

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

CURIOUS ITEMS ABOUT BIRDS.

"An Easy Way Out of It."

"A pretty little fly-catcher, which had taken much pains to build her nest, was in trouble about her own pearly eggs, and through no fault of her own. An impudent cow-bird (*Molothrus pecoris* of naturalists), too lazy to make a nest for herself, or to look up an old one, or, indeed, to hatch her own eggs, had slyly dropped an egg in the fly-catcher's nest, and then gone off, quite indifferent as to what became of it.

"What the first thoughts of the fly-catcher were when she saw the intrusive egg, I am at a loss to conjecture; but the nest itself tells us that the bird was not easily out-witted, and also that the conclusion it finally reached was, to get rid of the noxious egg, by making practically a new nest out of the old one.

"Now, this fly-catcher, which ornithologists know as the white-eyed vireo (*Vireo noveboracensis*), builds a rather fragile, hanging nest, usually out of fine twigs and strips of thin bark, all nicely interlaced, but sometimes also employing large pieces of newspaper. The nest is suspended to the delicate twigs that grow on the very ends of long way branches. To compensate, therefore, for the considerable motion to which it is subjected when the wind blows, the nest is made very deep, and quite small at the top. So deep is it, in fact, that usually we can not detect the sitting bird, unless the nest is looked upon from above.

"In the instance of the nest here described, this great depth of the original structure came nicely into play, for the outcome of the bird's thoughts was that to build a new floor to the nest, while it would necessitate leaving two of her own eggs unhatched, would place the unwieldy egg of the interloper down in the basement also, and would thus leave her free to rear her own family, unmolested, on the second floor. This she cunningly accomplished by first placing a stout twig just above the eggs, and then interweaving suitable soft materials with the sides of the nest, allowing their weight to rest upon the twig extending from side to side and projecting between them.

"Considering the fix the fly-catcher was in, and her determination not to nurse the foundling, certainly this was an easy way out of it; and not only easy, but ingenious, showing, as it does, an intelligence that would be little suspected by the unfortunate men and women (and girls and boys) who pass by, unheeded, the many wonders of bird-life that help to make this world so beautiful.

"Another little bird that is much more frequently subjected to the annoyance of visits from the cow-bird, is our very common, pretty summer warbler (*Dendroica aestiva*). When this bird finds the strange egg in the nest, it covers up the egg (with any of its own that are alongside it) in a mass of material like that of which the nest is made, and another set of eggs is laid upon this new flooring of the nest. Sometimes it happens that a second cow-bird's egg is laid on this new floor, and again the warbler has to cover it also, that its own eggs may not be disturbed; so that we have in such a case a three-storied structure. What patient, persistent birds, then, these little warblers are!

"Considering that many of our birds voluntarily perform so much unexpected labor to secure the welfare of their broods, let me ask of my young readers that in all cases they will examine the nests of birds without disturbing them, and collect them only when the birds need them no longer. Their structure and materials can be studied as well then as before.

Too Clever for the Cat.

Birds often foil larger enemies than their feathered foes by some cunning piece of strategy. Here is an odd incident which really happened. A mother-bird seeing a cat approaching, and fearing the loss of her brood, attracted the attention of the stealthy animal by flying down to the fence upon which the cat was crouched, and then, by feigning a broken wing and hopping along with plaintive chirps just in front of her enemy (but always just out of his reach), she succeeded in luring him to a safe distance. Then she immediately took to flight, and by a circuitous route returned to her nest. Bravely done, little mother! And here, too, is an account, taken from a newspaper, of a pitched battle between some sparrows and a cat, in which the sturdy little winged warriors actually put Puss to rout:

"At Pottsville, Pa., recently, a half-grown cat caught a young sparrow, and the latter chirped loudly, giving the alarm, and in a very few moments a large number of the belligerent little birds were on the spot. They swooped down on pussy from every direction, and, although she arched her back, extended her claws, and tried to give battle, she was overcome by numbers, and fled incontinently to the shelter of a coal-shed near at hand. This did not end the matter. In the course of a half-hour Puss made her entry on the scene again. But the birds seem to have put some of their numbers on picket duty, for, as soon as the cat came from her shelter, the alarm was sounded and the feathered clans came afresh to attack in greater force than ever. Their feline enemy, profiting by past experience, did not wait to make a fight, but ran as swiftly as she could to her home, half a square away, the sparrows striking her as long as she was in sight."

