

Our Young Folks.

Little Ocean Travellers.

"Come here a moment," said Inspector Eichler of Castle Garden to a New York reporter recently.

The reporter followed, and Mr. Eichler held up a little German boy about two years old.

"This is the youngest chap I have ever seen who came across alone. It is a common thing for parents to come to this country and go West, and then, after they make a little home for themselves, to send home for their children. There was a German and his wife who came over about five years ago. A friend of mine in Europe told them to find me, and I would set them right. Well, when they came here they told me they had left three little children behind with their grandparents, and wanted to know if I would look out for them on their arrival. I promised. A year later, a little fellow about five years old came up to me, gave me his name, and said his parents had told him to look out for me.

"Where are your brothers? I asked. "My father could not afford to send for us all at once, so we will come by one." "Two years and a half after the arrival of the parents the whole family were united, and it seemed strange to me to see these little fellows going alone so confidently to meet their father. The father is now mayor of one of our Western towns."

"What is the average age of the little ones who come alone?"

"Well, about six years, although we have quite a number coming here alone who are between three and four, but this little fellow"—referring to the boy he first drew the reporter's attention to—"is the youngest I have ever seen. It would be better for the children to come unaccompanied, for the sea companies are tender-hearted. When they find children on board they take them into their own cabins, and give them the best to eat and drink. A curly-headed little girl came from Sweden, and she had one of those little flutes which she used to play on board for the amusement of the passengers. There happened to be a lot of opera singers on board, and the child amused them so much that they gave a concert for her benefit the night before they arrived here, and the little girl found herself the happy possessor of one hundred and twelve dollars."

"What class of people generally allow their children to come alone?"

"The German, Irish, and English generally."

The little fellow, whom the inspector had been holding by the hand during this colloquy, now began to cry for his dinner, and the kind-hearted man started for a restaurant.

Spiders.

It is no uncommon thing to meet with instances of animal sagacity which go to show that animals are possessed of a sort of reasoning capacity which is greater than mere instinct. In a recent publication there is cited an instance of this kind. A small spider had been placed in the centre of a large spider's web some four feet above the ground. The large spider rushed from its hiding place under a leaf to attack the intruder, which ran up one of the ascending lines by which the web was secured to the foliage.

The big insect gained rapidly upon the little one; but the fugitive was equal to the emergency, for when barely an inch ahead of the other it cut with one of its hind legs the line behind itself, thus securing its own escape, the ferocious pursuer falling to the ground. The writer says: "It is not the habit of spiders to cut the slender thread below them when they are ascending to avoid threatened danger. As a rule spiders do not run from danger unless there is a hole close at hand—and a hole that is known to be unoccupied." From which it would seem that this little creature's action was the result of some kind of reasoning. Instinct led it to run away, but it must have been something more than instinct that led it to sever the line and cut off pursuit. The same writer says that spiders are cannibals, and that they are naturally pugnacious; but they do not fight for the satisfaction of eating one another. If two spiders fight there is generally good reason for the attack and for the vigorous defense that follows.

"It is not generally known that after a

certain time spiders become incapable of spinning a web from lack of material. The glutinous excretion the slender threads are spun from is not inexhaustible, therefore spiders cannot keep on constructing new snares when the old ones are destroyed. But they can avail themselves of the web-producing powers of their younger neighbors, and this they do without scruple. When a spider's web-constructing material has become exhausted and its last web has been destroyed, it sets out in search of another home; and unless it should chance to find one that is tenanted, a battle usually ensues which ends only with the retreat or death of the invader or defender."

History of the Alphabet.

