

A BLACKING MONOPOLY.

THE PADRONE SYSTEM HAS INVADED NEW YORK'S FERRIES.

Men Who Control the Bootblacking Privilege on Board the Ferryboats and in Large Business Buildings—A Business That Has Grown.

The unfailing law of business is that wherever there is an opportunity for the profitable investment of capital, money is forthcoming to keep that business booming and to seize upon the most advantageous sites. And so it has come about that capitalists have not disdained to take hold of the bootblacking business. While waiting for a boat outside of the Twenty-third street ferry to Jersey City a San reporter got a shine from a remarkably bright and efficient American boy, whose mode of cleaning and shining indicated a good deal of experience.

"Why don't you go inside and pick up business on the boats, where your customers can get comfortable seats?" inquired the reporter.

"I wish I could," said the boy, "but they won't let me do it."

"Why, I have seen boys on the boats blacking boots, and they seem to make lots of money."

"Yes. They don't see a day that they do not pick up at least a dollar, and from that all the way up to three or four, or sometimes five. But they can't keep the money themselves."

"Why not?"

"They have to give it up to the Italian padrones. There are three Italians who have bought the right from the railroad company, and they are the only ones who are permitted to black boots on the ferryboats. They have hired a lot of Italian boys, to whom they pay three dollars or four dollars a week, and the boys are compelled to give up all their earnings to the padrones who hire them. If the boys do not turn in an amount that is believed to be all their earnings the padrones put on spotters and watch them, and see that they do pay up."

BOOTBLACK PRICES.

"Well, why don't you go in and buy the right to shine boots on the boats?"

"Me? Why, do you know what those padrones pay for the right to black boots on all the boats? They pay over \$2,000 a year, and keep the men's cabins clean. A poor boy hasn't much chance to get that job. I used to work for them, but I find I can make more money by standing outside and catching some of the customers before they get on the boat. Then all I get is clean profit, and I don't have to pay over to any padrone."

On all the steamship companies and railroads, at the hotels, in front of saloons—in fact, everywhere where men go there are to be found capitalist bootblacks who hire the best places, or there is an arrangement by which the owner of the boat or hotel or barber shop hires some one to do the bootblacking and takes the money himself. There have thus arisen several bootblack princes, such as the enterprising Italian who has the monopoly of the bootblacking at the Produce exchange, or the happy colored gentleman who does up the business in the Equitable building.

Many of the bootblack princes have wives and families and nice homes, and they dress well and live well. At the big hotels the income from the privilege of blacking boots is a considerable part of the revenue of the house. It has long ceased to be a perquisite of the servant. A chair in a good place will yield five dollars a day for bootblacking, and on extra occasions a good deal more. The bulk of the work is done by men. It really requires considerable bone and sinew to black a pair of boots well, and the man who has once noticed the difference between the way an average boy does it and the way a man takes hold of the work will not care to risk the boy's work again.

ART IN BLACKING BOOTS.

There are a good many points about bootblacking that give scope to the genius of the workman, as in all manual occupations. The bootblack who once establishes a reputation for quick and good work has his fortune made. Men will go out of their way to meet him, and will wait their turn for a favorite bootblack.

On hot days bootblacks' chairs are very tempting on the street corners in the shade, and many a man stops and takes a shine just for a rest. The summer is the bootblacks' harvest, because there is so much traveling and so much dust. Some saloon keepers exact rent from the Italians who have chairs for bootblacking in front of their saloons. Others are content to use the Italians' services in cleaning up the place or for running errands. Sometimes the proprietors come out and occupy the chairs as lounging places, to the great chagrin of the Italian owners.

Some time ago it was pointed out that a good many women would get their shoes cleaned and shined as men do if they could have the same facilities. Nobody seems to have acted on this suggestion yet. But it seems likely that there would be money in it. When one of them finds out that there is money in it, she will follow. As it is, many women are ashamed of their shoes, and long to get up on the chairs and have a shine. Occasionally a venturesome girl does so, but she generally finds herself an object of considerable curiosity.

Improvements may be seen in the evolution of the bootblacking business. Fancy chairs, better blacking, a man at each foot, the use of chamois bands for finishing, little points of attention to dress, the varnishing of russet shoes, the oil shine—all these show that the bootblacks are in harmony with the spirit of the age; that they have their eyes open to the necessity for keeping pace with the progress that is going on in other departments of human activity. When the chorus of the nations calls upon each business to show what it has done of importance in the evolution of society the modern bootblack will take no inferior place, but he will shine like one of his own most polished shoes.—New York Sun.

A St. Louis physician recalls the case of a young man who had been dumb for five years, but who, while out hunting one day, began, in the excitement of the chase, to yell at the top of his lungs. Afterward he was able to speak with perfect articulation.

When Julius Caesar fell, as he was landing on the African coast, he is reported to have said, to banish the fears of his soldiers, who accepted the occurrence as one of ill omen, "Land of Africa, I take possession of thee!"

FARM-FIELD AND GARDEN

OATS AND WHEAT.

