level. The rock is blasted out, and the asbestos, separated from the surrounding rock, is "cobbed," that is, separated by hammering from inferior foreign matter. This cobbing is a comparatively easy matter in the case of the finer quality, as it usually separates readily from the gangue, but in the lower grades much difficulty is experienced in separating the fibrous matter from the non-fibrous. At best there is a great waste. Much of the asbestos is in thin and narrow veins, and is wasted, as by the present mode of operating it does not pay to separate this from the surrounding rock. Machines have been recently invented, and dissatisfaction which, however softened by the courtesy and mutual amenities of the prominent members of the competing institutions, are still inseparable from all contests of the kind between rival clubs when such are brought to a decisive issue on a single trial, as a championship class with specific prizes to be awarded for certain events would keep alive and promote public interest in the fencing movement, and the mooted question of the superiority of any particular member over another, if it became a burning question, could be settled without running the risk of making it a party question."

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There are now living in the town of Addison thirteen couples who have been married over fifty years. Mr. and Mrs. John Emerson, the oldest couple, have lived together sixty years.

Mrs. Ruth Jewell of Limington celebrated her 102d birthday recently, and last week Mrs. Mary Batson, a wide-awake old lady of Addison, turned her 99th year.

The present winter in Maine is full of freaks. While every other river in the State is frozen solidly over, the Machias has been entirely clear of ice all along; and one of the largest ponds on Mount Desert Island has thus far failed to freeze up, there being a skirt of thin ice along the shore, but none whatever in the middle of the pond.

Private Ownership Against Yankee Custom.

STONINGTON, March 8.—The millionaire Ferguson family of Pittsburgh, Pa., who recently bought Fisher's Island for a pleasure ground, and the free and independent fishermen all along shore are at cross purposes. After buying the island, which is nine miles by a mile and a half in size, and declaring their intention to put a colossal wall across the middle of the island and lay out the eastern half in a game preserve, they issued a proclamation forbidding all fishermen to gather seaweed along the island strand or fish in the adjacent waters, which privilege the Yankee fishermen had been doing since an immemorial date. The mandate was heard by them with chagrin and resentment, and after a day or two they sent back this defiance: "All right about the seaweed raking, you've got the law to do that; but you can go and tell those Fergusons they can't own Fisher's Island, but Uncle Sam owns the Atlantic Ocean, that part of it that sloshes round his outside door, and we shall keep right on fishing in the adjacent waters of Fisher's Island."

Thus the relations between the mainland and the island remain strained. The fishermen say they shall keep on fishing, and they do fish now, in the "adjacent waters," while the Fergusons say they shan't fish any more. The clash of resounding arms between the two powers is expected daily.

Alcoholic Lunacy Increasing in France.

Recent investigations conducted by M. Paul Garnier and embodied in a report to a convention of French doctors gives startling facts as to the increase of insanity in that country, and especially as to the increase of that form of insanity due to the excessive use of alcoholic drinks. From 1871 to 1888 insanity increased in France by 30 per cent. Fifty-six per cent. of the insane are men and 44 per cent. are women. The increase during the last seventeen years has been almost entirely in the branches of alcoholic insanity and of general paralysis, or paresis. There has been very little increase in mania, melancholia, and chronic delirium. Alcohol and overwork are therefore held responsible for the greater part of the increase of insanity during recent years. The frequency of alcoholic insanity has doubled in fifteen years, and the cases have increased 25 per cent. in the last three years. Fifteen years ago the proportion of women among the cases of alcoholic insanity was one-sixth. Now it is one-fifth. A singular fact noted is that the number of new cases of insanity is greatest in the spring, and that this is especially true of general paresis, of which the month of May seems to inaugurate annually an epidemic.

Asbestos Mining in Canada.

From the Popular Science Monthly.

