

## Some Wonders From the West.

### XIV.—SAND-PICTURES.

BY ALFRED BURKHOLDER.



MR. W. S. O'BRIEN, THE SAND-ARTIST.  
From a Photo. by A. Horning, McGregor, Iowa.

**P**ICTURES made with different coloured sand is a new art which has been developed by Mr. W. S. O'Brien, manager of the Western Union Telegraph

Company's offices at McGregor, Iowa. The art consists in so arranging sand of different colours in glass bottles as to make perfect pictures and lettering. Even natural scenery can be set forth by this wonderful art, as the accompanying illustrations will show.

"I cannot claim," said Mr. O'Brien, "to have been the originator of this unique and fascinating art, for it was really evolved by Andrew Clemmens, a

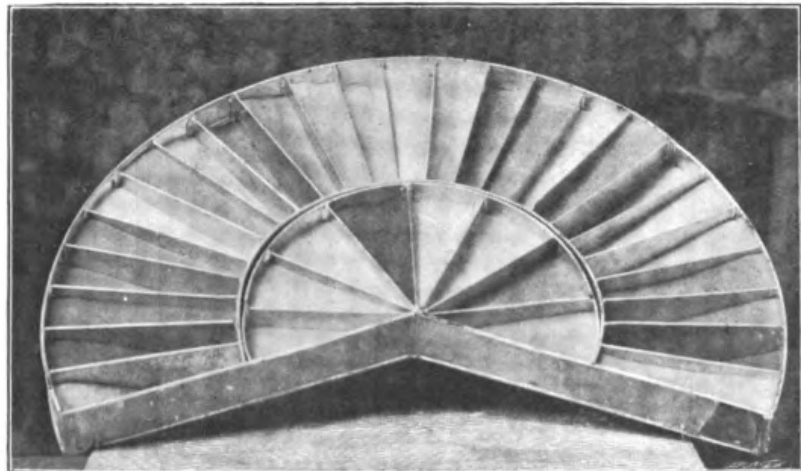
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deaf-mute; but following in his footsteps I have made many beautiful pictures, which are now scattered throughout the country in possession of private individuals. I have not made a business of the work, having had my profession to furnish me a livelihood. Any success which I may have won is due to the inspiration derived from the marvellous accomplishments of Mr. Clemmens.

"To begin with, the sand which I have used has not been ordinary sand, but is a special kind obtained from the pictured rocks in the vicinity of McGregor. These rocks form a canyon between cliffs about 400ft. high, facing on the Mississippi River. The formation of the rocks is massive, running back several miles from the river.

"The colours in some places are in regular layers, and in others mottled and variegated most fantastically. A cascade at the head of the ravine causes dampness, and lichens soon grow over the exposed faces of the rocks, hiding many beautiful colour effects and substituting many beauties of their own. The colours in the rocks are caused by waters flowing from the mineral deposits.

"In glacial times, when the rest of the country was 'planed off,' so to speak, a



CASE FOR HOLDING SANDS OF VARIOUS COLOURS.  
From a Photo. by A. Horning, McGregor, Iowa.



THE PICTURED ROCKS ON THE MISSISSIPPI, WHENCE THE COLOURED SANDS ARE OBTAINED.  
From a Photograph.

skip seems to have occurred in the neighbourhood of McGregor, and a strip about 200 miles north and south by about fifty miles wide was left standing in pristine ruggedness, through the centre of which flows the mighty Mississippi River. It is necessary to explain this formation in order that the peculiarity of the sand manipulated may be better understood.

“Having secured my sand I proceed to place it in the bottle, layer upon layer, and with very simple tools work in the designs or letters desired. While the sand is being placed in the bottle the latter is held at varying angles.

“According to

the law of gravitation the picture cannot be worked in from the back or sides, as will be understood. The sand is placed in the bottle perfectly dry, and I often have difficulty in convincing persons who have not seen it done that no glue or oil has been used



From a Photo. by]

SPECIMENS OF MR. O'BRIEN'S SAND PICTURES. [A. Horning, McGregor.



to make the grains remain in their proper positions.

"In order to prove that nothing is used but the sand I have frequently broken bottles and thus destroyed pictures. This is not the only way in which bottles get broken, however. Quite often in pressing the sand down tight, which process requires much care, the bottle breaks, it being absolutely necessary to have the sands as tightly packed as they will go, and, on the other hand, impossible to gauge the strength of the glass.

