

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 4 1897.

LIVE BY QUEER WORK.

GAINING A LIVELIHOOD IN ORIGINAL WAYS.

Odd Vocation of Some Chicagoans—The Strangest is That Developed by a Woman "Funeral Inspector"—A College Boy's Novel Business—Hotel Companion.

Some Chicago people earn their living in queer ways, says the Times Herald. There is a man in the city who makes a good income monthly by turning out especially artistic sofa pillows. Another man will clear you kitchen of rats and mice for a small sum, working in precisely the same manner as the sewer rat-catchers of Paris and other large cities. Kenwood housewives are well acquainted with a bright young fellow who washes dogs and takes regular care of birds and other pets, and Oak Park has a masculine resident who goes from door to door collecting defective gloves which he afterward carries to the small shanty which is home to him, cleans, mends and returns. He is said to be actually saving money, despite the fact that his charges are considerably lower than those charged by the downtown stores.

Nor are Chicago women less enterprising than the men in the way of doing odd work. One south side woman writes sermons for a living, another furnishes "original" papers to be read before clubs and bright rhymes for menu cards and quotation parties. There is another woman in town who is a practical miner. Another Chicago woman conducts a commission business on South Water street.

A New York hotel has lately started an enterprise that should be very successful and popular among its lady patrons. The new institution is that of a "lady's companion" who resides in the hotel, having her own private apartments for which she pays, with the understanding that her services will be preferred to others who are in the same line of work. The "Companion" makes herself useful to the lady guests, in various ways, piloting them around the city when required, accompanying them on shopping expeditions, reading to the guest if the latter is indisposed, and in fact doing the thousand and one little things that make hotel life pleasanter than the average woman usually finds it. The "companion" is of course a lady of education and refinement and in no way sacrifices her dignity, or personal feelings by her work. She doubtless makes hundreds of pleasant acquaintances through the medium of her unique calling.

But the oddest occupation unearthed yet is followed and was invented by a woman. It is that of a sort of funeral inspector and assistant. When her services are required she goes to the house of mourning, makes the shroud when desired to do so, gives orders for flowers, arranges them, takes messages to the friends and relatives of the household, bids people to the services, buys or hires the mourning garments, alters them if necessary, arranges the rooms for the funeral, talks matters over with the minister and the undertaker, sees that the wishes of the family are carried out, and, in a word, stands between the afflicted people and the world at large in a thousand ways and performs a thousand small but highly appreciated services. The funeral over, she takes the flowers to be photographed, remains in the house until the family returns, nurses any ailing member of it, cares for the children, prepares a meal if necessary, stays to this meal if requested, and in many ways helps along the dragging machinery of life. When affairs have assumed somewhat of their normal appearance and course she quietly departs. Another branch of her work is the assisting at weddings or large private gatherings of any kind.

When a wedding is in course of preparation she arrives early in the day, or perhaps two days previous to the great event, and again takes charge of all the countless small details so trying to the mistress of the house. She it is who sees that the bouquet is in readiness for the bride, that her trunk is properly packed and everything that should go in it put in place, and that all arrangements for the comfort and convenience of the guests are completed. She it is who interviews the bridegroom and makes sure that the ring is forthcoming; she it is who critically superintends the bride's toilet at the final moment, in order that her calm attention and unflinching inspection may insure perfection of detail. She it is who sees to the serving of re-

freshments, the caring for wraps and topcoats, and the 'clearing' when the festivities are over.

Two people, a man and a woman, the former a college youth, follow in Chicago the down-east avocation of 'professional entertainer.' The college boy is in such incessant demand for 'stag' and mixed parties that his studies suffer occasionally. The statement that he is 'the life of' every gathering he attends is his recommendation. He also superintends all the necessary arrangements for the affair. He is held responsible for the enjoyment and entertainment of the guests, and is treated as such himself. The college boy is paying his way through college by his work.

There is but one professional 'cheerer' so far as known, in Chicago. This is a young girl who, when plentifully blessed with the world's goods, tried to help others by visiting them in trouble and trying to bring sunshine to them. Later, when hard times came to her own family, a friend suggested that she turn her talent for consolation and cheer to monetary account. The experiment has been a decided success. In New York more than a dozen men and women do this work regularly.

In the top of a tall building on State street is a small office in which a man works busily all day long, making plaster casts of hands, feet, heads and so on. For women with pretty members to have them perpetuated in plaster, always supposing that marble is beyond her pocket book's capacity, has been a society fad for some time. This man seized upon the idea, and has lifted himself well above the want by means of it.

