

ABOUT POISON BUGS.

Some of the Species That Dwell in America.

THE FEARLESS TARANTULA.

Of all the American bugs that bite the most fearless, if not the most fatal, is the light-eyed tarantula or wolf spider. He is the king of the spider family. Down in Arkansas and Texas he grows to be as big as a saucer, if you measure his legs and his body proper is as large as a walnut. The tarantula is a burrower, but can climb readily.

I have most frequently found them basking in the sunshine along the dusty road, or in some open space. If one happens to be in a savage mood he will make battle without even pausing to reflect on how big you are or how many sticks and stones you have. He leaps with great agility, and you have to be quick to get him if he happens to be in an active condition. Sometimes tarantulas are torpid and will lie stupidly still and be murdered.

I was in a physician's office in Eureka Springs, Ark., one day when one Bowen, a gunsmith, came dashing in, pale and quite frantic.

"Quick, Doctor, for God's sake!" he cried. "I've been bitten by a tarantula."

He showed some small but distinct wounds on his forefinger, from which the blood was dripping. The Doctor cauterized the bitten place and tried to allay the man's nervous fears, administering for that purpose a liberal supply of rich-looking liquor. A half pint taken internally quieted the smith's apprehensions, and he was able to tell his story.

His shop was in the loft over a blacksmith's shop. While he was at work a tarantula leaped from the roof and fastened its fangs in his finger, clinging there till he could with difficulty shake it off. His fright was natural. He was a native and shared the general belief that the bite of the insect was fatal. But there was no cause for great alarm. The finger did not even swell, and the burning caused him more pain than the bite. Perhaps the promptness and vigor of the relief—the cauterization was severe, the brandy strong—accounts for his cure; but the incident led me to doubt the existence of the deadly venom which the tarantula is believed to possess.

This repulsive spider obtained its name from Tarantum, or Taranto, a town in Southern Italy where the tarantulas were very plentiful during the middle ages. Its bite had a remarkable effect which is worth mentioning, and was the cause of a prevalent disease known as tarantism.

"The bite of the spider threw the sufferer into a depressed state of melancholy, accompanied by various nervous disorders. The condition was accompanied by an increased sensibility to the power of music. The excitement of the nervous system amounted in some cases almost to insanity."

The body became livid and icy cold. The patient lost sight and hearing, and usually became insensible. "The only means of arousing the sufferer from the lethargy into which he sank was music. Under the influence of this he awoke, as it were, and commenced moving rhythmically, and continued increasing the rapidity of the motion until he fell exhausted to the ground. By this means it was considered that the poison of the tarantula was distributed through the system and worked out through the skin. If the music ceased while the patient was dancing he at once sank back into the state of lethargy from which he had been aroused. But when thoroughly exhausted he generally awoke relieved and cured, at least for a time. This dancing mania became contagious—one person caught it from another, quite independent of the bite of the tarantula—and in this way whole districts became affected. One of the most peculiar characteristics was the attraction of bright pieces of metal or brilliant pieces of color exercised over the imagination of the dancers. This was particularly marked in the later history of the disease."

Each sufferer became fascinated by some particular hue, the sight of which would throw him into raptures. The victims were also noted for their intense longing for water. They would often throw themselves into the sea and seemed unable to live away from water, "often carrying globes of the fluid with them when dancing."

This strange hysteria was prevalent in Italy for three centuries and seems to have been as common as the grip in our own time.

The centipede is a venomous and frightful fellow. He has more legs than anybody but the most hopeless scientist would dare to count, and each leg is a noxious stinger. Besides these multifarious weapons, he has deadly fangs in his mouth and a poisoned dagger in his tail. He is one of whom Horatio might have spoken, being armed "from top to toe, my lord," for in addition to this offensive armature he is incased in a hard, many jointed plate of mail. He is one of the creeping things of the earth, and "lays low," being most unusually found under stones or beneath the loose back of decayed logs.