It seems by the way the New York *Sun* talks that Dana-mite, if he would, blow up the whole republican party in a short time.

A Springfield paper of recent date contained in its columns the following bit of news: "Daniel Meisenback, of Mendota, is dead, at 81." The paper does not state the disease he died of, but we earnestly implore people to keep clear of "81" for fear of catching the disease.

Recession of the Falls of Niagara.

An interesting bit of information comes to hand regarding the wearing away or recession of these Falls. It will be known to many that, in conformity with recognized geological law, the rocks over which Niagara pours its immense volume are gradually giving way to the pressure and force of the torrent—are being worn down, or broken away in large detached fragments, and this to such a degree that the gradual recession of the cliff forming the fall is distinctly observable by those who periodically take measurements of it. A correspondent, writing to *Nature*, has supplied some information which goes to increase the interest of the subject. He calls attention to the rapidity with which the Canadian side of the fall is deepening its horse-shoe. An immense mass, he says, broke off near the middle of the curve in October 1874, many windows in the adjacent museum being broken by the concussion. Altogether, he finds that in ten years the fall has receded twenty-four feet.

Some interesting calculations might be based on this observation. The gorge below the Falls through which the river passes, extends for seven miles, and the whole of this gorge is believed by geologists to be due to the erosive action by which the Falls have retrograded. Sir Charles Lyell calculated that the rate of recession might be about one foot each year; the rate, however, is practically far from uniform. The upper beds of rock which form the cliff are a hard limestone, extending downwards to about half the depth of the fall. Under this, and extending to the foot of the fall, are soft shaly layers belonging to the same formation; and these soft layers of shale and marl, constantly acted upon by the moisture and spray of the descending waters, are gradually hollowed out, leaving the thick shelf of limestone overhanging. In course of time the edge of the cliff, thus deprived of support, gives way; and on each occasion when this happens, the Falls will be found to have receded so much from their former position. In this way the work of erosion has gone on from year to year, the result being that the river now falls over the rocks at a point seven miles higher up on its course than it must have done at one time. Taking Lyell's estimate of the rate of erosion—one foot a year—we find that a period of nearly thirty-seven thousand years has been required for this cutting out of the gorge. And supposing further that the Falls shall continue to recede—to eat their way backward—at the same rate in the future, then the seventeen miles which lie between them and Lake Erie may be disposed of in other ninety thousand years. If that event should happen in this—to us mortals—very distant future, the level of the lake would be lowered, so that its whole contents would flow down the Niagara river into Lake Ontario; but so large is the body of water which Lake Erie contains, that seven or eight years would, it is calculated, be required in this way to drain it.—*Chambers' Journal*.

The Society Young Man.

The "gilded youth" of today is the dandy of one hundred years ago; the "swell young man" of the present time is only a reproduction of the "beau" of the past, and only a mild reproduction at his best. In both types of fashion the costume is the distinguishing feature, but how poor and dull seems the exquisite of this century in comparison with that of the last. Now, a cravat and pin and a watch-chain are apt to be the only elements of gorgeousness; then the whole attire was one dazzling glitter. In the old days we hear that the nice young men appeared in plush satin waistcoats, silk coats, pink satin shoes, and plumb-colored stock, their whole figure being bedizened with lace and jewels. At the present time the effect of the costume is rather sombre than otherwise, an elegant unobtrusiveness being the chief characteristic. In manners the earlier and late varieties of this genus maintain a similarity, each, however, preserving the modifications caused by the peculiar state of society at this time. Then, as now, if we can trust the ancient chronicles, there was the fascinating ennui in deportment and the same don't you know, distinguished air of having drunk the wine of life to the dregs, of having tasted all the sweetness of the world, of having gone to the depths of existence to find nothing. It was quite the thing, one hundred years ago, so they say, for the society young man to scorn the knowledge of books, and to pretend that "seeing the world" was the principal duty of a gentleman; now, an expensive college education is bestowed upon the specimen under consideration, and he graduates with the supreme satisfaction of possessing perhaps a little less information than before his course. Everything noble in life is distasteful to the perfect example of this class, everything that calls for active exertion contemptible. His most exciting occupation has always been "mashing," which formerly was carried on with innumerable gallantries and mannerisms. Joseph Addison once had the cruelty to dissect a bean's head for his own good fame, but hardly for the benefit of the reputation of the bean. He found a cavity filled with "ribbons, lace embroidery, billet-doux, and love letters," another with "fictions, flatteries, and falsehoods, vows, promises, and protestations," and a great cavity filled with nonsense. Since the race seems not to be extinct, we may suppose that such monstrous anatomical structures will exist among us, as the head pieces of figures that are often very much admired, because of their "very pleasing ways."

