

WERE THEY COINCIDENCES?

How two Events Coincided in a Very Strange Manner.

When two events fall in together, they are said to coincide. The word implies an external meeting at a certain point, but indicates nothing as to the cause or purpose of the coming together. Not unfrequently the coincidence is so marvellous as to take our reason by surprise, and suggest that

There's a divinity that shares our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

Two of these coincidences, which almost compel the thought, 'They that are above have ends in everything,' are related by an eminent Boston clergyman, the late Dr. A. J. Gordon, as occurring to himself. We abridge the narrative as published in his 'Biography.'

On opening his mail one morning, Doctor Gordon found an earnest appeal from a poor student, detailing the straits into which he had been brought by debts for boards and books. He was reluctant to ask aid, but he did ask Doctor Gordon to pray for his deliverance from burdens that discouraged him. It was only a little sum that he needed,—fifty dollars,—but it was a great sum for a poor student.

Having read the letter with hearty sympathy, Doctor Gordon continued opening his mail. The next letter whose seal he broke was from a wealthy gentleman, expressing thankfulness for a service the clergyman had rendered him a few days before, and inclosing a check for fifty dollars as a token of gratitude.

'Instantly,' writes Doctor Gordon, 'I perceived that the second letter contained the answer to the first; and endorsing the check, I sent it to the young man, with my congratulations for his speedy deliverance.'

The noon mail of the same day brought a letter from a colored man, whose piety and scholarship had prompted Doctor Gordon to help him pursue his studies. He told a pathetic story of his struggles, of how sparingly he had lived,—an inclosed list of his expenditures demonstrated that,—and that he had not a cent to pay his debts.

Doctor Gordon went to the telegraph-office, and wrote a despatch to the poor student to say that he would be responsible for one-half the amount needed, provided he would raise the other half from Mr. W. But as he could not remember the student's street number, nor the amount of money needed, he went back to his house to find the letter.

On his way he called at a certain place to pay a bill—thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents. He handed his check for the sum to the bookkeeper, who, on turning to the account, said:

'This bill is paid, sir; you do not owe us anything.'

'Who paid it?' asked Doctor Gordon. 'I cannot say; only I know that it was settled several weeks ago,' and the bookkeeper handed back the check.

Doctor Gordon, surprised to find himself so much better off than he expected, returned home, opened the student's letter, and found that his list of debts came to just thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents. He sent a check for the amount to the poor student.

The points at which these several events coincided should be noted. Doctor Gordon knew nothing of the necessities of the two poor students; the money by which he relieved them was not his money; in each instance the exact funds were provided. Does this external falling together of the events suggest an internal propelling cause? Doctor Gordon believed that it did.

WHAT HE WANTED TO KNOW.

He Failed to Understand What the Odors Had Done.

One way to become a scholar is to ask questions. If you fail to understand a word that is addressed to you, inquire what it means, instead of attempting to conceal your ignorance by saying nothing or looking intelligent. This was the rule of a hotel-keeper of whom Harpers Bazar tells a story.

Mr. Johnson, who keeps a house in one of the large cities of Pennsylvania, is always anxious to learn what he does not know about taking care of the travelling public. There isn't really much for him to learn in that line, but nevertheless he is always in a learning mood.

Some days ago a man from New York registered, and was assigned to a room. Toward dinner-time the new arrival walked into the office and said to the proprietor:

'Mr. Johnson, you must give me another room immediately.'

'Doesn't that one suit you, Mr. Riggs?'

'No; it is too near the kitchen. The odor of the cooking permeates the atmosphere.'

'Very well, sir,' replied Johnson. 'I'll let you have a different room.'

The change was made, and the guest was no doubt satisfied, for he made no further complaint. The hotel proprietor was not satisfied, however. He thought he had a chance to learn something. Meeting the man from New York in the office next day, he asked:

'Mr. Riggs, does your new room suit you?'

'Very well, thank you, Mr. Johnson,' replied the guest.

'If you don't mind,' Mr. Johnson went on, 'I'd like to ask you one more question about the room you objected to yesterday.'

