

A LIBRARY IN HIS HEAD.

A Colored Man in Washington Whom Lawyers All Over the Country Know.

Opposite the winding staircase which ascends to the rotunda, and directly beneath the supreme court room, writes a Washington correspondent to *The New York Sun*, is the finest law library in this country. It contains 63,000 volumes, and the annual additions amount to about 2,000 volumes. Though nominally a part of the miscellaneous library, and under the jurisdiction of Mr. Spofford, it has had for years its librarian and separate accommodations. Within the portals of this vast collection the profoundest lawyers of the United States have laboriously traced legal principles and marshalled arrays of authorities. The rule of silence is without breach. In this legal reservoir their is that quiet which rests upon the waters in whose depths genuine pearls alone are found.

The legal explorer meets with but one annoyance. There is not a gas-jet or lamp within the room. No employe dare even carry a match. After the fire in 1851, which proved so disastrous, a statute was enacted prohibiting the use of combustibles of any kind within the libraries. And thus, when dusk prevents the eye from longer following the studied text, the doors are closed and, perhaps in the middle of a sustained argument which the reader would fain pursue to conclusion, the volume must be resigned.

The assistant law librarian, John Francis Nicholas Wilkins, is a colored gentleman. He is the oldest attaché in either library. For twenty-eight years he has been the familiar purveyor of the law books, and in every leading office of the larger cities he could find a lawyer whom he knows. No abbreviations of the law reporters stagger him. He refers to no dictionary to discover the meaning of the initials or condensed names used, but promptly goes to the proper alcove and unerringly brings forth the desired report, whether it be one of a musty British series or some earlier state collection of opinions whose editor sought to emblazon his own name upon it rather than employ the modern convenience of consecutive numbers. It is this perfect familiarity with the library which impresses Mr. Wilkins upon the visitor. The pages of the supreme court justices are momentarily coming down with requisitions for authorities that may range from the ancient Breton laws, French causes celebres, or reports of the court de cassation to the whole domain of American decisions. With the precision of a Swiss bell-ringer Mr. Wilkins draws out the required works from the shelves. But what is more remarkable as a feat of memorizing is the accuracy of his recollection of cases. He has no need of recourse to digests to locate the leading cases of our jurisprudence. The library has grown during Mr. Wilkins's incumbency from 15,000 to 63,000 volumes, but he has kept pace with it.

For six generations back Mr. Wilkins's ancestors have been free. He has African, Indian, and white blood in his veins. In 1831, when the fear of a slave insurrection terrorized the south and the free negroes were driven from Virginia, Wilkins's father became a resident of Washington, where he was caterer to the leading statesmen who nestled together there. The son was early placed in a brick-yard, and followed brick-making until he was 29 years old, filling the winter intervals with catering and playing in a band. In 1857 he was employed as a laborer to assist in cleaning the general library. Congress made an appropriation for an additional laborer, and Wilkins got the permanent job. Wilkins was soon detailed to the law library, and there, through the grades of laborer, messenger, and assistant librarian, he has served ever since. In 1862 Mr. Lincoln removed John S. Meehan, the law librarian after thirty-two years' service, and appointed Dr. Stevenson, of Terra Haute, in his place. The new appointee discharged every employe except the younger Meehan. Wilkins was told that it had been decided to employ no colored help. But he was restored in a few months, and the supreme court and Reverdy Johnson, then on the library committee, requested that he be never removed.

Cross-Eyed People.

"You would think that a cross-eyed person would overcome his sensitiveness," but he seldom does. He broods over it. It grows on him. He imagines that every one he meets thinks as much about it as he does, and life loses all attraction for him. Did you ever notice a cross-eyed man walk? No? I can tell one as far as I can see him. It imparts to his gait a certain movement peculiar to the whole class of cross-eyed people. But it is not altogether bashfulness which causes him to avoid looking a person squarely in the face. If he retains the power of sight in each of his crooked eyes, as is often the case, it would do him no good to look the ordinary way. He would be very likely to miss the object altogether. The lines of his vision would probably cross a foot or so before the object was fully comprehended, and all he would see would be the faint and shadowy outlines of a pair of ears or the rim of a hat. The place where the face ought to be would be a dismal blank. Many bright features are ruined by this fearful misfortune. Some sensitive victims never pluck up courage enough to marry. They often become selfist misanthropes, grow stingy, and leave a fortune for a horde of straight-eyed relatives who totally

