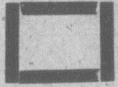


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HUMOR IN THE SCHOOLROOM.

The fund for ingenuousness and humor locked up within the four walls of an ordinary day school is, says Mr. H. J. Barker, H. M. Inspector of Schools, in Chambers' Journal for August, practically inexhaustible. The schoolroom walls, indeed, remain the same; but the generations of children—like a stream speeding betwixt its banks—are ever shifting and changing and disappearing, and each juvenile generation affords its sure quota of amusement. Thus, it is no great task for me to cull a number of interesting specimens—both oral and script—from my examination notebook: Questions in geography, based upon "boring a hole through the middle of the earth," are very favorite ones with examiners in testing the earth-knowledge of the lower classes of a school. Such questions are put with the special object of eliciting whether the children have exact and abiding notions of the size and shape of the earth. A certain examiner put the favorite question in this form: "If I made a hole right through the centre of the earth where should I come out?" And one little lad, whose wit was readier than his geographical knowledge, and who was quite above such commonplace answers as "Australia" or "the Antipodes," promptly replied, "Out at the 'hole, mester!"

The following literary selection is from a scholar's exercise on "Governments." With the exception of the introductory paragraph, which is of an ordinary character, I give the lad's complete effusion:—"It is not proper to think that the Governments of all countries are alike. It may surprise your fathers and mothers to learn that we read in our books that there are many kinds of Governments. Five or six I can count. In Persia the people call the Shah a despot. And your fathers and mothers will say that he deserves it. Why, if a man does anything wrong as not to please him, the Despot has only to say, "Cut his head off." And the police does it. Or if the Despot asks a woman to be one of his wives and she says, "I will not marry you," he only says "Cut her head off." And the police does it. But when this man who thinks as he is a king, comes to England, he cant do it. My mother remembers him once coming, and she says he had to behave himself, whether he liked it or not. "In France they have not now a king. Only a man as they chose for a Government, called a President. In our reading-books it tells you a lot about this country, only I can never think of it. Wives plough in the fields, it says, and the poor boys and girls have not got no English home. The men are too fond of Governments, and they have had more of them than any other country nearly. Napoleon was one, but there was lots of others. The city of Paris looks the finest place you ever see. There is a river runs straight up the middle, and lots of bridges drawn right across, and places sticking up, and bits of people walking up the side of the water. The Government this year is Prezident. These Prezidents have got queer names, but they are not kings nor Despots. Our country has a Queen who cant do anything but what she ought to. She has been at the Government for nearly fifty years, and still she looks nice. Also Georges I., II., III., and IV., but there was VII. Henrys. There is also houses called the Houses of Parliament. One of these is full of Lords, called the House of Lords, but the other is only built for them gentlemen as perhaps you have seen some of them, and it is called the House of Commons. No gentleman can get in there unless they know as he can make laws. But the Queen has to look them over, and see as they are made right. These Commons are called Conservatives and Liberals, and they try and hinder one another as much as they can. They sometimes have sides, and then you see it on the placards, and you can hear men and your fathers a talking and quarrelling about it. Our country is governed a lot better than France, and Germany comes about next. Then there's a lot of others, and then comes Persia. Our country always comes first, whoever you like to ask."

Another essay has for its title "The Irish," the writer of which was a lad attending a school in one of the poorest districts of Lambeth. It is given verbatim as follows:

"The Irish are so called because they live in the island called Ireland. It is a beautiful country, which is chiefly noted for three principal classes of things, which is namely, its great greenness, its big bogness and its little shamrocks. It says in our lessons as green is the favorite color with all the Irish great and small classes. Shamrock is nothing but a little bit of green clover. But the Irish love it. They cant manufacture things in Ireland same as we can, from a traction engine to a sowing needle. But still the Irish manufacture the following classes of things very exceedingly, namely, Linin, bacon, shop eggs and whisky. The Irish are nearly as fond of bacon as they are of potatoes; and as for that there whisky, the Irish love it. The hearts of the Irish, the book says, are all very warm. If you was walking out in the country and you met a poor man, you could easy tell whether he was an Irishman; for if he was an Irishman he would perhaps be in a pashion and have a pig with him. There is one Irishman as nearly everybody nose on, which is Mr. Parnell. I have seen his picture in a many different papers, and it is always the same. He has a nice minister's face, and his eyes look straight out at you. I do like to see his face. Mr. Parnell does not dress same as the other Irish, and his eyes seem to draw you to him. He doesnt look as fat as he would like. Them Irish as is poor and lives about here have a queer way of speaking, like as if they had a side-tooth out and the wind was blowing through it. They seem to have a lot of wind inside of them. These poor men's faces have a lot of wrinkles on them, and they look funny at you like what gypsies do. The Irish women have even got warmer hearts than the men, for they will actually sometimes pull their husbands' checks in the street. But the Irish are one of the two finest classes of men in the world. The English are a big fatter; but the Irish can run about and fight the best. The Irish have produced nearly all our great soldiers, because father told a man in our house that when he once took mother to the Music Hall, there was an Irishman a-kicking up his heels all by himself on the stage, and singing a song which said, What was Wellington? why, an Irishman; what was General More? an Irishman; what was Sir Garnit Woolsey? an Irishman. And father said that he showed the people that everybody as had ever done anything worth mensioning was Irishmen. Father said he left out Nelson, because he knew the people woodn't stand it. Then I said to father that if the man had have said as Nelson was an Irishman, that the people

ought to have called out as Mr. Parnell was an Englishman. Then my father laughed, and told me the man he was telling, as I was a fair coshen."

