

Why Our Railroads Are Narrow Gauge.

Why are all railroads built on the standard gauge of four feet eight and one-half inches? The makers of the first locomotives thought only of putting their machines upon the tramways already in existence, and from that followed a very interesting and curious result. These tram lines naturally had exactly the width prescribed by the strength of one horse. By mere inertia the horse cart gauge established itself in the world, and everywhere the train is dwarfed to a scale that limits alike its comfort, power and speed. Because there is so much capital engaged and because of the dead power of custom it is doubtful if there will ever be any change in this gauge. Still, it might be worse. If the biggest horses had been Shetland ponies our railway carriages now would only be wide enough to hold two persons side by side and would have a maximum speed of twenty miles an hour. There is hardly a reason aside from this antiquated horse why the railway coach should not be nine or ten feet wide—that is, the width of the smallest room in which people can live in comfort and furnished with all the equipment of comfortable chambers.—Atlantic.

Thiers as a Prompter.

Among the anecdotes related by the Marquis Massa in his "Souvenirs et Impressions" is one about the first president of the French republic. It runs: "A short time after young Thiers had been elected as a legislator a number of our set arranged to give a performance of 'Roman chez la portiere' at the house of a mutual friend. On the evening of the performance our prompter deserted us, and without a moment's hesitation the new fledged deputy volunteered to take the place, and despite the protests of some of the party, who feared that his dignity might be everlastingly injured, he jumped into the box, where he remained ready to help us in time of need until the curtain descended on what proved to be a highly satisfactory performance."

Hunting With Lighted Crabs.

A group of clubmen seated about an odoriferous cedar fire talked of hunting. "Once I hunted with lighted crabs," said an ex-consul. "It was in the desolate region of France called La-Vendee. There is no hunting there but sea gulls (which the French adore to shoot) and rabbits. It was to get the rabbits that we used the crabs. We caught some dozens of small, live fellows, fastened on their backs lighted candles and shoved them down into rabbit holes. The rabbits, scared to death by those strange moving lights, rushed forth frantically—fort into the very muzzles of our guns. This sounds rather frisky perhaps, but it is a Vendean custom as widespread as coon hunting in the south."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Grant and Sumner.

Concerning the reliability of things in print, it is recalled that Charles Sumner criticised General Grant savagely, and some time after some one was talking to Grant about atheism in New England and remarked, "Even Sumner does not believe in the Bible." "Why should he?" quietly replied Grant. "He didn't write it."

Gathering Ammunition.

"What makes you think our new congressman is going to be so successful as a speechmaker?" said one constituent.

"Because," answered the other, "whenever he hears a story that strikes him as funny he goes into the hall and makes a note of it in his memorandum book."—Washington Star.

One Way of Putting It.

"Although he goes to the club every night, he's always happy when it's time to go home."

"In other words, he doesn't go home till he's happy. Is that it?"—Exchange.

Very High.

"I just got that doctor's bill for that fever of mine."

"How was it?"

"It was a very high fever—higher than I dreamed."—Bellman.

A good reputation is a fair estate—Shakespeare.

Foiled Him.

When Tommy was taking papa his dinner he stopped for a moment to watch a workman emptying a sewer.

"That," remarked Tommy interestedly, "is the grate my brother lost a shilling down."

The workman's eyes lit up.

"Well, young man," he said, with a show of carelessness, "you'd better get forward with that dinner before it's cold."

In about half an hour Tommy returned to find the man still at the same grate.

"Are you quite sure it was this grate the shilling was lost in?" said the workman.

"I am certain," replied Tommy, "because I saw my father get it out."—London Answers.

A Story of Father Mathew.

"Father Mathew was the most loving and lovable of human beings," and in the light of this statement found in a biography of the famous Irish priest by Mrs. Katherine Tynan Hinkson two incidents of his crusade for temperance in the north of Ireland should be read.

At Clones, in Ulster, there were two Orange flags raised when he visited it. Instead of considering it as an insult, he thought it a very great compliment, never having seen one or been honored with one before. When he saw them he called for three cheers for the Orange flag. Commenting on this, an Irish writer says:

"A Catholic priest calling for a cordial salutation of the Orange banner and a Catholic assembly heartily responding was something almost inconceivable. It had never occurred before in Ireland. I'm afraid it has never occurred since."

For the time being there were good will and friendly feeling from one end of Ulster to the other. One recruit who knelt for Father Mathew's blessing said:

"You wouldn't be blessing me if you knew what I am."

"And what are you, my dear?" Father Mathew called men, women and children "my dear."

"I am an Orangeman, your reverence."

"Why, God bless you, my dear, I wouldn't care if you were a lemon man!"

A Lost Fee.

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell once believed that he had been smitten with a mortal disease and went to consult a distinguished doctor who lived in the neighborhood of Harley street and who was a great expert on the disease of which he thought he was a victim. It was a hot day in July, and as he walked from his London home, which was in the neighborhood of Addison road, to Harley street he perspired freely.

He found the great physician's rooms all crowded with patients—probably, he thought, suffering from a similar complaint to himself.

While waiting he found on the table a book written by the great physician on the subject of the particular disease. He opened the book, and the first words which caught his eye were these: "The patient who is suffering from this disease never perspires."

He had Scotch blood in his veins, so he picked up his hat and gloves and walked out, and he never saw that eminent physician.—London Scraps.

Reynard's Cunning.

While crossing an old field waist high with withered mullein stalks goldenrod and other weeds I noticed a dog within forty feet. He was partly hidden by the grasses, but appeared to be a young, reddish brown setter, pottering along, smelling at this clump and that bunch of weeds and gradually circling behind me. In a few minutes I heard a yell, "There goes a fox." Sure enough, over the top of a neighboring hill a hundred yards away went my "dog." It was a shrewd piece of work on his part to throw me off my guard by seeming indifferent and when behind me and out of sight to streak it for cover. I had probably disturbed him during his afternoon siesta. Many a fox have I hunted and killed, but this one fooled me completely. It forms a very pleasant recollection as an instance of brute sagacity.—Forest and Stream.

A Regimental Custom.

A peculiar custom obtains in the Twelfth lancers—the playing of the Vesper hymn, the Spanish chant and the Russian national hymn every night of the year after the "last post" has sounded. It is said that the playing of the Vesper hymn originated in one of the officers' wives presenting the regiment with a new set of instruments on condition that the hymn was played every night after the "last post." The playing of the Spanish chant is declared to be a penance for sacking of a convent during the peninsular war. No reason is assigned for the playing of the Russian national anthem.—London Tit-Bits.

A Quick Response.

Mrs. Jones (a suffragette)—I don't ask special privileges, Mr. Jones. What I do ask is that you, for example, a man, should treat me exactly as you would another man. Instead of talking small talk and treating me like a thing to be protected, and all that, assume toward me the attitude you do to Mr. Warrington. Treat me like a good fellow. Mr. Jones (quickly)—Why, certainly, old chap. Lend me a fiver, will you?—London Graphic.

The Interview.

As used nowadays by the newspapers the word interview is said to have been the invention of Joseph McCullagh of St. Louis, and, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, it became popular in England in the early nineties. But it was known before that. A writer on the subject in the Nation of 1839 was possibly the first to use the word in its present sense of a talk with a representative of the press.—

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