

The best thing about Mexico's new navy is that it is to be built in the United States.

Everything is coming our way. Even the mail from Australia to London will probably in future travel via New York.

The toll which the sea takes from those who trust it for a livelihood is pathetically illustrated in the announcement that the fishing season just closed has cost the single port of Gloucester, Mass., the lives of no less than sixty-two of its stalwart fishermen.

Observes the San Francisco Call: "An Eastern investigator announces that if men would breathe deeper and more slowly they would have longer hair, but it may be that as deep breathing prolongs life all that the investigator meant is that the deeper you breathe the longer you will wear your hair."

Pittsburg's institute, with its endowment of \$25,000,000, will represent a larger investment of capital in technical education than the combined endowments of all the distinctly technical institutes now existing in the country. It will be a truly splendid contribution to the most practical branch of twentieth century education.

The population of the United States is increasing faster than that of any other country. This is the richest country in the world—we are worth at least fifteen thousand millions more than Great Britain. Our miles of railroad track exceed by more than 10,000 all the tracks of Europe. We manufacture more than England, France and Germany combined.

Airships and under-water craft have done remarkable things in France in the first year of this century, but the vessels which have been coming about the clouds like comets and the boats which have been poking their noses beneath the waves have not yet achieved such triumphs that the surface of the earth and the level of the sea will possibly be abandoned for purposes of travel.

Although there are over 15,000,000 pupils enrolled in the common schools of the United States—nearly one in every five of the total population of the country—and very nearly 17,000,000 pupils of all ages receiving instruction in one kind of school or another, the extent of our illiterate adult population is disagreeably large. The census report on the subject just issued states the total number of males of voting age at 21,223,810, and reports 2,233,285 of them to be illiterate.

In staid Connecticut a murderer was guilty of taking the life of a young woman in circumstances of exceptional atrocity has been sentenced to life imprisonment, observes the New York Tribune. A peculiarly revolting feature of this case has been the sending of flowers and defiles to the assassin by weak minded creatures who seem to think that the criminal should be regarded as an object of sympathy. When such things occur in the colony of the Blue Laws, what can be expected in communities less Spartan and severe in origin and nurture?

Not to have seen the splendid electrical marvels of the Pan-American Exposition must be deemed a misfortune. The Hartford Courant, in appreciative remembrance, well says: "One can hardly be reconciled to the vanishing of so much beauty from the earth. There will be larger exhibitions in years to come—the St. Louis one will be much larger—and they will have their special attractions and triumphs, but not one of them will have Niagara as a coadjutor. Buffalo has paid a large price for her distinction as a hostess, but in America is her debtor."

A destructive parasite has attacked the sugar beet plants in Hungary, and is creating consequent alarm. It seems almost inevitable that the development of any special agricultural industry must be followed by the allied development of a destructive insect pest. At first the brilliant hop vines in Oregon and Washington were exempt, and great and very profitable crops were raised; but the vermin have found out the hop fields and have nearly ruined a prosperous industry. The phylloxera has devastated European vineyards. The potato has its insect enemy. It was hardly to be expected that the sugar beet should remain immune, and it will be well to keep a wary eye on the progress of the invader in Hungary. There is no attack which mankind finds more difficult to repel than that of hungry insect enemies.

Woman vs. Woman.

She gave a little gasp and sat down. The hotel porter discreetly looked the other way; he was enjoying the little scene greatly; the Mt. Seymour Hotel provided many of them. The girl was young and pretty; the hand which toyed with the letter before her was studded with valuable rings, among them a narrow one of gold. It was evident that she was a wife. There was no husband to greet her, though the car with her luggage from the mail boat was standing at the door. Alphonse had had the pleasure of handing her the letter; it had been given to him by a handsome, dark-eyed man only a few hours before.

"Monsieur le Capitaine he say, 'Give to de lady direct she come,' Hein, I do give."

The girl arose, her blue eyes dim with tears; the susceptible Alphonse was overwhelmed.

