Orange County Observer

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A Philadelphia surgeon says that by three strokes of the lancet he could paralyze the nerves acted on to make a man get mad, and thereafter any one could pull his nose or cuff his ears, and he would simply smile a soft, bland smile.

In 1868 the per capita indebtedness of Canada was $22.47; in 1891 it is $48. In 1868 the per capita indebtedness of the United States was $67.10; it is now $14. "In the aspect of the case, at least, it might pay Canada to enter the Union," observes the San Francisco *Chronicle*.

Within the last forty years at least 3,000,000 Germans have emigrated to the United States, an average of about 77,000 per year. The largest number came from the provinces of Eastern Prussia, where landlordism, maintains the New York *World*, is developed to almost as hateful forms as in Ireland.

The New York *Sun* learns that Cornell is going to improve all the roads on the University property, around Ithaca, N. Y., in sections and by different methods, and thus furnish a standing object lesson as to style and cost of maintenance for the guidance of attempts to improve the roads of the State.

Belgian railway officials, after three years of investigation, reports that under ordinary circumstances the average railway train in passing over one mile of track wears from it two and one-fifth pounds. This natural destruction of track amounts for the whole world to about 1,330,000 pounds daily.

The New York *World* declares that the population of the agricultural districts is less than it was ten years ago, the gains having been made in the towns and cities. But the mortgage indebtedness is increasing at the rate of $8,500,000 per year, and the loss in farm values since 1880 is estimated at $2 10,000,000, or an average of $7 per acre for the single State of Ohio. There are States where the proportion shows a still worse condition of affairs.

Further progress in the work of the Navy Department is shown, believes the New York *News*, in the organization of a permanent Torpedo Board. It is to consist of three members and be independent of other Navy Department bureaus, the object being to build torpedoes and torpedo-boats on an extensive scale. As a beginning, 100 Whitehead torpedoes have been ordered from an English establishment, but an effort will be made to introduce missiles of this character constructed from American designs. The choice of this weapon of attack is indication of an important change in our lines of warfare, especially those that concern the protection of our harbors. It may be remarked here for general information that a torpedo ordinarily runs its course from fifteen to seventeen feet below the surface of the water. It is about eighteen inches in diameter and eighteen feet in length, and for several hundred feet should travel at the rate of thirty miles an hour, exploding on connection with the object at which it is aimed.

The year 1890–91 has been a remarkable one for the length of its death roll of statesmen and of those whom the mutations of political parties or the weight of years have compelled to retire from their positions as leaders and rulers. The year in diplomacy has also been, says the Chicago *Herald*, a remarkable one for the number of questions discussed, most of which are happily in a fair way to be settled without disturbing the peace of nations. The disputes of England with Portugal and France in regard to the partition of Africa, the Newfoundland fisheries question, in which England and France, and possibly America are involved; the Behring Sea complication; the Mafia tragedy and its possible international difficulties; the Brazilian, Chilian and Venezuelan imbroglios, one of which has already involved the United States and another, the Venezuelan, may yet draw this country into strained relations with Great Britain. These are the most important of the great diplomatic contests that have signalized the present year, the end of which is not yet. The passing away of the great Canadian Premier, our contemporary thinks, may still further add to the questions of diplomacy. As long as Sir John was at the helm Canadian affairs were likely to follow the course marked out by his skilful hand on the chart of diplomacy. What course they will now take it is impossible to predict with any certainty.

LIMITATIONS.

"If youth could know!
How many needless fears were stilled!"
We tell our hearts with trembling lips.
"'Twere then less sad that May time slips
Away, and leaves dreams unfulfilled,
If youth could know?"

"Could age forget?"
Again we cry, with tear dimmed eyes,
"Our lips would wear less sad a smile
For hopes that we have held erstwhile;
Earth still would seem like Paradise,
Could age forget?"

If youth could know?
Tis pitiful to grope through light!
And yet—and yet if youth had known,
Mayhap the heart had turned to stone.
'Twere hard to read life's book aright,
If youth could know.

Could age forget!
Tis pitiful too late to learn!
And yet—and yet if age forgot,
There were sweet thoughts remembered not.
To hardiness sympathy might turn,
Could age forget.

"If youth could know!
"Could age forget!"
We cry; but would we have it so?
Were fewer eyes with lashes wet?
We hug our limitations yet,
While crying, as life's moments go,
"Could age forget!
"If youth could know!"

—*Charles W. Coleman, in Harper's Bazar.*

THE SLEEPLESS KID.

BY O. H. LEWIS.