ignored them while they were alive to fight over. Others, with that natural yearning for the love and sympathy which are almost universally denied cross-eyed men, take what they can get in the matrimonial market. They spring at the very first chance which offers. Thus often a soulful, but cross-eyed, esthetic finds himself joined to a loving, but unsympathetic, helpmeet, whose ambition rises above the kitchen and the laundry. He loses his hopes, descends to the level of his mate, and what might have been a talented career is ended on a large box in front of the corner grocery in retailing neighborhood gossip. Occasionally you find a man with sufficient strength of mind to live down the malign effects of strabismus and come out a victor. When once a man has overcome his diffidence he becomes as bold as a sewing-machine agent. When he is courageous enough to look a woman obliquely in the face without stammering an apology for having been born he can fairly be said to be superior to his misfortune. Such a man would make a heroic soldier. Unfortunately, there are few who can do this. The ordinary man melts under the affliction like a cake of ice in a July sun."—*New York Commercial Advertiser*.

Our Telephone Girl.

The telephone girl was wearily singing of love and broken hearts and such things, and seemed oblivious that a dozen other people were anxiously desiring to converse with a dozen other people and that she was neglecting them, when No. 688 raised such a racket that she could no longer remain inactive. She flopped down in her chair at the key-board and cried:

"Hello! What do you want?"

"Give me 383, please!" snorted the caller.

"Well, here is 383; and I hope it will have the effect of sweetening your temper a little."

"What is that?" roared 688.

"I hope you will be a little more calm in talking to 383 than you have been in talking to me," retorted the girl.

"You do, eh? Well, if I were in your place, I would keep my mouth shut. If I could not attend to business any better than you do, the souls of my flock would go to the demitison bow-wow. It is a good thing I am a man of God. If I were not, I am afraid I should have to swear."

"Well," cried the provoking girl, "if you want to talk to 383, go ahead—if you don't, say so at once, and I will turn on somebody that does."

"Hello! Is this Phillips, the sexton?"

"Yes sir. Phat do yez want?"

"Why, Phillips, the church was very cold and uncomfortable last Sunday. I want you to have it warm tomorrow."

"Och! The furnace air burned out, mon, an' the devil couldn't kape the house warrum 'till it's fixed."

"Well, well, Phillips, we don't want the devil to warm the church. We want you to do it. You can, if you will, and you must try."

"An' how am Oi to kape it warrum when the furnace air is cowlid as Greneland, her honor?"

Here the wretched girl switched on a carriage maker who was instructing one of his employes how to polish up the cushions in a lot of carriages that had been carried over from last year, and the answer the sexton received was as follows:

"Put a small quantity of alcohol on each seat, and when the people come in, the polished condition cannot fail to engage their attention and make them feel pleased—and, say—you might as well treat my desk in the same way, as it will materially improve the looks of it. Be sure to do as I tell you, now. It will take about a half a pint to each one, and a quart for the desk."

On the following Sunday, the minister was dumfounded to find a quart bottle of alcohol conspicuously placed on his desk, and the deacons and elders were shocked at finding half a pint in each of their pews, and when they learned from the sexton that all had been done by the preacher's orders, one of the greatest rows of the season began to brew, and when the text: "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow ye shall die," was announced, the ladies retired and the men put the minister out of the house, and now he has to answer a charge of immoral teaching."—*Through Mail*.

An Easter Novelty.

There will shortly appear in our book stores an original "novelty" for Easter, designed by two Buffalo girls who have met with such unexpected encouragement among dealers to whom they have submitted their work that they have every prospect of becoming successful business women. The little ornament, which they have fashioned to hang on a cabinet or gas bracket Easter morning, is a white satin crescent fringed with silver spangles and dusted over with silver powder. In the same circle rests a broken egg with a cunning downy chicken peeping forth, his bright eyes snapping mischievously from under his yellow, fuzzy coat. White chenille strings form a finish and pretty means of hanging up this Easter greeting. We learn that the young women have not once introduced their design here, but have received large orders from Rochester and other neighboring places. Any young lady nowadays who can get up something new and pretty for an inexpensive holiday souvenir is almost assured of her income in advance.—*Buffalo Courier*.

