

NATURAL HISTORY FALLACIES.

Most of Them Completely Exploded, But Some Still Survive.

Less than a century ago in the time when men had not penetrated so deeply into the study of nature, there was a great deal of poetry and romance connected with animal life that had been slowly but surely driven out as the study advanced.

Travellers returning from unexplored regions told strange and incredible stories about the wonderful wild animals they had encountered; but investigation has rent asunder these fanciful tales, and left only cold facts in their places.

I am the owner of a natural history written by one Riley, and published about the year 1789. It is a quaint old book, and its yellow leaves and odd type furnish the reader with a number of strange accounts. Among others may be found something like the following: "The digestive apparatus of the ostrich is said to be very strong indeed, that bird not only being able to digest such things as stones, bits of glass, and iron, but it is even said that it makes a good meal of a bed of live coals."

We laugh at such a statement, but no doubt at the time it was stated for a fact. What right have we to laugh? It is not long since almost every one believed the porcupine capable of shooting its quills like arrows, and regarding it an animal well able to defend itself against almost any foe, instead of the quiet inoffensive little creature that curls itself in a ball at the first approach of an enemy, trusting solely to its spine covered skin for protection.

Men who have lived only a short time before us did not question but what the pretty, graceful swallows that skimmed so lightly over the blue waters in summer buried themselves in the mud at the bottom of our rivers and ponds when the season was over to await the return of spring.

It has been but a short time since investigation has shown that the supposed happy family made up of the prairie dog, the burrowing owl, and the rattlesnake is not only not a happy family, but does not exist at all. Our first idea was that these three animals, of such different habits, lived in perfect harmony, like the so-called happy family of the modern circus, but our faith in this belief is somewhat shaken by the following, which may be found in Wood's *Natural History*. According to popular belief, these three creatures live very harmoniously together, but observation has shown that the snake and the owl are interlopers, living in the burrow because the poor owners cannot turn them out, and finding an easy subsistence on the young prairie dogs.

We were satisfied with this for a time, but judge the astonishment created when Elliott Conns, in one of his latest writings, makes the following statement in speaking of the burrowing owl: "I have found colonies in Kansas and other states, in all cases occupying the deserted burrows of the quadrupeds, not living in common with them as supposed."

Naturalists are now telling us that the opossum does not play possum, but it is merely paralyzed with fear for the time being; articles are published every day in our ornithological papers and magazines which go to prove that owls can see equally as well by day as by night. It is still an undecided question whether snakes "charm" their prey or not. In the Western backwoods these old stories are still believed in; the ignorant classes cling with fondness to them and will not learn anything different, and down in our own hearts do we not all of us cling to them, more or less? Do we not bate to give them up, and is it not with a little regret that we are forced to acknowledge that the porcupine does not shoot his quills, that the bird of Paradise really has feet and legs, and that our national bird, the white-headed eagle, is far from the noble bird we once thought him to be!—*Forest and Stream*.

Trivial Causes of War.

Among the curiosities of history is the oft-recurring fact that many of the great wars of the past have been indirectly brought about by trifling circumstances. One of the wars between the Turkish empire in the zenith of its splendor and the Venetian Republic was started about by the desire of the sultan's physician to marry a rich Spanish heiress. The lady and her mother escaped to Venice, and the sultan sent an official after them to bring them back to Constantinople. The Venetian republic was at first willing to comply with the sultan's request, but the ladies succeeded in making their escape to Ferrara, and from thence to Lyons, in France. The Porte complained that the Venetian republic had not used due diligence, and ultimately a terrible war broke out over this trivial circumstance. A contemporary historian says: "The agent of the Venetian government at Constantinople informed the council that the reason of the dispatch of the Turkish envoy to Venice was to require on the part of the grand seigneur, that a Spanish lady, named Mendez, with her daughters, should be delivered up to the envoy, and by him brought to Constantinople. The common rumor was that the lady Mendez had promised to marry one of her daughters to the son of a man named Rodriguez, doctor to the grand seigneur. The lady, however, changed her mind, and fled with her daughters to Ferrara, where they remained under the protection of the duke for some time. It is now said that they have gone from Ferrara to Lyons in order to realize funds invested there by the late husband of the lady Mendez. The emissary of the grand seigneur was by no means content with the loss of his prey, and there was trouble in consequence." This information is contained in a letter written from Venice in July, 1549, by M. Morvillier to Henry II. of France, the object being to induce the king to use his authority for the purpose of sending the Lady Mendez and her daughter to Constantinople. The king sent to Lyons for this purpose, but found that the ladies had again taken flight, and were supposed to be at Antwerp.—*American Register*.

