ROANOKE BEACON.

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According to the Catholic Herald there are about 152,000 colored Catholics in the United States.

The colored element is increasing much less rapidly than the white—not only in the country at large but in the Southern States, avers the Chicago Herald.

An undue importance is given to the bullet-proof armor lately brought out by Dowe and others, the New York Recorder thinks. It is intended to protect the vital parts only, and the head, arms and legs are exposed. In a conflict the ratio of wounded to dead combatants is very large, and a wounded man is as harmless as a dead one for offensive purposes. Probably a body of men so equipped would possess a stronger element of courage, and therefore add to its efficiency; but this added daring would only serve to bring the combatants closer together, and thereby largely increase the number of wounded. Would not a protected army lose, in the greater number of wounded what it presumably would gain in courage?

A report on the uncultivated bast fibers of the United States by Charles Richard Dodge, special agent in charge of fiber investigations, has just been issued from the Department of Agriculture. Among the plants described are species found in every section of the United States, from Maine to Florida and from Minnesota to Arizona. Some of them are jute substitutes, while others, if cultivated, would produce a fiber rivaling hemp. Over forty fibar plants are treated in the report, the history of twenty forms being given in full with statements regarding past efforts and experiments toward their utilization. Special chapters are devoted to the asclepias or milkweed fibers, okra, cotton stalk fiber, the common abutilon—known commercially as "China jute," but growing in the fence corners of every Western farm—Colorado River hemp and many others.

So marvelous have been the triumphs of the human intellect in the past, that the Rochester Post-Express believes that he would be a rash man who should undertake to prescribe boundaries to its discoveries in the future. For it may be scarcely a decade before the very achievements declared to be impossible, will be accomplished fact. Fifty years ago Auguste Comte, the famous founder in France of the Positivist school of philosophy, of which Frederic Harrison, in England, is one of the foremost expounders, declared that there was one field of knowledge that would forever remain beyond the reach of the human mind. This was the constitution of the fixed stars and the elements of which they are composed. The nearest of these stars being many thousand of millions of miles from us, Comte affirmed that the substances constituting them must ever remain locked in the secrecy of fathomless space. So probably they would had man been able to arm himself with no more potent apparatus of discovery than was known in Comte's day, or than would then have been believed possible. For to the most powerful telescopes these far away orbs reveal themselves as little more than shining dots, betraying none of the secrets of their structure. But Comte had scarcely launched his prediction, before astronomers began to hit upon and perfect the discovery of the now far-famed spectrum analysis, which wrenches even from stars deep in the recesses of illimitable space the nature and number of the elements of which they are composed. Many of these elements are the same as those known to us on our earth and in our sun; but some are strangers to our chemistry. Comte as a positivist was not given to modesty—indeed was noted for dogmatism—but even he underrated the possible achievements of the human intellect. In view of his nullified prophecy, it need not be counted rash to say that before another half century has flown, the oft-asked questions, "can we communicate with Mars?" and "can we know whether it has inhabitants?" may receive an affirmative answer. For who can tell with what new apparatus of discovery, eclipsing any now possessed or dreamed of, man may by that time have armed himself.

THE OLD STONE WELL.

Oh, the old stone well,
In the shady little dell,
Which lay across the meadows where the cowslips dwell;
How our tired hearts swell
As we long, more than we'll tell,
Just to soak in air and sunshine by the old stone well.

Oh, the faint, cool breeze
That sifted through the trees,
And murmured soft accommpaniment to the humming of the bees;
How one's soul 'twould please
To sit there 'neath the trees,
And to build again those castles that one's youthtime sees.

How as boys we'd play,
On each bright sunshiny day,
In the grass and through the branches till the twilight gray;
And day after day,
On each load of fragrant hay,
Roll up gaily to the barnyard in the same old way.

But the years have sped,
And our boyhood friends have fled,
And the pretty girls we used to love long since wed;
But the tale we'll tell,
And with memory sweet we'll dwell,
As we watch their children playing round the old stone well.

—Jack Stevens, in Rochester Post-Express.

A PECULIAR WILL CASE.

THE rise of James McCurdy, a young attorney in New York City, was attended with a number of peculiar circumstances of which the public in general were ignorant. His brilliant work in the celebrated Morris vs. Morris will case won for him a measure of fame that would mean much to any young man in the legal profession. The case was a hard-fought one, involving much labor on the part of the attorneys, especially for the young attorney who sought to break the will whereby James E. Morris had left his entire estate to his scape-grace foster-son, George M. Morris,, and had disinherited his daughter Edith, who in the eyes of the world, had ever been her father's favorite. McCurdy had known Edith for many years and, while they had never been actually betrothed, their names were more or less associated. The young lawyer himself was wealthy, so the match was deemed a fitting one and Edith did not seem averse to his attentions. The news that she had been disinherited was received by the world with surprise. The estate was a large one and the last act of her father was inexplicable. No one was more mystified than James McCurdy.

