STRANGER THAN FICTION.

A STORY OF REAL LIFE THAT READS LIKE A NOVEL.

An Innocent Man Arrested, Tried and Sentenced to Penitentiary for Life on a Charge of Murder—The Supposed Murdered Man Comes Back From South America and Has His Friend Released.

In 1874 George W. Pendleton and his wife, Mrs. Octavia Pendleton, were residing in the little village of Liverpool in Brazoria county, Tex. They had been married about three years. They were well fixed financially, owning a large area of fine grazing lands adjacent to their home and several thousand head of cattle. They were of congenial temperaments and lived happily together, and to increase their happiness there had come to them a bright boy.

In the same village lived Guy Hinton, who was also the possessor of considerable wealth. Mr. Hinton was a sturdy, pushing fellow, and a man greatly esteemed by all his neighbors, but he was unhappily married. One morning Mr. Hinton rode up to Mr. Pendleton's house and told Pendleton that he was going to Velasco, about twenty miles distant, and asked if he would not go with him. Pendleton replied that he had no business in Velasco, but that he wanted to see a Mr. Holt, who lived on Bastrop Bayou, about half way between Liverpool and Velasco, and that he would go that far. The two friends started off together, and Mrs. Pendleton says that the moment her husband mounted his horse she was seized with a strange and awful foreboding, and that she could hardly restrain herself from begging her husband not to go.

Mr. Pendleton returned home late that afternoon, tired out with his long ride. At the supper table he told his wife that Mr. Hinton had confided to him that he had left home for good; that he and his wife could not get along together, and rather than live in

A CONSTANT BOIL

he had decided to leave her what property he had and seek fortune and happiness in some other country. Pendleton said that he had tried to dissuade Hinton from leaving his wife, but without avail. The latter said that as yet he and his wife had no children, and as it was clear that they could never live together in peace, he thought it was wise to separate before offspring of their unhappy union should arrive to complicate matters. Pendleton also told his wife that Hinton had left his wife all he possessed except a few dollars, and that to help him out he (Pendleton) had bought his watch.

Mr. and Mrs. Pendleton thought it wise to say nothing about Hinton's departure to any of the neighbors, as they did not want Mrs. Hinton to think them in any manner instrumental in her husband's having left her.

Two weeks later, while eating breakfast one morning, there came a knock at the front door. Mr. Pendleton arose from the table to answer the summons, and on opening the door was confronted by a deputy sheriff, who stepped forward and slipped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists. Pendleton was, of course, surprised, and asked the officer what it meant.

"You are charged with the murder of Guy Hinton," Capt. Bennett replied. "His body has been found in a skirt of woods on Bastrop Bayou. There is much damaging testimony against you. I would advise you not to talk until you consult a lawyer."

Pendleton was dumfounded, not so much at the charge against him, for he thought he could easily clear himself, as he was at the news of

HINTON'S DEATH.

The unfortunate man however had no conception of the array of circumstantial evidence he was compelled to face.

On preliminary examination it was shown that the body of a man had been found in the woods skirting Bastrop Bayou with a bullet through his head, and that the body, although somewhat decomposed, has been identified as Hinton's; that Pendleton and Hinton had left Liverpool together one morning some two weeks before; that Hinton when he left home wore his gold watch; that a couple of boys out hunting that afternoon, had seen Pendleton and Hinton standing under a tree talking; that after the boys had passed out of sight they had heard a gun or pistol fired in the direction they had seen the two men; that Pendleton had returned to Liverpool that evening wearing Hinton's gold watch; that Hinton had never since been seen alive, and that the body had been found under the very tree where he and Pendleton were seen by the boys.

The law in Texas seals a defendant's lips. He cannot testify in his own behalf, and having no way to disprove the case the State had made against him Pendleton was committed to jail without bail.

On final trial he was convicted and sentenced to the penitentiary for life.

Mrs. Pendleton was present at the trial, and strange to say, after hearing the testimony, believed her husband guilty, but says now she cannot see how she ever could have believed it, since she knew him to be brave and honest.