"If thar is one thing," said the old cattleman with a strain of affection and respect in his tone, "which endears this yere Jack Booth to me, speshul, it is the ca'm uncompromisin' way he lines up on what he deems is his dooty.

"But where Jack shines exceedin' is when you opens a new game onto him. It is just beautiful, as a mere example to men, to see the confidence with which that Jack gets a stack of chips an' sets in agin it. One hot afternoon—Enright an' Doc Peets is away about some cattle or something, but the rest of us is holdin' down the camp—we're sorter hangin' an revolvin' 'round the postoffice, awaitin' for Old Monte an' the stage. Here she comes, final, a-rattlin' an' a-creakin', that old drunkard Monte a-crackin' of his whip, the six hosses on the canter, an' the whole business puttin' on more dog than a Mexican officer of revenoo. When the stage drors up, Old Monte throws off the mail bags, gets down an' opens the door, but nobody gets out.

"'Well, I'm a coyote!' says Monte, a heap disgusted, 'wharever is the female?'

"Then we all peers into the stage an' thar's jest a baby, with maybe a ten-months' start down this vale of tears, inside, an' no mother nor nuthin' along. Jack Booth, jest as I says when I begins, reaches in an' gets him. The baby ain't sayin' nuthin' an' sorter takes it out in smilin' on Jack.

"'He knows me, for a hundred dollars,' says Jack, mighty ecstatic. 'I'm an Apache if he ain't allowin' he knows me. Wharever did you get him, Monte?'

"'Give me a drink,' says Monte, trackin' along into the Early Bird; 'this yere makes me sick.' After he gets about four fingers of carnation under his belt he turns in an' explains as how the mother starts along in the stage all right enuf from Tucson. The last time he sees her, he says, is at the last station back some twenty miles in the hills, at dinner, an' he s'poses all the time she's inside along of her progeny until jest now.

"'I don't reckon,' says Old Monte, lookin' gloomy like, 'as how that womern is aimin' to saw this yere infant onto the stage company none?'

"'Don't addle your whisky frettin' about the company,' says Booth, a-settin' of the kid on the bar while we all crowds in for a look at him; 'the camp'll play this hand for the infant an' the company ain't goin' to be in it a little bit.'

"'I wish Enright and Peets was yere,' says Cherokee Hall, 'to be heard hereon, 'cause I shore deems this a grave occasion. Yere we finds ourselves possessed of an unexpected infant of tender years, an' the question nacheral enuf now is, whatever'll we do with it?'

"'Let's maverick it,' says Dan Boggs, who is a mighty good sort of a man, but onthinkful.

"'No,' says Cherokee, 'its mother'll come hoppin' along to-morry a-yellin', you see! This yere is sabed all easy enuf. This old sot Monte has jest done drove off an' left her planted some'rs up the trail an' she'll come along shore in time.'

"'Meantime,' says Booth, 'the infant's got to be took care of, to which dooty I volunteers. Thar's a tenderfoot a-sleepin' in the room back of the Red Light, an' he's that 'feminate an' effeet he's got a sure-nuf bed an' some goose-ha'r pillers; which the same I do yereby confiscate to public use to take care of this yearlin'. Is the sentiment pleasin'?'

"'Jack's scheme is right,' says Boggs, 'an' for that matter he's allers right. Let the shorthorn go sleep under a mesquite bush; it'll do him good a whole lot; for sech is life in the far West.'

"'I'm some dobersome of this play,' says Cherokee. 'Small infants is mighty mysterous people, an' thar ain't no livin man was ever onto their game an' able to foresee their needs yet. Do you allow you can take care of this young one, Jack? Be you equal to it?'

"'Take care of a small baby like this,' says Jack, plenty scornful, 'as ain't weighin' twenty pounds averdupois? Well, it'll be some funny now if I can't! I could take care of him if he's four times as big. All I asks is for you all to stand by in crisises, an' back the play, an' you can go make side bets we'll come out winners on the deal.'

"'I ain't absolute shore,' says the postmaster, 'bein' some out of practice with infants myse'f, but jedgin' by his lookin' smooth an' silky I offers $50 even he ain't weaned none yet; an' we leaves it to the mother when she comes.'

"'I won't bet none on his bein' weaned complete,' says Booth, 'but I'll hang up fifty dollars even he drinks outen a bottle as successful as Old Monte.'

"'I'll jest go you once,' says the postmaster, 'if I lose. It's fifty dollars even he grows contemptuous at a bottle and disdains it.'

