The Chatham Record.

H. A. LONDON, Jr.,

EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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The Outer and the Inner Life.

"That within which passeth show."—HAMLET.

There is a song within the lyre
That never yet was sung;
Unborn it lies upon each wire
That loosely hangs unstrung,
Until the minstrel's hand shall strain
The slackened cords in tune again,
The bard's creative spirit give
That long a vocal soul to live.

There is a form that marble holds
Beneath its surface rude,
Deep in the unhewn heart it folds
Beauty no eye has viewed,
Until the sculptor's hand shall scale
Each layer off that stony veil,
Until at last shall stand displayed
The perfect form of loveliest mail.

There is a poem never told
Within the poet's soul,
Like hidden streams o'er beds of gold
Beneath the earth that roll,
Until some spell resistless wake
The soul in rhythmic song to break,
As bursts the stream into the light,
Bedifting with golden glory bright.

There is a love—nor tongue nor lips
Ever told its deep desire;
Burning the heart, it silence keeps
Like subterranean fire,
Until some mighty passion-gust
Breaks through the outward icy crust,
And burning lava-words reveal
That love the heart would hide concealed.

The song's unsung, unhewn the stone,
The poem's rhyme untold,
The hidden fire of love unknown
Beneath the surface cold.
'Tis better thus—the secret kept
The wound unseen, the woe unwept
The outer life's deceitful show,
The inner life that none may know.

—*John K. Hiller.*

HETTY'S MISTAKE.

"He's dread'ul hard to get along with," said Mrs. Jennings, in a complaining voice. "As full of kinks and freaks as an egg is of meat. But for all that, I think that Mary would have suited him if it hadn't been for Bela Barlow."

"Girls is so queer," said Miss Hetty Boone, screwing up one eye toward a drapery of calicoes that swung to and fro in the northeast corner of the room. "Ahch-o so inconsiderate, too!"

"But it's an ill wind that blows no good to nobody," added Mrs. Jennings, with a Roman sigh. "Perhaps you can manage him. Mebbatsie, and in that case it will be a good home for you."

Hetty Boone bridled.

"As for that," said she, "I don't deny that I'd like to keep house for cousin Jacob, well enough. A penny saved is a penny earned, you know."

"But what is to become of us?" whined Mrs. Jennings, shaking out the folds of a calico-bordered pocket handkerchief.

"That's your own look-out," said Hetty Boone, indifferently, as she took off her beregé veil and folded it mathematically up inside of her hat.

Mr. Jacob Hopper lived in one of those old peaked-roof farm houses which still stand among the green Connecticut meadows, like relics of a past generation, with a well-sweep on one side and a huge butternut tree shaded its south exposure. Not a vestige of paint remained on the siding, the shingles were patched and repatched, the fence tied up with string and wire, the cow-shed propped with posts of every size and dimension, and yet there was a rumor in the neighborhood that old Jake Hopper was as rich as Crœsus.

He had only one extravagance, that was his flower garden. Roses of the rarest variety bloomed at the back of the house, where early frosts could not corrupt, nor stray boys break through and steal. Expensive bulbs, imported direct from Holland, painted the borders with gold and scarlet in the early spring. Choice shrubs occupied the position of exterminated gooseberry and currant bushes, and everybody believed that Bela Barlow would have gained the old man's good will in that matter of pretty Mary Jennings' love if he had not declared that he would rather have a bunch of good old-fashioned "pinies and tiger-lillies" than all cousin Jacob's Japanese hydrangeas and blotched coleus plants.

"Oh, Bela, how could you tell him that?" said Mary, in despair.

"Wal, it was the truth," said Bela, bluntly.

And as Miss Hetty Boone chanced to be visiting there just at that time, Mr. Hopper invited her to take charge of his household in the place of his widowed cousin and her daughter.

"But it never would have happened, mother," said Mary, with spirit, "if Hetty Boone had not filled his mind with doubts and ill-feelings toward us."

"Oh, Mary, don't be so uncharitable," said the meek widow.

"I don't intend to be, mother," said Mary, "but I'm quite sure I heard her telling cousin Jacob that I used too much sugar in the spice-cookies, and that your way of baking flannel-cakes was foolishly extravagant. She's a sly, contriving old pussy-cat, mother, and that's the long and short of it."

And Mrs. Jennings sighed, and made no answer.

"Don't worry, mother, dear," said Mary, caressingly. "You'll see that we shall get along splendidly. Bela has hired the blacksmith's shop, with the little yellow house in the rear, and I'll raise poultry and spring lambs, and you shall sit in the parlor, like a lady, with your best cap on, every day. Cousin Jacob shall see that we can get along without him, as well as he can get along without us."