About two years after that Mrs. Pendleton

SECURED A DIVORCE,

and was married to a Mr. Devit. Shortly after her marriage to Devit she sold all the property formerly owned by Pendleton, which had been awarded to her by the divorce court, and removed with her husband to Atlanta, Ga.

Pendleton had been in the penitentiary about two and a half years when a letter bearing his address and a South American postmark arrived at the Liverpool Post Office. It was forwarded to the penitentiary authorities at Huntsville, and on being opened was found to be from Guy Hinton, the man for killing whom Pendleton was serving out a life sentence. Pendleton immediately wrote Hinton of the strait he was in. Hinton on receiving this letter took passage for Galveston, and in due time arrived in Brazoria county.

Of course the Governor pardoned Pendleton as soon as the facts were presented to him. On his release Pendleton returned to Liverpool. His confinement had told harshly upon him, and the news of his wife's divorce, marriage, and removal to Georgia threw him into a violent brain fever. On his recovery he left his former home, the scene of his joy and great misfortune, and sought the home of his former wife, now the wife of another, with the purpose of having his boy at any cost.

The news of Hinton's return and Pendleton's consequent pardon had preceded him to Georgia. It was too much for Mrs. Pendleton, or rather Mrs. Devit. She felt herself a bigamist. She immediately left Devit, and a week before Pendleton arrived at Atlanta she became a raving maniac and had to be sent to the asylum. Pendleton secured his boy and worked his way to California. Being a man of fertile resources, he soon got another start in the world, and is now a prosperous fruit grower.

Mr. Pendleton's son, George, was too young when the events above recorded occurred to remember much about his mother, and his father carefully kept the facts of

THIS AWFUL DRAMA

in real life, in which no one was to blame, but all the victims of the iron hand of fate, from him until he arrived at his majority. On the boy's reaching the age of 21 years his father told him of the sad romance of their lives.

George was anxious to learn what had become of his mother, and, obtaining his father's permission to do so, visited Georgie. On inquiry at the asylum, he learned that she had been discharged years before as cured, and that she had gone to live with a brother then residing at some place in North Carolina. In North Carolina he learned that the brother with whom Mrs. Devit was living had removed to Alabama. The young man arrived there about two months ago, and sought out his parent. The meeting of the mother and son, so long parted, was a most affecting scene.

George subsequently wrote his father of his mother's course after learning of his innocence. That letter rekindled all the old love in George Pendleton's heart, and he crossed the continent as fast as steam could bring him and remarried the companion of his early manhood. Mrs. Pendleton is yet a beautiful woman on the sunny side of forty. Mr. Pendleton is in the prime of life.

The above facts were related to the writer on the evening of this happy second marriage. Mr. Pendleton also told the writer that the body identified as Hinton's was that of a peddler named McDabe, whom a negro who was hanged at Houston, Tex., some years ago confessed to having murdered and robbed.

THE LIZARD HAS AN UMBRELLA.

It Also Has a Tail That Might be Useful to Mothers of Bad Boys.

The frilled lizard is found in Australian woods, being tolerably abundant in north Queensland and the Kimberly district of western Australia. It lives on beetles such as are found on the tree barks. It has some characteristics of which Nature tells. Three pictures accompany the article, giving front, rear, and side views of the animal. It is about three feet long, measured from head to tail point. What makes it remarkable consists of two things—its hurry walk and its fighting anger.

It carries a sort of natural umbrella top about its neck, which it elevates suddenly with an alarming effect, even to ordinary lizard kifling dogs, scaring them as an umbrella opened in the face of a charging bull. Hence it is called the frilled lizard. Its teeth are not of much use as a defence against a vigorous animal, but when it fights it uses its long, lithe tail in a way to bring long brusies on one's hands; in fact, could it be properly trained it might serve as an automatic switch, which, like the magic rub-a-dub-dub stick, would at the word administer a thrashing to the disobedient child.

