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GLEANER'S SAN FRANCISCO LETTER.

A TWILIGHT INCIDENT AT THE CLIFF HOUSE.

Woven With All Sorts of Colors—Recess Time—A Question of Education—Aggressive Americanism—Funlets About Town, in Short Paragraphs, Showing the Doings of the Week.

SAN FRANCISCO, June 20, 1897—The long, long days of dear, delightful June are giving us most gorgeous twilights. It is almost eight o'clock before the real shadows of night gain full sway, and even then they are half scattered by the big, lustrous moon. The possibility of a ride without an overcoat is amongst the dissipations of the hour.

Nature has had a wide range of flirtations with the thermometer. On the Sierra mountains it snowed one day over quite a range of those famous hills. At Gold Run, fifty miles down this side, on the massive, apron-like slope, two huge thunder storms in one day awakened the deserted mines to astonishing echoes, and greatly alarmed the natives not used to forked lightning outside of a whisky glass. In the valleys the heat and dust have fretted the tourist; while on our own sea-girted peninsula the days have been particularly pleasant. And at evening time we have had all the luxuries that a charming evening's twilight can give.

One night it was after nine o'clock when a small party of us started for the Cliff. We rode all the way outside the car. Once, as we spun along the way, the cross on Lone mountain became a singular silhouette against the rising moon, making a weird picture in the early night. All about this sand hill, which rises alone to the sky, rest the thousands of the dead. Hundreds of them have in times past gone out to this Mecca of Pleasure. And, as we were that night, with no thought or care of the figure on the dial, which would summon us to rest, nor with any regard for that same huge cross, with its silent arms reaching out to warn the world of the future, so had they come and gone.

For some singular reason the Cliff House proper has now abandoned electric lights, so that the place has a sombre appearance at night. The upper promenade, or main balcony, is now enclosed or guarded by a gate. All comers are charged a small price for admission, which is refunded on the refreshment bill. This is done to give a certain degree of privacy to those who would like to partake of good cheer without the stares of the rabble. Said rabble is admitted to the lower piazza as formerly.

A large orchestrion at one end of the enclosed part gives out its overtures and waltzes as the orchestra used to do. A large number of tables have been added to meet the demands of the palates quickened by the invigorating sea atmosphere. The balcony at the south commands a sweep of the ocean and the lowlands stretching away to the undulating hills, around which the impatient moon was already hurrying. The splash of the waves made merry music at our very feet.

Here and there were small groups of people enjoying the night. Not far away sat the genial proprietor with another genial, white-haired man. A special kerosene lamp graced their table. About these two hovered continually the three waiters. In vain we rang, stamped our feet, rattled our canes or called out. When one would start towards us a graceful wave of their hands would call a silent halt. It got monotonous.

I went forward to expostulate, when I succeeded in corralling a tow-headed servant and got in my order. It began to arrive in instalments. We were minus knives and forks, and as the waiter passed this duo of important men there came the signal, a halt, and our much-needed cutlery was laid down to rest while the servant disappeared from view. Again, when we were waiting for napkins, the waning kerosene of the favored table sent the waiter back while we poised our fingers in the air.

After a good deal of this procrastination, at which the moon winked, the waves howled, the seals roared, and my temper boiled, I cornered a second loose, flying waiter and demanded in no uncertain tones who this incubus to orders was. In sepulchral voice he whispered, "The 'Smasher,' Judge Curtis." Through this revelation we knew that it was the imported legal acumen from the East in the Fair will case. "Of course," he said apologetically, "it is annoying, but we cannot get by the boss."

And so you see how the rights of us poor, ordinary mortals are gradually being narrowed down. How, with greasy hands and dripping moustache, we have to wait until My Lord the Smasher was served. The orchestrion was wound up for his delectation and his favorite airs introduced until he was tired. No matter how much we enjoyed the music, which filled into the poetry of the night most charmingly a special accompaniment to its rythm, when he wearied there came the wave of the hand and James was sent to bed. No music for outsiders.

I half expected to hear the wild surf told to "shut up," or the great, golden moon ordered to skip to China at once. How great is law; how much greater its machinists! To those who read the dull platitudes of the Fair will case will come the remembrance of this famous gentleman, who has quite electrified our local bar with polite ways, suave manners and a buttonhole bouquet. The adoption of the first two has come hard to our Blackstones, who are toughened with native slang, but they have adopted the bouquet until now Judge Slack's courtroom is at times like a conservatory of flowers.

