

Scraps.

S. S. Cox calls Ireland the Mark Tapley of nations. Stokes' father, mother and sisters will go abroad to reside. The ex-Prince Imperial is raising a moustache. It is said his friends use a field-glass.

The Cardiff Giant—once a sort of theatrical attraction—has been sold in Algiers, La., for \$8.

The right of translation of M. Victor Hugo's "Quatre-Vingt-Treize" for England and America has already been sold.

Prof. Thorell, of Upsala, considers it probable that English may be adopted as a common scientific language, and has written his own recent work in that tongue.

M. Brousse, a French free-thinker, is said to have bequeathed a sum of 400,000 francs for the establishment of a secular school, together with a splendid castle for that purpose.

The vicar of a North Country village is making arrangements with Robert Wright, the noted Border champion wrestler, to give some lessons in wrestling to all young men in his parish.

A church near Bergen, Norway, which can contain nearly 1,000 persons, is constructed entirely of papier maché, rendered waterproof by saturation in vitriol, lime-water, whey, and white of egg.

Here is a phrase that wants to be shot on the wing. Says *Charivari*:—"A journal remarks that M. Thiers was received very coldly by the assembly." *Diable!* Some people's thermometers are never satisfied.

Dr. Dollinger, who was declared by the Rornish papers to have separated himself from the "Old Catholic" movement in Germany, has requested Professor Huber, of Munich, "to contradict this Ultramontane lie."

On the 4th, at the Vatican, that the Pope intends to present Henry V. with a gold crucifix on the event of his being raised to the throne. It will be set in diamonds of the finest water and bear the following inscription:—"In hoc signo vinces."

Among the treasures to be found in the Khedive's Museum is a necklace worn by Queen Aah-hept, mother of King Ashmes, the founder of the eighteenth dynasty, who was not only coeval with Abram and Sarai, but the identical Pharaoh who was "plagued with great plagues" because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

We do not usually think of Alfred Tennyson as a farmer, but Miss Antoinette Sterling, whose noble contralto voice is shortly to charm our English friends as it has delighted Plymouth Church before, writes in a private letter of a pleasant lunch enjoyed on Tennyson's grounds, in the same field as his flock of South-downs marked A.T. He practises pastoral life as well as stags it.

Tourgueneff, the famous Russian novelist, is said to be quite broken down by recent misfortunes. Within a year his wife and only daughter have died; by the failure of his Parisian banker most of his earnings have been swept away; and a nephew to whom he was greatly attached has been sent to prison for outrageous felonies. The poor novelist writes very little now, as he says his stories, reflecting his own heart, are too sombre.

Paul de Cassagnac is described as one of the most conspicuous persons on the streets of Paris. He is very tall, broad-shouldered, and wears a very large and peculiar-looking hat, which he perches over his left ear. He walks in a bold, defiant manner, and carries a huge walking-stick, which he from time to time swings ominously from side to side, as though just preparing to smash the head of some imaginary foe, and at such times the passer-by do not fail to point him out very admiringly. As for the ladies, they admire Monsieur De Cassagnac very openly. He is so large, so dark, his eyes are so black and so bright, and all that sort of thing, and no one knows it better than P. de C.

Oddities.

Athens, Ga., has a paper named *Cat*, with the motto "I can scratch."

To know how to spell correctly is a good thing—unless you are an American humorist.

The "straighten-up-Mary-Jane-and-show-your-breadstpin" attitude has superseded the Grecian bend.

Out in Montana when they start a man down hill in a barrel, they speak of his "appearance in a new role."

"What is your name, little girl?" "Minnie." "Minnie what?" "Minnie Don't; that's what Mamma calls me."

"Please don't shoot the cows," is a sign on a farmer's fence near Chicago, intended for city sportsmen who go out after prairie chickens.

A Pekin, Ill., coroner's jury rendered a verdict that a man, whose body was found in the river, came to his death by a blow on the head, "which was given either before or after drowning."

"The arrangements of Nature are admirable," exclaimed a young Aberdeen lady, during the late high winds. "The same wind which disarranges our dress blows dust into the eyes of the would-be observers."

A lady of the shoddy aristocracy found, on returning from a drive, some visiting cards on her table. She called a servant in great haste, saying: "John! John! take these and run quick! Them ladies is forgot their tickets!"

