

Minor Matters.

A man named Millikan for many years infested a certain small country town. Millikan's chief bid for fame was the ingenuity of his excuses for not paying his debts. His business, when he condescended to have any, was always that of selling agent for something—porous plasters, fruit trees, sewing machines, head-stones, or other commodities—and if he had ever put half the skill and energy into his work that he did into his manufacture of excuses for non-payment, he would have prospered. Millikan never objected to being dunned—in fact, he often went to his creditors and "dunned himself," as the saying is. But he was always armed with an excuse of dazzling beauty. Usually he had had the money—indeed had started for his creditor's house with it—but had lost it in some way. Frequently he was robbed. If a bank closed its doors anywhere within 40 miles, Millikan had money in that bank. If a man absconded that man owed Millikan. If there was a fire it destroyed Millikan's possessions. If there was a rumour of a European war it depreciated Millikan's holdings and reduced his working capital.

Millikan had long owed Dr. Bates a bill. The doctor had about given up hope of ever getting it, and had settled down to a philosophical enjoyment of the man's excuses.

He had promised, solemnly, however, to pay it on a certain date, having a large sum coming to him for a consignment of apple-trees. The doctor's hopes revived somewhat. Bright and early on the morning Millikan rang his creditor's bell furiously. But the doctor found his face the picture of woe.

"Doc, I promised to pay you to-day," began the caller.

"You did, Millikan."

"Well, I'm sorry, Doc, but I can't do it. Blow the luck!"

"What's the matter this time?" asked the doctor.

"Why, Doc, the darnedest hardest luck you ever heard tell of. You know how absent-minded I am, Doc, and how patriotic—they are two of my strong points. Well, Doc, I was driving into town late last night with that money in my pocket, right in a roll, when the boys called me over and wanted me to help 'em celebrate Pretoria by shooting off that old brass cannon at midnight. Well, I went, and on the tenth round I was a-loading her, and we ran out of wadding, and what do you think I done, Doc, in my excitement, but yank out that roll of notes and ram 'em into that cannon and touch 'er off before I thought; and there went all that hard-earned cash all blowed to flinders. Doc, I am sorer than you be. But I'll have it for you by the 1st of August sure."

The Pretoria celebration at Dunedin bordered at times a little on the boisterous, and on one occasion a large crowd had gathered in front of Messrs. Sargood Son and Ewen's premises, where something in the nature of a scrimmage was proceeding. The matter was just looking a little serious, when a happy idea struck some one, who applied a very effective remedy. On the top of the premises there is a large reservoir for fire-extinguishing purposes, and some of the contents were directed on the crowd below. The effect was magical. As soon as the unlooked-for shower bath was felt, everyone scattered in all directions, and the affair terminated amidst loud laughter.

The late Prince Bismarck was not given to the telling of stories, but once, at a banquet in Berlin, he told one of General Moltke, who was dining at the same table. "Do you remember, general," he said, turning to the great strategist, "the last time you accepted a cigar from me?" Moltke could not recall the occasion. "Well," rejoined Bismarck, "I myself shall never forget the circumstances. It was on the day of Konigsgratz, during the anxious time when the battle stood still and we could neither go backward nor forward—when one aide-de-camp after another galloped off without ever returning, and we could get no news of the Crown Prince's coming. I was frightfully uneasy, and my eyes wandered round in search of you. I saw you standing not far off. You were gazing on the battle with a look of the

most serene indifference, and the stump of a cigar in your mouth. 'Well,' said I to myself, 'if Moltke can go on smoking so calmly as that it can't be so very bad with us after all.' So, riding up, I offered you my case, which contained two cigars, a good and a bad one. With the unerring glance of a true commander, you selected the good one. I smoked the other myself after the battle, and I never enjoyed a smoke better in my life. Collier's Weekly.

In default of other amusements Picton people are cultivating the piscatorial art, and spend no end of time charming the finny tribe. Wonderful fish stories are related—some of them true and some are mixed to be taken cum grano salis; but one of the funniest is about a Chinaman who also fell a victim to the prevailing craze, and went a-fishing off the wharf. He got tremendous bites (from a small urchin who had stowed himself away under the wharf), and hauled in time after time without any result, and he kept on assuring everybody around that the fish "him welly small, but catchee him pleasantly." Presently he caught him truly, for, having thrown out his line a little further than usual, the youngster under the wharf over-balanced himself and went flop into the water. Johann's pig-tail nearly fell off with fright when he found he had caught a boy. The on-lookers shrieked, and the boy capered about in the water oblivious of sharks and such like.