Cure for Lumbago.

A correspondent in Smyrna, Turkey, sends the following, and states that it is reliable: Take a piece of oilskin cloth, such as we use to cover tables, but of a soft, pliant kind, sufficiently large to cover the loins; place it over the flannel shirt, and bandage yourself with a flannel bandage; profuse perspiration will ensue on the loins, and you are quickly rid of this wearisome complaint."

A pint of whiskey put in a fruit cake will keep it for six months, and the same amount put into a man will keep him down town until 2 o'clock in the morning.

China and Japan are getting antagonistic. A laquer day. If Japan breaks China up, probably all Europe will want a piece.—*Boston Journal*. We suppose there will be more than one Chap-on-ese then.

DAMAJANTE'S PERIL.

The Snake-Charmer in a Circus Nearly Crushed by a Huge Python.

A thrilling incident happened in Forepaugh's circus, recently, while Nala Damajante, the Hindoo snake-charmer, was going through her performance of handling half a dozen squirming pythons. It was all in the twinkling of an eye, and scarcely a dozen persons in the great audience were aware that Damajante had for a moment been in deadly peril. She had finished the wonderful act of walking about the raised platform with six snakes coiled like a living head-dress over her forehead, and had taken the huge python, whose weight is ninety pounds and length twelve feet, from its box and threw it across her shoulder. As she had done with the other snakes, Damajante grasped the powerful creature a few inches back of the head. Although the air was damp and chilly, the python appeared to be possessed of more than usual activity. It unwound its sinuous length from Damajante's body and quickly coiled about the upper part of her chest and throat. To those nearest the performer, the muscles of the snake could be distinctly seen working beneath the spotted skin. Suddenly the reptile gave an angry hiss and darted forth its quivering tongue, and almost at the same moment the coil about the woman's throat was tightened. Damajante's agent, who was standing near the entrance to the elephant house, appeared to know that there was a possibility of something of the kind taking place, and was keeping a keen eye on the performance. He started forward quickly but quietly, so as not to alarm the audience, and had got half way down the race track, when Damajante, who had already realized her great danger, succeeded in untwisting the tail end of the snake from her body. The middle and most powerful part of the python was still about her throat, and

THE PRESSURE WAS INCREASING. She was very pale but thoroughly calm. The head of the python, hissing horribly, was still grasped in her right hand. Damajante, with remarkable nerve managed to free her left arm, and in another instant had with all the strength she possessed in both hands, unwrapped the writhing neck from her throat. She placed her dangerous pet back in its box, bowed, and retired. Speaking of her strange avocation a few moments later, Damajante said that it was only during very warm weather, when the snakes were viciously active that she feared their strength. "They are very susceptible to cold," said the snake-charmer, after she had recovered her composure, "and have to be kept in boxes arranged with hot-water pans to the temperature up to at least 100 degrees. Besides that, they are wrapped up in blankets. Did I ever have anything like that happen before? Oh yes. Once in Berlin, about two years ago, my largest snake nearly crushed me to death. It took the united strength of two men to remove him. Another time in Kiga the large python got his tail around a pillar and threw me on my back. In Madrid my arm was almost twisted out of its socket. Sometimes they bite me—look," and, extending her hands, Damajante showed them to be covered with small V-shaped scars. "The bite is not poisonous, but it is rather painful, I don't mind my hands so much, but am on the watch to keep them from striking at my eyes. You know the peculiar way in which the python's teeth are set—curving backward in repose and standing erect when angry—well it would be an easy matter to lose an eye. Some years ago in Vienna a snake-charmer had his eye

