

STORY OF A NEWS "SCOOP."

Trick of a Correspondent That "Beat" the English Government.

At the close of the Boer war of 1902 the London Standard published the news of the signing of the treaty of peace some time before the government itself knew of it—a circumstance that greatly puzzled the officials. In "Campaigns of a War Correspondent," the author, the late Melton Prior, tells how the feat was accomplished.

The conference between the English and the Boer leaders took place in a farmhouse at the base of Majuba hill. While it was going on a small army of correspondents and artists camped outside, anxiously waiting for the news that the war was over. They were lounging and lying about on the grass with their horses saddled and bridled, ready to race to the telegraph office in camp.

Captain Cropper, General Sir Evelyn Wood's aid-de-camp, and I were very good friends, and as he occasionally came out of the house to have a chat, he kept me informed how matters were going inside.

Another great friend of mine was Jack Cameron, correspondent of the Standard. I was anxious to do him a good turn, and it occurred to me that now was my chance, so I said, "Cropper, you might let me know when they really are signing or going to sign."

Then I said to Cameron, "Look here, old chap, you get your horse ready and send it round the corner of that hill, but be careful that the other fellows don't suspect anything, for as soon as General Wood and Kruger begin to sign the terms of peace Cropper is coming out to tell me, and when you see me raise my helmet, that is the signal for you to gallop into camp and send the news off."

Shortly afterward Cropper came out and carelessly whispered to me, "It's all over, Prior; they have signed."

I simply had to give the pre-arranged signal to Cameron, and he was off like a shot at a full gallop for the telegraph office.

It must have been twenty minutes or half an hour later that the general came out on the veranda, and calling the members of the press round him, said, "Gentlemen, I have pleasure in announcing to you that President Kruger and the other delegates representing the Boer nation and myself have signed the terms of peace, but I warn you that the wire to England is closed to all communication until my dispatch has gone."

I could not help smiling to myself, for I knew well enough that Cameron's news was already on the way to England.

Benefit of Peerage.

Every one may not know what the term "benefit of peerage" implies. A peer can demand a private audience of the sovereign to represent his views on matters of public welfare. For treason or felony he can demand to be tried by his peers. He cannot be outlawed in any civil action, nor can he be arrested unless for an indictable offense, and he is exempt from serving on juries. He may sit with his hat on in courts of justice, and should be liable to the last penalty of the law he can demand a silken cord instead of a hempen rope.

Children in Pliny's Day.

It was not a modern American writer who, discussing the children, wrote of them thus: "How many are there who will give place to a man out of respect to his age and dignity? They are shrewd men already and know everything. They are in awe of nobody, but take themselves for their own example." These were the words of Pliny the younger used in one of his famous letters during the first Christian century, but they will strongly apply to much of the young America of today.

Customs of Brittany.

Brittany alone, of all the provinces of France, seems to have preserved its types of individuality. To be Breton is by no means to be French. The old men to this day chatter in the Celtic tongue. The Breton mother when not at work in the fields sits in the door of her cottage playing the distaff and reciting the old legends and quaint folk songs to the white coifed baby beside her. The Breton woman still wears the costume of her mothers before her and is satisfied in it.

Whipped For Not Smoking.

Thomas Hearne records that at the time of the plague of London in 1665 "children were obliged to smook. I heard Tom Rogers, who was a yeoman beadle, say that when he was that year that the plague raged a schoolboy at Eton, all the boys were obliged to smook in the school every morning and that he was never whipped so much in his life as he was one morning for not smooking."—London Chronicle.

OUR THIRSTY WORLD.

It May In Time Gulp Down Every Drop of Water We Possess.

Scientists have long declared that the earth will dry up and become as barren and dismal as the moon. But there is no occasion to worry about this, since it will not occur for more millions of years probably than we can count.

In regard to the present dried up condition of the moon, it used to be believed that the moon at one time had a plentiful supply of water, but that the great heat developed on either side as the moon was turned to the sun on alternate sides fourteen days at a stretch gradually evaporated the water. This vapor of evaporation did not fall back to the moon's surface, it was claimed, because the moon's gravity was not sufficient to hold it, and so the vapor constantly thrown off by centrifugal motion gradually left the moon barren and dry.

But the new theory now held by great scientists is also held to be applicable to the earth, and that what really happened to the moon will happen to this planet in the course of time—an almost unthinkable amount of time.

This theory is that a crystal of any sort, a lump of rock salt or quartz or limestone contains a great proportion of water. If these things are heated in a retort the water is recovered and the crystal becomes a powder. Now, if this powder is placed near water it will absorb while cooling quite a lot of it.

