

The Weekly Messenger

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY
ALBERT BIENVENU.

Over \$80,000,000 new capital has been invested in the electrical industry in this country during the past year.

It appears that the construction of new railroads in the United States during the first four months of 1890 has been about one thousand one hundred and ten miles.

A wasteful slaughter of moose is said to be carried on upon the upper Ottawa River in Canada. The animals are killed merely for their hides, and the carcasses are left in the woods.

The President of the Columbian Fair in Chicago is to receive \$6000 annually; Vice-President, \$12,000; Treasurer, \$5000, and Auditor, \$5000. Vice-President Bryan receives a larger salary because it is expected that he will relieve President Gage of most of the work. Second Vice-President Potter Palmer declined any compensation.

The chicken business is a matter of wonderful importance to the table comfort and the financial outlook of the American farmer. Government statistics show that the annual expenditure in this line is \$560,000,000; and despite this immense production of eggs, several million dollars' worth are annually imported to meet the deficiency in the home supply.

The order which the Police Commissioners of Boston sent out recently was expected to work a transformation in the liquor selling business of that city. It abolishes all bars, and requires that liquors shall only be sold with food at tables. Every saloon in the city will have to be changed into a restaurant, and tables must take the place of the bars. The law has been on the statute books for some time, but it has never been enforced.

In the opinion of the New York Sun, "suicide in this country is getting to be a common nuisance. Here is a man whose rent falls due; he is unable to pay it, and commits suicide. No sane man now commits suicide but through defect of imagination. Time was when suicide was a point of honor in certain cases, but the world has shed those notions. It has got now to a point where sane suicide is a growth of pure barrenness of imagination. It is a case for the common schools. There wants to be more poetry in their curriculum; poetry simply as an exercise of the imaginative faculty, to train it, to develop its power of flight. The greatest part of suicide is stupid. Its prevalence derogates from national dignity. It used to be a fashion in France, and other folks rather despised the Frenchman then for not having better sense. It is time for the American people to brace up and quit making a spectacle of itself."

Electric Music.

Typewriting machines that will write and print have been common for some time, but the first typewriter that can be so operated as to produce musical sounds made its first appearance in public at the stage mechanics' benefit. The inventor is Mr. William Edward Wood, who is employed in the office of the architect of the Capitol. The instrument is an ordinary one, but some of its keys are electrically connected with a large and melodious assortment of bells arranged beneath the table. Pressure upon the keys operates a resistance coil and the result is a succession of remarkably sweet sounds. The beauty of the music is not so apparent unless the listener is some distance from the instrument.—*Washington Star.*

A single factory in Durham, N. C., manufactured \$32,000,000 cigarettes last year.

A Weather Prophet.

Scientist—So you have followed the sea all your life! I presume you are a thorough meteorological prognosticator by this time.

Jack Tarre—A which?

A—I mean you can easily foretell a gale, can't you?

Easy 'nough, sir. When you see the captain dancin' around an' yellin' out forty orders at once, you kin jest make up y'r mind that it's goin' ter blow.—*New York Weekly.*

DR. G. MUNRO SMITH states that a diet of twelve to fourteen ounces of chemically dry food, digestible and with the ingredients in proper proportion, is sufficient for the daily needs of an average-sized man on moderate work. Most persons eat literally twice as much.

FAME.

Write thou thy name in stone or hardened brass.

As years roll on, in time will come to pass
A day when one thy monument will see,
And ask what none can answer, Who was he?

And yet perchance, in him who asks, unknown
May bloom a precious seed which thou hast sown.

That gives him strength to bear his daily part.

And, think thou, which is best? Ask thou thy heart.

—[Flavel Scott Mines, in Independent.]

THE BROKEN CREVASSE.

BY COL. EDW. B. TAYLOR.

"I hate you!"

"But, Miss Alice, permit me—"

"Stop! I cannot listen to your protestations of love. From the first time that I knew you I have distrusted you, and you have deceived, cheated and robbed my old father!"

"Girl, this is infamous! I will not submit to being thus defamed even by you!"

And as Felix Cox uttered these words he sprang from the wicker chair in which he had been seated on the porch of Sedgewood plantation, and with flashing eyes faced the girl who had so boldly defied him.

