

THE BOURBON NEWS.

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THE VETERAN.

BY STEPHEN CRANE.



OF the window could be seen three hickory trees placed irregularly in a meadow that was resplendent in springtime green. Further away the old dismal belfry of the village church loomed over the pines. A horse meditating in the shade of one of the hickories lazily swished his tail. The warm sunshine made an oblong of vivid yellow on the floor of the grocery store. "Could you see the whites of their eyes?" said the man who was seated on a soap box. "Nothing of the kind," replied old Henry, warmly. "Just a lot of flitting figures, and I let go when they 'peared to be thickest. Bang!" "Mr. Fleming," said the grocer. His deferential voice expressed somehow the old man's exact social weight. "Mr. Fleming, you never was frightened much in them battles, was you?" The veteran looked down and grinned. Observing his manner, the entire group tittered. "Well, I guess I was," he answered, finally; "pretty well scared, sometimes. Why, in my first battle I thought the sky was falling down. I thought the world was coming to an end. You bet I was scared."

change in the old man. His face ceased instantly to be a face; it became a mask, a gray thing, with horror written about the mouth and eyes. He hoarsely shouted at the foot of the little, rickety stairs, and immediately, it seemed, there came down an avalanche of men. No one knew that during this time the old lady had been standing in her nightclothes at the bedroom door yelling: "What's th' matter? What's th' matter? What's th' matter?" When they dashed toward the barn it presented to their eyes its usual appearance, solemn, rather mystic in the black night. The Swede's lantern was overturned at a point some yards from in front of the barn doors. It contained a wild little conflagration of its own, and even in their excitement some of those who ran felt a gentle secondary vibration of the thrifty part of their minds at sight of this overturned lantern. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been a calamity. But the cattle in the barn were trampling, trampling, trampling, and above this noise could be heard a humming like the song of innumerable bees. The old man hurried aside the great doors, and a yellow flame leaped out at one corner and sped and sped and wavered frantically up the old gray wall. It was glad, terrible, this single flame, like the wild banner of deadly and triumphant foes. With his open knife in his hand old Fleming himself had gone headlong into the barn, where the stifling smoke swirled with the air currents, and where could be heard in its fullness the terrible chorus of the flames, laden with tones of hate and death, a hymn of wonderful ferocity. He flung a blanket over the old mare's head, cut the halter close to the manger,



"I MUST TRY AND GET 'EM OUT."

led the mare to the door, and fairly kicked her out to safety. He returned with the same blanket and rescued one of the work horses. He took five horses out, and then came out himself with his clothes bravely on fire. He had no whiskers, and very little hair on his head. They soured five pauls of water on him. His eldest son made a clean miss with the sixth paul because the old man had turned and was running down the decline and around to the basement of the barn where were the stanchions of cows. Some one noticed at the time that he ran very lamely, as if one of the frenzied horses had smashed his hip. The cows, with their heads held in the heavy stanchions, had thrown themselves, strangled themselves, tangled themselves—done everything which the ingenuity of their exuberant fear could suggest to them. Here, as at the well, the same thing happened to every man save one. Their hands went mad. They became incapable of everything save the power to rush into dangerous situations. The old man released the cow nearest the door, and she, blind drunk with terror, crashed into the Swede. The Swede had been running to and fro, babbling. He carried an empty milk pail, to which he clung with an unconscious fierce enthusiasm. He shrieked like one lost as he went under the cow's hoofs, and the milk pail, rolling across the floor, made a flash of silver in the gloom. Old Fleming took a fork, beat off the cow, and dragged the paralyzed Swede to the open air. When they had rescued all the cows save one, which had so fastened herself that she could not be moved an inch, they returned to the front of the barn and stood sadly, breathing like men who had reached the final point of human effort. Many people had come running. Some one had even gone to the church, and now, from the distance, rang the tocsin note of the old bell. There was a long flare of crimson on the sky, which made remote people speculate as to the whereabouts of the fire. The long flames sang their drumming chorus in voices of the heaviest bass. The wind whirled clouds of smoke and cinders into the faces of the spectators. The form of the old barn was outlined in black amid these masses of orange-hued flames. And then came this Swede again crying as one who is the weapon of the sinister fates: "De colts! De colts! You have forgot de colts!" Old Fleming staggered. It was true; they had forgotten the two colts in the box stalls at the back of the barn. "Boys," he said, "I must try to get 'em out." They clamored about him then, afraid for him, afraid of what they should see. Then they talked wildly each to each. "Why, it's sure death!" "He would never get out!" "Why, it's suicide for a man to go in there!" Old Fleming stared, absent-mindedly, at the open doors. "The poor little things," he said. He rushed into the barn. When the roof fell in a great funnel of smoke swarmed towards the sky, as if the old man's mighty spirit, released from its body—a little bottle—had swelled like the geni of fable. The smoke was tinted rose hue from the flames, and perhaps the unutterable midnights of the universe will have no power to daunt the color of his soul.—St. James Budget.