Mining is carried on by cutting down the hills of asbestos-bearing serpentine, much as a farmer cuts down a stack of hay or straw, or by open quarrying on the level. The rock is blasted out, and the asbestos, separated from the surrounding rock, is "cobbed," that is, separated by hammering from inferior foreign matter. This cobbing is a comparatively easy matter in the case of the finer quality, as it usually separates readily from the gangue, but in the lower grades much difficulty is experienced in separating the fibrous matter from the non-fibrous. At best there is a great waste. Much of the asbestos is in thin and narrow veins, and is wasted, as by the present mode of operating it does not pay to separate this from the surrounding rock. Machines have been recently invented, and dissatisfaction which, however softened by the courtesy and mutual amenities of the prominent members of the competing institutions, are still inseparable from all contests of the kind between rival clubs when such are brought to a decisive issue on a single trial, as a championship class with specific prizes to be awarded for certain events would keep alive and promote public interest in the fencing movement, and the mooted

LAW FOR THE PAWNBROKERS

A FEW HINTS FOR THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE POOR.

The Mayor's Marshal Can Often Be of Great Assistance to the Man Who Has Things in Pawn—Reason of the High Interest—Pawnbrokers and Thieves.

There are 110 licensed pawnbrokers in the city of New York. The amount of property that passes through their hands is enormous. It is a business that proverbially does not enlist the activities of men with sympathy. It takes a sharper advantage of the necessities of men than any other. It affords a prompt relief in extremity, but at a cost that taxes the very heart strings of the unfortunates who are compelled to resort to it as the last refuge from starvation. Great buildings are stored with pledges that have been wrung from the bitter sufferings of the poor and needy; pledges of every form of affection, relics of family history, trophies of heroic deeds, rewards of merit, presents from beloved ones, representing every tie of consanguinity.

"How much will you let me have on that?" is the question of despair. There is nothing whatever to control the pawnbroker's answer to that question. The article may be worth $100, yet he may value it at $25. In the majority of cases the pawning is a sale. The pawnbroker calculates that sooner or later most of the goods left in his charge will become his property. It is therefore the rule that goods in pawn are worth much more than they are pawned for, and the probability is that when pledges are unredeemed at the expiration of a year the pawnbroker not only gets his loaned money back, but a good, round surplus.

Yet the law is perfectly plain that the pawnbroker has no right to appropriate to himself any such overplus. The law is explicit and clear. The property must be kept a year. Then it must be advertised for sale at public auction. The pawnbroker has no right to sell it himself, or to buy it himself. In many cases the pawnbrokers do buy in through third parties, but, if caught at it, they would be heavily fined. The public sale must be conducted by a licensed auctioneer of the city. The notice of sale must be published at least six days previous to the sale in at least two daily newspapers of the city where the sales take place. The name of the auctioneer and the description of the goods must be advertised. Then the surplus money after deducting the amount of loan and expenses must be paid over to the person who would be entitled to redeem the pledge if no sale had taken place. Unfortunately, many poor people who do not know this, and suppose that when once the year is expired they have no claim to the property. They never think of going to the pawnbroker to demand the surplus to which they are entitled, and they do not know that by going to the Mayor's Marshal they have a very expeditious way of getting hold of this surplus and of compelling the pawnbroker to disgorge. It makes no difference if several years have elapsed. The owner's right to the surplus holds good, and the pawnbroker can be made to give it up within twenty-four hours.

The provision of law to prevent the pawnbroker from buying in pledged property are very strict. No pawnbroker has the right to engage in any second-hand business. The trouble is, however, that it is easy to do it through a third party, and so to conduct pawnbrokers' sales that goods can be sold at much less than their actual value. Although there may be no apparent surplus after paying expenses and the amount of the loan, the fact may be that the pawnbroker may make a large sum by the sale. He has had access to the goods, and knows the exact value. He can communicate this knowledge to a confederate. He can buy in $50 worth of goods for $40. But, as has been said, there is quick redress for the owner if he only knows enough to call in the services of the Mayor's Marshal.

As a matter of fact, the Mayor's Marshal is quite a terror to the pawnbroker tribe. He has a little court where he is himself judge and jury and executioner. He acts as the agent of the Mayor, who generally adopts his recommendations. The Mayor acts as a justice, and imposes fines on pawnbrokers. The other day the Mayor's Marshal, Daniel Engelhardt, issued warrants against twelve pawnbrokers for taking more than he was entitled to by law, and the result was that the pawnbroker paid $25 fine. There are many petty overcharges by pawnbrokers that could be redressed in this way if people only knew enough to go down and start the Mayor's Marshal. Many cases where the value of the property to be recovered is so small that the owner would rather let it go than bother about it.