Judge Curtis is a better looking man than the cartoons make him. He has about him an air of self-consciousness that permeates the air with a sort of quiet halo.

I gave the waiter twenty cents as a fee to compensate him for waiting upon so ordinary a mortal as myself. Meanwhile the ladies had devoured sandwiches and chocolate, and I had satisfied the inner man with something coarser. The tide was now coming in fast, and the waves caught the silver of the sky in a bewitching manner. It was too pretty a night to go home, but the hours were full of warnings, and one lady yawned.

Whenever I get sentimental the lady always yawns at the wrong time. I was trying to put a few vitally important words together when, unfortunately, she gave a regular Ethiopian gape. So I contented myself with a cigar on the steps of the car. I do not think a woman is at all interesting when she yawns. Some yawn all over as it it were a muscular affliction. It always gives a fellow a sort of uncomfortable suspicion that he is not the one she admires in particular. Some girls will go out with a man and eat his pocket book dry, and then give him a gape; while with some poorer scamp without a dime she would go hungry and say not a word, and do the "coochie-coochie" and never think of being bored.

One other time out there with a real pretty girl, no moon, no "Smasher," only just us two, I was quite annoyed by some couples who had evidently taken too much beer. They were hilarious, although not rude. There was no music but the sea—and my voice. I felt I was soulfully entertaining, and in my silence looked unutterable things. The minutes rolled away in this sort of quietude, and I was thinking pretty deep when suddenly she said: "Oh, this is awfully stupid; I wish somebody else would come along with a jag; I like to see them!"

You cannot always tell what a San Francisco girl will say next. It is usually the unexpected. At the minstrels the end man made a comparison: "The New England girl would say, for instance, 'You really surprise me.' The Western girl would coo, 'I never would have believed it.' The San Francisco girl would shout, 'Go chase yourself around the block; what are you giving us?'"

The curtain has fallen on the school term. It used to drop in May, but the past two years it has fallen about this time. The many graduating exercises have filled hall and schoolroom, and now the hiatus to the country.

Some one argues that education beyond a certain limit is not wholesome to the masses. The argument came up in reference to another girls' high school in this city to be located at the Mission. It was contended that a good grammar school education, thoroughly mastered, was all that a young person needed to make his way through the world. That the expense of a higher grade came heavy on the commonwealth in the way of taxation, and upon parents who could not afford to keep their children so long in school, and who needed their services. And, as an added emphasis, that it unfitted a great many for their work in life.

Educated to a point beyond their station, or beyond their parents' caliber, they became fretful and unhappy. A taste of the higher branches created the desire for a further advance, which could not be met. I am only giving others' ideas; I would not dare express my own. The factionists argue that the lack of good housekeepers, good wives, and the cause of extravagance and folly is the too high finish of the pupil. There is no doubt but what the keeping of children in school beyond a certain age is attended with a certain amount of expense to parents who can illy afford it. Books, dress, car fare and lunches are a big sum total.

The various changes in boards of education lead to a demand for a change of books. This is one of the perquisites that come to the political vampires from the father's pocket. A certain degree of dress is necessary for the comfort of the pupil. They do not want to be conspicuous by any poverty of garments. The car fare is quite an item in a poor family's exchequer, at least $25 a year for each child.

As it is now we have one high school for a city of 300,000 people scattered over a very large territory. The graduate from the high school may want to keep on to the normal school to fit for a teacher. Free from all such ambition in these hard and overcrowded times, she may have to at once seek some work quite at variance with her late school life. In so doing, unless she is careful, she will fall back very soon to where she was after she left the grammar school.

These sober thoughts do not count now in the flush of the graduating exercises. It is the summer time. The blossoms are at their best, and the fruits at their height. The work is done, and well done. Why bother about the mechanical part of the problem of the future?

A young man who has passed through the state university has decided to go into a wholesale dry goods house. He could have gone there when he was graduated at Irving Institute and saved three years of time and expense. One pretty young miss, who came out with all the honors and medals, married the next week and is already aghast at the perplexities of housekeeping.

Her essay upon "Ethics of the Early Centuries" will build a fire to heat the milk for baby by another year, and the $500 a year it cost to work up to that essay would have made baby a splendid nest egg in the bank. Possibly the real future is not determined in time to branch out correctly. The American idea that we are all kings and queens does not possibly consider the chance of there being any drawbacks.

