UNCLE SAM'S CHIEF LAWYER.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL KNOX AND HIS PERSONALITY.

Left a Practice of $200,000 a Year to Enter the Cabinet—His Fee and Gen. Harrison's—Grew Up With Pittsburg—Personal Traits—As a Driver.

WASHINGTON, June 28.—When Philander Chase Knox, now Attorney-General of the United States, entered the Cabinet he relinquished a private law practice of $200,000 a year. The firm of Knox & Reed always demanded and received large fees for their professional services.

This story of the Indianapolis Street Railway case, the last great argument made by Mr. Knox before he came to Washington, is illustrative. He was anxious to go to Europe for a rest when the pressure upon him to argue this case before the Supreme Court became so strong that, to rid himself of further importunity, he named a fee to the company which he believed would be prohibitive.

To his surprise, it was agreed to instantly. He argued the case in conjunction with the late ex-President Benjamin Harrison, and won.

Gen. Harrison evidently regarded Mr. Knox as a secondary consideration in the presentation of the case. Some time later Harrison and Knox met on the boardwalk of Atlantic City, and, after an exchange of civilities, the ex-President said:

"By the way, Knox, how did you come out in the settlement of your account with the Indianapolis Street Railway Company? I got $25,000 out of them for my services."

"I am very glad to hear it, General," replied Knox, pleasantly. Then, in a modestly deferential way, he continued: "I got $125,000."

"What!" blurted the ex-President. Then he wheeled and continued his walk without another word.

Phil Knox, as he was known then and as he is known to-day among his intimates in western Pennsylvania was 16 when he left home to attend Mount Union College, Ohio. He was born in Brownsville, Fayette county, Pa., May 6, 1853.

His father was a country banker, a boyhood friend of James G. Blaine, and he was sent to the public schools until he was ready for college. He was graduated in 1877, and immediately registered as a law student in the office of H. Bucher Swope of Pittsburg.

No two natures were more dissimilar than those of preceptor and pupil. Swope, then United States District Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania, was nervous, fiery, impetuous, aggressive and master of the greatest vocabulary of vitriolic adjectives that was ever exhibited in a district court room.

At all times, however, his diction was polished, and in this respect the pupil owes much to the master, though Mr. Knox was Swope's antithesis, cool, self-restrained, a natural logician, and a rhetorician whose command of language is still charmingly exact.

Mr. Knox was admitted to the bar in 1875, and in 1877 formed a partnership with James H. Reed, another young lawyer, the son of a Pittsburg physician. The career of these young men for the first few years gave no hint of phenomenal success.

But Pittsburg was then heading for international fame. Conditions were shaping themselves for the men who had wit and wisdom to make use of their opportunities. In the same class with Mr. Knox and Mr. Reed in point of brains and energy and equally unknown were Henry Clay Frick, subsequently President of the Carnegie Company; Congressman John Dalzell; James M. Guffey and John T. Chambers, the largest individual glass producer in the United States, at that period a partner in a struggling concern on the south side of Pittsburg.

During his career in Pittsburg Mr. Knox was known as a tireless worker. He frequently appeared at the office in the morning before any of the others had arrived, when his sole companion was the office boy.

This was particularly true when he had a great case on hand, for it was his unvarying rule never to leave any of the preparation of a great action to a subordinate. Every document, letter, reference or scrap of information on evidence was examined by himself. It was no uncommon thing for him to spend eighteen or twenty hours a day in the preparation of a case.

This has developed a rare faculty of self-control which invades even the domain of sleep. Day or night the Attorney-General can awaken at any hour, or at the end of any period of time which he may have determined. He can take a half hour nap and waken himself on the minute.

In Washington the early-rising habit is a feature of his daily life. He is up at 6 o'clock and breakfasts with his family at 8. The intervening two hours are spent behind his famous roadsters, Wert and B. C., a team that cost $9,500 and driven by the Attorney-General two years ago lowered the world's pole record for a gentleman's team to 2:12½ and 2:10½.

These horses were trained by Mr. Knox himself, and one of the familiar sights vouchsafed to early risers in the suburbs of Washington is that of the Attorney-General in cap and duster spinning along the country roads or climbing the heights of the Potomac in a light wagon behind his favorite team.

Outdoor life is the Attorney-General's hobby. He loves to hunt and fish and play golf. He is a charter member of the Castalia Club, a hunting and fishing club which controls an immense game preserve near Sandusky, Ohio, where Mr. Knox and his family have spent a fortnight or two every year for the past half dozen years.