"Of course I don't care myself that your money is gone, Edith," he said, "for I have enough for both of us. But it does seem strange that that scoun—"

"Don't call names, Jim," replied Edith, sadly. "It won't do any good. I never thought how it would seem to be left dependent, but I dare say I will get on somehow. I can teach music or become a companion, or paint china, or—"

"You shall do nothing of the kind," he retorted hotly, "You will marry me and have everything you want. Still I do not care to see that fellow who was never a brother to you—and you know what a life he led your father—take what is your just due."

"I don't want to marry you, Jim, and bring you nothing."

"You will bring yourself. That is sufficient. Still, if you will put this case in my hands, I will see that you get your just dues."

"You mean take it into the courts, Jim?" she cried in consternation.

"I mean just that. Contest the will."

"Never! I could never contest the will of my father."

"I don't believe it was his will."

"What, Jim?"

"I think it a forgery.

The upshot of the matter was that the will was contested. McCurdy found it uphill work collecting evidence. Nothing that he could learn shook his conviction that the father was not out of his mind when he made the will. He bent all his energies toward showing that the will was a forged document, but found that he made little headway in the task. The foster-son had a friend, Clarence Woodruff, a dissipated young man, and somehow the attorney could not avoid associating him with the forged document. He had Woodruff watched, but in spite of his zeal nothing came of the closest scrutiny of the young man's actions. Day after day he worried over the case until, finally, he was almost in despair. Edith alone was calm and indifferent. But now McCurdy had his professional reputation at stake, and he clung to the preliminary work on the case with dogged tenacity, although baffled at every step. One day, while pondering over the matter at his club, his attention was arrested by a familiar voice:

"Hello, Jim!"

"Jack, old boy!"

The two men clasped hands and were soon lunching together and conversing with much animation.

"By the way, Jack," said McCurdy, remembering a fad of his old friend, "are you doing anything in hypnotism lately?"

"I should think I was. I have become quite a celebrity in an amateur way on the other side of the water—belong to two London societies. But how are things with you, Jim? Married? No? Going to be? Why that sigh? Come, unbosom yourself."

With that Jim related all the perplexities of the case in hand and the other listened with marked attention. For several hours they conversed and at the end of that time came to some conclusion

"Pooh! I don't believe it will work, Jack!"

"There is no harm trying. You are sure you have told me all about Woodruff?"

"Yes."

"He is the man whom you suspect forged the will?"

"I do."

"Then if I succeed do you want him for a witness?"

"No; the other side are going to call him. He was well acquainted with Edith's father, and I believe claims to have been present when the will was drawn."

"You must point out Woodruff to me."

"Very well."

As they left the club a tall, well-dressed fellow passed.

"That is the man," said Jim.

"I won't forget him. Tell me where he is usually to be found."

The lawyer named several fashionable resorts and the other left him, saying at parting:

"I will look around in about a week and report."

The week passed and Jack was as good as his word. He appeared in evident glee.

"It's all right, Jim."

Then the two conspirators went out and had dinner at Delmonico's and further devised ways and means. The case came on for trial and Jim presented his witnesses. He asked Edith to be there that her presence might exercise a certain sympathetic effect upon the jury, but she refused, dreading the publicity. In opening Jim stated that he expected to show that the will filed for probate was a false and fraudulent document, a statement received by George's attorneys with smiles of amusement. It must be confessed that the testimony of his witnesses did not carry out this claim. The best that he showed was that Edith's father was always kind to her, loved her and had no reason for disinheriting her. When Jim's witnesses were exhausted the spectators in the court room were forced to confessed that he had a poor case. He had shown nothing, except by the most indirect inference. The other side built up what the young attorney at once mentally characterized "a gigantic tissue of falsehood." The principal witness was Woodruff, who testified that he had once heard the deceased say that he would disinherit Edith. During the direct examination of this witness, George sat cool and confident. He had supplied the motive for the disinheritance and the witness went on to say that the old gentleman's aversion to counsel on the other side, who was paying his daughter attentions, was the reason he had said he would leave her without a penny. The witnessed was questioned at length and told a story that was most effective for George.

"Take the witness," said the attorney for that young man.

Jim consulted with a gentleman who was seated directly behind him—a man who possessed a glittering pair of eyes, which he had kept steadfastly fixed on the witness.

"Is it all right, Jack?"