The centipede is not aggressive like the tarantula. If you come in contact with him he fights instinctively, but he doesn't carry a chip on his shoulder, and is of a modest, retiring disposition. He rarely wounds anybody, but is more dreaded than the rattlesnake. The current conviction in Arkansas is that if he simply crawls over your body the flesh will drop off beneath his touch, and the poison from his fangs or the sting from his venomous dagger will bring about the most excruciating agony.

I tried hard for a number of years to find a test case. There were many and dire rumours, but the most authentic account follows: I know a woman—a truthful woman—and she knew another woman. The latter lived in Franklin County, Arkansas, and had lost a leg during the war. A centipede it seems, had crawled over the limb, and the woman's life was only saved by prompt amputation. It may be possible that the limb was sacrificed to the family's fears—but I wouldn't advise you to make any personal experiments in the interest of science if you happen to come in the way of a centipede.

"Our subject," as the writer of county histories says, grows to be six or eight inches long, and his habitat is always south of the historic "scotch" line. I have seen scores of them, and the fear their presence excites is not lessened by familiarity. I believe the centipede is the worst animal of his size in the world. I would sooner take my chances with Cleopatra's asp, or the Gila

monster, any time, than to be bitten and stung and stabbed by a full grown centipede.

THE STINGING LIZZARD.

Another wicked "wee beastie" is the stinging lizzard. He is a true scorpion, and goes about with his tail in the air in the funniest way. I read somewhere that the scorpion would sting himself to death when surrounded by fire. When I was a boy I found one in the woods and attempted to roast him, but set the woods afire and came near burning up a "string" of fence. I do not know whether the scorpion stung himself to death or was simply cremated. I know that I received such a stinging rebuke for my carelessness that for days afterward whenever I sat down I had to sit on my knees.

Mennonites in Manitoba.

Referring to the progress of the settlement of German Mennonites in Manitoba, the *Empire* says:—"There is probably no more interesting class to be found amongst the settlers of our great prairies than the German Mennonites. They are usually termed Russians, but the phrase is a misnomer, as originally the whole people were Germans, and are still an isolated race of farmers in that portion of Russia in which they lived prior to coming out to Manitoba. It will be remembered that early in 1872, shortly after the acquisition of the Northwest by Canada, an agent was sent to the land of the Czar to confer with the Mennonites, who were believed to be an eminently suitable class for emigration and were known to be anxious for a safer and more peaceful home than they could find within the Russian Empire. The result was that delegates came to Manitoba, saw what the country was like, and in 1874 brought out a large number of families, fairly supplied with money, who settled in what is now known as the Eastern Reserve near Winnipeg. There were hundreds of others, however, who wished to follow, but were afraid of being stranded without means of subsistence in a strange land. At this juncture the Waterloo Society was formed for the purpose of aiding these would-be immigrants. It was composed of about 150 well-to-do farmers of German extraction in the county of Waterloo, Ontario, who agreed to offer their farms and general property to the Government as security for the repayment of any money which it might advance as a loan to the Mennonites who desired to settle in Manitoba. Upon this excellent security the Government advanced the sum of \$96,400, under condition that the settlers were to obtain a fair start in their new homes before either principal or interest was collected. Most of those who came away from Russia by this means, settled in townships between Red River and the Pembina Mountain, and upon what was then a treeless prairie, rich in every agricultural requirement excepting timber. In 1875, when settlement began, and for a few years from that time, the difficulties in building were considerable, as were unexpected obstacles in the way of grasshoppers and excessive rains. But these troubles were not continuous, and the result is seen to-day in the following description from the annual report of Mr. A. M. Burgess, Deputy Minister of the Interior:—"Their villages increased in size and numbers, they built roads and bridges, and generally each year witnessed such an advance compared with the previous year that to-day what was 17 years ago a treeless prairie without a solitary settler is now perhaps the most thickly populated piece of farming country in the whole North-west. Not only, however, is it thickly populated, but it has begun to overflow. A new generation of Canadian birth has grown up, with a thorough knowledge of the climate and language of the country and the agricultural methods best suited to the soil; and it is very pleasant to learn that their knowledge and experience lead them invariably to look for homesteads for themselves in either Manitoba or the North-west Territories." This is very gratifying, but even more so is the statement that every cent of the \$96,000 loan of 1875, with interest amounting to \$33,986, has been repaid to the Waterloo Society. That the Mennonites themselves are well satisfied is also evidenced by the fact that 300 more have come from Southern Russia during the past year, while 600, who originally settled in Nebraska and Kansas, have joined their brethren in the great Canadian North-west.