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MEN AND WOMEN TALKED ABOUT.

The Prince of Wales's life is insured for \$800,000.

Gen. Neal Dow advocates punishment by the lash on the back for liquor dealers who violate the Maine prohibition law.

Prince Bismarck rarely writes an autograph letter now, but contents himself with signing epistles which he dictates. If the communication is to some especial admirer he encloses his photograph.

Rudyard Kipling has made a short and quiet visit to this country for rest and change. His health is not very rugged, although he is not dying of consumption, as some recent reports have had it.

Alexander Rankin, the scotchman who succeeded John Brown as highland servant to the Queen, has obtained almost as marked an influence in the royal household as Brown possessed. He is the personal attendant of the Queen on every journey.

The emperor of China doesn't permit any lawyers to fool away the time around his courts. He simply orders the beheading of "all persons concerned in the recent riots and massacres," without bothering too much about the share they had in the trouble.

Queen Victoria does not escape business by her visits to Balmoral Castle. A private telegraph wire runs direct from the castle to London, and this is in constant use. A collection of cabinet boxes and a mass of correspondence is sent to the queen every day by special messenger, and all receive prompt attention.

Young Adam Forepaugh, though his income is now greater than the president's salary, dons his pink tights at every performance of his circus and rides in the hurdle-race with all the interest of a ten-dollar-a-week supe. Young Forepaugh is thirty years old and built like an athlete. He has had something to do about a circus since he was a boy of seven.

Hannibal Hamlin, ex-vice-president of the United States, wore to the very last the full dress suit of black broadcloth with expansive shirt front that formed in antebellum days the distinctive attire of public men. It was the style of suit that Webster and Clay were always clad in when they addressed the senate, and it has survived in a few isolated instances, of which Hamlin was probably the most conspicuous.

Princess Helen Sanguszko, who died recently at the age of fifty-six, received an offer of marriage from Louis Napoleon when she visited his court during the first days of the empire. He did not become the suitor of the Empress until he had been definitely rejected by the Princess. She had the reputation of being the most beautiful woman in Poland, if not in Europe. She had many suitors, but preferred a single life in her old castle of Gumniska.

Kaiser Wilhelm is a regular story book monarch—he is up to imperial doings all the time. The other day he happened to be at a post where a regiment of the guards were practicing athletics. A foot race was on. The emperor unbuttoned the lower buttons of his general's coat and shouted out to the astonished subalterns: "Now, gentlemen, let us see how many can distance your emperor." Then lickety-split they all took to their heels, the kaiser footing it like a good fellow. The kaiser was beaten, but it was not a bad feat, for he came in second, only a yard behind a young sub-lieutenant.

Mrs. Grimwood, the heroine of the Manipur retreat, will be decorated by the queen with the Victoria cross in recognition of her bravery, and has already received the royal red cross bestowed on good nurses. She was the wife of the resident at Manipur and was married but two years when the massacre occurred. She has herself written a vivid account of the affair. In her letter to her sister-in-law she tells that she was under fire for several hours, the bullets falling all around her. She was wounded twice, once very painfully in the knee but she continued to tend the wounded in the residency, exposing herself repeatedly and receiving a third wound in the arm. When the residency was to be evacuated she was the guide of the retiring party, and without shoes, almost starving, her hurts in bad condition, she led them for ten days, covering 120 miles, and being all the time in acute anxiety about her husband, who, though she knew it not, had been murdered by the enemy. Her bravery has also received recognition from the British government who have conferred upon her a valuable pension.

