

A Story of The Towpath

By OSCAR COX

It was more than half a century ago that stories of the towpath were current. That was when the canalboat was the chief means of transportation in America. At one time they were used as passenger boats. Then, under competition with the railroads, they sank into freighting only, and now they have almost entirely passed away.

In those freighting days a man named Shock drove a mule on the towpath which pulled a boat. Shock was as homely as his name. He had never had a sweetheart, and there was little hope of his ever having one, for when ever a woman looked at him she was appalled.

There was, some three or four hundred yards from the canal, at about the center of Shock's route, a tumble-down house in a small lot, in one corner of which was a pigsty. One day when Shock was trudging along he found his mule he saw at an open window in the dilapidated trap a female figure. She was too far off for him to see what she looked like, but she was wearing something white, which Enoch took to be a tablecloth. Whether she was trying to flirt with him or was shaking the crumbs out of the cloth, he could not be sure. Taking a bandanna from his pocket, he returned the wave.

Now, Enoch was cognizant of the fact that he was not beautiful. His hair was a fiery red, his nose was a pug the color of his hair, his teeth were mostly gone. Had it not been for this he might have made bold on his return trip to give his mule a rest and gone to the house a-wooing. As it was, and since this was the only chance he had ever met, he was wary. He thought it better to make some headway in lovelocking before risking showing the lady his homely person at close proximity.

So, instead of stopping when he passed again, having provided himself with a boy's blow gun, he fired a wad of paper at her, which being unrolled revealed the following note:

I am your sure winder Saturday and wood like very much to make your acquaintance.

The lady was watching for the boat on its return trip, and when Enoch fired his note at her she saw it fall near her horse and, going out, picked it up and read it. But by this time Enoch had gone on his way.

When Enoch passed the house again he saw large letters chalked against the house, which, though it had been originally white, had not been painted in twenty years, was now a dull brown. The letters were plainly visible from the canal, and Enoch read:

I can't see what you look like from here, but you may be a decent looking fellow and if you can you kin come and see me.

This reply was rather a setback to one who knew full well that he was homely as a hedgehog. The communication was brief, and it contained exactly what Enoch would have preferred that it should not contain. The lady evidently was looking for a handsome man. The message convinced him that he was right in not permitting her to see him close by before he had stirred up some sentiment which might lead her to overlook in a measure his homeliness.

Enoch's next love letter was written in lamphack on several boards nailed together and set up on the deck of his canalboat facing the house of his admirer. It read:

If you air a party woman I wood be happy to stop over. Hain't got no use for ugly women.

When Enoch passed the house the next time the blinds were all closed and no living thing was to be seen except a few chickens scratching the dirt in the yard. Enoch was disappointed. It was plain to him that this was intended for a snub. On his next trip he wrote on his boards, "What's up?" to which was chalked the reply, "Nothin'."

Enoch reasoned that his ladylove had been miffed at his previous communication, thinking that he had accused her of being homely; but, having thought the matter over, she had seen his note in another light. He began to think that "faint heart ne'er woo fair lady" and he might as well face the music one time as another. So he wiped the lamphack off his boards and wrote again:

He stop over next trip.

THE BIGGEST GUNS

Those Used on Land Outweigh the Largest in the Navy.

OUR COAST DEFENSE GIANTS.

The Sixteen Inch Monsters at Sandy Hook and Panama Can Sink a Vessel Before It Appears Above the Horizon. How the Big Guns Are Made.

There are two classes of guns—naval guns and army or land guns. Because they can be manipulated more easily than those of a ship, land guns are the heavier. The largest naval gun is the fifteen inch gun, and the largest land gun is the German howitzer, or 16 1/2 inch gun.

Of the two the naval gun fires a shell weighing over half a ton, while the other fires a projectile a ton in weight. But the new giant sixteen inch guns of the United States, located at the Panama Canal and New York at Sandy Hook, shoot projectiles weighing 2,375 pounds, which is over a ton. These immense steel guns can sink a ship before it has really come into sight on the horizon, the location of the battleship having been determined by airplane or tower.

How these huge pieces are made is described as follows by the Popular Science Monthly. The first step is the making of the pig iron from iron ore in large furnaces like towers, called blast furnaces. Then the pig iron is melted with other steel in large steel furnaces called "open hearth" until it is freed of its impurities and converted into steel.

The melted steel, thin as water, is run from these furnaces into big iron molds, where it is allowed to cool into large solid cylindrical or corrugated blocks. After cooling these are reheated and reduced in size by pounding them with big steel hammers and squeezing them in rolls until at last the steel is pressed into a long barrel like mass, the embryo of a real gun.