The feat of the Attorney-General in lowering the pole record for gentlemen drivers of the world was a surprise to everybody except Mr. Knox himself. He made a study of the horses for weeks before the trial on the Brunot Island's private track, below Pittsburg. He marked all their peculiarities of temper and motion.

In these practice spins Wert was the pole horse. One day in June, 1900, apparently without reason and against the vigorous protests of drivers and trainers, Mr. Knox put Wert on the other side of the pole.

He knew just what he was doing, however, and the record-breaking whirl began. He gave the team a loose rein, never the touch of the whip, but now and then encouraging them with a word. The result of it was a smashed world's record.

The Attorney-General is a man of generous impulse, who never permits any record of his benefactions to become public. A characteristic instance is related by a prominent and wealthy woman who called on him in behalf of a charity organization immediately after the great blizzard of 1898 in western Pennsylvania.

She solicited a contribution for coal and food, and the response was a check for a very considerable sum, so large, in fact, that it led the startled woman to inquire:

"How do you wish this money applied, Mr. Knox?"

"As your organization thinks best. There are worthy and unworthy poor, I know, but they are all cold and hungry," was the answer.

One of the most striking characteristics of the Attorney-General is his remarkably retentive memory. He never forgets a name or face. A gentleman who had business with the Department relates this incident:

The Attorney-General had written to him months before on a matter in which the visitor was greatly interested. The letter was one of a thousand similar ones, perhaps, dictated by Gen. Knox.

In the course of conversation the visitor quoted a sentence from his letter.

"I never wrote such a sentence," said Mr. Knox.

"But you certainly did. I remember it very distinctly."

"If I wrote those words then I confess I am losing my memory," insisted the Attorney-General.

The letter-copying book was sent for, and Mr. Knox pointed out the sentence, but not as the visitor had quoted it.

Mr. Knox has always been a Republican. The only office he ever held, prior to his call to Washington, was that of Assistant United States District Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania for one year in 1875 and 1876. He has never made a political speech.

In giving reasons for his appointment President McKinley said:

"His intimate knowledge of corporate law and his standing in his profession alone have led me to decide upon Mr. Knox as Attorney-General Griggs's successor."

Although he is verging on 50 he looks five years younger. He is of medium height, full-faced and smooth shaven.

Phrenologists would say that his eyes indicate unusual command of language they are full, dark and expressive. The mouth and jaw indicate firmness, the forehead is high and hair brown, changing into gray.

Whether in court or in private conversation Mr. Knox speaks with great deliberation, carefully choosing his words, though when roused he expresses himself with all the vigor necessary to emphasize an opinion.

He is not a society man; rather the Attorney-General is a clubable man. He has been President of the Pennsylvania Bar Association and the Duquesne Club of Pittsburg. He is a member of the Union League and Lawyers' Club of New York, besides other clubs in Philadelphia and Pittsburg.

His Washington home is on K street, two short squares from the Department of Justice. It is the former home of George W. Childs and was purchased recently by Mr. Knox for the sum of $170,000.

The Pittsburg home of the Knoxes is on Ellsworth avenue. The striking feature of this home is the library, whose walls are entirely concealed by paintings of Indian and frontier life, executed on the pelts of wild animals by A. F. Harmer of California.

The Knoxes are Protestant Episcopalians, Mr. Knox being a vestryman in the Church of the Ascension, Pittsburg. Discussing religious creeds one day with some friends the Attorney-General in reply to a question as to his belief, said:

"My creed is to live for those I love and to do all the good I can."

TO WEST POINT ON HORSEBACK.

The Story a Retired Army Officer Told a Recent Graduate.

One of the recent graduates of West Point tells this story:

"I fell in with an old army officer after the exercises. He looked me over and asked me a good many questions. Among others he asked how I came to be appointed and I told him that it came about in the usual way.

"'A recommendation does not necessarily mean merit,' he said.

"I assented to this.

"'I do not think that passing an examination always means merit,' he added as a crusher.

"I said I supposed not. I had resolved that I would not violate any of the rules by getting into an argument with an old Regular, now on the retired list.

"'I knew a young man who got here,' he continued, 'just after the Civil War, because he was mentioned by the commanding officer in an engagement, for bravery, and the youngster never intended to be brave—he did it because he did not know what he was doing, or because he could not help it. He is dead now and I do not mind telling you about it.

