

PECULIAR.

Oh, human beings are, in sooth,
A most peculiar lot.
By them a lady or a youth
Is kidnaped, like as not.
They love to turn to reckless fun
Which undermines the health;
And each feels happiest when he's won
Another's hard-earned wealth.

Each likes to talk about the way,
He loves his fellow-man,
But you will notice, day by day,
He "does him" when he can.
The golden rule he quotes as truth—
'Tis instantly forgot.
These human beings are, in sooth,
A most peculiar lot.



"ELIZA," said Mr. Sparks on the night of the day that they moved into their new flat, "this apartment life is worse than one of Dante's circles. I'll make just one more move before I die, and that will be into a house in a suburb. Here we are just moved, everything topsy-turvy and no girl. Of course, the latest acquisition from the employment bureau had to leave us just to throw all the burden of the packing up and unpacking on us. Then again the janitors of all flats are nul-

claimed, "that's the advertisement of Mrs. Smithkins, who lives in the flat underneath this. You came to the wrong apartment."

"Well, I like the looks of this place, anyway, and I'll stay."

"Henry," said Mrs. Sparks, "won't it be a case of false pretenses if we keep her?"

"Not by a jugful. I'll send Mrs. Smithkins the price of her advertisement in an anonymous letter. 'To have and to hold' is a good motto in a case like this."

The girl Rosa, who stumbled into the Sparks' flat that moving day night, "William, you've been in the service."

"Yes, sir," said William, "I put in five years in the Fourth Cavalry."

"I can tell a regular the minute I clap eyes on him," said Mr. Sparks.

"I put in a good many years myself. You have two fine children here, William."

"Yes," said William, assentingly, and then Mr. Sparks said "Good-by."

That night when Mr. Sparks reached home his wife said: "The janitor came



ROSA.

sances. I'll bet the one in this building will prove to be worse than any of the others, and even a man accustomed to using strong language can't say anything stronger than that. Just look at this muss, will you, and no one to help us fix it up."

Just then the front-door bell rang. Henry Sparks stumbled over two trunks, his daughter's bicycle, barked his shin, bruised his toes and finally reached the door. There in the hall stood a young woman, comely and strong-looking. "Is this the place you want a girl?" she asked.

A sudden joy leaped into Henry Sparks' heart. "Yes," he said, "come in. We've just moved; we're all up-side down here. Look out for the boxes."

Then Mr. Sparks led the way into the dining room and turned the caller over to his wife. "Yes, we want a girl," said Mrs. Sparks; "we've just moved in, and may be you won't want to stay now; you see how things are and what cleaning is to be done."

"I'm not afraid to work," said the girl.

At this answer Henry Sparks, who stood in a corner, almost fainted. The girl produced a letter from a Lutheran

up-to-day and washed the windows. I was a dream. She cooked tungs to a turn; she was willing; she didn't have a cross word in her vocabulary; she didn't care to go to balls on Saturday night, and she was plump and good-looking. The Sparks' family life was ideal.

One morning as Mr. Sparks was leaving the building to go to the office he met the janitor, who was coming up from the basement leading a child with each hand. Mr. Sparks had barely noticed the janitor before. "This morning something in the man's bearing struck him, and turning, he said: didn't think it was part of his work; but he said it was all right and insisted. He told me that he used to be in the regular army and that he knew you had been in the service, too."

"That's it, Eliza," said Henry, "an old soldier likes to do things for another old soldier. He washed our windows because we had both done hard duty on the plains. Nothing like it. He must be a good, steady fellow, for he has a wife and two children. They have a flat in the basement."

Mr. Sparks met William quite frequently after this. William always saluted. If he happened to be stand-



HE WASHED THE WINDOWS EVERY OTHER DAY.

clergyman in a little country village. It happened that Henry Sparks knew the man. The girl was taken on the spot, as she declared she was ready to go to work then and there and would have her things sent right over from her cousin's.

During the whole conversation Mrs. Sparks' face had worn a rather puzzled expression. When the girl had volunteered to stay Mrs. Sparks said: "How did you happen to know we wanted a girl?"