The brilliant miss who astonished us by her beautiful voice at Mills seminary may be a "hello girl" in a telephone office, who knows? Ambition is all right. The little red school house is the proudest building in the land. It is the bulwark of American liberty, along with the ballot. The ballot is more of a toredo, possibly, at times than otherwise.

The flag has floated this week from these same school houses all over the land. Their principles are tempered to locality a trifle, especially in states where the color line is drawn or where there is a contra-religious faction. All glory to the little red school or the white grammar school, but our voters think too many high schools are a little blue. And while we write, snap! go all the locks, the big rooms are deserted and the children have all gone. Ah, happy childhood days! We have all had them; and what a lot we have learned since, out of school.

These nights at the theatres are quite comical in a way, noting the enforcement of the ordinance compelling the removal of the ladies' hats. The theatrical folks, or, rather, the theatre folks, are endeavoring to comply with the order. The male sex as a rule is in full sympathy with the occasion. For years we have been most patient sufferers, little dreaming that the law would one day aid our vision. We had read with envy the rules of the British theatres, which allow no headgear at all to be worn.

Some years ago when the Gainsboro hats were worn it was something maddening to attempt to enjoy the play. Not as bad, but almost so, have been the hats with the stiff pompons. It is really amusing to watch the nervous manner of the ladies. Some of them begin to take off their hats as soon as they are seated. They act as it they were afraid of immediate arrest. Again there will be those who take time. This usually excites some irritable female behind her, who fumes and talks and looks about for the usher, much to the amusement of the audience.

Ladies are not used to holding their hats in their laps, so they find them very annoying. Then it is incumbent upon them to be more particular about the dressing of the hair than formerly. So, take it all in all, the fair sex is uncomfortable. I think it will result in the fashion makers getting up a low hat which will be permitted at the theatres. As soon as a lady takes her seat and shows a disposition to keep on her hat she is passed a card which politely invites her to take off her hat or get her money back at the box office.

The play this week at the Alcazar is a satire on woman, so that if the ladies did wear bonnets the rustling of feathers and pompons would have been something terrible. The daughters of old New York meet to formulate charitable affairs. They are at sea over laws. Every few moments they start out upon some gossip, and are perpetually being called to order. One lady remarks that although Mrs. Brown has gone into deep mourning she still wears red stockings.

During the session one lady remarks in a loud voice that she has just heard the best story; at which the president, secretary and treasurer, with the entire crowd, rush to the lady to hear about it. The play will never be a success, since women are the heaviest patronizers of the drama, and they will not go to see themselves held up to the mirror.

The coming week will see the whole world doing homage to Queen Victoria, who celebrates at this time her diamond jubilee. I say the whole world, but the Irish will not join the throng. Their prelates say that while they honor her as a woman they do not as a queen, and so the Irish are not in it. One loves to read about this old lady, as she is a link to past generations. And during her long and wonderful reign the whole civilized globe has made such remarkable progress.

She has been a figurehead the like the century has never seen, only in her own personality. What a caravan of Popes, emperors, kings, presidents, poets, authors and statesmen have come and gone on the stage of life. When she shall have gone to her marble bed for an eternal sleep, the world will miss this great factor of humanity.

In our own city there will be meetings, picnics, speeches, celebrations and all sorts of good times by her loyal subjects. Thousands of Americans will lend willing applause to the sentiment of the occasion. Had she been on the throne instead of old King George tradition says that we would still be a part of the British empire. Well, still more years we wish for Victoria, full of renown and gladsome homage from those who admire the woman if they do not admire the queen.

Some of the papers begin to talk about aggressive Americanism. They hold the Monroe Doctrine in their mouths as a bit, but ride out over the seas for lands to conquer. We apparently are to look after the Hawaiian islands, despite the *Argonaut*. But that most admirable paper grows starchy with years and, like a faithful watchdog grown full of years, is content with well-written growls rather than a rush up the lane of modern progression with lively barks.

The wheels of state move too slowly for the jingoes. They would do it all in a minute. The opinion of the average man is that if Hawaii is not able to take care of herself and is good for anybody she is good for Uncle Sam; a sort of vivandiere to the procession of the sister states.

You take a good geography, and you will wonder that Cuba was not long since a part of our country. It is only a good swim from Florida. And I never could quite forgive the boundary makers for allowing Canada to poke her joints away down into our Union. Aggressive Americanism will one day right all this, I think. If we devote ourselves to foreign missions, despite the chaos of sin and misery at home, we can also do a little encroachment on preserves that need attention outside our own cupboard.