Misunderstood.

A West end druggist is bemoaning the loss of a customer. A lady was in the store on Saturday and had a prescription filled.

"How much is it?"
"Fifty cents."
"Dear me, forty-five is all I have with me. Cannot you let me have it for that?"
"Really I could not," said he of the pills, "but you can pay the next time you are in."

"Oh, but suppose I should die?" laughingly required the lady.

"It would be a small loss," replied the druggist, but he saw from behind the injured look the customer wore as she crept out of the door that he had made a mistake somewhere, but it did not dawn upon him until too late.

Ideal Taffy.

"Married life has its thorns as well as its roses," she sighed.
"Yes, dear," he said, putting his arm about her tenderly, "and it isn't fair that I should have the rose and you the thorn."
Then she kissed him and a fragrance of June filled the house. —[*Godley's Magazine*]

Putting an End to the Farewell Business.

A story comes from Dublin of a man who had a poor, sickly, cranky bit of a wife, who regularly every week got up in the night and invited the family see her die.

She gave away her things, spoke her last words, made her peace with heaven, and then, about 8 o'clock in the morning, got up in the usual way and disappointed everybody by going to her household duties as if nothing had happened.

The man became sick of it finally, and went out and purchased a coffin, a real nice cashmere shroud and a wreath of immortelles, with "Farewell, Mary Ann," worked in and a handful of silver-plated screws.

Laying the screw driver beside the screws he invited her to holler die once more.

"Do it," said he, "and in you go and this farewell business is over."

Mary Ann is at this moment making bread for a large and admiring family, while they keep their dried apples in the coffin up in the garret.

THE ENERGETIC C. P. R.

Obtains the Right to Construct a Bridge at the Head of Rattlesnake Island.

A Buffalo, despatch says:—"The old Buffalo and Fort Erie Bridge Company, which some years ago obtained the exclusive right to construct a bridge or tunnel across the river, has sublet the right to the Canadian Pacific railway. The Canadian Pacific will come into this country, crossing at the head of Rattlesnake island, bridging the narrow channel between it and the Canadian shore, and extending along almost the entire length of the island. This will give the road thousands of feet of water frontage on the island. The route then will bridge the river at the end of the island, and cross over to Tonawanda, just north of the Buffalo city limits. A branch of the road follows the river along the American shore from Buffalo to Niagara Falls. The Canadian Pacific will then have one of the greatest water fronts in the country. Besides the river front, on this side, the island will afford an excellent site for lumber and coal yards, etc. The road will terminate in Buffalo near Main street and the terrace.

The Americans in Hawaii.

Referring to the present aspect of Hawaiian affairs, the *Empire* says it is interesting to notice the struggle of selfish interests to see how the American adventurers are striving to maintain their slippery hold upon the State; to watch the fear of external Powers which every one of them exhibits; and to listen to the bluster which perforce takes the place of bravery. The latest object of attention at their hands is the attitude of Japan. As a despatch from Honolulu puts it:—"The Provisional Government is worried and American naval officers do not know exactly where they stand." And all because two powerful Japanese men-of-war—the *Naniva* and the *Kongo*—have come into port and are staying there. Consequently, it is much feared and currently asserted, that Japan is an ally of England, and that together those two countries are working to checkmate the United States. It might be pointed to the panic-stricken heads of the eminently "Provisional" Government that when Great Britain finds it necessary to interpose she will hardly wait for the alliance and aid of Japan, much as she respects and esteems an eastern country which has copied the British system of Government and established a constitution superior in many respects to that of the United States. But in any case there are more Japanese living upon the Hawaiian Islands than there are Americans, and if numbers were a sufficient reason for plotting and overthrowing the native Government, the Mikado of Japan should have precedence as an annexationist over the President of the great Republic.