"Yes; I'm sure. Go slowly at first, though."

Jim turned to the witness.

"You are sure you heard Mr. Morris say that he would disinherit his daughter if she did not stop going with me?"

The witness hesitated, and finally answered in a bewildered way:

"No; I'm not sure those were just his words."

"Did his words imply any such thing?"

"I can't say that they did."

George regarded the witness with consternation, and Jim strode out in front of him and threw out question after question.

"Did you ever hear my name mentioned by Mr. Morris?"

"No."

"Now, did he as a matter of fact, ever say that he would disinherit his daughter?"

"No."

"Why did you say he did?"

"Because George Morris gave me $10,000 to testify in this case."

"It's a lie!" shouted that person.

"Your honor," said Jim coldly, "I protest against interruption. This is their witness, your honor, and I assert that I am following a legitimate line of questions. I give your honor my word that we have not tampered with this witness. If there has been any wrong doing, I protest that it was not on our side."

"You may proceed," said the court.

"Now, Mr. Woodruff, is it not a fact that Mr. Morris did not disinherit his daughter?"

"It is."

"Is it not a fact that in the true will he left her everything?"

"It is."

Here George whispered to his attorney: "That hound has sold us out."

"Is it not true that you manufacture a will to suit your purpose?"

"It is."

"This was a conspiracy between you and George Morris to defraud an innocent girl?"

"It was."

"Where is the true will?"

"In George Morris's possession."

"Where has he concealed it?"

"In his trunk in his room."

Here ensued of scene of confusion. George sprang to his feet with the intention of making an assault upon the witness. Officers were sent to the room and found the will.

It was a peculiar ending to a peculiar case, but whenever Jack in these days calls upon Jim and Edith and sees how happy they are in their married life he does not regret the part he took in the case, although he did hypnotize the principal witness for the other side.—Detroit Free Press.

Engineers' Eyes.

"This intensely hot weather and glaring sun reminds me of the great difficulties a locomotive engineer has to encounter when the sun is strong to cause a vivid reflection," said Walter Jourdan, who was for several years a locomotive engineer, and who abandoned the lever and throttle on account of failing eyesight. "I often hear people enlarge upon the difficulties of driving a locomotive in the dark or during heavy rain, but for my part nothing ever gave me more anxiety than continuous sunshine. Color blindness is frequently nothing more than intense pain in the eyes caused by watching objects which reflect the light, and upon which the sun is shining. In a run of several hours the glare from the rails which strikes the eyes while watching for track obstructions, and more particularly for rails which have been forced out of line by the heat, is very trying, and often when I have left the locomotive after such a run I have found the greatest comfort in resting in a room where Egyptian darkness prevailed. A man is afraid to wear smoked glasses lest he should be suspected of color blindness and lose his position. But some protection of this kind would greatly prolong the career of many an engineer and fireman."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

BICYCLING IN ASIA.

THE REMARKABLE WHEELING TOUR OF TWO AMERICANS.

In the Capital of Turkestan—Russian Home-Life Around the Samovar—On the Vast Steppe—A Mishap.

THE story of the remarkable bicycle tour around the world by the two young American students, Messrs. Allen and Sachtleben, now running in the Century magazine, shows how many dangers and difficulties they had to contend with, and what enterprise and mastery of resource they displayed. Their route lay through countries that were not accustomed to Western visitors, and their strange method of locomotion invariably called out great curiosity, not unmixed with superstitious fear.

In the August Century the young men describe their journey from Samarkand to Kuldja. Soon after leaving the former place the lowering snow-line on the mountains, the chilling atmosphere, and the falling leaves, warned them of the approach of winter. A failure to obtain necessary passports prevented them from attempting to reach Vernoye, a provincial capital near the converging points of the Turkestan, Siberian, and Chinese boundaries.

"Permission to enter Turkestan is by no means easily obtained, as is well understood by the student of Russian policy in Central Asia. We were not a little surprised, therefore, when our request to spend the winter in its capital was graciously granted by Baron Wrevsby, as well as the privilege for one of us to return in the meantime to London. This we had determined on, in order to secure some much needed bicycle supplies, and to complete other arrangements for the success of our enterprise.

"Our winter quarters were obtained at the home of a typical Russian family, in company with a young reserve officer. He, having finished his university career and time of military service, was engaged in Tashkend in the interest of his father, a wholesale merchant in Moscow. With him we were able to converse either in French or German, both of which languages he could speak more purely than his native Russian. Our good-natured corpulent host had emigrated, in the pioneer days, from the steppes of Southern Russia, and had grown wealthy through the 'unearned increment.'