"Marie," she said to her maid, "Capt. Molyneux has been ordered up to Pretoria; he only left today. Please see to the boxes."

She crossed the hall toward the elevator and disappeared.

Many eyes had watched the little drama; the lounging chairs in the hall were all occupied; officers on sick leave, men convalescent and men on their way up to the front or back to old England. Women, too, some grass widows, a few real widows, many more with no special concern in the war at all. But it was the war which had drawn them to Cape Town—the war, or, rather, the soldiers who were fighting. Where else but to the Mt. Seymour Hotel should they go? Rank and fashion, joy and misery, virtue and vice rubbed shoulders in that fashionable and exorbitant hostelry.

"Ah, a pretty woman," drawled young Dennis of the 4th Lancers. "Who is she?" queried his companion.

John Beresford rose languidly from his chair and satisfied his curiosity at the porter's office.

"It's Bob Molyneux's wife," he said to his friend, "Fancy. One of my oldest pals. I was so sick at having missed him this morning. He left just before I got here. Ah! there is Mrs. de la Fane; she's a pretty woman. If you like, I was introduced to her this morning by old Vigors."

He sprang to his feet and offered his chair to a tall, graceful woman who had entered the hall as he spoke.

She accepted it with a smile, and in a moment the little group attracted all the leading spirits of the hotel; the acknowledged beauty, whose wonderful ways drew every man into her toils, her husband was rolling in money; she was reported to be a Johannesburg millionaire; but the reports were rather vague. It was sufficient for her admirers that he spent his money like water, gave the best dinners a man could wish to sit down to, and did not scowl when other men smiled at his wife.

"What brings you down to Cape Town, Capt. Beresford?" asked Mrs. de la Fane. "Major Vigors tells me your regiment is in the thick of it just now." She raised her great violet eyes to the young man's face as she spoke.

The implication underlying the word stung him. He flushed, and tapped a side pocket in his coat.

"I have got a little bag here," he said with meaning—which contained a few papers of importance.

"Oh!" laughed Mrs. de la Fane. "I see. You are one of Kitchener's messenger boys. Rather a satisfactory berth, isn't it, Captain? No risk, no worry, no exertion."

John Beresford caught those violet eyes again full in his own. His heart beat faster. He did not care to appear as one of no importance in this woman's eyes. His mission demanded secrecy, yet for the moment his tongue ran away with him.

"You are wrong, Mrs. de la Fane," he smiled in reply. "The papers would be worth—well, a lot to Kruger or Botha."

Taken unawares, and anxious to hide the trace of her recent tears, Muriel stammered hastily, "Tomorrow? No, the day after," and the next moment she was alone again. Bewildered, she turned the note over in her hand. There was no address upon it. She rose hurriedly and hastened to the door of the summer house. A man's figure, evidently that of a gentleman, was disappearing out of the garden gate on to the high road. It was too late to recall him.

She opened his note mechanically. In the dim light it was difficult to trace the writing, but a second glance left no room for doubt.

"The Societies Office, Stellenbosch. To Mrs. de la Fane. 'Have you procured the dispatch case carried by the officer, J. B. yet? If so, the bearer of this is to be trusted; give it to him. If you have not yet secured it, tell him to see J. X. de W.'"

Muriel drew her breath sharply. She sat motionless, her brain busy. She realized at once that she had been mistaken for somebody in the pay of the Boers; a plot was hatching, and she—

At that moment she heard footsteps hurrying down the pathway. She thrust the note in the bosom of her dress. Suppose the messenger had discovered her mistake, and was returning? Her heart beat wildly. With sudden resolve Muriel had made up her mind. The summer house had an inner room, to which a small doorway gave admittance. Opening the door she plunged into the darkness. Holding her breath, she peered through the half-open door, not daring to rise, for fear of making a noise. A man entered the summer house. A quick sigh of relief escaped Muriel's lips. It was not the messenger. She glanced at the man's face; then started back in horror. She recognized him as a man she had frequently seen in the hotel; but his eyes were now bloodshot, his expression wild, his manner distraught.

