

Late Old Country News

ENGLAND

ARMY OF PUPILS IN COMPETITION

Twenty-three Thousand London Scholars After Scholarships.

Twenty-three thousand London children took part on a recent Saturday in the competition for 1,700 junior county scholarships.

To avoid paying \$500 additional license duty imposed under the finance act, a Dover music hall has closed its public bars.

The Duke of Norfolk unveiled a statue of the eighth Duke of Devonshire on the Veteran Lawn, Grand Parade, Eastbourne.

Mr. Richard Lloyd George, son of the chancellor of the exchequer, has joined the Dorset troop of the Royal East Kent Yeomanry.

Tyne and Blyth coal and coke shipments last week showed an increase of 20,000 tons compared with the corresponding period of last year.

The Rev. Oswald Barker, a native of Hanley, has succumbed to fever on the west coast of Africa, where he was a Roman Catholic missionary.

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was sold for \$45,850, has been acquired by the Great North of Scotland Railway Company. The company owns the Palace Hotel, which is the only hotel in touch with the railway system there.

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GREAT WORKS OF GENIUS

(Continued From Page Thirteen.)

will question, though M. Bourget and Balzac are among these few, finding the literary world a most dangerous place. But those who give to early manhood a monopoly of great achievement are probably looking most to the two dazzling fields of military prowess and of creative genius in poetry and art.

It is true that extraordinary feats of generalship have been accomplished by youths of magnificent confidence and speed of execution, like Alexander and Charlemagne. But even in war the most masterly work has usually been done in years of maturity. There is, perhaps, evidence of failure in physical and mental energy, when, at 48, Napoleon met the disaster of Waterloo. But Caesar was 42 at the beginning of his Gallic wars, and 51 when he crossed the Rubicon. Von Moltke was an old man in the Franco-German war. As war becomes more of a science and less of an instinctive art, youthful generalship may be expected continually to count for less in the history of the world.

In other branches of imaginative literature, that youth has won its most signal victories. But, even there, the old genius has contributed but little to the works of supreme worth. Among our own writings, Keats' "Endymion" at 23, Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" at 25, Milton's "Paradise Lost" at 38, and possibly at 24, and the first two cantos of Byron's "Childe Harold," at the same age, stand as high-water marks. Shelley's "Queen Mab," Shelley's "The Rivals," Ruskin's first volume of "Modern Painters," Morris' "Defence of Guenevere" rank also as notable products of early youth. But, upon the whole, little has happened since the day when Macaulay's declaration that "No great work of imagination has ever been produced under the age of 30 or 35 years, and the instances are few in which it has been produced under the age of 40."

Though it may be true that the full tide of creative imagination flows in youth and early manhood, the works of great works of creative genius has belonged more to the maturity of the forties. "Paradise Lost" was written between the years of 42 and 50; "The Canterbury Tales" between 45 and 50; "The Tempest" was probably written at the beginning of Shakespeare's fifth decade. Cowper was 50 when he published his "Task," and Keats' "Endymion" was the fruit of the same age of life. It, quitting poetry, we turn to prose masterpieces, even in the literature of power, the case is still clearer. Few of the greatest novels were written before the age of 40. Scott was 43 when he published "Waverley," Fielding 42 when "Tom Jones" appeared, while the incomparable "Clarissa" was written between the ages of 54 and 60. Though Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot had made their mark a little under 40, by far the greater volume of their best work came later on in life. Meredith was exceptional in the precocity of his attainment, though not of his fame, producing in early manhood an unusual proportion of his most enduring work. Turning to the general body of prose literature, we note that, still in the imaginative realm, many of the greatest works are delayed until the prime of life has gone. The first part of "Don Quixote" was given at 58, "Pilgrim's Progress" at 50, "Robinson Crusoe" at 58, "Gulliver" at 59. Most works of great merit in reflective literature and philosophy came late in life. Kant's "Critique," Leibnitz's "Essai" at 64, Locke's "Essay" at 58, Montesquieu's "Esprit des Loix" at 59, Burke's "Reflections" at 67, Grote's "History" was completed at the same age, Johnson's "Lives of the Poets" between 68 and 72. A few works of great importance appeared at earlier ages. Newton's "Principia" at 45, at 48, 49, Descartes' "Meditations" at 45, "The Wealth of Nations," at 43, Bacon's "Advancement of Learning" at 44, though the "Novum Organum" was the fruit of the late thirties. But it is unnecessary to add, indeed impossible to pursue our argument further per enumeration of simple facts. Enough facts have at least been given to show that the most substantial fruits of intellectual achievement are, as ought to be expected, of slower growth and are reaped after the prime of life has passed.

If, however, leaving the middle period of intellectual vigor we advance a little further down the slope, great achievement in any field of endeavor becomes extremely rare. The reputed wisdom of old age lives almost wholly in the realm of reflection, rather than in the realm of action. Where authority gives great influence, as in the art of statecraft, important measures have sometimes been executed by old men. But even so, they have hardly ever been conceived in old age. Indeed, as one follows more closely the roll of great human achievement, some of the most important arise as to the wisdom of old age. The implications of the amorphous, "Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait." ("If youth could know, if age could do"), assuredly need not be taken too literally, but, as Stevenson pointed out, by chance the typical defect of youth is not that it does not know, but that it does not choose. For old age, as we have seen, has its own illusions, which rob experience of much of its fruitfulness. The chief of these illusions is a denial of certain fundamental facts of nature, a refusal to admit old age. Open-eyed reflection should convince us all that nature has its appointed tasks and enjoyments for the different epochs of our life, which is a waste and folly to confuse. Yet, as years advance, most of us fall into the pathetic conspiracy of ageing persons against old age. We have scientific men to exorcise him with lactic acid, and the thousands of grey-headed, we seek to win a second childhood by knocking a white ball about with sticks. With desperate tenacity we cling to each interest and occupation of our prime, rejecting the erstwhile peacefulness and dignity of age that we may still live as boys among our sons and grandsons, warming our hearts and sharpening our wits on the vigor of the younger generation.

If in former days the barriers and the status of child and parent, youth and age, were too formal and too rigid, precluding ease of intercourse, and human sympathy, we surely tend nowadays to the falsehood of the other extreme.