Mary Jennings drew up her trim, little figure, and settled the blue ribbon in her braids, with a pretty consciousness of coming success, which, although it might not be authorized, was certainly very becoming. And so Bela Barlow thought, for he added, conclusively:

"That's so!"

But love and youth can afford to be generous. And so the two young people went into cousin Jacob's sick room, to bid him good-by.

"So you're really going to be married, be you?" said cousin Jacob, who looked as yellow and withered as so many elderly mummy, among his pillows, in the semi-darkened sick room. "Oh, these rheumatics—rheumatics! Oh, oh!"

"That's what we're a thinking of," said Mr. Barlow. "It's well now as ever."

"Yes, yes, I dare say," said cousin Jacob. "But don't shake hands with me, please! It hurts! What was we talkin' of? Oh, I remember now! Gettin' married. It's all folly and nonsense, I think, and there ain't no sort of doubt but you'll both come to the poorhouse. But Polly there's a good girl enough, and so I mean to give you a weddin' present, for all you've used me so bad!"

He paused here for a second, to groan over the sudden twinges in his elbow joints.

Bela Barlow's vision pictured a pair of stout working-oxen, at the very least.

Mary's imagination depicted a black silk dress, or a set of willow-pattern china.

"And so," went on cousin Jacob, "I'll give you six of them new gladioly bulbs from New York—them as was a dollar apiece, and can't be duplicated at no price now. There!"

Bela Barlow was cured with a sudden fit of coughing.

Mary Jennings answered, meekly:

"Thank you, cousin Hopper!"

And Mrs. Jennings went out into the back kitchen and cried.

"Hetty Boone'll give 'em to you," said Mr. Hopper, complacently. "They're wrapped in a paper on the shelf where the garden tools are. And mind you take good care of 'em. It's just the time o' year to plant them out, and if they do well, money can't buy 'em."

And Mr. Hopper sank, alternately groaning and chuckling, back among his pillows.

So the young couple were quietly married, and went to live in the little yellow farmhouse behind the blacksmith's shed.

"Hang the gladiolies!" said Bela Barlow. "I've a good mind to feed 'em to the pig."

"Oh, Bela, don't!" said Mary. "Give 'em to me. I'll plant 'em in the little south border. Cousin Jacob meant it in all kindness, you know."

"But what do we care for gladiolies?" persisted Bela.

"Never mind," said Mary. "I'll plant 'em, all the same."

In the meantime, however, a storm was brewing at the Hopper homestead.

Cousin Jacob, who had by this time recovered so far as to hobble about with a stick and a pair of carpet-slippers, did not relish his dinners as he used to do.

"D'ye call this an onion stew?" said he. "Why, there ain't no sort o' flavor about it."

And Miss Boone, who had a chronic catarrh, and could not taste anything declared that the flavor was excellent.

"Humph! humph!" growled Jacob Hopper, "I'd as soon eat so much stewed rags! Put it in the pig's barrel. Bring on your pudding. A man must eat something!"

The pudding—one of the variety known as "b'iled injin"—was brought on, and luckily it proved to be tolerably palatable.

So that, after the mid-day meal, old Jacob went out to look for his bulbs on the shelf.

"I'm late a-plantin' 'em," said he. "But that's somethin' I never could trust any one else to do. But, dear me, this 'ere's a most onaccountable circumstance. Where be they?"

Hetty Boone was summoned from her dish-washing to solve the problem.

"Gladioly bulbs!" said she. "I don't know nothin' about 'em. How should I?"

"But they were on the shelf here!" said old Jacob. "In a flat, yellow pie-plate. Six of the Royal Princess variety, at a dollar apiece."

Miss Boone turned livid.

"I guess the rats has got 'em," said she. "Or, hold on, cousin Jacob—you give 'em to Bela Barlow's wife yourself."

"Them was in a blue pie-plate!" shrilly cried Mr. Hopper. "Where are my gladiolies, Hetty Boone? That's what I want to know. Twelve dollars a dozen! Varieties as can't be replaced not for the mint itself."

Miss Boone wisely got behind the skeleton of the old spinning-wheel.

"Wal," said she, "if you must know, Jacob Hopper, you eat them gladiolies for your dinner. I s'posed they were onions, and stewed 'em up. And, after all, what's the use of such a mortal fuss about a few dried-up old roots?"