Arguments in Favor of Deep Preparation of the Soil for These Crops.

The idea is current with the average farmer that the roots of oats and wheat are superficial, and that it is useless to break the ground deeper than is necessary to plow in the seeds and fertilizers, if any of the latter are applied. This is an erroneous conclusion, as we will endeavor to show, writes a Texas farmer to The Southern Cultivator. He continues: The quantity of roots attached to a plant are far greater than can be observed by merely lifting them from the soil. Simbert made an experiment as follows: An excavation was made in the field to the depth of six feet, and a stream of water was directed against the vertical wall of soil until it was washed away, so that the roots of plants growing in it were laid bare. The roots thus exposed in a field of oats presented the appearance of a mat or felt of white fibers to a depth of four feet below the surface of the ground. The roots of winter wheat he observed as deep as seven feet, in a light subsoil, forty-seven days after sowing.

The quantity of roots in per cent. of the entire plant in the dry state was found to be as follows:

Winter wheat examined last of April 40 per cent.
Winter wheat examined last of May 22 per cent.
Winter rye examined last of April 34 per cent.

The quality of the soil influenced the aggregate yield of roots. In a rich porous garden soil, which is usually deeply broken up, often uniformly spaded and well supplied with vegetable matter, a barley plant produced 128 feet of roots; in a heavier compact subsoil a similar plant yielded only eighty feet of roots. It is evident, therefore, how necessary it is that the plant should have an abundance of room in which to spread out and extend its roots. Inocited by a knowledge of these principles, early in December, 1890, I prepared my soil for seeding oats by breaking up as deeply as large heavy mules could pull diamond pointed scooter plows 14 inches long and about 3½ wide, having previously spread broadcast twenty bushels of green cotton seed and 100 pounds of acid phosphate lime per acre. Two bushels of oats per acre were plowed under with a turning plow, commencing Dec. 17. The surface was then dragged over with a heavy brush.

There was a uniformly good stand, and the oats grew without interruption from the start to full maturity. The long dry spell in April and May did not retard its growth, and it attained to a height of from four to five feet, matured full heavy grains with heads sixteen inches long. I did not thrash them out, as I was short of long forage, and fed them after cutting up the entire plant with an oats cutter. Good judges estimated the yield to be forty bushels per acre. This was not phenomenal, but remarkable when compared with the average product of the neighborhood, which did not exceed twelve bushels per acre. One of my neighbors, with more than double the quantity of cotton seed per acre, one-third more of oat seed, and sowed six weeks earlier, made at least one-third less than mine, when the soil was not broken up previously to the sowing of seed.

One characteristic of my oats was the uniform and uninterrupted growth of the plant during the long dry spell of April and May, when the oats of the country in general were atrophied and dwarfed, with almost a failure in the ultimate production. I will remark that my land is characterized by a superficial sandy loam three or four inches deep, supported by a rich tenacious clay substratum from six to eight feet thick, the whole resting upon a bed of limestone. In sandy soils, where the clay is within five or ten feet from the surface, it is hardly necessary to remark that subsoiling would be detrimental rather than beneficial, as I have satisfactorily proved.

Notes.

How can a cow have the "milk and beef form?"

It requires 15,000,000 cows to supply this United States with milk, cheese and butter.

One of the best after dinner cheeses is the strong, rich Edam, which is now made in America.

The live stock and dairy business, and even farming, is now carried on by combinations of proprietors.

Two billion dollars are invested in the dairy business of this country. This is almost twice as much money as is invested in manufacturing and commercial interests.

The dairyman who does not breed his own cows, but merely buys fresh ones and sells them when they go dry, buying other fresh ones in their place, will need to be a good judge of a dairy cow.

The story is going the rounds again about a large snake which was found milking a cow. What was the cow doing while the snake was milking her, and how did the snake reach the cow's udder? Did it stand upon its tail?

A feeding experiment at the Maine agricultural station shows that it costs only seven dollars a year more to feed a 1,200 pound Holstein cow than to feed a 900 pound Jersey; but this by no means determines the relative value of the two animals. Will the Holstein's carcass dressed for beef sell for eleven dollars more than the Jersey's? And during the year which cow's milk and butter was worth most?

In the province of Ontario a number of creameries have combined into a great syndicate, and the result is improved methods of butter and cheese making. In spite of the opposition to syndicates they seem to be making their way into popular favor in the teeth of all opposition in every line of business. Certainly, when all the creamery men work together and at the same time regard the public as their friend, and not as a common prey to be devoured, it will be far better than when each man's hand is against his neighbor in the same occupation.

An apparatus for purifying lubricating oils coming from machinery has been patented in Norway whereby the same oil can be used many times at a trifling expense.

The ancient Greeks and Romans had their beds supported on frames, but not flat like ours. The Egyptians had a couch of a peculiar shape, more like an old fashioned easy chair, with hollow back and seat.

A farmer in Jefferson county, Wis., dislodged a huge rock at the bottom of his well, when it sank out of sight, revealing a subterranean lake.

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