This provision of law that the surplus of a pawnbroker's sale belongs to the owner of the ticket is only about five years old, and many intelligent persons are not aware of its existence. It ought to be widely published, and pawnbrokers should be compelled to placard it in their shops, on the same principle that the driver of a hack is compelled to carry in a conspicuous place a schedule of the legal rates of fare. Without such publicity the pawnbroker has a great advantage.

As a rule pawnbrokers dispose of pledges promptly at the expiration of the year. The plea for this is that otherwise they would require large rooms for storage. In some cases pawnbrokers have been known to dispose of pledges before the expiration of the year, under the impression that the owner would never appear to redeem them. Of course, this is a flagrant violation of law, and could be punished severely if the owners would make complaint. In some cases where they have been detected in such premature sales pawnbrokers have compromised by surrendering other articles. Several cases have come to the knowledge of the writer where watches pledged have been sought to be redeemed by the owners, and the pawnbroker was compelled to admit that a premature sale and pretend to make restitution by the substitution of other watches. In some such cases the watches thus supplied were found to be inferior to those which they replaced. If anybody has a grievance of that kind the Mayor's Marshal can redress it for him very quickly.

The profit on the interest allowed by law to pawnbrokers is enormous. The law is that he shall not ask, demand or receive any greater rate of interest than three per cent. a month for the first six months upon any loan not exceeding $100, and for each succeeding month two per cent. a month. In sums over $100 the pawnbroker has the right to charge only two per cent. a month for the first six months, and one per cent. a month thereafter. The interest thus varies from 30 per cent. a year to 18 per cent. a year. This is from three to five times the legal rate of interest for money lent, and appears to be an enormous interest when computed on large sums. It is but just to say that on small sums of a dollar or two this is really a small payment, when we consider the work and responsibility of the pawnbroker. The law requires that the pawnbroker must have a license which costs him $500 a year; he must give $10,000 security; he must keep books with full records of each transaction; he must provide a ticket to represent the goods pledged; he is liable to inspection by the Mayor's Marshal; he takes a risk that the goods pawned are stolen, and may be taken from him by the Court; so that the money the pawnbroker receives is for a good many things besides interest.

Take, for instance, the pawning of a thing for $1. If the goods are redeemed at the end of a month the pawnbroker gets for the service is three cents. If he charges more he is liable to have his $500-license revoked by the Mayor. The reason why such apparently exorbitant interest is allowed is because in the bulk of transactions the amount lent is below $5. It is only when large sums are obtained that the interest becomes really exorbitant, and when these large sums are required there are means of evading the law so that the full rate of interest which pawnbrokers may charge is not really charged.

One of the ways of evading the law concerning pawnbrokers is by fictitious sales. It is well known that there are certain jewelry stores where the owners receive property in pawn under cover of a pretended purchase. The plan is very simple. The owner of the goods says: "I will sell you this for $50, and you can pay me now, and I will buy it back next month for $51. It is really worth $100." The storekeeper says: "All right," and he keeps the goods. At the end of the month the owner comes back and gets his goods, and pays $51. By this transaction he has obtained the use of $50 for a month for $1. If he had gone to a pawnbroker it would have cost him $1.50. It is true that this is an unlawful act. The pawnbroker act of 1884 explicitly provides that any one who lends money in such a way is a pawnbroker, but an effort to enforce the law against a very notorious store failed. It was impossible to prove that the transaction was not real. Of course, no law can be made that will prevent a man from selling his property, or from buying the same property back.

These evasions of the law are of course an invasion of the bailiwick of the pawnbroker, and tend to decrease his profits and prevent his lending large sums at the exorbitant rates authorized by law. The irregular pawnbrokers, having no license to pay and no restrictions as to methods, are able to underbid the licensed pawnbrokers, and they do so constantly. Every concern carrying on such an irregular business could be punished if the proof could only be obtained.

There is one advantage in dealing with a regularly licensed pawnbroker, which is that if one recovers a judgment against such a pawnbroker it may be enforced on his bondsman. The fact that this irregular business has grown recently to a quantity of pig tailed Flemings secured more than White, and the latter attempted to get