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Selected Miscellany.

THE COMET.

BY GEORGE LUNT.

Yon ear of fire, though veiled by day,
Along that field of gleaming blue,
When twilight folded earth in gray,
A world-wide wonder flew.

Duly in turn each orb of light
From out the darkening concave broke;
Eve's glowing herald swam in light,
And every star awoke.

The Lyre re-strung its burning chords,
Streamed from the Cross its earliest ray—
Then rose Altair, more sweet than words
On music's soul could say.

They, from old time in course the same,
Familiar set, familiar rise;
But what though art, wild, lovely flame,
Across the startled skies?

Mysterious yet, as when it burst
Through the vast void of nature hurled,
And shook their shrinking hearts, at first,
The fathers of the world.

No curious sage the scroll unseals—
Vain quest to baffled science given
Its orbit ages, while it wheels,
The miracle of heaven.

In nature's plan, thy sphere unknown,
Save that no sphere His order mars,
Whose law could guide thy path alone
In realms beyond the stars.

God's minister! We know no more
Of thee, thy frame, thy mission still,
Than he who watched the flight of yore
On the Chaldean hill.

Yet thus, transcendant from thy blaze
Beams light to pierce this mortal clod;
Scarcely a fool on thee could gaze,
And say—There is no God!

—*Boston Advertiser.*

MRS. ROTHELY'S EMERALDS.

BY HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD.

It cannot be denied that Mrs. Rothely loved splendor; and it cannot be denied that Mr. Rothely knew she did, nor that many a time and oft he had been visited by a suspicion that it was just possible he had, some time since, been prospered in his suit for the lady's hand by the fact that he was able to surround her with this splendor that she loved.

She was indeed a beautiful woman, quite worthy, one would think, of anybody's affection, and eminently fit to be surrounded with this splendor that so pleased her fancy. Knowing that she was beautiful, she had an innocent sort of pleasure in enhancing her beauty by the appliances of luxury. But aside from that she derived from them a different and more exquisite pleasure, the pleasure which objects of beauty afford the worshipers of beauty; she loved strong lusters and colors, with a passionate delight in them, as she loved music indeed, and liked to have them within reach; to cast her eye on soft curves and pure outlines was to have a sensation of delicious rest; to move in spacious and lofty rooms seemed to leave her spirit free to spread its wings unhampered by remembrance of cramping wants and cares; to roll in her cushioned carriage to the clatter of the hoofs of swift thorough-breds was the next thing to floating on the clouds! And all this her husband knew. If her splendid silks gave first a satisfaction to her woman's vanity they gave next a satisfaction to all her sense of the beautiful in tint and texture; and if she was pleased that her jewels were more magnificent than Mrs. Ewer's were, she was also pleased to have it in her power to contemplate at any moment the wealth of luster that from creation's day had been shut into those drops of concrete light.

Mr. Rothely was only too happy that, so long as Mrs. Rothely loved splendor, the kind fates allowed him to give it to her. She became it well, he used to say, and when, one night, he dreamed of seeing the angels descending and ascending Jacob's ladder into heaven, they every one wore the array in which he had seen his wife going out to Mrs. Ewer's ball; and, ridiculously as the angels would have looked to any one else, to him they looked half divine. It did make him laugh, indeed, when he awoke, to think he had clad the angels in an endless reduplication of his wife's ball dress; but I am not sure that he did not in his inmost heart think it was quite good enough for them; and indeed he would not have thought them angels at all if every one had not had that same enchanting smile, that same heavenly grace, that he found so precious in Mrs. Rothely.

Mr. Rothely would have been shocked at himself if he had known what made him dream of Jacob's ladder, let alone the extraordinary and seraphic recurrence of his wife's apparition there; but as he did not worry himself much with psychological science he did not seek for any reason, and never suspected that his dream was due only to the remembrance of a stormy scene in the gold-room. Why the remembrance of such a scene should have associated itself with a ladder into heaven rather than into the other place nobody knows; nor why all that silent, shifting throng that in the patriarch's sleep trod the slant sunbeams up and down between the earth and sky should have been summoned to his fancy by the throng of ravening wolves, except through the law of contrasts. But Mr. Rothely, walking home very late that day, had been fearfully dejected; he had felt, in fact, as if he were in the wilderness and alone, for his reverses had been tremendous, and he dared not speak of them to his wife; and he was thinking it would be too much bliss on earth if a man could go home and tell his wife everything and have sympathy and comfort from her; and then he was confounding himself for a sentimental fool to be hankering after sympathy when he wanted credit. And thereat he had met his wife coming lightly down the hall stairs, a vision of rosy beauty, dark eyes and dimpling smiles, and the peach-blow dress and the jewels; and he had felt himself to be a presuming simpleton to think of sympathy and comfort from such a radiant creature as that, and had longed to take her in his arms, and had feared to crush her dress, and so had smiled back as she had smiled, and had gone down and put her in the carriage and returned to his lonely house and the endless figures with which he was always ciphering on his endless papers and which he now began to look over again with a groan.