But this brings us to a consideration of the Lieutenant in the case. He is Lieut. Young, of the United States cruiser *Boston*, a native of Kentucky, and apparently a profound admirer of his own country. This is quite right in itself, but, at the ball given by American residents of Honolulu to the officers of his ship, the young man made some statements which are sufficiently amusing to quote. For instance:—"That flag is the beacon light to which the eyes of the oppressed of all the world are turned. From the abyss of despotism and political slavery the hands of downtrodden men are stretched out towards it for help and assistance. It tells the story and sings the song to the breezes of heaven that the country over which it floats and which it represents is the asylum, the home and the promised land for the victims of political injustice, persecution and inequality upon the earth. The American flag will be planted so far north that the Esquimaux, coming out of his hut in the gray of the early morning shall mistake it for the northern lights. Yes, and more, the time may come when from the blue ramparts of the northern ice to the blistered ripples of the tropic seas, all men will share our pride in the flag of the constellated stars, and hail it as the token of a common citizenship." Certainly this Lieutenant is amusing. He forgets so much, that he wonders if he ever knew anything of the land which is spoken of. Millions of negroes appealing to heaven for a justice and liberty which they cannot obtain from the American Government or people; Indians, daily, monthly, yearly, deprived of rights and lands, which have been pledged to them by treaty and are theirs in all honor and justice; the law utterly helpless over immense regions, north and south, together with hundreds of lynch law incidents yearly occurring; marriage a mockery in many states; lawlessness prevalent in all the newer portions of the Republic; and boodle reigning supreme in the great centres of so-called Christianity and civilization—this is the picture which Lieut. Young forgot to present to the men who had wilfully destroyed the native Government of a simple, law-abiding, happy and honest people. Meantime, the American Commission has sailed for the Islands, and we trust, in the interest of American reputation, and in the name of all diplomatic and international codes of honor, that Minister Stevens' rule is nearly ended. It is probable that such will be the case and that the far-seeing action, or non-action, of Lord Rosebery will be vindicated in a friendly withdrawal by the United States of its unsupported claims and by repudiation of the unauthorized conduct of its agents.

The Testing of Grain.

Among the various services which the Government Experimental Farms are rendering to the farmers of the Dominion one of great and immediate practical value is the free testing of the germinating power of grain and other agricultural seeds. This work is now in active progress at the Central Experimental Farm at Ottawa, and farmers are invited to avail themselves freely of the opportunity for testing the quality of any seeds which they may be proposing to use in the coming spring. Any farmers desiring to send samples for test should forward them without delay. The packages should weigh about one ounce each, and they can be sent free through the mails. In Manitoba and some other parts of the Dominion the weather last autumn was very wet, and the grain in the stock was liable to sprout before it could be housed. "A large proportion of such samples," Professor Saunders says, "show a low degree of germinating power, and if sown as seed will be likely to result in poor crops." The samples can be tested and reports made usually in about ten days after the grain is received.

HERE AND THERE.

Modern coaches are too heavy.
Dr. Simpson discovered chloroform.
Spiritualism, according to Mr. Stead, is waking up.

There are twenty-eight parks in Chicago.

Starvation is the most horrible death of all.

Automatic ice creams are the latest novelty.

Sneezing may be averted by pressing the upper lip.

Only about 15 per cent. of the first-class literary men write legibly.

Thirty-five railway companies have depots in Chicago.

The best time to bathe is two or three hours after breakfast.

25,000 murderers have been committed in the States since 1888.

From six to eleven a. m. are the favorite hours of work in India.

The most expensive of all monarchies is said to be that of Russia.

In bird "fancying" circles a man who buys eggs is called a "higgler."

The chance of being struck by lightning in a storm is one in ten thousand.

The Masonic Temple in Chicago is 285 feet high, and consists of twenty storeys.

The cost of war is truly frightful. All modern wars have been very destructive.

The Crimean war cost over £340,000,000, and the American Civil War £1,300,000,000.

Dr. Gatling is said to have invented a new gun which will throw 2,000 shots a minute.

\$150,000 is spent every year by the Australian Government in the destruction of rabbits.

