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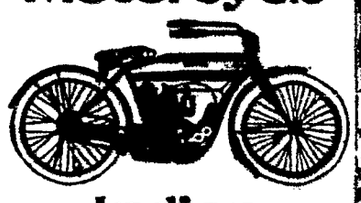

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THE STORY OF A STORY

This is the true story of a story that will not down. It had its beginning more than seventeen years ago, and to all intents and purposes it is as fresh to-day as it ever was.

In 1891 I was a reporter on a Washington evening paper. On a day in October of that year, during an unusually heavy wind and rain storm that swept over the city, really a hurricane, a large building on F street that was being erected for a music hall was blown down and several persons were either killed or injured. In a very few minutes I was on the spot watching the police and firemen in the work of removing the debris and rescuing the victims. I must have sat down upon a green wall, for on my way home from the office that afternoon a friend called my attention to the fact that the rear of my trousers was badly marked with plaster.

So that evening I left word that when John Quander, a colored handy-man, came in the morning to black the boots and incidentally to rouse me for my day's toil, he was to give that garment a very thorough cleaning.

The next morning, when John had rapped on my door the customary length of time, the following conversation ensued:

"'Deed, sir. I can't get them pants cleaned nohow. I done bresh 'em 'n' use a wet rag, 'n' soap 'n' water, but I can't get 'em clean nohow."

"John, have you tried ammonia?"

"No, sir, I haven't, but I know they'd fit me first rate."

Now I thought then and still think that that was the best pun in the English language, especially as the perpetrator was so thoroughly innocent. I sent the story with a suggestion for an illustration to a leading New York weekly. I received no reply, but a few weeks later the story, with an illustration such as I had outlined, did appear in another well known periodical. I presume that some friend who had heard me tell it had forestalled me and had reaped the reward I had thought was mine.

However that may be, that story is still going the rounds of the press, and cropping up as a brand-new story with remarkable regularity. A few years ago, when I was in Florida I saw the story in a Philadelphia paper ascribed to Representative John Sharp Williams. Again I saw it in a Chicago daily credited to the son of a famous Milwaukee brewer who had a valet. That was the only difference. It has appeared at intervals in New York, usually laid at the doors of some "well known visitor at a prominent uptown hotel." It has come to be a part of the stock in trade of many professional interviewers, who, when short of fresh material, ring it in in their "Hotel Corridors" column as told by some illustrious guest at a leading hotel.

And so it goes.

Some fifteen years ago a Washington lady told the story at a luncheon, only she finished it up something like this:

"John, have you tried cleanoliol?"

"No, sir, I haven't; but I know they'd fit me first rate."

And she wondered why it fell so flat for she had heard it told by Elia W. McCartney Lane, the novelist and playwright, and always with great success. Mrs. Lane first heard the story a day or two after it "occurred," and for more than seventeen years now it has occupied a prominent place in her repertoire. It is the only old story she tells.

In the spring of 1907 I was at the Grand Canyon in Arizona, and there met a very brilliant young woman from Los Angeles, who was one of the best story-tellers I have ever known. We swapped yarns to our mutual satisfaction, but I saved "mine own" for the last and best. Finally I sprang it in what I thought was my very best style, but there was nothing doing. In despair I repeated it, asserting the point. Thus: "Have you tried ammonia—have you tried 'em on you. See?"

With a wistful look across the great chasm she merely said:

"Please do not ask me to laugh at that story. I had to laugh at it at seven dinner parties in San Francisco last winter, and each time the teller insisted it had happened to him."

This summer, when I was in New England, this same young woman sent me an August number of a popular magazine, in which my story again saw the light of day.

Last winter my brother was at a dinner given by the Men's Society of the Church of the Covenant, which in years gone by has sometimes been known as the "Church of the Government." A gentleman sitting at his right told him that self-same story as having happened to him, and a few minutes later one of the chief speakers of the evening incorporated it in his address as a personal experience.

I have never seen the story in London Punch, but I am sure that by the time it has reached its majority, four years hence, the editors will have appreciated its merits, and that I shall have the pleasure of seeing it in American papers reproduced, with due credit, from that famous English weekly. Only I am afraid they will substitute methylated spirits for ammonia.

Now, what I want to know is this: Will any one now believe that this is really my story, and that it actually happened to me about 7.15 o'clock on the morning of November 24, 1891?