"'He was at headquarters in the Army of the Potomac, and as he was a good sort of fellow he got in with a General of one of the divisions who lived pretty high. He and this young man went on a bat on one occasion. Not to speak disrespectfully of the dead the young man got as drunk as a sailor on shore leave.

"'While he was in that condition the division got orders to go to the front and this young fool was put in the saddle and told to go in the other direction. But the engagement came on quickly and the horse on which he sat, being like Job's war charger, smelled the battle and turning, dashed into the thick of the fight.

"'The young fool who rode him had just enough sense to hang on and the horse plunged and neighed into the fray. It was a miracle that horse and rider came out of it alive.

"'The commander of the division witnessed what I related, and in his report to Grant he made special mention of the daring of the fellow. The result was that the fellow was appointed a cadet. He was a graduate, I believe, of the Missouri University before he went into the army, so he was able to pass here.

"'But what I want to impress upon you, young man, is this, if this fellow had not been drunk he would have kept his horse from being so reckless. And in that case he might not have been mentioned for bravery, and consequently he would not have been appointed a cadet.

"'He was a good fellow—peace to his soul—but he owed his education by the Government to his horse.'

"'And to getting drunk,' I added.

"'Well,' said the old regular, 'you know what Lincoln said when somebody told him Grant got drunk.'

"And with that he turned away, evidently satisfied with his lecture."

"BUTCH" THOMPSON, GAMBLER.

A Shrewd Norwegian Who Is Credited With Winning Half a Million in His Day.

"Butch" Thompson, the sporting man, who is reported to be dying at Saratoga, is a Norwegian who looks like an Irishman. He is about 55 years old and is said to have $400,000 to $500,000 as the accumulation of many years of shrewd gambling.

Thompson's present illness is due to an accident he had at Long Branch seven or eight years ago. His horse ran away and threw him out of the buggy, rolling him down an embankment. He suffered internal injuries which were manifested some time later, necessitating two operations. From a robust, active fellow of 285 pounds, Thompson dwindled down almost to a shadow.

He went to Saratoga two weeks ago, looking for quiet and the benefits of the springs. He went there last summer, too, before the races opened. He showed some improvement by winning $15,000 at faro, but by the time the racing meeting opened he was $10,000 on the other side of the ledger, and his health had failed as well.

Thompson got the name of "Butch" because of his size, strength and healthy appearance in his early manhood. He took to gambling for a living very early in life and laid the foundation of his prosperity by his skill at poker. Trotting horses took his fancy first, and for some years he followed the grand circuit with great success.

As a bookmaker on the running turf he quickly earned the respect of his fellow gamblers for his judgment of a horse and his ability in making a round book. He had what sporting men call "good gambling sense."

His most successful venture was the White Elephant poolroom at Broadway and Thirty-first street where a tailor's shop now stands. This place became the best known as well as the most profitable poolroom in America. Thompson was known as the only man who could make a book on Broadway.

He has not been a man of winning personality, nor the man to pick out to smooth the ways for such a venture. His pull came through "Al" Smith, the champion stakeholder, who was his partner in the White Elephant. Smith had great influence at that time with the powers in the police department.

Thompson never backed a gambling enterprise other than a poolroom or a book. He is now the backer of a book at Sheepshead track, and is said to have put a bank roll of $100,000 at the managers' command.

"'Butch' Thompson hasn't laughed in fifteen years," said a well-known sporting man the other day. "Why? It might encourage some one to try to borrow money from him. When those fellows get up beyond $100,000 they learn that it's dangerous even to smile. On the other hand his old partner "Al" Smith has made more men happy than Carnegie, filling up luck's old holes."

Thompson has some relatives in Norway or Sweden, but none on this side of the water.

WESTERN HARVEST METHODS.

PLANS FOLLOWED TO GET THE CROP IN QUICKLY.

Farmers Keen After New Machinery—This Is a Header Year—What That Means—Army of Harvest Hands—Harvesting at Night—Danger of Fire.

ABILENE, Kan., June 8.—Not even the changes that have taken place in the machinery and methods of the manufacturing plants of the East are more notable and distinctive than the developments in harvesting on the Western plains.

The Western farmer has one hobby—the purchase of new machinery. He will buy anything that promises to make crop-raising or crop gathering easier or cheaper.

