

eBook

Said the Observer

For the online version of BookRags' Said the Observer eBook, including complete copyright information, please visit:

<http://www.bookrags.com/ebooks/12832/>

Copyright Information

© 2000-2014 BookRags, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Said the Observer

THE TELEPHONE FACE

[Illustration: *Influence of the pipe.*]

"I see, by a recent paper," said the Observer, as he lit another cigar and resettled himself in his chair, "that a Chicago physician and a lot of fool women, who are evidently jealous of Carrie Nation, are about to start an active crusade against the 'Smoke Nuisance.' This is ambiguous enough to warrant the supposition that their object is the compulsory introduction of some patented device for clearing the atmosphere of Pittsburg and other manufacturing towns, but their real aim is to discourage the use of tobacco. Now, of all the human pests which afflict the long-suffering public, the anti-smoke agitator is about the worst. Why, man alive! what would become of the human race without tobacco? It is the grease which lubricates the Wheel of Evolution. Since the time of Sir Walter Raleigh civilization has advanced more rapidly by one hundred per cent. Nearly all great inventors, artists and writers owe their inspiration to the pipe.

"A very successful newspaper man whom I know has four different pipes and each serves a special purpose. When he wants to write a humorous article, he says to his wife, 'Where is my funny pipe?' and she hands him a long-handled affair with a weichsel-wood bowl and a cherry stem that has a kind of rakish, good-natured curve to it. Then he sits down and grinds out copy that will make an Englishman laugh at first sight. A big, dumpy brier, with a shorter stem and a celluloid end, is responsible for general descriptive work, sporting news, *etc.*, while a trim little meerschaum with a carved bowl engenders excellent criticisms of music and drama. Occasionally, too, this bright fellow, who does considerable work on the editorial page, gets into a newspaper controversy. Then he pulls from his pocket a short 'bull-dog' with a horn tip, whose massive, square-jawed bowl and ferocious short-curved stem breathe forth aggressiveness, and, jamming it full of 'plug cut,' he writes one of those satirical, sledge-hammer roasts which make him feared by his opponents.

"One night he was detailed to write up a show at one of the leading theatres. The play was 'East Lynne,' which, as a tear-producer, ranks away up and was presented by a first-class company. When the critic reached home he was feeling pretty sad, so he looked around for his meerschaum. His wife had been cleaning house that day and he couldn't find any pipe but the long one. What was the result? Why, he wrote such a humorous description of the play that everybody thought 'East Lynne' was a farce comedy and, when the performance closed on the following night, two-thirds of the audience wanted their money back.

"His worst crack, though, was when a man of great local prominence, who stood high with the people, died and it fell to G.'s lot to describe the funeral ceremonies and eulogize the deceased. G.'s mother-in-law had just arrived and the poor fellow was so badly rattled that he got hold of the 'bull-dog' instead of the brier and made the Hon. G. out the grandest rascal who had ever preyed upon the vitals of a law-abiding community. The only thing that saved his neck this time was the fact that it all turned out to be true and his paper got the credit of a 'scoop.' After that he had a little case made to hold all four of his pipes, with a strap to go around his neck---and I guess he sleeps with it now.

"They say that Guttenberg conceived the notion of the printing press while taking an after-dinner smoke; that Stephenson's ideas of steam locomotion came to him through the curling wreaths of his favorite Virginia; and that Morse figured out the telegraph with a pipe in his mouth. I never could corroborate these statements, though I don't doubt them a bit. But, be that as it may, the man, woman or child who tries to deprive us of the solace and inspiration of tobacco, is like the goat that tried to butt a train off the track. He is not only trifling with one of the greatest factors in civilization, but he is toying with a lost cause."

* * * * *

[Illustration: "No other man gets half the flattering attention given the condemned."]

* * * * *

OUR FRIEND THE MURDERER.

"No, I don't believe in capital punishment," said the Observer, as he rose from the barber's chair and adjusted his collar before the glass. "It's less expensive for the government than to board a man for life, and it satisfies the popular idea of justice, but I doubt very much its efficiency in the suppression of crime.

"Take the average murderer, for instance. He seems to look forward to his execution with happy anticipation. He may have been a hopeless dyspeptic who killed his wife in an agony of indigestion, following a repast of hot biscuits and flannel cakes, such as 'mother used to make,' but as the hour of death approaches, he regains his appetite, and, just before the solemn moment, partakes of a hearty breakfast. His whole life may have been a record of flagrant cowardice, yet he walks steadily to the scaffold and dies 'like a man'; he may have been illiterate to a degree, yet in the very shadow of the gallows he writes a statement for publication the depth and power of which astonishes the world. From the sentence to the finish, the murderer's life is one bed of roses. Every pretty girl who visits the prison brings him flowers and sweets, and begs eagerly for his autograph; great authors write books about him; great lawyers draw up petitions from notable men and women asking for his pardon, and the governor's secretary works night and day, declining their requests, writing special permits and "standing off" tearful relatives, friends and sweethearts, who spring up as if by magic to plead his cause.

