THE MARKET IN MANTES.

FRENCH RURAL LIFE.

Scenes in the Country Side Near Paris.

A TYPICAL SEINE TOWN.

Its Historic Old Church and Its Sleepy Population—The Thrift of the People—Small Farms Well Cultivated—Women Who Work in the Fields.

Correspondence of The Evening Star.

PARIS, Sept. 21, 1892.

MANTES IS A PICturesque town with 6,600 inhabitants, thirty miles from Paris in the direction of Rouen. It is near to Normandy; and it was at the capture of Mantes, in the year 1087, that William the Conqueror had the fall from his horse which caused his death. Mantes has now a magnificent Gothic church which was built with William's money, and it has a fine old bridge, the river Seine and country carriage drives the most charming that can be imagined. It would be well for hurried tourists, who see nothing of France but Paris, to spend a day round about some town like this.

The best way to reach Mantes is to start for some other town, say Pontoise, and miss the train. Or, if you should miss the Mantes train and visit any other of a hundred rural towns within thirty miles of Paris, the profit would be the same. They are all ugly in themselves; the hotels are all primitive in comfort, but give excellent food, and they all possess intensely interesting historic monuments, with a magnificent fruit and vine country around them in every direction.

At the railway station of Mantes the traveler can stop and look about him. His mind is easy; he has left the whirl of Paris for a day. Here is a straggling town, with nothing in it that he cannot see easily and well, without fatigue or hurry. He selects one of the four sorry-looking omnibuses which are backed up against the station and jingles along the village road to the hotel. With him there will be two other passengers—one a young servant girl come home from Paris for a few days' outing, the other an old village woman in her peasant finery to show that she has been paying a friendly visit somewhere. Each of these females will have half a dozen baskets and bundles, and they will be sociably talking together as soon as they are seated. They do not talk to tourists, because all tourists are presumably English—proud, ill-natured and stupid. Country people in France still think that English ladies have webbed toes like ducks.

THE COUNTRY HOTEL KEEPER.

The hotel keeper will be polite with a politeness different from that of Paris. Paris hotels live by strangers. Country hotels do not. The politeness of the country hotel in an unfrequented town, therefore, will be like the politeness of government officials, disinterested and without enthusiasm. If the tourist be of a sensitive disposition he will feel like a poor relation; if his sensibilities are well under control he will speak up authoritative and sharp, drop his valise with a bang on the sanded floor and ask what there is for dinner. Everything goes well in France for the man who asserts himself. That politeness which in America is another word for modesty and kindly feeling has but a limited usefulness with lower-class Frenchmen.

I have been at two hotels in Mantes, each with indifferent accommodations. One is the Grand Hotel of the Great Stag and the White Horse united; the other is the Hotel of the Rock of Cancale. The difference between them is worth noting. The Grand Cerf is by far the most interesting in appearance. It is a long, two-storied straggling building, with two wings which form a handsome court-yard, well shaded. Formerly it was the building of a convent. Within its quaint irregular-shaped rooms, where pious nuns were wont to sit and muse, the modern commercial traveler and stray tourist snore in lofty, canopied beds. The entrance to the Grand Cerf is through the kitchen, where a brigand-looking cook in white duck and with a fierce mustache welcomes the guest and waves him to the landlady's office at the side. Rooms cost three francs the night; the dinner is good, and also costs three francs, without wine. But the conversation of the regular boarders was something indescribable the only time I visited the Grand Cerf. The regular boarders were eight men, presumably railway clerks and the like, and the burden of the talk was borne by a gray-headed old reprobate with a dirty yellow beard of patriarchal extent. They paid no regard to an Englishman and his wife quietly seated at a side table like ourselves, but continued their inappropriate stories from the soup to the middle of the roast, when the English left the room with flaming faces. I heard the man asking for his bill and the landlady expostulating with him in vain. He took his wife to the Rock of Cancale. English-speaking people are bound to support each other in foreign lands, so my friend and I called for our bills as well. "And you go, too?" pleaded the patronne. "Yes, you have your own clients. Their conversation does not please us."

A FAMILY RESORT.

The Hotel of the Rock of Cancale is more of a family resort than the Grand Cerf. Its table the next morning at lunch was filled with a quiet and rather mournful mixture of men and women, respectable country folk in town for the market. There was no conversation at all except that of a fine, stout little boy, whose doting young mother was afraid to give him too much Camembert cheese with his jelly. His fluency in French aroused the enthusiasm of the Englishman's wife, who had mastered the language herself and knew its difficulties. But her husband benevolently pointed out that these French children acquire their accent very young. For breakfast that morning there were little fried fish—fritures de Seine—mutton ragout, green beans, stuffed tomatoes, grapes and various cheeses and jellies. A full bottle of fairly good red country wine was included—a good enough lunch for 50 cents even in France.

Mantes is well though roughly paved with heavy blocks of stone. Most of the houses are without interest, dating less than a century back in their present form. There is little life in the streets and more women are visible than men. The women are seldom pretty. They have severe faces and quiet ways. There is less difference between a country town in the north of France and one in the United States than might be imagined, except that a place of 6,000 inhabitants in France will be as dead and quiet as an American village of less than 1,000 inhabitants. Tourists familiar with cheerful German villages, with their laughter, their songs and their musical beer gardens at night, will feel a lack in northern France. The French here are not an over-cheerful people, and above all Paris draws to itself all those who wish for gayety and noise. Germany has no Paris. One German town is as gay as another; one French town in the north is as dull as another. A great proportion of the people, especially the women, are intensely religious. Those not religious are intensely atheistic. Both the atheistic and the religious are intensely avaricious and saving. Therefore, in a town like Mantes public amusement will not distract the tourist from the monuments and scenery. The great church and the river Seine are its two beauties.

THE GREAT CHURCH OF MANTES.

A church was standing on the spot in the year 1087, when William the Conqueror took the city. During the siege it was burned. On his death bed William bequeathed a large sum of money to rebuild it. In its present form the church dates from the twelfth century. The west facade has a fine rose window and the triple portal is richly carved. The interior consists of a nave, aisles and choir without transepts. It is unusually bright, owing to the absence of stained glass windows. In the nave round pillars alternate with clustered columns, some of which rise as high as the lofty vaulting. For many reasons Notre Dame de Mantes is a gothic church interesting to architects. It was built at the same time as Notre Dame of Paris and the exterior retains what was the original disposition of the latter church. It is supposed to have been built by the architect of the Sainte Chapelle. Much has

HILLSIDE VINEYARD BELOW HERMITAGE.

been written about it, and even common mortals who like to discern the various modifications of gothic architecture can find them exemplified here in their most flourishing epochs. In the late twilight, when the country town is already silent, this church stands gloomy and alone in the midst of its public square, its back to the river and its front to the town. Now and then a side door opens and a man or woman passes in or out. Inside a few dim lights which throw gigantic shadows serve for those who come to pray and tell their beads. Each step resounds with a hollow echo as the devotees move from chapel to chapel. In Paris one can see an ancient church by night, but there is not this effect of splendid somberness. They are refuges, these great old churches of a bygone age. The poorest and most ignorant old crone in Mantes may make the church her nightly resort and sitting place. Here she was baptised as a baby, here she took her first communion, was married, baptised her children and buried her husband. She is quite at home. Around her are noble columns and paintings and sculptured saints. Notre Dame de Mantes is worth whatever it cost of William's money—if only for the sake of the tottering old dames, who, for generation after generation, for 700 years have come to dream in the midst of its solemn beauty.