The Book Tea could not possibly run very long. Of the giving of such teas there must come an end. Still, the idea was too novel and too appreciable to the common understanding for it to be allowed to die utterly. It had like the influenza to leave behind it its formidable after-results. And one of these results is the Flower Tea. The phrase sounds feminine and hopeful. But the thing itself proved even worse than the Book Tea. It had, of course, the same idea. You were invited to a tea to what the French say the English call "A Five o'Clocks"—and when you entered the room you were to personate a flower, and you were allowed to wear a badge to help you. It sounds all very pleasant. One has ideas of a shy, gentle girl looking like a violet, of a queenly beauty as a rose, of the grace of a lily, of the stinging sarcasm of a nettle. But, unfortunately, the thing is taken in another way, and it is the badge that settles the flower and puzzles the company. For how should one guess that a friendly-looking girl, with kind eyes and a portrait of Kruger pendant from a button-hole meant Anemone? Or, again, that a pretty bicyclist, lithe and fearless, decorated with a picture of a flower, or, better still, with the flower itself, symbolised a Cyclamen (a sickly man), or that a male guest showing on a card on his coat something like a rook perched on a big D meant a Crocus? If Book Teas were a good thing—which we doubt—surely Falstaff was right when he said that the fault of the English was that when they had a good thing they made it too common.

There are many stories of the originality of little folks concerning matters eternal, but the following, got off by two little Wanganui children, is hard to beat. Tommy, a precocious youth of six summers, took it upon himself to administer a theological lecture to his sister, a maiden of still more tender years. The occasion was bedtime, and Tommy's surplice was his nightgown and his pulpit was his cot. He took as his subject "Heaven and Hell." Heaven, he said, was a place where all good people went to, and where the happy ones sang songs, played on golden harps, and wore crowns on their heads. Hell, on the other hand, was a place where people who drank and smoked were sent. You, he said, pointedly addressing his sister, will go to the bad place, because you are naughty and you scratch and lose your temper, and I'll go there too because I do wicked things and spit. Ma will go to heaven, because she's so good and kind to us, and never loses her

temper. At this stage the timorous baby, in tears, sobbing at the gloomy prospect held out for her by the gloomy theologian. Even Tommy was moved, for he finished his oration with the comforting assurance—"Never" mind, Cis, Pa will be with us!"

In new districts where lawyers of profound learning are not to be had for Magistrates, the country Justice of the Peace, with common sense and a sense of justice, makes an acceptable substitute. Nevertheless, there are numerous instances in which the proceedings of country justices would be the better for more knowledge of the law. Lawyers relate queer instances of their proceedings.

A colonial Justice of the Peace is said to have presided in a case brought by himself for an assault on him by his wife. After testifying in the case himself, and hearing all the evidence of other witnesses, he threw the case out of court on the ground of insufficiency of evidence! His rigorous sense of justice and self-abnegation are likely to rank in history above those of the Roman judge who condemned his own son to death.

When this story was sold lately an American present match it with an account of a country judge up in the mountains, who was presiding in an important horse-stealing case. Although it was properly a jury case, the lawyers on both sides agreed to dispense with the jury, requesting the judge to "act as jury." The judge took the request literally, and also felt that there should be, to satisfy the law, nominally a jury.

After mounting the bench and considering a long time, the judge left the bench, entered the jury-box, and had himself sworn by the clerk. He heard the evidence there, but when an objection was made on a law point he left the box, mounted the bench and passed on it as judge, returning to the jury-box when the testimony was resumed.

After the evidence was all in, he wrote out his instructions as judge, and, handing the document to one of the attorneys, requested him to read it to the jury. After listening in the box to the instructions, he had himself conducted from the room by the sheriff and locked in the jury-room to consider the case and prepare a verdict.

"How long did he stay out?" asked one of the lawyers to whom the story was being told.

"Six hours."

"What was the verdict?"

"He reported that the jury was unable to agree, and as judge discharged himself!"