"The Russian samovar is the characteristic feature of the Russian household. Besides a big bowl of cabbage soup at every meal, our Russian host would start in with a half-tumbler of vodka, dispose of a bottle of beer in the intervals, and then top off with two or three glasses of tea. The mistress of the household, being limited in her beverages to tea and soup, would usually make up in quantity what was lacking in variety. In fact, one day she informed us that she had not imbibed a drop of water for over six years. For this, however, there is a very plausible excuse. With the water at Tashkend, as with that from the Zerafshan at Bokhara, a dangerous worm called reshta is absorbed into the system. Nowhere have we drunk better tea than around the steaming samover of our Taskend host. No peasant is too poor, either in money or sentiment, to buy and feel the cheering influence of tea. Even the Cossack, in his forays into the wilds of Central Asia, is sustained by it. Unlike the Chinese, the Russians consider sugar a necessary concomitant of tea-drinking. There are three methods of sweetening tea: to put the sugar in the glass; to place a lump of sugar in the mouth and suck the tea through it; to hang a lump in the midst of a tea-drinking circle, to be swung around for each in turn to touch with his tongue, and then to take a swallow of tea."

When the spring came the young men began their journey again with unabated ardor. At Chimkend their course turned abruptly from what was once the main route between Russia's European and Asiatic capitals, and here they began that journey of 1500 miles along the Celestial mountain-range that terminated only when they began to descend into the burning sands of the Desert of Gobi.

"The steppe is a good place for learning patience. With the absence of landmarks, you seem never to be getting anywhere. It presents the appearance of a boundless level expanse, the very undulations of which are so uniform as to conceal the intervening troughs. Into these, horsemen, and sometimes whole caravans, mysteriously disappear. In this way we were often enabled to surprise a herd of gazelles grazing by the roadside. They would stand for a moment with necks extended, and then scamper away like a shot, springing on their pipe-stem limbs three or four feet in the air. Our average rate was about seven miles an hour, although the roads were sometimes so soft with dust or sand as to necessitate the laying of straw for a foundation. There was scarcely an hour in the day when we were not accompanied by from one to twenty Kirghiz horsemen, galloping behind us with cries of 'Yakshee!' ('Good!'). They were especially curious to see how we crossed the roadside streams. Standing on the bank, they would watch intently every move as we stripped and waded through with bicycles and clothing on our shoulders. Then they would challenge us to a race, and, if the road permitted, we would endeavor to reveal some of the possibilities of the 'devil's carts.'

"On an occasion like this occurred one of our few mishaps. The road was lined by the occupants of a neighboring tent village, who had run out to see the race. One of the Kirghiz turned suddenly back in the opposite direction from which he had started. The wheel struck him at a rate of fifteen miles per hour, lifting him off his feet, and hurling over the handle-bars the rider who fell upon his left arm and twisted it out of place. With the assistance of the bystanders it was pulled back into the socket, and bandaged up till we reached the nearest Russian village. Here the only physician was an old blind woman of the faith cure persuasion. He massage treatment to replace the muscles was really effective, and was accompanied by prayers and by signs of the cross, a common method of treatment among the lower class of Russians. In one instance a cure was supposed to be effected by writing a prayer on a piece of buttered bread to be eaten by the patient."

The Bank of France.

The Bank of France is guarded by soldiers, who do sentry duty outside the bank, a watch being likewise kept within its precincts. A former practice of protecting this bank was to get masons to wall up the doors of the vaults in the cellar with hydraulic mortar so soon as the money was deposited each day in these receptacles. The water was then turned on, and kept running until the cellar was flooded. A burglar would thus be obliged to work in a diving suit, and break down a cement wall before he could even begin to plunder the vaults. When the bank officers arrived each morning the water was drawn off, the masonry torn down, and the vaults opened.

The Bank of Germany, like most other German public buildings, has a military guard to protect it. In a very strongly fortified military fortress at Spandau is kept the great war treasure of the Imperial Government, part of the French indemnity, amounting to several million pounds.—Chambers's Journal.

Scratching Hard for an Education.

"Young men," says the Lewiston (Me.) Journal, "who have to scratch hard for an education nowadays may think their efforts and sacrifices less arduous if they hear the Rev. Dr. Joseph Ficker's account of his beginnings at Waterville College. Entering in 1835, he walked, with just $5 in his pocket, from his home in Parsonfield, near the New Hampshire line, to Waterville. With a part of his money he bought a bag of wheat and had it ground in the mill and took it to his room in the college. He then bought a jug of molasses, hired a woman to do his baking, and his cakes and molasses formed his daily food for the first term."

A shortage of billions of feet of pine lumber is predicted from the great Northwestern territory.