In conclusion, let me say that I have ceased telling the story.—VICTOR HAUSMANN.

WILD TURKEYS ARE WANTED.

The Birds, if Let Alone Would Check Increase of Noxious Weeds and Insects.

"They are the hardest things in the line of a game bird to bring down. They can run like a deer and duck out of sight like a jack rabbit.

"I ought to know, because I've chased them for days at a time, but I never did get as close to a real live turkey before," says a writer in the Boston Herald.

It is hard to realize that at the beginning of the nineteenth century wild turkeys were so abundant that they sold for six cents apiece, although the larger ones, weighing from twenty-five to thirty pounds, sometimes brought a quarter of a dollar. A big wild turkey nowadays would not long go begging at $5.

It is their value as food that has made it worth while to hunt turkeys to the very point of extermination. So-called sportsmen go out in the late summer, ostensibly to shoot squirrels, but really to pot turkeys on the roost. Another practice is to lie in ambush and to lure the game by imitating the call note of the hen in spring. Trapping turkeys in pens, a very simple matter, has also accelerated the destruction of the species.

"The wild turkey consumes insects, pests and seeds of weeds, but now is nowhere abundant enough to have much effect on agriculture. The biologocal survey has examined in all sixteen stomachs of wild turkeys. These were collected during February, March, July, September, November and December. These stomachs contained 15.57 per cent. of animal matter and 84.43 per cent. of vegetable matter.

The animal matter consisted of spiders, snails, myriapods, grasshoppers, beetles, flies, caterpillars and other insects. The wild turkey is very fond of grasshoppers and crickets. During the Nebraska invasion of Rocky Mountain locusts Prof. Anghey examined the contents of the stomachs and crops of six wild turkeys, and every one was found to have eaten locusts. The wild turkey has been known also to feed on the cottonworm, the leafhoppers and the leaf eating beetles.

The results of recent investigations should lead to a wider knowledge of the essential part these birds play in checking the increase of noxious weeds and insects and the importance of preserving the turkeys and of increasing their numbers.

No Bequests for the Dead.

There is a curious settlement in a short grass county of Kansas, according to one who was in that part of the country looking after claims.

"The population," said the returned collector, "is a sort of mixture of Quakers and Populists. Of the latter this nest is about the only one left in the State.

"The cemetery near the town is an index to the character of the place. The few tombstones contain only the names of the departed with the date of death and sometimes the age. Not a line of sentiment is carved upon a single stone.

"I was curious to know why. A patriarch undertook to enlighten me.

"'This town,' he said, 'is no Hall of Fame. Leastwise not yet. The community has been fooled so often that we don't take up with anything new at first sight.

"'We got wise after tribulation. I doubt if you could find a man in the town who, if he told you the truth, has not eaten into something hollow since he has been here. For a while it seemed as if this was the camping place of every fraud and skin game on the road.

"'Several men who had cut a considerable figure in their lives died and received a lot of notices about what they had done. We found out later that they had been morally rotten and rascally on the sly.

"'Now, when a man dies in this community, especially one who posed to the good, the committee meets and the question is asked, "Was the deceased what he cracked himself up to be?" If any one present can prove that he was we simply record that he died and then wait a year to see if anything turns up against him. If he rings out all right we hold another meeting and the deceased gets what is coming to any good man.

"'By that time the monument fever has cooled down and one good dead man is on a level with another. Besides, this sort of thing saves money.

"'If the dead man's family wants to put up a monument and smear it over with a lot of Scripture, that's their business. But there isn't a monument of that kind in our graveyard. If we learn anything against the deceased after he has been buried a year we say nothing, but we are very particular in any business transactions we may have with his immediate kin forever after.'"

The Value of Nitrogen.

Nitrogen is so vital to the growth of plants that large sums are expended for fertilizers rich in that element. So far chemistry has done nothing effective in the way of obtaining nitrogen from the atmosphere. Yet it is calculated that the nitrogen in the air weighs no less than four billion million tons.

It is becoming to be a well-known fact that trained nurses are peculiarly subject to attacks of appendicitis, although the cause is not very clearly explained. A physician has the records of eighteen cases operated upon among the students of five training schools having a membership of ninety-six pupils.

ETHICS FOR CHILDREN.