So speaking, Miss Hetty fled for her life, and none too soon, for Jacob Hopper had seized the wooden rake in his wrath.

"The Lord be good to me!" said the repentant old man, as the sound of the banging kitchen door warned him that Miss Hetty had got beyond the reach of his rage. "I never struck a woman yet, but I dunno what I might be tempted to do if that erector had stayed on here."

Mary Barlow was weeding her china-aster bed, when cousin Jacob trudged slowly and painfully up to the blacksmith's shop.

"Mary," said he, "have you planted them bulbs?"

"Yes, cousin Jacob!"

"Well, you may dig 'em up ag'in," groaned the old man. "They ain't nothin' but red onions. Hetty give you the wrong lot. She b'iled the dollar-bulbs in a stew that tasted like old newspapers. I'm p'isoned, for all I know. And I dunno that it makes much difference whether I live or not."

"Oh, cousin!"

"Mary," pursued cousin Jacob, "do you s'pose your mother would come back to keep house for me? Hetty Boone is going to-night. I hain't been half-way comfortable since she came to keep my house. And if you and Bela would come, too, I'd let him have the farm on shares. Somehow, I'm lonesome without you. And these gladiola bulbs have opened my eyes. You nor your mother wouldn't have made such a blunder as that. I ain't ashamed to own that I've been in the wrong, and you in the right. Will you come?"

"Yes, cousin Jacob," Mary answered, heartily kissing the old man.

So ended the reign of Miss Hetty Boone. The fate of the gladiola bulbs had sealed her doom. And all the stipulation that cousin Jacob made, was that their common table should never be desecrated by the presence of onion stew.

Death from Emotion.

From America, says the London *Lancet*, comes the record of a very instructive case in which a man died from fright, and where the death narrowly escaped being attributed to ether. The patient had received a severe injury to his hip during some blasting operations. Some days after the injury a consultation was held in the Wilkesbarre Hospital, and it was considered necessary to administer ether. The man objected to this and urged that his heart was weak, but it was considered necessary to anæsthetize him. This decision seemed to affect the man strongly; he breathed with great difficulty, asked for the windows to be opened, and died in a few minutes. No ether or other anæsthetic had been administered, and he had not suffered any pain from the partial examination of the hip that had been made. No particulars of the actual state of the heart are given, but we are told that a "murmur" was present. There is no difficulty, however, in tracing the death to a powerful inhibitory influence upon a weak heart. Had the surgeons begun to administer ether this death would have been wrongfully attributed to the effects of the anæsthetic.

A Queer Tree.

The queerest of trees must be the baobab, or monkey bread. It grows to the height of forty feet, "but its girth is entirely out of proportion to its height, some trees being thirty feet in diameter. An old baobab in Africa is, then, more like a forest than a single tree. Their age is incalculable." Humboldt considers them as "the oldest living organic monuments of our planet." Some trees are believed to be 5000 years old. You can cut a good-sized room into the trunk of a baobab, with comfortable accommodations for thirty men, and the tree lives on and flourishes. It produces fruit about a foot long, which is edible. As an example of slow growth in England, a baobab at Kew, though more than eighty years old, has only attained a height of four and a half feet. A kindred species of the African baobab grows in Australia. They have been measured, being thirty feet high, with a girth of eighty-five feet.

A REVOLTING SIGHT.

The Ceremonies of a Russian Pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Nicholas.

In everything that Mrs. Scott-Stevenson writes, says the London *Athenæum*, we find a command of language and descriptive powers far above the average. The writer's energy and endurance, too, are happily unimpaired; she has the same decided opinions, likes and dislikes, and, above all, she holds the same pleasant and unquestioning belief that in every emergency the knot will be untied by her husband "Andrew's" superior judgment, or severed, in the last resort, by his strong right arm. He had certainly no sinecure, escorting a party of ladies for whom an encounter with Greek brigands had more attraction than terror.

The "summer seas" which lave the shores on which most of Mrs. Scott-Stevenson's scenes are laid are the Ægean, the Levant, and the Adriatic. Her opinion of the people of these regions we are probably intended to gather from the motto prefixed to the volume, "Where every prospect pleases and only man is vile." She is shocked at the filth and degradation of the poorer quarter of Bari; but an Italian traveler might match these in our large towns. The most degrading sight she saw in Italy was one with which the Italians had comparatively little to do, viz., a Russian pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Nicholas at Bari.