ALONG THE SEINE.

Behind the church is the river Seine, whose banks offer pleasant promenades. A small island formed here is united with Mantes by a modern bridge. At a little distance is the ancient bridge of the twelfth century, which is far more graceful. In any of these French country towns one can hire an open carriage of the model common in Paris at the rate of two or three francs an hour. The horse will be spirited and of fine appearance, and the driver, usually a boy, will be communicative and good natured. He will know the favorite drives and can be trusted as a local guide. The banks of the Seine opposite Mantes rise high to a bluff overlooking the valley and a considerable stretch of country. Crossing the modern stone bridge, which affords a fine view of the ancient one, the drive goes down along the right bank of the river. The road, like all French country roads, is hard and smooth, in perfect condition for the bicycle, of which one meets a number. Other vehicles are those of country people coming to the market. They are of every description, from donkey carts to heavy wains drawn by oxen. Now and then a smart villa will disclose handsome carriage houses and perhaps a stylish turnout, but these are not characteristic of the scene. The charm is of a perfect countryside, with nothing ugly and nothing new. Every inch of ground is under cultivation, with sober and contented small proprietors tilling their own fields.

THE OLD BRIDGE.

WOMEN WHO WORK IN THE FIELDS.

Sometimes it makes one sick to read uninformed and hasty newspaper correspondence about women working in the fields in Europe. Certainly women do work in the fields over here, and factory girls in America would be stronger and happier if they were taught to do the same thing instead of gaining the pittance they enjoy at work supposed to be more genteel. French women of every rank work side by side with their husbands. If the husband is a city retail shopkeeper the wife is at the cashier's desk and has a superintendence of the whole establishment; if her husband is a literary man she interests herself in his writings, and if he is a peasant with a truck farm she hoes the beans and picks the potatoes in his company like an equal partner. Two things are overlooked by American tourists when they shiver at such sights—the smallness of peasant holdings and the nature of peasant social life. From the railway train you see women working in the fields. Shocking! But they are working in their own fields—small fields under minute cultivation, and all their female friends do just the same. They are all within calling distance of each other. At 10 o'clock in the morning they knock off work for an hour and eat their second breakfast in cheerful companies; at 1 o'clock, noon, they knock off for two hours for dinner, and in the evening they march through the fields to the village in merry parties with their implements on their shoulders and their brothers, lovers and husbands by their sides—a life so near ideal that it is a never-failing subject for French painters, as in Millet's "Angelus." Imagine what inspiration an artist would find in the daily, lonesome drudgery of an American small farmer's wife. She is often without help, she cooks three hot meals each day, winter and summer, for the men folk, attends to the dairy and the family wash. Worst of all she is alone with one servant or a daughter. She does not dance, and she most often confines her singing to prayer meetings and church. I have seen both sides of the picture. The American farmer's wife too often breaks down at fifty years of age. The European peasant woman at sixty-five is still strong enough to work in the fields and excite the commiseration of American tourists.

AN ARCADIAN SCENE.

In the fields outside of Mantes the women are picking vegetables and fruits and the men are tending the vines. The carriage rolls along the level road that skirts the riverside. Later the road turns from the river and, ascending a gentle slope between apple and pear orchards, shows picturesque glimpses of the valley of the Seine. There are no fences marking off the fields, which are scattered with scarlet poppies and the yellow of wild mustard. Along the roadside are hawthorn hedges with their red berries and bushes of wild plum with their glistening purple fruit. One sees patches of green corn, which is grown for fodder. The grapes along the protected hillsides are both purple and yellow and are nowadays sent to the Paris fruit markets rather than used for wine. Skirting orchards of golden pears, open fields of cabbages that glisten with a metallic bluish green, passing pasture fields where little girls tend cows and donkeys, the road ascends to the plateau which overlooks the Seine directly opposite Mantes. The Seine is not the Rhine—it is smaller, the hills are not so high and the castles vanished long ago; yet the traveler, as he throws himself on the turf and traces the contour of the river and the land below to the right and to the left, is irresistibly reminded of the view from the heights of Stolzenfels. Everything is on a smaller scale, gentle, refined, peaceful and domestic. The banks of the Seine are lined with graceful willow trees, the two stone bridges are in sight, the boundaries of distant roads and fields are marked by slender Lombardy poplars and the southern hillsides are covered with vines. Through all the river winds, a lazy stream of silver or dark green. If there are no castles immediately near there are at least the towers of Mantes and the unfinished steeples of Notre Dame. A short distance further on there are the ruins of an old convent of the Celestine monks, founded in 1376 by Charles V of France. This hillside was celebrated for its good wine. It was in the act of foundation of this monastery that Charles V for the first time used the royal arms reduced to three fleurs-de-lys, "in honor of the trinity," as the charter itself says. A little below the monastery, reached by a winding lane, is the ancient hermitage of St. Sauveur, entirely cut in a rock overlooking the river. There is a chapel, a little garden and the dwelling place of the hermit. In the old times these caves could only be entered from the top by a rope ladder from a hole in the ground kept covered by a stone. In the time of Charlemagne it was the rendezvous of the old Seine pirates. Three stone crosses, very ancient, mark the spot where the last of them were hung. There are no hermits in the hermitage now and the town council of Mantes has declared the place to be a public museum. They have put a man in charge who tends carefully to the middle-age relics without reverence for them. He is a disreputable pleasant-faced old communist, who declares that "the days of images are past." He spends his days in solitude and keeps his spirits up by drinking cognac. It is customary in entering a church or sacred place for gentlemen to remove their hats; but he cries out: "Keep on your hats!" adding, as a rather mixed reason: "Keep on your hats. I am a Calvinist!"

Driving back along the hills to Mantes you can complete your observations on the French country by noticing the close cultivation of the soil which has made France the richest nation in Europe. In Paris the general distribution of property is not so evident, but here every French family has its own plot of ground to stimulate industry and thrift. As I said at the beginning, this experience of the French countryside may well be added to what the tourist sees in his confusing visits to the show sights of the great city.