John Beresford (for it was he) drew a revolver from his coat and raised it against himself.

Muriel waited no longer. With a little cry she flung open the door and threw herself upon the man. The revolver fell from his hand.

"Oh! stop, stop!" she cried. "You can't know what you are doing."

John Beresford stared at her as though she were a ghost. He stood motionless, his arms hanging limply by his side, his wild eyes searching her own.

"Can't I help you?" whispered Muriel, gently, all the sympathy of her nature going out toward him. "Please let me try to help you."

"I am beyond help!" echoed the man, struggling with the words. "Leave me, for pity's sake, Mrs. Molyneux? There is only one way out of this."

"How do you know my name?" asked Muriel, in surprise.

"Molyneux was an old pal of mine," answered the other. "He would not speak to me now."

A sudden inspiration flashed across Muriel's brain. "What is your name?" she asked.

"John Beresford. For pity's sake leave me."

"Your initials are J. B., then? Have you—are the dispatches—"

"How do you know about that?" asked John Beresford, raising his head with a gleam of hope in his eyes. "A soul but myself and the thief know that the man, struggling with the words, 'Leave me, for pity's sake, Mrs. Molyneux? There is only one way out of this.'"

"How do you know my name?" asked Muriel, in surprise.

ford to date with him that evening. She handed the note to Mr. de la Fane and remarked, caustically:

"What nerve the man has. Surely, he knows there is nothing for him to do but shoot himself. * * * He's ruined * * * silly creature."

Mr. de la Fane laughed harshly. So that evening a cheerful party assembled in the private dining room. Mrs. Molyneux and Mrs. de la Fane were the only ladies present, but some half-dozen men made up the party. With the exception of John Beresford, who sat at the head of the table, and placed a leather case on the table.

"I've had the queerest adventure since I've been in the hotel," he said laughing. "It's too rich to keep to myself; it might amuse you."

"Fire away," said some one.

"Fire away," Mrs. de la Fane turned very white, but Muriel, watching her every movement, felt no pity.

"You know, of course," Beresford continued, "that I was sent down on special service to deliver some dispatches to Gen. G—, who arrives here this evening. Like an ass, I made no secret of my errand. I shall be back in a few days. Well, two days ago the case with the dispatches disappeared. You can imagine what felt like. After wild searchings for 24 hours there was only one thing to be done."

He then described his meeting with Muriel in the summer house, and her adventure with J. X. de W.'s messenger.

"I wrote a note," he continued, "and inclosed it with the original letter, addressing it to a certain lady, whose name does not matter, asking her to meet J. X. de W.'s messenger last night. In disguise I myself represented the messenger and received my dispatch back into my own hands."

The men laughed loud and long.

"The sequel, too, may be interesting," said John Beresford, coolly. "A couple of detectives are at this minute collaring J. X. de W.'s man."

"What about the lady?" he was asked.

"Well, I fancy you'll hear that she and her husband have been presented with tickets to Europe by the next boat."

A little shuffling cry came from Mrs. de la Fane's lips. She had faintly—the Onlooker.

QUANT AND CURIOUS.

A costly marble monument stands in a fashionable cemetery at Seattle, Wash., sacred to the memory of a faithful horse. The animal's owner was himself buried beside the horse recently.

The other day James Pelter, who lives near Winchester, Va., killed a bald eagle, whose spread of wings was seven feet. Mr. Pelter had lost several lambs and thought it remarkable that the thief left no tracks nor other sign of his visits to the farm, but when the eagle tried to carry off a dog which followed him, he concluded that the bird was the robber.

During the recent session of the British parliament no fewer than 6448 questions were asked in the house of commons. This number has only once been exceeded in recent years—namely, in the session of 1892, when the number of questions asked was 6584. But the house sat on 226 days during that session, while there were only 118 sitting days during the late session.

There are three nut cracking plants in St. Louis, Mo., giving employment to considerable numbers of people. The nut crackers are driven by electricity, each nut being fed individually into the crusher. After the shells are cracked the nuts are winnowed by an air blast, and the meat is picked from the crushed shells by hand, women and girls being employed for this part of the work.