As a result he is sometimes machinery poor and has so much discarded material on his place that his barnyard resembles a behind-the-times-implement headquarters. Harvest time brings to the farmer the need of new machinery, and he has with the passing years adopted everything that could be invented in this line.

The present harvest is the fifth good wheat crop on the hard wheat belt of the Mississippi Valley. It began late because of the wet weather, and not until June 20 did the workers get well to going. The outcome of the crop is far better than was expected and the methods of gathering it have been greatly improved over those of a few years ago.

This is a header year, as the Westerners call it. Last season was a binder year. The difference lies in the quality of the wheat straw.

Out here on the plains, where the harvesters are at work by the hundreds for two or three weeks, this difference means a great deal. A header year is one in which the straw is so short and so thin that it can be best cut with a heading machine.

This is a powerful implement pushed ahead of four horses, the driver riding on a tiller at the rear and both guiding the team and steering the machine. It cuts a 12 or 14-foot swath and leaves the field clean except for the stacks that hold the year's harvest.

The stubble is from eighteen inches to two feet high, only the heads of the wheat being gathered. As it enters the wheat ahead of the team none of the grain is trampled down.

A straw carrier on the side of the platform on which the fallen heads drop takes the straw and heads to a large wagon box hauled alongside the machine. When one box is filled the driver hurries away to the stack and another box takes its place.

In that way the header is kept in motion throughout the day and far into the evening. It is a toilsome task for the man who manages the machine, but the rate at which the work is done commends the method to the Western farmer with a large acreage.

The binder is more suitable for a year when the straw is long and heavy. Last year, for instance, was such a year.

The straw was very abundant and frequently lodged near the ground until the headers could not cut it nor could the carriers lift it to the wagons. In this case it was necessary that the self-binders with their narrower cut and better adaptability should do the work.

The binders use from three to five horses according to the nature of the work and are made more perfect each year. They not only cut the wheat and gather the straw into bundles but wrap each bundle with a piece of twine and tie the ends of the cord, then throwing the bundle to the ground out of the way of the next round of the team.

The twine question is a serious one for the farmers of the West, a State like this in a good wheat year using millions of pounds. This State tries to save the farmers money on their twine by buying raw material and having the prisoners in the penitentiary make it into twine.

Last year the price was only a little lower than the so-called trust twine. This year the warden thought he would go south into Yucatan and buy the sisal before the Trust made any arrangements about it.

He started without telling where he was going, but a newspaper man guessed and sent word to his paper. The twine manufacturers saw the despatch, telegraphed to the producers and bought the supply, or made a price on it so high that the penitentiary was unable to get enough at a price that could save the farmers money.

There is also an effort being made to introduce twine made out of grass. It is coarse and clumsy and as yet is not in general use. The farmers say it kinks.

"Looks like another Coxey army," remarked a farmer of the central part of the State as he pointed to a freight train coming up the Smoky Hill Valley. "Look at th' fellers on tops of the cars."

On every car was a dark fringe of men sitting in rows along the edge of the roofs, riding as easily as could be expected. They were laborers from the East, another novel feature of the Western harvests.

The past few years, with the increasing acreage of the fields and the growing importance of the crop, have brought to the attention of the Eastern laborers the need of help on the prairie, and it has become quite a common thing for hundreds and thousands to come here each summer. They get low rates on the railroads, but often they capture a freight train and do not pay fare.

They are from every walk of life among the laboring class. Even shipyard men and sailors are found among the collection of toilers.

They do not want to stop long in one place; they want to travel. They start in Oklahoma in May and reach here in June. Then they pass on with the harvest into Nebraska and the Dakotas, finishing in late August or September.

The cutting of the great wheat crop of the West is divided about equally between the headers and binders, take it one year and one place with another. In either case the farmers have learned to make the best of the time and to utilize every minute for the harvest.

Time is more than precious when during fourteen summer days there must be gathered the whole year's reward. It is for this reason that there is made preparation for the most careful economy of every passing minute.

Here is the day's programme on one of the average farms of central Kansas; the entire equipment having been made perfect days before the wheat turned yellow.

The four horses to be used first are harnessed and driven to the field at daybreak by one of the men, before the horses are fed or the worker has had his breakfast. The binding and cutting begins at once.

The other four horses are fed, chores done and breakfast eaten leisurely. Then the second team and the other two men of the force go to the field.