She, winsome Alice Burnett, cool, calm and self-collected, returned his gaze unflinchingly.

"I am not afraid of you," she said, "even if father has become your slave. I know not what potent spell you have exercised over him, poor man! but this I do know—that since you came to Sedgewood he has been a changed man. The servants tell me that you gamble at night, and that you, skillful man of the world that you are, have won large sums of money from him. My hand was not the stake for which you played, at any rate. Sedgewood, I understand, is mortgaged, and we are practically beggars. Father is in debt to you, and these debts are gambling debts. Be it as it may, I hate you. We'll go out from here beggars, rather than that I should sacrifice my womanhood and become your wife."

For a moment Felix Cox stood regarding her as she faced him in her innocence and righteous wrath, and then a contemptuous smile curled his lips.

"You talk very foolishly," he said, "and you do not realize what you say. Know you that I have the power to turn you and your father out into the world beggars?"

"I defy you!" she cried; and her lipsome form straightened.

He took a step toward her, and by a sudden movement seized her hand.

"Do you know," he cried, "that I love you with a love that passes all understanding? I would die for you—I would commit murder for your sake! One thing I have resolved—you shall be my wife! Failing in this, you shall die, and I will die with you! No man shall possess the treasure that I have set my heart upon!"

There was a baleful glitter in his eyes, and his breath came hot and fast.

Alice Burnett shrank from him, and in the effort to twist away her wrist from his frenzied grasp, her hands were scratched by his sharp nails, and blood flowed from the wounds.

"See," she cried, holding up the bleeding hands, "you have hurt me!"

And turning toward the canopied doorway, she uttered the single cry, "Help!"

Old Abel Burnett, her father, was passing through the broad hall at the time, and on his ears fell the frantic cry.

He was sixty years of age, but sturdy and stout of heart. Alice was the apple of his eye, and her cry for help hastened him to her rescue.

He threw aside the heavy damask curtains that framed the door, and stood facing the couple, with a rapidly rising fire of indignation in his heart.

"What's the matter now?" he asked.

Alice turned toward him, and her voice rang out clear and distinctly:

"I have been insulted, threatened by this man!" and she pointed her finger scornfully toward Felix Cox.

"Insulted—threatened?" gasped the old man and two white lines of anger crossed his ruddy face from ear to chin.

"How dare you, sir?" and he turned toward Cox, with his heavy cane uplifted threateningly.

"How dare I?" sneered Cox, and his lip curled contemptuously. "You know well how I dare. You are in my power. I own every foot of land on Sedgewood plantation. This house is mine and everything that it contains. Defy me and I will drive you out in the world a beggar. I love this girl, and would make her my wife. If she consents, Sedgewood shall be released from the burden of debt which hangs over it, and you will be a free man."

For a moment after this audacious sentence had been spoken, sturdy old Abel Burnett stood facing Felix Cox, and his breath came in quick gasps. He seemed struggling for utterance; his lips moved but gave forth no sound.

Finally he spoke, and his words came thick and husky.

"Look here!" he cried, and he raised his stout cane in his trembling hand, "you have gone too far. I know that I am in your debt. You have cheated me at cards, and through my foolish fondness for the game, I have beggared myself and this dear girl. But she shall not be the price of my redemption. You are a villainous scoundrel, sir. Until the sheriff takes possession of Sedgewood, I am master here. Go, before I throw you out!"

And the old man, rising to his full height, pointed down the gravelled driveway leading to the river road.

Felix Cox bowed with infinite irony.

"I obey your command, Colonel Burnett," he said, "because, as you say, you are still master here. To-morrow you will be a beggar on the highroad yonder, and then we will see whether my terms shall be acceded to or not. I give you the alternative—beggary on the one side, opulence on the other: Alice as my wife, Alice as a beggar on the highway. Choose between the two, and let me know before to-morrow at ten o'clock, or the sheriff will take possession of Sedgewood plantation."

He bowed again with a sweeping gesture, and striding down the steps of the porch, walked toward Cypress Grove plantation—the next property below Sedgewood—of which he was the owner.

Hardly had he disappeared, and Alice, clasped in her father's arms, was weeping bitterly at the thought of their impending fate, when Rice Williamson, the proprietor of a saw-mill three miles up Sedgewood Creek, rode to the plantation house, dismounted, and perceiving Alice and her father, walked toward the porch.

