

A MATTER OF CHANCE.

YET SOME COINCIDENCES ARE OF A STARTLING NATURE.

A Batch of Anecdotes Upon Which the Superstitious Might Ponder—Things That Happen but Cannot Well be Accounted For.

A few years ago says a recent writer, a gentleman entered a well-known New York hotel. While glancing over the visitors' list he was surprised to find an entry corresponding in every particular with his own.

A speedy introduction followed, which revealed the singular fact that both men had been named after Colonel Elmer Ellsworth. The coincidence happened to be reviewed in the press, and its publication elicited from the Rev. E. E. Reynolds, of Ludlow, Vermont, the information that he too had been named after Colonel Ellsworth, and, strange to say, born the same week with the others.

Not long since a Mr. A. H. Whitney, of Toronto, Canada—with his wife and a friend—put up one evening in Detroit, intending to resume his journey the following morning. That night the unfortunate gentleman expired in the extreme stages of consumption.

But the strangest part is to come. Early the following morning another Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Whitney arrived; but this couple were apparently in good health. Mr. Whitney doing his own registering. They were shown to their room, and here, scarcely ten minutes later, the second lady became a widow, her husband having succumbed to an attack of heart disease.

The affair caused some consternation among the guests of the hotel, as its features, so singularly dramatic, appeared at once to the popular imagination. Both men had held good positions and were comfortably off; they were not related, nor had they met each other at any time.

An incident illustrating the popular maxim, "There is nothing new under the sun," is recorded in the annals of a well-known London publishing house. Among the many manuscripts submitted to them within the course of a few weeks, three were found to be identical in plot and action; though, as might be expected, differing slightly in treatment. They had each been written by an author of repute, without any attempt whatever at collaboration.

Not frequently coincidences are as startling as they are unlooked for, but that which happened to a gentleman whose two sons were attending their respective colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, is so singular as to merit a few words in its favour.

The elder, a young gentleman of expensive ways and habits, found it necessary to write home for a remittance. He had lost money over some betting transaction and was sorely in need of £20. How to obtain this sum without any inconvenient questions being asked puzzled him. His father, he was aware, held very pronounced opinions upon the sin of gambling, and was not likely to help him if he knew what purpose his money would be put. He therefore taxed his ingenuity for an excuse that would be both reasonable and likely to open his parent's purse to the amount he required.

The idea of writing up expenses for college fees, books, stationery, and his share in the outlay connected with one or two clubs to which he belonged, presented itself, as the most feasible excuse to be found for so sudden a call upon the paternal resources, and, moreover, one which possessed the merit of figuring under the head of "necessities." A plausible letter was drawn up and despatched, and its result awaited with some amount of anxiety.

Now, it happened the young gentleman at Cambridge was likewise in need of a little pecuniary assistance, since his expenses in living had been rather higher than usual. To whom then should he apply more naturally than to his father? At the same time, being aware the latter would stand no "nonsense," it became expedient to draft out a summary of expenses sufficient to cover the sum he needed. This was soon accomplished, and the letter despatched forthwith.

Next morning the father's astonishment may be better imagined than described. The two letters were practically identical, word for word. Each contained the request for "a small remittance" of £20, describing how the expenses had been incurred and tallying in every particular, even to the figures as they totalled up, as though, indeed, the two had penned one letter and in their hurry forgotten to modify its composition to suit each other's style.

One of those strange fatalities, which impress even the most incredulous among us, occurred recently in an old-fashioned riverside villa. As often happens, the house, though admirable in every respect, was unable to compete with the many villas and family mansions—with their "modern conveniences"—which had sprung up mushroom-like around it. Nor was this all. Rumour had it—and for once she did not err—that a singular fatality connected the fate of the last tenant with that of his predecessor. Each had met with a painful and fatal accident about the completion of their fifth year of residence.

and, strange to say, about the same time, dating from the commencing of his tenancy.

For some years after this the house remained empty, until at length a gentleman, less credulous than the rest, agreed to take it upon a lease for seven years, with the option of renewing it upon the same reasonable terms at the expiration of that period. At first, its history served as the occasion for a grim joke, but gradually old associations were forgotten and again it became the centre of attraction, vying with its neighbours in extending a generous hospitality and in opening its doors to a wide circle of friends.