Over in the Bohemian district lives a man who is growing rich by painting pictures for the use of beggars. Day after day he works on, painting away at explosion scenes, fires, battlefields, and other gory and startling happenings which have supposedly reduced the tearers of the pictures to beggary and want.

In a big Wabash avenue building may be found a woman who earns her bread and butter by means of a kind of leather work never done in America except by herself. It is a German method, a combination of rousseau work, hammering and photography.

On the west side is a man who carts bodies from the morgue to the medical colleges for a living, and Chicago has the only woman in America to make colored medical drawings within her gates.

And it goes on; the list of queer vocations followed in Chicago might well be indefinitely extended, for the people who are forced to think out new ways to earn a livelihood are exceedingly numerous.

PRATHER'S COSTLY RUN.

Speeding Ninety Miles on Horse-back to Save a Fortune.

'One of the notable incidents of early days in the Pennsylvania oil regions was John Prather's \$3,000,000 ride from Oil City to Pittsburgh,' said Byron G. Smith, of Cleveland, 'and I was the man that started him on it. I call it his \$3,000,000 ride because by taking that ride he made \$1,000,000 apiece for himself and his two brothers. When he mounted his horse at Oil City that January morning in 1865 the three of them combined didn't have \$10,000. I was an oil well driller, and it was a few idle strokes of my drill in a wildcat well that I was about to draw the tools out of and abandon that sent John Prather flying on horseback on that ninety-mile ride to fortune—and he didn't have a cent's worth of interest in the well, either.'

In the summer of 1864 I was employed by one of the myriad, wildcat oil companies that came into existence during the early petroleum excitement to put down a well on territory it had leased of a farmer named Holmden. The territory was seven or eight miles beyond what was then believed to be the limit of the Oil Creek district. The company had an immense capital on paper, but it actually had none at all. It was formed solely to dispose of its stock. That it became suddenly one of the wealthiest companies ever organized in the oil regions, and was enabled to pay enormous dividends to its shareholders, was to no one as much of a surprise as it was to the projectors themselves. The Holmden farm wasn't worth \$3,000 all told, but John Prather, who was a son-in-law of Holmden, having watched the methods and manipulations of oil land speculators on the creek for a year or more, believed he saw a possibility of doing some profitable speculation on the Holmden farm himself.

'The company that had begun operations on the property was booming it, and speculators not in the field were beginning to

"It went right to the sore spot,"

is what a young man lately said of his first dose of SHORT'S DYSPEPTICURE. Better still, a few more doses cured his indigestion.

make anxious and eager inquiries about it. John Prather and his brothers Abe and George owned a farm at Plumer, and oil had been struck near it. He induced his brothers to his way of thinking about the Holmden farm, and John went to his father-in-law and on the part of himself and his brothers made him an offer of \$25,000 for the refusal of that of his farm not leased by the oil company, the option to be for sixty days. The security of the Prathers had to give was not worth \$25,000 nor anything like it, it being simply their farm at Plumer, but the offer itself was tremendous. Farmer Holmden, not believing the boys could raise that much money in sixty days, and seeing better prospect for oil on the Prather farm at Plumer than there was on his own farm, accepted the offer and signed papers to that effect.

'I hate to do the boys out of their farm,' old Holmden said to me the day he signed the papers, 'especially as Johnny's my son-in-law, but if they don't know a good thing when they've got it, I can't help it.'

'This was along in November. I kept pegging away at the well I was drilling, and the Prather boys began negotiating for a customer for this territory on the strength of that well. They wanted \$100,000 for their part of the farm. I found good signs of oil, but no vein. I got clear through the third sand, which was as deep as we drilled in those days, and reported to the company that there was no use. I had orders to keep still and go on drilling. There was a few hundred thousand dollars worth of stock to be unloaded on the public yet. The Prather boys saw that something had to be done with their territory pretty quick or not at all, and George Prather was sent to Pittsburgh to work it up. This was about the first of January, 1865, just about the same time that my drill entered what had never been found in oil well drilling before—a fourth sand. The weather was such that we had to shut down then, whether or no, and even if I could have gone on with the drill I wouldn't have taken any stock in that fourth sand.'