Mr. Gosse's American Experiences.

"You try me hard," said Mr. Edmund Gosse, who has just returned to London after a highly successful lecturing tour in America, to one of our representatives, who called upon him with a request for his impressions of America. "The fact is I have declined to be interviewed—the word is familiar enough to me now, I can assure you. The first night I landed in New York, sea sick and weary, I naturally wished to retire early. I had opened my bedroom to put out my boots. An interviewer was there on my door-mat. He declined to move until he got the information he required. The door-mat was hard. I took pity on him. 'Well,' (relenting) 'I shall be glad to answer a very few questions. But no man has a right to give his judgment on a country after only eight weeks' experience.' 'I have noticed, Mr. Gosse, that celebrities are always most enthusiastic in their praise of America, its great people, its great institutions, if they think of returning at some future date. It is but natural. Americans pay us back in the same coin.' 'I can not undertake to give you any impressions on America. I did not stay there long enough to collect any that would be of value to you. But I might, perhaps, venture on one or two impressions of Englishmen in America. It has struck me in the current comparisons between the two countries that our travelers have failed to prepare themselves for the fact that, although the language is the same, the two nations differ immensely. The first thing that strikes one is the difference in the physical appearance of America—broad plains of the landscape, the brilliant atmosphere, even the foreign smells. Englishmen should not, when they visit America, wish to have a replica of what they left behind. Nor should they reprove and chastise and point the moral, as they are so fond of doing—a remnant, surely, of the good old times when the papers used to tell John Bull every morning that he was the noblest fellow in the world, and could do nothing wrong. One is immensely struck by the fact that all the little details of everyday life are different; even the language has undergone a transmutation not to be discovered in books. A station has become a 'depot,' a washhand jug a 'pitcher,' spirits of wine 'alcohol,' luggage 'baggage,' an engine a 'locomotive'—all these things tend to create a certain amount of friction on a conservative ear. Then the Englishman should start with the understanding that democracy is a real thing in America. Now, I heard a story of a distinguished Englishman of science who made so great a fuss at an American railway station that the bystanders remarked it. 'You seem to take up a great deal of room sir.' 'In my country I am accustomed to take up a great deal of room.' These are the little things that ruffle the Americans sadly. But it is impossible, I think, for anyone, even perhaps for an American, to give trustworthy impressions of America, the most interesting country in the world, the most shifting problems of modern times. The Americans regard Mr. James Bryce as the authority par excellence on things American. But then he has traveled far and wide, and followed the various steps of American progress with sympathy and intelligence."—*Fall Mall Gazette*.

Woolen Bulwarks Against Bullets.

The Yaqui Indians long since used tactics in war that were unknown to civilized troops. In a former uprising they were attacked by Gen. Pesqueras, who was much amused to see the savages use blankets as a shield against the soldiers' bullets. Holding up a blanket at both ends, so that the edge just touched the ground, the Indian riflemen marched boldly toward him behind this apparently flimsy protection. The Mexican general was soon alarmed, however, to find that his bullets did not stop the strange advance and the moving fort of blankets soon came so close to him and poured in such a deadly fire that he was fain to fly the field in confusion and with great loss. The Yaquis has become acquainted with the simple fact that while a bullet will pass through twenty blankets strained over a frame or laid against a firm surface it will not penetrate a single one if moistened and hung up so as to swing clear of the ground. The bullets which Gen. Pesqueras imagined were passing through the Indian blankets and thinning the ranks of the savages were all falling harmlessly on the outside of the woolen bulwarks.—*San Francisco Call*.

The Size of Our Lakes.

The latest measurement of our fresh water seas is as follows: The greatest length of Lake Superior is 335 miles; its greatest breadth is 160 miles; mean depth, 688 feet; elevation, 627 feet; area, 82,000 square miles. The greatest length of Lake Michigan is 300 miles; its greatest breadth, 108 miles; mean depth, 690 feet; elevation, 506 feet; area, 23,000 square miles. The greatest length of Lake Huron is 200 miles; its greatest breadth, 169 miles; mean depth, 600 feet; elevation, 274 feet; area, 20,000 square miles. The greatest length of Lake Erie is 250 miles; greatest breadth, 80 miles; mean depth, 84 feet; elevation, 555 feet; area, 6,000 square miles. The greatest length of Lake Ontario is 180 miles; its greatest breadth, 65 miles; mean depth, 500 feet; elevation, 261 feet; area, 6,000 square miles. The length of all five is 1,268 miles, covering an area upward of 135,000 square miles.