STERLING HEILIG.

LIMBS FOR CRIPPLED VETERANS.

Half of Those Entitled to Them Get New Ones Next Year.

SOME OF THE GRAND ARMY VETERans who recently visited Washington had their traveling expenses paid by the government. They were crippled old soldiers who wanted to be measured for new artificial limbs here. The law allows them car fare from any part of the Union to whatever city they choose to have their legs and arms made in and return. There are factories engaged in that sort of manufacture for the government in various places all over the United States. Two of them are at the capital. So the wounded survivors of the war were in some instances able to get their passage hither from their homes and back for nothing.

About 8,000 of the crippled soldiers entitled to arms and legs at Uncle Sam's cost will receive new ones during the next fiscal year or else a cash equivalent. There are not far from 16,000 such veterans on the roll, and each one of them gets one or more substitute limbs or the money value every three years. The law formerly made the period five years. On January 31 last there were 3,657 men on the roll who had lost one leg. Thirty-three had lost both legs, eighty-seven one foot and eighteen both feet. Each of 3,535 veterans had lost one arm, twenty-four both arms and fifty-seven one hand. One had lost both hands and one had lost both arms and both legs. There never were but two on the list who had lost both arms and both legs, because such injuries are almost invariably fatal.

From the above reckoning it is apparent that less than half of the 16,000 old soldiers on the roll have lost limbs. A majority of them have merely lost the use of arms or legs. However, that amounts to the same thing under the law. If a hand is merely disabled or a foot cut off at the ankle the claim for a whole arm or leg is good. Of course in such cases veterans take the money commutation instead of the limbs—$75 for a leg and $50 for an arm. So do nearly all of those who have lost their arms, because an artificial arm is of scarcely any use except as an ornament, though an imitation leg of good make serves almost as well as a real one to walk with.

Most of those who need legs do not get them, preferring to accept the money instead. Some of them are chronically hard up, and $50 or $75 in hand seems more desirable than the finest artificial limb that was ever made. Besides, life is short, and they have a reasonable expectation of obtaining another leg or arm in the next world. Furthermore, there are not a few crippled men who cannot wear the improved imitation legs, because their stumps are tender and are rendered sore by the contrivances of willow wood and rubber with machinery inside of them. They get along very well with ordinary pegs, properly cushioned, but these new-fangled jointed affairs do not suit them. Owing to all these facts not more than 600 arms and legs are drawn "in kind" by the 16,000 pensioners. The rest of them prefer to take the cash.

Rather Too Much to Expect.

From the Detroit Tribune.

The cracksman had ripped the blinds off their hinges and was in the act of cutting through the window glass when a chorus of feminine shrieks was heard within the house. It sounded as if there were at least thirty-five women inside, but the burglar, basing his opinion upon his experience, conjectured that there were about three of them.

"Go right away from there," shouted a shrill voice.

"Murder!"

"Help!"

The clouds parted long enough to allow the moon to bathe the earth in silver glory and reveal a cynical smile on the lips of the outlaw.

"Ain't you going away?"

The shrill voice shook.

"Well, I guess not."

The burglar spoke with the courage of his convictions.

"And you're c-c-coming in h-h-here?"

"Cert."

For a moment the harsh, rasping noise of the file on the glass—the identical harsh, rasping noise that is usually heard in stories of adventure—was drowned in another chorus of shrieks.

"Girls, he's c-c-coming in."

"Wo-o-o-ow."

There was a rushing hither and thither and the mingled commotion of sobs and groans. Presently there was a sudden silence.

"Mr. B-b-burglar."

The shrill voice was timid and the harsh, rasping noise overwhelmed it completely.

"Mr. B-b-burglar."

The rasping ceased.

"Hey."

"Dear, good Mr. B-burglar, won't you——"

The shrill voice was husky with excitement.

"Wait until we get dressed?"

The clouds parted again and revealed the cracksman looking thoughtfully at his watch.

"Nine p. m.," he mused. "Must finish this job before daylight."

His face grew set and determined.

"No," he declared aloud, "I have no time to wait for a woman to dress."

Distracted as they were they felt the cold logic of his remarks.

Mr. Oldboy—"I remember the first fish I ever caught."

Miss Pert—"What was it; an Ichthyosaurus?"—*Life.*

NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND.

WRITTEN EXPRESSLY FOR THE EVENING STAR BY RODNEY CLARKE.

AUNT MERCY PERKINS stood by the back gate and gazed at the sweet peas. Pansies, sweet peas and geraniums constituted the core of what Aunt Mercy was pleased to call a garden, and every day she tended her little plants with great care and no less pleasure. Her hair, parted in the middle and brushed carefully back till it hung like a curtain over each ear, draped a face that, though somewhat determined in its outline, had a certain sweetness about it which spoke of self-denial and charity. Her figure, though a little stooping, bore the stamp of grace, and her whole bearing proclaimed that once she had been a great beauty. As she stood in the twilight gazing thoughtfully at her little bed of sweet peas she made a picture that would have touched a lover of the good and true—and a sad expression resting upon her lips betrayed the presence of other cares than those pertaining to her flowers. She was soon awakened from her reverie. "Tea's ready, auntie," cried a sweet voice from within the house, and Aunt Mercy turned and entered through the door—a circumstance to be remarked, for the front door was only in use when "company came." The house which engulfed Aunt Mercy's slender form was a small two-story affair fronting on the main street of a very small village in Massachusetts. It was of shingle and whitewashed.

The "garden" was just in front, between the road and the house, and the front door was reached by a little gravel path, a similar path leading around to the back entrance. Everything was scrupulously neat, and an air of "hands off" seemed to pervade the premises. Aunt Mercy closed the door and proceeded to the dining room through the parlor. Surely something must weigh very heavily on Aunt Mercy's mind! The parlor—opened only on Sundays when the minister came to tea—actually witnessed Aunt Mercy's form this Thursday evening of which I write. A musty odor rather pervaded the atmosphere, and the two shells on the mantel glared with astonishment at the intruder. A faded illuminated text that hung upon the wall appeared to grow pale, and the high-back chairs frowned with quiet dignity. Aunt Mercy stopped before the big rocking chair, arranged a tidy in place, blew a little speck of dust from a vase standing on the table and proceeded to the old square piano, which had not seen daylight for years. There were several photographs upon this ancient piece of furniture—some cabinet size and one or two miniatures. A miniature of a very good-looking young man she quietly removed from its place and wrapped gently in her handkerchief. Then she went into the dining room and took her place at the table. The table was spread for two, and as Aunt Mercy took her seat a pretty face looked up from the other end and gazed with astonished eyes at her vis-a-vis. "Why, Aunt Mercy," exclaimed the same sweet voice that had announced the meal, "you've been through the parlor, and I believe you've left the front door open." "No, Lucie," replied her aunt, "I shet the front door arter me as I come in, and I went into the parlor for a purpose."