"No other man gets half the flattering attention that is given the condemned; no one else is given half the chance to make a glorious finish. By some occult influence his faults are utterly effaced and every latent talent is developed to a point of absolute perfection. When this 'ne plus ultra' is reached, a quick curtain is dropped over his career, and he lives in the memory of countless thousands as a martyred hero of the most splendid moral and mental attainments.

"Who would not sacrifice life for such a climax? Many men have said to Fame and Wisdom, 'Let me look upon your face and die'; many have come to view their Gorgon features and cheerfully paid the price, and still more have perished miserably on the way.

"Now, what is the murderer's sacrifice compared to these? He is carefully attended, afforded every luxury, and at last, is whisked away into eternity, quickly, and, as far as possible, painlessly, with a grand opera and limelight effect.

"We have learned many things from Mongolia; gunpowder, the printing press and many other great discoveries have been traced back to Celestial origin. Let us, then, adopt her method of dealing with troublesome subjects. A 'harikari' sentence saves the nation much trouble and expense. A coroner's verdict of 'suicide by request,' is much more simple, and just as good as a lengthy criminal prosecution, besides affording the transgressor a choice of weapons. He may prefer a strychnine sandwich to the rope, or an unobtrusive blow-out-the-gas transition to the electric chair; he may choose to loiter carelessly in the path of a metropolitan trolley car; to caress the rear elevation of an army mule, or insist upon reading a spring poem to an athletic and busy editor. Many persons are particular upon these subjects and, if the individual liberty, which is the watchword of our nation, is to be preserved, some license should be allowed even a felon under such conditions.

"If we really wish to decrease and discourage vice, however, let us go about it in a logical manner and hold up a terrible example to those premeditating crime. The prisoner should be visited by none but religious advisers of every denomination, except on certain days when free admittance should be granted to sketch artists, camera fiends, elocutionists and young authors. All newspaper articles relating to his case should be carefully suppressed; no reading

matter furnished him except dialect stories, and amateur photographs, taken by visitors, should be hung upon the wall. Between times the prisoner might be employed in washing dishes for a cooking school and testing the products of pupils. After two months of unremitting toil, according to this itinerary, he might be safely liberated, if life remained, and it is safe to say that his experience, when related to associates, would have a more deterrent effect upon the 'profesh' than several kinds of death penalties could hope to produce."

SCIENCE AND WEATHER.

"Science," said the Observer, "is a great thing and applicable to almost every line of endeavor. You can kill people in a scientific manner---witness the late Madame Borgia and others. You can shoe a horse scientifically, beg scientifically or hypnotize a squalling infant into innocuous quietude by the aid of science. Marconi has signalled across the ocean; Santos-Dumont has navigated the air and Austria has proven her neutrality in the Spanish-American war by scientific means. But there is one thing which Science cannot tackle with any degree of success, and that is the weather problem.

"The gift of weather prophecy goes with rheumatism and not with government appointment. The barometer and the anemometer are not in it with a touch of gout, a sailor's superstitions or a farmer's instinct, and, until the Department of Agriculture realizes this, the weather forecast will have no practical value except as an interesting bit of fiction.

"I once heard of a man who was 'salivated' in a quicksilver mine, and who, as a result, turned into a living barometer. If his head was clear and his feet were heavy, it was a sure sign of rain in Summer or frost in Winter. If, on the contrary, he seemed depressed mentally and yearned for exercise, a rise in temperature and fair weather were in order. He amassed a large fortune in making weather bets, but one day when the thermometer was down below zero, he stepped on a tack and all the mercury ran out of his heel. After that he lost all his money betting with a neighbor who had a rheumatic left joint, and died of grief in abject poverty.

"The only way by which the government may hope to secure competent weather prognostigators is in the establishment of regular training schools for its prophets. The candidate should be examined as to fitness, just as the applicant for a West Point cadetship. He should possess inherited tendencies toward rheumatism as a primary qualification. Then, after serving three years before the mast and putting in an equal period of active labor on a farm, he would be able to turn out correct forecasts with no other apparatus than a set of signal flags, a typewriter and a hektograph.

"It wouldn't be scientific," concluded the Observer, reflectively, "because he couldn't explain his deductions on a basis of dynamic pressure, electrical disturbances, or velocity of air currents. But it would be a safe tip for the city man to get out his umbrella, mackintosh and overshoes and for the farmer to cover up his hay, if the rain flag were seen to float on the weather pole."

* * * * *

[Illustration: "Fate has posted a great big placard over the Hall of Fame."]

* * * * *

THE ESSENTIALS OF GREATNESS.