"I saw your advertisement," was the answer. "Here it is," and the girl pulled out a copy of the morning paper. Mrs. Sparks took it. "Mercy," she ex-

ing still as Mr. Sparks passed he would come to "attention," clicking his heels together the while and saluting like the old campaigner he was. Almost every night when he would reach home Mrs. Sparks would tell Henry of some new act of attention on the part of the janitor. "He came up and went all over the plumbing to-day," she said one night. "He said he wanted to make sure there wasn't any sewer gas in the place. I suppose he fears for the health of his wife and children. He spent an awful long while in the kitchen examining the pipes there. He said they would need attention for another day or two. I was afraid he

would interfere with Rosa's work, but she said he didn't."

"There, it's just as I told you, Eliza," said Mr. Sparks; "this janitor doesn't want to see the family of an old soldier suffer. I'll give him a box of cigars to-night. Eliza, this is the finest kind of life. Never talk to me again about taking a suburban house. Here the best girl that ever worked out stumbles in on us by accident, and we get a janitor who serves us as though we were moguls. We'll just drift along in this Elysian atmosphere until either we, Rosa or William die. It's great."

Things went on this way for two months. Henry Sparks told five real estate agents to quit looking up a country home for him. "You can't beat the combination I've got right here in the heart of Chicago," he said.

A box of cigars went a long way with the janitor. He insisted on beating the Sparks' rugs, he gilded the radiators, he fixed the door knobs, and toward the end of the second month he was washing the windows every other day. The windows of the other flats were dingy and finger-marked, while those in the Sparks' flat were as undimmed crystal. Rosa was a pearl of great price. She anticipated every wish of every member of the family. There was little left for Mrs. Sparks to do but to embroider and to mend Frances' stockings. For some reason or other Henry Sparks, though he had always prided himself on his perspicacity, never noticed that whenever William found that something in the kitchen needed fixing the job was always one that required three or four days' time. He told his wife one day that he must give William another box of cigars, because, although he was an old soldier, he did not like the idea of having the man do so much work for simply the sake of sentiment. "I gave each of his children a quarter this morning and I gave his wife a dollar the other day, but that's not enough to do for a man who spends most of his time making your life happy in a flat."

That night Mr. Sparks went downtown to do some work. He didn't get back till one o'clock. He slipped off his shoes at the door so as not to awaken his wife. He passed into the hall and, feeling hungry, he went back through the dining-room with a mind and appetite bent on exploring the kitchen pantry. The door leading into the kitchen was shut. In his stocking feet Mr. Sparks made no noise. He opened the door quickly. The kitchen gas was burning. From the far end of the room came a clicking noise. William the janitor was standing at attention with his heels brought sharply together. As the man jumped to the position of a soldier Mr. Sparks saw that one of his arms had just dropped from its position of embrace about the waist of Rosa, the maid.

Mr. Sparks was horrified. He went back to days when as a "non com" he had verbally lashed some bluecoat duty derelict.

"William," he said in a voice of thunder, "how dare you! You're a scoundrel, sir."

William's hand went to his forehead in salute. "Rosa and I are to be married next week, Mr. Sparks," he said.

"Married?" was the gasping response; "how about your wife and two children down stairs?"

"That's my widowed sister and two little ones. She's been keeping house for me," said William.

Mr. Sparks groaned and went limply back into the front room. He waked his wife. "Eliza," he said, "our dream is over. Rosa is going to marry the janitor. It wasn't any old soldier sentiment at all that made him wash windows. I'll tell Hunt in the morning to look for a home for us in the country," and, sighing, Mr. Sparks went to bed.

At the breakfast table the next morning William and Rosa came in, hand in hand. "We're going to be married next week, Mrs. Sparks," said Rosa, "but my sister wants a place and I'll send her here. She's a better cook than I am."

At this bit of information Mr. Sparks' face cleared visibly. "You both have my blessing," he said; "send in your sister Rosa, and if William leaves here I'll get old Highrates, the landlord, to send a good janitor in his place, but I'll take good care that he's not an old soldier." And then, forgetful of everything else, Mr. Sparks turned to his wife and said: "They can't resist an old soldier, can they, my dear?"—Edward B. Clark in the Chicago Record-Herald.

An Epidemic Among the Murres.