How many of the millions that daily use the alphabet ever stop to think of its origin and long history? Isaac Taylor has recently written and published, in London, two stout volumes under the title "The Alphabet, an Account of the Origin and Development of Letters." By careful study of the learned essays and scientific investigations of the latest philologists, Taylor has set forth in language within easy comprehension the origin of the alphabet, showing that our own "Roman" letters may be followed back to their very beginning, some twenty or more centuries ago, as he asserts. We have no better letters, according to the account, than those of the fifteenth century. These were imitated from the beautiful manuscripts of the tenth and eleventh centuries, the lettering of these being derived from the Roman of the Augustan age. The Roman letters, in turn, are traced to those employed at Rome in the third century B. C., and these do not differ greatly from forms used in the earliest existing specimens of Latin writing, dating from the fifth century B. C. This primitive alphabet of Rome was derived from a local form of the Greek alphabet, in use about the sixth century B. C., and that was a variety of the earliest Greek alphabet belonging to the eighth, or even the ninth century B. C. The Greeks got their letters from the Phoenicians, and these are clearly traceable in the most ancient-known form of the Semitic. The most ancient of books, a papyrus found at Thebes, and now preserved in the French National Library, supplies the earliest forms of the letters used in the Semitic alphabet. The Stone Tables of the Law could have been possible to the Jews only because of their possession of an alphabet, and thus the Bible and modern philological science unite in ascribing a common origin to the alphabet which is in daily use throughout the world. The nineteenth century B. C. is held by Taylor to be the approximate date of the origin of alphabetic writing, and from that time it grew by slow degrees, while from Egypt, the home of the Jews during their long captivity, the knowledge of the alphabet was carried in all directions where alphabets are now found. The Aryans are thought to have been the first to bring the primitive alphabet to perfection, and each letter and each sound may be traced, by Taylor's careful analysis, through all the changes that have marked the growth, progress, and, in some instances, the decay of different letters of various alphabets. It is an interesting fact that the oldest known "A B C" in existence is a child's alphabet, scratched on a little ink bottle of black ware, found in one of the oldest Greek settlements in Italy, attributed to the fifth century B. C. From the common mother of many alphabets, the Phœnician, are descended the Greek and other European systems on the one side, including that which we use and have the greatest interest in; and on the other, the alphabets of Asia, from which have sprung those of the East, Syriac, Arabic, and Hebrew.—*Philadelphia Ledger*.

President Arthur is fifty four years old weighs two hundred and thirty pounds, and is six feet tall.

The Rev. Dr. John Hall, of New York, is said to receive \$20,000 a year salary, besides a house rent free and \$5,000 for a weekly article from Robert Bonner.

A gentleman who observed Johnnie carefully taking the census of a company assembled in the parlor awaiting a call to supper inquired: "What is the matter Johnnie?" "Why," returned the urchin, with a troubled air, "here's nire of us, counting me, and mamma has gone and cut the two pies into quarters, and that only makes eight pieces."

Escaped from El Obeid.

An eye-witness of the defeat of Hicks Pasha who has escaped from El Obeid gives the following account of the great disaster, the most complete hitherto obtained: "On leaving Duem for Obeid we came across the rebels, and had several skirmishes with them. Our losses were confined to a few Bashi-Bazouks and Soudanese irregulars. On arriving at Rahad, where we found a lake, we took a supply of water, and afterward marched on to Alouba. There we spent the night. We had met numerous detachments of rebels on the road, but we easily put them to flight. The next day we continued our march, taking with us the necessary quantity of water. We took three hours to cross the forest. We were subsequently surprised by a strong force of the enemy, our advance was checked, and the square was formed. We fought the whole day long, and finally compelled the rebels to retreat. We spent the night on the scene of action.

"The following day we set out again. Our supply of water was soon exhausted. The enemy surrounded us in large numbers, and after several engagements, with heavy losses on both sides, the rebels were defeated, and we again remained the night on the scene of the day's fighting.