"After the bottle is properly filled and sealed down it will stand any amount of shaking and can be transported in safety anywhere. Moreover, the colours of the picture will never fade, not having been dimmed by the



THE STARS AND STRIPES IN SAND.  
From a Photo. by A. Horning, McGregor,  
Iowa.

use of oil, water, or spirits. They maintain all the pristine brightness of their hues. I have thus far obtained thirty-three shades in sands, and expect to secure more. One illustration shows the way in which I keep these different shades separated.

"The number of shades used naturally varies with the picture produced. Some of the work that I have done shows the natural scenery in the vicinity of McGregor. One represents a waterfall and others are of similar pastoral subjects. The words shown in some of the pictures are worked in simply to produce odd effects. It is possible to produce in these pictures anything desired."

#### XV.—THE HUMAN OSTRICH—THE GREATEST PUZZLE TO THE MEDICAL WORLD.

As is well known, the ostrich evinces a strong propensity for devouring such indigestible comestibles as nails, glass, china, and various flotsam and jetsam of a similar character. This peculiar tendency, however, is attributed to eccentricity on the part of the bird, since there is no accounting for tastes. Yet the ostrich is not the only member of the brute creation to dine off such unique edibles, since Mr. Henry Harrison, a native of Syracuse, U.S.A., is afflicted with a similar peculiarity, and in fact outrivals the ostrich in the selection of his delectable dainties. In view of

the delicate nature of the internal organism of the human body it comes somewhat as a shock to know that this man consumes such fare as blades of pocket-knives, pins, nails, screws, and glass with as perfect impunity as the ordinary individual partakes of the more conventional articles of diet. But Mr. Harrison neither suffers from indigestion nor experiences the slightest effects from such a repast. Under these circumstances, therefore, he is certainly entitled to the strange sobriquet "The Human Ostrich," as which he is familiarly known.



MR. HENRY HARRISON, THE HUMAN OSTRICH, AT HIS DINNER OF KNIVES,  
From a Photo. by PINS, NAILS, AND GLASS. [The Helios, New York.]



Mr. Harrison is a typical young American of middle stature. There is nothing in his appearance to suggest his remarkable proclivity, for he is of splendid physique. He possesses prodigious strength, his muscles being as hard as iron—attributable perhaps to the vast quantity of that metal which he has eaten during his life. His chest measurement normally is  $38\frac{1}{4}$  in., but he is capable of expanding it an additional  $10\frac{3}{4}$  in., making 49 in. in all. Another peculiar feature is that he can make any of the muscles throughout his body dance at will, without moving a limb, a circumstance which is due to his remarkable muscular energy. Indeed, one would opine from his splendid athletic build that he indulged in violent and regular training, but, strange to say, he does not follow any exercise whatever beyond a little walking.

Harrison first discovered his unique propensity when he was a small boy, six years of age. One day he swallowed a pin. Feeling no discomfort, several other pins rapidly followed the course of the first. His mother, somewhat alarmed, summoned the assistance of a physician, who extracted three pins. He also paid £50 for permission to operate upon the child, and succeeded in removing forty other pins from the boy's stomach. The surgeon was intensely interested in the case, and feeling convinced that the boy would live but a short while, if he continued swallowing such articles, offered the parents £200 for the child's body when he died. That was eighteen years ago, and still Harrison is in robust health, notwithstanding the physician's convictions regarding his early demise.

Young Harrison continued to pursue his inexplicable idiosyncrasy. One day he broke a glass lamp chimney, and was duly castigated by his mother for the offence. When the punishment was concluded, either as a penance for his misdemeanour or to spite his mother, he deliberately devoured the glass fragments of the chimney he had broken. He then concluded this peculiar meal by eating an assortment of rusty nails

which he discovered. A few months later he ran away from home and joined a travelling circus, where he exhibited his unique gastronomical accomplishments, and has continued the performance for the last eighteen years.

