

ACHIEVEMENTS IN IGNORANCE.

General Barry's report concerning the deficient education of many candidates examined for admission to West Point Military Academy is interesting from more than one point of view. These young men were not taken at hazard from the mass of their fellows, nor were they merely young men of average ability. Each of them had been selected and chosen as a nominee for a cadetship. Each of them had presumably prepared for the examination he knew awaited him, says the New York World. Yet many of them disclosed a degree of ignorance concerning history and literature that could hardly be surpassed among illiterates. One of these aspirants for West Point stated that Lee and Stonewall Jackson had fought at Princeton and Trenton, another that the battle of Waterloo was fought between "Nepolican" and "Wellington." Of Mason and Dixon's line it was said it "divides Maryland from Georgia." Among the "most important writers of the nineteenth century" were included "Eller Wheeler Wilcox, Elbert Huggard, Jack London and Dorothy Dix." These young men are graduates of American schools. To them have been open from their boyhood all the advantages of public libraries and an incessant and well-nigh countless stream of magazines and newspapers. They surely are not dull boys nor unambitious. Their ignorance, therefore, is as discreditable to their teachers as to themselves.

The idea of reclaiming Russian swamp lands is not new. Like many other valuable ideas it sprang up in the fertile mind of Peter the Great, who built his capital in a swamp, because it was the only place he could find affording access to the sea. Peter selected the Holmogori district in the province of Archangel for raising Dutch cattle because he noticed the resemblance between the grass of Holland and that of the Holmogori district. It is now pointed out that at small expense the vast swamps in the province of Archangel can be turned into lands covered with the Holmogori grass, and that after a few years a large portion of it will be fit for raising cereals and vegetables. A systematic reclamation movement is now planned by the Russian department of agriculture.

Germany is fast becoming Americanized, according to the reports of the British consul at Munich, who notes the symptoms in altered trade methods, the greater use of advertising by business houses and the growth of luxury and restlessness in private life, says the New York World. But what will strike Americans themselves as the best evidence of American tendencies in Germany is contained in the mounting cost of living in Germany and in the imperial chancellor's suggestion that it must be accepted as part of the new conditions.

Geologists are claiming that the greatest underground river in the world flows from the Rocky mountains underneath New Mexico and Texas, emptying itself in the Gulf of Mexico. This river is thought to be in places several miles wide, and it is believed that it feeds rivers that flow upon the surface. The artesian well belt of Texas is pointed to as the uplifting of the water from this river, often from eight hundred feet below.

A Chicago man who was arrested for kissing a girl made a plea for mercy by explaining that he was so badly under the influence of intoxicants that he didn't know whether he was kissing a girl or a horse. The judge, being unwilling to accept intoxication as an excuse, fined the offender \$25 and costs. Things are not as they used to be.

Massachusetts is preparing to put in force a law which will compel the retirement of state employees on age limit, but with a pension. Inasmuch as part of the pension fund is to be obtained from enforced contributions from these employees, based on certain percentages of their salaries, there cannot be so much objection to the plan as there might otherwise be.

Music is said to increase a cow's output of milk, but farmers who subject their cows to phonograph concerts are lacking in the milk of human kindness.

NO MAN'S LAND A ROMANCE

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SYNOPSIS.

Garrett Coast, a young man of New York City, meets Douglas Blackstock, who invites him to a card party. He accepts, although he dislikes Blackstock, the reason being that both are in love with Katherine Thaxter. Coast fails to convince her that Blackstock is unworthy of her friendship. At the party Coast meets two named Dundas and Van Tuij. There is a quarrel, and Blackstock shoots Van Tuij dead. Coast struggles to wrest the weapon from him, thus the police discover them. Coast is arrested for murder. He is convicted, but as he begins his sentence, Dundas names Blackstock as the murderer and kills himself. Coast becomes free, but Blackstock has married Katherine Thaxter and fled. Coast purchases a yacht and while sailing sees a man thrown from a distant boat.

CHAPTER V.

