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TRAVELING BY NIGHT IN LONDON.

The gray and misty night,
Upon those that hold the night among
Their treasures, and along
The vapor embankment, light on light.

The sodden, sorrow night!
I see you, hear, distort, alone
The apple scattering lost
Bearing the rhythm of native sights.

The gesture to the weeping moon
Fling back the breath of years,
Oh, the refrain of years on years
Death the weeping moon.

—Arthur Symons in Academy.

THE BRAZEN PALACE.

Wonderful Ruins in the Ancient City of Babylon, Asia.

One of the most noteworthy buildings of the "refulgent" city was the Lowa-Maha-Paya, or the Brazen palace, erected by King Dutugemunu in the year 142 B. C. It stood upon 1,600 granite pillars, and vied with surrounding dagobas in height, soaring its ninety story 270 feet skyward; it contained 1,003 dormitories for priests; its roof was of brass, and, according to the Mahawanse, the walls gleamed with resplendent gems. The great hall was supported on golden pillars resting on lions, and in the center was an ivory throne with a golden sun and a silver moon on either side.

Several times the Brazen palace was razed by iconoclastic invaders from India, and as often restored by zealous adherents of the new faith, up to the latter part of the Twelfth century, when the capital was removed to Polonnaroa. From the upper stories of this magnificent pile the priestly occupants could view the far extending city, and look upon six great dagobas, all within a radius of little more than a mile, and lifting their huge white domes as high as some of the tallest cathedrals in Europe.

The Ruwanwelli dagoba stood near the palace, and according to the native archives, rested on a platform 300 feet square, its glass pinnacle glittering in the sun 270 feet above the city, its base surrounded by marble statues and its outer walls mounting elephants of ivory with real tusks. In the north, beyond splendid pavilions of king and queens, loomed the great Jetawanarama dagoba, with its 20,000,000 cubic feet of masonry.

The beholder at the palace had only to turn his gaze in the direction of the rising sun to look upon the greatest of the idol temples, the Aldeyapiria dagoba.—James Realton in Scribner's.

Queer Collection in the Dead Letter Office.

No brief but could enumerate the innumerable strange things that have fallen into the hands of the dead letter office in Washington. There are opium pipes and packages of refined opium, bottled specimens of different kinds of mineral formations thrown up by the Charleston earthquake, boxes of cartridges, percussion caps, quantities of firearms and torpedoes, false teeth, corn looking gloves, every imaginable sort of kitchen utensils, carpenters' tools, horns, tambourines, banjos, harmonicas, gold bricks, money, and even "spirit photographs."

Many of the objects accumulated come under the "unmailable" head, being of glass or "pointed instruments" which might damage the mails. Bottles of surgical tools are not carried by Uncle Sam unless inclosed in wood or tin. One hundred dollars' worth of nuggets of virgin gold in a box came in a while ago and are awaiting a claimant. Likewise a damaged ping hat, which had no address, and a grumpous doll about the size of a baby. There are some gloves from the steamship Oregon which were 114 days under water, though they seem to be lately respectable now and might be worn at a stretch. Some wedding cake is exhibited in the museum that is fifty years old.—Rene Bache in New York Sun.

The Mosaic Flooring of the Desert.

The northern portion of the Colorado desert is paved with the most wonderful pebbles in the world, in many parts so exquisitely laid as to defy successful imitation by the most skilled worker in mosaic flooring. These pebbles are made of porphyry, agates, cornelian, quartz, crystals, garnets, chrysolite and other such beautiful materials. They are packed together so that the surface composed of them is like a floor, and they look as if pressed into it with a roller. As a rule, they are of nearly uniform size, and each one is polished brilliantly, as if oiled and rubbed. Most of them are perfect spheres, and the reflection from them of the sun's rays is gorgeous beyond description.

Each convex surface gives back a ray of light and the ground for miles seems as if literally paved with gems. Thus the whole surface of the plain is a combination of myriads of rainbows, each pebble being so highly polished that it is like a mirror, and it is believed that the lakes of the desert mirage are produced by this means. The pebbles are polished by the loose sand which is blown hither and thither.

Insects That Sing.

