

ROANOKE BEACON.



Roanoke Publishing Co.

FOR GOD, FOR COUNTRY AND FOR TRUTH.

\$1.00 a year in advance.

VOL. VI.

PLYMOUTH, N. C., FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 1895.

NO. 40.

There are enrolled in the public schools of this country thirteen and one-half millions of pupils (13,488,572.) Of these more than one-half are boys.

There are 1,800,000 boys in the public schools of the United States under eighteen years of age, and the New Orleans Picayune believes that if the plans of Lafayette Post, G. A. R., of New York, Henry H. Adams, commander, are carried to a successful issue, every one of these boys, before the end of the year, will be skilled in military knowledge and the use of arms. "It is an idea of magnificent dimensions that the Grand Army post has conceived, and the men selected to put it into active operation are going about the Herculean task in a reasonable, business-like manner that promises speedy success. Should the project be developed into a fact it will give the United States the greatest force of citizen soldiery on earth. Almost from the time the boys of the Nation are taught the first elements of the three R's they will be given military instruction—first, in primary stages, and later on, the more advanced courses, as the student increases in age. Under this system, when the average boy leaves school he will be in better physical condition than is the case at present, by reason of the active exercise attendant upon military instruction, and in event of emergency will be ready to serve his country capably and efficiently without months of training."

The sod houses in which many of the farmers of Western Kansas brave the blizzards are admirably adapted to the purpose. It should also be said that they are the coolest of dwellings during the heated term. The manner of construction is as follows: "The farmer cuts the slabs of sod for building purposes just as sod is cut for transplanting grass. The buffalo grass indigenous to the Western Kansas country grows like a thick mat of tough herbage. The slabs of this sod, about fifteen by twenty-four inches and four inches thick, hold together with the consistency of felt. They are laid in courses like building stone, and pressed closely together, and the roof is made of timbers and frequently thatched. The inside is then smoothed with the native lime, which makes an excellent plaster. This coat of lime is sometimes applied outside also, but usually these sod houses present a natural dun color like the winter prairie. In some cases the floor is made by excavating a few feet and tramping the ground solid with horses; otherwise a regular wood floor is laid. The window and door frames are fitted as in building stone house. The sod house contains frequently only one room, but some have two and even three rooms." The sod house lasts about five years.

The New York Press prints this rhapsody: All heroes do not wear uniforms, and some of the bravest of them are too young to vote. That twelve-year-old West Virginia school-boy who was found frozen to death with his arms clasped about his ten-year-old sister was a hero of the truest sort. For he had taken his own coat off and wrapped his sister in it in the vain effort to save her life at the expense of his own. No Spartan at Thermopylae, no grizzled veteran of Napoleon's Old Guard, no man who joined in Pickett's charge at Gettysburg, or who stood unflinchingly under the Stars and Stripes against that memorable onset, ever won the title of hero more worthily than this nameless lad. His conduct had in it all the highest elements of heroism. It was not inspired by love of glory or hope of reward. It was born of instinctive chivalry and inspired by dauntless courage. To die in the blaze of battle, with nerves quivering with excitement, under the eyes of cheering comrades, is far less difficult than to perish by inches, after having deliberately sacrificed the last chance of safety in order to save another. There could be no sterner trial of heroism than this. Yet this West Virginia boy stood the test, and the Nation that has lost him has reason for pride as well as regret. He was made of the right stuff for American citizenship. While our country produces lads of this type, there can be no fear for the Republic.

SONG OF TRUCE.

Till the tread of marching feet
Through the quiet, grass-grown street
Of the little town shall come,
Soldier, rest awhile at home,
While the banners idly hang,
While the bugles do not clang,
While is hushed the clamorous drum,
Soldier, rest awhile at home,
In the breathing time of death,
While the sword is in its sheath,
While the cannon's mouth is dumb,
Soldier, rest awhile at home.
Not too long the rest shall be,
Soon enough, to death and thee,
The assembly call shall come,
Soldier, rest awhile at home.