"Well, we all talks it over an' decides Booth is to nurse the infant, an' at once proceeds to make a procession for the tenderfoot's bed, which he resigns without a struggle. Cherokee Hall an' Boggs then goes over to the corral an' lays for a goat which was a mother, to milk it a whole lot. The goat was mighty reluctant an' refooses to enter into the spirit of the thing, but they makes their points right along, an' after a frightful time, which now an' then demands the assistance of a large part of the camp, comes back with more'n a pint.

"'That's all right,' says Booth. 'Now go out an' tell the barkeep to give you a pint bottle. We'll have this yere game a-winnin' in two minutes.'

"So Booth gets his bottle an' fills her up with goat's milk an' makes a stopper outen cotton cloth an' molasses for the young one to dror it through. About this time the infant sets up a yell an' ain't peaceful agin until Booth gives him his six-shooter to play with.

"'Which shows my confidence in him,' says Booth. 'There's only a few people left I care to pass my gun to.'

"Well, Booth gets along with him first-rate, a-feedin' of him the goat's milk, which he goes for with avidity, tharby nettin' Booth $50 from the postmaster. He has Boggs build a fire so he can keep the milk warm, an' I—that earnest he don't even go for no supper; jest has it brought to him.

"'Somebody'll have to ride herd on this yere foundling all night, I reckon,' says Boggs to Jack when he's bringin' him things.

"'I s'pose, most likely, we will have to make the play thataway,' says Booth.

"'All right,' says Boggs. 'You know me and Cherokee. We're in this any time you says.'

"So a passel of us continues along with Booth and the infant until mayhap it's about second drink time in the night. The infant don't raise the war yell once—jest takes it out in goat's milk an' in laughin' an' playin' with Booth's gun.

"'Excuse me, gents,' finally says Booth, mighty dignified, 'but I've been figgerin' this thing an' rather thinks it's time to put this yere young one to sleep. So if you all will now withdraw, I'll see how near I comes to beddin' of him down for the night. Stay within whoopin' distance, though, so if he tries to stampede or takes to millin' I can have he'p.'

"So we all lines out an' leaves Jack an' the infant, an' turns in on faro an' poker an' similar devices which was bein' waged in the saloon.

"Maybe it's an hour when Jack comes in.

"'Boggs,' he says, 'jest step in an' play my hand a minute, while I goes over an' adjourns them frivolities in the dance hall. It looks like this yere camp speshul tumultuous to-night.'

"Boggs does an' Jack proceeds to the Baile house next door an' states the case.

"'I don't want to onsettle business,' he says, 'nor disturb the currents of trade, but this yere young one I'm responsible for, in back of the Red Light, gets that engaged in the sounds of these yere revels, it don't look like he's ever goin' to sleep none. So if you all will jest call on the last waltz an' wind her up for to-night, it'll be regarded. The kid's mother'll shore be here in the mornin', which will alter the play all around, an' matters can then go back to old lines.'

"'Enuf said,' says Jim Hamilton, who runs the dance hall. 'You can gamble this dance house ain't layin' down none on a plain duty, an' to-night's shindig closes right yere. All promenade to the bar. We'll take a drink on the house an' quit an' call it a day.'

"So then Jack comes back mighty grave with his cares, an' relieves Boggs, who's on watch, straddle of a chair, a-eyein' of the infant, who, a-setting' up agin a goose-ha'r pillar, along of his goat's milk and Booth's gun, is likewise a-eyein' of Boggs.

"'He's a-way up good infant Jack, says Boggs, givin' up his seat.

"'You can bet your life he's a good infant,' says Jack, 'but it seems mighty like he don't aim to turn in an' slumber none. Maybe goat's milk is too invigoratin' for him, an' keeps him awake."

"About another hour goes on an' out comes Jack into the saloon agin.

"'I don't aim to disturb you all,' he says, 'but, boys, if you'll jest close the games yere an' shet up the store I'll take it as a personal favor. He can hear the click of the chips, an' it's too many for him. Don' go 'way—jest close up an' set 'round quiet.'

"So we does as Jack says; closes the games an' shets up the camp, an' then sets 'round in our chairs an' keeps quiet, a-waitin' for that infant to turn in. A half-hour later Jack comes out agin.

"'It ain't no use, gents,' he says, goin' back of the bar an' gettin' a big drink, 'that child is on to us an' won't nave it. You can gamble he's fixed it up with himse'f he ain't goin' to sleep none to-night. I allow it's because he's among rank strangers, an' figgers it's a good safe play to stand watch for himse'f.'

"'I wonder couldn't we sing him to sleep,' says Cherokee Hall.