MUTTON BIRD.

The Sooty Petrel is Esteemed a Delicacy in Australia. Tastes differ in different latitudes even among English-speaking people. Imagine Caucasians dining on salted petrels and with a relish, too, as though that fish-eating sea bird were a luxury. Of all the fowl that haunt the barrier islands on the California coast none is considered quite so worthless as the sooty petrel. Even the seagull has his usefulness as a scavenger on the bays along the coast but the petrel is truly a despised bird in these waters. Seagull's eggs bring a price in the market that makes it worth while to gather them at a considerable expense, but no one thinks it worth while to rob the petrels' nests on the rookeries at the Farallon islands. It is different in Australia. Is it the cold winds that blow up from the antarctic regions or the hot air that sweeps down from the equator? No matter what the cause, the fact is that the appetites of our Australian cousins are radically different. The sooty petrel is there an edible fowl with a decided market value, and a number of men and small craft are employed each year in catching, salting, packing and carrying it in great quantities from the rookeries on Trefoil island and other adjoining islands on the north coast of Tasmania to Stanley and Melbourne. Mutton birds is the general name given the petrel there and the men and ships engaged in the business are known as "mutton birders." To Americans this is quite a novel industry and the fact that such common sea birds as the petrel are packed and salted down like so much pork is always a matter of wonderment to strangers who go there. But the test of the pudding is in the eating of it and those who have dined off mutton birds instead of land mutton pronounce the one every bit as good as the other. If you leave San Francisco in August sailing westward and southward you will pass many great flocks of birds that will be pointed out to you as sooty petrels—or they will pass you, for they are traveling about three times faster than you are. And when you reach Melbourne and have become acclimated enough to venture a trip across to Tasmania you may dine off the young of those very birds that passed you on the California coast, only now they will be served to you as mutton birds. These fowls leave the Farallones every few months and once every year they visit Australia. Trefoil island is their chief roosting-place in the southern hemisphere, so far as is known. Here they scratch and dig in the barren soil until they have burrowed a hole perhaps two feet deep. Into these holes each hen in the immense flock deposits her one egg. The mutton birder inserts his arm full stretch for his game. He does not take the egg, but waits a week or ten days after the egg has been hatched. Then he finds the young bird almost as big as its parent, but much more tender and fat. On land the petrel is quite unable to escape from the catchers. It cannot mount into the air from off the land, though its wings are enormously long in proportion to its black body and it rises quite gracefully from the water. On shore, however, the strange bird must hop along at a slow pace and can only fly from the top of a ledge. Certain points of Trefoil island are littered with thousands of these nests and it is no difficult task to gather the yearly harvest of young mutton birds. The mutton-birding season on Trefoil lasts from a month to six weeks and this includes the catching, salting, packing and shipping. They are packed in casks and these are loaded on coasting schooners that come after them from Tasmania and Melbourne.—San Francisco Chronicle.

Eating Dinner Backward. An odd experiment with the kinoscope took place not long ago in Boston. The subject was a man eating dinner, and the film, prepared especially for the occasion, was found of unusual length, so that the whole performance could be recorded. The man entered the room, and, seating himself at a table, proceeded to cut up the food. The motion of the fork from the plate to his lips was carefully recorded until the last morsel of food had vanished. Then he arose and walked out of the room, leaving nothing on the table but bare dishes. The series of pictures was then reversed. It showed the man entering the room, walking backward. He sat down at the table, upon which there was nothing but bare dishes, and proceeded to extract food from his lips until he had filled the potato dish with potatoes and gradually put together a steak on the platter before him. Then he calmly backed out of the room, and the waiter did likewise with the meal that the man had apparently created.—Troy Times.

Judging from Appearances.

Fashionable Maiden Aunt (chiefly interested in preserving a youthful appearance)—I must say that I am proud of our country. It seems almost incredible that we should have grown so remarkably during the comparatively short period since America was discovered. Tommy—How long ago is that auntie? You ought to know that, Tommy. It's but a trifle over 400 years. "How old were you then, auntie?"—Richmond Dispatch.

Conclusive.

Voice (at the telephone)—Major, will you please bring your family and take supper with us next Sunday? Servant Girl (replying back through the telephone)—Master and mistress are not in at present; but they can't come to supper, as it's my Sunday out.—Boston Globe.

Then the Hair Flew.

Mabel—I hear you are engaged to Charlie Blyth. Maud—Yes, I am. "I wonder if he proposed to you in the same way he did to me?"—N. Y. Commercial Advertiser.

HUMOROUS.