—Robert F. Murray.

One of Cupid's Pranks.



HE was not pretty, though her features were regular, her hair bright and her eyes soft; for one shoulder was higher than the other, and she had that pitiful look about the mouth that seems to accompany the slightest deformity of the spine. But Nelson Ruthven was very fond of her. He was a cabinet maker, and lived over the shop, with his mother for housekeeper. Nannie Pitcairn had the little shop next door, and there made dresses and bonnets, and so earned her bread.

It was in the aspiring village of Doubledy, and the fashionable ladies went to the city to be fitted; but the plainer folks patronized Nannie. Mrs. Ruthven did, and it was while Nannie was making that lady's dress that Nelson found out how sweet she was. He was in love, and his mother knew it before he did.

"Poor thing! I'm sure it's a pity she isn't pretty!" she said. And Nelson answered:

"She is mother;" and then added, "at least I find her so."

And the trouble that flits through a mother's heart when her boy begins to think more of another woman than he does of her gave her a twinge of pain. However, it was in Nannie Pitcairn's favor, as far as the old lady went, that she was not pretty. "He might do worse," thought Mrs. Ruthven—"marry some one who would try to queen it over me, take my place. She'd not care. I won't hinder it." And so she told Nannie that there was always a seat in their pew in church, when she choose to come there.

A month or two went past. Nelson Ruthven, who had not all the moral courage of his great namesake, kept sinking deeper and deeper into the slough of love, but dared not say a word to Nannie. And Nannie, beginning to grow very fond of him, began to wonder at last if it might not have been better for her never to have gone to Mrs. Ruthven's house to take tea, or to have taken her place in the widow's pew, or to have done any of those things that had thrown her so much into contact with Nelson.

"For," said Nannie, looking at her poor shoulders pitilessly in the glass, "no one ever could love me; no one ever would want me to love him." Then Nannie hid her sweet face in the pillow and cried; for though she was brave, a loveless life had a black horror to her, as she looked down its lonely vista.

"Never, never!" sobbed Nannie, softly. "The love is all for pretty girls; no need of trying to be good, or of loving them. They give all they have in their hearts to bright faces and falling shoulders and taper waists. What use of hoping that yearning and loving, if one is not beautiful?"

And at that moment Nelson was writing this little note:

Nannie, dear—for you are very dear to me—have you guessed how I love you? Do you love me a little—just a little? Will you be my wife, and let me love and care for you all my life? Try to say yes, dear, or I think my heart will break. I want you so! I shall send this so that you will get it on Valentine's day. They say it is a lucky day for lovers, and I'm a little superstitious. Yours until death.

Nelson Ruthven.

Then he put it into a nice white envelope, and wrote upon it, "Miss Nannie Pitcairn," and resolved to leave it at the postoffice next day, so that the postman might take it to the girl he loved on Valentine's morning. It would have been much better for him to have gone to Nannie himself, but Cupid loves to vex his votaries,

and probably put the idea of writing into Ruthven's head.

He put it into his head also to go that night to buy some material needful in his trade, and so leave the house to his mother, who bethought her to fall downstairs and sprain her ankle before he had gone two hours.

The servant, frightened out of her senses, called out to Miss Nannie to "run in to Mrs. Ruthven," as she rushed doctor-ward. And Nannie hastened to obey. Mrs. Ruthven sat in a chair, in some pain and rather faint, but Nannie was glad to find matters no worse. She propped the hurt ankle upon a cushion, and asked what she should do; and Mrs. Ruthven answered that the camphor was on the desk in Nelson's room, and she went in quest of that restorative; and so, looking with a candle for the bottle, saw, despite herself, the name upon the envelope which Nelson had left upon his desk—"Miss Nannie Pitcairn."

The sight fluttered her amazingly. "Why should he write to me?" she asked. Then it came into her mind that the day after to-morrow was Valentine's day. "He is going to send me a valentine," she said. "I never had a valentine in all my life!" And a blush stole to her cheek, and a happy softness into her heart.