"'Nothin' agin makin' a try,' says Jack, some desperate, wipin' his lips after his drink.

"'S'pose we all goes an' give him "The Dyin' Ranger" an' "Sandy Land" for an hour or so, an' see,' says Boggs.

"So in we trails. Cherokee lays down on one side of the infant an' Booth on the other, an' the rest of us take chairs an' sets 'round. We starts in an' sings him all we knows an' we shorely keeps it up for hours; an' all the time that child a-settin' an' a-starin', sleepless as owls. The last I recollects is Bogg's voice in 'The Dyin' Ranger.'

With his saddle for a pillow,
An' his gun across his breast,
Far away from his dear old Texas,
We had him laid down to rest.

"The next thing there's a whoop an' yell outside. We all wakes up—all except the infant, who's wide awake all along—an' yere it is four o'clock in the mornin' an' the mother has come. Comes over from the last station on a speshul buckboard, where that old inebriate Monte drove off an' left her. Well, son, we was willin' an' glad to see her. An' for that matter, splittin' even, so was the kid."—*Kansas City Star.*

The Chinese Book.

The arrangement of the Chinese book is as follows: Beginning at the end, according to our Western ideas, we find in the upper left-hand corner of the cover, the outside title. This is often printed in "seal" characters. Next (going backwards, according to our ideas) we find the title-page. In the middle is the title in large characters. The year of the reigning Emperor is put in the upper part of the left column; below is generally the name of the printing establishment where the book is printed or published. In Christian publications the top of the right-hand column is filled with the date, according to our calculation: "Jesus descended to the world, one thousand eight hundred ninetieth year." Below this we often find the author's name. The next pages, are as a rule, filled up with prefaces, introduction and index. Then comes the ordinary letter-press. The characters read from the top to the bottom of the column, and the columns read from the right to the left. —*Paper and Press.*

Every minute, night and day, the United States Government collects $639 and spends $461.

AFTER SEA OTTER.

HUNTING FURS OFF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

A Sport That is Brim Full of Excitement—A Shy Little Animal That Cannot Stand the Human Voice.

Beginning a little south of Point Conception on the north and extending at irregular intervals to the bay of Todos Santos on the south, lie the Channel Islands, varying in size from a few miles in length to over twenty, and keeping an average distance from the mainland of about twenty-seven miles. Only one of these, Catalina, has any special claim to being inhabited, the summer resort of Avalon being situated near its center, and almost directly west from the port of San Pedro. With the exception of an occasional lonely shepherd ranch on one or two of the largest islands, the rest of these outlying natural barriers remain as they were at Creation's dawn, and even to-day are given up solely to the sealion and the otter hunter.

The small community that subsist by this occupation numbers perhaps some 200 souls in all, and is a most peculiar and isolated one. For over a generation they have retained a monopoly of their pursuit, and resent all professional competition with jealous hostility. Living apart from the haunts of mankind, touching elbows with civilization only at rare intervals and rendered silent and undemonstrative by the very nature of their profession, they live on, care free, contented and unregardful of the great world "on the main." Their stations or "camps" similar to this are usually about eight or ten miles apart. The inmates or "crews" are about ninety per cent. native Californians, the rest Americans, and are divided in three distinct classes. The least important of these are the "grubbers" or fishermen, skin-salters and cooks, who find and prepare the food. Next come the boatmen, whose sole occupation is rowing, and lastly, the "shots," or riflemen, almost always American, and who are the magnates and aristocrats of the outfit, it being upon their skill the welfare of the whole depends. Although the business is largely a co-operative one the riflemen are paid an additional ten per cent. of the "catch," and also obtain a further bonus of fifty cents per skin for each pelt above a certain number secured each month.

The shooting is all done from boats, four or five of which are always beached in front of each camp. These are home-made affairs, low on the sides, nearly flat-bottomed for convenience in beaching and sliding over kelp, and are intended for two oarsmen, a steersman and rifleman. Their internal arrangements are somewhat unique, the double object of facilitating the marksman and insuring complete silence being kept always in view. In the bow, where the sharp-shooters sits in lordly state, is placed the only modern article, if his latest pattern Winchester be excepted, observable. This is an office chair revolving on a well-oiled screw to afford its occupant a quick change of position. Under the generally bare feet of the crew are spread several old blankets. The wooden oarlocks are covered with generously greased felt; the oars themselves oval-bladed, thin-shafted and flexible, while on either side of the sharp bow trail strips of loose felt, against which the splash of the water is inaudible. Everything, in fact, is done to avoid the slightest sound while afloat, for the sea otter, as has been indicated, seems to rely more upon his acuteness of hearing than his sense of smell or sight.