Neglecting Home Talent.

There are artists and musicians among us who have won fame and fortune. But for one that is successful scores struggle against the petty jealousy of their countrymen and poverty produced by this foreign craze. It is a notorious fact that Americans who have painted pictures and published music under their own names have been a complete failure; but on assuming a foreign, high-sounding name their works have found a ready sale. A large number of paintings held by the rich in this country, with French and Italian signatures, are the works of resident American artists. If their owners knew that the artist was a plain George Smith or John Thomas they would not consider them worth the canvas they are painted on.

Why have not Americans more national pride? Why do not the rich spend more of their money at home? Money paid out here for luxuries benefits the masses. The artist and musician pay it to the merchants, who in turn pay it to their employes.

Foreigners who excel should be well paid for their works, which should be brought to this country; they help to educate us, to elevate and refine, but they must not be patronized to the exclusion of our own. We have the same elevating, refining influence with us, in men and women of talent and genius; but who languish in obscurity for want of patronage, because our great weakness is for show, and that is made better by buying in Paris, Florence or Rome. In order to avoid the loss of millions we must learn to appreciate, to encourage and support our own.

Another evil consequent upon the first is, that, seeing Americans rushing abroad to spend their money, foreigners have naturally come to the conclusion that our art productions must be of a very inferior order when we will not buy them ourselves. This impression is created by Americans wherever they go; consequently they not only send their own money abroad, but prejudice foreigners, so that they will not send their money here for anything that can be had elsewhere. If Americans had that true-born pride and love of country which should animate every heart, there would be no bowing at the feet of strange talent to neglect our own; but with a helping hand American genius liberated would mount and hold place with the highest talent of the world.—*Philadelphia Ledger*.

John Charles Black.

John Charles Black, the new Commissioner of Pensions, was born at Lexington, Mo., in January, 1839. He received an academic education, and graduated at Wabash College, Indiana. A short time afterward he entered the army, in the 37th Illinois Regiment. When he left it, in 1865, he held the rank of Brevet Brigadier General. His next step was to procure admission to the bar. He entered the office of a prominent firm in Chicago for this purpose, and in due time was admitted to the practice of his profession. His home is at Danville, Ill.

Gen. Black has been active in politics, as a Democrat, and has been frequently nominated for office. Several unsuccessful nominations for Congress, the last only last fall, have maintained his prominence in local party struggles, and are significant of the respect in which his ability is held. Gen. Black was the Democratic candidate for Lieutenant Governor in 1872, and when Gen. Logan was sent to the Senate in 1879 Gen. Black was the Democratic caucus nominee. He was a delegate at large to the last Democratic National Convention, before which an attempt was made to put him in nomination for the Vice-Presidency, which he prevented.

Worth Her Weight in Gold.

Mrs. Jusus Castro, an aged Mexican lady, now residing at American Flag, in the Santa Catalina Mountains, is perhaps the only woman who, literally speaking, ever cost her husband her weight in gold. It is said that in the early gold-digging days of California, when about the age of seventeen, a paternal uncle but a few years her senior returned with his companions gold-laden from the El Dorado of the West and became desperately enamored of her. He sought her hand in marriage and was accepted, but the Church refused, because of the near relationship existing between them, to solemnize the marriage. Persuasion being in vain he tried the power of gold to win the Church's way, and succeeded only by the payment of her weight in gold. She at that time weighed 117 pounds, and against her in the scales the glittering dust was shovelled. Her affianced husband still had sufficient of this world's goods to provide a comfortable home, and they were married.—*Tucson Star*.

A Deserted Port.

The United States warship Powhatan recently visited a port of Hayti called Nicola Mole, where President Salomon claimed an extensive trade was about to spring up, particularly in the log-wood business. The Powhatan arrived off the town on January 31, where she remained one day. No one came out to the ship, and, as there were no signs of life except a Haytian flag flying from a dilapidated building, an officer was sent to call on the governor, who excused himself by reason of being alone. No representatives of any nation were found there, nor any evidence of any commerce. The Powhatan steamed away.—*New Orleans Times-Democrat*.