PLUCKED OUT OF THE SOCKET in an instant. I think the snakes know me. I have possessed a strange power over them, that I can not account for myself, since girlhood. Are they hardy? Well, sir, I give them as much attention as a mother does her child. Regularly every Saturday night they are washed in luke-warm water and wrapped up in blankets. During warm weather I feed them every eight days. The smaller ones eat live rabbits, and that big fellow is satisfied with a live duck or two. I have another pet, which is shedding his coat. Come and I'll show him to you. He's only a baby," and, leading the way to the menagerie tent, Damajante approached a red box, which she unlocked. From beneath the folds of a double blanket she drew, with some difficulty, one of the most monstrous pythons ever seen in captivity. It measured eighteen feet from head to tail, and weighed certainly not less than 125 pounds. Its scaly coat was peeling off in patches, and its eyes were sightless. This blindness, the snake-charmer said, was always present while the reptile was going through the annual process of shedding its gaudy-hued coat. "This fellow," continued Damajante, "is very strong, and I have to use the greatest care in handling him. He is almost through now, and I may possibly exhibit him in Philadelphia before the circus moves."

The snake-charmer does not speak English and carried on the conversation partly in French. Her agent, who speaks the strange language of her mother country, helped to interpret when she stumbled across a too difficult sentence.—*Philadelphia Press*.

Black Men as Lightning Conductors.

In his *Leaves from a South African Journey*, Mr. Froude writes: "On the road to the Vaal River—first experience of camping out. I am alone in my tent with a glaring sun raising the temperature inside to ninety degrees. The mules have strayed, being insufficiently hobbled. I sent Charley my black driver in search of them in the early morning. He returned with his face as near white as nature permitted, declaring that the Evil One had jumped out of the ground at his feet with four younger ones. I suppose it was an antbear. Anyway, the mules are lost. He has gone back to our last halting place to look for them. My other youth has started with a rifle to shoot buck, which are round us in tens of thousands, and here am I by the side of a pond which is trampled by the antelopes into mud-soup, the only stuff in the shape of water which we have to depend on for our coffee, and, alas! for our washing. To add to the pleasure of the situation, the season of the thunder-storms has set in. The lightning was playing round us all yesterday afternoon, and we shall now have a storm daily. Whole teams of oxen are often killed. To a white man, they say there is no danger while he has a black at his side, the latter being the better conductor. When one is struck, another must be immediately substituted.

FASHION NOTES.

Big buckles are all the rage. Leather fans are in high favor. Mourning fans are edged with crepe. Even mantles are made of plaid stuffs. Gay colors in costumes are worn only in the house. Cashmere is the popular early spring dress fabric. Bottle-green velvet trims ecru cashmere admirably. Plush boots, foxed with kid, are a not very pretty novelty. Brides' dresses are made with elegant simplicity this season. All elegant street dresses are de rigueur, dark, or neutral tinted. Alicante brown and Soldat red are popular new shades of these colors. Gold thistles and gold burs are the latest millinery and hair ornaments. Amber, topaz, and all yellow stones are in vogue for ornamental jewellery. Chicken-down—the color of the newly-hatched—is the latest shade of yellow. Leather buckles appear among new ornaments for hats, bonnets, and dresses. Sleeves of street costumes remain tight and plain, and are larger than last season. Long shell or metal hair-pins take precedence of all other ornaments for the coiffure. Plaid skirts worn under plain fabric polonaises and overdresses are in high favor. Both high and low chignons are worn by fashionable women, but they must be small. The bridal coiffure most in favor is wavy in front, and braided into a close knot in the back. Dressy matinees are in bright shades of red and blue, and trimmed with lace and embroidery. Red in moderate quantities gives a fine dash of bright color to black, gray, pale blue, and ecru dresses. Dark brown, green, black, or blue velvet is the most elegant trimming for light-colored cashmere dresses. Gigot sleeves and epaulettes of ribbon or ruching are considered correct and good form for indoor dresses. The *Season* reports bridal toilets of "Puritan plainness" for approaching weddings in fashionable society. Pansies of all colors and sizes on grounds of various colors appear in chine effects on some sash ribbons and scarfs. Cream llama is a new and useful material for dressing-gowns. It is printed all over with the cashmerine palm pattern.

