

## "ARE MEN MORE VAIN?"

"ASTRA" IS ALMOST CONVINCED THAT THEY ARE.

A Young Man who Thought That the Girls Were Fond of Him—How It Was That He Came to be Ostracised—Other Vain People and Their Folly.

Someone, who is evidently interested in the answer, asks if it is "true that men are more vain than women?" Well I hardly like to say it, but I am afraid I must confess experience and observation, have gone a long way towards convincing me that they are, and curiously enough it would seem that those who have the least to recommend them display the most astonishing conceit.

I have sometimes been tempted to think this was true of our sex also, but I am not sure, because I have known very plain women who were painfully conscious of their shortcomings and inclined to exaggerate rather than make light of their lack of attractions. On the other hand, I have known men who were so repulsive in appearance, that pity made people try to be especially kind to them, so inordinately conceited that they were positively unendurable. I remember one instance in particular, where the man was not only revoltingly ugly of features, but badly deformed, stunted in stature, and afflicted with a peculiar wheezing when he breathed, which was most trying to those whose unkempt fate threw them into his society. He was far from clever, occupied a very ordinary position in society and had no money! In fact I cannot think of one solitary advantage, or one most ordinary attraction which the poor soul possessed, and yet I never expect to meet any member of the human family again who is endowed with the same amount of sanity and conceit as that man rejoiced in. He would explain confidentially that none of the other fellows cared for him, and the reason was that they were so jealous of his attractions, they could not bring themselves to do him plain justice. "You see," he would say in all seriousness, "The fellows in this town want to get rid of me, they would like to make me leave the place, drive me out you know; and it's just because I get ahead of them with the girls. I don't know why the girls should think such a lot of me, I'm sure, I don't suppose I'm any better than most other fellows, but somehow they are fond of me, and when I'm round they won't look at anyone else! Funny, ain't it?"

I wish I could do justice in print to the inexpressible conceit of that last clause, the conscious smirk which accompanied it, and the settled conviction that he was the most irresistible of men which exuded from every pore of his thick skin, and shone like oil from his self satisfied face.

Unfortunately a few of the more unselfish and kind hearted girls, pitying his misfortunes, and fancying he needed encouragement, tried to be especially kind to him, and make him forget the terrible disadvantages under which he labored; but if the good souls had but known it, they need not have troubled themselves, and the only reward they obtained was the approval of their consciences, since no good action is utterly wasted, and the firm conviction in the mind of the object of their kindness that they were one and all setting their caps for him. "But I'm not so easily caught I can tell you: I'm onto their little schemes, and I don't intend to sell myself cheap either!" he would say, swelling out his chest, and looking like a very plain peacock, which had been shorn of all its best feathers.

Perhaps those good hearted girls did not have to pay dearly for their consideration for his feelings! He became such a nuisance that they were glad to flee at the first intimation of his approach. He grew to feel certain that no other man had a ghost of a chance when he was present, and openly boasted of his easy conquests, asserting that he had only to ask any girl in town to accompany him to an entertainment and she would jump at the chance. He could not dance any more than a cow, but he worried the lives out of all the girls he knew trying to engage them for dances, and their enjoyment of a party would be ruined by the constant vigilance they were obliged to exercise in avoiding him, and if a girl spoke at all pleasantly to him, he was sure to spend at least three evenings a week in order to try to reward her. Naturally, it was not long before he was dropped entirely, and the last state of that man was worse than the first.

We, at least those amongst us whom a merciful Providence has spared any personal affliction, and who are blessed with ordinarily symmetrical bodies, and faces about which there is nothing repulsive, are apt to feel a very deep sympathy for those to whom nature has been unkind, and we have a deeply rooted belief that the victims of such misfortunes as a misshapen form, or a repulsively ugly face must be sensitive to a morbid degree. Therefore we are so careful of their feelings, that we make allowances for them such as we should never dream of making for ordinary people and the result is they come to consider themselves superior beings, and specially set apart to receive the homage of the rest of humanity.