An agreeable and versatile town "local" says: "Cedar River is in a languishing condition. It is very low and confined to its bed. The cat-fish get aground, and have to be helped off the sand-bars by the good-natured boys."

Once when preaching at Wapping to a congregation composed principally of sea-faring men and fisher-women, Rowland Hill greatly astonished his congregation by commencing the sermon with these words: "I come to preach to great sinners, notorious sinners—yea, to Wapping sinners!"

A preacher in a Scottish town took up a collection one recent Sunday, and found, when his hat was returned, that there wasn't a cent in it. "I thank my God," said he, turning the hat upside down and tapping the crown of it with his hand, "that I have got my hat back from this congregation."

A western paper tells a story of a country woman who made her first attempt to get in the court-house yard through the patent back-action gate. She opened the gate, went through, as she supposed, and shut herself out on the same side seven times; then, ejaculating "Merciful sakes!" climbed over the fence.

A tradesman was served last week with a schedule to make his returns. In the column for noting the number of carriages with less than four wheels, he inserted—"A barrow, drawn by me in the garden, with one wheel." The assessor wrote under it—"Asses and one-wheel carriages are exempt from duty."

Says a London letter: The money-taker being unavoidably absent, was temporarily replaced at the exhibition of the boarded lady and other natural phenomena by a pretty, bright-eyed girl of about fourteen. "How, I suppose the—the—er boarded lady is your mother," observed a swell, as he paid his money. "No, sir," said the extempore money-taker, "she's my father."

Now the Winter games for the home circle are settling in, and the family, gathered beneath the rays of a bright light, have an appearance of subdued enjoyment that is blessed to see. Naught is heard but the grating of the checker, the click of the domino and the muffled rasp of the card, with an occasional observation such as, "Whose turn is it?" "Why don't you play, mother?" "Oh, what a fib!" and the like.

AN ADVENTURE IN ST. PAUL'S.

We colonials, on the whole, I think, have more appreciation of St. Paul's than of any other of our London sights. More than of Westminster Abbey, even. For it wants a deal of history to understand the abbey and its puzzling chapels; and after a certain amount of stock-driving one jumbles up the kings and queens. Coming over from Australia for a six months' visit to England, one of the first things I promised myself on landing was to see St. Paul's, and yet it's a singular fact that up to the very end of my sojourn here I had never been inside your (or may I say our?) great cathedral.

I felt it impossible to go back and face my relations and friends if I couldn't say that I'd seen St. Paul's, and I made half a dozen plans at various times of paying it a visit. But first one thing intervened and then another till my last day in England had come, my pilgrimage unperformed. This last day, however, I kept clear of engagements on purpose to see the place. Before I was out of bed in the morning I had a telegram of importance, which took me off post haste to the Eastern Counties; and it was eight o'clock in the evening before I reached Shoreditch station on my return. Now I was bound to start early next morning to reach Brindisi in time for the Italian mail, and it thus seemed as if it were my fate to miss my last chance of entering St. Paul's. Still I was determined not to throw away chance; it might be that the cathedral was still open; and I picked out a fast looking horse from a row of hansom, and bade the driver put me down in the shortest possible time at the corner of St. Paul's churchyard.

As I descended from the cab and stood on the edge of the pavement looking out at the giant bulk of the dome the clock struck nine. The sun had set; but high overhead the golden ball and cross stood up against the sky, still burnished by the evening glow. All the lower part of the building was in deep shadow, rendered still darker by the thick coating of soot that encased it; but the upper portion, towering clear of houses and chimneys, and swept and sweetened by the wind and rains, caught a gleam of brightness from the clouds above, and raised itself white and fair into the evening sky.

The traffic of the day had slackened; there were few pedestrians and only an occasional cab rattled by. The big warehouses had retired from business; the shops were shut; the city seemed to sleep. St. Paul's also was closely fastened up. It misgave me that all I should see of it would be the outside.

Bending back my neck and gazing upward at the huge dome I saw that about the great golden cross and ball was a tracery as of cobwebs, and men like flies were crawling about these slender filaments. Stout scaffoldings and thick cables they were, no doubt; but from the street they looked like the delicate fabric of the gossamer.