Mr. Rothely heard the wheels on the pavement when his wife came back, and he was just putting up his papers as she entered.

"I saw your light," she said. "What! always those papers—those hateful papers! Do you want to kill yourself?" And she came and laid one arm lightly over his shoulder.

"Why should it kill me to sit here and study my calculations till this hour," he said, "any more than kill you to go out in the cruel weather and dance till the same hour?"

"Oh, that's different!" she said, with a laugh. "That's a pleasure. And this—"

"Isn't pleasure," said he, rising. "No, it isn't pleasure!"

"Well, what is it, then?" she asked, coaxingly, twining her arm in his.

"It's pain!" he exclaimed, vexed by her light way, when his trouble was so great—"it's pain and perplexity, and a sword hanging over my head!" And he turned about and left the room hurriedly, sure that the next moment she would be saying, "I do believe Mr. Rothely is losing his mind!" and the moment after be singing the last tune to which she had waltzed, yawning and going off gayly to bed.

But what Mrs. Rothely was really saying was: "I wonder what it means. Did I do anything to tease him? I wonder if he is displeased that I go out without him. I'm sure I had a world rather he went too. I don't know. He hardly ever comes to talk with me now; he never tells me anything he couldn't tell somebody else's wife. I wonder—Oh, it couldn't be, it couldn't possibly be that he is tired of me! Pshaw! what a fool I am to be mooning this way over a busy man!"

But when Mr. Rothely went to bed, just before daybreak, after taking another turn with his papers, his wife was sleeping the sleep of the just, a rosy, dewy, lovely sleep, over which he hung a moment idolatrously before he turned away, half-indignantly for all, to think she could take so easily what was torment to him; and then, laughing a little grimly to himself, he compared himself to the peasant who one moment prays to his little wooden image and the next moment cuffs it roundly for not answering the prayer.

He had gone over his papers again, as was said, and had thought that he might worry through, as he called it, without the open shame of failure and disgrace of bankruptcy—for shame and disgrace it seemed to him—if he could only lay his hands on a certain sum of ready money, a sum that was not a large one for a man that was accustomed to the figures that Mr. Rothely was, but something over a hundred thousand dollars. The open shame of failure was a great deal to Mr. Rothely, for his pride was a trait that everything, so far, had fostered; and the apprehension of the loss his failure would entail on others was still more to him, for he always felt himself an honest man, and had believed that, in respect to a record of unblemished integrity, his pride had some reason for its being. "Write on my gravestone," he was fond of saying, "'Here lies an honest man.'" Whether he was abstractly and intrinsically an honest man, from whom deceit and untruth shrank as from the day-light, it never occurred to him to question; he had never been tested. "Show me the man whom I have ever wronged of anything!" he would have replied, if the doubt had been suggested, and would have considered it fully answered. "A hundred thousand dollars ready money!" he was saying now to himself; and as he said it his eye rested inadvertently on the door of the little iron safe let into the wall where his wife's jewels were kept, and which, in her fatigue, and in that carelessness which with her was half a charm, she had that night left ajar. And a little devil began whispering in his ear: "There is more than a hundred thousand dollars ready money there!"

O yes, he knew that very well. Those great square emeralds and their alternate diamonds as large had cost him very much more than that some years ago, and now emeralds were in fashion, and worth an added price. Fine emeralds they were, too, every one a picked stone, not a doublet among them, and looking at them, one looked into the wells of soft green light, the very essence of sunshine in the heart of forests, of pools in mossy beds, and of the great sea depths. And then, as for the diamonds, they too were perfect specimens, not purely white perhaps, but the more lustrous for that, as their slightly yellow tinge at night became only added luminousness, each one of them all a stone with a history before it had the honor of being in Mrs. Rothely's possession, each one of them all worth its thousands. For Mr. Rothely, in his pride regarding his wife, had lavished on her a fortune that few absolute millionaires would think of spending, and fine and sumptuous as all her surroundings were, there were no finer jewels in the ownership of any one woman in the country. O yes, there was no doubt that a hundred thousand dollars ready money could easily be raised on Mrs. Rothely's emeralds, necklace and tiara and stomacher and bracelets, and the less valuable accessories, if anybody wanted to raise it. However, they were Mrs. Rothely's jewels, not his; it was only a passing thought, that in reference to their value; he had not yet fallen so low as to think seriously of selling his wife's pretty folderols, he hoped.