They may be dimly conscious that nature has not endowed them liberally with personal charms—having mirrors, I scarcely see how they can avoid some such sus-

picion—but they console themselves with the reflection that they must have some peculiar charm of their own which more than makes up for any slight deficiencies in mere personal beauty, else why should everyone be so attentive to them. People are not usually given to being disinterested in this world, they argue, and therefore the cause of their popularity must lie in their own gifts, their mental qualities, or that mysterious charm called fascination which is only another name for personal magnetism.

I remember reading once, that the plainest woman will walk calmly along beside a friend who is conspicuously beautiful, and serenely accept all the admiring glances cast in their direction, as her just due, fully convinced that however lovely the friend may be, there is "a something" about herself, which completely casts mere beauty into the shade, and is a far more valuable possession. I don't quite believe this, though I have seen enough of the power which vanity exercises over poor humanity, to make me credit some very extraordinary statements, but I must exonerate woman from the accusation of not knowing that the world was made for beauty, and that the woman who possesses the royal gift has little need of any lesser attraction.

With men it is different, they have no lack of precedent for the success of the most repulsively ugly men, with the fairest of women; history teems with such instances, if one wants to go so far back, and real life can show quite enough to justify the ugliest of men in preserving a goodly share of vanity.

We cannot help being amused at them poor souls, because there is something too absurd for human gravity in the spectacle of a bald-headed widower of fifty, who is extremely fat, and decidedly cross-eyed trying to rival some handsome youth of twenty, in the affections of a pretty girl: or a dried up, lanky bachelor of sixty insisting on waltzing with the youngest and prettiest debutante in the room. But probably their vanity is the greatest blessing they enjoy, enabling them to ward off the stings and arrows of misfortune better than triple plated armor, and saving them from many of the mortifications that more sensitive people have to endure.

I am afraid I have not thrown much light on the vexed question, "Are men more vain than women?" but I have answered it to the best of my ability, according to the light which has been given me. ASTRA.

A FAMOUS ASCENSION.  
A Man Who Has Made Forty-Five Balloon Ascensions.

It was at the age of twenty five that Tissandier began to make the balloon ascensions which have rendered his name famous. His first was undertaken at Calais, on the 16th of August, 1868, in company with the aeronaut, Durnot. The result of it was that Tissandier was encouraged to hope that, by the use of the various air currents, it might be possible, after all, to solve the problem of the direction of balloons. By rising and falling in their balloon the two aeronauts, on that occasion, were able to proceed in a given direction a distance of twenty-eight kilometres, and, if this otherwise unremarkable ascension was so greatly discussed at the time, it was because it seemed that at last—that is to say, by a proper application of the natural forces—the problem referred to might be considered to be capable of solution. It may be remarked here that, although M. Tissandier has since that time made no less than forty-five ascensions, he does not consider the problem any nearer solution than it was a quarter of a century ago. In the fine drawing-room, into which the visitor is shown, are to be remarked a series of drawings representing the various episodes of the terrible ascension of 1875, which nearly cost M. Tissandier his life. This was the ascension of the balloon "Zenith" on the 15th of April, following closely upon the inaugural ascension undertaken in that balloon on March the 23d, when M. Tissandier, in company with his brother Albert, a M. Jobert, and MM. Croce-Spinelli and Sivel remained over twenty-three hours in the air, thus beating the record of the world in the matter of length of a balloon voyage. Starting at noon on its second voyage, the "Zenith," manned by MM. Gaston Tissandier, Croce-Spinelli, and Sivel, soon reached an altitude which had never been reached by a balloon before; that is to say, an altitude of twenty-eight thousand two hundred and fifteen feet. Before this height had been reached M. Tissandier lost consciousness and did not recover until the balloon had descended to an altitude of twenty-two thousand nine hundred and sixty-five feet. Then he had the horror to discover that his two companions, less fortunate than himself, had passed from the swoon to death.