From the scientific point of view the creature's peculiar method of ambulation is most interesting, because it presents an absurdly grotesque appearance at such times, more especially from the rear. I twalks bipededally, or on two feet, like a bird, and so much does it resemble a bird in its walk that it seems to be the connecting link between the ancestors of birds and the lizards of to-day. It walks in a hurry, and the photographs were secured with some difficulty from living specimens in England, the most rapid roller-blind shutter of an Anschutz being necessary, as ordinary shutters did not work fast enough, a dim, blurred streak being all the picture they got.

When walking erect, its only mode when in a hurry, it leaves a track in the mud showing three claws. Readers will remember the three-toed track in the sand stones found in various museums. The professors remembered them, too, and they are now calculated that these sandstone tracks were made by another such animal as this Australian lizard.

An old quarryman once told about seeing a set of these sandstone tracks blurred in places by another kind of tracks, just as if one reptile had been chasing another. It must have been a highly interesting race, with the rousingist kind of a fight at the end.

THE RECKLESS SULTAN.

A correspondent of the London Standard says of the sultan: "He is absolutely reckless as to the fate of his people and his empire. So long as he has his Circassian girls to amuse him, his pet regiments to line the roads on Fridays when he goes to the mosque, his favorite priests to pray with and his court buffoons to make merry for him; so long as his army of spies enables him to arrest and suppress the unruly and his tribe of sycophants are ready to pour honey into his willing ears; so long as twenty fat pashas run up the Yildiz hill behind his victoria and the gates clang heavily after him when he reaches the seclusion of the harem— he is satisfied."

BEN ALI'S STRANGE POWER

THE REMARKABLE WORK OF AN INDIAN DETECTIVE.

Catching a Thief by a Peculiar Ceremony—Bamboo Divining Rods Pointed Out the Culprit—The Verdict Sustained by Another Wonderful Test.

I was visiting a friend in Calcutta. The day before my arrival he had lost a very valuable gold watch, which he had thoughtlessly left exposed upon his dressing table. He had questioned the servants concerning the theft, but to no purpose. Finally he advertised the missing article, offering a reward of a hundred rupees for its discovery.

"Why not send for Ben Ali?" suggested someone.

"And who, pray, is Ben Ali?" inquired my friend.

"Have you never heard of him? He is a holy man who by long study and deep penance has become endowed with the power to detect criminals. He is a priest and thief-catcher combined."

Ben Ali was accordingly sent for, less I may say from any faith in his power, than from the curiosity to see how he would proceed. On his arrival we found him to be a short, sinewy individual, remarkably intelligent looking, and possessed of a very easy and gentlemanly bearing. He brought along with him two bamboo rods, each about eight feet long, an inch and a half broad, and a quarter of an inch thick. These were to be used in his strange exercises.

The ceremony he was about to perform, was known, he said, as the Nole Chanlaun. It was some years ago declared illegal, and, therefore, it was now rarely practiced.

After a few introductory remarks, our party gathered at the front of the house, under the portico, and the investigation began. Taking a brass drinking mug from his pocket the Brahmin stepped down to the Hooghly—the most holy stream that flows from the sacred Ganges—and filled the vessel with water. Returning, he brought forward and laid upon the ground the two mystic rods. These he prayed over, sprinkling them as he did so with the belssed water. This done he produced a leaf containing some red pigment with which he daubed each knot in the bamboos. All this was done very slowly and with much wearisome ceremony, so that by the time the rods were prepared, there was quite a crowd of spectators.

"Sahib," said the Brahmin, advancing and bowing deferentially to my host, "all is now ready; but I require two men of the same creed or religion to hold the rods. No cross sects or creeds will do; they must be influenced by the like fear or favor of their gods."

"Take your choice," replied my friend, indicating with a sweep of his hand that a selection might be made from the assembly. But this was easier said than done. Nearly all refused point blank to lend themselves to any such performance. At length, however, a couple volunteered, whereupon they were stationed facing each other about eight feet apart. The rods were then lifted and the four ends placed under the men's four armpits. Both lightly supported the parallel bamboos from below with their open palms.