"Oh yes! Steve White was a great man," said the Observer, as he chalked his cue and reflectively gazed at the balls, "but he was born in that class. If he hadn't been, Stephen Mallory White would probably have cut no greater figure in the world than any other man.

"Did you ever hear of a man who wasn't born in some country village, 'of poor but honest parents,' amounting to a row of pins? Not on your life! It's the true and only essential of greatness. Yes, there are lots of fellows fixed that way who don't make their mark, but that's because they don't try.

"Everybody knows how Carnegie got his start; didn't Lincoln use to chop wood for a living, and Garfield drive a canal boat team? Wasn't Gould a messenger boy, and General Miles a private? It's a 'cinch,' a 'kismet.' Fate has posted a great big placard over the door to Fame and it says, 'None But Impecunious Young Countrymen Need Apply.'

"That is why I always thought reincarnation was a good scheme. The Theosophists say that every soul must pass through a certain number of experiences, before it can attain perfection. Now, here's a chance for some unfortunate scion of wealth or nobility, who has lived a useless and uneventful life, and wants to do something for his country.

"He can go to some secluded hamlet, inquire as to the probable date of the next birth in the neighborhood, and, when things are in shape, he can blow out the gas some night and wake up the next morning as a new-born babe, with all the elements of greatness strong upon him.

"When this fact becomes generally known, people will donate their funds to charitable institutions and move to the country to raise future presidents, senators and merchant princes; there will be an epidemic of suicide among the idle rich, and the birth-rate of our rural districts will increase a hundredfold; the population of cities will be sadly decimated; waste lands will be cleared and cultivated, as if by magic, and, a generation hence, there will come forth from the agricultural regions a host of young toilers with Destiny's diploma for future greatness in their pockets."

The Observer was so wrapped up in his prophecy that he missed his shot by fully half an inch and put the wrong end of his cigar in his mouth. After carefully wiping the ashes out of his teeth and kicking the proprietor's cat, he resumed:

"I rather got off the subject, and don't want you to put me down as endorsing reincarnation, either, but when I hear a lot of folks talking about what a great man So-and-So was; how he had to get up before daylight to chop wood and feed the stock, in order to get to school on time, I say to myself, 'What Tommyrot! As if Providence didn't have it all fixed for him.'"

HORSE SENSE

"In some ways the average man hasn't the sense of the average horse," said the Observer, taking a shot at the cuspidor and looking thoroughly disgusted. "Horse sense is a brand of intelligence immeasurably above that displayed by human beings under certain conditions. No, I'm not suffering from dyspepsia or gout--I've simply been watching people as they try to pass each other in halls and doorways, and on the street. It's enough to make a man ashamed that he was born a 'Lord of creation.'

"The average horse doesn't need to be guided when he sees another horse coming the other way. He swerves to the right, as naturally as a bull-dog chases a tramp. What does the average man do when he suddenly meets another coming hurriedly in an opposite direction? He places himself squarely in front of him and then begins a series of side-steps, first to one side and then the other, in exact accordance with those of the man he is trying to pass, like the mirror pantomime in Hanlon's Fantasma. Finally, both come to a standstill, facing each other, and one tries to execute a quick flank movement to the left. Just at this moment the other suddenly remembers that he would have avoided all this tomfoolery if he had only kept to the right, and tries to make good on this hypothesis. The result is that they bump into each other violently and begin side-stepping again. After another round or two of Terpsichorean gymnastics one of them breaks through the other's guard and escapes and each continues on his belated way, thinking what an infernal idiot the other is.

[Illustration: "Oof!"]

"I have known men who gained international renown for their strategy and 'sang froid' on the battlefield; men whose calmness and deliberation have averted many a financial crisis and men whose marvelous executive capacity and keen insight into human affairs have won them great fortunes. I have seen these same men trying to pass other pedestrians in a narrow hallway and act in a way which would make a lunatic ashamed of himself.

"A drummer, who travels for a large Eastern jobbing concern, was once entering the establishment of a firm which always bought heavily from his house. One of the proprietors was just going out. They came together in the doorway, and, before they could pass each other, a rival salesman slipped by and sold the other partner a large bill of goods.

"Congress ought to pass an appropriation for the purpose of teaching people how to pass each other. If the surplus energy and brainwork consumed in this task under present methods were applied to some more useful purpose, a great reform movement would have been inaugurated."

THE MANNISH WOMAN.

"I don't want to achieve a reputation as a 'knocker,'" said the Observer, knitting his brow thoughtfully, "but, I nevertheless, aver and maintain that the national evil of this great land is the mannish woman.