The interior of the moon being at one time extremely hot, so hot that it was a molten mass, a cooling process was started then, and in cooling the natural demand was for water in order for them to form their crystals. The water seeped down through the crust of the moon, and finally it was in that manner all used up.

This is the manner in which this theory is applied to the earth. Our great oceans bring a powerful pressure to bear upon the earth's crust, and because of subterranean volcanoes in various parts of the Pacific ocean we know water is gradually seeping into the heated interior of the earth.

The earth continues to lose its heat by radiation, and this brings about a shrinkage and cracking of the old crust, as demonstrated now and then by great earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. This in turn makes a communication between the water of the earth's crust and the cooling mass inside, these things being affinities. And so it is claimed all the earth's water must gradually seep into the interior and go into the formation of crystals. Even then it is claimed there will not be sufficient water to cool and crystallize all the molten mass inside.—New York American.

Work.

"What shall I do?" asked a woman who felt her grief was greater than she could bear. How many hundreds of others, borne down by the tides of disappointment, grief and sorrow, are asking the same question.

Once we heard an old lady say, "Work is the great sorrow killer," and she knew, for all the waves and billows of human sorrow had gone over her, yet she had risen above them through work. When the clouds seem heaviest, the sun gone, an insurmountable wall before you, go to work, work hard for yourself, or better still, for some one else. Work is the common heritage of all, a panacea for almost every mental ill or heart sorrow.—Exchange.

What Was on His Mind.

Once a clergyman went to pay a visit to an old Yorkshire yeoman, who was lying on his deathbed. After a few preliminary words the worthy minister said that if the veteran had anything on his mind he hoped he would ease his conscience and confide it to his pastoral car, so that he might die in peace. "Well, sir," answered the old sportsman, "if I only had to live my life over again, I'd fish more with bait and less with flies."

The Man and the Book.

A clerk in a Chicago book store was surprised not long ago when a young lady came into the store and said to him: "I want to buy a present of a book for a young man."

"Yes, miss," said he. "What kind of a book do you want?"

"Why, a book for a young man."

"Well, but what kind of a young man?"

"Oh, he's tall and has light hair, and he always wears blue neckties!"

Dropped in the Basket.

"Here," said the man of pensive mien, "is something that I dashed off in an idle hour."

"Well," said the man beside the waste basket, "that's no reason for printing it. There is no use of idly consuming both time and space."—Washington Star.

POWER OF VIBRATION.

Buildings May Be Swayed by the Use of Musical Tones.

It is now about half a century since Chomet demonstrated that a long sustained and very high musical note could, under certain circumstances, kill a dog. Recently experiments along the same line have been recorded in a scientific periodical of Paris with reference to the extermination of mosquitoes.

The violin and the flute were brought into requisition with almost equal results. The mosquitoes were in the vicinity of a swamp district in southern France and were found first to be attracted as the moth to the flame and then to die in numbers.

One musician goes so far as to say that buildings may be made to tremble at the sound of certain notes and that each one of these has its corresponding "shock" or "jar." He has devoted many years to the study of vibrations produced by music and very strange facts have come to light as the result of his investigations.

"One evening," he says, "I was playing the violin with a friend when all of a sudden we heard a note sounding longer than its normal life." We looked at each other in consternation, for the objects about us in the room were vibrating. So upset were we that we stopped playing. Since then my friend has often had similar experiences. It was this that induced me to study the subject."

His investigation was most detailed and extended over many months. Before applying his theories he would first study the idiosyncrasies of a given structure. His most convincing experiment was made on a tower of considerable height in the French chateau district. On each of the first four stories he stationed men at equidistant points, with instructions to sound a dominant note on the violin at a given signal. He left the fifth story vacant and provided for the sixth in the same manner, following this method to the top of the tower. At the signal agreed upon the men on the various floors sounded and prolonged the note. It was found that the sound ascended in a circle and that there was a horizontal swaying of the tower.

The music of the organ, and more particularly the trumpet, has more striking effects than that of the violin, at least so far as the crumbling of edifices and engineering works is considered. This is one of the reasons why troops are forbidden to cross bridges and viaducts playing music and marching in step.—Harper's Weekly.

Genesis of Men of Straw.

Mr. Englebach, an English author, in a volume on humors of the law, relates the following queer bit of history:

"Some years ago men used to walk about openly in Westminster hall with a piece of straw in their boot. By this sign attorneys knew that such persons were in want of employment as false witnesses and would give any evidence required for money. For instance, if an advocate wanted an obliging witness he would go to one of these men and show him a fee, which, if not sufficient, the witness would not take any notice of. The fee was then increased until its weight recalled the power of memory to a sufficient extent. By this they derived their name, 'Men of Straw.'"