What Makes a Good Reporter.  
This is the idea of Charles A. Dana, editor of the New York Sun, as to what constitutes a good reporter. One of the best reporters I ever knew was a man who could not spell four words correctly to save his life, and his verb did not always agree with the subject in person and number; but he always got the fact so exactly, and he saw the picturesque, the interesting, and important aspect of it so vividly, that it was worth another man's while, who possessed the knowledge of grammar and spelling, to go over the report and write it out. Now, that was a man who had genius; he had a talent the most indubitable, and he got handsomely paid

in spite of his lack of grammar, because after his work had been done over by a scholar, it was really beautiful. But any man who is sincere and earnest, and not always thinking about himself, can learn to be a good reporter. He can learn to ascertain the truth; he can acquire the habit of seeing. When he looks at a fire, what is the most important thing about this fire? Here, let us say, are five houses burning; which is the greatest? Whose store is that which is burning? And who has met with the greatest loss? Has any individual perished in the conflagration? Are there any very interesting circumstances about the fire? How did it occur? Was it like Chicago, where a cow kicked over a spirit lamp and burned up the city? All these things the reporter has to judge about. He is the eye of the paper, and he is there to see which is the vital fact in the story, and to produce it, tell it, write it out.

### STRANGE DANCING PARTIES.

Some of the Remarkable Dances of these and Other Days.

Although at the present day the majority of balls and dancing-parties are conducted upon general lines, and show but little that is novel, there have been at all times a few enterprising hostesses who have broken through the thick hide of convention, and given their guests something original in the dancing-party line.

Such, for instance, must have been the host or hostess who, during the time of the great plague of London, first brought into fashion the Dance of Death. At these dances, which became very popular amongst a certain class during that terrible period, the dancers, both male and female, who were invited to these gruesome evenings, were disguised as skeletons, and so utterly reckless had the plague made people, that in many cases they left the ball-room, and, in the dead of night, finished their dance in the open streets.

Somewhat curious, too, were the Victim Balls, which became the rage in France at the close of the Reign of Terror. The dancers, dressed in the costliest costumes, had one and all a band of crape round the left arm, for no one could be invited to one of these balls unless he or she had lost, during the Reign of Terror, at least one relation by the guillotine. Considering the wholesale butchery that was indulged in under Robespierre, most people, we should imagine, amongst the upper classes were qualified for an invitation.

Fancy dress balls, in which the guests are dressed in costumes representing the pieces in a set of chessmen, are by no means uncommon; but a short time ago a certain hostess went one better than this, and gave a card-dance, at which the invited guests were requested to appear in the character of the particular playing-card allotted to them. The dresses of the majority of the guests were most elaborate, particularly those of the court-cards, but the dress of a gentleman to whose lot had fallen the character of ace of diamonds was simplicity itself. He appeared in ordinary evening dress, but a magnificent diamond sparkled in the midst of his dress shirt-front. This idea was likewise followed by the gentleman representing the five of the same suit, who, in addition to a diamond in his shirt-front, wore a pair of diamond links.

A dance, which occurred after a banquet given to twenty-four armless persons at the Royal Tree Inn, Dartmouth, must have been a curiosity in its way. Unfortunately we are not told how it was managed, but, doubtless, the dances were confined to jigs and hornpipes, as a waltz performed by a couple without arms would be a somewhat difficult feat to accomplish.

Blind people, provided they have been blind for a sufficiently long time, and the apartment in which they are is one well known to them, can move about as quickly as people with their eyesight. At a certain blind asylum in London, dances often take place amongst the inmates, and it is not a little curious to see couples who are totally blind waltzing round a room never colliding with other couples, and dancing as gracefully as their seeing brethren. In fact, unless one knew that the dancers were blind, one would never guess it from their manner of dancing.