After another prayer and a fresh sprinkling of the rods with the sacred water, the Brahmin gravely informed the mystic bamboos of what he had learned concerning the stolen article, and then humbly requested them to proceed to the place whence it was abstracted and afterward to point out the thief.

Standing close beside the supporters of the rods, the priest-detective kept reminding the sticks of their duty and stimulating them to the performance of it by repeating the words "Sigi, sigi! juiice, jui ck!" (soon, soon! quick, quick) For a considerable time however, there was no manifestation. At length an exclamatory outbreak from the Brahmin announced that something was about to happen, and to our surprise we saw the rods cross each other horizontally, and alternately rise and descend. They were now, he told us, obeying the mandates of the diety. He further informed us concerning the phenomena we were about to witness. The rods, he said, would bend in the direction they required their supporters to go, which was first to the place from which the watch was stolen, and afterwards they would point out the thief by bending towards him; and when the person so pointed out was made to sit on the ground, the bamboos would, on being held over his head, separate and descend, inclosing his head between them.

It was a very slow and tedious process. For some minutes the bamboos remained motionless, then they began to bend, and the supporters were told to advance in the direction of the outside curve until the rods again became straight. This was done over and over again, the advances varying from a few inches to three or four yards. By degrees the rods led their bearers in this way, along the veranda, in through the bedroom door, and up to the dressing table. Then bending slowly, one of the rods actually touched the very spot where the watch had been last laid.

Returning in the same manner to the veranda, the rod bearers now moved slowly along in front of the nine native servants who had been placed in a row, arm's length apart. The bamboos remained rigid enough until they came opposite the sixth man, who proved to be the cook. Here, strange to say, they bent gently forward, curving outward, until at length they touched him on the breast. The man's face turned livid with fear.

The nine were then ordered to sit upon the ground and the final test was made. Again the bamboos remained inactive until the cook was reached, when they opened, bent downwards, and inclosed the culprit's head. This was repeated several times with the same result and it was clearly to be seen that the man's companions looked upon him as satisfactorily proven guilty of the crime.

The result was quite a surprise to my host, for the cook had been with him several years and was something of a favorite. He was rather inclined to laugh at the whole affair as absurd Still neither of us could quite ignore the decision of the rods. As far as we could see there was no collusion between the rod bearers and the Brahmin, in fact, we felt quite certain that there was none; and yet we did not feel like condemning the man upon such peculiar evidence.

While we were discussing the matter, the Brahmin stood by awaiting our decision and the promised reward. When he learned that we were not yet quite satisfied as to the cook's guilt, he buried himself for a moment in thought, and then hit upon a very clever strategem—a strategem, indeed, which would do credit to a Solomon or even a Sherlock Holmes. He termed it the Ordeal of the Sword.

The Brahmin called for a tulwar, which was immediately brought him. Addressing the servants he told them that he was about to suspend this sword in a dark room, but before doing so he would pray over it, invoking the wrath of the Deity upon the guilty man who dared to touch it. Should he do so the weapon would instantly cut him down. The words and the solemn air of the man sunk deep into the minds of his superstitious hearers and their faces showed great anxiety.

The Brahmin now entered the ordeal chamber alone and suspended the tulwar, after which he smeared the weapon over with red paint. Then closing the shutters so that the room was so dark that the suspended sword could barely be distinguished he went out and stood by the door. He next called one of the servants to him and after telling him where the tulwar was situated, he whispered to him solemnly that if innocent he was to touch the blade and retire by the opposite door. The man went into the room and presently came out at the other door, where I was stationed to receive him. I looked at his hands and saw that they were well daubed with the red paint. He was kept apart from the others, and two more went in turn through the same test.