Mrs. Ruthven was in bed when Nelson came home, and Nannie had gone home, but the old lady was full of her pranks.

"Did me more good than the doctor," she said. "She's a little dear."

And but for that diabolical Cupid, Nelson would have told his mother then and there what he had written to Nannie; but his tormentor whispered, "No; if she refuses, it will be unbearable to be condoled with." So he held his peace. The next morning he went to the office with his letter, and dropped it into the box, and said to himself, "She'll read it anyhow."

But the postmaster's "Cousin Peter" was in the habit of stealing money from letters; and Nelson Ruthven's had not been in the office an hour before it had been transferred to Cousin Peter's hands, and was being peeped into by that gentleman.

He had opened three letters, one after the other, when one came unexpectedly to the door. It was the postmaster for the key. Peter cried out, "Coming. I'll attend to it!" And in his flurry dropped the three letters on the floor, and left the envelopes on the table. The postmaster departed with a trustful "All right!" He picked them up again, trembling with fright, for the carrier was waiting below.

"Mrs. Brown's letter," he said, cramming it into its envelope. "Mustn't seal that. Ah, what's this? A valentine?" It was a hideous one—a skeleton female, with a hump back, sewing on a machine. Mr. Tommy Traddles had sent it to his six-year-old sister for the righteous purpose of "making her mad."

Then he picked up an envelope. "Miss Pitcairn. That sewing girl. This is for her, of course," he said, sealing it up.

Then he crammed Nelson's love-letter into Annie Traddles's envelope, and went down to unlock his drawer. Whereupon Cupid, in high ecstasy, saw that hideous valentine wing its way.

She sat at her window watching for it. She waited eagerly. At last the carrier appeared in sight, stopped at the grocery, stopped at the Traddles', stopped at Mrs. Smith's, and then came right to her own door. "Miss Pitcairn," he shouted, and tossed the missive into her hands, and was off again.

She flew to her bedroom and sat down upon the floor, and kissed the envelope, and opened it daintily with her scissors, and swooned away.

"I want to die," said Nannie, creeping upon her bed after she came to herself. "Oh, I want to die." But death did not come to her—only a supine sort of sorrow woven in and out of her life, into her eating and sleeping—into her work and her church-going, for she went to church, though not to Mrs. Ruthven's pew. From that day she never spoke to mother or son, but fled their approach in a kind of horror; and fled the village at last, finding work in a great city.

Nelson Ruthven thought it was his way of saying "No," and tried to bear it. He did not notice how little ten-year-old Annie Traddles walked past

his shop, giving him baby-love glances. He did not notice anything. He worked and said nothing.

If even Cousin Peter had known of the trouble he had caused I hardly think his stolen money would have given him any comfort.

One day Nelson bade his mother good-bye, and started for home.

He only told her of a business prospect, but she suspected more. She looked after him tearfully.

"What could have come between that girl and Nelson?" she said.

And just then she saw little Annie Traddles running after her son.

She caught him at the depot, just as the cars were in sight, and held him by his coat tails.

"Mr. Ruthven," she said, "are you going away?"

"Yes, Annie."

Then, as he kissed her, she pouted and said:

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"I?" cried Nelson.

"Yes," said Annie, "to treat me so! After asking me to be your wife, never to come and see me! It's a shame! I'm mad!"

"Did I ask you to be my wife?" said Nelson, stooping down, for she was little even for her ten years. "Well, grow up quick, and we'll see."

"I'll have you now, and go along," said Annie. "Tom is such a tease, I've never let him see your letter, but I've got it here."

Nelson snatched it, read it, and cried: "Where did you get this?" so fiercely that Annie began to cry.

"It came by the letter-man," she said, "on Valentine's day, and I'd have answered, only I can't write yet."

"In the name of heaven, what does this mean?" said Nelson. Then he turned away from the train and Annie Traddles and walked home. Somehow Nannie had never had his letter. There was hope in that, at least. He went alone to his room, passing his wondering mother without a word, and looked himself in. The mystery was great, but he saw light beyond it. He knew that Nannie had gone to New York, and he also went thither. He searched for her vainly for a long, long while, but at last a pale face looked at him from a window and turned away, but not before he knew it.