"Why, the parlor ain't been used, 'cept Sundays, fer a long time, auntie. We have everythin' wrong there? I dusted real careful after the minister had gone, and I'm sure the shells were all in place. I fixed the pictures all right, too, and took pains with everythin'."

"Everythin' was all right, dearie, an' I allus was proud of your dustin'. 'Twan't to find fault I went into the parlor. I had a purpose, and you shall know it soon—very soon indeed. P'raps tonight—p'raps not—but very, very soon."

"Well, I'm glad you ain't put out by anythin' bein' wrong in there, anyway. I thought I had done things right. I'm dyin' to know what it was that took you in there, tho', auntie. It must have been a mighty strong purpose. Tell me as soon as you can, won't you, auntie, dear?"

"Yes, yes, dearie, but it's a long, long story, an' I'm afeared you'll git weary 'fore it's half through. Has Mr. Hull been here today?"

The girl—for she was but a girl of eighteen—blushed a little and dropping her eyes replied, faintly, "For a little while."

"He ain't comin' ag'in tonight, is he, my dear?"

Again the answer was in the affirmative—this time so inaudibly that had it not been for the confusion of the speaker the question would have been repeated. But Aunt Mercy knew only too well that "Yes" was the reply, and for some minutes the meal went on in silence. Lucie ate rapidly and nearly choked herself with her tea, while Aunt Mercy clenched her thin fingers around the handkerchief containing the miniature, sipping very slowly her evening beverage and looking through the window at the distant church spire with a far-off light in her clear blue eyes, as if trying to bring her thoughts into realities by the power of her gaze.

"Lucie, my dear," she presently said, "tomorrow morning after breakfas' I want you to come with me an' take a little walk. I've got a little story to tell which I spec' you'll be right interested in, an' we'll go into the woods—jes' you an' I. What do you say to it, child?"

"Why I'd jes' love to, auntie," cried Lucie, and so it was arranged.

That evening Mr. Benedict Hull called. Mr. Benedict Hull wore a white flannel tennis suit, a straw hat on the back of his head and a cigarette, which last he threw away as he approached the "Perkinses." There was something about Mr. Benedict Hull that you liked and there was also something about him that you didn't like. He was handsome, fine brown eyes, frank eyes, too, a dark brown mustache and a good complexion. When he smiled he displayed a good set of teeth, but his mouth was a trifle weak and his manner indicated a degree of carelessness that disappointed you. If he undertook anything he seemed to have no trouble in accomplishing his purpose, but whatever he did was carelessly done, and could have been done so much better with a little more earnestness and attention on his part. Why he had wandered to this little sequestered spot no one knew but himself and his explanation was complete rest. He had been through seasons at Newport and Narragansett in summer and Washington and New York in winter.

Yet here he was alone and apparently very happy. He certainly was a clever man and could entertain himself and anybody else with whom he came in contact. He possessed a large and good heart and a very strong inclination to flirt with any woman who flattered him in the least degree or took the slightest notice of him. And as he was extremely popular among the fair sex he never was at a loss for one with whom he might indulge his inclination, which sometimes would blind his good-heartedness and make him go to such extent that it was with difficulty he regained a perfect balance. Then he would repent and "be good" for a week or two before his next fall. So near had he come to an actual proposal—and, of course, an acceptance thereto in his last flirtation—that he really resolved to flee from the very haunts of temptation, and this is the true reason for finding him in the quiet village where dwelt Aunt Mercy and her niece.

On this particular evening he was in a very easy-going frame of mind. "I have been remarkably fortunate," he said to himself, "in having selected this place for my refuge. I was afraid that I should find it so stupid that I would turn again to Narragansett and begin anew to indulge in the fascinations of that watering place. But this sweet little rosebud has been an oasis in my desert of loneliness, and I think I can stay here for some time yet, until the rush of the season is over, at any rate."

He tapped gently at the front door and in a moment Lucie opened it and welcomed her visitor cordially. He was ushered into the sitting room, where the bright lamp light illumined his really handsome face and revealed to his gaze Aunt Mercy sitting in the big rocker knitting. She rose at his entrance, and putting out her hand she said:

"Good evenin', Mr. Hull; set down thar in the easy chair and make yourself comf'ble."

The gentleman did as he was bid, and after an exchange of pleasantries Aunt Mercy withdrew and left Lucie and Mr. Benedict Hull together.

Aunt Mercy went straight to her own room and lit her lamp. Then she sat down, and taking the miniature from the handkerchief—she had carried it all the time that way—gazed at it long and earnestly. Presently a tear trickled down Aunt Mercy's cheek and dropped upon her hand. Then another and another followed it, and soon a convulsive sob shook her slender frame. She laid the miniature upon the table next her, and leaning forward with her face between her hands wept silently. Dear Aunt Mercy! The heart was pouring forth its stream from wounds long ago healed over, but tender still. Thy tears burned with the thoughts of thy early womanhood. The scenes of the past were more real to thee than all the reality of the present, yet through them all thy niece was pictured as playing the same part that thou didst play when thy sweet life was shattered many years ago. Shattered? No, not quite, for the one bright star that shone in Aunt Mercy's blighted heart, the star that softened with its mellow light every hard or unkind thought, every trial and care, that brightened Aunt Mercy's very existence, was Lucie. And now Aunt Mercy was weeping in fear and dread. What if that star should be shorn of its brightness? Or if it should be taken from her and then extinguished? "Oh, no, oh, no," she sobbed, "I will tell her tomorrow. I will save her. She shall not be heartbroken like me, my dear, dear Lucie."

And then, weary with her weeping, she fell asleep and did not awaken until Lucie came up to bid her good-night.

"Why, auntie, what's the matter," she exclaimed.

"Lor', child, I must ha' ben dreamin' about ole times, I guess," replied Aunt Mercie, "when you was a little tot an' used to make mud pies in the back yard an' git your frocks all dirty. You was a dreffle cute little one, too, dearie."

Lucie kissed her and then going quietly out of the room retired to her own chamber.

She did not sleep very much that night. She was thinking what a fascinating man was Mr. Benedict Hull. "He has such lovely manners," thought the girl, "an' he knows so much." And then her thoughts reverted to Aunt Mercy's strange behavior. She connected it somehow with Mr. Hull, but in what way there could be any connection she was at a loss to find out. Mr. Hull, however, occupied the greater part of her wakeful moments and figured largely in her dreams. Aunt Mercy also had Mr. Hull in her thoughts and dreams and if that favored gentleman had known to what extent his image was closeted in the mansion of the "Perkinses" he would no doubt have felt highly honored.