During this prolonged period he has swallowed a huge variety of articles of a more heterogeneous nature, probably, than was ever eaten by an ostrich. Yet he has never

suffered the slightest inconvenience, and has never experienced any illness, with the exception of that which he contracted during the exposure of an X-ray photograph of his stomach, and is in possession of all his faculties. He always eats a good, hearty meal of starchy foods before he commences his performance. After he has swallowed each piece of hardware he takes a drink of water. When the entertainment is concluded he enjoys another sound meal, similar in nature to the first. By thus eating a large quantity of farinaceous substances the inside of his



THE HUMAN OSTRICH DINES ON A LAMP CHIMNEY.  
From a Photo. by The Helios, New York.

stomach becomes well lined, thus obviating the possibility of any of the points of the nails, glass, or knife-blades injuring him. The most remarkable circumstance in connection with the achievement is that the gullet is not lacerated, not even by the sharp edges of the glass, during the passage of the substances down the throat.

He is considered an inexplicable prodigy by the whole of the medical profession throughout the United States. He has visited all the principal medical colleges and placed himself unreservedly in the hands of the most brilliant *savants* of the profession. They have closely diagnosed his peculiarity, but they have all been absolutely baffled. Innumerable theses have been advanced to account for the phenomenon and animated discussions have raged in the columns of the medical Press from time to time, but no feasible solution or explanation of the case has yet been advocated. On nine occasions eminent surgeons have paid Harrison £50 for per-



mission to operate upon him, so that they might carry out their investigations at close quarters. His body is literally covered with scars showing where the surgeons' knives have been at work. The last operation was made upon his neck, the doctor desiring to examine his throat. But Harrison still remains a human puzzle. Personally he does not regard the feat as very extraordinary. He naïvely opines that "any man with a good constitution and a strong nerve can do the same thing. It is simply a matter of cultivating the palate. Rusty nails are very nice when you acquire a taste for them, and glass is a particular dainty." A plausible explanation of his powers, no doubt, but one that is scarcely likely to tempt the prosaic man in the street to emulate his efforts.

Probably the finest exhibition of his peculiarity was that given at the Medico-Chirurgical College, in Philadelphia, on Thanksgiving Day last year. This festival is one of the greatest of the American institutions, and the dinner on this occasion resembles very closely in character that enjoyed by Englishmen on Christmas Day—roast turkey and other dainty victuals in season. Harrison's dinner on this auspicious day, however, was indubitably the most original on record. This was the menu:—

Forty Carpet Tacks.  
Six Pieces Broken Glass.  
Twenty Lath Nails.  
One Glass Milk Pitcher.  
Six Horseshoe Nails.  
Five Two-inch Screws.  
One Broken Lamp Chimney.  
Aqua Pura.

DESSERT.

Two Bone-handled Pocket-Knives.  
Three Minced Pen-knife Blades.

The table was set in the amphitheatre of the college, in view of a large concourse of prominent members of the medical profession and students, by all of whom the progress of the dinner was followed with intense interest.

Harrison swallowed the forty carpet tacks without the slightest hesitation. It must not be imagined, however, that he swallows the

articles in an indiscriminate manner. "Incur no risks," is his motto, and to prevent one stopping in his throat and choking him he adopts a certain method of swallowing them. On one occasion he consumed a packet of tacks, and by some mischance the package lodged in one of his digestive organs. It did not entirely obstruct the passage of his food, however, but it caused a certain amount of discomfort, and he was compelled

to undergo an operation to have it removed. This is the only misadventure he has ever experienced during the whole of the eighteen years. His *modus operandi* is to place the tack, or screw, carefully on his tongue, point outwards, give a gulp and it is gone, head foremost.

The broken glass was then eagerly devoured. This, to a certain extent, is the most noteworthy part of his performance. Glass possesses so many sharp edges and fine points, and yet his gullet is so hardened and elastic that the glass passes through without injuring it in the slightest. The twenty lath nails con-

stituted the next dish on the menu, and they vanished from sight in an incredibly short space of time. The glass milk pitcher came next, followed in turn by the six horseshoe nails. The latter are particularly formidable articles of diet to consume, owing to their length—3in.—and large pyramidal heads. Before swallowing these Harrison bends the point into the shape of a staple, and thus gulps it down, staple foremost. His rapacity was then somewhat further allayed by the five large 2in. screws, supplemented by the broken glass lamp chimney, which the human ostrich consumed with as much relish as a child eats a biscuit. He now partook of a copious drink of water, which concluded the first section of the dinner. Dessert was now brought forward, but the strangest dessert ever yet offered to a human being. There were two bone-handled pocket-knives on the dish. But without any comment Harrison opened the knives and quickly severed the blades from the handles with his teeth, with the greatest facility, and the blades soon followed in the wake of the



HIS NEXT COURSE CONSISTS OF A COUPLE  
From a Photo. by] OF SCREWS. [The Helios, N. Y.



previous dishes. The final course was three pen-knife blades minced together, at the conclusion of which the unique diner rose from the table.