They both started at the sound of his footsteps, but there were tears in Alice's eyes when she faced him, and Colonel Burnett's lips were quivering with an emotion he could not control.

"Miss Alice! Colonel!" cried Rice, and he sprang toward them with a hand extended to each. "You are distressed—in trouble. Tell me what is wrong."

For a moment old Col. Burnett hesitated, pride struggling for the mastery.

"Rice," he said at last, "you are the only man in the world that I would tell my troubles to. For this girl's sake I will make you my confidant. I am in debt—heavily in debt. Sedgewood is mortgaged for more than it is worth, and Felix Cox holds the mortgages. To-morrow he will foreclose, and we will be beggars unless—and here the old man's voice quivered with emotion—"Alice becomes his wife. That he has stipulated as the price of my redemption."

"And you have consented?" gasped Rice, while his face grew ashen.

"Never!" cried the old man in a ringing voice.

"Never!" echoed Alice; and striding forward she laid her head on Rice's shoulder and twined her arms about his neck. "Do you think that I could sell myself, dear heart, when I love you so tenderly?"

"No," he answered, soberly.

And then turning to the colonel, he asked for full particulars of the scheme by means of which Felix Cox had secured mortgages on Sedgewood plantation.

With bowed head and trembling voice the old man confessed his weakness. A love for cards had prompted him to play with a man who was ten times his superior in skill and craftiness. Night after night he had lost, until at last all was gone, and he was at the mercy of a man who had no mercy.

As the story progressed, Rice Williamson's face grew stern and rigid, and his lips were tightly compressed.

"It is wretched business," he said at last; "but you can yet be saved."

"How?" cried the old man; and his face lighted up eagerly.

"I have some money on deposit at Baton Rouge," said Williamson. "It is a legacy left me some months ago by a maiden aunt. You say the mortgage is for twenty thousand dollars. I have twenty-five thousand on deposit there. This money is at your disposal to save Sedgewood and your honor."

"God bless you!" was the old man's fervent ejaculation; and he grasped Rice's hand fervently.

"I do it for Alice's sake," added Rice, lowering his voice. "But come, the boat leaves in half an hour. We have barely time to catch it at the landing. You and Alice shall accompany me to the city."

"And when we return," said the colonel, recovering something of his wonted spirit, "we'll have a grand wedding at Sedgewood—eh, little girl?"

And he turned toward Alice, with a gleeful laugh.

She blushed, and did not answer nay. Rice Williamson walked down the porch by her side, talking of things that he had not dared to speak of before that day.

They were passengers, those three, that night, on the Belle Creole, and reached Baton Rouge. The money was drawn from the Planters' Bank, the mortgage against Sedgewood plantation was satisfied, and they took passage up the river again on the City of Memphis.

Agents of Felix Cox had apprised him by telegraph of the move made against him, and when he heard that Abel Burnett was no longer in his power, he gnashed his teeth, and strode up and down the wide hall at Cypress Grove with bitter curses on his lips.

"But they shall not triumph!" he cried.

And hastily scribbling a telegram to his agent at Baton Rouge, he sent it off by the messenger in waiting, and patiently bided an answer. It came at last toward midnight:

"Burnett and party left for Bolivar Landing to-night on the City of Memphis."

For days the Mississippi River had been rising, and for the last forty-eight hours its banks had been patrolled by armed men, who would shoot down any one who attempted to cut down the levee. In the country below there were great floods, and unscrupulous emissaries had been sent up along the river to make crevasses that would relieve the lower country.

"The city of Memphis will reach Bolivar Landing in half an hour," muttered Felix Cox, reading the telegram.

And then crushing his hat down over his eyes, he dashed from the house.

On the way to the river he passed the gardener's lodge, and entering it, groped about until his fingers clutched the handle of a spade. With this implement

thrown over his shoulder he continued on toward the levee.

A heavy rain was falling, and there were great pools of water that he waded through. He was mire besmudged and wet to the skin before he reached the river bank, against which the turbid waters of the Mississippi roared and surged.

As he stood for a moment breasting the storm, he heard the distant whistle of an upcoming steamboat, and a bright light shot out across the water.

