

NORTH SHORE NEWS-LETTER

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WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT PAPER?

There seems to be some mistake as to what should be the attitude of an independent paper in regard to election matters arising out of the recent Highland Park election. Certain people whom we have been pleased to regard as friends have criticised us and some have spoken in contemptuous terms about the "independence" of the News Letter because we stated our reasons for advocating the election of Mr. Everett as Mayor.

But, from certain remarks made by the same persons, we gather that no such criticism would have come from that source had we declared for Mr. Dooley.

Now if independent journalism means that we are never to pronounce an opinion on important issues, or that we must never name a preference for any one of two or more candidates, or that we must always find out which is the winning ticket before we endorse it,—then we are not independent.

But, if to be independent means that we are to give a fair place to all parties, and yet to take an active, intelligent, interest in what to us seems best for the citizens as a whole, then we are independent.

We ask no favors of any party as such, we give a fair and equal place to them all, but in discussing through our editorial columns the issues of a campaign, we should prove ourselves the reverse of independent if we did not squarely and openly advocate what seems best when there is an important issue on.

The Highland Park election is over, Mr. Dooley has a majority of votes cast. Now let us stand up and be counted to give him a solid support in all things that look towards good government and progressive citizenship. But do not let any one imagine that the News Letter will be silent when great issues are at stake. That would not be independence but spinelessness and we think all good citizens desire a paper with a backbone.

MARK TWAIN'S FLING AT SHAKESPEARE.

Mr. Clemens, who is better known as "Mark Twain", has assumed the role of a wrestler against Shakespeare. He has written a book bearing the title "Is Shakespeare Dead?" and while he answers "No!" to the query, he takes a fling at those who do not accept the Baconian theory of the Shakespeare plays. He gives the following very homely or crude parable to show, by inference, that Shakespeare could not have written the plays and that Bacon was the one man who could have done so.

Here is the story:—

The Cat, the Kitten and the Mouse.

"We will suppose a case: Take a lap-bred, house-fed, uneducated, inexperienced kitten; take a rugged old Tom that's scarred from stem to rudder-post with the memorials of strenuous experience, and is so cultured, so educated, so limitlessly erudite that one may say of

him 'all cat knowledge is his province'; also, take a mouse. Lock the three up in a holeless, crackless, exitless prison-cell. Wait half an hour, then open the cell, introduce a Shakespeare and a Baconian, and let them cipher and assume. The mouse is missing; the question to be decided is, where is it? You can guess both verdicts beforehand. One verdict will say the kitten contains the mouse; the other will as certainly say the mouse is in the tomat.

The Shakespeare will reason like this: He will say the kitten may have been attending school when nobody was noticing; therefore we are warranted in assuming that it did so; also, it could have been training in a court-clerk's office when no one was noticing; since that could have happened, we are justified in assuming that it did happen; it could have studied catology in a garret when no one was noticing—therefore it did; it could have attended cat assizes on a shed-roof nights, for recreation, when no one was noticing, and harvested a knowledge of cat-forms and cat lawyer-talk in that way; it could have done it, therefore without a doubt it did; it could have gone soldiering with a war-tribe when no one was noticing, and learned soldier-wiles and soldier-ways, and what to do with a mouse when opportunity offers; the plain inference therefore is, that that is what it did. Since all these manifold things could have occurred we have every right to believe they did occur. These patiently and painstakingly accumulated vast acquirements and competences needed but one thing more—opportunity—to convert themselves into triumphant action. The opportunity came, we have the result; beyond shadow of question the mouse is in the kitten."

"We know what the Baconian's verdict would be: 'There is not a rag of evidence that the kitten has had any training, any education, any experience qualifying it for the present occasion, or is indeed equipped for any achievement above lifting such unclaimed milk as comes its way; but there is abundant evidence—unassailable proof, in fact—that the other animal is equipped, to the last detail, with every qualification necessary for the event. Without shadow of doubt the tomat contains the mouse.'"

We are left to assume that Bacon is the "Tom Cat" and that Shakespeare is the "lap bred, house-fed, uneducated, inexperienced Kitten" and that it is utterly silly to suppose that the latter would get the mouse while the former was present. But there is absolutely nothing new in this very weak and one-sided illustration. As a contribution to the exploded Baconian theory it would never have been quoted by the press but for the reputation of its author. There is an "unearned increment" attached to the writings of any person who, for any reason, has achieved fame, no matter how stupid or weak some of those writings may be.

This Tom-Cat-and-Kitten parable assumes that human genius is always, necessarily, attended with intellectual training, education and experience. It leaves no room in the world for those bright luminaries which have shined with unconscious splendor.

Suppose the parable were applied to Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott. Burns could not have written the "Cotters' Saturday night" because Scott was the great intellectual poet of the age, while Burns was a "house-fed, uneducated, inexperienced Kitten."

Only Scott could have written:—"But mouse, thou art no thy lane, In proving foresight may be vain; The best laid scheme o' mice and men, Gang aft agley, And leave us nought but grief and pain For promis'd joy."