The human body is at its lowest minimum temperature between eleven at night and one in the morning.

A mad dog on the rampage, frothing at mouth and covered with foam, is a creature of the imagination.

The space occupied by the World's Fair will be over four times as much as that occupied by the late Paris Exhibition.

The chief dispensary of the City of London treated no less than 12,124 cases last year, necessitating 30,000 attendances of the medical officers.

When people preach about early rising they ought to be told to do it if they like, but to let other people do as they like too. It is folly to lay down a general rule on the subject.

An arc light at the World's Fair will have a candle-power of 150,000.

The corps of volunteers attached to Gray's Inn, London, are called the "Devil's Own."

It costs each district in London a little over \$25,000 per year to dispose of the dust.

It is asserted that the flight of birds does not equal the speed of an express train.

Dickens was a reporter, so were also Sir Charles Russell and Sir Edward Clarke.

A dry, cold climate produces more brilliant foliage than one that is damp and warm.

Reading good literature is one of the most important means of cultivating the mind.

A pearl is but the exudation from the wound of a shellfish which becomes fixed and hardened.

Every time a train (say of ten carriages and a locomotive) is stopped, the wear and tear cost amounts approximately to 2s. 3d.

Upper Thames street is at present one of the narrowest streets in London, but it is within measurable distance of being widened.

A Child's Skeleton in a Hollow Tree.

A Lexington, Ky., despatch says:—"In the fruit orchard of E. T. Davis, within a few miles of this place, there was recently felled an apple tree, the exact age of which no man can say. This tree was known far and wide as the largest known specimen of the apple family, and bore the name of 'Old Dave' from David Crockett, who is said to have paused at this exact spot to eat an apple, and that, finishing the delicious morsel, he stooped and dug with his hunting knife a cavity large enough to contain the handful of seed which he dropped into it. A recent gale felled the giant to the earth, from which violent fall the trunk was split from top to bottom, exposing a pitiable relic of the days of warfare with the blood-thirsty redskins.

This was a child's skeleton, with the delicate little skull cloven from crown to chin by a tomahawk which was still sticking in the rent. The blade of the weapon was a sharpened stone with a handle of horn or some such substance. Doctors say the child was three or four years old and a little girl, whose hair was golden, to judge from the strands, which, catching in the inner wood of the trunk, became imbedded in it, and which to-day remain.

The mother, probably having her child killed in her arms, instinctively shrinking from thoughts of the mutilation that beloved little form would suffer at the hands of the shrieking fiends on their track, had thought her, as she passed it, of the old apple tree, the secret of whose cavity she knew, had thrust the little dead thing within, hoping to return if she succeeded in eluding the Indians to give the child Christian burial. But she herself had in all probability gone but a few steps on ere an arrow pierced some vital spot, or a tomahawk had given her the same fate her child had met.

An Execution in China.

This is the description given of an execution which recently took place in China of a culprit whose right ear had been some time previously forfeited for theft:—"The prisoner was brought before the General and made to kneel down. His crime and sentence having been read to him in the audience of everyone, he was asked if he thought the sentence just and he admitted that it was, volunteering the information that he had been a very bad man—and so he had. The soldiers then closed round him and stripped him of his upper clothes, throwing them away, and binding his arms. On a sudden he appeared between two of them, who rushed him down in my direction, the other soldier scattering the crowd on all sides. Then the executioner, at a signal given to him, raised a sword something like an old-fashioned English cut-throat, took a careful aim, and the head of the thief and murderer rolled on the ground.

SOME LOVES OF ROYALTY.

The Tender Passion in Kings and Queens.

The late Emperor Alexander of Russia was morganatically married to the Princess Dolgorouki.

George I. was morganatically married to Fraulein Schulerberg, whom he made Duchess of Kendall. Frederick William III. of Prussia had a morganatic wife in the person of the Countess Augusta von Harrach.

The late Alphonso of Spain was for years in peril of his life at the hands of wronged husbands, noblemen of his court.

Victor Emmanuel often wished to contract a morganatic alliance, but was deterred by the remonstrances of his Ministers.