Some garden hats are in Japanese style, of a fine, mat-like texture, embroidered in colored silks, and caught up on one side with cords and tassels.

The requisite dash of yellow in a white toilet is sometimes given by wearing an amber necklace and amber bracelets, or with yellow topaz jewellery.

Delicate leather designs of small ivy leaves, berries, and flowers are now used on velvet, in cream colors, and are formed into collars and cuffs.

The fancy work of the coming season will be outline embroidery in bright-colored wools, cottons, and silks or shams, tidies, bibs, bureau covers, and table and chair scarfs.

A new and very thin material called "spider's web," shot with color, will be used for tennis dresses, and also light flannels of various colors trimmed with narrow velvets or braided.

Among new bonnets of the Parisian Flower company's production is a genuine novelty of great beauty called the Newmarket. It is a modified jockey-cap bonnet, producing the becoming effect of a poke without its oddity.

The bridal veil may be either as long as the train of the dress or as short as the waist line, but it must be of tulle if the bride is youthful. If she is over 25 or 30 it may be of any fine delicate real lace, and shorter than the youthful bride's veil.

Two Famous Song Writers.

Samuel S. Sanford, who is known as the father of negro minstrelsy, is brimful of recollections of Foster and other song writers of the country. The old man was met yesterday by a reporter, who found him just in the mood for talking. "One thing I've got to say is this," said he, as he tilted back his silk hat and placed his thumbs in his vest arm holes; "I think that too much is thought of Foster and too little of Nelson Kneass. Foster owed his first introduction to the public to Nelson's generosity. Nelson had written a lot of songs that are now more sung by minstrels than Foster's. There's 'Jane O'Malley,' a quartette founded on the death of a poor young woman who was found in the Hudson; 'Ben Bolt,' one of the most popular in the minstrel repertoire; 'The Miller,' 'Hold Your Horses,' 'Wake Up, Jake,' 'Nellie Was a Lady,' 'Junia Johnson,' and besides these he wrote any number of burlesques of operas and sentimental songs. Away about 1845 it used to be one of the attractions of minstrel troupes to offer prizes for conundrums and songs. In Pittsburgh our company, in which Nelson was the musical director, offered a cup for the best song, and Nelson wrote several himself, because he was afraid there would not be enough sent in to make a good public contest. Foster sent in a song—I don't remember now what it was—but the judges didn't pick it out for honors, but pitched upon one of Nelson Kneass's. Nelson went to them privately and told them that he had only entered in order to make a good show, and that in his opinion, the cup ought to be given to Foster. That was done. Foster got the cup, and after that plenty of minstrel troupes came along and asked him to write them songs. I bought the manuscript of three from him for \$50, and it was my company that, in the fall of 1854, in Pittsburgh, brought out 'Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming,' 'Hard Times Come Again No More,' 'The Old Kentucky Home,' and 'Glendy Burke.' I have the original manuscript yet. I knew both Foster and Nelson Kneass, and I think Nelson was the better man."—*Philadelphia Times*.

The Past and Present.