Sunlight and shadow playing in swift alternation upon his face, as the Echo courtesied to the morning breeze, Coast awakened.

For a moment almost thoughtless he lay drowsily enjoying the rise and dip of the boat, as drowsily conscious of a faint thrill of excitement; mostly comparable, perhaps, to the first waking sensations of a fourteen-year-old boy on a Fourth of July morning.

Then without warning the small chronometer on the transverse above his head rapped out smartly two double-chimes—ships' time: four bells: ten o'clock in the forenoon.

Astonished, he sat up quickly, and his still sleepy gaze, passing through the companionway, encountered the amused regard of the so-distant Melchisedec Appleyard. Promptly Coast found himself in full possession of his faculties. That in obedience to first instincts he nodded with a cordial smile, was significant.

Appleyard returned the salutation with a quick bob of his small head. "Good-morning, hero!" he sang out cheerfully.

He sat in the cockpit, huddled into the folds of a gray blanket, voluminous for his slight figure, a thin but wiry forearm bared to wield the cigarette he was smoking with every indication of enjoyment.

"Good-morning," he returned. "How d'you feel after your adventure?"

"Unclothed but in my right mind," said Appleyard, with a twinkle of anxiety amending: "to the best of my knowledge and belief." He indicated airily the various articles constituting his painfully simple wardrobe. "Waiting for 'em to dry."

Appleyard hopped up, fingered his everyday attire critically, and pronounced it bone-dry; then, bundling it up, he returned to the cabin, seating himself on the opposite transom to dress.

"And the sensations of a hero, refreshed by sound slumbers, are—"

"Hunger," said Coast. He moved forward and began to experiment gingerly with a new and untried alcohol stove. "I can offer you eggs, coffee, biscuit—and nothing else," he added, producing raw materials from a locker. "You see, I hadn't expected to entertain."

"Rotten inconsiderate of you," Appleyard grumbled. "I'll wire you a warning next time it occurs to me to drop in unexpectedly."

Divided between amusement and perplexity, in the course of the meal Coast reviewed a personality singularly enriched by a variety of suggestions consistently negative. The man's age was indeterminate—somewhere between thirty and forty-five. Loosely summarized, he might have been anybody or nobody on a lark or his uppers.

Appleyard looked up quickly, with a shy, humorous smile.

"Well, what d'you make of me?"

"It's hard enough to guess what you've made of yourself."

"Flattery note," observed Appleyard obscurely. "Yet you win my sympathy; sometimes I am moved to wonder—really." He tapped an egg thoughtfully, a crinkle forming between his colorless eyebrows. "It's really not what a man makes of himself; it's what his temperament does to him."

"Temperament!"

"Yes; you really ought to keep one, too; they're all the rage just now—and such excellent excuses for the indulgence of your pet idiosyncrasies."

"Oh!—And you blame yours for what?"

"For making me a—I presume posterity, in the final analysis, will adjudge me a Romantic."

"Literature?" asked Coast, aghast.

"Good Heavens, no! Nothing like that. Life." He sighed profoundly. "Shall I rehearse to you the story of my life? No, I shall not rehearse to you the story of my life. But at all costs I shall talk about myself for a space: I insist upon it: I love to. You don't seriously object?" he added, anxiously.

"Then compose yourself. . . ."

Born at an early age—in fact, at as early an age as you can comfortably imagine—I found myself immediately the sport of sardonic fortunes. That name, Melchisedec! One felt that there must be in one's future life some warmth of Romance to compensate for that infamous ignominy. So I belabored any reasonable human should logically have looked forward to sure degeneration into the American peasant of the New England magazine-story type, sans brains, bowsels, breadth, beauty. A born iconoclast, however, as soon as I awakened to realization of my plight I mutinied and resolved to live down my shame. Thenceforward I set myself to painstaking muckraking in modern life, seeking the compensating Romance without which life were but death in life. He paused and cocked an eye at Coast. "Not bad for a beginning, what?"

