

THE COMIC LIAR.

A BOOK NOT COMMONLY FOUND IN
SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

BY
"THE FUNNY MAN
OF
THE NEW YORK DAILY TIMES."

WITH MANY HARROWING ILLUSTRATIONS.



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attended the Philadelphia Exhibition, and lived on the surplus food of Centennial boarding-house keepers, can easily surpass the most difficult feats of the French exhibitor by digesting articles which he, lacking their experience, would find as indigestible as forks. As for the good taste of the public exhibition of the human stomach, there can surely be no valid objection made to it by a community which has patronized the anatomical displays of the *opera bouffe*. There is a vast and fruitful field waiting to be reaped by the stomach-exhibitor, and it is unfortunate that it is now too late to place in the Centennial Exhibition a few well-selected American stomachs, and thus humiliate Europe by compelling a comparison between the free and vigorous stomach of the New World, which easily digests both pie and pork, and the feeble stomach of effete Europe, which is unequal to the digestion of a simple silver fork.

VULCAN.

FOR many years ambitious astronomers have been in the habit of announcing the alleged discovery of a small planet revolving in a quiet and obscure orbit, situated within the orbit of Mercury. Their fellow-astronomers have, however, unanimously declined to believe in the existence of this planet, and have scoffed at its discoverers as men who are not interested in sea-side hotels scoff at the pretended discoverers of the sea-serpent. In fact, the alleged planet Vulcan was looked upon very much in the light of an astronomical sea-serpent. "Vulcan may possibly exist," said the conservative astronomers, "but Professor So-and-So never saw it;" and then they would hint, with sneering astronomical smiles, that too much tea sometimes plays strange pranks with the imagination, and that an astronomer who cannot tell a planet from a fly that walks across his object-glass is not the sort of man from whom any discoveries of moment need be expected. This determined hostility to

Vulcan finally made it a hazardous matter for an astronomer to profess a belief in its existence. Public astronomic opinion insisted that there was quite enough planets between the earth and the sun already, and that to have this miserable little Vulcan take the first place on the list, and crowd the Earth back to the fourth place, would be little less than an outrage. Indeed, it is said that no scientific person has latterly been admitted to any astronomical society without previously renouncing Vulcan and all his phases, and professing his belief in only two inferior planets, possessing phases and the power of making transits.

But now comes M. Leverrier, the discoverer of Neptune, and confessedly a crack shot with the long-range telescope, and announces that he has positively discovered Vulcan, and will before long exhibit it in the act of making a transit across the Sun. This announcement has been received in grim silence. M. Leverrier is too well known to be sneered at. The man who hunted Neptune with his nose—so to speak—following the mathematical scent of that shy planet till he flushed it in the vicinity of Uranus and brought it down with his unerring telescope, cannot be accused of confounding accidental flies with actual planets. When he firmly asserts that he has not only discovered Vulcan, but has calculated its elements, and has arranged a transit especially for its exhibition to doubting astronomers, there is an end to all discussion. Vulcan exists, and its existence can no longer be denied or ignored. The Earth must henceforth be ranked as the fourth planet from the sun, and the children in the public schools who have been taught to recite their planets after the old-fashioned order, must be required to commit Vulcan to memory and insert it in its proper place.

That Vulcan is an extremely small planet there is every reason to believe. Moreover, it must be excessively hot, and its inhabitants ought to be very thankful that its day is so ridiculously short. Precisely what is the length of a Vulcanic day M. Leverrier has not yet announced, but in all probability it cannot be more than four hours. If its working men have obtained the passage of an eight-minute law, and are careful not to overheat themselves by

undue activity, they can doubtless accomplish as much in the course of a day's work as does the earthly plumber, and with little more fatigue. On the other hand, the life of a Vulcanic editor, who has to issue a morning paper every four hours must be a terribly laborious one, and as for the editor of a Vulcanic evening paper he can hardly find time to write the formula, "the news of the morning papers was substantially anticipated by our fourth edition of yesterday," before he is required to prepare a powerful and convincing list of "hotel arrivals" for the first edition of next day's paper. There is, however, one great advantage which the inhabitants of Vulcan have over the Tellurians. The Fourth of July, on that happy planet, lasts only eight hours, and a Vulcanite can make a day's visit to a Centennial Exhibition without more than four hours of acute suffering. Still, even as to these matters, the brevity of Vulcanic time has its discouraging features. The Fourth of July must return with maddening rapidity, and the Vulcanites must be scourged with Centennial Exhibitions at least four times as often as the inhabitants of any part of our slower and more considerate planet.

In spite of the unreasonable opposition which astronomers have shown to the discovery of Vulcan, that event ought to fill them with joy, and to bring a corresponding sadness upon the unscientific part of mankind. Hitherto, Venus and Mercury have been the only planets which had the habit of making periodical transits across the disc of the Sun. Mercury has rather overdone the matter, and made its transits so frequently that the astronomers have lacked the assurance to pretend to take any exceptional interest in them. The infrequent transits of Venus, on the contrary, have been scattered along at such wide intervals that it was possible to assume an immense amount of apparent enthusiasm concerning them. Thus, whenever a transit of Venus was about to occur, astronomers who wanted to visit all sorts of out-of-the-way places would inform their Government with every appearance of sobriety, that unless they were sent in a man-of-war, with vast quantities of telescopes and cigars to Kerguelen's Land, or Japan, or Mount Chimborazo, the transit could not be properly observed,

and they would decline to hold themselves responsible for the consequences. By this means scores of fortunate—and would that we could say scrupulous!—astronomers, have made foreign tours of great interest, and have improved their minds with poker and seven-up during sea-voyages of enormous length.

Now, it is evident that the first half dozen transits of the entirely new planet will be more interesting and important than the hackneyed transits of Venus, and that astronomers all over the world will promptly urge this view of the matter upon their respective Governments. Of course, they will demand to be taken on free astronomical picnic excursions to remote regions where the climate is pleasant and the scenery is attractive, whence they will ultimately return with note-books full of abstruse calculations as to the comparative frequency of the occurrence of “flushes” and “fulls,” which they will palm off upon the Smithsonian Regents as astronomical tables of vast learning and value. Thus the discovery of Vulcan, leading, as it undoubtedly will, to a series of delightful scientific expeditions, ought to be warmly welcomed by all astronomers of a social turn of mind, and ought to awaken the gravest apprehensions among the friends of economy and retrenchment in public expenses.

UNDERGROUND CLASSICS.

It is by no means certain that digging for ancient statues and vases is not more profitable than digging for gold. The German government is sinking shafts and driving tunnels at Olympia, and has already struck a rich marble “pocket,” in which has been found the identical statue of Victory mentioned by Pausanias! That this sort of mining has been so long neglected is due to the failure of fortune-hunters to perceive the mercantile value of antiquarian remains. Let it only be thoroughly understood