This long skeleton of the inside of a gun must be bored out from one end to the other on immense lathes, some over ninety feet long. Here as the mass is, a huge lathe turns it around as easily as a body turns a top.

After the inside has been fitted out to form an inside barrel, the muzzles are drilled to a depth of six inches, the muzzle and causes it to be straight, the lower or muzzle end of the gun is made larger. This may be accomplished in one or two ways. Either additional shorter steel tubes are placed over the main inner tube, or the main tube is wound with wire and outside with an outer tube. The wire wound guns are usually the heavier and are used on board ships.

The gun bound with wire is really stronger than the one built of bands or rings of steel, one on another, for the wire reinforces the gun tube so that it will safely withstand the tremendous strain which is constantly put on it when it is fired, said to be as much as seventeen tons pressure on each square inch.

In the case of a "built up" gun, as it is called when made of hoops of bands of steel, the outer tubes or rings are shrunk or sweated on—that is, they are heated so that they expand or swell a little, as all steel does when heated, and then while hot they are fitted over the inner part and allowed to cool and shrink, or contract. In so doing they fit very tightly on the main tube.

In making a wire wound gun the wire is wound or coiled around and around until more than 100 miles of wire is wound or coiled around the big cannon. A twelve inch gun requires 117 miles of wire, weighing about thirteen and one-half tons. Although the strength of the wire is such that it gives great resisting force to pressures exerted sideways, it does not bestow strength lengthwise. Therefore an extra thickness of metal must be put on the muzzle of the gun, where the vibration caused by the shell leaving the gun is the greatest.

The breech, or the back end of a gun, is a very important part. Here the shell is inserted in a specially built chamber. After the shell is in place the breech is closed by the shutting of a very complicated and strong door. It is fastened or fitted in the gun by extremely strong screws, so that the charge will not burst the gun open at the back when it is fired.

Sometimes a shell explodes in the barrel of the gun. In a wire bound gun the wire tends to prevent a grave disaster. It hinders the steel tubes from bursting into many pieces and flying in every direction. The solid gun is wholly built of tubes, while in the wire wound gun there may be one or two tubes, over which the wire is wound with the jacket tubes shrunk over the wire. A bush for the breech ring is screwed into the rear end, which is also reinforced by a breech ring outside.

Test in Forensic Oration. It is related that when a veterinary surgeon was once called as a witness in a case to prove that a horse was a "roarer" the opposing counsel in his loudest tones said to the witness: "If you say that my client's horse was a 'roarer' just represent to the jury the sort of noise he made." "No," said the witness. "You must understand that that is not my business. Now, if you will be the horse and make the noise, I, as a veterinary surgeon, will express an opinion as to whether you are a 'roarer' or not."—Farm and Home.

He is a brave man who refuses to be disheartened by the fact that he was beaten yesterday.

The Gentleman From Cupidville

By ALAN HINSDALE

One spring morning when the buds were opening Howard Lane, a young New Yorker, left his room on Central Park West and, entering the park, strolled along the mall smoking a cigarette. Presently he looked up at a man passing him and saw that he was the very counterpart of himself. Each stopped and stared at the other.

"Upon my word!" "By love!" "You're my self, only better looking," said Lane. "Permit me to return the compliment."

"You must be a near blood relation of mine. What is your name?" "Spencer—Raymond Spencer. And yours?"

"Howard Lane. Come, let us sit down on one of the benches and compare notes. I don't remember any Spencer connections."

"No, I am Lane."

The two passed an hour together each now and again looking up at the other in wonder almost fancying they were identical in face and figure, they soon noticed that they were very unlike in disposition. Lane was philosophical, analytical, critical, cynical, indeed, everything that ends in "ism" but he was a man of intellectual vigor. Spencer was an optimist and very shallow. He was on his way from San Francisco to Europe.

"I have an idea," said Lane. "How does it feel?" "You are a stranger to me, but you are a gentleman. I'm going to take you into my confidence. I'm in love."

"Poor fellow! Is it more bother than having an idea?"

"I have been unsuccessful with the lady. She likes me, but says I'm too 'dead and alive' for a life companion."

"Why not turn her over to me?" "That's just what I'm thinking of."

A bargain was made, and when the two left the park they went to Lane's rooms, where Spencer was put in temporary possession of the owner's wardrobe. That evening Mr. Spencer appeared at the residence of Miss Margaret Thorne and sent up Mr. Lane's card. Miss Thorne came down with a settled purpose. That purpose was to give her lover his final quietus.