They were all dressed in a kind of uniform; the men in gray, bare-footed, with staffs slung over their shoulders, on which were tied bundles of clothes and a pair of boots; the women wore blue serge skirts, gray jackets, and red handkerchiefs round their heads, and, like the men, carried bundles, with a water-bottle and tin mug, on their backs. They were all slowly crawling up the steps with bleeding knees and torn, travel-stained garments, muttering prayers and endless litanies as they toiled upward. On entering the church we saw a shocking sight, so painful that I hesitate to describe it. Four pilgrims were on their knees, with their heads beat down to the ground in the most unnatural attitude, their eyes shut, and the swollen veins standing out like cords from their crimsoned foreheads. A man walked by the side of each, holding one end of a handkerchief, while the wretched penitent held the other, and was thus guided along the pavement. For a few seconds we did not realize what was taking place, but as they crawled onward, we noticed four marks like a dark ribbon behind them, and it dawned on us that they were actually licking the floor! And such a floor! Thousands of only half-civilized human beings had been in the church since daybreak, as the tainted atmosphere but too plainly showed. For over eighty yards these wretched creatures kept their tongues on the rough pavement, over every pollution that came in their way. We were chained to our seats by horror and disgust, and in spite of ourselves stayed till they at last reached the altar steps and were permitted to rise. Their faces haunt me still; the small, cunning eyes, turning steadfastly towards us and as hastily turned away; half-shamefaced, half-ferocious looks, the coarse, dirt-smeared features, the matted heads of hair, and the lolling, lacerated tongues bleeding over their chins. And these were fellow-creatures, these benighted wretches, looking like scared wild beasts.

Torpedo Warfare.

Torpedo attack in warfare is receiving pretty close study abroad, and English authorities are viewing the subject in almost every possible light. Altogether, it seems that the attack has considerably the best of the defense in this case, for, after summing up all the known methods of resisting torpedo boat attacks, there seems to be comparatively little comfort to be gained. Torpedo nettings, the use of torpedoes from the ship which is attacked, machine guns and direct fire of large artillery are all considered, and in each case the verdict has been there is more uncertainty than is desirable. The fast torpedo boats, capable of discharging either long projectiles or torpedoes, having enormous bursting charges are decided ugly customers, and no certain way has so far been suggested by which their attacks may be diverted. It is all the more unsatisfactory because the small torpedo boats can easily discharge such missiles at a speed considerably greater than that of the fastest iron-clads now afloat, many of them being able to keep a speed of twenty miles an hour for more than an hour at a time, while but few, if any of the iron-clads will be able to make anything like that speed after having been at sea two or three months. The final outcome of all the suggestions seems to be that Gatling guns of one-inch bore are, so far as known, the most effective weapon against torpedo boat.

A MOTHER'S LAST LETTER.

Written to Her Son Shortly Before His Execution.

Of the thousands who read in the Gazette the report of the Clarksville executions none can have forgotten the touching letter written to young "Jimmie" Johnson a few days before that fatal day. It was from his mother, over whose humble home brooded the desolation of the impending fate of her son, who, though a blood-stained criminal in the eyes of the law, was not less dear to her whose eyes had looked upon him for the last time.

She had received his own letter, and writes: "If I could see you one time more, how glad I would be!" But" and who can depict the agony the simple words cost their heart-broken author? "My darling boy, the time is close at hand when you will know your doom. You asked me to forgive you." Ask such a mother to forgive her son—that mother who with streaming eyes replies: "Yes; my dear, if I could take your place I would do it." Who does not believe this? Who does not feel that this poor woman would gladly have mounted the gallows that her darling boy might be saved—and for what? To plunge once more into crime. What of that to her? Was he not her son, to whom she wrote in her sweet, simple way: "The yard is full of roses and other flowers. It would look good if you were here." But he was not there. Never was he to be there again. And though the sun's rays entered the little cell and gilded the sweet flowers with their golden sheen, though the cherries had ripened "the nicest cherries you ever saw," she writes—not for a moment could the demon of anguish gnawing at this fond mother's heart be driven away. "But, my dear, I cannot enjoy anything. You are never out of my mind." No wonder the young criminal, though walking in the valley of the shadow of death; though already feeling the fatal noose tightening about his neck; though listening to the tramp of armed men coming to bear him to a felon's death—no wonder, even in that awful hour, he forgot his own doom and thought only of her, who in her home, far away, sat in the ashes of a grief unutterable, of a devotion unfathomable, and wept and grieved and prayed as only a mother can weep and grieve and pray! No wonder that he even pleaded that her last letter might be printed, that the world might know how good and noble she was, that the world might see her as she appeared to him, who so errant footsteps had led him into crime, and was breaking her heart!