A curious case came up the other day before the court in Caroline county, Md., when an ancient resident was charged with the hatching of nine eggs. Extra jurors had to be summoned, and it cost the county \$250 to try the case. The accused was 73 years old. His counsel said he had known the defendant for 40 years, and it was incredible that he would steal eggs. He argued that anyhow the state had not shown that the eggs were found and nine rotten eggs would have no value at all. The jury stood out 15 minutes and returned a verdict of not guilty.



Children's Column

A Little Girl's story.

To take her nap, I put my doll in grandpa's garden chair. The robins found her right away. And tried to steal her hair.

They pulled so hard she sat right up, And looked wide her eyes.

Those foolish things supposed was me, And hopped off in surprise.

And then it was I found their nest: They were so droll you see, As you they flew, and down they flew, Glancing sideways at me.

But now they know me very well, And eat the food I bring. "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up! cheer!" Is what they say and sing.

The Woodchuck.

H. D. Reed and Verne Morton, in country life in America, tell an interesting and pictorial story of the woodchuck, or ground hog.

"Perhaps you will remember," says Mr. Reed, "as more familiar to country people than the woodchuck. Every hillside and meadow is dotted with the small piles of earth which mark the doorway to his home. The woodchuck prefers a hillside or a knoll in which to dig his hole, for here he can easily make the end of his den higher than the beginning, thus avoiding the danger of being drowned out."

"What could be more useless in general appearance than a woodchuck and a squirrel? Yet they are cousins, both belonging to the same family of mammals. The trim body, sharp claws and agility of the squirrel make it possible for them to lead an arborescent life, jumping recklessly from branch to branch, while the stumpy form and short legs of the woodchuck better adapt him for digging than for running or climbing."

The nature of the food of the woodchuck is such that he cannot lay up stores as the chipmunk does, nor is it during the winter. The case of this creature during the winter seems to be, therefore, one of sleep long and soundly or starve. During the winter's sleep or hibernation, life processes go on very slowly. Breathing is reduced, and the heart beats become so slow and feeble that they cannot be felt. They come from their winter's sleep about the first of March, in New York.

How Elephant Seals Live.

These curious animals the elephant seals, also known as sea elephants, have been recently studied by Professor C. Chalmers, a German scientist, as well as by Robert Hall, a well known naturalist, and as a result many new facts have been gathered in regard to their life and habits.

These seals are only to be found in the southern seas, and mainly in the vicinity of the Kerguelen islands, where they go in August, for the purpose of pairing. They remain there until February or March. During the winter they are very dull and apathetic, but as spring approaches they become more lively. Mr. Hall says that he went several times through a herd of 49 or 50 animals while they were dozing, and only a few were disturbed by him.

These seals live in communities, and in a single bay may often be seen from 5 to 10 colonies. Hitherto it has been supposed that there is never more than one male in a single herd, but there now seems to be abundant proof that each herd contains some of only one sex. Thus, in one bay there will be five or six herds of males, and in another five or six herds of females.

Professor Chalmers, who has studied the seals thoroughly in their native haunts, says that for a long time after the animals return to the Kerguelen in the autumn they do not take any food but remain torpid in beds which they form until they have shed their old hair and put on a new coat. During the winter he saw several seals killed, and not a particle of food was found in their stomachs.

Mr. Hall, on the other hand, says that the seals during this period feed once a day, going down to the water to obtain a supply of fat. In any case, it is certain that these animals can live without food for a long time, since they have under their skin a layer of fat which is 15 centimeters in thickness.

How the Beaver Breathes in Winter.

easy to handle. If he could get hold of you with his teeth he would almost take a leg off, so you want to watch him sharply. The place to grab him is by the tail.

"The ability of a beaver to remain under water for a long time is really not so tough a problem as it looks. When the lake or pond is frozen over a beaver will come to the under surface of the ice and expel his breath, so that it will form a wide, flat bubble. The air, coming in contact with the ice and water, is purified, and the beaver breathes it again. This operation he can repeat several times. The otter and muskrat do the same thing."

