

The editor of the paper I was engaged upon once ran short of printing paper,—and used up every sheet, coarse or fine, completely indifferent as to shade or colour, of grocers' and drapers' paper he would purchase or borrow, and then, until he could obtain a fresh supply from Melbourne, he asked the editor of the opposition paper to lend him a ream or two to carry on with, but the editor, also proprietor, was hard of heart, and he refused, and by the refusal sought to stop the issue of the paper. My employer was fertile in resource. In his next issue he stated to his readers that he was in; asked respectfully for contributions of calico or any white textile material which would take an impression with ink; and on the day following pieces of calico, ladies' white under-clothing, the backs or foreparts of shirts, old sheets, and odd remnants poured in to the utter confounding of the day's work, which had to be abandoned in order to receive the free gift offerings and return thanks for such liberal contributions. Fortunately, as returned out, these were not wanted, for the same afternoon the mail cart brought the required supply of paper, and all went right as before. But I remember perfectly that two or three weeks subsequently the washerwoman's drying lines in the suburbs of the town presented a singular appearance. Wherever shi-

REMINISCENCES IN THE LIFE OF A COLONIAL JOURNALIST.

BY SNYDER.

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I CONTINUE TO NARRATE—HOW PEOPLE LIVED DURING THE RUSH—THE CIVIL SERVICE—AND OTHER MATTERS.

At the time I referred to in the close of my last, people were rushing from all parts of the world and concentrating themselves on the goldfields, or settling in the towns and cities, making fortunes only to knock them down afterwards on the wildest and maddest of speculations. People—strong men and delicate women, who had come with their husbands from snug homes—slept under canvas or calico tents, undergoing many privations and discomforts before reaching one or other of the goldfields, to suffer privations and still rougher treatment when they arrived there. Houses could not be run up fast enough, although a couple of smart carpenters would think very little of knocking three or four two-room cottages together in a day and a half, but then it would have scarcely been safe to have leant against the walls. These were let to tenants at from thirty shillings to forty shillings per week upon the stipulation that they bought their own chimney or did without one, and found themselves in locks and door-handles.

It was at this time I was in London under the medical treatment of an eminent physician, who, having taken twenty guineas, confided to me one day that there was really nothing the matter with me, but that possibly there might be if I selected London fog for a climate instead of the dry breezes of Victoria. So I left London, bringing with me the third of a ship-load of corrugated iron buildings, which included several cottages, a dissenting chapel, a fourteen-roomed hotel, dance saloon, and two stores, all of corrugated iron. I sold the whole of these to great advantage. But when the buyers took delivery, and began to erect them, it was discovered that the home manufacturer with whom I had contracted, had omitted to ship the roofs, or if the roofs were all there the walls were not; or, in case, as it did happen, the roofs and walls were correct, the staircases, or the chimneys, or the flooring-joints, or the wall-plates, were absent, or had been deemed unnecessary. The buyers came upon me for deficiencies, and the cost of supplying these in the colonial market exceeded the original price the buildings were constructed for. I wrote to the manufacturer for reimbursement, and a more civil answer I could not possibly have received. He deeply regretted the circumstance, and enclosed me a copy of the decree of the commissioner in bankruptcy, which intimated that he had been released from all his pecuniary responsibilities, and, further, had paid two and four pence three-eighths in the pound to those who had proved their claims upon his estate. This contractor subsequently purchased a nobleman's mansion, with a deer-park, and 600 acres of land. It was looked upon as a bargain at £90,000, which the contractor paid for in hard cash. It was his boast, as I have since heard, that in three years he built as many iron houses as, placed in a line, would reach from Blackwall, where his factory was, to the White Horse Hotel at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, being a distance of 332 miles. I wish this contractor no harm, and I hope he is happy. I shall not even reproach him should we come together in a happier land in the next world.

Other occupations I have followed in my miscellaneous career, such as dabbling in shipbuilding, sinking for a vein of copper, and in doing so discovered a new kind of clay a geologist pronounced to be admirably adapted for fire-bricks, which would doubtless have been the case had the clay held together during the process of baking, instead of departing in fragments and flying through the air in meteoric showers.