Five years passed away, and when upon the eve of the sixth someone jokingly remarked that this was presumably a day fatal to the master of the establishment, he invited those friends who were acquainted with the story to picnic with him up the river. The party returned home at night-fall, well satisfied with their entertainment. Next morning, however, they were astounded to hear their genial host had passed away during the night. Death, the doctors attributed to heart disease. But, occurring as it did upon the very day which had proved so fatal years before to previous tenants, it struck many as a singular coincidence.

WAS IT GOOD TASTE?

Mr. Frith Criticizes the Recent Action of Some Well Meaning Citizens.

To THE EDITOR OF PROGRESS:—In the biography of the late Bishop Medley, recently published, will be found, at page 132, a brief reference to a lecture on "good taste" which His Lordship delivered nearly forty years ago in St. John. The few of the listeners to that able lecture who may still survive will not forget its keen and scathing arraignment of the offenders against the taste which is good; and if any of them read the kindly and discriminating article which appeared in your last issue on the possible return of Father Davenport to this city, it must have forcibly struck them that the class of offenders which the bishop denounced was not exterminated by his philippic. You say that petitions were signed by hundreds of persons of all creeds and faiths, who wanted the good father to come back to St. John. All very well. None could possibly have wanted him back more than the undersigned, and yet a mere flagrant breach of good taste could scarcely be conceived than these petitioners, (thoughtlessly perhaps, and with the best intentions) were guilty of. For to what was he invited to return? Not merely, I presume, to the honorary chaplaincies of the St. George's Society and the 62nd Fusiliers; not to the rectorate of a city church about to become vacant; but, it must be supposed, to the incumbency of a church already in charge of a priest appointed by the bishop. Was no regard to be had to the feelings and tenure of Dr. Williams who could only be removed from the Mission church for such cause as heresy, immorality, or wanton neglect of duty? Was no respect due to the trustees of the church, in whose hands solely, if the Cure had been vacant, would reside the nomination of a priest? Nay, was no consideration to be had of the fine and honorable feeling of Father Davenport himself, which could not but be wounded to the quick at such an application to him under the circumstances? Fancy a petition to Canon Knox-Little to come and take the rectorship of Trinity church—Archdeacon Brigstocke being still in possession!!!

It has so happened that Doctor Williams, hearing of what was desired by so many, and knowing the peculiar circumstances which made Father Davenport's return to the Mission church desirable, has most graciously and promptly offered to retire; but this ex post facto concession of the priest in charge affords not the slightest justification of the shocking bad taste of the petitioners. Let us hope that they may make reparation if Father Davenport returns, by contributing freely to the expenses of the church. It is well known that Saint John Baptist is an absolutely free and unappropriated church; at present entirely without endowment and wholly dependent on the offerings of the worshippers thereat. Affording as it does, ornate and attractive services, its expenses in proportion to its size, are far greater than those of any other church in the city; and yet hundreds continually resort to it and make use of it, whose "offerings" do not exceed one cent, at any one service. To the really poor it is ever gladly open as free as air; but they can hardly be welcome to God or man who are able to pay and neglect or refuse to do so.

H. W. FRITH.

POINTS ON CIVIC AFFAIRS.

Suggestions of Steps to be Taken for the Reduction of Taxes.

TO THE EDITOR OF PROGRESS:—I have not the honor of being a member of "the Tax Reduction Association," yet I have watched with increasing interest its movement. It has now paved the way for the reduction of the membership of our city council from 27 to 16 members, and secured the election of all these gentlemen on one and the same day, with an apparent annual saving of \$1,100. This, however, is but a drop in the bucket. The civic expenditure of St. John now about equals our provincial expenditure.

The Association having entered upon this important work, the question now is, What next?

Mr. W. W. Marshall, in one of his able letters, clearly demonstrated the fact of the lax administration of our city assessment law, inter-alia, pointing out that fully \$8,000,000 of fairly taxable property, under the assessment law of 1887, is permitted to go unassessed. No doubt the members of our Board of Assessors try to do as well as they can; but, have the duties of that office

grown beyond the scope of that board? The answer to this question would seem to be in the affirmative.

What is absolutely wanted is a revaluation of all our real estate and personal property and income from labor, of the rate-payers of our enlarged city of St. John, under the legislature of to-day, without fear or favor of affluence. Some property is now valued too high, and some absurdly too low. A proper administration of the assessment law of St. John would fairly equalize the burdens and reduce the rate from one and one half of one per cent to say, about one and a quarter per cent, with a probability of future reduction to the vicinity of one per cent.