"A little prolix," commented Coast dispassionately, falling in with his humor. "But continue. You found your Romance?"

"What is so-called—alas, yes! I found it, as a rule, a non de guerre for crime. . . . Lured by legend, I have traversed much of the known

to my fatal passion for this Romance thing, sir. I have already acquainted you with my determination to burrow my quest of that shy spirit upon the trackless ocean. Conceive, now, the bitterness of the disappointment which overwhelmed my ardent soul when I applied for a berth as a foremast hand, only to be informed I was physically unfit, that, as one brutal mate phrased it, I'd blow away in the first half-gale. . . . I give you my word, Mr. Coast, I've been sticking round this waterfront a whole fortnight, vainly seeking nautical employment. Last night, for the first time, for a few brief hours, I was permitted to flatter myself that fortune was on the point of favoring me. For a fugitive moment I slipped the chains of Romance and rolled its flavor beneath my tongue."

Appleyard half closed his eyes and smacked his lips, his expression one of beatific bliss.

"You've a pretty taste in pleasures," Coast commented.

Appleyard waved the interruption aside. "It came about largely through a whim of Chance," he resumed, "as all true adventure must. Quite by accident I fell in with one of the crew of that fishing smack, he being well under the influence of liquor; in a way of speaking, he'd looked too long upon the wine when it was red-eye and half wood-alcohol. Craftily simulating a like condition, I plied him further and succeeded in learning the name of his vessel and the fact that she was expected to sail with the morning tide—together with other details that intrigued me. Then, leaving the sodden wretch to sleep off his disgusting debauch, I caused myself to be conveyed aboard the lugger—I mean schooner—and stowed away in



"Thank You," said Appleyard Gratefully.

world, only to come to that conclusion. I have penetrated the fastnesses of the Tennessee mountains, nosing the ill-felt still; which proved merely sordid. Counterfeiting seemed to promise largely—and discovered itself the most ill-paid calling in the world. Diplomatic intrigue unmasked proved to be merely a popular fallacy shining in the reflected luster of the Six Best Sellers. . . . But I refrain from wearying you with a catalogue of the exploded mines of Romance; a list inordinately lengthy, believe me. High finance, I admit, escaped my probe; but the recent plague of Wall Street plays discouraged me, demonstrating there could be no Romance there. . . . So at length you find me turning in despair to the Seven Seas; afloat, at all events, one must of necessity pursue the glamorous promise of the Unknown that lurks just down the horizon."

Appleyard paused, his mien subdued, his gesture bespeaking resignation.

"All of which means—?" Coast insisted.

"I hardly know. Frankly, I thought that speech rather stupid myself. That's why I chopped it off. One talks. . . . You may have noticed?"

"I have," said Coast drily.

"You would, naturally," returned Appleyard without resentment. "But would it amuse you to learn how I came to be on board that fisherman?"

"You mean how you came to be overboard."

"Perhaps it would. You're the best judge of that."

"True," Appleyard accepted and lighted a cigarette, frowning soberly. "It was," he began, "due principally

his bunk, trusting to luck to avert discovery until the morning. Unhappily I, with the rest of the crew, was routed out incontinently by an unmannerly brute with a belying pin (at all events it felt like a belying-pin—

A Home-Made Barometer

Those who like experimentation may try the following method of making a cheap barometer.

Take 8 grams of pulverized camphor, 4 grams of pulverized nitrate of potassium, 2 grams of pulverized nitrate of ammonia, and dissolve in 60 grams of alcohol. Put the whole in a long slender bottle closed at the top with a piece of bladder containing a pinhole to admit the air.

When rain is coming the solid particles will tend gradually to mount, little star crystals forming in the liquid, which otherwise remains clear; if high winds are approaching the liquid will become thick, as if fermenting, while a film of solid particles forms on the surface; during fair weather the liquid will remain clear and the solid particles will rest at the bottom.

Dark Smoke No Fun.