It is stated that during the past season an epidemic has prevailed among the murres of the Pribilof Islands, and that the birds, which are found there in vast numbers, have perished by thousands. The first intimation of disease was the presence of birds about the village of St. Paul, close in shore, so weak that they were readily taken by the children. Later, dead birds washed ashore in such numbers that 212 were counted in 150 yards, while steamers from St. Michael's reported passing through large quantities of dead birds. This recalls the epidemic which has twice prevailed among the cormorants of the Commander Islands, greatly reducing their numbers.

In Russia the forests cover thirty-six per cent. of the whole imperial area.

WORLD'S SMALLEST FISH

AN EDIBLE VARIETY NEVER LARGER THAN A HALF INCH.

Sent from the Philippines — Caught in Nets by the Thousands and Pressed Into Cakes to Be Eaten — These Fish Are Highly Prized by Our Soldiers.

The world's smallest vertebrate, just discovered in the Philippines, is exciting the wonder and admiration of government scientists.

It is difficult for the layman to imagine a mature and normal animal possessed of a backbone and spinal cord and yet so minute and delicate as to weigh only half a grain.

This wonderful little animal is a fish. It was lately found by our soldiers in Lake Buhl, Southern Luzon, in the department of Camarines Sur. Medical officers connected with the hospital at Buhl collected numerous specimens in a small bottle and sent them to Washington. Surgeon General Sternberg sent them to the fish commission the other day, without knowing what a great prize he was donating to that institution. At the fish commission they were referred to Dr. Hugh M. Smith, biologist, who has carefully weighed, measured and examined them microscopically. Dr. Smith has christened the wonderful species, "Mistichthys luzonensis," the first word meaning "the smallest" and the second, "inhabitant of Luzon." "Sinarapan" is the common name by which the little creatures are known among the Bicolos who inhabit their region.

The sinarapan is like any other fish in shape and proportions, so far as the untrained eye can see. On account of its almost phenomenal minuteness, it is almost transparent. It has a black chin, a black line down its centre, behind the anal fin, and a few black spots on its back. Many of the specimens dissected under the microscope contained ripe eggs, comparable with the merest needle-point and measuring 1-200 inch in diameter. The females are slightly larger than the males, the former averaging a fraction more than half an inch in length, while the males average just a half inch. The smallest mature specimens are but two-fifths of an inch from tip of nose to point of tail.

An odd fact in regard to these infinitesimal creatures is that they are utilized for human food. Lake Buhl is a volcanic basin, in the shadow of Mt. Iriga. Here the side of a mountain seems to have been quite recently blown out by volcanic action. Many varieties of fishes of every size abound in the lake, but the sinarapan are by far the most numerous.

The Bicolos when fishing for them use a large sheet of close web which they dip under the water whenever a school congregates. They are gathered in tightly woven baskets from which the water soon drains, leaving a compact mass of the little creatures. When the fleets of fishermen bring them to shore in this condition the natives buy them eagerly. They are seasoned with pepper and other spices pressed uncooked into cakes and dried in the sun. Our soldiers are reported to have already grown fond of this strange diet.

Several cakes made from the little fishes dried have been obtained by the fish commission. They are about the size of ordinary griddle cakes, but are as thin as wafers and very brittle. Each contains from two to three thousand fish. Dr. Smith and your correspondent together partook of morsels of one of these cakes. It gave off a decided fishy odor which did not belie its taste. The flavor was also peppery with a suggestion of sage and a good proportion of salt. The wafers are a rich yellow in color and might be palatable to those fond of caviar and kindred fishy dishes.

To be able to brag of eating ten thousand whole fishes at a meal could be excelled only by a boast of having caught that many mature fishes in a few minutes, with one's own hand. One of the wafers supplies only a mouthful and many are doubtless requisite to satisfy the hunger of a Bicol at one meal.

These smallest of all fishes belong to the great cosmopolitan "goby" family, of which upwards of 2,000 species are known. Dr. Smith regards it as not impossible that they are annuals, like many of our plants, i. e.—that they die out each year leaving only their undeveloped eggs. If this be true, there are months in each year when they are practically extinct, but potentially extant. In certain regions this is characteristic of the goby.