The next morning dawned bright and beautiful. The sweet peas in Aunt Mercy's garden seemed to lift their heads to drink in the delicious air and the birds twittered gleefully in the elm trees that bordered the road on each side. Lucie was down early, and at 7 o'clock punctually breakfast was ready. It was rather a solemn meal, however, for Aunt Mercy evidently seemed to have something on her mind. She hardly spoke at all, and then only to ask for some article of food. Lucie was very quiet and seemed absorbed in thought. She was looking into her heart, seeing there an image, but very, very faint as yet, of Mr. Benedict Hull. It would not require very much on his part to develop the image into an idol for her adoration, but still as yet it was but a shadow. And she was trying to learn its meaning, though it puzzled her to some extent.

After breakfast was over, the things cleared away and everything put into place in apple pie order Aunt Mercy said:

"Come, dearie, let's go for our walk now. I'm glad it's such a lovely mornin'."

"All right, auntie," cried Lucie, and getting her hat she joined her aunt, and the two wandered over toward a patch of woods which stretched across the fields, about a half mile back of their house. Taking a path that wound prettily through these woods they followed it until they reached a fallen tree, upon which they sat down.

At first neither spoke. Lucie knew that something unusual was coming, and Aunt Mercy was trying to find a way to begin what she wanted to say.

"Aunt Mercy," at length ventured Lucie, "did—did you want to tell me anythin' special? Is—is it anythin' about Mr. Hull, auntie?"

"Waal, no—not exactly about Mr. Hull, dearie, but something that you might apply to his keepin' sech stiddy comp'ny with you. Lucie, dear, I'm agoin' to tell you things which I never 'spected to tell a livin' soul—things which happened to me when I was a gal your age, or pr'aps a year or two older."

"Oh! auntie, do go on, and I'll never, never say a word to any one about it, nuther."

"All right, dearie; wait jest a minute 'tel I kinder git things jined together in my mind."

Lucie smiled and waited while her aunt thought a moment. She had always known that there had been something of a romance connected with Aunt Mercy's youth, but what it was had never been revealed to her. And now she was eager to hear it all, and waited impatiently for Aunt Mercy to "jine things together in her mind." Finally that operation having apparently been performed to the old lady's satisfaction, she began:

"Now, dearie, in the fust place, you must promise never to tell a livin' soul what I'm agoin' to tell you."

"Deed I promise faithfully, auntie," said the girl.

"Waal, then, secondly, you must pay the strictest 'tention to me, then you kin think a while."

"All right, I will, auntie, dear," chipped in Lucie with a kiss; and so Aunt Mercy started in.

"When I was a gal 'bout twenty I was considered by some folks to be purty good lookin', and tho' I've changed to a homely ole maid now, still I used to prink up 'fore the glass an' gad about to parties an' hold my own with the best on 'em. Waal, 'twas in the winter time, an', as I said, I was jest twenty when I went visitin'. There was some folks who had kinder took a fancy to me one summer, an' they had asked me to come an' spend Janiery and Febiery with 'em at their place 'bout fifty mile from here, not a great ways off from the city o' Boston. I liked 'em mighty well, an' so I packed up my things an' went. I kin remember the day jest as well as if 'twas only yesterday. 'Twas snowin' hard, an' looked like 'twas agoin' to keep it up, too. I lef' here in the mornin', an' 'twas nigh onto 5 o'clock in the afternoon afore I got there.

"There was two gals an' a young man in the family beside the parents. As I got out of the carriage at their front gate the young man—whose name was Jack—come out an' helped me out, an' then the two gals run out on the piazzy an' gave me a cordial welcome. An' then I got inside an' had taken off my wraps an' set there afore an open fire in that han'some settin' room I think I was jest about as happy an' full of sperits as a young body could be. What we did in the two weeks following I n'dn't mention. Drivin' an' sleighin', dancin' an' all kinds of parties. I was nothin' but a country gal, of course, an' I didn't know all the fashionable ways that the others did, an' now an' then I'd git laughed at an' made fun of. But I had a good time through it all. P'raps I would have minded the way the two gals would laugh at me an' the way they done all kinds of queer things of it hadn't a ben fer Jack. I heard one of his sisters say one day to a han'some woman that I was a real nice country gal an' she mustn't mind my funny ways. An' when I felt badly over it an' looked kinder glum that evenin' Jack asked me what was the matter, an', when I told him he said it was a shame an' that I was as good as any on 'em, an' he was jest as nice as could be. Jack used to comfort me so sweetly an' he was sech a han'some fellow, too. Dear Jack," sighed Aunt Mercy, a little brokenly, "He was very good to me. Waal, when it come time for me to go home agin, I'm sure I felt bad, an' I told the folks I had had a good time at all the parties an' things, I thanked 'em all for their goodness an' kindness an' left on a rainy afternoon in the first week in March. I was kinder glad I was agoin' home agin, for I longed to see the folks an' the dear ole town an' the cat an' everythin'. My greatest feelin' of sorrow at leavin' was on account of Jack. But he said he'd run down in the summer an' see me, so I felt better. Waal, when summer come, I got a letter from him askin' if he might bring a frien' with him, an' of course, I told him yes. I wish now I'd a told him no. Along about August he came with his frien'. He was about the same fellow—this frien'—and was talented, too. He could play the pianer jest lovely, an' he had as fine a voice as ever I heard. He was a dashin' feller an' could entertain a comp'ny or talk to you alone, an' do both equally well. He an' Jack stayed with us the whole month of August, an' at the end of that time I was head over heels in love with Jack's frien'. He made sweet speeches to me, almos' told me he loved me, gave me lovely things an' said no other gal should ever come between us. When he went away I cried very, very hard an' then sat down an' wrote him a long letter, but I didn't mail it until I got his. He wrote me jest lovely things an' every now an' then he'd send me candy an' sometimes jewelry an' sometimes a pictur' of himself. This miniature he gave me about two months after he lef'." And Aunt Mercy unwrapped her handkerchief and gazed somewhat fearfully upon its precious contents. Then she handed it to Lucie, who looked at it with admiration. "He was han'some, auntie," she said softly. Aunt Mercy nodded and went on:

"Waal, about eight months after that he come down to see me an' spent Sunday. I was more wildly in love with him than ever an' he was properly agreed to with me, too. But oh, Lucie," cried Aunt Mercy, "only a month afterward his letters stopped acomin' and then I got a little note from him sayin' he was married—had been married about two weeks, an' hoped I'd always think of him as a friend. Oh, dearie, it broke my heart. I've worked an' strove to try to forget. I can't—no—no—more," sobbed Aunt Mercy. And Lucy took the dear old lady's head upon her bosom and comforted her, and cried a little with her too. When Aunt Mercy had calmed down a little she once more assumed an upright position and bade Lucie listen to the finale of her story.