What Sort of Teaching is Needed to Decrease Crime.

A learned conference on the cause of the increase in crime in this country and the responsibility of the public schools in this country in this matter, was held in Philadelphia at the New Century club, under the auspices of the educational department of the club, and developed a wide diversity of opinion.

With a view to having as broad a view on the subject as possible representatives from the Jewish, Protestant, Catholic Ethical and all other organizations which stand for morality, were invited to address the meeting, and although little that was strictly new, or little that seemed to offer any permanent remedy for the great increase in crime, was said, the discussion was entertaining and enlightening.

Mrs. Edwin O. Guce, who during the speeches, said that the earnest desire of the committee under whose auspices the conference was held, was the awakening of the minds of the public to the gravity of the problem of the increase in crime.

Rabbi Charles Fleisher of Boston, the first speaker, said, among other things: "We must teach our children some code of ethics in the schools. Why should we leave the care of their morals to our churches? The churches do not reach everybody, and the churches do not meet enough people, nor give them enough time to make an impression.

"We are growing to me a more intelligent than a moral race. We are shrewder than we are sympathetic, because we do not take our moral development seriously enough. It is the duty of the state to stimulate the sense of right and wrong. Why should the moral training of children be left to chance? Why should the church have the only kind of moral training necessary? Half of the people of the day do not go to church. A small proportion of them go to Sunday school, and when they go, what do they get? A diluted theology. A moral pap."

Rabbi Fleisher recommended that a graded system of ethical instruction be incorporated in the public schools.

Dr. Nathaniel Schaeffer superintendent of public instruction in Pennsylvania, suggested in the address which followed that teachers use secular distinctions as an occasion for the instilling of ethics and some kind of morals. "Children are not taught the value of veracity," he said. "The very way in which children are encouraged to tell different tales about their age is enough to influence them against any possibility of their having a high standard of morals. In Pennsylvania children have three different kinds of age. Their first age is real or baptismal age. The second their railroad age, when they want to get cheaper railroad rates. The third is the age they give when they want to get employment, when they know they are too young."

Superintendent Schaeffer suggested that the school books in which historical events and characters appeared be used as topics for occasional moral instruction. He also suggested that the teachers in public schools be required to have some religion; that no teacher not a professional believer in some creed be allowed to teach in the public schools.

Although called upon unexpectedly and totally unprepared for an academic address, Father Daniel McDermott made a brief address, in which he criticised the remarks of those who preceded him on the program, and frankly said that their remarks had nothing original about them, nor did they, to his mind, seem to hold to the topic on the program or offer any practical solution for the increas in crime.

"If you adopt the theory that you must teach ethics and not religion," he said, "you leave the children with a rule of life which has only a natural law as its end. If you combine religion and morals you will have to define more clearly than either the rabbi or the superintendent have defined, what is your religion and what are your morals.

"I do not see how you are going to introduce any religious training in the schools without becoming sectarian. You cannot even say the 'Lord's Prayer' without offending someone, because the Catholic version is different from the Protestant version. You cannot read the bible because the Catholic version is different from the Protestant, and even if you celebrate the Christmas ideals or talk of the Christ you offend the Jew."

Children as Peace Envoys.

Sir Edwin Cornwall, chairman of the London county council, is in the limelight because of his plan for a "congress of capitals" to further international good-fellowship, among the cities of the world, as expressed in the term "entente municipal." He thinks also that the school children of the world can be made universal peace envoys and says: "The London county council, being an educational authority, responsible for 1,000 schools, 20,000 teachers and nearly for 1,000,000 students, should lead the way in the matter of affording facilities for the interchange of scholars between the various cities of the world. Cecil Rhodes' scholarship scheme did this to some extent. Japan has had students distributed all over the world for the last twenty-five years and her recent successes are due largely to the fact that she had trained her men in every capital."

The owner of a house in a London suburb altered the number 12 to 12A. The borough authorities objected, and though he pleaded that he could not be a house numbered 12, they made him replace the 12 on the door.

LUXURY ATKINS' TROUSERS

Reason Why England Finds it Difficult to Get Recruits.