I walked quickly around the church, hoping to find some doorway open, some access to the interior. The iron gates were all closed, the doors were fast. St. Paul's portals looked as inaccessible and forbidding as the rocky flank of a mountain. I was determined to find my way in, if possible, but knew not how to set about it. Could I have come across anything that looked like a deanery or sacerdotal residence I should have made bold to knock thereat and ask the occupiers for the key. But I could find nothing of the sort. Even at a bun-shop, which was still open, where I enquired as to the way of getting into the church, the people knew no more about St. Paul's than if it had been a thousand miles distant.

I began to feel despondent about the matter, but went around the church once more till I came to the end of the south transept—the shorter limb of the cross—and looked vacantly up at the fine semicircular portico, with its tall columns and flight of steps. All this time I never thought of there being anybody living inside St. Paul's; I should as soon have expected to meet with furnished apartments in the Catacombs or a family residence in the Pyramids. But peering cautiously about I espied, in the angle formed by the nave and transept on the western side, a window from which came the faint gleam of a candle. I stood and looked between the railings and saw that somebody was moving within. There was a birdcage in the window; on the sill outside some red flower-pots. Presently somebody came to a desk near the window and began to write—an old man with white hair.

If I could only make him see me perhaps he would take compassion on me and let me in. But it wasn't likely that he would see me. Looking from the lighted window into the twilight outside it was hardly possible that he should see anything. I thought of flinging a pebble at the window; but it was a good distance off; I might break the glass and be taken in custody. I gave a few shrill whistles, holding my fingers in my mouth; I even ventured on a modified version of an Australian "cooee;" but it was all of no use. The old man didn't turn his head.

Once again I had almost given the thing up and gone home; but just then the light disappeared from the window and all was darkness. Was the old man off to bed, I wondered, or had he gone to grope among the crypts below? Should I see his light presently twinkling in those high windows? Did he couch in some stony gallery or find a resting-place in the golden ball? Whilst I was thus speculating I heard a door softly closed, a doorstep on the stone staircase; the iron gate at the bottom creaked on its hinges. I sprang forward and met a grey headed old man with a pallid face, who was just opening the iron grille.

With all the eloquence of which I am master I besought him to do me the good office of letting me into the sacred fane. He hesitated, shook his head; at last he relented. "Very well," he said, "it's against rules; but, as you say, it's a long way to the antipodes. I'll let you in if you don't mind stopping inside alone for an hour; it will be that time before I return; and I must lock the door behind me. Do you still wish to go inside?"

I thanked him warmly and said: "Certainly, yea." I was delighted at the idea of an hour in perfect silence and seclusion among the mighty columns and arches of St. Paul's. I got under the great dome, which hangs like a luminous cloud above, full of uncertain shadows, a faint circle of light rimmed with a subdued crimson glow; eastward the choir, dark and sombre; the windows of the apse showing as stray luminous patches, the altar glooming in the distance like some funereal catafalque. White figures gleaming here and there in shadowy recesses—marble warriors, heroes, statesmen.

Under the dome, in the great open space, was a vast crowd of chairs—wooden rush-bottom chairs—lashed together in rows, looking towards the east. Choosing one of the most central of these I sat down and began to dream, peopling this wide area with a vast, invisible congregation.

In soft, long-drawn cadence the bell of Paul's struck out the hour of ten. I had been in the place nearly an hour. I felt chilled and numb. Enough of dreams. Let me walk briskly up and down and think of the busy scenes awaiting me; the warm, glad welcome; wife and children holding out eager arms—right at the other side of this huge world.

I paced rapidly up and down an avenue between the chairs. I had seen enough; I was anxious to be released, to get away from the world of shadows into the living world outside. For a moment I stood in what seemed to be the very centre of the dome, and looked upward. A faint circle of light marked the apex of the soaring vault, and just above my head I saw—my eyes being now accustomed to this half-light—I saw, I say, a rope hanging down from the vast height above.

Then I remembered the spider-webs I had seen outside about the ball and cross. And as I stood and looked and listened I heard faint sounds of hammering and knocking. Men were at work hundreds of feet above; a light shone here and there, twinkling like a star.

In years gone by I used to be a famous gymnast, and the sight of the rope hanging just above my head put me in mind of my ancient prowess. I was heavier now, my muscles less elastic; still there was some salt of youth in me. How many times, I wondered, could I, hanging to that rope, draw my chin up to my knuckles?