Comparing the smallest vertebrate with the largest animal of that category we have an amazing contrast. The largest vertebrate and likewise the largest of known animals is the giant finback whale inhabiting the Atlantic, within the temperate zone, and which therefore swims off our eastern coast. This monster has been known to attain a length of nearly 100 feet and is commonly 70 feet from muzzle to tail.

But while the whale is the largest vertebrate, and, as also stated, the largest known animal of any category whatsoever, it is not a fish, although it is commonly alluded to as such. The whale is a mammal, and hence the largest of known mammals.

The smallest mammal is a little shrew called the sorax. It is under three inches in length, from tip of tail to point of nose.

To the fish family belongs the distinction of having the greatest range in size. This little fish, two-fifths of an inch long, just discovered in the Philippines, being the minimum, we will compare it with a giant shark of the Indo-Pacific region, known as "Rhincodon typicus." This is known to exceed a length of 50 feet, and, hence, is the largest fish. It is even stated on fair authority to grow to a length of 70 feet, but few of our modern scientists believe this to be true.

RAILROAD GOOSE LAW.

No Damages for Running Over Geese.

"Proper Bird for Drawing the Line." Nashville and Knoxville Railroad company vs. Thomas F. Davis—Punam law. Justice Wilkes said:

"This is an action in damages against the railroad for running over and killing three geese of the value of \$1.50. The owner of the geese lived a mile from the railroad, but permitted them to run at large and they went upon the railroad track near a public road crossing. The engineer blew the whistle and rang the bell for the crossing, but there is no proof that he rang the bell or sounded the alarm for the geese. Whether the geese knew of this failure to whistle to them does not appear.

"We think there is no evidence of recklessness or common-law negligence shown in this case and the only question is whether a goose is an animal of obstruction in the sense of the statute, section 1574, sub-section 4, Shannon's compilation, which requires the alarm whistle to be sounded and brakes put down and every possible means employed to stop the train and prevent an accident when an animal or obstruction appears on the track. It is evident this provision is designed not only to protect animals on the track, but also passengers and employees upon the train from accidents and injury. It would not seem that a goose was such an obstruction as would cause the derailment of a train if run over.

"It is true, a goose has animal life and in the broadest sense is an animal, but we think that the statute does not require the stopping of trains to prevent running over birds such as geese, chickens, ducks, pigeons, canaries and other birds that may be kept for pleasure or profit. Birds have wings to move them quickly from places of danger, and it is presumption perhaps, in case of a goose—an animal which appears to be loath to stoop from his dignity to escape a passing train.

"But the line must be drawn somewhere, and we are of the opinion that the goose is the proper bird to draw it at.

"We do not mean to say that in case of recklessness and in common-law negligence there might not be a recovery in killing geese or chickens or ducks or other fowls, but that case is not presented. Snakes and frogs and fishing were sure, to some extent, obstructions when upon the railroad track, but it cannot be held that for such obstruction as these as well as fowls the train should be stopped, mails and passengers delayed. We are of opinion there is error in the judgment of the court below, and it is reversed, and the case having been heard without a jury, it is dismissed at plaintiff's costs."—Nashville Banner.

Young Men With Old Positions.

"The old fellows don't stand much show any more except as United States senators and justices of the supreme court," said James L. McKay of Chicago. "Most of the positions that used to be held by old men exclusively are now given to the young men.

"Take, for instance, college presidents. Until within the past 15 years it would have been considered suicidal to have placed a young man at the head of such an institution as Columbia, Chicago or Yale, yet now young men are in these positions. Further evidence of how the young men are advancing to the front rank in positions of trust is to be found in the railroad offices throughout the country. Nearly all the presidents, general managers, general superintendents, and, in fact, nearly all general executive officers, are comparatively young men. In big corporations of all kinds, in banking houses, in mercantile lines and in insurance companies, the young man is the conspicuous figure."—Washington Post.

A Wasted Snub.

Clarice—Katherine is always looking out for more important people; so I determined not to notice her at Mrs. Chic's reception.

Clarice—How did it work?
Clarice—Oh, she didn't even notice that I didn't notice her.—Brooklyn Life.

Among the First of the Kind.

"Pop, what is a jinrikisha?"
"A jinrikisha, my son, is a sort of horseless carriage."—Yonkers Statesman.

A balloon is one thing that is safer when it has its drawbacks.