Charles H. Hoyt, the playwright, and the senior member of the firm of Hoyt & Thomas, theatrical managers, is considered a rich man by his associates. His country home, in New Hampshire, costs something like \$50,000, and he can write a good many checks for "five figures" without fear of overdrawing his bank account. He is about 32 years old. Nine years ago he was a newspaper man, with a salary of \$20 a week and with very little hope of advancement. He was just crazy to write a play. In fact, he had sketched out half a dozen comedies and dramas, but he couldn't get the ear of a manager or actor. At that time Willie Edouin, a well known comedian, was playing in a farcical comedy called *Dreams; or Fun in a Photograph Gallery*. He wanted some minor changes made in the dialogue and stage business of one act, and was at a loss for some one to do the work, as the author of the piece was beyond reach. A friend suggested that Hoyt, the newspaper man, could rearrange the piece. Edouin did not think well of the suggestion at first, but consented to talk with the young man. The friend went after Hoyt and told him that his opportunity had come, but Hoyt was averse, as he "didn't see anything in it." The actor and the newspaper man were brought together, however, and, as a first result *Dream* was rewritten to suit Mr. Edouin. A second consequence was that Hoyt received an order for a play, and a result of far more importance was that he was enabled to come before the public as a manager, as well as an author. During the past six or eight years Hoyt and Thomas have produced half a dozen comedies, and every one has earned a great deal of money.

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PROGRESS PICKINGS.

Tommy.—"Did you ever see a live circus, Johnny?" Johnny.—"No, but I've heard ma when pa comes home late, lots of times."

"That chimney is smoking all the time," said Daddies. "Yes," said his grandmother; "but it isn't such a fool as to smoke cigarettes."—Puck.

She (at the base ball game)—"But do tell me, George, what does that man wear a mask over his face for?" George—to keep the flies off.—Truth.

Harry (at the ball)—"You look bored and tired, old man." Jack.—"Well, who wouldn't? I've been swinging dumb bells all the evening."—New York Herald.

WANTED—A VEST.
She shed a tear upon his vest;
The effort made him wince;
The vest was made of flannel, and
He hasn't seen it since.

—Clothes and Furnishers.
I am going to open my museum this week, and I want you to print me some drawing card that will attract the public attention. "How will 'Admission Free do'?"—Lowell Citizen.

Father—I wish you would not lace so tight. It is positively inhuman. Daughter—Why, I thought you would be pleased, father. The material for this dress cost seven dollars a yard.

She knew his weakness—She—"Whom do you care most for, Jack?" He—"Is it possible you do not know whom I love best in all this world?" She—"Yes, I know; but next to him?"—Life.

It is so perplexing to be told that a married man has been released from his sufferings at last—you can never tell whether it is the man himself who has died or his wife.—*Fremdenblatt*.

"She—"Do you ever see Mr. and Mrs. Chapley since their marriage?" He—"Oh, yes; it is a case of two souls with but a single thought." She—"How lovely!" He—"Yes, she married a dude."—Buffalo Evening News.

Brilliant city editor—"What did you find out about that alleged murder? Brilliant reporter—"Nothing." "No facts at all?" "Not a fact." "No rumors?" "Not a rumor." "Then keep it down to two columns."—New York Weekly.

Boggs—"I know a man that has made a snug little fortune in willow splints for baskets. Knoggs—"That's nothing. There's a Spaniard in Madrid who's made several hundred thousand dollars out of bull rushes."—Detroit Free Press.