Toward the middle of January there came a big break-up and thaw, and the Superintendent of the company ordered me to take the tools out of the well while I had the chance, for the company had no more use for it—having disposed of more than \$800,000 of its \$1,000,000 of stock, and the whole business hadn't cost it \$25,000. I went over to the well and started to obey orders, but before pulling the tools I thought I would see, just for curiosity's sake, if there was any kind of depth to that fourth sand. I set the drill to jogging, and it didn't bored into that sand more than a foot when it dropped plump into the oil vein, and I had a well that was flowing oil at the rate of 300 barrels a day! There had been spouters few times as big as that along Oil Creek, but they'd had their day, and the pump was then getting most of the oil in the region, so this strike, seven miles beyond developments in a wildcat country, just set the oil field wild. This well was on Pitohole Creek, and it was the starter of Pitohole City, where there were 15,000 people in less than two months, and millions of—but everybody knows the story of Pitohole.

'Well, sir, you may imagine how John and Abe Prather felt when they heard what my idle stroke of the drill had struck, and you may imagine the feelings of old man Holmden. He had bargained away land for \$25,000—provided the boys could raise the money in time—that was now worth a million at least. John Prather hurried to Oil City and telegraphed George at Pittsburgh to stop all negotiations for the property that he might have on. No answer was received. Fearing that the farm would be sold by George, at figures, which although a fortune, would now be but a song John and Abe were nearly crazed. There was no railroad communication with any place from Oil City then. Telegram after telegram remained unanswered. John Prather hired the fleetest and best horse he could find, mounted it early next morning, and started for Pittsburgh to find his brother. He never left the saddle to eat or drink, and changed horses but once on the entire journey, which he made in nine hours, arriving at Pittsburgh to learn that his brother had a customer in Philadelphia for the Holmden property, and had gone to that city the day before to close the deal. John Prather telegraphed George at Philadelphia, but got no reply. Then he followed him on the fastest train that ran on the Pennsylvania Railroad in those days, and that wasn't very fast. He arrived in Philadelphia all right, but it he had got there one minute later the name of Harrison W. Woods would be among those on the list of oil millionaires in place of John, Abe, and George Prather, for John

met George on the steps of the Girard House just as he was on his way, in company with a lawyer, to close a transaction with Woods, who had offered \$100,000 cash for the Prather boys' option on the Holmden farm. It is hardly necessary to say that the news carried by John Prather to his brother George put an end to further proceedings in that direction. It may seem strange to-day that the news of this great strike at Pitohole had not reached George Prather yet, but it is a fact that no mention of it was made in the Philadelphia newspapers for more than a week after the strike was made.

But the Prather boys were not out of the woods yet. It was on the sale of the Holmden property that they had depended for the money to make good the price they were to pay Holmden for it. The sixty days' limit was within five days of being up, and they had the money still to raise. They succeeded in getting the amount from C. B. Duncan, a Scotchman who was in the oil business in Pittsburgh, but when they came to pay it to Holmden and get their deed for the land Holmden's wife refused to sign the necessary papers to make the title good unless she was paid \$5,000 in gold for her signature. This the boys never could have got if it hadn't been for a man named Culver, who had a bank at Reno, for gold was scarce and high in those days. Culver had a lot of gold he was holding for speculation and he let the Prathers have \$5,000 of it for \$8,000. They paid Mrs. Holmden her demand, and the Holmden farm passed into their possession—\$3,000,000 for \$33,000, for that was the amount the boys cleaned up and divided from their lease and royalties on the farm and its production during the two years of the life of that marvellous oil pocket. The wildcat oil company got out of their part of the farm about as much more, besides paying its dividends to the stockholders. And how much do you suppose that company gave me for having the investigating turn of mind but for which it never would have possessed that rich oil vein? I don't mind telling you, now that the thing is all over. The company didn't give me a cent!

