

New Way of Earning a Living.

A new industry, which seems likely to become a success, has just been established in Berlin. Old, stained playing cards, all those slightly soiled which have only been once or twice in use, are collected from hotels, clubs, and a hundred other establishments in Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Switzerland, and are cleaned and made as fresh as new. They are carefully rubbed with benzine on both sides, and then, after drying, placed in presses, where they are rendered perfectly flat again. They are then sprinkled over with powdered white lead and placed in a warm press, where they receive the finish and shine lost in the fingers of the players. They then find their way into another press, where the edges are carefully cut. Before being put on the market they undergo, each card separately, a careful revision, to see that they are all "as good as new."

A Model Young Man.

"Didn't that hurt you, sir?" The clerical-looking gentleman in the rear seat of the tram-car turned inquiringly to the nicely-dressed and clean-cut young man who sat beside him, as that individual, winced slightly, for his foot had just been stepped on by a portly man who was leaving the car. "Yes, sir—it hurt very much," he said, simply. "I thought so," said the clerical man. "Allow me to congratulate you on your control. I observed with pleasure, sir, that no oath sprang to your lips. Great pleasure to meet a young man like you. Have a cigar?"

"Thank you, I don't smoke," said the young man. "Splendid!" exclaimed the clerical interrogator. "I smoke myself," he said, "because I lead a sedentary life. But I glory in a young man who doesn't. May I inquire, sir, if you know the taste of liquor?"

"No, sir, never tasted a drop." His new friend clasped him by the hand. There were tears in his eyes. "Remarkable!" he exclaimed. "In these unregenerate days it is indeed soul-satisfying to gaze upon such a model. May I ask, my dear friend, what high motive impels you to abstain from these influences, that are sapping the lifeblood of the nation?"

The young man smiled. "Certainly," he replied. "The fact is, sir, I find that I can't dissipate and run a faro bank at the same time."

Thereby Hangs a Tale.

Moifaa, the Auckland-bred racehorse, which was taken home by Mr Gollan and bought by H.M. the King the other day, once had a flowing tail, but after he came into His Majesty's possession he was shorn of this crowning glory. Thereby hangs a tale. "Rapier," in the "Sporting and Dramatic News," says: "Moifaa's tail has lately been the subject of much discussion. Some good judges lean to the King's horse, others will not have him at any price. Of these latter, Sir Charles Nugent is one. He is not convinced that Moifaa is perfectly sound in his wind, did not like the look of him when he saw him last, believes that the Sandown race was not good enough to make him out to have a chance, and that there is his tail. Marsh has had this formerly flowing appendage cut to the usual shape, and Sir Charles believes that this will affect the horse by tending to unbalance him as he jumps. Mr Waller, someone told me, supports this theory, and another experienced trainer thinks 'there may be something in it.' Marsh, on the other hand, evidently takes the opposite view, or the tail would not have been cut. Major Edwards ridicules the idea of it making any difference. Supposing that Moifaa does at first miss what he has so long (in a double sense) been accustomed to carry behind him, the Major is convinced that after jumping a fence or two he will be quite reconciled to his loss or forget all about it. Mr Gwynn Saunders-Davies also smiles at the notion of a few—or even a good many—inches of tail affecting the horse's performance. Thus doctors differ, and experienced doctors, too, for all the half-dozen quoted have ridden and won many steeplechases, and trained many winners."

The "Late" Phil May.

In the days of holiday covers to the magazines, there was going about among the London journalists a story of the late Phil May, who as one newspaper proprietor of the British capital put it "was the late Phil May long before he died"—for May never lived up to the time of his promises.

On one occasion he had agreed with the publishers of one of the big English weeklies to draw them a coloured cover for the Christmas issue. The day set for its delivery came and passed, but no drawings appeared. Letters brought no answer; telegrams failed of reply. A personal call at his lodgings only brought out the fact that May had gone off—to Paris, the hand-maiden thought—and no address had been left behind. Then purely by chance, one of the puzzled editors went down to Margate for a Sunday—and there lay Phil May, basking in a reclining chair on one of the covered piers.

That afternoon seven "sandwich men" made their appearance before the artist's hotel, and till dusk they paraded back and forth, while a wondering public hazarded guesses at what could be the meanings of such signs as "We are waiting for that cover!" and "How about that Christmas cover?" But May "caught on." The Tuesday following the publishers received their design—one of the best, the brilliant but erratic genius ever turned out.

The Crisis.

Mr George Meredith, who was thought to have laid aside his pen, sends the following lines to "The Times," inspired by the outlook in Russia. He entitles his poem "The Crisis."

Spirit of Russia, now has come
The day when thou canst not be dumb.
Around thee feigns the torrent tide,
Above thee its fell fountain, "Fid,"
The senseless rock, awaits thy word
To crumble, smelt it be unshorn?
Already, like a trumpet sent,
That shouts the flare and shins to dim,
Thy hand twist flame and darkness
In waves,
Showing the blade wherewith Fate cleaves,
If mortals in high courage fall to
At the one breath before the gale
Those riders in all forms of dust,
Who trod thy children down to dust
On the red Sunday, know right well
What word for them, thy voice would
Spell.

What quick perdition for them weave,
Did they in such a voice believe.