In the dim grayness of the early hour at which all wild creatures seem to break their fast, five silent ghost-like figures, comprising Pedro, two oarsmen, the steersman and the *Examiner* representative, take their way to the water's edge and quietly launch a boat fitted and provisioned over night. Not a word is spoken, not an oar rattles, for even then a venturesome otter may be a few hundred yards away. The writer is stationed on a covered box in front of the steersmen with a whispered injunction from that official to "chin easy." The crew melt into their places as would buccaneers on a cutting-out expedition; the "shot" lifts his hand; the lithe blades steal through the water without a drip; the boat slides seaward like a shadow and the chase is begun.

About 300 yards from the shore we see that the kelp line follows the curves of the land like a sleeping serpent, the leaves of its forty-foot-long stems matting together in a greenish brown mass about 500 feet in width. This undulating forest of stems and leaves harbors a marine world of its own. It is here the otter repairs from his rocky lair and, supported by the giant stems, lies in wait for prey. Our boat is carefully steered about thirty yards from the inner kelp line, and the rifleman, his wide sombrero brim folded in so as to exclude the light except in front, glues his eyes to the oily greenish surface to seaward. Sometimes he grasps his cocked weapon tighter as some pursued flying fish breaks above the surf swell, or some bit of kelp lifts itself a moment higher than the rest. Suddenly his trained eye catches a sharp lift of the water ahead. It is the "fluke" made by the quick upward stroke of the startled otter's hind feet and tail as he forces himself under water in his frantic race for the shore. Now if the otter would only content himself with remaining in the kelp, amid whose patches of leaves his—not—nose would remain undetected, all would be well, but his invariable habit is to make a bee-line for headquarters. Long experience has taught the marksman that in doing this his quarry must make exactly three dives; that is to say, he must come to the surface to breathe just twice in his course. The first of these "breaks" will be almost exactly in front of the boat, and with rifle butt against arm, but with his head held high and both eyes wide open—for this quickest of snap shooting allows no time for sighting—Pedro watches almost the exact spot the sleek, pointer-like head will in a moment appear.

"Crack!" For an instant—about the space required to count rapidly "one, two, three"—the brown spot appears and vanishes before the rifle smoke has floated an inch from the muzzle.

Another quick fluke ahead, and then a slow smoothing of the ripples.

"A clean miss!"

The fact is telegraphed to the crew by the quick ejectment of the empty shell, which is the signal for the landward oars to hold water while the steersman heads sharply toward the shore. The boat stops as nearly as possible over the locality of the "break," for by this means the next shot, though at a distance of from seventy to ninety yards, will have the advantage of being a "line" one. With set face and partly raised rifle Pedro leans forward, every muscle and nerve at highest tension, and catlike watches a certain spot half way between the boat and yon clump of rocks on the shore. Long practice has already informed him of the condition of the animal, indicated by the distance covered by his first dive, and he could almost spread a blanket over the fugitive's next breathing place.

"Crack!" again; and this time a fatal flurry in the water proclaims success.

And now everything depends upon the spurting capacities of the rowers, and the boat fairly flies through the water in the direction of the "kill." Just in time! Leaning over the bow Pedro seizes the feebly fighting prize and deftly twists it into the boat. Next to killing it is most important to retrive the game at once, for the otter sinks immediately when dead. True, that in from five to eight days, even sooner in east windy weather, the animal would be washed ashore, but in such cases its fur is usually found to be abraded by the rocks or mutilated by crabs.

Again our course is south, keeping the same prescribed distance from the kelp's margin. A half mile slips by and once more the indomitable scrutiny of Pedro is rewarded. This time a close-at-hand kill with the first shot, although a few inches miscalculation by the steersman almost loses us the otter. Pedro missing his plunge, and the sinking quarry's tail being seized by the writer just in the nick of time as the boat rushes by, an achievement that raises him very measurably in the estimation of the voicelessly applauding crew.

At 6 o'clock the return trip is begun and resulted in more additions to the handsome store of pelts occupying the box behind the rifleman's seat. Eleven in all, being, as the spectral steersman, Jose, relaxes himself so far as to whisper as we approached the camp, six singles, five doubles "and a carambo," the two first expressions indicating the number of cartridges used by the shooter, and the last the correct expletive to accompany an exasperating miss.

Trains on the Brooklyn Bridge make faster time (by two miles an hour) than did the first railway train than ran between New York and Albany.