But if it were a passing thought it was one that came back again—came back as he lay awake turning this way and that for some escape from his dilemma—came back to stay. It was a strange thing for a husband to be burning his brain with distracting search for means to keep his name afloat while his wife had those very means lying idle in her jewel-safe, he said in his thoughts, and repeated it a little angrily. And what if he did think of selling them? he said. Better men had come to a worse pass. He bought them! What if he did think of selling them now? It would be only to make himself able to buy them back—to buy better. If he did sell them he would buy better; there shouldn't be a lady off the thrones covered one-half so resplendently with gems as his wife should be. Let him once tide over these cruel breakers, she should be as radiant as a whole constellation, if she wished. All at once Mr. Rothely shuddered. He had, then, really and seriously, been thinking of taking his wife's jewels to carry him through his difficulties!

Well, why not? he said, presently. Let him look at the thing squarely. Would his wife be more hurt or more benefited by his doing so? Hurt for a season, certainly, yet not so much hurt as he would be under the necessity of doing it; but benefited in the end to an immeasurable extent, since, unless he could be carried through, not only jewels, but estate, equipage, servants and all would have to go to satisfy the demands of creditors who would not wait for a sentiment. But only let him get through this strait—and with a hundred thousand dollars ready money the tide might turn at any moment—and he would wind up his business, realize, and retire with a sufficient fortune to assure his wife a perpetuity of all the comforts and luxuries she had hitherto enjoyed. Yes, on the whole, he thought he could do nothing so wise as to raise the requisite money upon the jewels. But having arrived at that determination a new feature of the case presented itself to Mr. Rothely. What would Mrs. Rothely say to the plan? Would she, in the first place, be likely to listen to it, and would she take it as a reasonable woman should? No, she wouldn't. Mrs. Rothely wasn't a reasonable woman. She was a charming woman, but, as he had thought if not said when he married her, he thanked heaven she wasn't that strong-minded thing—a reasonable woman! A lovely, capricious, fascinating being she was, but one to whom a syllogism was as Sanscrit. And as he remembered all her sweet and gay inconsistencies he felt that it would be quite impossible for him to explain the thing to her. How could he tell her he would buy them back again? She would tell him that she should never have a moment's security in them afterward. "What!" he could hear her say, "my emeralds! my beautiful great emeralds! Sell my jewels! It can't be that I understand you. To be sure!" with that sweet, inconsequential way of hers, "I knew you were only teasing me. My precious emeralds, indeed!"

And he could hear himself answering: "Indeed I am not jesting. I meant what I said."

"Meant what you said!" he was sure she would reply. "Meant that you must sell my emeralds! Why don't you sell the house?"

"Because real estate is low," with literal persistency, heedless of the intended sarcasm, "and the house would not bring a third as much as the jewels. And my losses, my reverses—I—I have seen the fabric of a fortune it has taken years to build fall in a day!" Not that out of an imaginary conversation never taking place Mr. Rothely would have been capable of using the least fine language.

"And fallen so low," she cries, "that you must pledge your wife's trinkets!—fallen so low that we are in the same plight as those miserable creatures who are found with pawn tickets on them! Oh, take them! take the wretched things!" she cries, with lofty scorn; "I will never touch them again! Oh, why was I ever born? What have I ever done, to be disgraced so? I'm sure I never expected this when I was married. Don't touch me! don't speak to me! I never dreamed of such an outrage!" And by that time his thinking had thrown Mr. Rothely into a wet chill, and he sat up in bed, sure that he never could tell his circumstances to Mrs. Rothely, and ask her for the help her jewels could afford. There she was now, sweetly sleeping in the moonlight that filtered between the curtains and silvered all the rich room, her long, dark lashes resting on her rosy cheek, a smile parting her lips—as she remembered, perhaps, some of the fatuities whispered by her last partner at the ball. He felt a glow of resentment taking the place of the cold chill of the moment before, and he suddenly said to himself that he would have her jewels, and she should never be the wiser! He could not, he would not, he thought, humiliate himself before her by craving such a favor. What power he had, what supremacy, he felt to be due to his granting favors, not begging them. He would not yield the position, he would never place himself in such an abject light! Not while this other course was open; for what was there easier than now, while she was wrapped away in this soft nimbus of sleep, to steal across the moon-lighted room, to secure the casket, to lock the safe and keep the key—that she might fancy she had mislaid it—till he could put the casket back again with every splendid diamond, with every cool, rich emerald, in it replaced by as skillfully-cut crystals as cunning hands could set them, after which the key could easily be found again! The law would take them if he didn't, and would never give them back again, as he would.