"I have been thinking over the matter between us," she said, "and have come to the conclusion that I am wrong in permitting you to hope. A man who has reasoned himself into the belief that life is but an empty dream, I could not be happy with. I will never be yours."

The man grasped the back of a chair for support and brushed back his hair dramatically.

"Too late!" he exclaimed in the tone of one for whom the bottom had dropped out of his life.

"Have you a cold?" asked Miss Thorne, surprised, especially at the tone of his voice which was deeper than usual. She was still more surprised when her lover rushed toward her and seizing her hand pressed forth an impassioned appeal.

"Until our last meeting," he said, "I did not realize that you were right and I was wrong. Life is not an empty dream and you have made me see it. Life is real, life is earnest. I had resolved to throw off the depressing philosophy by which I have been bewitched. I had set a goal and your inspiration—determined to do or die. We need one gentleman in political affairs. I had resolved to enter upon a career which, beginning with the state legislature, might end in the White House. But, alas, without you I am powerless. Nevertheless, I shall go abroad and sink away into a degenerate globe trotter."

"What has come over you?" she asked. "Your influence. It has had its effect at last."

Mr. Lane—Howard, I cannot understand this sudden change. Do you mean all you say?" "I swear it."

IT WAS VERY GOOD COAL.

That It Was Spiced With Gunpowder Made It All the Better.

In reviewing his early life in Constantinople Sir Edwin Pears tells an amusing story of a coal contractor who was supplying the British fleet with fuel. A commissariat officer on one occasion went to him to say that a man-of-war had just arrived in the Bosphorus and was ordered to proceed to the Crimea with distinguished officers on board, but it was short of coal. The contractor answered that one of his small sailing vessels had just arrived laden with a cargo of coal and that he would arrange to have it discharge the fuel directly on board the man-of-war.

A day or two later when the contractor saw his manager he asked what had been done with about thirty kegs of gunpowder that had been stowed on the top of the coal.

"Oh, we found all the kegs empty," said the manager. "There was no powder to remove."

During the next three weeks the contractor lived in a state of dread. He feared that every ship coming from the Crimea would bring news of an explosion on the man-of-war and an order for his arrest. He became ill from anxiety.

One day, a fortnight later, he heard with four and trembling from his head office the voice of the commissariat officer asking to see the merchant who had supplied the ship with coal. He put on a bold face and went out.

"Yes, your man," said the commissariat officer in a loud voice. "You gave us 300 tons of coal. It's the best we have ever had. Instead of our having to stop the ship while we cleared the funnels whenever there is a new firing up the smoke goes with a puff that clears the funnel itself. I want 300 tons more; but, mind, it must be of the same quality."

OUR FIRST DREADNAUGHTS.

And the Paper Battleship the U. S. S. Scared—Nothing.

One of the most interesting episodes in Vice Admiral Sims' career was his championship in the years 1903-4 of the all big gun ships, the dreadnaughts. This was two years before the British brought out their first dreadnaught, revolutionizing the naval construction policy of the world. The progenitor of the dreadnaught idea in the American navy was Lieutenant Homer C. Poundstone. Poundstone for months had treasured the idea of all big gun ships, hoping to win the support of the navy for such a construction change. Meeting discouragement, he sought out Commander Sims. He quickly won Sims' support.

Poundstone was a good draftsman, and he and Sims in 1903 and 1904 made sketches and drew plans for a big gun ship. The navy heads vetoed the plan of the two officers as often as they brought it up for consideration, but Sims never abandoned the idea. The ship became a great joke around the navy department. It is a striking coincidence that the name given by these two officers to their paper battleship and the name by which the ship was known in the navy offices was the U. S. S. Scared—Nothing. Two years afterward the British admiralty called its first all big gun ship Dreadnaught. Commander Sims convinced President Roosevelt that a dreadnaught was bound to come. As a result the plans for the battleships Michigan and South Carolina, which had already been authorized to be built in the old way, were changed so that they slid from the ways the first American dreadnaughts—World's Work.

The Engineer Corps.

The duty of the corps of engineers in the United States army in the time of war consists of planning and constructing fortifications, procuring information concerning the topography of the country, supplying maps, selecting position for camps, constructing or destroying bridges and often work requiring technical skill. In time of peace, to plan and construct permanent fortifications and coast defense, build lighthouses, superintend river and harbor improvements, survey and establish boundaries, etc.

A Freak of Death Valley.