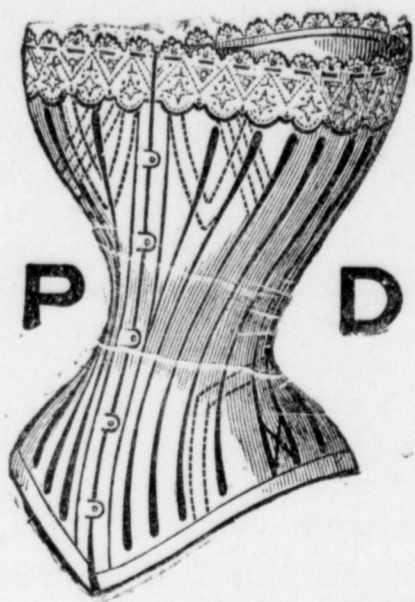
'The only trouble was that it was too near the kitchen.'

'Yes, I know that; but what was it you said those odors done?'

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A MID-OCEAN ADVENTURE.

An Exciting Experience of Two Sailors in a Little Row-Boat.

On the afternoon of June 7, two Norwegians, George G. Harbo and Frank G. Samuelson, set out from New York for Havre in a rowboat. They were provisioned for sixty days, and though their seafaring friends looked upon them as crazy, they believed that they had taken all necessary precautions, and should find themselves equal to the work they had undertaken. And so they did, as the event proved, for in March last they landed again in New York, having reached Europe and taken passage back in a steamer. Their experiences, which were sufficiently exciting and dangerous, are narrated at some length in the New York Herald, from which we quote a description of their worst adventure. It occurred on the tenth of July, the third day of a terrible westerly gale.

One of them had to be always at the oars, not rowing, but keeping the boat's head to the storm. It was terrible work. The outlook man would shout, 'Here comes one!' and the oarsman would drop his oars and hug the seats while the breakers rolled over. And then would come the work of recovering the wash-over oars—no small labor in that tiny boat and that sea, notwithstanding that the oars were held by lines.

Imagine this battle continued for seventy-two consecutive hours!

All day through July tenth they waged this struggle with the elements. But the worst was to come at night. It was a dry storm. The night was bright, and so, fortunately, the big waves were readily made out.

It was quite dark when Samuelson, who was on watch, cried out:

'Oh, here's a big one! Do you see that one?'

'We'll never clear it!' gasped Harbo, dropping his oars and clinging fast.

It was indeed an immense wave when seen from the tiny boat, whose sides were now scarcely above the water's edge. It towered black against the sky, shutting off the horizon, creaming at the apex, rushing with the speed of an express.

The wave struck them on the port bow, and upset the boat.

It was a frightful moment. And how well the men were repaid for all their precautions! Each man wore a life-belt made of reindeer hair, and was fastened to the gunwale of the boat by three fathoms of line. So after men and boat had tossed and rolled together in wild confusion in the waters, each man promptly got back to ship again by pulling himself hand over hand.

They found the boat upside down. Struggling together on one side they tried their best to right her, and for a while in vain. But even this emergency had not been neglected in the preparation, and the keel of the boat was provided with a hand-rail for just such a contingency. Working together, they succeeded in laying hold of this, and then their combined efforts turned the boat.

One of them now swam to the opposite side, and together they climbed in, and set to bailing with all their might.

All that night the two bruised, famished and nearly exhausted men struggled with the sea. They prevailed, and towards morning the wind abated, and the next day was pleasant. In its noon sunshine each in turn stripped and wrung his clothes, and drenched again in the damp garments.

It was a narrow escape. They could not have held out much longer. Less hardy men could not have survived as it was. Both were nearly dead. That afternoon of June eleventh, beginning at one o'clock, Samuelson took a three hours' turn alone, while Harbo, nearly perishing, slept. When he waked up at four o'clock, he could not move. His body was considerably swollen, and his joints were stiff. Samuelson helped him to the oars, and himself crawled under the canvas.

For a time it was impossible for Harbo to move, but finally he was able to row a little, and then literally worked off his stiffness. Samuelson was similarly affected when he awoke.

Good weather followed, the men recovered their energies, and after seven weeks more of varied adventures they arrived at Havre.

Money to Spare.