"The City of Memphis!" he cried, under his breath. "To reach Bolivar Landing and avoid the sawyers in the middle of the river, she must come close to this bank. In ten minutes she'll be here, and when she comes, she and all on board shall go down to perdition."

He laughed fiendishly, and with his spade began to dig a ditch in the levee, against the top of which the angry waters were lapping.

At first only a tiny stream trickled across the face of the levee, but with almost incredible rapidity it grew wider and wider, became a brook, a river, a rushing torrent—a crevasse four hundred feet long, through which the waters of the river plunged with a Niagara-like violence.

"Ha, ha!" cried Cox, throwing down his spade. "No steamboat can withstand that strong current."

And to watch the result of his cowardly scheme, he climbed among the lower limbs of a big tree which stood on the edge of the crevasse.

On came the City of Memphis, the pilot all unconscious of the danger which menaced him. He was already in the whirl when the powerful search-light on the jack-staff of the boat showed him his danger.

With a firm hand he grasped the wheel, and signalling to the engineer "full speed," he turned the bow of the boat toward the sawyers in the middle of the river.

The current was powerful, but the boat's strong paddle-wheels pushed her forward, and finally, with a mighty crash, she grounded. There was great consternation among the passengers; but the captain quieted their fears, and the pilot, coming down from his round-house, told them of the danger they had escaped.

The search-light was turned toward the shore, and all saw the yawning crevasse down which, but for the presence of mind of the pilot, they must have plunged.

A tall tree on the bank tottered and bent forward as the water surged about its roots.

"There's a man in that tree!" cried one of the roustabouts, and he pointed toward the tottering tree.

"Great heavens!" cried Colonel Abel Burnett, who, with his daughter and Rice Williamson, were gathered on the hurricane deck, "it's Felix Cox!"

As he uttered these words the tree went down with a mighty crash, and high above the roar of the torrent there was borne to the ears of the passengers on the City of Memphis an agonized cry.

It was Felix Cox's dying utterance, for when the tree fell he was engulfed in the angry waters that swept through the crevasse, and borne on down the rushing torrent to his death.

On the day that his body was discovered, bruised and beaten out of all semblance to humanity, there was a wedding at Sedgewood plantation, and Alice Burnett became Mrs. Rice Williamson—[Saturday Night.]

"Licking" Books.

There has recently been introduced into the public school system of Buffalo, N. Y., an institution called the "walloping register." As the principal of one of our schools told the Buffalo Courier, "we lick our pupils on the double entry system now." An inquiry into the matter elicited some remarkable information. Whenever a pupil commits so outrageous a breach of discipline in the classroom that it is necessary to send him to the principal for correction, the teacher is required to stop her work and put down on a card prepared for the purpose the pupil's name, age, residence, offense and other matters.

This the pupil takes cringingly to the pedagogue, who copies the card into a big book. Then he punishes the boy, and in another ledger he makes other entries, describing the age, sex, nativity, parentage, religious belief and offense of the culprit, what the punishment was, and if a flogging, on what part of the child's frame the stick, baton, ruler, slipper or other instrument was applied. It is understood that in the schools which have the most unruly youngsters, assistants will soon be appointed, whose sole duty it shall be to keep the records in the "licking books," as the burden is too great to impose on the principals in addition to their already onerous duties of castigation.

A Romance of the Turf.

Hermit, the winner of the sensational English Derby in 1867, which was run in a snowstorm and for which 66 to 1 was bet against him, has just died of old age. The horse belonged to Henry Chaplin, now minister of agriculture, who won a fortune by the animal's victory. It is a well known story now that the then Marquis of Hastings had stolen away Chaplin's affianced bride, and it was the Marquis who bet against Hermit as long as he could find anyone to lay money on the horse. Chaplin himself was the chief backer, and he had the satisfaction of half-ruining the man who robbed him of his intended wife. Beyond his winning of the Derby Hermit was rather a failure as a race-horse, but at the stud he produced more prize-winners than any other stallion, and yielded his owner a princely income. His progeny won in stakes alone \$1,579,940 in England and \$136,715 in France.—[Chicago Herald.]

HARA-KARI.

ATONEMENT VS. ATTAINDER.