At length came the cook's turn. With ashen face and trembling knees he entered the ordeal chamber, the solemn warning of the priest ringing in his superstitious ears. Three, four, five minutes passed and still he did not come out. I was beginning to fear that the fellow had fainted from fright, when suddenly the door opened, and, nearly dead with terror the miserable wretch staggered out. He had scarcely taken three steps from the door when his fellow-servants turned upon him.

"The tulwar! the tulwar! have you touched it?" they cried.

"Yes, yes," he gasped.

"Then, open your hands."

He did so—there was not a speck of red upon them. Conscience had made a coward of the fellow, and the unsoiled hands that betrayed his guilt.

Seeing that the game was up, he broke down and made a most abject confession. At his direction the watch was found concealed in the hollow trunk of a tree. As this was his first offense, my friend forgave him, deducting from the wages due him, by way of a lesson, however, the hundred rupees reward, which was duly turned over to the Indian Sherlock Holmes.

THE BRITISH PACIFIC CABLE.

The Enterprise Pushed Ahead at a Conference of the Australian Colonies.

The Australian mail brings advices of a Pacific cable conference held at Sydney during the last week of January, when definite action toward realizing the project of a cable from Vancouver to Australia and New Zealand was taken. At the conference were official representatives from New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Victoria, New Zealand, and Tasmania. Among the official delegates were the Postmasters-General of all the colonies, the Post Office and telegraph services being conducted under one department in Australia and New Zealand, as in Great Britain. The deliberations of the conference were not made public, but these resolutions were passed:

That in the opinion of this conference a Pacific cable should be constructed and owned jointly by the various Governments interested.

That the cost of its construction, working, and maintenance be borne in the following proportions, namely: Great Britain one-third, the Dominion of Canada one-third, and contributing Australasian colonies one-third.

That the route from Fiji to Australia be via Norfolk Island, thence bifurcating to the nearest convenient landing places in the north of New Zealand and Moreton Bay (Australia).

That the colonies contribute jointly and equally to the undertaking.

There has been a considerable obstacle in the way of unanimous action by the Australian colonies in regard to the Pacific cable in the fact that South Australia owns the great overland telegraph line, 2,100 miles long, stretching across the continent from north to south, between Port Darwin and Adelaide, over which Australia now has telegraphic communication with the rest of the world. The cable system from India and England terminates at Port Darwin, on the north of Australia, and the Port Darwin-Adelaide land line connects with it, carrying all the Australian telegraphic business to the rest of the world. If the Pacific cable is constructed it will seriously affect the business of this line, probably diminishing it by one-half. The line was built in 1871-72 by the South Australian Government, and is owned and operated by it. At the conference last January the other Australian colonies resolved that they "would be willing jointly with Great Britain, to guarantee South Australia against loss in connection with her transcontinental line in consequence of the construction of the new cable." In consideration of an agreement that South Australia should have her financial position in regard to the overland guaranteed, "on a basis of average of the past five years," the representatives of that colony agreed to join on even terms with the other colonies in the construction of the Pacific cable.

The settlement of this difficulty materially clears the way for the British Pacific cable project. Canada has all along been anxious to have the cable built, and has sent Commissioners to Australia to urge on the colonies the desirability of the enterprise. Great Britain would like the cable if only for strategical purposes. It is likely, therefore, that some definite plan of actual work will soon be agreed upon. The conference appointed a committee to "consult on all important points with the Agents-General for the Australasian colonies" in London.

THEY MEASURE BRAINS.

RESULTS OF TESTS OF A WONDERFUL APPARATUS.

Machines That do Most Marvellous Things—Girls at Six and Thirteen—Your Mental Calibre.

A machine to measure brains, known as the pendulant chronoscope, is in operation in the School of Pedagogy in the University of New York. A child is shown a shutter and told to press a button as soon as the shutter drops. The interval between the dropping of the shutter and the pressing of the button shows how quickly the child can respond to an optical impression. The children who respond the most quickly are the smartest, and the schools of the future will grade them accordingly.