The following is the latest ghost story, and is affirmed to be absolutely true. The substance of the story is as follows:—Two lovers talked of the possibility of communication after death on the eve of their marriage, and promised each other that the first who died would, if it were possible, appear to the one upon the earth, no matter what pain it cost to do so. A few days later the man went away to his warship. The wife got letters from him daily. One morning she awakened, after dreaming of her husband, and saw him standing at the foot of the bed. She rubbed her eyes in amazement, for he instantly vanished, but her heart was full of dread. She descended into the garden, and there saw him again. This time he disappeared as instantly as before. She knew he was dead. A little later his daily letter came, but that did not reassure her. Her father and the servants all said they had seen him, and soon a telegram came announcing that he had been drowned that morning while attempting to rescue a companion. He never appeared to her again.

A man runs up against some queer risks in railway travelling. Know a way-back storekeeper who carries gunpowder with him because he "can't see the force of paying ten shillings for having fifteen bob's worth of explosives put into compartment set apart for the purpose." He sticks the powder carelessly under the seat to be kicked by everybody's heels. Also (says the same writer in the "Bulletin") I once travelled from Cootamundra with a case of typhoid. It was in my arms most of the way, as the compartment was crowded. It was "going to Sydney Hospital." Again, travelled to Goulburn with fat old lady with an offensive smell in a carpet

bag. Officials, suspecting defused baby, seized the bag, but found in it only a lot of shells and decomposing seaweed, which the old party had collected at Manly Beach. The authorities should ordain that all parcels shall set forth on the outside the nature of their contents, and surely there should be separate compartments for fever patients as much as for explosives. Another night, near Cambelltown, a man's muzzle-loading gun went off and shattered a parson's bottle of gin in the rack. "Hum," said the owner of the gun, coolly, "thought I had her at half-cock."

An accident occasioned by a too inquisitive inspection of a ship's rocket occurred at Castlecliff, Wanganui, the other day. Three young men were examining the rocket, which had been picked up by one of them, when one of the trio indiscreetly applied a match to it. Of course, a violent explosion followed, as the result of which all three sustained injuries in the shape of nasty cuts about the body, arms and legs. Fortunately neither of the young fellows were injured about the face. They were promptly brought into the Hospital in a special train, where their wounds were dressed by Dr. Anderson.

As showing the wisdom of municipalities buying rats from Tom, Dick and Harry, with the object of preventing the spread of the plague, witness the conduct of a small boy in my Melbourne suburb. One recent morning a friend encountered a youngster with three rats on a string, and being of an enquiring turn ascertained that the proud proprietor of the rodents was "taking 'em" to school. "What for?" "Why, to sell 'em, o' course." "But not at school?" Yes, there's a feller in our class, what gives three 'pence each for 'em. Then when he gets a lot he sells 'em for three bob a dozen in another." My enquiring friend ascertained that the name of the enterprising youth who posed as wholesale dealer in rats was Moses Moses. That is near enough, anyhow.

A well-known physician, while speaking of the various methods of inducing sleep, said: "I've tried them all—putting a cold towel on the head, bathing the feet in hot water, counting up to 1,000, drinking a glass of milk, and so on—and the best thing I ever found was simply this: When I have worked all the evening and find myself at bedtime in a state of nervous or mental activity, I go to bed and place my right hand directly over the pit of my stomach. Whether it is the animal warmth of the hand acting on the stomach and drawing the circulation from the head, or some nervous action, I can't say, but I know that I fall asleep in a few minutes. I believe that in a large majority of the ordinary cases of sleep-

REST

"If I could only get a little rest." How many tired women say this! They are exhausted, depressed, discouraged. Even after sleeping they find themselves just as tired as before. Not a part of the body escapes from the hard aches and pains. You should have all impurities removed from your blood and your nerves greatly strengthened.

Ayer's Sarsaparilla

brings rest and refreshing sleep. Your nervousness disappears and your great unrest passes away.

Of course you know this is so, for you have heard all about Ayer's Sarsaparilla. Ask your doctor if it isn't the best Sarsaparilla in the world. Even your druggist will tell you "It's the oldest and the best!"

If you are constipated, take Ayer's Pills. They greatly aid the Sarsaparilla.

Prepared by Dr. J. C. Ayer & Co., Lowell, Mass., U. S. A.