Policeman—"I don't see how a little woman like you succeeded in capturing and holding a big burglar like that." Little woman (weakly)—"It was dark, and I—I thought it was my husband trying to—elope with the servant girl."—New York Weekly.

Walter Besant says "there must be some reason why young men have ceased to find expression in poetry." There is, Walter, there is. It is a good, deep reason with a large open mouth. It is made of willow and stands with an insatiable yearning beside the editor's desk.—Ex.

Returned traveller—"French people always seem so pleasant. I noticed that every one I spoke to, while I was in France, would smile at me." Friend—"Indeed! In what language did you speak to them?" Returned traveller—"French." Friend.—"Perhaps that accounts for it."—Ex.

Laura—"What a clever girl Jennie is! She had sixty seven offers of marriage within a week after she left college." Clara—"Indeed! And she is not very good looking." Laura—"No; but the subject of the essay that she read at the graduation was 'How to Keep House on Twelve Dollars a Week.'"

Father of eleven daughters (prowling about with a lighted lamp)—"There's one of the girls that hasn't come in yet." Mother of same—"I think you are mistaken, William. They're all up-stairs." "I know what I'm talking about, Elizabeth. There's only ten wads of gum on the back of this bureau."

"Why, cousin Jenny," said Capt. Jinks, "what a beautiful complexion you have? You are the belle of the dance tonight." "Yes, Tom, I agreed to furnish the powder if papa would provide the balls. My partners must furnish the arms." "Oh, I see, and you expect to bring on an engagement."—Free Press.

An equivocal puff—"Did you see the notice I gave you?" said the editor to the grocer. "Yes, and I don't want another. The man who says I've got plenty of sand, that the milk I sell is of the first water, and that my butter is the strongest in the market, may mean well, but he is not the man I want to flatter me a second time."—Harper's Bazaar.

The tearful wife—"I am going to go right down to the river and drown myself!" The brutal husband—"All right, my dear; start at once, if you really want to." The tearful wife—"It's raining now, and it would spoil my new dress; but I'm going just as soon as it stops. You see if I don't!"—Munsey's Weekly.

The small boy's view of it.—"Papa," inquired the editor's only son, "what do you call your office?" "Well," was the reply, "the world calls an editor's office the sanctum sanctorum, but I don't." "Then, I guess," and the boy was thoughtful for a moment, "that mamma's office is a spank-tum spank-tum, isn't it?"—Washington Star.

"Nellie," he said, with a kind of experimental, immature, early home-grown smile on his anxious face, "I—I may count on you as—as a friend, may I not?" "Certainly, Alfred," she replied. "As—as a good friend?" "To be sure." "Have you no objection to looking on me as—as a distant relative, perhaps?" "No, I have no objection to that." "Second cousin, as it were?" "I am willing to once removed?" he persisted, mopping his forehead with a trembling handkerchief. "Well, I have no objection to that, either." "And I might as well be a first cousin, mightn't I?" "Yes, I suppose so." "Do you feel, Nellie," he went on, hastily swallowing something large and buoyant, "as if you could be—a—a sister to me?" "No, Alfred." The invitations are out.—Chicago Tribune.

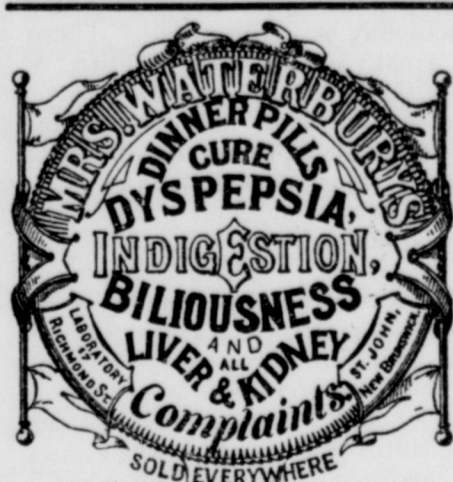
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