Charts, giving the results of a great many experiments, prove that girls are brighter, on the average, at six years old than seven, and that after seven they get bright again, and also that they are dullest at thirteen. The pendulant chronoscope that is responsible for those charts shows, too, that boys average better than girls in brightness and general capability. One chart gives the results of experiments in seeing double objects. It shows that the girls were markedly better in this test than the other.

THE STUDY OF HANDWRITING.

Handwriting is deemed of great consequence at the school, and the subject is examined with scientific accuracy. Professor Shaw, the dean, says, for example, that they have made seven thousand tests for the sake of comparing vertical with sloping handwriting, but that the results have not, as yet, been fully enough examined to hazard a conjecture as to which will prove the better way. They have also made elaborate tests to discover when fatigue begins, in writing, and when speed begins to decrease. With many people fatigue begins before the writing does, but that isn't the kind of answer that the professors looked for. They found that, on an average, speed does not begin to decrease until the twenty-fourth line, but that before that, in rapid writing, fatigue has begun, and is shown in nervous twitchings in the letters. In these tests, the line, "John is flying his paper kite," is used, for it has eleven long letters, and the combinations and forms are admirable for the desired purpose.

THE STUDY OF NAMES.

Some in their tests include the writing of adults, as well as of children, and Professor Shaw says that journalists are decidedly the most rapid writers as a class.

"Their writing is always well formed," as he courteously expresses it, but, as he truthfully adds, "it is hard to read."

Another machine in the school is the plethismograph, which finds how intelligent a child is by its general nervousness. It is a little rubber bellows, attached to a rubber tube, which carried a small lever. The bellows is placed against the wrist at the pulse, and the heartbeats make little gusts of air pass through the bellows in such a way as to move the lever and record the beats. How a child is affected by various experiences and feelings may thus be accurately known, as the machine will record it all. It is intended to fasten a plethismograph on a girl's wrist in the morning, and not take it off till the day's schooling is over. Then the record will be examined, and the teacher can see just how everything has affected the girl during the day.

HOW MUCH CAN YOU SUFFER.

In some respects the algometer is the most interesting apparatus of all. The school has not one as yet, but is going to get it. It is an instrument that will show the amount of pain that can be endured. It is like a small pump, with a spring balance in the handle. A piston, with a metal disk at the end, projects from the tube. The disk is pressed against the child until a pain is felt, and the brighter it is the sooner it cries out. Not brighter because it stops the pain by crying, but because it has better brain power. A dullness to pain proves dullness to mind.

The possibilities of such an instrument are wonderful. Examinations for West Point or for the colleges will no longer be matters of long study and careful examinations, but the mental tests will be rapidly and scientifically applied. The candidate who will stand punishment without flinching will be promptly rejected, and the effects of this new system on the school life and athletics of the future will be radical and far-reaching.

A RIVER'S MYSTERIOUS TIDE.

Peculiarity of the River St. Lawrence.

The tidal movement in the St. Lawrence is not the familiar diurnal one common in the ocean and other extensive bodies of water, salt or fresh, and caused by the attraction of the moon. It is something much more mysterious.

The allegation is that the big river has a total tidal period of about fourteen years, and that is that it falls regularly and continually for seven consecutive years, dropping its level four or five feet, and then raises for the next ensuing seven years. Those who make this assertion—and its most persistent adherents are the fishermen and guides who study the river as a matter of business from day to day and year to year—are fortified with apparently excellent evidence.

They will show you the islands submerged for twelve years that only show themselves at the lowest water during the two remaining years of the period. They will row you out to perpendicular cliffs, upon whose sides they their fathers and their grandfathers before them have marked high water, and the alleged dates seem to confirm the theory. What makes this singular movement of the water more apparent is the fact that the lordly St Lawrence is not subject to the floods and droughts which raise and lower the level of almost all rivers many times during the course of each year. Except for the almost imperceptible "tidal" rise or fall, as the case may be, its level is constant the year around. Weeks of heavy rain do not disturb its steady volume or spoil the angler's sport by making muddy the clear water.