'Through the Prather boys, Duncan, the Scotchman who had advanced them the \$25,000 to make good their payment to Holmden, got some choice investments in Pitohole territory, and made a couple of millions. Duncan was a bachelor, and he disposed of all his interests at Pitohole before the great crash came and went home to Scotland. He died in 1868, leaving the bulk of his fortune to religious and charitable institutions at Aberdeen. He was an eccentric man, and relatives of his contested his will on the ground of his insanity at the time he made it. They never could have made out their case if news had travelled thirty years ago as it travels now. Duncan had been instrumental in building a Presbyterian church at Pitohole in 1865, and by his will he left \$25,000 to that church. A committee representing the contesting heirs came to this country to learn something about Duncan's transactions in the oil regions. They went to Pitohole to see the church he had remembered so liberally in his will. There was nothing left of Pitohole but vacant and decaying buildings, and the church had disappeared entirely. When Duncan left Pitohole the church and everything else there were in a most flourishing condition. The news of the utter collapse and abandonment of the place had never reached him in his seclusion in Scotland. The committee went home and reported that there was no such place as Pitohole, and consequently no church there to receive \$25,000. No explanation was made further than that, and on this evidence the Court decided that Duncan must have been insane when he made his will, and the millions he had made in the place that the committee said had no existence were divided among a small army of canny Scots.

'Duncan built a \$30,000 hotel at Pitohole—the Duncan house. After Pitohole's collapse the hotel was purchased by some Oil City men, who took it down and rebuilt it, in its original form, at Oil City, where it was the leading hotel for several years. It

at last became unprofitable and was abandoned. For years it was a retreat for rats and tramps and owls. It was sold finally for \$80, and was torn down and sold as firewood—the last visible relic of the gold-on days that the idle strokes of my wildcat drill brought like magic to that barren, isolated Pitohole wilderness.'

COLLECTING FROM "DRUMMERS."

The Collection Was a Large one and the Captain Was Pleased.

One Sunday evening, not long ago, the Salvation Army of Topeka formed a circle in front of the National Hotel, where a number of traveling salesmen were staying. After the usual singing, praying and beating of drums, came the collection, and as it turned out to be the most exciting, as well as the largest ever taken in the streets of a Kansas city, a correspondent of the Kansas City Times thought it worth describing. He writes:

For a few minutes things went slowly enough. The captain was begging for nickels or pennies, but they came not rapidly.

On the balcony, twenty feet above, were a dozen traveling men had a few women. One of the travelling men took out his pocketbook and fished out a dime. He threw it down to the captain, but it missed his tambourine and had to be hunted for on the stone pavement.

'Oh,' said the New York wine-drummer, 'I wouldn't give anything so small as a dime.' He took out a quarter and threw it down. It, too, missed the captain.

'I'll fix that, God be praised!' said the captain, and taking the bass drum, he set it on the pavement, head up, directly in front of the balcony.

'I can beat a quarter,' said a text-book man, and he threw a half-dollar. It hit the drumhead with a noise that made it sound like a brick to the startled ears of the Salvationists, and they shouted:

'Praise the Lord.'

The brewery man from Kansas City got his back up, and probing his pockets he found a silver dollar, and it hit the drumhead with a plunk.

'Fire a volley,' shouted the captain, in an ecstasy, and there was a rousing 'Amen' from each and every member of the army.

Another dollar from the pocket of a shoe-drummer lighted squarely on the beer dollar with a merry clink.

'That's a ringer,' said the grocery-drummer, whose used to pitch horseshoes behind a country store while waiting for his trains, and he tried to duplicate it.

'I'll be one of any five men to throw a dollar each,' announced another one of the text-book men.

'I'm with you,' said four voices at the same instant, and plunk, plunk, plunk, plunk, went five silver dollars against the drumhead in rapid succession.

'Fire a volley,' shouted the captain above the mild Sabbath-day cheers of the gathered crowd, and there was nothing mild about the 'Amen's' that responded.

'I'll go two at a time with anybody,' announced the wine man.

'I'm with you,' said the beer man, and four silver dollars struck the drumhead simultaneously.

There was another round or two of singles, and then somebody asked:

'How much have you got now, captain?' The captain counted while the travelling men got together in little bunches on the balcony and made up purses for an attack.

'Eighteen dollars and fifty two cents so far, praise God,' said the captain. 'Fire a volley.' Amen! shouted the army.

For nearly half an hour the fun lasted, and the army went away reluctantly but joyfully, after a parting serenade.

The Blue and the Gray.

Both men and women are apt to feel a little blue, when the gray hairs begin to show. It's a very natural feeling. In the normal condition of things gray hairs belong to advanced age. They have no business whitening the head of man or woman, who has not begun to go down the slope of life. As a matter of fact, the hair turns gray regardless of age, or of life's seasons; sometimes it is whitened by sickness, but more often from lack of care. When the hair fades or turns gray there's no need to resort to hair dyes. The normal color of the hair is restored and retained by the use of

Ayer's Hair Vigor.

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