Easy is the descent. The whole affair shaped itself in a swift drama to his eyes, to his hand. And then it was done. And if in the morning Mr. Rothely looked worn and haggard, it was not because he had not slept, and had not been muttering in his sleep when by and by his wife, leaning on her elbow, bent over him to hear the words he said; it was not because he had not felt that he was on the mending hand, so far as his business difficulties were concerned. Not, indeed, that a hundred thousand dollars ready money would liquidate a tenth part of his obligations, but that, on that hydrostatic principle of balancing an immense weight with a mere trifle on which much of the affairs of Wall street is modeled, he saw that he would be able to pull through.

It was a busy day for Mr. Rothely—a dreadful day in some respects, a delightful one in others, for he raised his money and he saved his name. Yet no one would have supposed it had been delightful in anything who had seen the gray and dreary look he cast about him as he entered his house and observed his wife hastening to meet him. He shrank away from her welcome before he knew what he did, and then could but think of the toad squatting in Eden and shrinking from the presence of the visiting white spirit there; for certainly there was an air of Eden about this place to him—all was so soft and bright; luxurious warmth and delicate beauty everywhere; and wherever his wife was there were flowers in abundance, since Mrs. Rothely was much like Lady Teazle, after all, and never considered it her fault that flowers were dear in winter!

"Oh, Mr. Rothely!" she was exclaiming, as she hurried down the drawing-room. "What *do* you think? The key is gone! I have looked for it everywhere, and have had all the servants up to examine them, and the room has been swept, and the furniture moved, and Susette has taken everything out of the wardrobe drawers and shaken it and put it back again, and yet it can't be found!"

"What are you talking about, my dear?" said Mr. Rothely, with well-assumed bewilderment. "To what does 'it' refer?"

"Yes, indeed!" she cried, paying no attention to what he said. "Oh, I am so worried about it! And I am positive I locked the door of the safe and put the key in its place!" She had done nothing of the kind, you know.

"Yes, I am positive I saw you do it," said Mr. Rothely, absently, she too much excited to remember that he had done nothing of the kind either.

"I think I shall have to call in the police!" she cried. "I shall not be able to sleep one moment to-night. I shall be thinking I see masked faces, and hear felt shoes, and be on the watch for burglars and everything terrible!" and the tears were choking her.

"O no, my love, I shall be here," said Mr. Rothely, reassuringly.

"Oh, I know. You, of course," said Mrs. Rothely, dashing off her tears. "But that won't hinder them. Why, they blow chloroform through key-holes, and smother you with pillows, and if you scream they shoot. Mrs. Ewer has just been telling me how she lay still and held her hand over Mr. Ewer's mouth, and saw the men going through his pockets, without daring to breathe—

"Mrs. Ewer! I thought she gave an alarm."

"O yes, finally, when they went to the drawer where she keeps her diamonds, you know. O dear, dear me! If I could only find that key! I shall vex myself into a fever. I am all tired out, and I have been so afraid you would say it was careless."

"Careless, my love? Not in the least. And as for the key, never mind it. It will turn up; that's a way things have."

"According to the moral depravity of inanimate things,'" said Mrs. Rothely, laughing as easily as she cried. "Are you ready for dinner? There's Lawrence making eyes at me outside the door. Come in! What is it, Lawrence? Have you found the key? What a jewel an honest servant is!"

"May be this ull be the kay, mum," said Lawrence, with a shuffle.

"That rusty thing? O dear, no! It is a little ornamental brass key that is lost;" and she tossed the rusty tool upon the fire. "Was there ever anything so vexatious as to have all your expectation roused just to be destroyed?"

"There's no occasion for fretting, my darling," said Mr. Rothely. "I will have the men up here to open the safe by force, take it away, and put another in. That will outflank the thieves." He felt, and was conscious that he looked, like nothing but a thief himself.

"Yes, and we may all be killed in our beds to-night! Well, we must seize the moment as it flies, I suppose; which means that you must make haste and dress for dinner and get what pleasure we may out of the day if we are not to have another. I expect that superb Count Pescovitch—the Pole, you remember—to dinner (now don't make a mistake and take him for a Russian, or—you know the old saying—you'll catch a Tartar), and the Du Barris and Van Vleets, that's all. I'm sure it's a blessing sent especially to divert my mind, though I dare say they'll talk of nothing but burglary and murder after I tell them about the key."

"Don't tell them, then."

"Well, I declare, Mr. Rothely! I should think it was something to hide! When Providence makes a subject for conversation to hand, to decline it! Why, of course I shall tell them, and ask their advice. Oh, it's too bad! I had such a delightful plan, and such a surprise for you, too. But perhaps Fate was wiser than I," said Mrs. Rothely, sighing, and lifting her eyebrows as if she rather doubted the proposition.