He entered the door and climbed the stairs and rapped. Some one admitted him. He hardly dared to raise his eyes, but he felt that it was Annie, and held out his hand.

"This is quite unexpected, Mr. Ruthven," she said, but did not take his hand. Then he looked at her, and she was so pale and worn that his heart trembled.

"Oh, Nannie, how can you be so cold to me?" he said out of his heart.

"A least I am not a hypocrite," she answered.

He knew she flung the name at him, and he heard the pain in her voice.

"Nannie," he said, "I sent you a letter last Valentine's day. You never got it. I don't know what took its place, or what angered you. But here is what I wrote. It is what I have felt ever since, feel now, and always shall."

Looking at her, he saw a change come over her face. It grew soft and beautiful as she read his letter. Then, all a tremble, she went to a little box and took something from it.

"This is what I got," she said. "With your hand on the envelope, I thought you sent it." And she unfolded the comic valentine.

Then her self-command deserted her, and tears gushed forth, and, seeing his arms open and stretched toward her, she glided into them and wept. I think that he wept with her.

And so it came to pass that Widow Ruthven, looking from her door in the twilight next day, saw Nelson coming home with some one hanging upon his arm, and knew before he told her that it was Nannie Pitcairn, and that she was his wife.

As for the mystery of the valentine, that was never solved until Cousin Peter brought himself to grief by opening a marked letter and taking from it a marked note, when some faint inkling of the truth at last dawned on the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Ruthven.—New York News.

Selling Jap Type.

Henry Norman says in "Real Japan": "They are very keen journalists in the land of the chrysanthemum, but it must be allowed that the business is carried on under difficulties from which even the hardened Western newspaper man might shrink appalled. The internal organization of a newspaper office is a sad spectacle of daily struggle with difficulties unknown elsewhere and really unnecessary here."

"The Japanese written and printed character consists of the Chinese ideographs, those complicated square figures made up of an apparent jumble of zigzags and crosses and ticks and triangles and tails—the footprints of a drunken fly—and of the original Japanese syllabary, called kana. Of the former there are 20,000 in all, of which perhaps 14,000 constitute the scholars' vocabulary, and no fewer than 4000 are in common daily use; while the forty-seven simple letters of the kana are known to everybody. Therefore, the Japanese compositor has to be prepared to place in his stick any one of over 4000 different types—truly an appalling task."

"From the nature of the problem several consequences naturally follow. First, he must be a good deal of a scholar himself to recognize all these instantly and accurately; secondly, his eyesight suffers fearfully and he generally wears a huge pair of magnifying goggles; and, third, as it is physically impossible for any one man to reach 4000 types, a totally different method of case arrangement has to be devised."

"The 'typo,' therefore, of whom there are only three or four on a paper, sits at a little table at one end of a large room, with the case containing his forty-seven kana syllables before him. From end to end of the room tall cases of type are arranged like the shelves in a crowded library, a passage three feet wide being left between each two. The compositor receives his copy in large pieces, which he cuts into little takes, and hands each of these to one of half a dozen boys who assist him. The boy takes this and proceeds to walk about among the cases till he has collected each of the ideographs, or square Chinese picture words, omitting all the kana syllables which connect them. While these boys are thus running to and fro snatching up the types and jostling each other they keep up a continual chant, singing the name of the character they are looking for, as they cannot recognize it till they hear its sound, the ordinary lower class Japanese not understanding his daily paper unless he reads it aloud."

One Oyster Enough for a Meal.