I was the purchaser of the right to work the patent of an ice-making machine for the eight summer months of the year. But of the whole of that eight months, with the exception of one fortnight, the weather was so cold that people went out of doors with overcoats, and covered themselves over at night with extra blankets. The exceptional fortnight I have referred to set in blazing hot. Stout men and women were visibly melting away; vegetation was burnt up; the ground opened in dangerous fissures; the thermometer stood at 120 deg. (Fahrenheit) in the shade, and something beyond the memory of the

oldest inhabitant in the sun. No such intense heat had ever been felt before, and the demand for artificial ice amounted to a mania. But this magnificent opening for making a mint of money was denied me, for the boiler which worked the machine commenced leaking in many places. The water put out the fire in the furnace, in addition to which the piston rod became infirm of purpose and refused to have any further connection with the piston. A couple of engineers, a boiler-maker, and two labourers contrived to put the whole of the machinery in order just as the hot nor-wester had blown itself out, and by way of change set on from the snowy region of the South Pole, with hailstones as big as small walnuts. It was about this time I became perfectly resigned and submissive to anything which befell me. The thought of artificial ice was something to shudder at.

I was once a noble Volunteer in a crack corps, remarkable for the elegance of its

uniform (scarlet, with silver facings). I seldom put in an appearance at drill, but attended all balls, parades, and evening gatherings whenever our colonel issued regimental orders that we were to appear in full dress. After a time, when the facings became soiled, and the scarlet uniform was perceptibly becoming of a dark, dirty, orange hue, I sent in my resignation, because a venal and corrupt Government had issued its ukase that if Volunteers wished for new uniforms they must provide them at their own expense. I am proud of having been a Volunteer, because it is to this that I acquired, and retain to the present hour, that commanding mien and military bearing which has brought down upon me so much admiration on the part of the gentler sex.

My great ambition at one time was to be connected with a banking establishment. I have always thought, and I think so still, if I were allowed to issue bank-notes, which I have been told cost somewhere about threepence each, while at the same time I could induce a confiding public to accept them as an equivalent for twenty shillings, I should be able to declare dividends in my own favour at least once a week, leaving at the same time large balances to go to the reserve fund. I have now come to think that I shall never be a banker.

I once became involved in maintaining a large private boarding-house, at which no one was supposed to put up excepting members of the Civil Service; but I was not many months in making the discovery that instead of the establishment supporting me it did nothing more than contribute towards the support of the Civil Service. I never met with a more pleasant or a more honourable set of fellows in my career through life. I could retire to my room of nights, leaving the private bar open with a slate and pencil placed on the bar table, and I am ready at any time to make affirmation that there was not a drink the Civil Service supplied themselves with but it was faithfully chronicled on the slate in the morning. If in the end I was not paid for these liquors, that has nothing to do with the question. I certainly could not fail to observe one peculiarity among my young patrons which I was puzzled to understand at the time, but the solution of which I think I have since come to know. That portion of the Civil Service which patronised me never got their "screws." They were always just going to get them, but never did quite. That's what they were wont to tell me. How, then, could they pay, when paid they had not been themselves? I often wondered how they managed theatres, where no credit is given, and hotel bars, and little suppers at Mademoiselle Fontenoy's cosy establishment, and how it was so many so very frequently didn't come home till daylight did appear.

It was after long and serious meditation that, one morning, at the breakfast-hour, I asked my boarders whether they would partake of my hospitality in the shape of an oyster supper. They said they would and they kept their word. They were splendid fellows, all of them. My health was drunk three times three and one cheer more in hot whiskey of my own providing. In responding to the toast, I told my lodger guests how happy I had been in their society for a period of so many months, but that circumstances required me to give up boarding-house-keeping, which would occur at nine o'clock the next morning. That was about the hour they would have to depart, and soon after the

hour named I had twenty-seven bed-rooms, two parlours, and a drawing-room vacant, and the same night I dreamed of a ghost being in the passage below. I found on inspection that I had on my books close upon three hundred pounds due by the Civil Service, of which amount I subsequently received nine pounds fifteen shillings.

There was one little romance, which, if I relate, will be called to mind by many old colonists. I couldn't say how many guineas I did not make by furnishing the newspapers with fullest details of the affair. How those details were varied to meet the tastes of readers, and the moral I drew from each, I will not now take upon me to say; but for three weeks public attention was so arrested that politics, party strife, and the wrong-doings of a venal and most corrupt Government were quite lost sight of.