"No, I don't mean the woman who can earn a living in some professional pursuit that has hitherto been monopolized by men. Why, with our male milliners, dressmakers, cooks, and what not, she has been driven to it by man himself. Even the servant girl has become a thing of the past, and the 'help' of the present day wears trousers,---not metaphorically, as his female predecessor was wont to do---but literally. However, I'm not going to discuss the servant-girl question. That is an old story and a painful one---almost as painful as the mannish woman.

"This fearful and wonderful product of American progressiveness---this worst type of monomaniac (man-o-maniac, one might more appropriately term her) is driving men to drink. The mother-in-law is a thing of beauty and a joy forever, compared to the mannish woman; the female book-agent takes on new lustre and even the poetess is a desirable companion beside her. The mannish woman wears a coat and vest and---no, she doesn't wear trousers, because she doesn't dare, but a vertical strip of braid down the middle of her skirt suggests the effect. From a distance you couldn't distinguish between her and a man to save your life, for her hat, shirt-bosom, collar and tie are the real thing. She has pockets in her skirt, one on each side, and, sometimes at the club, she puts her hands in them and, with arms akimbo, admires herself in the glass. At the club also she does other things to show how independent she is. She slaps her friend on the back with a 'Hello, Gertie. How's tricks?' and orders a glass of soda-lemonade with a cherry in it. She wouldn't take a man's arm for the world, which is perhaps fortunate, for she seldom gets a chance. But she likes to talk to a man about the races and exhibit her knowledge of baseball slang.

"A friend of mine has an elderly sister who is a mannish woman. Contrary to the popular belief, she never borrows his neckties or collars, but perhaps this may be accounted for by the fact that Fred is rather stout in the neck and seldom wears a tie. She got him to tie a four-in-hand for her one day. Fred used to be a sea-captain in his early days and, although he could make all kinds of splices with a rope, he had never tackled a four-in-hand. He was game, however, and, after a hard tussle, accomplished what is known in nautical parlance as a 'clove hitch.' Fred's sister wore it night and day for a week and then cut it off with a pair of scissors.

"Fred had another experience some time after this which nearly proved serious. His sister was on the reception committee for a club function one evening and asked her brother's advice in regard to mixing punch. Fred is an obliging fellow, so he got his friend, who is a barkeeper, to mix up a couple of gallons and send it over to the clubhouse with his

compliments. The barkeeper thought it was for Fred's club so he made it good and stiff. It was an innocuous looking mixture and tasted innocent enough, so the club women said it was 'bully' and partook freely.

"About twelve o'clock that night, somebody telephoned for Fred to come quick. Just exactly what happened, Fred never would tell, but it cost him about \$40 for cab fares and an equal amount to keep it out of the papers. Now, whenever one of the club women sees him, she crosses the street.

"I don't believe there is any province in Heaven for the mannish woman. If there is, I know lots of men who would enter upon a life of crime rather than take a chance of going there when they die. I think there is a special place in Hades, where the mannish woman will be made to wear a mother-hubbard and let down her back hair. If there isn't, Mephistopheles don't understand his business a little bit."

A WONDERFUL MACHINE.

"I see by one of the papers that a Chinaman has invented a typewriter which writes in the Celestial language," said the Observer, handing the bootblack a nickel and shaking hands with the crowd. "This bright Oriental, who is known as Tap-Key, has undertaken a very large contract, for the Chinese language, as most people know, is composed entirely of word symbols, each of which represents a word; some combining to form other words, as for instance, a square represents a field, and a combination of 'man' and 'field' signifies a farmer; while 'a man in a box' most graphically describes a prisoner, and 'two women' typify 'gossip,' which is emphasized by adding another of the fair sex, so that a half-dozen women in a row would probably mean the direst kind of mischief.

[Illustration: Chinese typewriter]

"Well, to embrace any kind of a vocabulary, this machine would need to have about 5,000 characters, and would require quite a force of men to operate it, but the advantages which would accrue from its use are almost inestimable. The Spaniards have found in the typewriter a most effective instrument of war, and through its use many of Weyler's most important battles were won. Reports from South Africa seem to indicate that it has played no unimportant role in England's subjugation of the Boers, and General Elwell S. Otis has even been accused of employing it with terrible effect against the forces of Aguinaldo. With such an awful weapon as Tap-Key has invented the Chinese government might defy the allied powers with impunity and even regain the territory captured by Japan. The young Emperor could doubtless put to flight the august but doughty dowager, as well as his beloved relative, Prince Tuan, and rule his flowery kingdom in peace and harmony, while Li Hung Chang would lose his head, metaphorically, if not literally, in favor of Tap-Key, future lord of the war department."

DRAWBACKS OF THE KING BUSINESS.

"No," said the Observer, thoughtfully, "I never cherished dreams of inordinate wealth or power; there's nothing in it. If a man is satisfied to reach a moderate altitude he may enjoy it unmolested, but if he succeeds in scaling some remarkable height, there immediately arises an army of envious cranks ready to take his life or make it so miserable for him that he will be glad to sell out at half price and gratefully descend into the obscurity from which he rose.