Mark Twain has written some deservedly popular works. Some day it may be claimed that the author of "Innocents Abroad" could not have written the Life of Joan of Arc.

But suppose some one starts the theory that Joan was pure fiction. Mark Twain's parable of the "lap-bred, house-fed uneducated, inexperienced Kitten" would apply to her in a greater degree than to any other prominent character in all history. Robert de Bandricourt may have been the old Tom with memorials of strenuous ex-

perience and he only could catch the English mouse that invaded France.

The weakness of such logic is that it takes no account of human genius. No Shakespeare and no Bacon would ever look into a contracted cell for mouse or lion.

The plays of Shakespeare could not have been caught in a "holeless, crackless, exitless prison cell." They were caught in the universal world, open alike to all. To catch them they needed, not so much learning and training, as the insight and vision of the Seer, the spirit and faith of the prophet.

"Blind Tom" might have been the "Kitten" of Mark Twain's parable,—without knowledge or scholarship. He was an idiot, but he caught the mouse which great musicians would have given years to catch.

We have had "Mark Twain's" humor which, like Shakespeare's works, is often unscholarly; but it is the product of genius, begotten not of classic knowledge or university degrees but of the skill and power which often "buildd better than he knew."

W. BURGESS.

Class Tree Planting at the Northwestern Military Academy.

ADDRESS BY COL. H. P. DAVIDSON.

Gentlemen: A year ago on the occasion of your class tree planting I spoke briefly of the great waste of our national forests and the rapid rate at which our entire lumber resources were being exhausted. I spoke of the great annual increase in the cost of lumber and the inevitable lumber famine that must overtake us within the life of the generation now coming on the stage unless radical measures are taken both to stay the reckless waste and to reforest the denuded areas.

Today I wish to call your attention to another alarming disaster swiftly approaching as a result of the rapidly disappearing forests. This is hardly the occasion, and certainly we have not the time to go into a scientific explanation how or why certain important climatic changes have taken place as the result of deforestation.

The warmer air is, the more moisture it will hold in suspension. Assume a volume of quite warm air saturated with moisture. If this air cools, its power to hold moisture in suspension decreases faster than its temperature decreases. As the result it follows that if two volumes of air of different temperature, come together, each saturated with moisture the combined volume cannot hold in suspension all its humidity. The excess must fall as rain. This was the theory of my student days. It has since been modified, but is still largely true and will in a simple way illustrate my point.

Cutting off large areas of timber, especially on hill sides and mountain slopes, removes a great check to the velocity of winds, especially near the surface where is usually most humidity. It follows then as night follows day, that instead of the slow steady drizzling rains of years ago, we are bound to have much more violent falls of water.

Secondly—When the forests are cleared away, the roots, rootlets and all the mass of little root fibers which hold the atoms of soil together, disappear. The annual mantle of leaves which gives an additional protection from the beating and disintegrating force of the rain is no longer furnished. You can readily see then how the soil is continually traveling down in every little gulf and larger channel into the rivulets, thence into the rivers and on to the ocean or to some other large body of water. Nor is this all, for not infrequently this flow down hillside becomes so impetuous that not only the soil but gravel, small stones and even boulders are carried down to the rich meadow lands below, causing a double ruin. I recall an instance where a neighbor in New England had a very valuable meadow of rich soil. He also had some sloping land for pasture. A heavy rain storm not only ruined his hill side, lands but buried his meadows from two to

three feet deep, thus spoiling both hillside and meadow.

But not to make my talk too long, let me briefly give you two or three marked illustrations of this wide spread devastation in the world's history.

Large areas in the northern part of China are today no better than barren wastes. The mountain sides from base to summit have been swept as bare of forests as a street pavement. Wood has become so scarce that in large tracts its use is limited to material for coffins and even for that purpose is often borne on human backs down rugged slopes and defiles by journeymen, sometimes of ten or twelve days. Faggots for fuel are a luxury of the rich, while the poorer class dig up roots from remote mountains and rake stubble from the harvested fields to use as fuel. Their efforts to eke out a scanty living by cultivating the soil is pitiable.

But there is evidence that the time was when these hill and mountain slopes were covered over with forests and bountiful crops. Certain it is that China, centuries ago, must have been a powerful and flourishing nation.

Dalmatia, the southern province of Austria, sandwiched in between the Adriatic Sea on the west and Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Montenegro on the north and east, was once a fertile and prosperous country, indeed one of the richest of the Roman provinces, and in the days of Diocletian, who had an immense palace there, it supported a large population. When it fell into the hands of the Venetian Republic, its mountain slopes were soon bared of their fine forests, the soil washed away, the springs and rivers dried up, and large tracts became a desolate waste. Then the climate began to change. A fierce wind, called the bora, began to blow, so fierce indeed that it is said sometimes to overturn railway trains. The result is that reforestation is practically impossible. And now, where once were rich farms, a recent traveller says, the miserable peasants often form mounds of rocks and stones, gather a little soil and plant an alive tree or a grape vine.