Funny thing about smoking! If a man were compelled to puff a good cigar with his eyes shut the operation would lose its zest. A man who had undergone a slight operation upon one of his eyes had to stay in a darkened room for a week with his optics bandaged. After a few days his doctor told him he could take a gentle smoke if he liked. He jumped at the chance

an instrument with which I am unacquainted save through the literature of the sea) and forced to go on deck to help hoist anchor. . . . Or should I say, 'weigh anchor?'"

"I'm not quarrelling with your style," chuckled Coast. "Why not put off polishing your periods until another time?"

"Thank you," said Appleyard gratefully. "To resume: My detection promptly ensued and my presence was dispensed with, a trace unceremoniously, perhaps, but no doubt very properly from the skipper's point of view. With the subsequent phases of this most delectable adventure you are familiar; therefore, I confidently assume your concurrence with my conclusion; which is—here am I. . . . Now," he wound up, inclining his head at an angle, and favoring Coast with a frankly speculative stare, "what are you going to do with me?"

Coast opened his eyes wide, with a lift of his brows. "I don't know that I contemplate doing anything with you, Mr. Appleyard."

"It's not yet too late for the amende courtoise," suggested his guest.

"I'll gladly set you ashore—"

"Pardon, but that's precisely what I don't want you to do."

"But—"

"A moment's patience, sir. The Echo lacks a crew; I offer my services unconditionally in that capacity."

"But I don't want a crew."

"Oh, don't say that!"

"And I have no need of one."

Appleyard lifted both hands and let them fall with a gesture of despair. "Infatuated man!" he murmured, regarding Coast with commiseration.

"Why infatuated?"

"What do you know of these waters?" the little man counterquestioned sharply.

"Little." Coast was obliged to admit; "or nothing, if you insist."

"And yet you say you don't need a crew!"

"But, my dear man, I do know how to sail a boat; and with a copy of the Coast Pilot, charts, a compass and common-sense—"

You may possibly escape piling her up the first day out—granted. On the other hand, I happen to be intimate with these waters; I can pilot you safely whither you will; I can afford you infinite assistance with the heavy work—it's no joke, at times, for one man to have all the handling of a craft of this size. I'm exceedingly handy, small and inconspicuous, neat, a fairish cook, and normally quite pleasant to be thrown amongst—never savage save when denied the sweet consolation of continuous conversation. Finally, I'm a great bargain."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I offer my valuable—pay, invaluable services, gratis, without pay."

"But why do you do that?" demanded Coast, blankly.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Small Boy and His Hat.

He flings his hat across the dining-room when he comes in from school, or leaves it in all manner of places in the house; in the coal-bin, or on sister's bureau. He loses it just at church time, and spoils the spirit of family reverence and piety. As the family enters the church the anthem is being sung, and the disgrace of being late again is laid on the innocent headpiece clutched in the hand of the small boy who has already forgotten the confusion of which he was the cause twenty minutes ago. In this stage also one's hat is removed on the way to school by the hand of one's bosom friend, passed down the line of surrounding boon companions, stuffed into others' pockets, while dire thoughts of ultimate loss hold one in their grip, and the reckoning to be paid at home wraps the world in tragedy.—George L. Parker, in the Atlantic

and to his amazement found it afforded him not the slightest pleasure. To be sure, men often smoke in the dark, but there's always the rosy glow of the lighted end to be seen and the faint outline of the cloud of smoke in the air. There's no more fun in a sightless smoke than a saltless egg or a kiss upon your own hand. What's the psychology of it?

China to Have Airships.

China's military councillors and the minister of war have decided in a conference to send officers to England to acquire technical knowledge of air machines to enable them to construct and to fly airships on return to China.

Smart Youth.

"Tommy, what did you do with that penny I gave you for taking your medicine?"

"I bought a bun with one halfpenny, ma, and I gave Jimmy the other half to drink the medicine for me."

Candle Wax for Traveling Bottles. When you are traveling about a great deal carry a candle with you and use the melting wax to seal your various toilet bottles.