In a mining country it is more than usually unsafe to judge of a man's financial condition by his outward appearance. Here, for instance, is a story from the Spokane Review:

A miner from the northern part of the state, having sold his claim for a round sum, came down to Spokane for a kind of celebration. In appearance he was rather rusty, and when he went into an up-town restaurant, the single waiter was in no haste to serve him. To and fro he went in an officious manner, waiting upon a party at the next table, but quite ignoring the presence of the newcomer.

'See here, kid!' called that worthy, when his patience gave out. 'Do I eat?'

'Sorry I can't wait on you now,' was the answer, 'but the gentleman there has just ordered a fifty dollar dinner.'

'Fifty-dollar dinner be banged!' said the miner. 'Bring me a hundred dollars' worth of ham and eggs, and be quick about it!'

And he was waited upon promptly.

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A RAILWAY ON ICE.

Drawing Trains Over Frozen Rivers in Russia.

It has been reserved for Russia to undertake what will probably rank as the monumental railway enterprise of the nineteenth century—this being the completion of a belt of rails around the world—at least so far as terra firma is concerned. The Trans-Siberian Railway, which is now in course of construction, has reached as far as Krasnoarsk, which is the exact centre of Asiatic Russia, and in four years' time it is expected that it will be completed to the Pacific Coast, and direct railway communication established between the most western point of Europe and the most eastern point of Asia. The most significant fact in connection with the Trans-Siberian Railway is that it will make possible a journey round the world in less than forty days, and thus Jules Verne's romantic globe-trot will have been reduced to the tune of 50 per cent.

The work of construction has been pushed on with an energy not usually associated with things Russian. The manner in which the Government has gone slap bang in this work has been a surprise to the engineering world, but like most Muscovite undertakings, the whole line from Chelabinski, in the Urals, to its present termination, has suffered from bad management. The rails are miserably laid, and the road ballasted in a most precarious manner. Smashups are frequent, but as nobody outside Russia hears much of them the world is not worried. The pace, too, of the Siberian trains is wretched, the average speed not exceeding twenty versts (about thirteen miles) per hour.

But what the Russian engineers have lacked in constructional skill they have compensated for by novel experiments. Everybody knows that Siberia is a cold place. The rivers freeze to a considerable depth in winter, but still nobody would conceive that they would freeze sufficiently to bear a locomotive and a whole train of heavy wagons hurtling across from one side to the other. But such is the fact.

The experiment was first tried on the River Obi last year. At first a light train was drawn by horses over tracks frozen on to the icy surface of the river. Then a locomotive was steamed across, and, as it did not go through, it was satisfactorily established that Siberian ice was of a distinctly bearing quality. Once this fact was patent, the brow of the Russian engineer cleared, for, while it was easy to get along rapidly with the construction of the line on the ground itself, the building of bridges over the rivers was a longer job, and, as a matter of fact, the bridges over the Obi and the Achinsk are not yet half finished. 'Why not use nature's bridge—the ice?' thought the Russian; and so he did.

My first experience of the railway running on the ice was at the River Achinsk. This is a tolerably broad river, perhaps twice as wide as the Thames, and when on that February afternoon the train steamed up to its western shore, the surface presented one white mass of snow-covered ice. The railway line continued down the slope of the bank and across the ice to the other side.

The train stopped at the edge of the bank, and the conductor bade us get out and walk, humorously remarking that, if the train went through, only he and the driver would be drowned.

The whole motley crowd of befuddled passengers therefore descended and trailed across the ice. At the centre of the river I paused to watch how the train would behave.

Slowly the heavy mass descended the bank and crept on to the ice. There was a distinct "scunch" as the locomotive left solid bottom. Once all the weight of the train was off the land, I clearly felt a sag in the ice, and as the cars passed me, crack! crack! crack! like a burst of small fireworks, notifying me that the ice felt it badly. But it bore bravely, and in about five minutes' slow journey the train was on firm land again.—London Answers.

A Good Reason For Wonder.

The country editor, so says the Cincinnati Enquirer, laid down with impatience the great city daily that he was reading in the bosom of his family and exclaimed:

'Mighty funny!'

'What is funny, John?'

'Why, this here paper has this paragraph:

'Eva Hollis-Wopper, the charming sou-brette, has just purchased a new bulldog.'

'Such items are quite common in the big papers, John.'

'Yes, I know it; but why do they laugh at me for publishing the information that Squire Jim Brown has painted his barn?'

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