"Hang this fog!" "What's the matter?" "Why, it's so thick I just walked into one of my creditors."—Cleveland Plain Dealer. Hostess (entertaining two lady friends, to herself)—"Oh, dear, I do wish one would go—I have so much to tell either of them about the other!"—Tit-Bits.

A Literary Hint.—In producing literature write only on one side of the paper, as the great publications of the day do not, as a rule, care for both sides of a story.—Detroit Journal.

Miss Prion (quoting)—"Wise men make proverbs, and fools repeat them." Miss Smart (musingly)—"Yes; I wonder what wise man made the one you just repeated."—Tit-Bits.

"My child," said the old herring to the young herring, by way of parting advice, "the whole ocean is before you, but don't go too near those canneries along the coast of Maine unless you want to be taken for a sardine."—Chicago Tribune.

Fuddy—"Haven't you always had a contempt for that slothful servant who wrapped up his talent in a napkin?" Duddy—"On the contrary, I have often thought him deserving of praise. Just as like as not, you know, his talent was one for music."—Boston Transcript.

Obstacles to Art.—"There is one thing," said the heavy man of the theatrical company, "that'll have to be attended to." "What is it?" asked the stage manager. "You remember the scene in which I pledge the princess' health in this crystal goblet of foaming wine?" "Yes." "Well, you can do one of three things. You can make that cold tea weaker, put some sugar in it, or else get some man who isn't in danger of making a wry face to play the part."—Washington Star.

The late lord chief justice of England used to tell his friends this anecdote at his own expense: Driving in his coupe towards his court one morning, an accident happened to it at Grosvenor Square. Fearing he would be belated, he called a cab from the street rank, and bade the Jehu drive him as rapidly as possible to the courts of justice. "And where are they?" "What, a London cabby, and don't know where the law courts are at old Temple Bar?" "Oh, the law courts, is it? But you said courts of justice."—Tit-Bits.

HERRMANN'S GREAT TRICK.

How He Caught Bullets Hot from Rifles Held by Good Marksmen. Now that Herrmann the Great is gone, there can be no harm in explaining how his wonderful trick of catching the bullets shot at him by six national guardsmen was done. On both occasions the famous prestidigitateur stood alone upon the stage, while six picked marksmen from the state national guard fired point blank upon him from a platform built in the audience. On both occasions Herrmann, pale of face and painfully alert, caught the bullets previously marked by a committee of noted army men, and handed them back hot from the barrels for identification. Of course, it was a trick, but it was a dangerous trick, and one that Herrmann disliked to do. But even he was less nervous than the marksmen, who, acting in perfect good faith, feared that they might kill the plucky magician. Many have been the alleged explanations of this trick published in various newspapers. They have all been wrong. Herrmann himself told the Herald how it was done, and here it is: Of course, there was an accomplice, and this accomplice was not one of the marksmen, but the sergeant in charge of them. This sergeant took the six regulation army bullet cartridges on a silver platter to the committee. The committee examined them, made sure they were genuine, marked them plainly and replaced them on the platter. The sergeant instantly raised the platter in plain sight at arm's length above his head, walked over to the marksmen, and they themselves each took a cartridge, examined it and placed it in the rifle. Then came the shooting. The trick lay in the platter, which had a false bottom. Under this bottom lay six other cartridges, identical in size, weight and appearance, but holding bullets made of a composition of plumbago and mercury. When the sergeant held the platter aloft he touched a spring, and by a clever mechanism these six "fake" cartridges jumped into the platter, while the genuine cartridge disappeared beneath the false bottom. So it was the composition cartridges that the marksmen unknowingly put into their rifles, and on firing this composition was instantly melted by friction through the barrels and dissipated in the air. Meantime, however, the supposedly empty platter was taken behind the wings, where the genuine cartridges were drawn out, quickly heated and carefully placed by an attendant on a table, where Herrmann, just before the firing, carelessly picked them up and palmed them. Holding them in his hands during the firing, he immediately produced them as the smoke cleared. A simple trick, but a very dangerous one, for if the platter's mechanism failed to work completely, one or more of the genuine cartridges might have got into the rifles of the marksmen and thence into Herrmann's body.—N. Y. Herald.

Dipping Into Theology.

A man asked an Irish priest what a miracle was. He gave him a full explanation, which did not satisfy the man, who said: "Now, won't your reverence give me an example of a miracle?" "Well," said the priest, "step before me and I'll see what I can do." As the man did so he gave him a tremendous kick behind. "Did you feel that?" he asked. "Bogorra I did feel it, sure enough." "Well," said the priest, "it would be a miracle if you didn't."—Boston Pilot.

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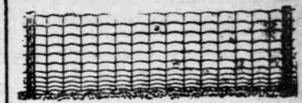
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