A young man, well-dressed, and of most gentlemanly appearance, applied to me to take up his quarters at my establishment. I raised an objection to receiving him as he was not a member of the Civil Service, but he overruled this by saying that the money he paid me would be found to go quite as far and might be applied to as useful purposes as if it had come out of the Provincial Treasury chest. My thoughts ran in the same direction, and so I yielded. He was anxious, he told me, to have a single-bedded room to himself, and this he was accommodated with. I question if a more inoffensive, harmless young man—a man fit for any lady's tea-party—could scarcely be found in any department of public life that I have been introduced to. He appeared to be a close student, for he read books all day, and only went out of nights, and then never when the moon was up. He was rather liked by the Civil Service lodgers, because they made the discovery that if any of them were short of a sovereign for a supper at Madame Fontenoy's, he was always willing to assist them with a loan to that amount, and always said he would be content with repayment when the borrower received his "screw." Now it so happened that

three weeks after this gentleman had taken up his abode with me a rather stout, well-dressed man came to me, and requested accommodation. He also wanted a single-bedded room to himself. He said he was in the Government service, and never cared about sleeping where there were two beds in one apartment. The only objection I raised in my mind to the application was that, being on the Government service, I might have to wait for my board money until he had got his screw, but he proved to be a highly exceptional case in this particular. I was almost startled and completely filled with doubt when he tendered the money for a fortnight in advance. What he stipulated for was that he should have room No. 19, which adjoined that of my quiet, studious, but mysterious lodger. This I managed to obtain for him by informing the then occupant that it had distressed me greatly to see him uncomfortably lodged when I had a much better room to place him in. It appeared strange to me then, although it does not in the least appear strange now, that when the mysterious student remained in his room the gentleman in the Government service also remained in his; and that when the mysterious student went out, Government Service went out immediately afterwards, when both Government Service and mysterious student would return about the same time. In the matter of three weeks it all came out. About seven o'clock one evening when the Civil Service had just dined, I was sent for upstairs, when I met the mysterious student with a pair of handcuffs on his wrists, and Government Service reading to him from a printed document. The secret was, that the student being a bank clerk in Victoria, had absconded with bank moneys to the tune of £14,000, and Government Service was a detective constable who had been sent after him. The student received a sentence of fourteen years. He had a wife, and three steps of stairs of young children. As not more than a thousand pounds was found on the student, and as his wife and children were reported to be living in affluence, it is to be believed that the student had done the right thing in providing for them out of his assets.

I think that I have omitted to state that at one time the newspapers and agricultural journals of Victoria became insane upon the subject of growing mangold wurtzel, which, if properly entered upon,

CONTRIBUTIONS BY "SNYDER."

JUVENILE BEGGING.

At this moment I am interrupted by a knocking at my door. I open it and find standing before me a young girl—she may be ten or she may be twelve years of age. She has the fresh bloom of early girlhood on her face. Neatly attired, and modest-looking withal. In her hand she holds a card, ruled in parallel lines. She comes a-begging on account of some mission—a good mission, I have no doubt. It is to further the cause of a church. She shows me her card, and in childish words she asks me to contribute; to which entreaty I at once refuse.

I say to her, "My dear child, whoever sent you upon this mission is doing you, unintentionally I dare say, great wrong. By-and-by—may the time be long and distant—it will probably become your lot of stern necessity to come in hard contact with the world, when you will be called upon to do many things and make many requests which you may have but will not care to make. But those who have sent you forth upon this mission, whether it be parent or clergyman, should have borne in mind that, although when the fresh bloom has been brushed from the fruit, it may still be good fruit, yet it has lost much of its early beauty. You have been sent out to meet with many a cold answer, many an unkind rebuff, and it may be to hear words which you ought not to hear. The cause you are pleading for with childish lips is no doubt a good cause, but it should have been pleaded for by age that has matured and is able to answer a refusal or reply to a taunt."

And so the child went her way, and I here note it that those who send out young children to beg for money from door to door, no matter for what object, do them a grievous wrong. I did not ask that child from whence she procured the money which purchased the pastry, the remains of which were about her mouth and face, nor that packet of confectionery which she held in the same hand with her begging card. I did not ask her, I say, because I could not have her add the sin of a lie to that of peccation. Will my good friends lift by the counsel which this intimation attended to convey?