"My dear," said Mr. Rothely, "don't alarm yourself any further. If it will be a comfort to you, I promise to sit up in the hall with a couple of loaded revolvers all night." And then he laughed and went up stairs.

"How good he is," said Mrs. Rothely. "Never to whisper a word about his own great troubles because he saw mine. He doesn't know what I heard him saying. Oh, there never was such a husband!"

For two or three mornings after that—having neglected to send up the men who could remove the safe—the first thing that saluted Mr. Rothely's eyes as he opened them was his wife, with her pretty lace cap askew, and a shawl dragging from her shoulders, reflected in two or three long mirrors, and going over the room in a renewed search, while she talked vigorously to herself. "It is getting to be worse than Blue-beard's key," she was sighing. "I sha'n't wait another day before calling in the police. If any of the servants took it and are biding their time for a raid on the safe we are only assisting at the cutting of our own throats by this delay." And Mr. Rothely, muttering something about its turning up all right would dispose himself for another snooze, but not a sweet one, we may surmise; for, somehow or other, light-hearted as Mr. Rothely ought to have been in relation to his business, he did not in these two or three days find it possible to smile, and Mrs. Rothely could not but observe his depression and derive fresh trouble from it.

It might have been on the third or fourth of these mornings that as Mr. Rothely opened his eyes he saw his pretty wife prowling about the rooms as on the previous days.

"Still on the look-out?" he said. "Well, you will lose your wits. Here, let me see!" And he seized his dressing-gown, wrapped himself in it, and was presently beside her. "Do you expect to find it by shaking your ball dresses like a prestidigitateur?" he asked.

"But it may have gotten caught in the folds, you know," she urged.

"You had the furniture moved, you said. Did you turn back the edges of the carpet?"

"Turn back the carpet! Mr. Rothely, it is your wits that are in danger. Do you suppose the key has been lost supernaturally, that it can get under a carpet?"

"I thought you didn't. Well, let us see. H'm—h'm. Can you help me a little? Monstrous thing! Give me those scissors, please. H'm—h'm—there! Mrs. Rothely, what do you call this? Here is your key, slipped between the carpet and the wall; and all the agitation of your search, with its sweeping and moving, is only calculated to slip it still further into hiding. I told you the thing would turn up." And he went back with apparent composure to his sleep; but he did not close his eyes at once, for it was a tremulous moment to him. A tremulous moment too to his wife; she clasped the key a moment to her heart with as profound an ejaculation of thanks as if she had been on her knees, and then she flew to the little safe and unlocked it and snatched the casket. Yes, there it was, and there were the jewels in it, with their old and exquisite filigree setting in gold-work of tiny shamrock and thistle.

"Oh, my beauties!" she exclaimed. "How glad—how glad I am to see you sparkling up at me again! Oh, how precious you are! What should I have done if I had lost you?"

"I was quite right," said Mr. Rothely to himself. "It is evident she would not have parted with them. Women are lovely creatures, but not reasonable ones. Yes, I should have been a sad fool," he was thinking, bitterly, "to have risked my fortune for a moment on the supposition that she could prefer her husband's honor to her baubles!" And he closed his eyes as he lay there, perhaps to sleep, perhaps to shut out the sight of the woman he loved rejoicing over the deceit that he had practiced upon her.

But what was this? Ah, what? What were these soft arms round his neck, this velvet cheek on his, this sweet voice murmuring in his ear, this gay, light-hearted laugh, these sudden tears? "Wake up—wake up, my darling!" his wife was crying. "Didn't I tell you I had such a delightful plan before I lost the key to the safe? Didn't I hear you talking in your sleep, and saying you were to be ruined for the want of $100,000? See here, my dear husband! Here is $100,000 in this little case, and it is all yours, and you needn't feel badly about taking it, for I always kept the jewels as if you lent them, and if they help you in your trouble they will give me more pleasure than they ever did before!"

Mr. Rothely sat up in bed, pushing back the case, and staring straight before him with wild eyes. "Oh, you think I only care for gayety and glitter!" she cried. "You think it is too great a sacrifice for me to make. But indeed, indeed"—and here, with both arms about him, and her face hidden in his breast, she broke out in a fresh flood of sweet, glad tears—"I never dared tell you, you never seemed to want me to tell you, but indeed I had rather be—if only you are pleased— Oh, I never was so happy in my life! And you will take them?"

Was he dreaming? Was he here in his own bed, in his own house, awake? Oh, had he perjured his soul for this! Had he believed his wife to be so small in order that she might destroy him with her greatness? Had he stolen her jewels that he might receive from her the free gift of these bits of colored glass? Mus the all his life carry round with him the shame and memory of a crime—of a crime, too, that was so useless? He drew away from her, shuddering; and then, as she still clasped him, he folded his arms about her, and the tears that he was weeping were different tears from hers—were tears salt as the salt with which the desert is sowed!