Several species of insects have apparatus for producing sounds similar to that of the grasshopper, or modifications of it. Of a different type is that with which the cicadas are endowed. Only the males of this family are singers, for which the Greek poets called them harpy because their founders were dumb. With the ancients a cicada sitting on a harp was the symbol of music. A pretty fable tells of the contest between two cicadas players, in which the curious event happened that when one of the musicians broke a string a singing cicada sprang on his harp and helped him out so that he gained the prize.—H. Frauchenhuni in Popular Science Monthly.

HOW RUBENS PAID A BILL.

He Painted a Portrait for His Unpaid Tailor and Landlord, Who Hung It After Its Death.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century Peter Paul Rubens, whose name half out the same sound then as now, lived in Paris, as a resident in house for the palace of his patroness, Marie de Medici. Sometimes he had his pockets full of money and lived like a prince, but oftener he was without a plunge, scarcely able to pay his rent very frequently, or not at all. The last did not consider it an honor to board this great painter, and so he had a supreme contempt for art, he often said, insulting Rubens. One day when the landlady was in an especially bad humor he threatened to throw Rubens out of the door like a tramp and without further notice.

Rubens had just had an interview with Marie, but did not possess a sou. What should he do? The lady keeper would not reason, but wanted to see cash, under any circumstances money must be procured.

The artist took a small picture of his own from the wall and wrote a note written to one of his friends 1,000 livre for it. Half an hour later the messenger returned, saying that the gentleman would pay only 800 livre for it.

Rubens was furious, threw the picture on the floor and stamped upon it, while the host was still more furious, as he hopes, through this "dodge," to get money were dispelled. He wanted to put his guest out on the pavement immediately, when Rubens gave his word of honor that he would pay his debt within eight days.

With these words Rubens hurried up stairs and locked the door. He left the room very seldom and never without taking the key with him. A week later he appeared before his host with a little hand trunk with these words:

"I have kept my promise. Upon the table in my room you will find more money than I owe you. Farewell, adieu!"

Then he left the inhospitable house with the mien of a grand seigneur, who had given rich alms.

The tavern keeper hurried up the stairs to the artist's room. The door stood open and the name of money which was spread upon the table met his gaze. Fourfold Louis, double Louis, dollars and half dollars lay there in gay confusion. Naturally the good host thought he must quickly put his money in a safe place, but when he hastened and fair he showed where, upon touching a gold piece, he found that it was only painted! The miser, the tramp, had fooled him!

But his anger lessened somewhat when he saw on the walls the rich clothing that had been left by the painter. From the sale of this he could cover a great part of the debt. He rushed for a cherry colored velvet mantle—what disappointment! That, too, like the other garments and the glittering gold, was only painted!

The unhappy host was pitied by all his friends who heard it.

The story became further known and the painter's fame grew and spread. Distinguished people streamed to the modest tavern to hear of Rubens' gay trick from the host himself and see the painted clothing—the table had been put in the garret as the owner wanted it out of sight—and many a dollar was spent in the tavern for the purpose of seeing those things.

One day a rich Englishman who dined on art was accidentally told of the deceptive table by the tavern keeper. He asked to see the table, admired it and offered to give the host as much cash in French gold and silver coins as was painted on the table. Naturally the host accepted and was rid of this "disagreeable" piece of furniture.—Philadelphia Times.

Aldermen as a Board of Directors.

It would clear away much misconception if the popular body in cities, instead of being spoken of and thought of as a local legislature, could be looked upon and considered as a board of directors. One of the most important grants whereby the powers of such a body in cities seem to pass beyond the functions of a board of directors is the right to adopt ordinances which are enforced by the police, but even as to this power it is to be borne in mind that city ordinances have no original authority. They are constantly declared invalid by the courts because they contravene statutes of the legislature or deal with matters not covered by the grant of power to the city corporation. The inference to be drawn from this discussion are two. First, that the whole question as to what ought to be the business of the city and as to the best method of conducting this business is fairly open to discussion; second, that the question is one involving good judgment only. It does not involve the liberties of the people or bring any of the inherent rights of citizenship.—Seth Low in Century.

The Elephant's Memory.

The elephant has a wonderful memory. It sometimes friends will and it never forgets an injury. It is recorded of one that it vomited a mouthful upon its driver's head and smashed the man's head of his cranium, because the poor fellow had broken a resident on its shell the day before. A quarter-master engaged in superintending the removal of baggage to the camp by means of an elephant, became angry at the creature's refusing to carry more than a certain weight and forcibly fixed a tent peg at its head. Some days afterwards the elephant overtook the quartermaster as he was going through the camp, piled him with its trunk and neatly placed him among the branches of a tamarind tree, leaving him to reach the ground again in the best way he could.—New York Advertiser.