Saratoga springs is one of the freaks of Death valley and has probably caused more profanity than anything else in the region. The waters are as clear as crystal, and they bubble up from a deep, sand basin like a well-spring of joy. But they are strongly impregnated with sulphur and other minerals, are tepid in temperature and act instantly like an emetic upon any one who drinks them.—Exchange.

A Disadvantage.

"Do you think 'The Star Spangled Banner' is a good song?" "I don't see why it isn't a perfectly good old anthem. You don't always get a favorable impression of it owing to the fact that anybody feels free to tackle it, regardless of whether he can sing or not."—Washington Star.

The Difference.

"Anropos of this aviation business, you know?" "Well, what of it?" "Formerly the public here used to take fliers in stock; now they are taking stock in fliers."—Baltimore American.

Work.

There is no better ballast for keeping the mind steady on its keel and saving it from all risk of crankiness than business.—James Russell Lowell.

Misfortune is the bosom friend of the man who "didn't think."

RUNNING THE GANTLET

By WARREN MILLER

"Mr. Humphrey," said the president of the bank, who had sent for me to come to his private office, "we have \$20,000 to go to M. today, and I have a mind to send it by you. Would you care to undertake the delivery?"

I didn't like the job for we were in the far west, where desperadoes abounded, and if one of them suspected I had so large an amount with me, murder would not stand in his way to possess it. But if I wished promotion in the bank it would never do for me to flinch at such an offer, which was really an order. So I accepted the charge.

I left the bank with thirty \$1,000 bills in a large pocketbook in the breast pocket of my coat. Of course from the start I had my eye on everybody in sight, wondering if some one of them was not intending to rob me. One person arrested my attention from the peculiarity of his appearance. He was standing on the bank steps when I went out, looking carelessly up the street. He wore green spectacles, a very shabby suit and a high plug hat. The most remarkable feature of his apparel was a waistcoat with stripes resembling those of a zebra. He was evidently down on his luck and had picked up his clothes piecemeal, where he could find them cast off from their original owners. He paid no attention to me. Indeed, I had no evidence that he was aware of my existence.

Going to my room, I took a suit case full of clothes and on emerging noticed the man with the zebra waistcoat on the opposite side of the street looking in at a shop window. His back was to me, and I kept my eye on him till he had turned a corner. In this way I made sure he had not seen me come out of the house nor during my going away from it. Proceeding to the station, I boarded the train, and as it rolled out the car door opened, and who should step in but the man with the zebra waistcoat.

He gave me a glance as he took his seat, and I knew he had spotted me for a victim. But why this fantastic attire? Then it all rushed upon me suddenly. It was to attract my attention from some confederate who was keeping me in sight and who doubtless had informed him of my proceeding. They could only have received the information of my bearing the money from some one in the bank who had let it out for gain or unintentionally.

My heart sank within me. But we are all natural gamblers, and I at once laid out a game for my money and my life. I picked up my suit case, which I had deposited on the floor, and held it in my lap. Then I went to the water cooler for a drink, carrying the suit case with me. Next I changed my seat, never for a moment letting the suit case out of my hand. Finally I opened it, pretending to make sure as I did so that no eye was upon me, and thrusting my hand in between the clothes, gave evidence by my expression that what I sought was there.

Meanwhile an ugly looking man in a woolen shirt and sombrero went and sat down by the man with the zebra waistcoat, and the latter gave him some piece of information which I was sure referred to the money being in the suit case. Not feeling that my effort to throw the men off the scent would avail—for when they robbed me, not finding the money where they expected it, they would force me to produce it—I concluded to get off the train at the first stop. I did so and saw the two men standing on the platform as well. As the train moved on I stepped aboard, and my followers re-entered at the other end of the car.

I looked about me to see if there was any one on whom I could rely for help. There were not half a dozen persons, and they would all be frightened out of their wits the moment the attack was made. I saw my enemies consulting earnestly and felt sure the blow was about to fall. The train was running through a sparsely settled country. While looking out of the window I saw a short distance ahead a man standing in a field holding three horses. Suddenly the man with the zebra waistcoat sprang up, seized the bell cord and pulled it vigorously. It happened that at the same time the conductor came into the car for tickets. The brakes were put on, and the train slowed up. The conductor, seeing no reason for stopping, angrily gave a signal to proceed.

Like a whirlwind the two men dashed past me and as they did so seized my suit case. Carrying it with them, they jumped off the train just as it was moving on with accelerated speed. I saw them run for the horses. All mounted, and as they dashed away the man with the zebra waistcoat held the suit case aloft triumphantly and waved his plug hat.