"Nor, is it only the self-made man to whom these remarks apply. Take, for example, the Czar of Russia, the Emperor of Germany, or any other potentate, Christian or heathen, civilized or savage, great or small. He has more trouble to the square inch than a weather prophet. Nicholas III is probably the worst off of them all. He gets up early in the morning and shaves himself with a safety razor, while the court chemist is analyzing his breakfast for traces of arsenic or prussic acid; then he dons his bullet-proof coat, descends a private stairway to a bomb-proof drawing-room and receives his meals on a dumb-waiter from the laboratory with the chemist's certificate that all injurious substances have been

removed.

[Illustration: Nicholas III, shaving.]

"This is the latest method, an official taster having been formerly employed, but owing to the exorbitant rate of insurance on such officers and the rapid decimation of the royal retinue, that plan was recently abandoned. After finishing his repast the Czar receives the morning papers, previously disinfected, and after reading the news, sentences a few nihilists to death by means of a long-distance telephone.

[Illustration: The court chemist analyzes the Czar's breakfast.]

"In Germany the situation is almost as bad. The Kaiser spends the entire morning endeavoring to suppress an incipient revolution, and after convicting several editors for 'les majeste,' drives around the streets of Berlin, wearing a baseball mask and making speeches to his soldiers, upon whom he urges the necessity of constant watchfulness.

"The young potentate of the Celestial empire is not far behind. He keeps one eye on the dowager and the other on Li Hung Chang, while he sends out harikari mandates to troublesome officials, and stands off the Russian ambassador. Last, but not least, is the Sultan of Turkey, who has a large family to provide for and who keeps a man busy issuing promissory notes to Uncle Sam so that his wives may be properly supplied with filigree hair pins and divided skirts. They say he recently bought the entire stock of an insolvent dry goods store for his harem, and it only went half way around.

"The king business is not what it is cracked up to be. I know lots of fellows who would make first-rate kings, and I don't know but what I would make quite a hit in that line myself. But I wouldn't take the job if I could get it. I'd sooner be chief of police or a corporation lawyer. There's more money in it and not half the danger."

THE EATING HABIT

"My friend," said the Observer to his vis-a-vis, who was studying the bill-of-fare on the other side of the table, "did you ever stop to consider in what an advanced age we are living? Have you ever studied the laws of the universe and sought to figure them out?"

"'Never had time,' you say; 'keeps a man busy providing cash to feed his family.' Well, that's just the point. Have you never realized that half of our time is spent in preparing, eating and digesting food, while the other half is employed in making money enough to buy it? Now, students of psychology say that, in time, the human body will become so refined that it will be able to absorb all necessary nourishment from 'universal life,' and need not gorge itself with animal or vegetable organisms.

"What vast changes such a condition will inaugurate. The Frenchman will no longer clog his digestive apparatus with 'pate de foi gras;' the rodent will pursue the even tenor of his way in the land of the heathen Chinese, without danger of being converted into a stew; the aged mutton of Merrie England will gambol on the green, with chops intact; the Teuton will forsake his sauerkraut; the benighted heathen his missionary pot-pourri, and the ghosts of slaughtered canines shall cease to haunt the sausage-maker of our own beloved country.

"It means the elimination of the dyspeptic and the 'autocrat of the breakfast table,' who frowns coldly upon the efforts of his young wife in the culinary line and carries off her biscuits to serve as paper weights. The scoffer at occidental table manners will cease to cavil at the genial westerner who eats vegetables with a knife, pie with a spoon, and drinks his coffee from the saucer, a napkin tucked in graceful folds beneath his ample chin.

"The picturesque phraseology of the Bowery-waiter will fade from view when he ceases to hustle 'stacks of whites,' 'plainers,' and 'straight-ups' to waiting customers, or bawl a hoarse-voiced 'draw one,' to the white-capped cook.

"The grafter will lack his usual excuse for making a 'touch;' the after-dinner speech will no more pave the politician's ways to fame, and the portrait of the baby that thrived on Malter's Malted Milk, which now embellishes the pages of newspaper and magazine, will become naught but a lingering memory of the past."

DELIGHTS OF FLASHLIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY.

"See those hands?" said the Observer, holding up two "bunches of fives," whose digits were stained near the ends with some dark brown substance, "that's pyrogallic acid---and that burn near my thumb was made by Blitz Pulver. It wouldn't take a Sherlock Holmes to discover that I had the camera craze, would it?"

"The other day I went into a photographic supply house to look at some of their cameras and the clerk sold me one of the kind that 'a child can operate.' He didn't say where the child was to be found, but I have since concluded that it must be a very remarkable specimen of the infant prodigy, and is probably touring the country as a dime museum attraction on the strength of its wonderful abilities.