"It almost takes a burglar proof safe to hold a newly captured beaver. I once caught an old one and two kittens up the north branch of the South West, put them in a barrel and brought them down to Miramichi lake. That night she knawed a hole through the barrel and cleared out, leaving her kittens. They were so young that I had no way of feeding them, so I released them. Soon after that I caught a big male beaver. I made a large log pen for him of dry spruce, but the second night he cut a log and disappeared."

"Beavers, when alarmed, generally make up stream, so I went to the brook where a little brook came in, and I thought I would go up that a little way, and I hadn't gone more than 10 rods before I came across my lad sitting up in the bed of the brook having a lunch on a stick he had cut. He actually looked as if he knew he was playing truant when he caught sight of me out of the side of his eye."

"I picked him up by the tail, brought him ashore, put him in the pen, supplied him with plenty of fresh peapods, and he seemed as tame as possible and never gave me any more trouble. I brought him out to Stanley, where he lived a long time. Turnbull had a squirrel dog, which was jealous of the beaver, and one day attacked him. He did that only once, for the beaver nipped the dog's tail off quicker than a cat would catch a mouse."—Rod and Gun.

The Discontented Geese.

Once upon a time a flock of wild geese started out to see the lights. They were led by an old goose who no doubt thought she was very wise. As if anybody ever did see a wise goose.

"It's going out," she said, "to see more of the world. We really know nothing of what is going on outside of this pond. Don't you find it very dull? Only last week a swallow passing in his flight to have a bit of conversation with me, told of the wonderful things to be seen. If you care to come along," she added, "I shall take you with me."

Now, to tell the truth the young geese, one and all, were perfectly delighted at the proposition (because that dangerous little seed of discontent had already taken root).

Such a corkle as they set up Cackled, cackled, cackled, cackled. So they flew away over brown marshes and green meadows, over rivulets and streams, until they came to such a lovely place where there were beautiful flowers and trees. There were rustic bridges spanning limpid streams, and last, but not least, a beautiful pond.

"How lovely!" they exclaimed in one breath. "I wonder where we are," said one little goose.

"This," said their leader with an air of importance, "is Central Park. My friend, the swallow, told me all about it."

And sure enough, it was Central Park, down by the duck pond, where, no doubt, you have walked many and many a time.

"The ducks and geese you see swimming about," said the old goose, "are tame. How beautifully they behave. It all depends," quoth she, "on one's bringing up. Hush, my dears," as the young geese, one and all, began to cackle. "Don't be rude! Let me, I beg of you, speak to our friends."

The tame geese, however, were not in the least inclined to be sociable. They glibbed about majestically, quite ignoring the presence of the intruders. "Don't that pretty little house over there," said the little goose. "Can it be possible that it has been built for our accommodation?"

How absurd this was. Of course your mamma has a room set apart as a guest chamber, and these ridiculous little geese thought the duck house had been especially built for them, just like a bird's nest, you know.

"To be sure," said the old goose, shaking the water from her back, "my friend, Mr. Swallow, must have told them we were coming." She waddled over, followed by the entire flock. Hardly had they entered the duck house when they heard a click. The spring door closed with a snap and they were prisoners! Just then the keeper came out. "High-he!" exclaimed he, "what's this? A flock of wild geese, on my life. Come here, Bill (to a great sturdy fellow near by). Here is work for you to do. Clip the wings of these geese as usual." The wild geese went to work and did as he was told, clipping all their wings, while a big park policeman looked on and laughed.

The geese were then let out on the pond to swim about majestically like their neighbors. Oh! how they longed to fly home. Never before did freedom seem so dear to them.

"Why didn't you tell us," said the little goose in tone of reproach to one of her new found friends, "that we were going to have our wings clipped?"

"Because," replied her companion, "you wouldn't have believed us; and after all, my dear, experience is the very best teacher."—New Idea Magazine.

Australia has more than 1900 newspapers.