Nero stole Poppæa from a nobleman of the Roman court, but she acted so badly that one day, in a fit of passion, he kicked her to death.

The Empress Anna, of Russia had innumerable lovers after she had succeeded in getting rid of her husband by poisoning him.

Alexander the Great had a large number of wives, and was accustomed to reduce them to obedience by using the flat of his sword as a corrective.

Louis VIII. and his wife separated by mutual consent, she wishing to marry a nobleman of the court and he having a penchant for one of her maids of honor.

Homer gives a wonderfully graphic picture of the loves of Agamemnon, of his love for Briseis, of his amours with Cassandra, and of his tragical death at the hands of his wife Clytemnestra.

When Catharine the Great of Russia, became tired of her lovers, as she generally did in a few weeks, she gave them a foreign appointment and advised them to travel, and they always travelled.

Eric XIV. of Sweden lost kingdom and life for an unworthy woman. He married her and a general revolt broke out, the rebels were joined by his own family, he was deposed and murdered in prison.

Mary Stuart, of Scotland, was the modern Cleopatra. She captivated nearly every man whom she met, and even her jailer at Fotheringay Castle, infatuated with her charms, tried to devise means to secure her escape.

Charlemagne never asked the advice of any one about his love affairs or marriages, but married as he pleased, and when he became tired of his Queen sent her away and took another, in all having five successive wives.

The love of Ferdinand for Isabella closed the long rivalry between the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile, just as the union of Henry VII. with Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV., ended the War of the Roses in England.

The English revolt from Rome was due to the love of Henry VIII. for Anne Bolyñ. She would not listen to the King's proposals, and to please her he began the divorce proceedings that resulted in the separation from Rome.

The famous love affair of the Duke of Clarence, afterward William IV., with Mrs. Jordan, the actress, so scandalized the English people as to raise the question of his succession to the throne, and he was compelled to give her up.

Louis VII. became tired of his Queen, but, having a decent respect for the Pope, asked to have his marriage annulled, claiming that he had been forced into the alliance. He carried his point and was set free, shortly after marrying again.

Elizabeth of England had innumerable lovers whose letters to her have been preserved, and all are monuments of amorous stupidity. She was too clever to write letters, but kept all she received, and they are still to be seen in the British archives.

The Duke of Marlborough was singularly unfortunate in his marriage with his Duchess, the noted Sarah Jennings. He repeatedly threatened to horsewhip her if she did not mend her temper, and she as often threatened to leave him if he did not improve his morals.

Sultan Amurath fell in love with the picture of the Princess of Serbia and made overtures to her father for her hand. His proposals were rejected upon which he made war against Serbia, defeated and killed the King, and carried off the Princess to his harem.

Pat's Score.

In a country town there lived an Irishman who spent most of his time and money at one of the many public-houses. In consequence to this, and the small wage he earned, he had run up rather a long score on the slate.

One day a fire occurred at this particular public-house, and the fire brigade was called into requisition. Among the first at the conflagration was the Irishman. He was heard above the noise and din of the people assembled shouting: "Och, an' be jabers, play on the slate."

Nearly Blasphemy in Dakota.

"Mary Jane," said the Dakota farmer to his spouse, "it seems like flyin' in the face of Providence to name that boy Elijah. It sounds too much like the old feller in the Bible that was carried away by a cyclone. I don't think it's a proper name at all for this country."

Admirer of Nerve in Others.

"Who was that bashful young fellow who went out as I came in?" asked the senior partner.

"You would never guess in the world," answered the junior partner.

"All right, then, I give it up. Tell me."

"He is a drummer for a new nerve food."

'Twas Different This Time.

It was on Sunday morning, and a little colored boy was slowly wandering along a country road. He was as black as black could be. He held a string of fish in his hand and they were dangling in the summer dust. He turned the curve and his black face blanched—there was the minister straight ahead! No escape for Sammy! The minister looked serious. "Ah, you're doing it again, Sam. Well, I expected it. Where did you get those fish this time? Did you steal them?"

"No, sar," murmured the black-faced backslider, "I merely hooked 'em."