[Illustration: Poor B. is kicked by a calf.]

"I took the camera home with me and carefully assimilated the printed instructions which accompanied it, fixed up a dark room in the woodshed and then sauntered proudly back with my machine under my arm to photograph the baby.

"Now, I've always prided myself on the genial good nature of my infant. He hardly ever cries or kicks the covers off, or becomes afflicted with colic about 3 A.M. The butcher says he takes after me, though my wife won't acknowledge this, notwithstanding the fact that the butcher has six of his own and ought to know. Well, the moment I came in, that kid, instead of rolling his eyes and saying, 'a-goo-goo,' which means 'papa,' as everyone knows, set up a regular Comanche howl and threw his rattle at me. When I took him in my arms and tried to quiet him, he clawed at my eyes, kicked a pocketful of cigars to pieces and bellowed so vociferously that I gave him back to his ma.

"After a while he began to listen to reason and I set up my outfit near the window in order to have a good light. I tore down a blind and ripped a lace curtain clear across in my effort to get two exposures, and, Good Lord! you ought to see those prints.

"In the first snap I must have moved the camera, for I got only one side of the baby, but that side had three different arms and you could see the back of the chair through all of them. The second was normal, as to limbs, *etc.*, and plumb in the center, but it was all fuzzy, like an impressionist picture.

"I took them to the photo' store and asked the clerk what was wrong. He said:

"'Why, you've timed 'em too long. He's moved all over the plate. You want to use a big stop and make it quick!'

"'But what do you make it of and what is it for?' I asked perplexedly.

"He laughed and explained that I should make the hole in my lens larger and take a more rapid exposure; then he sold me a bottle of flashlight powder.

"That night I thought I would take a group at the dinner table, so we all assembled around the board. After knocking down a couple of pictures and upsetting the cuspidor, I got things all ready to light the fuse, expecting to get back to my chair and be in the picture before the stuff went off. The moment I lit it, however, the durned thing blazed up like a small volcano and I ran around the room for a minute or so with my thumb in my mouth. Then I discovered that the slide had not been withdrawn from the plate-holder. Well, the room was full of smoke and the baby was so badly frightened that we had to put him to bed before I could make another attempt. When my wife came back I set the cat up in the high-chair to fill out the gap and tried it again. This time, by using a long fuse and making a third-base slide, I got almost to my chair and the prospects looked promising. The result was an excellent view of the back of my head, occupying three-fourths of the plate, through which could be dimly discerned a silhouette of my wife and a black streak in mid-air which represented the cat jumping over the coffeepot.

[Illustration: Poor B. hanging by his pantaloons on a fence-post.]

"I know a fellow, though, who had a worse experience than mine. He took home a kodak and a 'creme de menthe' jag one night, and, as all his folks had retired and he was too impatient to wait until morning, he went out to the stable to flashlight the calf. The calf was too sleepy to object till the stuff exploded. Then he became imbued with such sudden and tremendous vitality that he kicked poor B. and his outfit into the middle of next week. The hired man heard the racket and found him hanging by his pantaloons on a fence-post. Part of the tripod was about his neck; his hair was full of ground glass and he was murmuring something about a trolley-car. They put him to bed and the first thing he said after he came to, was, 'Did they arrest the motorman?'

"I hear fellows talking about golf and driving four-in-hand, but, if anyone wants to experience a real hot time, let him get one of these easy-working cameras and practice on the family."

WONDERS OF SPIRITUALISM.

"Spiritualism is a wonderful thing," said the Observer in a retrospective tone. "As a source of valuable information, it beats the Encyclopedia Britannica in an easy hand gallop; the tonsorial artist is not in its class and even the 'Intelligence Office,' pales into innocuous desuetude beside it.

"Had it not been for a recent visit to a medium, I should never have learned many important truths which affect me very closely. In the first place I should not have known that I have a little brother and sister in 'spirit life.' I had always considered myself an only child and all of my relatives and friends cherished the same illusion. You may imagine my astonishment, then, at receiving messages from Brother Charley and Sister Ida, both of whom the medium described with marvelous attention to detail. They told me not to worry---that it would all come right, and that they were always with me, which is comforting and shows how affectionate children can be---even in spirit life.

"The next revelation which came from the 'other side' was the statement that a dark cloud which was then hovering over me, would soon pass away. This was interesting as well as instructive and, as I was idly speculating as to the exact location of the cloud, I was suddenly startled to learn that two beautiful young women---one fair and wealthy, the other dark and poor, but accomplished---had won my heart and that I was hesitating as to which one I loved the more.