Well, that was years ago. Mr. Rothely took the casket his wife had pressed upon him and burned it in his office fire, case and gold and all. The world has prospered with him since then, and he has replaced Mrs. Rothely's emeralds with those which are much more magnificent than the original. But though now he knows how firmly his wife believes in him, knows that he need want no more for sympathy and comfort, yet he feels that he purchased that knowledge at a price too dear. He cannot bear to see her put her jewels on, for every ray of their light is like a needle pricking the sore spot in his heart; and he never has said another syllable about the words he wants written on his gravestone. And sometimes at night, when Mrs. Rothely is in her happy dreams, and Mr. Rothely sits lingering by his dressing-room fire, the skeleton that slips into the opposite seat makes him hide his face before it, and wish he had never seen the light, and yet it is only the image of himself as he has seen himself to be.—*Harper's Bazar.*

The Hairy Visitor.

The comet now hanging in the vicinity of the earth and coming constantly nearer will be the sensation of the season. It is a large one, and will be so distinctly visible that no one can help seeing it without trying. The appearance of an object so rarely seen and so strange naturally excites curiosity and sets speculation in a quiver of excitement. It will be remembered that for ages the appearance of a comet was thought to betoken wars, or plagues, or earthquakes, or some other dire calamity. It was the forerunner of disaster. It was the advance courier sent forward to herald approaching evils and warn men to prepare for the worst. Exactly why the influence of comets was always considered baleful it is not easy to understand, except that, unable to account for any unusual appearance in the heavens save by the interference of supernatural powers, men took counsel of their fears rather than their hopes, and attributed a malignant design in whatever was out of the natural order of things. The fact that war or pestilence or a volcanic eruption or any other calamity occurred within a year of a comet's appearance was considered a sufficient proof of its baleful influence, and a mere coincidence was mistaken for a necessary consequence. The telescope and the facts it has revealed and the calculations it has led to have completely revolutionized the old theory of the heavenly bodies, and given even comets a place in the vast and grand order of which our solar system is an insignificant part.

But there are still a great many people who associate calamity with the appearance of a comet, and when the hairy visitor comes trailing its feathery flakes of light across a quarter of the heavens they are disturbed if not alarmed. There is nothing so adhesive as a superstition that has once got fairly fastened to the human mind. Perhaps one reason why this old notion keeps its hold so long is the difficulty of explaining the origin and orbit of comets to uneducated people in an intelligible manner. Indeed, very little is certainly known respecting them, even by astronomers. Newton thought their orbit was elliptical, while modern astronomers generally hold that it is a parabola. What substance they are composed of is still uncertain, as the instruments and processes of the spectrum analysis were not sufficiently perfected to enable astronomers to subject Donati's comet, which appeared in 1858, to a scientific test; and Biela's comet, which has appeared since, was too insignificant and remote to throw any light on the subject. That they are composed of anything more substantial than the lightest gases is exceedingly improbable. What are the chemical constituents of the gases is still a matter of mere guess-work. The relation of the nucleus or head to the tail which spreads fan-like so far is not understood, and the law of their existence has yet to be determined. One reason why the coming of the present comet is specially welcome is that it will enable astronomers to study it with new and more powerful instruments and learn something specific and satisfactory respecting its composition and probable destiny. It will call the attention of intelligent observers anew to the demonstrated facts and unsolved problems of the astronomic universe, and lead them to forget for awhile the petty cares and frivolous excitements of our world in contemplating the wonders of the heavens and the mystery that still enshrouds their ongoing.—*N. Y. Graphic.*

The refreshment stands for the Ohio State Fair were sold recently for $1,415.

CURRENT ITEMS.

Five hundred patients receive treatment in the Athens (Ohio) insane asylum.

Not more than two of the nine furnaces in Sharpsville, Pa., are now in operation.

The expenses of the Holly water works, Titusville, Pa., are but $10,800 per year.

Sixty thousand quarts of strawberries were shipped from Milford, Pa., in a single day recently.

An inventive genius in Ohio proposes to furnish horses with false teeth, so as to conceal their age.

Several residents along the Mohawk Flats, Pa., have engaged in the cultivation of sweet potatoes.

Five times John Happy, of Vermont, has been engaged to one girl, and he has not made her Happy yet.

Thirty-five citizens of Center Township, Boone County, Ind., have reached the age of seventy years.

A bill that everybody is anxious should not be brought before the house this summer—the mosquito's.