The following essay on "Winter" is an effort by a boy who was eleven years of age at the time of examination. He is one, alas! of too many. He came from a miserably poor home, for his father was dead and his mother had to support a small family of three by the labor of her own hands. The composition gives a touching insight into the home life and the hardships which the very poor have to undergo in their daily struggle for uncertain bread:—"Winter is the 4th season of the year, and therefore it is the coldest. It is so cold that we have fine red fires in the schoolrooms, big enough to boil a sheep on them. You never see such fires not even in the church. They are fires, them are, and no mistake. Whenever I see the schoolkeeper come in with that big scuttle of his, and tiddle the coals on, I always think how pleased my mother would be only to have one of them lumps. Why, there's more coals in that one scuttle than there ever is in all our coal bin at home. I do wish that my mother was the School Board so as she could make good fires for her and me and my two little sisters. I never cry with the cold, not me, but our little Hannah does. But then I get so regular warm at school, that it seems to stick to me for ever so long. In the winter you have to pick up the bits of coals from the middle of the road after the carts have gone by. This is not stealing, because the coal man would never pick them up himself. When there is snow upon the ground the carts bump a good deal and jog more coals out, and besides you see the pieces plainer lying on the ground. Our Hannah has been very ill this winter. Whenever she coughs extra loud, I see the tears come to my mother's eyes. I see her look at Hannah, and then she always wipes her eyes and nose with her apron. I wish as my mother was the School Board. You seem to get thinner in winter, and your boots seem to get thinner, and you always feel a lot hungrier. Dont I like that toast and drippin which I have with mother when she gets home from her washing. She toasts three or four slices at the laundry fire where she works, and so shes only got to warm it a bit afore we eat it. But I shouldnt mind winter very much if it wernt for the chilblanes. Sometimes your toes feel as if theyre tickling one another, and sometimes as if theyre skorching one another. I feel regular mad with them sometimes. When shall I have some nice thick hard boots again same as what that gentleman give me at school a long time since. He has been to school once or twice since, looking at our feet under the desk, but every time he came my boots happened not to have no holes in, so he past me by. Perhaps he will come again afore long.

Smoke the Union Cigar Pic-nic 5c.

THE LIFE OF A LONDON SHOP GIRL.

The life of the girl who stands behind the counter of a fifth-rate shop selling ribbons, writes "Miss Mantalini," is a ceaseless grind. The work is niggling and trying in the extreme, but the perpetual standing is worse. It takes years to learn how to stand. Anybody fresh to the business will be utterly bowed down with fatigue at the end of a day's experience. Garroulds, of Edgware road, are the only people I know of who provide seats for their assistants. The Early Closing Association's efforts in this direction do not seem to have resulted in much. Most of these girls who work at fifth-rate shops are ill-fed as well as ill-paid. During the selling off season they have to work twelve hours a day. An interval of twenty minutes is allowed for dinner, and another of the same length for tea. Wretched food is put on the table—tough meat and watery potatoes. This, with a chunk of bread, is what they call dinner. The tea is always well boiled, so that all the goodness is got out of it. This, with more chunks of bread and plenty of margarine, is put on the table at five. The buyers eat their scrumptious morsels in another room. The show-room hands have a trifle better time of it than the girls behind the counter. They can steal a few minutes' rest in the day while the show-walker's back is turned. It is strictly against the rules to sit down at most places. I asked a show-room hand what became of the girls eventually; whether those who failed to get on remained in service all their lives. She said, "Most of them marry."

At some of the first-rate houses of the West-end the assistants are treated well. But here vacancies are at a premium. A girl can only get a situation in a good house through having a friend at court. "You can go and interview any lady you like here," said a Sloane street draper to me recently. "I always dine with my assistants, and whatever I have they have. There is half-an-hour for dinner, with ten minutes afterwards, and the same period for tea. At six o'clock we close. Sometimes it's later. The assistants are always at liberty to sit down when they are not engaged with customers." I had a chat with one of the show-room women at this place, and she told me that they were treated almost as visitors by their employer. The shopkeepers of London differ widely in their notions of how their assistants ought to be treated. Some of them get up balls and concerts for their amusement occasionally.

Smoke the Union Cigar Sokmer 10c

REMARKABLE END OF A TRIAL.

A charge of attempted murder and attempted suicide at the Old Bailey the other day had a singular termination. The prosecutrix, a young woman named Mary Ann Capper, made the acquaintance of the accused, William Stock, aged twenty-two, seven or eight years ago; and some months ago, when she, her sister, brother and father were compelled to go to the workhouse by destitution, the prisoner, who was only earning £1 per week, and was allowing his mother 10s of it, took them out of the Union and supported them out of the remaining 10s. On the 21st May the girl left to go to her married brother's, and the prisoner meeting her two days afterwards, begged her to return, stating he would put up the banns next day. She refused, whereupon he cut her throat and his own with a razor. The girl, in cross-examination, said she would marry the accused if he was released. The jury recommended the prisoner to mercy, and Justice Grantham said he would only sentence him to one week's imprisonment, the result being that he would be at once discharged. He had hardly ever heard of such devotion as the prisoner had shown, and the Aldermen and Sheriffs and himself believed that the girl herself would recompense him for his devotion to her. He would hand her a sum of £10 to assist in providing a home for them both.

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