It may be thought that the present times of the 19th Century have little or nothing in common with those of Rome in the first. But don't let us be too sure. Now, as then, wealth is getting into the hands of a comparatively small number. Squalor, misery and vice are side by side now as then with selfish luxury and vulgar ostentatious display. Reckless money-seeking and unblushing fraud flourish pretty well still, and wealth is worshipped at present in such a way as not to allow much room for casting a stone at former ages. Things are not so bad by a great way, thanks to the Christianity which some who call themselves philosophers want to destroy as antiquated and behind the times, but the following description by Canon Farrar of the state of things in the Roman world, eighteen hundred years ago may be read with interest as descriptive of that which has not yet even altogether passed away, and for the restoration of which some who think themselves advanced both in sight and labor: "At the lowest extreme of the Social scale were millions of slaves, without family, without religion, without possessions, who had no recognized rights, and toward whom none had any recognized duties, passing normally from a childhood of degradation to a manhood of hardship and an old age of unpitied neglect. Only a little above the slaves stood the lower classes, who formed the least majority of the free-born inhabitants of the Roman Empire. They were, for the most part, beggars and idlers, familiar with the grossest indignities of an unscrupulous dependence. Despising a life of honest industry, they asked only for bread and the games of the circus, and were ready to support any government, even the most despotic, if it would supply their needs. "They spent their mornings in lounging about the Forum, or in dancing attendance at the levies of patrons for a share in whose largesses they daily struggled. They spent their afternoons and evenings in gossiping at the Public Baths, in listlessly enjoying the polluted plays of the theatre or looking with fierce thrills of delighted horror at the bloody sports of the arena. At night they crept up to their miserable garrets in the sixth and seventh stories of the *hugo insule*—the lodging-houses of Rome—into which, as into the low lodging-houses of the poorer quarters of London, there drifted all that was most wretched and most vile. Their life, as it is described for us by their contemporaries, was largely made up of squalor, misery and vice."

Immeasurably removed from these needy and greedy freemen, and living chiefly amid crowds of corrupted and obsequious slaves, stood the constantly diminishing throng of the wealthy and the noble. Every age in its decline has exhibited the spectacle of selfish luxury side by side with abject poverty; of wealth, a monster gorged, and midstarving populations;

but nowhere and at no period, were these contrasts so startling as they were in Imperial Rome. There a whole population might be trembling lest they should be starved by the delay of an Alexandrian corn-ship, while the upper classes were squandering a fortune at a single banquet, drinking out of myrrhine and jeweled vases worth hundreds of pounds, and feasting on the brains of peacocks and the tongues of nightingales. As a consequence, disease was rife, they were short-lived, and even women became liable to goot. Over a large part of Italy most of the free-born population had to content themselves, even in winter, with a tunic, and the luxury of the toga was reserved only by way of honor, to the corpse. Yet, at this very time the dress of Roman ladies displayed an unheard-of splendor. The elder Pliny tells us that he himself saw Lollia Paulina dressed for a betrothal feast, "in a robe entirely covered with pearls and emeralds which had cost more than two millions of dollars," (bent even the Vanderbilt extravaganzas), "and was known to be less costly than some of her other dresses. Gluttony, caprice, extravagance, ostentation, impurity, rioted in the heart of a society which knew of no other means by which to break the monotony of its weariness or alleviate the anguish of its despair." Things are not so bad to-day, but the trend is in the same direction. "Under the Empire," Farrar adds, "marriage had come to be regarded with disfavor and disdain. Women, as Seneca says, married in order to be divorced and were divorced in order to marry; and noble Roman matrons counted the years not by the Consuls, but by their discarded or discarding husbands." How much better are they now in the States? How much better do many want things to be here? Not much, if any.

A Fair Exchange is No Robbery.

"Arrested for carrying a pistol, was he?" asked a magistrate of an officer, referring to a gentleman who had just been arraigned. "Let's see the pistol." The weapon was produced and handed to the Judge, who examined it and asked: "Where did you get it?" "Bought it at a hardware store." "What did it cost?" "Fifteen dollars." "Fine implement. How'll you swap?" and the Judge drew out a pistol and handed it to the prisoner. "Take ten dollars to boot." "All right. I fine you ten dollars. That makes us even."

A Half Dollar Worth \$1,000.

When Mr. Oscar Taylor was in town a few weeks ago he showed me a silver half dollar for which he has already been offered \$1,000. It is one of four halves cast by the Southern Confederacy, when the mint was seized in New Orleans. On the liberty side the die is the same as on the present half dollar, but on the reverse side was substituted seven bars and seven stars, surmounted by a pole with the cap of liberty. A stalk of sugar cane and a stalk of cotton are shown, around which are the words, "The Confederate States of America." Only four of these coins were issued. Mr. Taylor purchased it from a man in Ozark, who parted with it for the extremely low price of \$100.—*Meriwether's Weekly*.

Henry Bergh, the friend of animals, is 60. He frequently acts like it. "We know thee, gentle spring," sings a poet. Indeed, but this poet would be a good fellow to take alone at a masquerade. He could penetrate almost any disguise.