A merchant who has suffered from the moiety system styles the Government officials "infernal revenoodles."

A performer at the coming circus is styled "the human anaconda." It is to be hoped he will not prove a boa.

A Leavenworth paper notes the death of a man of "thirty-five years' standing." Chairs must be scarce out there.

France, notwithstanding her disturbed political condition, produced more books last year than any other country.

"This engine won't work," said a fireman to the chief of a fire department. "No wonder," said he, "it was made to play."

The Spragues are under a cloud yet, and it isn't necessary to have a pass from one of them in order to travel across Rhode Island.

The wind-mills introduced in the Granby (Nev.) mines to pump out water have proved a failure, and the idea has been abandoned.

John Groggin, of Maine, has just got mad about the Modoc war, and is coming West with fire in his eye and a shotgun on his shoulder.

A Detroit boy propounds the awful query: "Which had you rather do, be eaten up by a tiger, or have all the maple sugar you can swaller?"

Come, now, let's say no more about Laura Fair. When one remembers that it was a lawyer she shot, the crime is robbed of its rough edge.

Commodore Vanderbilt admits that he isn't much on orthography, but Blinkers asks: "What in thunder does a man worth $87,000,000 care about spelling?"

Dubuque has just platted a new cemetery with a race-track around it, and now if they would give a chromo to every purchaser of a lot the thing could be made to pay.

When a man is found on the highway in Missouri with two bullet-holes in his head, the verdict of the Coroner's jury is "that it looks like shooting, but may have been suicide."

George H. Avery, of Boston, who recently walked 100 miles in twenty-one hours and forty minutes, is going to start from Boston for Montreal, 460 miles, Sept. 1, intending to walk the distance in eight days.

Prof. Hitchcock, of Dartmouth College, will shortly receive from New Zealand two skeletons of the extinct bird, the dinoris, or dodo, the first ever brought to this country.

The San Francisco trotting horse Sam Purdy was sold by auction on the 24th ult., for $21,500. Messrs. McCord and Frank Malone, of San Francisco, were the buyers.

A grapeshot, probably fired during the Revolution, was found the other day in the heart of a tree twenty inches in diameter, near the spot at Center Rutland, Vt., where the old fort stood.

A man who had spent over two years and $2,000 in lead mining at Joplin, Mo., has just made a strike which will likely repay him for his time and outlay. Recently he took out 10,000 pounds.

The Joplin (Mo.) *Bulletin* wants a railroad from that place to Kansas City. It claims for the town a population of 8,000, together with 130 business houses and twenty-five furnaces, which run day and night.

The son of an Emir had red hair, of which he was ashamed, and wished to dye it. But his father said: "Nay, my son, rather behave in such a manner that all fathers should wish their sons had red hair."

A correspondent informs us that in Germany, when the vote of the jury stands six against six, the verdict is left to the decision of the Judge. A majority of votes either acquits or convicts the prisoner.

A Paterson (N. J.) man who had placed several lightning-rods on his house was delighted during a recent storm at seeing it struck in two places, while the house of his neighbor, who was too mean to pay for a lightning-rod, was not struck at all.

The Trustees of the Worcester (Mass.) Academy have received the sum of $1,000 from William Bucknell, of Philadelphia, the income of which is to be applied to sustaining a scholarship for the most courteous Christian gentlemen among the students in the academy.

A New Orleans young woman who writes pieces for the papers says that occasionally a woman meets a man to whom she says: "On the barren shores of Time, O my soul's kinsman, I have found in thee my 'pearl of great price,' and there is nothing more precious out of heaven!" This young man does not grow in the North.

The other day a young lady in Philadelphia became so much embarrassed by a proposal from her lover that, in her agitation, she swallowed a needle. Young men cannot be too cautious about such things. They should never make such propositions to girls until they have thoroughly examined their mouths to see whether they have any needles in them or not.

Prof. Adler, of the Cornell University, cannot see what the name of the shad is derived from, unless from the German word *schade*, signifying something like our English word "scathe"—to injure or inflict loss. The shad has been described contemptuously as the poor man's fish; and from this association of it with poverty the Professor thinks that its name may have come.

Naturalists bewail the apparent fact that the elephant, like the whale, is being driven into extinction by the persecution of mankind. In India the hunters have pursued him so far inland that he is scarcely more common now in the habitable part of that country than is the red deer in England; and in Burmah and Ceylon only has the huge and docile animal a refuge from extermination.

Medical science in Holland claims to have discovered yet another remedial power of that beneficent substance, quinine. German physicians, who have used it for several years in their practice, say that quinine is a sovereign cure of small-pox, if administered in a pure state and at an early stage of the disease. It acts as a prompt antidote to the poison of the dread malady, but must be given in large doses.