"In cold weather the coal supplied for each room for the week rarely lasts half that time, and it becomes necessary for the men to buy coal for the rest of the week out of their own pockets. In food, clothing and almost everything else the free issue is far too small. To provide tea, sugar, milk, butter, vegetables and other luxuries the soldier is allowed 3 pence (6 cents) a day. The greater part of a man's pay is swallowed up by the purchase of food. In addition to this the soldier has to pay out of his own pocket for the keeping up of his kit as well as for all the necessary articles used for cleaning it, such as blacking, pipe clay, brass polish and, in the case of cavalry, saddle soap and burnishers. Then there are innumerable other charges put upon him.

"When a soldier first joins the service he is supplied with a free issue of everything, including a tiny piece of soap, which, like the greater portion of his kit, is supposed to last him his seven years, or twenty-one years, if he extends his service. The same remark applies to his socks, underclothing, and all his small kit, while his uniform and boots are supposed to last two years, and all repairs have to be defrayed out of his own pocket. However careful a man may be, it is impossible for him to make such things as socks and shirts last for seven years.

"Another evil is the scarcity of eating utensils. Rarely is there a plate and basin for every man. Many a recruit, after leaving a comfortable home, has found himself sitting down to breakfast at a table where there are twenty-five or thirty men with half a dozen basins between them. Cups and saucers are not known. Nor is it at all an uncommon thing to see two men eating their dinners off the same plate, or even off the bare table itself. For the most part, meals are eaten in shirt sleeves with hats on, while in every room a few men will be short of knives and forks, for which, as substitutes, they use their knives, old razors and pocket knives.

"Most disgusting are the uses to which bedding is put. Whenever any equip is to be drawn from stores it is always carried in blankets off the beds. Then, previous to all inspections of barrack rooms by the commanding officer, the floors are scrubbed, after which, to keep them clean until they are dry, and the commanding officer has been round, it is customary to spread blankets over them. In wet weather the blankets get into a fearful condition by being trampled on by men coming in and out of the mud and stables. The same blankets are used for drawing rations. The regiment that has its blankets washed once in six months is the exception."

Large Brain and Intellect.

Two of the most eminent anthropologists of Germany, Professors Lewenfeld and Kyarich, have been examining into the prevailing belief that a large skull and a heavy brain are indications of superior intellectual power, and find absolutely nothing in support of this tradition. They have based their investigations on careful studies of 935 soldiers of the ordinary class; 300 one-year volunteers, gentlemen's sons of superior education; 212 pupils of national schools, and 307 examinations of brains of the dead. There were weakly endowed natures with fine brain capacity; on the other hand, some of the brightest of the one-year volunteers had heads rather less than the normal size. No matter what way they went to work to get results in favor of their earlier impressions, they were confronted with defeat. No such rule can be said to exist. It is as irregular and as unscientific to say that a big-brained or bigheaded man is intellectual as to say that he is tall or short or addicted to any particular habit.—Modern Society.

Clever Little Stories.

It was on an Atlantic liner. The clergyman had been compelled to share his stateroom with another man. "After a while," explained the minister, "I began to worry about some valuables I had with me, and at last I took them to the purser, saying, 'I should like to explain to you that I am much pleased with my fellow passenger. That is, I find him a gentleman in every respect, and I wouldn't have you think—that—that—I would'nt have you think that my coming to you with these valuables is to be taken—er—er—as any reflection on him.' The purser interrupted me with a broad smile and said, 'Oh, it's all right, sir; your friend has come to me with some valuables of his own, and he said precisely the same things about yourself!'"

A middle-aged Japanese and a Japanese boy stood before a steamship office regarding the globe that revolved in the window. "Do you mean to tell me," said the boy, "that the world is as round as that?" "I do," the man answered. "Then," said the boy, "I can't understand why the people on the other side don't fall off." The man sneered. "You fatigue me," he said wearily. "Well, why is it?" the boy persisted. "Heaven," the man answered, "has given those people common sense, and they hold on."

She was gathering statistics for a temperance society publication. Talking to a drayman she asked: "Well now, please tell me how many glasses of beer you drink during the course of a day?" The man took his hat off and scratched his head. "Well, mum," he replied, "I don't know as I can rightly tell you. Some days I go above thirty, but—brightening up—on the other hand, some days I go quite a lot."

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MARY A. [illegible]
Dated, Rochester, N. Y., January 12th, 1909.
Harris, Brown & [illegible], Attorneys, No. [illegible] Powers Building, Rochester, N. Y.

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