Natural Ointments and Plasterings.

Insects that have to fly for hours and hundreds miles, victims of thirstiness, are often used for hunters, soldiers and courier, and are very ornamental when opened and set. Beetle and other long articles made of the most costly materials in such numbers. There are 50 species in Kamchatka, the backs of which need a gay bodice made of a dull orange red and black, flecked with white, and also in Egypt by women and children as amulets against witchcraft and sorcery.—Chambers' Journal.

Bits of Glass Mill Tinsel on a Lighthouse.

A number of stores in Nantucket sell what are known as lighthouse baskets. They come in "nests," a most convenient arrangement for the accommodation of various sizes fitting one into the other. These baskets are made only on the South Shoal lighthouse. Their manufacture has been attempted ashore, but has never paid. This is because there is a very narrow margin of profit in them for the lightship crew, who make them chiefly for the purpose of whiling away the every whitey hours.

In summer the crew occupies its spare time "scrimshawing," an old whaling term for doing logbooks and nautical work, but having aboard the South Shoal the special necessary for preparing the strips of wood and rattan for the manufacture of the baskets is wanting. The bottoms are turned ashore. The blocks over which the baskets are made have been aboard the ship since she was first anchored on the station in the fall of 1854. The sides of the baskets are of white oak or hickory, filled in with rattan, and they are round or oval, of graceful lines and of great durability, the sizes to a nest ranging from a pint to a peck and a half.

But notwithstanding these various attempts at killing time, life on the South Shoal lightship is at its best a life of desolation, with only a few gulls or Mother Carey's chickens for visitors, which seek refuge aboard in stormy weather.—Gustav Kobbe in Century.

An Enormous Brain and a Thin Skull.

When Ivan Turgenieff, the great Russian novelist, died in 1883, his brain was removed for the purpose of weighing it, the distinguished physicians and surgeons having often remarked the extraordinary size of his head. When placed on the delicate balances the brain was found to weigh exactly 2,012 grams. The meaning of this can be better understood when it is known that the weight of the average human brain is but 1,500 grams. Turgenieff's brain was the heaviest that has yet been weighed, Cuvier's coming next, his having weighed 1,830 grams.

There are many cases in which an extraordinary intellect has been accompanied by a heavy brain weight, but men whose mental superiority is undoubted have also been found to have other brains under the average weight.

One other peculiarity of Turgenieff was the surprising thinness of his skull. When it solved he often finded from being playfully tapped on the temples by his schoolfellows. The post mortem which revealed the enormous weight of the brain, also proved that the skull was so thin that it would yield to the pressure of the fingers and thumb.—St. Louis Republic.

Surrender and Its Noble Deed.

The Marquis of Allesbury, who is applying to the courts for permission to sell his estate, the Lord Iveagh for £750,000, was better known in the public as Lord Savernake. The lands in question came into possession of the family through an ancestor who married the heiress of one of the wealthy Seymours, the issue of this marriage. One of the Seymours had previously married a daughter of Sir William Stanley, of Chesham in Wiltshire, the male members of whom family had been bailiffs of the Royal Forest of Savernake since the days of Henry II. Tottenham Park, so long the chief seat of the Allesbury, is situated in Savernake forest.

As things go in these degenerate days £750,000 seems a very fair price for 40,000 acres. The marquis' reply, when asked whether he had made any provision for the housing of the valuable heirlooms in the mansion—"Well, now it's very funny that, when I only thought of that myself yesterday"—was just what might have been expected from the agent of the aristocracy. His lordship has only had the estate for some dozen years, and he has succeeded in housing it with surprising in the return of some £250,000.—Pall Mall Gazette.

Retrenching.

When "Abby" was placed at Milan, an amateur living at some distance came to hear it but was disappointed. To make sure he tried it the second time, with the same result. Wherupon he wrote to the composer, complaining of having been put to considerable expense on his account for nothing and asking a bill for thirty-two lire, with a request for the money. Among the items was one of two lire for a "detestable supper." Verdi detected this on the ground that he might have had supper at home, but forwarded the balance on condition that his correspondent signed a formal agreement not to go and hear the opera again, which agreement was strictly fulfilled.—San Francisco Argonaut.

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