

popularity of the latter. It ought to be the common rallying field of our University, the bosom of our Alma Mater. We have pointed out some changes we think most calculated to attain this end. We have opened, but far from exhausted, the subject. Let the undergraduates take it up, and we shall hope for the best results.

### SCIENTIFIC 'SNAKE STORIES.'

People have often wondered at the number, audacity, and recklessness of ordinary newspaper snake stories. This has been, doubtless, the result of the general disregard for accurate and reliable information which distinguishes the usual semi-annual sea-serpent anecdote from other stories. The yarns which Mr. William Nye, the talented but eccentric fabricator of the Laramie *Boomerang*, tells, are described by most people by a little word of three letters which rhymes with Mr. Nye's name. American humorists—especially those residing in the free-and-easy west—are usually considered to be first-class liars. At least this is an inference which might be drawn from the character of their writings, which partake, also, of the free-and-easiness of the aforementioned west. But this may not be a logical deduction; probably is not. The old proverb says: Truth is stranger than fiction. This trite remark has been verified over and over again. It is our purpose to again put it to the test.

Let those of our readers who are inclined to share the general belief that American humorists—especially those who dwell west of the Mississippi—are incomparable and inimitable prevaricators, listen to those fairy-like inventions of modern science, which its exponents endeavour to palm off on a confiding and unsuspecting public as real and actual facts. Now, an ordinary person can have some sort of control and supervision over a confirmed yarn-teller of the Western-American species; but the same ordinary person fails utterly when he undertakes to throttle the scientist and prove him a romancer. For, immediately he sticks his dissecting knife into the body of a scientific bogey, the scientist showers down upon the enquirer after truth such a jargon of scientific terminology, and such an array of experimental testimony, that the luckless searcher after verity is fain to quit the field, and cry: Hold, hold; enough.

Let the aforesaid disbeliever in the probity of American humorists hereinbefore mentioned listen to the latest true story from the literature of science. Mr. Romanes, in his interesting article on "The Darwinian Theory of Instinct" in the *Nineteenth Century*, is its perpetrator:—

"There is a species of wasp-like insect called the SpheX. The insect lays its eggs in a hole excavated in the ground. It then flies away and finds a spider, which it stings in the main nerve centre of the animal. This has the effect of paralysing the spider without killing it. The SpheX then carries the now motionless spider to its nursery, and buries it with the eggs. When the eggs hatch out the grubs feed on the paralysed prey, which is then alive, and therefore quite fresh, although it has never been able to move since the time when it was buried!"

And yet the *Westminster Review*, in commenting on Mr. Romanes' book—of which his article was an abstract—has the audacity to say:—"The work will repay careful reading, though the treatment is less original than might have been expected, and the cases discussed, though all striking, are perhaps less varied than might have been desired"! But then, there is no pleasing some people.

Another genuine "fish" story is the following:—"One of the most interesting phosphorescent fishes is the Chiasmodus, a fish that attains the length of only 13 inches. The top of its head is the principal light-giving organ, and its fins gleam with phosphorescent light. It is not alone remarkable as a light-giver. It has a jaw so arranged that it can seize fish twice its own size and easily swallow them. Its stomach has the elastic quality of India rubber. It stretches to enormous proportions, and appears like a great transparent balloon hanging under the fish and containing its prey."

Now, after reading the above stories, will any unprejudiced reader remain long of the opinion that science is behind western journalism? It is a toss up which is the more veracious and trustworthy. We shall have to wait, however, till the Christmas crop of snake, sea-serpent, and fish stories are gathered from the American press before we can pass a final judgment.

ERIC.

### LE PAUVRE HOMME!

Scene:—Chateau Blue-Beard.

Time:—Shortly before the entrance of the Two Brothers.

Mr. le Comte de Barbe-bleue *loquitur*.—When is a man going to have peace and quietness! I am getting to detest these family scenes. Women never are calm in emergencies. There's Zuleika crying like mad in the next room and of course Ann is boo-hoing to keep her company. They ought to know if there's one thing I simply cannot bear it's a woman crying. It just shatters my nerves. But they never *did* consider my feelings. It's most annoying to have them go on like that. I do so like quiet, and I had begun to think that Zulie was going to behave like a sensible girl, and be resigned and all that. . . .

And there she is talking to Ann in such an excited way. . . . Poor Ann! I am so sorry for her. It will be such a loss! She will be sure to miss her dear sister very much! They always *did* seem so fond of one another. But it's all her fault. I told her in time, but she wouldn't take advice. If she only had moderated her feelings and pursued the proper path all would have been different. How much longer I wonder am I to be tormented by the idle curiosity of woman. . . .

And they're all alike! There was little Selima. How fond she was of me to be sure! What pretty white hands she had! I hoped I had found happiness at last till that evening I came home and found her at the wash-stand with her hand all nasty and red. How she trembled to be sure, and I *was* so tired! It was such an exertion to . . . remove her. . . . And there was Zorah with her black eyes, and—

But I wonder why Zulie has stopped crying and who Ann is calling to, out of the window. What an unladylike action!

What a thundering knock at the front door! Heavens! what a crash!! The door is down! That wretch Ann must have sent word to her precious brothers. But I shall permit of no family interference in my domestic arrangements. Where's my best scimitar!! I'll just step in and . . . see Zuleika and then I'll be ready to receive her gentlemanly brothers. The idea of coming into my house like this! It's the most excessive piece of impertinence. . . . I really beg your pardon gentlemen, but to what may I ascribe the honor of this visit?

BOHEMIEN.

## University News.

### LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY.

Owing to Mr. Brandram's readings on Friday evening, the Society met on Tuesday afternoon last in Moss Hall at 5 p.m. Mr. D. McKay, 1st Vice-President, occupied the chair. There was a large attendance. The principal business before the meeting was the selection of the Reader, Essayist, and Speakers for the next Public.

The following gentlemen were elected to represent the Society on the 12th of December next:—Reader, Mr. C. C. Owen; Essayist, Mr. W. W. Vickers; Speakers, Messrs. Weir, Collins, Roche, and Hunter.

Mr. J. G. Holmes moved that Mr. Colin Fraser, a member of the general committee, having been absent from all meetings of the committee, his seat be declared vacant.

Mr. L. P. Duff rose to a point of order regarding the irregularity of the whole proceedings.

The chairman, on the motion being made, refused to read it from the chair or to put it. Mr. Holmes then put his own motion, which was carried. The constitutionality of the proceedings has since been the subject of much discussion, and will likely be brought up again at the next meeting.