A Ceremony of Self-Immolation That is Peculiarly Japanese.

There are few terms more commonly used when speaking of the distinctive customs of Japan than that of hara-kari, and there are few customs that are so misapprehended. The generally accepted idea is that hara-kari is the popular form of suicide in Japan, and that when any man wishes to get away from the cares and sorrows of this life as experienced in Japan, he swiftly and effectually disembowels himself. This is altogether a mistaken idea, the true explanation and history of the term and custom being the object of this article.

Seppuku, or hara-kari (belly-cut), was a merciful institution that originated during the terrible civil wars of the Ashikaga period in the twelfth century of our era. Prior and up to that time the victorious party in war had, by immemorial usage, the right to proscribe its adversaries and expatriate them root and branch. So, whoever perpetrated treason against the reigning powers thereby entailed blood attainder on his family and kindred, and they became extirpated root and branch. The scenes of carnage that invariably ensued when a victorious party came into power were even more frightful than the proscriptions that soaked Rome with the blood of her best citizens during the memorable contests between Marius and Sulla. First one faction and then the other would be victorious, and the land was filled with the slaughtering of multitudes of innocent and helpless people, until it was found that the flower of the land was being ruthlessly swept out of existence. The wild horror of the scenes beggared description. Matters at last grew so desperate and so desperately bloody that the wise men set about devising some scheme whereby needless bloodshed might be spared and innocent lives might be saved.

Then it was that the horrible yet beautiful ceremony of seppuku was devised—horrible when considered in its ghastly details, and beautiful when considered in the light of its humane and beneficent effects. By this ceremony the leaders of the vanquished party were allowed to cut through their bowels into the portal vein—one of the largest in the body, and the one that runs through the liver—and thus terminate their lives. By this sanguinary act they washed away blood attainder from their families and kindred, thus saving them from proscription, and, at the same time, cleansing their own honor from all stains. Their political shortcomings, whatever they might have been, were thus fully atoned for. It was, in a word, blood atonement set over against blood attainder. After a battle thousands of warriors, instead of flying from the victors, would calmly kneel down and perform the ghastly rite upon the field, thereby limiting the consequences of their acts to their own persons.

At first only the nobility, or samurai, were allowed this privilege, and there were times when they were very careful to exact it.

As time went on the atonement of hara-kari was not limited in its theatre to the battle-field, but was made a punishment for political offences, around which there was much formality and ceremonial.

In its new phase, however, it was never looked upon as a punishment, but rather as an act of clemency, and it was discretionary with the Emperor to grant or withhold what was considered a privilege. It was necessary that there should be a judicial degree or sentence perfecting the ceremony, otherwise the act lost its efficacy so far as confiscation and blood attainder was concerned. Unauthorized self-immolation was of no avail, and the self-immolator could only perform seppuku on receipt of governmental permission and in the presence of two duly appointed officers.—[San Francisco Chronicle.]

Insect Superstition.

Insect superstition is very ancient. The Koran says all flies shall perish save one—the bee fly. It is regarded as a death warning in Germany to hear a cricket's cry. The Tapuya Indians in South America say the devil assumes the form of a fly. Rain is, in some parts of the country, expected to follow unusually loud chirping of crickets. Flies are regarded as furnishing prognostications of the weather, and even of other events. Spaniards in the sixteenth century believed that spiders indicated gold when they were found in abundance. Although a sacred insect among the Egyptians, the beetle received but little notice in folk-lore. It is unlucky in England to kill one. In Germany it is said to indicate good luck to have a spider spin his web downward toward you, but bad luck when he rises toward you. The grasshopper is a sufficiently unwelcome visitant of himself in this country, but in Germany his presence is further said to announce strange guests. A Welsh tradition says, bees came from Paradise, leaving the garden when man fell, but with God's blessing, so that wax is necessary in the celebration of mass. The ancients generally maintained that there was a close connection between bees and the soul. Porphyry speaks of "those souls which the ancients call bees." It is said that upon the backs of the seven-year locusts there sometimes appear marks like a letter of the alphabet. When this looks like a W it is thought that war is imminent. German tribes regard stag beetles as diabolic, and all beetles are detested in Ireland, more especially a bronze variety known as "goldie." It is also believed, that to see a beetle will bring on rain the next day.