"I've never seen him sence, dearie, and I've allus lived in the ole house yonder—happy because you have ben my bright an' happy companion. 'Happy because your sweet life has been a part of mine, too—an' I have been under its influence. Happy, dearie, because I have lost my sorrow by bein' successful in makin' you the bright, dear child you are. But last night the danger of a new sorrow come upon me. I thought of a breakin' up between us. I thought of you led on to love this man, an' then your heart broken like mine was. If anythin' like that should happen agin' I should die, for I couldn't stand another shock. After all these years of stiddy, growing happiness by doin' and carin' for you, dearie, the thought that your young life might be in danger of bein' ruined made me tell you this. I don't know nothin' about Mr. Hull. I don't want to do him any wrong, but don't lose your precious little heart, and don't let him keep sech stiddy comp'ny with you. Break this off while you kin, dearie, and now's the time."

Lucie was crying quite freely now, and it was some time before she could say anything. At length she looked up and kissed her aunt. And then she told her everything there was to be told, how she was very near the danger her aunt feared, and how she would try and do as her aunt wanted her.

The village clock struck the hour of 12, and they both started up, exclaiming that it was the hour for dinner and nothing had been prepared. They returned home as quickly as Aunt Mercy's feet could carry her, and soon they were eating their midday meal, the happiest they had had for some days.

* * * * *

Mr. Benedict Hull walked home to the hotel in time for the 1 o'clock meal served at that institution. He was so occupied with his thoughts that he bumped right into the landlord and very nearly sent him sprawling, much to that gentleman's discomfort, as he was a portly person. After making suitable apologies he went into the dining room and ate his dinner. Having finished the meal he went to the desk and paid his bill up to the following morning. Then he retired to his room, and, getting out a sheet of writing paper and an envelope, began to write. He addressed the envelope first and laid it aside. It took him some time to start his note. Twice he got nearly half through a sheet and then tore it up. He sat and thought and thought. Finally he seemed to hit upon the right thing, and then he wrote it off, put it in the envelope and started out of the house. He had not gone far before he suddenly returned to his room and sat awhile in silence. Then he started out and took a walk, returning at tea time. About 8 o'clock he went to the post office and dropped the note in. As he did so a sigh of relief escaped him. Early next morning Mr. Benedict Hull was on his way to New York and enjoying his cigar with the air of a man who had done his duty in spite of inclinations to the contrary.

After breakfast Lucie brought home the mail and there was a letter for her among its contents. She opened it and read thus:

"Dear Lucie: Yesterday morning as I was walking through the woods back of your house I overheard voices in conversation. As I approached the spot whence they came I recognized yours and stopped a moment to listen. I heard my name mentioned, so I continued standing where I was, not meaning to be an eavesdropper, but having a feeling of curiosity to know what would be said about me. Thus I heard your aunt's touching story, and perceived its application to me. I had never meant to do you the slightest harm, and truly did not realize the state of things which were really existing. But the touching appeal that lay hidden in the sad story of your aunt moved me sadly. I have resolved to go away tomorrow that I may escape playing the part of a brute, as I was unconsciously doing. When you read this letter I shall be well on my way to New York, and your sweet little home will not be troubled by me any more. God forbid that ever two such beautiful lives should be blighted by a serpent's sting. Begging your forgiveness and that of your noble aunt, and wishing you, as you deserve, a future unimpaired in its sweet serenity, I am regretfully yours,

"BENEDICT HULL."

Lucie read it twice, then carried it slowly in to her aunt. She handed it to her without a word and quietly went up to her room. She cried a little for a few minutes, then realizing that what had been done was for the very best and that she was still really heart whole she tripped down stairs and went at her work. And Aunt Mercy, with a bright smile on her dear old face, was to be seen out in her garden watering the sweet peas.

THE MAN WHO LOVED CHILDREN.

Childish Innocence Always Melted His Old Heart, but He Had His Failings.

From the New York Herald.

After she had seated herself in the ferry boat little Willie broke away from her and began rolling around in the dust and dirt before us all.

"Ah, madam," whispered the old gentleman, "do not try to stop little Willie! I love to see the child have fun."

"Yes, indeed."

"It does my old heart good," he went on, as Willie turned a double somersault; "it carries me back to the early days. I tell you, ma'am, there is nothing like youth."

"That is true, sir," she said, sweetly.

"It recalls to me, madam, the old farm where I once romped, a care-free mortal, all the livelong day."

"Willie is such a good boy," she ventured as William yelled "Rats!" three times and threw up his hat.

The old gentleman suddenly let out a roar that echoed over the river.

"Wo-w!" he gasped, howling with pain.

"Mercy, me!" exclaimed the woman, staring.

"Why don't you teach your boy some manners? He has just stuck a pin in my leg!"

"But he is only a harmless child, sir."

"Wow-w!"

"And his conduct carries you back to the early days."

"Wow-w!"

"And youth fades so quickly, sir."

"Wow-w, ma'am; wow-w, I say!"

"And it reminds you of the days down on the old farm."

"That will do, ma'am," he gasped, rising and glaring at us all. "I see, ma'am, that I am in the presence of a spoiled child, your sweet William. You expect we should all sing and dance, but you are mistaken, ma'am, mistaken to the utmost. I predict, ma'am, that your boy will grow up a burglar and a horse thief, and if he doesn't break his mother's heart before he is twenty-one my name is mud, ma'am, mud, I say."

And he flung himself out the door. Then mamma took little Willie to her arms and did exactly what all mothers would under the circumstances.

She called William her darling boy and kissed him on the dirty nose.

Herbert Spencer at Billiards.

Apropos of Mr. Herbert Spencer, a correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* recently reported the following anecdote, says the Baltimore *Sun*, which, though it may not be quite new, seems worthy of being repeated. Mr. Herbert Spencer daily spends some of his afternoon leisure in the London Athenæum, the famous club for scholars and literati. Here he will regularly play his game of billiards. One day a young man who had been introduced to him asked him for the pleasure of having a game with him. The philosopher started the ball, but when his young acquaintance seized his cue he proved to be such an expert on the green cloth that he finished the game by one run, so that Mr. Spencer found no further occasion for using his rod. Darker and darker grew the clouds that gathered on the scholar's forehead, while he was apparently following the game with the greatest interest. When, finally, the young man, after the last shot, smilingly turned to his opponent to receive the philosopher's compliments, the latter, in the most serious manner, remarked: "Sir, moderate proficiency in such sport is a sign of good education; such masterly skill, however, as you exhibit is the proof of an ill-spent youth." Thus speaking, Mr. Spencer took his hat and disappeared.