Pliny mentions that according to historians of Alexander's expedition oysters a foot in diameter were found in the Indian seas, and Sir James E. Tennent was unexpectedly able to corroborate the correctness of his statement, for at Kottiar, near Trincomalee, enormous specimens of edible oysters were brought to the resthouse. One measured more than eleven inches in length by half as many in width. But this extraordinary measurement is beaten by the oysters of Port Lincoln, in South Australia, which are the largest edible oysters in the world. They are as large as a dinner plate and of much the same shape. They are sometimes more than a foot across the shell, and the oyster fits his habitation so well that he does not leave much margin. It is a new sensation when a friend asks you to lunch at Adelaide to have one oyster fried in butter or eggs and breadcrumbs set before you, but it is a very pleasant experience, for the flavor and delicacy of the Port Lincoln mammoth are proverbial even in that land of luxuries.—Philadelphia Press.

An Editor's Forethought

The force of habit which becomes so great a part of a newspaper man's life was never more fully demonstrated than when James Liddell, editor of a paper at Lyons, Iowa, wrote a truthful and complete statement of the way in which he committed suicide before the deed was done. He even went so far as to add a display heading. When the suicide was discovered, the press of the paper was stopped and the item inserted.—Fourth Estate.

A LIBRARY OF BOOKS.

A New Work Issued far Superior to and Cheaper Than The Encyclopedias.—Five Volumes of Wonderful Value.

CHARLOTTE, N. C.—After a careful examination between the Britannica, Appleton's American, and Johnson's Universal Encyclopedias and History for Ready Reference by Larned, for the purpose of purchasing one of the above for the Charlotte Library Association, History for Ready Reference was unanimously decided upon by the committee as being the preferable, both for satisfactory results and for convenience of arrangement.

(Mrs.) B. L. Dewey, Librarian.

History for Ready Reference is more valuable to me than any Encyclopedias within my knowledge. Rev. T. H. Pritchard, D. D.

"History for Ready Reference and Topical Reading," by J. N. Larned, is the title of a new work just being issued by one of our largest publishing houses.

It is the only work in the world which attempts to give the statements upon all questions of history, of the best scholars, the most brilliant writers, and the most vigorous thinkers, the world has ever seen. It is the only work ever printed which gives the full text of the constitutions of the different countries of the world; also the full text of the prominent Historical Documents such as the Magna Charter, the Grand Remonstrance, Scottish National Covenant, Habes Corpus Act, Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, Declaration of Independence and many others. It is the only work giving a brilliant and authentic account written by some authority on every Party or Faction in the world's history. It is the only work giving a clearly-defined account of every battle and military movement in our late Civil War taken from every prominent writer upon that subject, and giving full justice to the South.

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It is endorsed by every scholar who has seen it. In North Carolina Bishop Edward Rondthaler, of Salem, President G. T. Winston, Drs. Manning, Battle and Hume and Prof. E. A. Alderman and C. C. Cobb, of the University, Rev. J. W. Carter, of Raleigh, Rev. E. A. Yates, of Durham, Rev. Egbert Smith, of Greensboro, W. W. Fuller, of Durham, and many others endorse it unconditionally.

For circulars address Chas. L. Van Noppen, Buford Hotel, Charlotte, N. C.

An Ingenious Process.

Harnessing the forces of nature to one's chariot is by no means a new thing, but every now and then there is some new application of existing methods that awakens our enthusiasm and enchains our interest. It became necessary to sink a shaft in a coal mine in Belgium, but the existing difficulties seemed almost insurmountable. Directly in the way there was a very thick and heavy quicksand, and in addition a great body of water that could not be controlled by ordinary means. It was therefore decided to freeze a large bulk of the sand and water, and in this way prepare a medium through which to tunnel. This was accomplished by the use of large pipes, closed at the lower ends. These were sunk to the required depth, and were placed sufficiently close together for the purpose and in a line surrounding the space to be frozen. Inside of these, smaller pipes, open at both ends, were placed, and into them chloride of magnesium was forced. This ran through the lower end of the inner tube and rose in the space between the two tubes. Gradually the surrounding quicksand and water froze until it could be cut away like rock. The circumference of the frozen space was about eighteen feet.—New York Ledger.

A French company has bought an Idaho gold mine for \$2,361,000. But \$75,000 has been taken from the mine up to date.