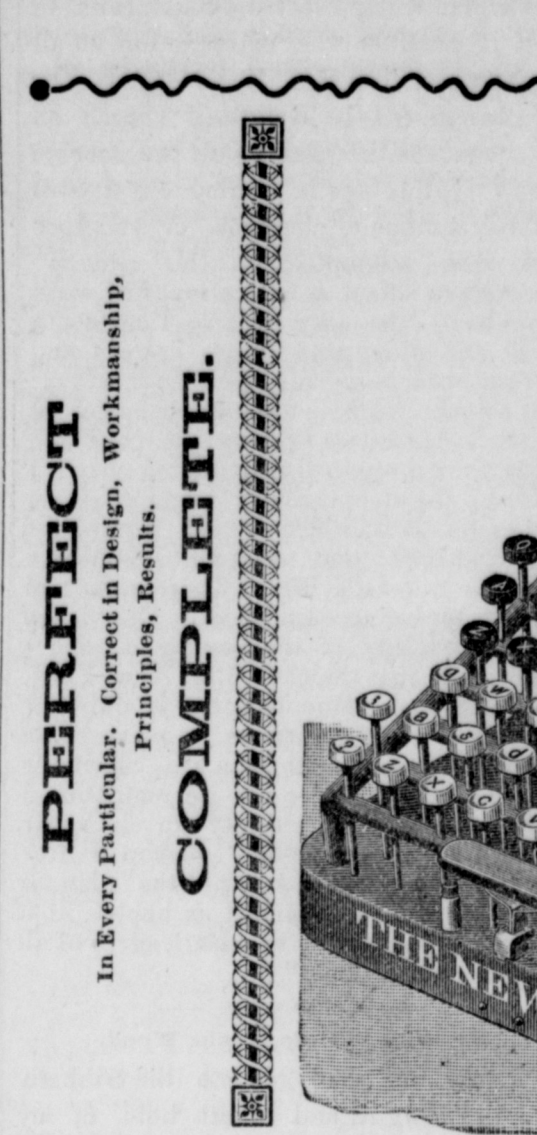
That the inmates of many mad asylums not only dance, but dance well, is within the knowledge of everyone who has been present at a dance given by such an establishment. When in Germany, the writer once attended a ball given by a mad asylum in Hesse, and could hardly believe that many of his charming partners were otherwise than clothed in their right mind. It was only after the doctor had assured him that his last partner had thrown her two-year-old daughter out of the window, and that the one before that had been found promenading one of the principal thoroughfares of Giesen in a state of Nature, that the general uncanniness of the dance was directly brought home to him.

### A Clever Dog.

A story is told of a farmer's dog which had been found guilty of obtaining goods by false pretences. He is extremely fond

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of sausages, and] has been] taught by his owner to go after them for himself, carrying a written order in his mouth. Day after day he appeared at the butcher's shop, bringing his master's order, and by-and-by the butcher became careless about reading the paper. When settlement day came, the farmer complained that he was charged with more sausages than he had ordered. The butcher was surprised, and the next time Lion came in with a bit of paper between his teeth he took the trouble to look at it. The paper was blank, and further investigations showed that whenever the dog felt a craving for sausages he looked round for a piece of paper and trotted off to the butcher's. The farmer is something out of pocket, but, squares the account by boasting of his dog's intelligence.

### Too Smart For John Chinaman.

It is generally acknowledged that the Red Indian cannot claim honesty as one of his special characteristics; it is also believed that he is not clever, but this, at any rate, is open to question. The State Government used to impose a direct monthly tax on all miners working in the gold mines of California, and this levy required numerous collectors. The Chinese swarmed throughout the mines, and were notorious for skulking into the mountains while the official was going his rounds, and could only be taken by trickery or surprise. On one occasion the Chinamen in a certain district were apprised of the near approach of the collector, and soon there was a general stampede. A crafty digger Indian was on the ground, and immediately offered to show a large number of the Celestials a cave, that would afford them a safe retreat, if they would pay him fifteen dollars to attend them. The bargain was made, and, after the Indian had led them to the cave, he received the money. "Now," said the Red-skin, "you stop here; me go watch tax man; when he gone me come tell you." The cunning schemer at once came down hunted out the collector, and proposed for the sum of ten dollars to take him to the spot where no fewer than one hundred yellow faces were in hiding. The offer was readily accepted, and, when the official was shown to the mouth of the cave, the cash was paid. The poor Chinamen soon discovered that they had been duped, and were forced to submit to an exit fee of two and a half dollars each, which cleared their dues to the Government for a month.

### How Trees Vary in Size.

Perhaps it is more interesting than strictly useful to know that the diameter of trees not only varies from summer to winter, but from day to day. They are larger from noon until twilight next morning than from twilight to noon; they are smaller in winter than in summer. Low temperatures, as well as high, promote evaporation. The trees evaporate from their branches in winter, and so, the colder the weather, the more they shrink.



## The Stone that Keeps Rolling!....

That's an old story about the stone, but it has nothing to do with the snowball that GROWS with the rolling. Has it?

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