The rope was just out of reach, but I leapt up and caught it—once, twice, thrice. I felt a kind of emulation with my old self. I wanted to persuade myself that I had not lost much of my former prowess; and so I went on drawing myself up and down, not touching the ground, till I grew tired, and stretched myself out, expecting just to reach the pavement with my toes. But I couldn't reach it. Casting a glance below me, I saw with horror that the flooring had vanished under me. I was swinging suspended by my hands high up in the dome.

Perhaps if I had dropped at that moment I might have escaped with a serious shaking; but I hesitated and was lost. Slowly and steadily the rope was being wound up. I shut my eyes. Surely this was a hideous delusion that another moment would dispel. But no; as I looked down, the floor below was almost lost to my sight. There I swung, a tiny human speck, half way between heaven and earth. I couldn't hope to hang on much longer. My muscles were wearied with the task I had given them. I made a desperate effort to raise myself hand over hand, so that I might grasp the rope with my feet also; but it was impossible; I could not do it. Even the desperate energy of self-preservation could extract no more force from my muscles; I could only hold on.

I was now on a level with the plinth that surmounts the great arches of the dome. The gilded groundwork of a new fresco in the spandrel cast a sort of glow upon me; the colossal figures seemed to mock my agony. I must be half way up now, and for the moment a ray of hope shone in upon me that I could hold on to the end. But, to my despair, I saw that the seeming dome was a false one, above which rose the veritable conical roof, another hundred feet or more, and that through a vast round orifice in the sham dome the rope was to ascend to the uppermost peak of the roof. In that moment of torture I recognized my fate as inevitable. I might prolong my agony for a few seconds; my muscles were involuntarily relaxing; my grasp would fail; in another minute at farthest I must fall to be dashed to pieces on the adamantine floor below.

A thousand confused thoughts whirled through my brain, like the smoke and sparks of an approaching conflagration; but especially clear in my mind's eye, I saw—I did not think, but saw this vision—the picture of my far-off home, the rolling plains of grass, the herds and flocks, a galloping horseman—there was my home. My wife stood in the portico, shading her eyes with her hand; the children were clustering about her; there was news of daddy coming—perhaps daddy himself. It was bitter to die thus.

My limbs relaxed; my senses almost deserted me; a merciful oblivion, the intoxication of despair, stole over me; voices, I thought, were calling—perhaps a delusion of failing sense—I was slipping, slipping, and I fell—

"How do you feel now, sir?" I heard a voice say close in my ear. Was it possible—was I still alive? Yes; my brain was yet conscious. But the frame? Shattered, no doubt; a mere human wreck, to which life would be a mockery. I only dared to use my eyes. Any other muscular exertion might bring on torments to which I was then insensible; and yet I had no feeling of pain; perhaps some merciful paralysis had cut me off from torture.

An old man was bending over me; the same who had admitted me; he had a wine-glass in his hand, with some liquor in it; a candle burned by his side, forming a little chamber of light about us.

"Am I knocked all to pieces?" I whispered.

"I don't think so, sir; I don't think you're hurt a bit. Bless you! you didn't fall more than three feet."

I stretched out my arms—they were whole; my legs—they were sound and un hurt. What a happiness to be alive, after seeing death inevitable!

"How is this?" I cried, sitting up and looking about me.

"I thought I was carried up into the dome."

"And so you were. You'd have been a dead man by this, but just in the nick of time I came back. I don't suppose I should have noticed you, for the light was pretty nearly done; but I caught sight of you against the gilding, and then you gave a sort of moan, and says I: 'There's death here if I can't think of something in a minute.' And then I recollected that I'd heard the workmen chaps whistle three times, like this, when they wanted the rope lowered, and I piped away, and then the rope stopped and began to come down. I shouted to you to hold on and keep your heart up; but I don't think you heard me, for when your face came in sight it was white like death, and your eyes closed—but you still holding on—till, as I say, you came within three feet of the floor, and then you gave a quiver and fell, and I caught you in my arms, for you were in a dead faint. But what were you about to let them draw you up like that?"

Then I told him of my gymnastic feats.

"Oh, then, I suppose you shook the rope. That's the signal to pull up, and up they pulled, and they never knew what sort of a load they were hauling up. The men are working double shifts now, and are in a hurry to get finished."

When I left St. Paul's I felt weak and nerveless, as if I had just passed through a long illness. I couldn't start next morning, I was so upset, and I have written this account of what happened to me as a sort of outlet for my feelings, for I don't think I shall talk much about St. Paul's when I get home.