A Well Meant Suggestion.

At an "at home" given by a Yorkshire gentleman's wife an outside manservant had to do duty for a butler. The man was astonished at the thin slices of bread and butter with which he served his mistress' guests. As he was serving an ancient dowager for the fourth time he said to her in a voice that was meant for a whisper, but which was audible to the whole room, "If yer slaps three or four slices together, mum, maybe yer can get a bite."—London Telegraph.

A Welcome Addition.

The Youth—Sir, I came to ask your consent to my marriage with your daughter.

The Old Man—Is your income sufficient to support a wife?

The Youth—It is. And in addition to that, it is sufficient to enable me to stand an occasional touch from my wife's father.

The Old Man—Say no more, young man. She's yours. Bless you, my son.—Kansas City Times.

A Tactful Answer.

"Like to join us in a game of bridge?" asked the polite gentleman in the Pullman to the gentleman across the aisle.

"No, thank you," replied the other. "It's very good of you to ask me, but I never play with strangers. You know you never can tell whether a chap's a bunco stealer or not."—Harper's Weekly.

MAKING A DWARF TREE.

It Is Done by Root Pruning and Just Keeping the Plant Alive.

How gardeners manage to grow miniature pines, firs and oaks in flower pots for half a century has always been more or less of a secret. It is the result chiefly of skillful, long continued root pruning.

They aim first and last at the seat of vigorous growth, endeavoring to weaken it just as far as possible without destroying the life of the tree.

They begin with the young plant, say a seedling of a cedar or hemlock, when only two or three inches high and cut off its tap roots as soon as it has other rootlets enough to live upon and replant it in a shallow earthen pot or pan.

The end of the tap-root is generally made to rest on the bottom of the pan or on a flat stone within it. Alluvial clay is then put into the pot, much of it in bits the size of beans and just enough in kind and quantity to furnish a scanty nourishment to the plant.

Just enough of water, light and heat is given to keep it alive, but not enough to excite a vigorous habit.

Thus by using very shallow pots the development of the tap roots is impossible, and by using poor soil and little of it and little water rapid growth is prevented.

Then, too, the top and side roots, which are within easy reach of the gardener, are shortened by means of a pruning knife or are seared with a hot iron. In this manner the little tree is headed off on every side and is allowed to grow just enough to live and look healthy.

Accordingly, each new set of leaves becomes more and more stunted, the buds and rootlets are diminished in proportion, and at length a balance is diminished between every part of the tree, making it a dwarf in all respects.—Scientific American.

Maddening.

A gentleman was attending a lecture one evening when he saw, two seats ahead of him, a man whom he took to be an acquaintance. Having no other way to attract his attention, he asked a stranger sitting next to him to poke the supposed acquaintance with his umbrella. As the disturbed man turned his head the gentleman discovered that he was not the person he had supposed, so he fastened his gaze attentively on the lecturer, leaving the man with the umbrella to settle with the man he had disturbed, an embarrassing and difficult task. At last the man with the umbrella turned rather indignantly to the gentleman.

"Didn't you ask me to poke that gentleman with my umbrella?"

"Yes."

"And why did you ask me?"

"I wanted to see whether you would do it!" was the reply.

When Lost in the Woods.

It is a well known fact that we walk naturally in a curve. If you are in the woods with nothing to guide you, you will walk in a circle and not find your way out. If you are on the plains and have neither sun nor stars nor compass for guides you will do the same thing—walk in a circle and arrive nowhere. In the woods, however, a clever device to be resorted to is this: Select three trees in a straight line and walk toward them. When you reach the first one there are still two ahead which keeps the line straight for you. Select a third tree in line with the other two and walk toward them. Always keep the line of three trees ahead and you will never walk in a circle.—Chicago Tribune.

The Feminine Dig.

"When women set out to say mean things about each other they usually succeed," said a well known New York state senator the other day. "My wife had several guests recently and I overheard a bit of conversation that I thought was a prize." Then he told this story:

"A certain Mrs. Blank was under discussion. 'I see that she employs colored help now,' remarked one of the ladies.

"Yes," said another, 'she became tired of having people ask her if her maids were relatives of the family.'—Detroit Free Press.

On the Wrong Man.

A gushing woman who prided herself upon her literary tastes, hailed Bret Harte with rapture when he was introduced to her. "I am so delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr. Harte," she said. "I have read everything you ever wrote, and of all your dialect verses I think there is nothing better than your 'Little Breeches.'"

"I quite agree with you, madam," answered Mr. Harte, "but you have put the little breeches on the wrong man. They belong to Mr. John Hay."—St. Louis Republic.

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