"This was somewhat distressing and wholly unpremeditated on my part. I caught myself hoping, with a vague sense of guilt, that my wife wouldn't hear of it, for I knew it would worry her and bring about complications between us. Perhaps this was the dark cloud, I ruminated, and felt cheered by the assurance that it would soon pass away. The spirit that told me these things was evidently in a communicative mood and had, no doubt, looked up my case very carefully.

"You are very sensitive,' she told me---I use the word 'she' advisedly, for no masculine spirit could possibly have ferreted out all these facts. 'You touch many natures closely and benefit by this faculty.' I had just borrowed a little money from a friend and wondered if anything personal was intended by the word 'touch.' But I cast this thought aside as unworthy---no spirit would resort to slang.

"Do you often hear voices, indistinctly?' continued the spirit, 'strange voices which seem to call you and then sink away?' I thought of the telephone and wondered how she could have known.

"Yes,' I said, I hear them every day.'

"Ah!' said the spirit, 'you are mediumistic.'

"I started. 'Is it painful?' I asked, 'or likely to become chronic?'

"The medium sat bolt upright in her chair and rubbed her eyes violently. 'Your levity has destroyed the conditions,' she said. 'Two dollars, please.'

"I paid the money, and, in going out, I met a man looking at his watch in an irritated way.

"I engaged a sitting for 3 o'clock by telephone,' he said. 'Why have I been kept waiting half an hour?'

"The medium's jaw dropped with peculiar suddenness and she sat down heavily in a chair. A sudden revelation came to me.

"Sir,' I said, addressing the stranger, 'pardon the inquiry, but have you a Sister Ida and a Brother Charley in spirit life? Do you love two women---one fair and wealthy, the other poor and dark, but talented? Does a dark cloud hover over your life and do you hear voices calling you from afar? Are you sensitive and have you developed the sense of tou--?'

"Enough!' cried the man, hoarsely. 'I am convinced---here is your money,' and he handed me a five-dollar bill.

"Thanks,' said I, and left them there together."

THE POTENCY OF THE TESTIMONIAL

"Did you ever read the testimonial letters of noted persons?" said the Observer, thoughtfully, stirring his coffee. "There are many things which come with fame besides public adulation; they are material things and have a certain commercial as well as sentimental value, such as soap and corsets, patent medicines, face powder, vapor baths, books, cigars, corned beef, fountain pens, and patented trouser hangers. As soon as a man gets his name in print a few times he is deluged with samples by every manufacturer in the country. I know an actor who hasn't bought a cake of toilet soap since he began to play leading parts. All he's got to do is to write a testimonial for some new brand, saying he would use no other, and he gets a case; then, there is a leading lady who once endorsed a certain kind of shoe, and now she's got a dozen pairs in her trunk, which didn't cost her a cent.

"Among the personal effects of the late Senator D----- were six dozen porous plasters and nearly a gross of Casey's Liver Regulator. Whether the senator's demise was due to his strenuous efforts to deplete this generous supply has never been made known, but I very much doubt if the doctor, who attributed his death to heart failure was familiar with these facts at the time.

"Another famous statesman, who was as bald as he was absent-minded, once mailed a testimonial to the manufacturer of Blank's Hair Restorer, enclosing a photograph of himself. In their next advertisement they made two cuts from the picture, painting a profusion of wavy hair upon one, and ran them over a reproduction of his letter, labeled, 'Before and after using.' When the old gentleman saw it he was so pleased with his appearance in the latter cut that he straightforwardly bought a wig and ever afterwards kept up the delusion.

"Then there's the man who is cured by X-Y-Z Cough Cure, or Blither's Sarsaparilla. He may not be known to half a hundred people before he tries this wonderful stimulant; but after he takes half a dozen bottles and is 'snatched from the jaws of death,' his name and features become familiar to several millions of people. I know a carpenter in a northern county who resorted to this method and was so well advertised that, when the national representative for that district died, B----- was nominated for Congress and elected by a big majority.

"There is a saying that 'some men are born great; some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them.' I don't know who made this statement, or why it was made, but it's dollars to doughnuts that the fellow who did was saved from an untimely grave by the curative powers of Bunker Hill Stomach Bitters and rose from obscurity to high position as a result."

* * * * *

[Illustration: "They usually read * * * Dante's Inferno and think how sweet it is to suffer."]

* * * * *

AMBITIONS AND THINGS.

"Ambition is a good thing," said the Observer, deftly flicking the ash from his cigar. "It provides one with a certain amount of incentive which may prove useful in developing latent resources, but it ought to be carried about in a glass case and labeled, 'Handle with care.'

"Caesar had an ambition, but he overworked it with disastrous effect. Napoleon got good results from his for a while, but it finally gave out on him, and William Jennings Bryan, the latest prominent victim of ambition is in such a bad way that he has to ride on tourist cars, like 'common people.' This may be due to a beautiful spirit of consistency on his part, as editor of the 'Commoner,' but it is not in line with his ambition. All of which goes to show that ambition is no more subject to a guarantee than a patent-leather shoe---it looks very fine when you first get it, but it cracks.