The first American whaler which ever doubled Cape Horn was the Rebecca, built by Claghorn, who was also the architect of the famous frigate Constitution. She was launched in 1785, in New Bedford, and though she was of only 185 tons she was regarded a big ship in those days, and the compliment of commanding her was given to Capt. Cornelius Grinnell, father of Henry and Moses H. Grinnell, of New York city. During the reign of the Directory she was taken by the French, recaptured by the British and restored to the owners through heavy salvage. The Rebecca was lost at sea in the winter of 1803-4.

The Baby in Hot Weather.

In July and August the baby becomes, or ought to become, a point of public interest. If grown men and women suffer from bad ventilation, uncleanliness or indigestion, they have themselves to blame. But when the poor baby is the victim it is a matter of deliberate cruelty. Summer after summer teething children fall in hecatombs, sacrificed to the ignorance or carelessness of their parents. This year, however, at last, instructions have been published by the boards of health in some neighboring cities by which the most uneducated mother may understand how to protect her child from danger as far as possible during the season of heat and foul air. The directions are based upon plain principles of common sense, which we would suppose would be patent to anybody of ordinary intelligence, but which are unfortunately the very facts soonest ignored and neglected. Mothers, like Naaman of old, are usually willing to try any cure which any prophet may recommend—the more miraculous and difficult the better; but as for a steady washing of themselves or their children in the waters of Jordan or Croton to make them whole, they are apt, like the Syrian, to sniff contemptuously at the idea, and go faithfully on their way through dirt to death.

Washing, however, might be called the basis of a baby's salvation through teething: a thorough sousing of the little body in plenty of cold water every morning, and when the weather is extremely hot a tepid sponge bath at night; washing, too, constantly of all clothes and cloths used by the infant, to afford it perfectly clean garments at all times. Whatever milk be given should be thoroughly sweet and cool; infants under two years should be restricted in their diet to milk, oatmeal mush, or gruel carefully prepared, and beef broth or minced raw beef in small quantities. There is a popular prejudice among uneducated women against the meanness of refusing food to "their children which they eat themselves;" to which is owing one-half the deaths among that class of infants. The swarms of sallow, puny, wizened-faced babies which we see at the doors of tenement-houses are fed on morsels of pork, vegetables, unraised bread, and occasionally sips of tea and lager-beer which may fall to their mother's lucky lot. It is not heat or malaria or teething against which the doctors have to contend so much as the obstinate ignorance of the parents. Fresh air is of course a tonic and cure superior to any medicine; every hour passed by the child under the trees in the squares or on the rivers gives it a new chance for life. No anodynes or soothing syrups should be given except under medical direction.

So far the doctors. There are other rules as practical in effect, but which only affection can suggest. One is the laying aside for the brief hot season the rigor of parental discipline. Many well-meaning women feel it to be their duty to teach their children implicit obedience at the earliest age, and to punish any ill-temper or peevishness. Now, an infant never cries except when hungry, hurt or sick; the cutting of the teeth frequently affects the brain and produces a nervous irritability, which relieves itself by peevish complaints or crying. To whip a child for such conduct is sheer cruelty, and simply increases what is an actual disease. Through these perilous two months the helpless little creatures require not only the skillful care of a wise mother, but the brooding love of the most tender one. If they do not fret and cry against the discomforts and pain of a world into which they come without choice and which shows them just now its roughest side—what wonder?—*New York Tribune.*

Hindoo Worship of Tools.

At the festival of Sauri, wife of Sceva, and of the three principal Hindoo deities, which is celebrated for several days in September, and is one of the most solemn of the Hindoo festivals, every artisan, every laborer and handicraftsman offer sacrifices and supplications to the tools and implements which they use in the exercise of their various professions. The laborer brings his plow, hoe and other instruments, piles them together, and offers to them a sacrifice, consisting of incense, flowers, fruits, rice and other similar articles; after which he prostrates himself before them at full length. The mason offers the same worship and sacrifice to his trowel, his rule and other instruments. The carpenter is no less pious with regard to his hatchet, his saw, his adze and his plane, before which he is offering a sacrifice of rice and flowers previous to prostrating himself before them. The barber, too, collects his razors in a heap and adores them with similar rites. And the shopkeepers are in the daily habit of personifying the stool on which they sit: "Oh, great stool, send me to-day many customers with full purses and empty heads." Every person, in short, in this solemnity adores the instrument or tool he principally uses in gaining his livelihood. The tools are then considered as deities to whom they present their supplications that they will continue favorable and furnish them with the means of living; and to such a depth does this base idolatry descend that the farmers in certain districts offer a sacrifice to the dunghill which is afterward to enrich their ground.