But let me not give you a false impression. Forest or no forest, there will always be some soil on sloping lands, washing to lower levels. But this waste goes on at a much more rapid rate when not held in check by tracts of timber land. Let me give you some idea of the present rapidity with which our land is being impoverished through this steady washing of the soil into the sea. Mr. W. J. McGee of the United States Bureau of Soils, estimated a year ago, that our waterways annually sweep into the sea a body of soil one mile square and one thousand feet deep. Applied like Nile mud, one-quarter inch deep, it would cover all the area of the states bordering on the Atlantic Ocean and including Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania and one-third of Georgia. You all know what a delta is and how formed. That at the mouth of our own Mississippi, if I remember correctly, already extends into the Gulf of Mexico, about 150 miles and is building out about 260 feet annually. The delta of the Nile is about 200 miles wide and extends into the sea about 150 miles; this is all soil brought down from the Nile valley. The delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra covers an area of about 50,000 square miles, and in some places the alluvial deposit has been found about 500 feet deep. Is it surprising that we hear every few years of terrible famines in India.

"Westward the course of empire takes its way." So said Bishop Berkeley. But in the lights of our rapidly wasting and wasted natural resources, may we not more appropriately exclaim: Westward the besom of destruction sweeps its course. I am no pessimist, but as an educator, I can not, I must not lie "supinely on my back hugging the delusive phantom of hope" while the ax and the fire brand are sweeping away our forests and leaving the floods to wash our fertile hillside bare of soil, filling up the beds of our navigable rivers, working destruction to our internal commerce, and leaving coming generations to suffer the same hardships and calamities as have long been suffered in China, Dalmatia and many other countries and is already fast appearing to view in our own loved land. The generation to which we belong have done some things to make this land of our love a truly glorious land. But we have made also our mistakes. To your generation we must bequeath the duty to

continue whatever of good we have begun, and to you also we leave the task of correcting our mistakes.

A PENSIONED PUGILIST

Jem Mace the Old Fighter.

The News-Letter does not usually record the doings of the pugilistic world. But an account of one of the old men published recently is of especial interest.

The writer remembers in his boyhood sharing in the feeling which all boys have for an unconquered fighter. Jem Mace was then the hero of the tough crowd in the city of Norwich, England. "Jem" was born a gypsy and many a time the writer admired his wonderful muscular build and his absolute fearlessness. Many a story was told of his defence of the weak and his gallant defence of women when needing help.

The following story is given in the Literary Digest of a week ago:

The old-age pension scheme in England is bringing out some forgotten characters, once rich and famous, but now glad of a little help from the public treasury. One of these is Jem Mace, once worth \$350,000, who won \$50,000 in one fight in America (as he tells it, at any rate), who now, at the age of seventy-eight asks for aid. We read in the London Chronicle:

Into the Goswell Road post-office yesterday walked a stalwart, broad-shouldered old man, with white hair and mustache. He came to sign an application form for an old age pension, and gave his name as Jem Mace, born at Beeston, Norwich, April 8, 1831.

The old man with the well-brushed silk hat was indeed none other than the famous old pugilist, and former undefeated champion of the world, who now within a few weeks of his seventy-eighth birthday, finds himself fallen on hard times.

Despite his years, Mace is as hard as nails, and as jolly as a sand-boy and he was delighted to chat with a Daily Chronicle representative who sought him out in his Islington haunts. He was at his prime in the sixties, and boasts five hundred fights with only two defeats.

"Careful living and keeping off the drink is the secret," he said. "In the old days men trained harder, and went through ordeals that would kill present-day boxers. There's all the old fights with bare knuckles and glove-contests today, which are mere pleasure outings."

Mace is still active and keen. Within the last fortnight he has been giving exhibitions of boxing at Hull and Coventry, and he hopes to have the gloves on with pupils and others many times more.

Some big prizes have fallen in his time to the lot of the old man who today is applying for an old-age pension. In one fight in America he won \$500,000 and he has known what it is to have \$35,000 in the bank. A fine old link with days when sport was cleaner and more strenuous, though perhaps more brutal, he is now a genial old man who suggests rather the pulpit than the prize ring till you feel the steel muscles of his arms, or persuade him to "fight his battles over again."

Illinois Upper House Passes Measure Making Them Subject to Rail Commission.

Springfield, Ill., May 5.—Senator Hearn's bill declaring express companies to be common carriers, and as such subject to the rate regulating authority of the railroad and warehouse commission, was passed today by the senate.

It places all companies, corporations, and persons engaged in the express business or business of "carriers, by express" under the jurisdiction of the railroad and warehouse commission, which is given the same authority to regulate the rates of such companies as it has in the case of railroad passenger and freight rates.

Must Post Rate Schedule.

It is made the duty of the express companies to print schedules of their rates and to keep them posted conspicuously in their offices. It is provided that no increase in rates can become effective until ten days after the new rates have been approved by the railroad and warehouse commissioners. Provision is made for hearings to be given on complaint of shippers or other persons charging that any rate is unreasonable, notice to be given to the companies.