"The children all send their love to you. John is a good boy to work. Caley and Nan have to work all the time. John does all the plowing. Lydie talks a great deal about you. Maud grows some." How tender and loving! Criminal, murderer, though he was, to that bereft household he was only the absent and loved one, and in her grief the mother could thus write. She felt that he would find consolation in their childish, affectionate remembrance. She could think of all this, and then add in words grandly eloquent in their simplicity, and filled with tenderness and the agony of despair: "I want you to write me one more letter. This may be the last one I can ever write to you. Don't forget to pray, Jimmie. You know how well I love you, and I never got tired waiting on you when you were sick. You don't know how bad I felt when I heard you was sick and I could not be with you. Now, my darling boy, trust in God and don't grieve any more about me. Edy wants to write. All the love to you that a mother can have. Write my dear boy, if you can."

Every line of this letter has moistened eyes with tears. Every line appeals to the sweetest sympathies in human nature. It is the very sublimity of grief. It is the heart speaking. No one who did not feel as this humble, God-fearing woman felt could write as she wrote, in that last letter to the one being she most fondly loved—to the one being who least deserved a mother's love and prayers and tears.

Just a Way He Has.

City boarder to farm hand: "Why does that old looking fowl make that curious noise?" "That rooster that jest crowed? Oh that's jest a way he has, ma'am, of signifyin' that he's a high flyer from up the creek, and can lick all creation, and that he's happy because he ain't old enough by eleven years to make pot pie for summer boarders."

Ex-Governor Stanford of California, owns one ranch at Vina, Tehama county, covering 25,000 acres of land. It will be planted in grapes.

SCIENTIFIC SCRAPS.

M. DeLesseps states that the evaporating power of the sun is less on the site of the proposed inland sea of Sahara than on the Red Sea, and he does not anticipate that the waters will dry up.

Geological examination reveals in the delta of the Mississippi, along a space of 300 miles, ten distinct forests of buried trees. Bald cypresses with a diameter of twenty-five feet have been found.

A Chinese imperial decree has been issued ordering that the telegraphic lines between Woosung and Shanghai, and between Amoy and Hailoon, are to be constructed by the Chinese themselves and not by Europeans or other foreigners.

Prof. Joseph Le Conte has come to the conclusion that the supposed human footprints at Carson, Nevada, are the tracks of a large plantigrade quadruped. He adds that there is an abundant room for honest difference of opinion in the matter.

It is maintained by some scientists that the aroma of fruits increases with the latitude, while the sweetness decreases. Many herbs, such as caraway, are richer in essential oils in Norway than in more southern regions. The effect is ascribed to the influence of the prolonged light of the summer months.

Among Russian geologists the belief appears to be settled that granite rocks, once thought to be of igneous and eruptive origin, are really of aqueous formation. The granite of the rapids of the Dnieper, when closely examined, show stratification, and under the microscope they are seen to contain drops of brown water.

Dr. Julien comes to the following conclusion in regard to the life of stones, defining life as the period during which the stone presents a decent appearance. Coarse brownstone, best used out of the sun, from five to fifty years. Laminated fine brownstone from twenty-five to fifty years. Compact fine brownstone from one to two centuries. Nova Scotia stone will probably last from fifty to one hundred years. Ohio sandstone, the best of the sandstones, 100 years. Caen stone, from thirty-five to forty years; coarse Sebastopol marble, forty years; fine marble, sixty years; pure calcareous marble, from sixty to one hundred years; granite, from seventy-five to 200 years, according to variety.

The Consternation an Owl Made.

The action of the Washington monument is watched most carefully and its every movement registered. Two plummets are suspended in its inside, one from a height of 200 feet and the other from a height of 150 feet. The movements of these are compared many times a day. The movement of one should be about one and one-half times that of the other if there were no irregular internal movement on the part of the structure. But the register shows that the movement is irregular in both direction and in size. Sometimes the plummets move in opposite directions and sometimes in the same. Sometimes the top moves a little, but its whole sway since the foundation was strengthened has been only one-quarter of an inch. All of these movements are very slight, and can only be detected with a microscope. The longer plummet line is encased in a wooden box, to prevent the atmosphere having any effect upon it, and since the finding that the spiders had once drawn the line out of the perpendicular, a careful investigation is made daily, to see that the lines are not influenced by outside causes. Once, when great consternation was caused by the irregularity of the line, it was found that an owl was perched upon the top of the line. It was caught, killed, stuffed and given to Mrs. Hayes, and it is now probably on exhibition at Fremont.