If this revaluation were intelligently done the wage earner, who is now assessed on \$400 income, would pay say, \$7 instead of \$8; and the wealthy citizen now assessed on \$100,000, would pay say, \$1,252 instead of \$1,502. The proper administration of our assessment law would therefore seem to be one of the problems with which this Tax Reduction Association will have to grapple. Is it possible, that under the present management, any considerable number of our people escape taxation altogether?

In view of the Connelly embroglio, should not the Tax Reduction Association, take steps to ascertain whether the time has not arrived, when it would be expedient and in the best interests of our ever open port of St. John, to have the building of our wharves and the dredging of harbor, etc., done under the immediate supervision of a permanent board of harbor commissioners, under the terms and conditions of our present dominion and provincial legislature regarding the matter. This would reduce our civic indebtedness of about three-quarters of a million of dollars, and this one may fairly claim would materially reduce the tax-bill sent out annually to the rate payer by our worthy city chamberlain. Under a commission all the affairs of the harbor administrator by the saw booms, would be paid through the Customs, so that the taxation, in this regard, would not affect the tax payers bill from the chamberlain's office, even to the extent of one dollar.

The consolidation of our city debt of about three million of dollars is another matter calling for action. St. John has assets fully the equivalent of her indebtedness, and her bonds for all practical purposes would be equal to British consols, so that a scheme to consolidate our city debt, gradually at say three and one half per cent per annum, is quite feasible, and this matter it naturally taken hold of could be accomplished in the not distant future. To this idea of consolidation of our city debt, it is only fair to, as an excuse for the apparent apathy of our present and former civic authorities, that the citizen who now hold our bonds do not look with favor upon any movement in the reduction of interest. This state of affairs should not be allowed to continue and a determined effort should now be made to consolidate our city debt at a rate not exceeding three and one half per cent per annum.

In conclusion, I would only further call attention to the fact that in view of the possibilities of epidemics, we should as speedily as possible have water mains extended to Loch Lomond; then we would have an abundant supply of as good water as there is in the world. RAY.

MORE POINTS ABOUT THE FAIR.

Including the Chorus Song that is Heard Everywhere One Goes.

In addition to the bright and readable letter which a well known St. John man contributes to PROGRESS this week, in regard to the World's Fair, the following additional pointers from the same source will be of interest. He says: The attendance is constantly growing. The first week I was there it ran over the 1,000,000 mark, and one day 243,951 people paid to see the big show.

The conductor of the multitude on the grounds is wonderfully orderly and respectable. I did not see a single disturbance of any kind.

The date for closing is set for October 31st, but there is talk of continuing it longer, if the weather does not get too cold. Now, however, is the best time to see it. Take a run out and you will never regret it.

Of all the types at the Fair the Dabemeyics are probably the lowest and most degraded in the scale of civilization.

The only song one heard was "After the Fair." It greeted you everywhere—on the streets, in the buildings, down the midway—there was no escaping it. The photograph and the graphophone ground it off at you, the bands played it, it was hummed by the dudesque youth, and the swell boy whistled it. The music is the same as "After the Ball," the words are well, judge for yourself. Here is a specimen verse:—

After the Fair is over just watch the rents come down, When all the rubes and hayseeds have skipped Maug a man will be busted, people will tear their hair, Hyde Park will be dead and buried after the Fair.

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Hawker's Pearls.

Chas. McGregor, 137 Charlotte street, says Hawker's Nerve and Stomach Tonic, Hawker's Catarrh Cure, and Hawker's Balsam of Tolu and Wild Cherry are sell in good form.

To the Hawker Medicine Company limited: Chas. McGregor, 137 Charlotte street never said anything of the kind. See PROGRESS of 16th inst. C. McG.

St. JOHN, Sept. 20, '93

To the Hawker Medicine Co:— Sir: While your Mr. Chestnut was conversing with me in regard to the sale of your medicines, I did not think he was going to publish our conversation, or would have said nothing, as I am opposed to all patent medicines, but had I known Mr. Chestnut wanted something for publication, I could have done much better for him.

Yours, etc., Chas. McGregor.

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