The performance aroused the greatest attention, and many of the doctors of the college regarded the feat with undisguised wonder. One of the most prominent surgeons present declared that he had "never seen the human system subjected to such marvellous misuse." in which statement he voiced the opinion of the majority of people who have witnessed the spectacle.

But several members of the profession were sceptical. Doubts on this point were soon allayed, however, by Dr. Nihran K. Kassabian, who requisitioned the X-ray apparatus to photograph the stomach of the human ostrich. Harrison has good cause to recollect this part of the proceedings, since he was so burned by the application of the rays that he was incapacitated for nineteen months, and has ever since experienced a certain weakness.

When the negative was developed a dark spot was present in the region of the abdomen, showing the location of the various

articles of hardware that Harrison had swallowed. This proof was incontrovertible, and the sceptics immediately speculated as to how it was the man could so abuse his system without suffering injuries of any description. Their theories were as deficient,

however, as those of the other physicians who had previously, and have since, examined Harrison, and they were reluctantly compelled to acknowledge the futility of their diagnoses.

The human ostrich has an extensive collection of pocket-knives, the blades of which he has consumed, and he naturally regards this assortment with a certain touch of pride. When he obtains a knife from a spectator he makes it a *sine qua non* that he retains the handle, which after the blade has been removed is relegated to his museum. Harrison has also swallowed on several occasions doses

of powerful poisons such as strychnine, without experiencing any ill-effects. He proposes to pay a visit to England shortly to display his wonderful gastronomical proclivities, and doubtless they will create as much interest in that country, both among the ordinary public and the medical profession, as they have done in America.



THE BLADE OF A KNIFE FORMS HIS DESSERT.  
From a Photo. by The Helios, New York.

## XVI.—'POSSUMS AND 'SIMMONS.

WHEN Indian summer paints the Missouri woods with red and gold and the ground is white with frost to the morning sun, the persimmon is ripe. Among the hills and valleys the trees abound, laden with the orange-coloured fruit, and the opossum grows fat and sleek with the coming of plenty.

Inherited instinct makes the opossum nocturnal in his habits, and he dreams the day away in cosy hollow tree or log till the night falls. Then he awakes. Full of woodcraft, and equipped by Nature for fierce battle, the opossum is the bully of the woods among the smaller quadrupeds, but in man and dog he recognises his superiors in craft, and yields up his life without battle.

Go out into the woods on a frosty autumn night with lantern and axe. Far off in the darkness the dog ranges ahead casting to and fro, testing the fugitive air-currents for scent of game. Under foot the leaves, softened by the white frost, scarcely rustle and the smell of the woods rises pungent. Above the stars prick out the blackness of the sky with glittering points of light and the wood birds twitter uneasily at the invasion of their solitude. Borne up from the cool ground, the scent of the opossum rises and drifts through the woods on vagrant air-currents. In his persistent hunt the dog breathes it in and traces it to the very spot, then with head up he roars out his find. Far in the blackness of the woods the roar is thrown



back from the hills till the air vibrates. The sound falls on the alert ears of the game, and starts him into mad flight. Up among the broken hills is a rocky den that means safety, and forgetful of his woodcraft in his sudden fear the opossum flees noisily.

Down the trail comes the dog, a whirlwind of sound, and far behind the hunters yell encouragement. Through the uproar the patter of swift feet comes to the back-turned ears of the quarry, and he scales the nearest tree, perching far up in the darkness. With a rush the dog reaches the end of the chase and tears at the rough bark of the tree till his



From a]

"TREED."

[Photograph.

mouth bleeds; then through the sudden stillness rings his sharp yell telling that the game has "treed."

Probably the most wonderful governing trait controlling any animal is the instinct that makes the opossum curl up inert and grinning "'possuming," a horrible picture of death, at the approach of the only enemies he fears. With lips drawn back from needle teeth and eyes half open; glazed with the semblance of death, the opossum is far from it. Possessed of enormous vitality and the patience of ages, the first opportunity for escape is swiftly seized, and with a rush the dead is alive.



From a]

"POSSUMING"—I.E., FEIGNING DEATH BEFORE AN ENEMY.

[Photograph.