Not this to raise the avenger's shriek,
Nor thus to bid the Trolol check;
Nor assure him, the wayfarer still,
Man of much heart and little will,
The criminal of his high seat,
Whose idea of Guiltless judges it,
For him thy voice shall make to hand
Salvation, and to thy term find,
Seen out the breakers, Now has come
The day when thou canst not be dumb,
Spirit of Russia; those who bind
Thy limbs and trim thy mind,
Take thee for quaking flesh, without
That thou art of the rubble rot,
Which cries and flees, with whimpering
lip,
From reckless gun and brutal whip,
But he who has at heart the needs
Of the heroic stirring leads
In them a soul, not given to shirk
From peril on the abyss brink;
With never dread of murderous power;
With view beyond the crimson hour;
Neither an instant driven night,
Nor visionary cruddle:
A soul that art thou, it remains
For thee to stay thy children's veins,
The counterfides of late arrest,
Give to thy sons a breathing breast
And the recording, in His sight,
Say to thy land, Let these be light.

How Fast You Walk.

An engineer has employed his spare time in recent years measuring the speeds of all creatures, and as the result he has collected a remarkable array of facts, each one based on actual experiment.

He has found that man can attain remarkable speeds. A good pedestrian's speed over good roads is six-tenths of a mile in twelve seconds. The maximum speed acquired by the average person in swimming comfortably is thirty-nine inches a second.

Skaters average nine to ten yards per second.

A Russian wolf-hound has covered seventy-five feet in a second, and a gazelle has shown measured speed of more than eighty feet per second.

A whale has been known to dive at the rate of 300 yards in a minute, and crows have been known to fly eighty miles in three hours.

Snails are the slowest creatures. They average one foot per hour, the maximum being five and a half feet in an hour.

Peace Hath Its Dangers.

Manoeuvres were going on in the neighbourhood, and thus it came about that the smoking-room was for the most part filled with military men. As the evening wore on, song and story went the rounds, and old battles were fought anew, when a meek and somewhat battered individual struck in.

"Gentlemen," he said, "to look at me you would not credit the experiences I have been through; but I think the most thrilling of all was when about twenty years ago, I stood and confronted, single-handed, a desperate crowd, who thirsted for my blood. Alone I braved them, when suddenly a shell whistled through the air, and burst right in my face."

One of the officers present surveyed the meek man's countenance.

"It certainly isn't much of a face," he said, musingly; "but, at the same time, it doesn't look as though a shell had burst in it. What regiment were you in?"

"I never said I was in a regiment," drawled the story-teller sadly. "I'm an actor!"

Maxim Gorki.

No very pleasant impression of the Russian novelist Maxim Gorki is given by his latest translated work, "Creatures That Once Were Men." It is a grim picture of a Russian doss-house. Types of character are set forth with an intensity of realism that, at times, provokes a shudder. The drunken and degraded "creatures that once were men" are allowed to tell their own stories and show by their conversation the depths to which they have sunk. There is no extenuation, no "moral" suggested. "Here are these men," the author seems to say, "this is their condition; make out of them what you like." Many of them are wife-beaters, for no particular reason except that their lives are dull, and wife-beating means excitement and change. "Wait," says Yakovlev; "but you beat your wife, too." "Did I say that I did not? I beat her. There is nothing else handy. Do you expect me to heat the wall with my fist when my patience is exhausted?"

Thackerays.

In "Thackeray's Letters to an American Family," recently published, are many excellent examples of Thackeray's humour, and of his habit of turning it against himself.

"Enter Dr. O. W. Holmes half an hour, a dear little fellow, a true poet, I told him how much I liked his verses, and what do you think he did? His eyes began to water. Well, it's a comfort to have given pleasure to that kind soul."
"I shall see you all once again before I go after the dollars and—who knows?—the Mississippi snags. We will try and be jolly a little next week, won't we? And then I shall go on my way like an old mountebank (I get more ashamed and disgusted of my nostrum daily),

and send round the hat through the R.R. public."

(From London.) "On Wednesday I asked two Americans to dine here; and as my invaluable plate is still at the banker's, we had to serve the soup with a teacup. I rather expect this fact will appear in the American papers some day as an instance of my avarice or my poverty, and warn you beforehand what the real state of the case is."

(From Calais.) "Sterne's picture is looking down on me from the chimney-piece at which he warmed his lean old shanks ninety years ago. He seems to say, 'You are right. I was a humbug. And you, my lad, are you not as great?' Come, come, Mr. Sterne, none of these tritaques."

"I wonder whether all literary men are humbings and have no hearts. I know one who has none."

"I'm low in spirits about 'The New-comers.' It's not good. It's stupid. It haunts me like a great stupid ghost. I think it says why do you go on writing this rubbish? You are old, you have no more invention, etc. Write sober books, books of history. Leave novels to younger folks. You see, half of my life is grumbling; and lecturing of novel-writing or sentimentalism I am never content."

"My expenses (have I ever grumbled to you about them?) are awful. I have a one-horse shay and spend £2000 a year at least. Two families each with a carriage could live for that money, but then they don't give away £500 as Somebody somehow does. Also at the end of the month, when the number is done, I go out and buy pooty things—six such byootiful spoons as I brought home yesterday! And what do you think? I have had a new coat, the first in four years. I have a famous little horse to ride, and get on him once a fortnight. I have good daughters, good wine in the cellar, easy work, plenty of money in my pocket. I oughtn't! Eh bien! I don't think I am above four days in the month. A man without a woman is a lonely wretch!"

Killing Time.

"No," said the young enthusiast as he held a strip of bacon to the camp fire on a forked stick, "a true sportsman never kills anything he can't use. You'd hardly believe it, but I've seen a duffer come into camp after a day's fishing with three hundred trout, and actually swell up with conceit as he showed them off. Then the guide took them away and buried them."
"It's a bad day," said the young man as he parted the tent-flap the next morning; "we'll have to kill time today."
"Well," said St. Peter to a bent shape that loomed worryily up to the gate of the hereafter, "what luck?" And with a pride that was concealed by the stiff and halting motions of his aged limbs, the spirit swung to the ground and displayed his bulging pack. It contained eighty-five dead years.

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