Mr. Bryan is coming to the coast, so they say. If anything could stop the wave of prosperity it would be the talk, talk, talk of the man who dreams night and day of 1900.

The details of the Hoffman inquest are not so very interesting. They have had a good deal of talk. The coroner and the police are somewhat at odds, and the whole thing is a typical San Francisco affair. A trifle odd that Mr. Figel, whom some connect with a knowledge of the case, is named Figel. That itself should be sufficient cause to let the subject drop.

Did you read about Barney Barnato, the diamond king, who, in the plentitude of power and wealth, jumped into the deep sea? For years he has occupied a prominent position in the world as associated with South Africa. But the human brain, like the human stomach, can only hold out so long, and when these machines break, "down tumbles Barney, diamonds and all."

The discharge of Mr. Maxwell, the paying teller of the First National Bank, from a position he had held for twenty years for telling the truth on the witness stand was hard lines. He stood, metaphorically, between the devil and the deep sea. If he did not answer it was contempt of court and jail; if he did answer, it meant, as it proved, loss of place. Unfortunately he did not go to jail as a preference, for the bank would have seen him through the trouble. We have queer ways here in town of doing up those in a tight place. I only knew Mr. Maxwell as a paying teller, very courteous and gentlemanly. The rest of our paying tellers have decided to lie upon the proposition of holding their jobs.

I once knew a clerk whom a firm sent as a substitute to do jury duty. He was at this work about a month. His substitute at the desk proved so very capable and agreeable that the firm kept the latter and let the other out when he had finished the machine-like work of jury duty. To this day I have never gotten over the fellow's disappointment at the loss of his place, or the feeling of outrageous meanness on the part of that firm.

The merchants of this city held a picnic at Sunset Park, near Los Gatos, on Saturday, and about 2000 people attended. The train went out in three divisions. Unfortunately the day was unpleasant. The transportation of 2000 people is no light affair. The delays were vexatious. The rain prevented any real picnic privileges, so the crowd did not have a good time. They did not return until nearly 10 o'clock.

The Liliputians have not had a very successful engagement. Their piece has been devoid of any special feature. The dialogue was in German, so that aside from their own personality, always interesting, they failed to attract the crowd. Now comes the New York Lyceum company with a round of good plays.

Florence Blythe Hinckley is a much persecuted woman. The dogs of the law that fought for her are now fighting against her, and growling for dollars and dollars until the woman is to be pitied.

Word has been received with regret by our legal fraternity that Butler, the murderer, has been found guilty in Australia, and will soon hang. The swift wheels of English justice make our poor criminals cringe. There is so much lost opportunity for talk, for habeas corpuses and all sorts of verbal lingerie, that to choke a man off in a few weeks, no matter what he has done, is past comprehension.

The Camera Club gave a good exhibition this week. The Western Addition Club had a jovial evening; the Olympic Club had a wrestling bout at Woodward's Pavilion; and the fact that oysters are out of season has not prevented a crowd at the "saloons."

The judges have kindly divorced a good many couples, so that the several twains will be able to make new attachments during the summer season. There was quite a good deal of energy manifested by the parties interested, and all restrictions for the outings speedily removed.

Somebody the other night hummed Eugene Field's pretty poem, "Little Boy in Blue," to the sweetest accompaniment of a mandolin. It made me thoughtful if not sad. Somebody is playing to-night a host of tunes that come floating through the rooms as if to arrest my pen and thoughts from writing. It takes so little to send one into dreamland, into the realms of fanciful musings. It was Queen Catherine who had her maids sing to her when she was nigh unto death.

It is always music that softens the heart to better moods. June is full of music I suppose to the many who have gone away for the summer. There is the chorus of frogs at night and the birds in the morning. A hum of insects all day long. Narrowed down in this great city all these pretty things of reality are but vagaries and imaginations. The youth of to-day will not have the old music to remember for the times have been invaded. St. Cecilia's realm and this city are bound up in the dissipated in music. I would like to hear a big church organ played by a master tonight. But instead there is the hum of the piano, the distant melody of voices and outside the patter of untimely rain. Now will the cherries burst and the new mown hay mold. The farmers will wince, the papers spread out the misery, the screws of time give a fresh twist; the combination of which thought winds up into a bundle of discord what I intended to be a beautiful musical paragraph.

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