"Then there is the ideal, which is even more perishable, but can fortunately be replaced when it breaks---for it does not wear out. Like a Prince Rupert drop, it is just as good as new until something steps on its tail, and then there is nothing left but a noise and a disturbed atmospheric condition.

"After a fellow's ideal, explodes he generally idles away his time pitying himself and saying sarcastic things about the entire human race, until he achieves a local reputation as a cynic. When in this state of mind there is no use in telling him that he is not the only original possessor of a bona fide broken ideal. He'll show you a little superficial scratch and say in husky tones, 'see this great wound it has made in my constitution, it will never heal. Happiness is an iridescent dream. Go and leave me to my fate!' Then he'll heave a sigh which he thinks comes from a broken heart, but which really emanates from a dyspeptic condition, caused by lack of exercise. After a while he finds that this brand of romance is an overcrowded field and that he doesn't get sufficient sympathy to make it pay. When he realizes that he is up against the competitive system good and hard, he bids a fond farewell to sentiment and goes to work.

"It is interesting to watch young women, just after they lose an ideal. They generally have more time to indulge the 'broken heart' idea and do it so much more scientifically than men. It is very effective to lounge about in a darkened room, wearing a pale, hopeless expression and picturesque negligee. They usually read Faust and Dante's Inferno and think how sweet it is to suffer.

"When friends come to cheer them up they sigh softly and say, 'Ah, no; it is too late. Once I had aims and aspirations, but Fate has swept them all away. I shall only drift and drift now, until it is all over.'

"Then, the comforters go away with tears in their eyes and send her flowers.

"How the poor child has suffered,' they say. But Providence only has a quiet laugh up her sleeve and says, as she winks the other eye,

"What fools these mortals be!"

THE TELEPHONE FACE

"What's the matter with that man?" said the Observer, repeating his friend's interrogation, as they passed a pedestrian wearing a most prodigious frown. "Don't you know what's the matter with him? He's got the telephone face.

"Never heard of it, eh? Well, that shows that your powers of perception are not particularly acute. The telephone face is no longer a physiognomical freak, but a prevalent expression among the several thousand unfortunate clerks and business men who find extensive use for the telephone necessary. It is a distinctive cast of features, too, which can readily be distinguished from any other by one who can read faces at all.

"The dyspeptic has a 'face.' His expression is fitful and disgruntled, but underlying it is a gleam of hope; the insolvent man, harassed by creditors, has another well-defined type of facial mold. It is haunted and worried, with a tinge of defiance in it; the owner of the 'bicycle face' has his features set in lines of deadly resolution; the 'golf face' displays fanatical enthusiasm and a puzzled look resulting from a struggle with the vocabulary of the game; the 'poker face' shows immobility and superstition; the 'telegraph face,' according to a well-known New York professor, is 'vacant, stoic and unconcerned,' but the 'telephone face' stands out among all of these in a class peculiar to itself. There are traces of a battle and defeat marked on it; the stamp of hope deferred and resignation, yet without that placidity which usually betokens the acceptance of an inevitable destiny. The brows are drawn together above the nose, and at times a murderous glint shows in the half-closed eyes of the possessor.

"The peculiar feature about the man with the 'telephone face' is, that he always believes the day will come when he will be able to get the right number and the right man without being told that the 'line's busy,' 'party does not reply,' or 'phone is out of order.' He is like the man who always backs the wrong horse, the poet with an 'Ode to Spring,' or the honest man seeking a political job, continually defeated, but ever dreaming of ultimate success.

"I know of only one instance in which the dream was realized. A new girl had been installed in a telephone office without proper instructions--a most unprecedented case. A bookkeeper, grown gray in the service of a large mercantile house, picked up his receiver wearily. It rang the new girl's bell, and like a flash, she said, 'Hello.' The bookkeeper gasped. 'Is that you, Central?' he asked huskily. 'Yes,' replied the unsophisticated maiden, pleasantly. 'What number, please?' The old man sat bolt upright and clutched the desk. 'Give me purple six double-nine,' he said, in quavering tones, and his weak form trembled as he spoke. Nimble worked the fingers of the uninitiated telephone girl, as she struck a peg in the switchboard and quickly rang a bell. A voice at the other end responded promptly, and the bookkeeper wiped cold beads of perspiration from his brow before he answered. 'Is this Jones & Company?' he almost

shrieked. 'Yes,' came the reply, full and clear, 'this is Jones talking.'

"A dull thud followed, and, when the other clerks rushed in, they found the old man lying still and cold, his right hand still grasping the receiver of the telephone, which had fallen to the floor beside him, and a smile of the most transcendent happiness they had ever seen, upon his faded lips."