She Took the Medicine.

The doctor had loved her long and well, but dare not mention it. At length she became indisposed and sent for him. He could see nothing materially wrong with her, except a little irregularity about the heart, and at length she asked:

"Well, doctor, what do you think ought to be done for me."

Replied the doctor, "I don't know of any better way than to go to the county clerk's and get a matrimonial prescription."

"What and get married—why who in the world would have me?"

"I will," replied the doctor.

"Oh, dear me, if that is the kind of medicine you are going to give me, it won't be so bad to take after all, will it dear," replied the rapidly reviving young lady.—*Winfield (K. W. Co.) Free-press.*

Things Not Always What They Seem.

Only the leaf of a rosebud,
That fell to full bloom on floor,
Felt from the tinted clusters
Of the big bouquet she wore.

Quickly she stooped and picked it,
"To the vase rose," said he.
"Let it with summer blushes
And flower thus gladden me."

"Lovely and fragrant petal,
Some sweet summer night, who knows,
I may have a chance to tell her
I envied the lips of the rose."

But when to his lips he pressed it,
He muttered in accents wrath;
"The painted thing is artificial,
And made out of cotton cloth."

—*Somerville Journal.*

PUNGENT PARAGRAPHS.

Gaudy colored ties are the latest advertising venture. Good thing to "raise the wind."

One of the most trying moments in a man's life is when a lady is getting his picture taken to send to his best girl, and is just assuming his most angelic expression, and a fly alights on his nose.

"Ma!" called the facetious small boy "Well, dear?" "I'm only one, ain't I?" "Yes, love." "Then if I eat this green apple I'll be two, won't I?" "How is that, dear?" "Why, it'll double me up."

Longfellow said, "In this world a man must be either anvil or hammer." Longfellow was wrong, however. Lots of men are neither the active hammer nor the sturdy anvil. They are nothing but bellows.

"Is that dog mad?" he asked the boy as the animal dashed by. "I reckon he is!" replied the boy; "just see a butcher take a piece of meat away from him and kick him six feet into the air. Wouldn' you be mad if that was done to you?"

A young carpenter wants to know "what is a jogle-piece?" Why don't you read your dictionary? Webster says it "jogle-piece is a timber post whose double and sockets receive the lower ends of the struts." Good gracious, we thought everybody knew what a jogle-piece is.

There is a beautiful practice common throughout a portion of Mexico for little children to kneel before a stranger and pray that he may have a safe journey. And the fathers of the children have a practice not so beautiful, of "laying for" the stranger in the forest with a jacknife two feet long.

Do you want to see some fun?" said a small boy to his father. "Don't care if I do," he replied. "Well, let's go and listen to Deacon Dumpy tack down his carpets." "I don't think there's anything funny in that," scornfully snorted the patient. "Don't, eh? You seem to forget that the Deacon stutters." "Ah," said the old man. Then they went over to hear kon.

Indian Food in Arizona.

All the varieties of cacti bear fruit, which is valued by the Indians for food, says an Arizona letter. They also cook the fleshy leaves of the prickly pear when young, which are said to resemble string beans in flavor. The Indians also use the head of the maguey, or century plant, for food. It is found everywhere in the territory and is cultivated for revenue in Mexico. It contains a large amount of saccharine matter. The century hypothesis in regard to its blooming is a myth, however, long since exploded. Instead of requiring a hundred years to attain maturity and blossom, the plant blossoms in seven years from making its first appearances. It then dies, its mission ended. The leaves, which are fleshy and stiff, with thin edges covered with thorns, branch from the root in long lances, growing to the height of three or four feet. The centre of the plant consists of a large bead, something like a cabbage. From this springs a pole, eight to twelve feet high, which branches near the top, bearing a yellow flower. The Indians prepare the head for food by roasting in an oven made of stones sunk in the ground. We had an opportunity to taste a piece of the maguey so prepared, and found it delicious, sweet and nutritious, tasting very much like old-fashioned, home-made molasses candy. If that was a specimen morsel, the Indians deserve no sympathy on the score of their diet, as it was really a luxury.

The juice of the plant is also converted into syrup and a fermented drink, called tizwin by the Indians, and the Mexicans distil it, making an intoxicating liquor called mescal. We also tested this liquor burned on an omelet, and found it as good as brandy for that purpose. In its natural state, unburnt, it has a strong, smoky taste, resembling Scotch whisky. Many useful articles are made from the fibre of the maguey, ropes and even paper having been manufactured from it.