A Remarkable Dog.

Mr. Peter Latic has a remarkable dog, a cross of the Newfoundland and St. Bernard, that has been a regular attendant, every Sabbath for over four years, of the Congregational Church of this place, of which Mr. L. is a member, only failing to attend twice during the four years; once because of rheumatism, and one day because the church bell being out of order failed to make its usual call. What adds to the dog's whims he invariably goes alone and on different streets from the direct way his owner goes, and by his circuit passes the M. E. Church, never failing to be at the ante-room before the bell ringing ceases and there remains until the services close, when he sees Mr. L. to his residence, carrying either his cane or hymn book. A few evenings since, when Mr. L. and sons remained at their store beyond usual hours for closing, and there the dog usually stays he gave frequent signals for his supper that were not heeded. He sought and found the hat of Mr. L. sr. and brought it to him, who told him to call on one of his sons, naming him, and he would supply his wants, when off posted the dog for the hat of the son, and brought it to him, who kindly accompanied him to a meat market near by and got him his grub.

Often when the dog needs food he gives the signal to one of the boys at the store, who, by receiving a nickel, posts off for a mess of fresh meat, carrying the change in his mouth and depositing it at the meat stand, if the door is open, and if not scratches for admission. The dog seems to understand the King's English as well as a person. Some two years since a party, not of the family, gave him a ticket on election day and told him to go and vote at the polls on the opposite side of the street. The Colonel marched over like a little man with the ticket in his mouth and reared up and stuck his head into the window, and thus passed his vote to the judge of election. Many other marks of rare faculties might be named that show more than instinct. He appreciates kindness, though revengeful for any unkindness shown him by man or any of the dog family, as evidenced in giving a neighbor's dog a severe shaking to pay him for pouncing on him some years before, when a half grown puppy. Kindness begets kindness, with man or beast, and vice versa.—*Iowa State Register*.

Congressional Mediocrity.

Congressmen are each paid salaries of \$5,000 a year. There are 325 of them, and about twenty-five out of that number are worth their salaries. The best could not make more than half that by the sale of their talents to the world in any capacity, and if some of them were forced to live by the sweat of their brows outside of politics I imagine that many of them would go on a low diet, and not from choice either. Look over the men of your acquaintance. How many of them are worth \$5,000 a year outside of their capital?

Pick out 325 men from any part of the Union—men whose brain and muscle alone is worth \$5,000 a year in the market—and I will show you that they are of a far higher grade than those making up this body. How did they get here? In various ways. Some bought their seats, it is charged, and some held them through their friendship with great corporations. Some got them by drinking at bar-rooms to cultivate the slums, and some hypocritically slid into them by praying in the churches at the same time. Others hold their places by the favor of certain district rings and the mainspring which runs the successful machinery of others is the sending out of seeds and the Government documents to their farming constituents. A few of them are really great men, but these I can count on my fingers. A few more are noble and upright, and now and then you will find one who does, because it is for his country's good, and not because it will benefit himself. Most of them swell about and pose as great men. I suppose they think they are so, saving at election time, when they must drink, truckle and bootlick to keep their greatness uppermost. Congressional greatness! Faugh!—*Carp's Washington Letter*.

Farms on the Baltic.

A more beautiful farming country does not exist than that along the southern shore of the Baltic. No fences mark the boundaries of the fertile farms which stretch away over the rolling hills to the distant horizon, all aglow with yellow grain. At intervals a clump of trees often seen intensely dark against the ripe grain shows where a house stands, and giant windmills swing their sails on the highest hill-tops. The highway, a finely built *chasse* leads straight across the country, only curving to pass through some village. Mountain ash, birch, and cherry trees border the road in an unbroken rank. In the ditches and by the roadside grow countless varieties of wild flowers—a perfect paradise for the botanist. From the highest hill the eye meets to the south a succession of grain fields. To the north, beyond the soft undulations of the cultivated hills, the Baltic shimmers in the strong sunlight, a narrow line, sharp at the horizon. The dimensions of the brick barns prove the accustomed magnitude of the harvest; the luxury of the farmers' houses tells of inherited success.—*F. D. Millet, in Harper's Magazine for April*.