I explained the matter to no one, keeping my secret till I had delivered the money and returned, when I told the president of the bank. The incident led to the discovery that our porter was in league with a gang of road agents. The president gave me my choice of a big reward for saving the money or the position of assistant cashier, which he created for me. I chose the latter, soon became cashier and am now president of the bank.

I often wish to have seen the expression on the robbers' faces when they opened the suit case and found no money.

The Schooner.

The first vessel of the schooner type was launched at Gloucester, Mass., in 1713. The boat was in the water, and Captain Andrew Robinson was about to christen her with a name which has not been recorded when one of the bystanders cried out, "See-how she scoons!" The captain at once took the cue and said, "Schooner let her be." That, declares the dictionary, was the origin of the word "schooner."—Christian Science Monitor.

John Wesley's Mother's Advice.

John Wesley's mother once wrote to him when he was in college: "Would you judge of the lawfulness or the unlawfulness of pleasure, take this rule: 'Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God or takes off the relish of spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of your body over mind, that thing to you is sin.'"—Christian Science Monitor.

Not Too Late.

Mrs. Gotham—Were you late for church today? Mr. Gotham—Not too late. "Why, what do you mean by not too late?" "I missed the sermon, but I was in on the collection."—Yonkers Statesman.

Spoiled It All.

"What! You kidding about your food? I thought you boasted about your housekeeper cooking so well." "Yes, but I married her and now we keep a cook."—Boston Transcript.

The Wise Fool.

"Age brings wisdom," observed the sage. "But it doesn't leave us much time to use it." replied the fool.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

A Rebuff.

Stranger (trying to be friendly)—How is your health? Mr. Chronic (gruffly)—How do I know? I haven't had any for five years.—Puck.

LIVING LONG AND WELL.

In Every Case the Properly Balanced Life is the Winner.

What profiteth a man that he gain the whole world yet lose his health? In the race for power and place, for ease of circumstance and relief from the stimulus of hunger, the modern man is apt to forget that unless he is careful of his body he will soon be made to suffer for the infraction of Nature's inexorable physical law. With the loss in body tone comes an equal loss in mental acuity, and the brain, which for a time was able to operate despite the complaints of an overfed, underexercised, self poisoned body, stops working.

Statisticians have discovered that the mortality rate of persons in the United States over forty-five years of age is increasing. The strenuous life of today is not alone responsible for this. Lack of health giving exercise, superfluity of diet, lack of restoring sleep, overstimulation, the high pressure of the race for power, wealth and position, plus physical neglect—these bring early decay. The goal is reached—wealth is amassed—honor, position and power are just being grasped when the apple of accomplishment turns to ashes of dissolution. The brilliant mind becomes clouded, the steady hand is no longer accurate, the eye which once gazed fearlessly on the whole world is dimmed, and it is not long before the final breakup occurs. All of this was entirely preventable.

Other things being equal, it is the man who leads the well balanced life who lasts the longest, whose work to the end is uniformly the best—who neither overworks nor overplays, neither overeats, overdrinks nor oversleeps, he who maintains a standard of simple, healthy diet in moderation, who offsets mental work with physical recreation, who is as honest with his own body as he is with his own business. When success comes to such a one his physical and mental condition is such that he can enjoy in peace of mind and contentment of body the fruits of his labors.—Health Bulletin.

OUR PORPOISE FISHERY.

One of the Oldest and Least Known Industries in America.

One of the oldest and least known industries in America is the porpoise fishery, which has been operated from Cape Hatteras, in North Carolina, for about 200 years. It should attain an unusual prosperity in the next few years, for the bureau of fisheries is urging more general use of porpoise hides in place of cowhide. It is an excellent leather and could undoubtedly be used more widely.

Heretofore the most valuable product of the fishery has been the oil which is extracted from the jaws of the porpoise and is worth about \$20 a gallon. It is universally used for lubricating watches and other very delicate mechanisms. The body blubber is also valuable. Attempts to manufacture fertilizer out of the carcasses have failed because of the distance from a fuel supply.

The porpoises are taken at Hatteras in seines operated from the shore, and it is probably the only place in America where this has ever been successfully done. During the fall, winter and spring many porpoises are seen off the south Atlantic coast and at Hatteras they come within a few hundred yards of the surf. They are taken by spreading seines about 200 yards outside the surf line. As soon as the porpoises have come inside the seine it is dragged ashore. Often a whole school of these creatures is taken in a single haul.—Baltimore American.

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