Aleut Canoes.

Two firemen who were on the steamer Alice Blanchard on a trip to the Yukon river, says the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*, brought back two novel Aleut canoes. The boats were made of rawhide, supported by horizontal ribs. The only opening is a circular hole in the center, large enough for a man's body so that he can sit down. A flap of rawhide surrounds the hole, and when the occupant plants himself in the bottom of the craft he draws this flap up, fastening it tightly around his body under the arms. This makes the boat practically water-tight, and he can paddle along in the roughest kind of weather without danger of drowning. If his craft rolls over all he has to do is to paw the water until he gets his head to the surface again, and the boat, having stationary ballast, immediately rights itself.

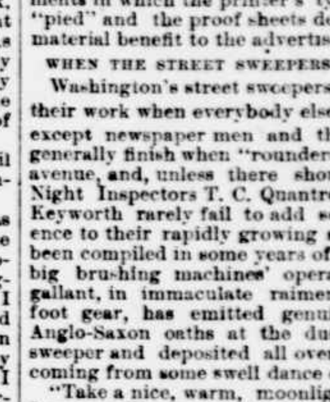
Some of them are made with two holes to accommodate two passengers. The two brought down are the single pattern. They are about fourteen feet long, thirty inches across and of a like depth. They are very light and can easily be carried about. The owners are going to keep them at Lake Washington. It is said two men came down from Alaska in one such canoe and sustained no more serious injury than getting their shoulders wet.

IN THE SWEEPINGS.

Valuables That Are Found After the Sweepers Have Passed.

AT THE DUMPING GROUNDS.

Picking Over a City's Refuse—Families That Make a Living at the Dumps—Occasional Valuable Finds and Telltale Letters—A Star Man's Visit to a Dump.



"IT'S AN ILL WIND that blows nobody any good." And it must be an exceptionally third-rate sort of refuse dump that does not yield in its scrapings the merest pittance, at least, toward the living of some one of the scores of unfortunates who generally frequent those necessary adjuncts of a great city. Hundreds of people, white and black, young and old, rollicking, dirty-faced brats and squalling pickaninnies, almost every day of the 365 afford both trouble and amusement to the inspectors appointed to look after the city's dumping ground for street refuse, while searching out the odds and ends of rags, bones, paper and what-not that go to swell the hard-lined coffers of the junk dealers and make correspondingly plethoric in smaller ratio the pockets of the dump scrapers.

And what stories of municipal wire-pulling, loss, misery, filth and general wreckage could not the contents of Washington's five big dump grounds tell if speech were temporarily imparted to them? How many "finds" would there not be in response to "lost" advertisements in which the printer's type was long ago "pied" and the proof sheets destroyed, without material benefit to the advertiser?

WHEN THE STREET SWEEPERS ARE AT WORK.

Washington's street sweepers generally begin their work when everybody else has gone home, except newspaper men and the police. They generally finish when "rounders" stagger up the avenue, and, unless there should be a storm, Night Inspectors T. C. Quantrell and Howard Keyworth rarely fail to add some new experience to their rapidly growing stock, which has been compiled in some years of supervising the big brushing machines' operations. Many a gallant, in immaculate raiment and polished foot gear, has emitted genuine home-made Anglo-Saxon oaths at the dust raised by the sweeper and deposited all over his outfit while coming from some swell dance or reception.

"Take a nice, warm, moonlight night," said Inspector Keyworth to a STAR reporter, "and somewhere about 1 o'clock perch yourself in a doorway along the avenue, say between 6th and 15th streets. Wait for the sweeper to come in the course of its work and see if you don't experience a big surprise within two minutes after the machine has gone by. If you are a man of pretty wide acquaintance it is just dollars to doughnuts you will find more than one man whom you know quite well following that pile of dirt which the sweeper has pushed in a line from cross street to cross street. Why, young man, I have seen dozens of department clerks coming along the asphalt in the wake of the sweeper and stirring the mass around with their canes like the small boy hunting for coppers in a puddle when he knows there were some dropped there. What were they hunting for? Why, valuables of any kind—money, lost papers, jewelry and the thousand and one things that are daily advertised for in THE STAR as 'lost.' No, they weren't necessarily looking for anything they had lost themselves; and department clerks are by no means the only patrons of the sweepings whom I have recognized among the searchers after a bit of sudden and possibly unexpected wealth. What are these men doing on the streets in so undignified a manner at that time of night? Human nature, sir; human nature; and it only goes to show that we're all alike and 'on the make.'

FINDS IN THE SWEEPINGS.

"In a city of this size," continued the inspector, "it is natural to suppose the searchers could generally secure a good deal of lost property of a valuable sort, but when they do it is equally human nature that they should keep their discoveries to themselves. Of course we see comparatively few of the finds, but once in a while some lucky pedestrian along the dirt heaps can't restrain his exultation and we get a glimpse at a stray $5 bill or gold watch that the original owner has lost and nine times out of ten will never see again. Undoubtedly finds of this latter character are among the rarities and money constitutes most of the finds. Personally I know of a number of such running from $20 up, but the biggest I can recollect was made near the corner of 9th street a year ago last July. A young man employed in the treasury, and whom I knew by sight as one of the regular searchers, picked up a well-filled pocket book after four or five other searchers had passed the same spot. I happened to be standing on the curb at the moment and was naturally interested in the find. The discoverer opened the black leather receptacle in my presence and it contained nearly $600 in bank notes. There was nothing about it to show to whom the property belonged, but the owner advertised for it next day, and the young man afterward told me that the original possessor, who proved to be a resident of Chicago on a visit to Washington, was so rejoiced at the recovery of his lost wealth that he counted out $100 to the finder for his luck and honesty combined.

TELLTALE LETTERS.

"More than one blackmail case had its origin in the street sweeper, too. I have seen some of the searchers pick up lost letters with as much avidity as if they had been treasury notes of big denomination, and in at least one case now before the District courts the plaintiff in a divorce suit secured the thread of evidence against his faithless wife through a letter which the co-respondent in the case received from her and then lost on the street. It was found by some unscrupulous follower of the sweeper and sold for $5 to the injured husband, who had suspected something of the kind before, but was not certain until that telltale letter fell into his hands. The case I refer to involves parties who are well known in Washington, and the beginning of the suit for divorce created a sensation when brought some time ago."

AT THE DUMPS.