"On the following day the army marched on Kashgil, and, after we had been four hours on the road, the enemy attacked us with a terrible fusillade. We suffered badly from thirst, but nevertheless kept our ground the whole day. Next day, the fighting having ceased, we advanced toward the wells. About half an hour after we had started, the rebels, who were hidden in the forest, surrounded the army on all sides and opened fire. We made a lively reply, but toward midday the rebels made a general charge, and the Egyptian army was annihilated, with the exception of two hundred Egyptian soldiers and a few negro servants, who were only wounded. Abd-el-Rhaman, a merchant of Khartoum, was recognized by his relatives who saved him. He was wounded in the eye. He is now at Obeid, where he is known as Sheik Abd-el-Rhaman. He has been appointed chief of a detachment. I was picked up wounded and sent to Birkeh. There I found the mehdi and remained a fortnight. The mehdi then left for Obeid, with all his followers. They took me with them, and I stayed at Obeid until I found means of escaping with several merchants. I came at once to Khartoum. The prisoners at Obeid enjoy certain freedom, but may not leave the town. They would be shot if they tried to get away. The merchants I came with remained at Khatine."

The same individual stated, in the course of conversation, that the mehdi had sent an expedition to Darfur. He met on his way a number of Bedonias marching with their banners on Kordofan. He says the mehdi has numerous Bedonin followers, belonging to all the different tribes.

The Vanity of Pedigrees.

I have seldom read anything more utterly silly than the letters which have recently appeared in several journals, in which it is announced, as "a great fact," that this and that distinguished person can claim a royal descent. The merest tyro in genealogical knowledge that there is no sort of special credit in a descent "from the Plantagenets." You have only to bring your candidate into a tolerable "strain" of blood and you are perfectly certain to carry him up to Edward I., Edward III., or Henry III., who are the great fountains of honor. The "descendants of the Plantagenets" are numbered by hundreds of thousands, and people who pretend that such a pedigree is something to be proud of are either quacks or idiots. A late sexton at a fashionable West end church traced his descent to Edward III., while a small butcher in a country town could show a pedigree from Edward of Woodstock, son of Edward I.; and a well-keeper in the same neighborhood traced from Thomas, duke of Gloucester. The last of the great Northumberland family of the Umfravilles, of Prudhoe kept a small chandler's shop at Newcastle, and the lineal descendant of the O'Neills, kings of Ireland, was a coffin-maker in Dublin.

There is quite a craze just now for fantastical peculiarities of this description. People who pretend to marvellous pedigrees should remember the story of the French duke of Levis, who used to show an old painting

which represented one of his ancestors, a prince of Judah, bowing to the Virgin Mary, who says: "Convrez-vous, mon cousin." The family of Croix possessed a not less absurd picture, which showed Noah entering the ark, and exclaiming, "Sauvez les papiers de la maison de Croix!"

NOT PARTED BY DEATH

A Scene at the Wreck of the "Colombus."

Among the confused mass who were struggling and screaming were noticed a middle-aged man and his wife. Their conduct was in marked contrast with that of the other passengers. The panic which had seized the others was not shared by them, but their blanched faces told that they realized the peril which surrounded them. The only movement of muscles or nerves was that produced by the chilling atmosphere. They stood close together, their hands clasped in each other, as if about to commit suicide together, and thus fulfil the marital vow of standing by each other in the varying tide of life's fortunes and misfortunes. As the wreck careened with the gale from one side to the other, and while the spray and waves were drenching them at every moment, the husband turned and imprinted a kiss upon the companion of his life, and while thus embraced a heavy sea broke over the wreck and both were washed away and not seen afterward. Mr. Cook says the scene was one which will remain indelibly impressed upon his memory until his dying day.

The Editor's Trousers.

An editor in Chicago recently ordered a pair of trousers from the tailor. On trying them on they proved to be several inches too long. It being late on Saturday night, the tailor's shop was closed, and the editor took the trousers to his wife and asked her to cut them off and hem them over. The good lady, whose dinner had, perhaps, disagreed with her, brusquely refused. The same result followed an application to the wife's sister and the eldest daughter. But before bedtime the wife, relenting, took the pants and, cutting off six inches from the legs, hemmed them up nicely and restored them to the closet. Half an hour later her daughter, taken with compunction for the unfilial conduct, took the trousers and, cutting off six inches, hemmed and replaced them. Finally, the sister-in-law felt the pangs of conscience, and she too performed an additional surgical operation on the garment. When the editor appeared at breakfast on Sunday the family thought a Highland chieftain had arrived.—*The Century*.

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