A District regulation long ago located the principal city dumps at 27th and N, 25th and N, 17th and B and 28th and M streets northwest, Delaware avenue and 1st and 6th and M streets southeast. The dump down near the fish commission waters is mainly used for the dirt and snow cleaned from streets in slushy weather, and the remaining four are generally made the recipients of "pay dirt." Here the city teams and store wagons, and all other sorts of vehicles from the regulation cart to the nearest approach to the "Virginia creeper" Washington boasts of, haul their cargoes of rags, splinters, common street sweepings and waste paper, and the dump inspector sees that everything is done in proper form. A dump isn't a dump in this neck of the woods unless it can boast of an inspector. T. T. Jones, T. Sherwood, John McNamara, E. B. Burt and Stephen Taylor are the men detailed to keep the fillings at grade with the surrounding streets and prevent any promiscuous grab-bag business among the daily visitors to their stamping grounds. They rarely have much trouble in that direction, however, for there is an unwritten law of non-interference among these diggers after wealth and fame, and, as there is usually a plentiful supply of loads to be picked over, the inspector's official duties cause no bad feelings in the mixed community.

A VISIT TO THE DUMP IN THE NORTHWEST.

The dump at 25th and N streets is the largest in Washington and was fairly covered with pickers when THE STAR man visited it the other morning. E. B. Burt, one of the old timers in the service, is in charge, and he recounted some of the curious things which have occurred on the dump during his incumbency. Here and there a team was unloading its freight in a cloud of dust from the ashes, which were mixed up in every conceivable corner with shavings, waste paper and rags. An entire colored family of nine, with the smallest youngster barely able to toddle, was busily pushing the contents of one wagon about as they fell to the ground, and one of the urchins gave a yell of ecstacy as he picked up a stud of yellow metal from the dirty pile. "Brung dat button yeah, boy!" shouted the master of this particular party of pickers, but the stud proved to be merely a brass fixture, which the head of the house, however, confiscated. Meanwhile the whole crowd was busy sorting old newspapers, bones, scraps of iron and anything which promised to bring a penny or two from the junk dealer, and everything else of a combustible nature was carried to one of the fires constantly burning on the dump to destroy waste.

FAMILIES BY THE DOZEN.

"That's the way you'll find them day in and day out," said Inspector Burt, as he picked up a penny which his practiced eye noticed on the dump near at hand. "They're here in all sorts of weather, and I'll wager a dozen families, mostly colored, in this vicinity make their livelihood out of this dump. They search patiently, and sometimes find something of considerable value. Besides, quarter and half dollars are a common thing to find here in the refuse; but trust one of these pickers to say a word about it. They're as close-mouthed as a political prisoner, although every one of them will boast of what he is earning. Junk dealers make regular trips to the houses about here and have their regular customers, who frequent the dump and keep the junk market supplied. I am pretty certain some of them make anywhere from $1.50 to $3 a day from their pickings, although the majority make less than $1 even. But, excuse me, that fire over there seems to have a peculiar odor which I have learned to be burning flesh. I'll see what it means."

WHEN FUMIGATION IS NEEDED.

The inspector hastened to the place, but the scent proved false. A small piece of rubber happened to be the unpleasant factor this time. It was a leader, however, and the dump man was asked whether any human remains ever reached the refuse ground. "Only once," replied Mr. Burt, "and that was the body of an infant, so thoroughly wrapped in rags as to almost escape notice among the other contents of the wagon. I discovered it in time, though, and notified the police, who had the body removed, else it might have reached one of the fires accidentally, although it wouldn't have been my fault. Sometimes dead cats and dogs escape the garbage man's dead animal wagon and find their way here. Somehow they are tossed into the fire, and you can imagine that a sanitary fumigation would be highly desirable about then. Still many of these things are as rare as big finds, and altogether there are worse occupations than being the inspector of a dump like this."

BANK NOTES BURNED TO ASHES.

This 25th street repository also contains the charred remains of several hundred dollars which were accidentally destroyed there about five weeks ago. Great loads of waste paper from stores and printing offices are brought there daily, and the match is applied before the pickers have arrived. In one of these loads was a tin dispatch box, as was afterward found, but before it was discovered the contents had been turned to ashes. Mr. Burt's attention was first called to the pile when a well-dressed gentleman came to the dump and inquired whether a load of waste paper had arrived that morning. He had lost a valuable tin box, he said, and thought it might have been dropped among the waste accidentally before its removal from his place of business. Among the burning mass the receptacle was found, but the owner left the dump a sad man. Only a small corner of two or three bills was left to show that considerable cash had been in the pile.

One of these days the Commissioners will have to find a new dump around 25th street, for in a year or two more the filling will be as near Rock creek as it may be placed without damming the stream. Meanwhile, the dump picker and his confrere, the junk man, will find many a dollar's worth of value in the refuse which finds its way to the capital's scrap piles.

APPALLING FIGURES.

Another Domestic Pow-Wow in the McSwat Mansion.

From the Chicago Tribune.

Mrs. McSwat—"Billiger, how often do you get shaved?"

Mr. McSwat—"About four times a week on an average."

"How much time does it usually require?"

"About half an hour."

"Half an hour four times a week! That's two hours a week, four and one-third days a year and nearly a month and a half in ten years. Think of it, Billiger. If you should let your beard grow you would save time enough in ten years——"

"But look here, Lobelia! Great Scott! I don't want to let it grow. Did you ever see me with a full set of whiskers?"

"No, but—"

"Well, let it be the cause of the most heartfelt joy and gratitude you ever experienced, Lobelia, that you never did! With a full beard, madam, I look like a cocoanut in a fit of delirium tremens. I tried it once, years ago. Dogs barked at me on the street, children fled from me in terror, footpads who caught a glimpse of me by moonlight or the pale, flickering rays of a street lamp dropped their murderous weapons and slunk tremblingly up the alleys and I was offered $60 a week and all expenses by a dime museum man for a year's engagement. My portrait was hawked all over the country as the most hideous—"

"I don't believe any of that stuff, Billiger, and I'm sure—"

"Don't interrupt me, madam. My beard grows straight out, up, down, sideways, every bristle for itself, like the spines on the fretful chestnut burr, and it grows in every shade and color, from brindle to vermilion and back again. If you could see me once with a hedge fence all over my face you would—"

"But think of the time you lose in—"

"The time I lose! Look here! How often do you fix your hair?"

"Every day of my life, of course, but that's different."

"That's different, is it, hey! How long does it take you to fix it?"

"I think you're just as—"

"You needn't answer. I know how long it takes. I've seen you do it often enough. It takes you half an hour every blessed day of your life to look after your frizzes, if that's what you call them. Think of it! Half an hour a day, three hours and a half a week, nearly eight days in a year, an entire month in four years, a whole year in forty-eight years, and over two years in a century! Lobelia, you'd better go and look after the baby."

TALES WITHOUT WORDS.

From London Judy.