The first man leaves and goes to his breakfast, the horses being fed at a wagon in the field. One of the men changes teams while the third oils the bearings, looks after the supply of twine and sees that everything is in readiness.

The change of teams takes but a minute and then the steady click, click of the machine is resumed. At the end of an hour and a half there is another change of teams and so on throughout the day, the machine stopping only long enough for the oiling in which interval the teams are transferred.

The dinner hour even is dispensed with, the men and teams taking their turns to go to the house at noon.

Two of the men are all the time at leisure and keep the shocking up to the machine, so that when it becomes too dark to see all the twenty-five acres that have been cut are also shocked and ready for the teams that are to haul the grain to a stack or to the threshing machine—the latter being a common way of handling the wheat in the modern management of a farm.

Not satisfied with the running of the machine through the daylight hours the progressive farmers are now turning the night into working time. A new force of men comes on at twilight, and with lanterns hung on the necks of the horses and on the machines the cutting goes on all through the night.

The sight of the twinkling lights across the fields is a very attractive one, and really marks a new feature of the gathering of the season's wealth.

The farmers are very careful about entering on this method owing to the danger of fire. One of the chief losses of last summer's harvest came through the danger in this direction.

A disaster that was enough to make the afflicted ones more than angry occurred on the great wheat fields of the middle Arkansas Valley. One hot afternoon while the harvesters were working in the fields a liveryman of Great Bend took a travelling man across country to the other railroad.

The stranger was smoking as they left the town, and when they were a few miles out of town gave his cigar end a toss into the stubble alongside the road.

"Be careful, there!" called his companion, and they looked at the spot where the stump had been thrown. A blaze had already started, and, fanned by the high wind, was eating into the tall straw.

They tried to put it out, but could not, and soon had to drive fast to save their lives. The fire swept across field after field, burning reaping machines, horses, threshing machines and wheat stacks until more than 10,000 acres of yellow grain had been destroyed and the whole country around made a blackened waste.

The travelling man caught a train that night at a way station and did not stop travelling until he was east of the Mississippi River. He will never go back to that region again, and it would be very unhealthful for him should the people catch him.

In the dry days of late June and early July the engines of the passing trains set many fires and the roads pay thousands of dollars every year in settling losses. The claim agents say, however, that the yield on the fields burned has always been far in excess of any other fields in the neighborhood.

It is estimated that Kansas will this year produce about 50,000,000 bushels of wheat, Oklahoma half as much, and Nebraska 40,000,000 bushels. It is not the good year that has been experienced heretofore, but it is well enough.

The average crop for twenty years has been 40,000,000 bushels and the State ought not to object. Even had the crop been a failure, the five years ending with this one would have produced more wheat than any other five-year period in the State's history. The past five years have been a remarkable period of wheat prosperity, the best in the history of the Commonwealth, and it has resulted in the paying of many mortgages. These figures show what has been done:

Years.	Acres.	Bushels.	Value.
1897	2,444,594	51,026,604	$34,585,304.69
1898	4,624,731	60,790,061	32,937,043.28
1899	4,548,852	43,687,018	22,406,410.00
1900	4,878,553	77,329,091	41,974,145.09
1901	5,316,497	90,333,096	50,610,505.75

A tabulation of 150 opinions of the actual cost of producing wheat in this State shows that it is:

Average cost of ploughing (or disking)	$ .96
Harrowing	.28
Seed and seeding	.92
Cost of harvesting and stacking (or shocking)	1.36
Threshing and putting in bin or car	1.60
Wear, tear and interest on tools	.29
Rental of land, or interest on its value	1.90
Total cost per acre or twenty bushels	$7.81

The twenty bushels thus raised selling at 70 cents give the farmer payment for his work and also a profit of $7 an acre. As the yield is often from twenty-five to thirty bushels the profit is thus made larger. With several hundred acres in wheat the farmer has a fine nest-egg for the crop's reward.

The fame of the Kansas hard winter wheat is all the time growing, and it is becoming a pride of the people of the State. In order to insure the high standard of the crop there is much new wheat imported.

Last summer a shipload was bought by the farmers at $2.25 a bushel, it coming direct from southern Turkey, and the result has been to give seed enough of this pure wheat to sow the greater part of next fall's acreage.

The threshing of the present crop will begin early in July and it will show many new features that are a part of the development of Western agriculture.

The Ragged Commandos.

The Boer commandos that are coming in are in rags, but their horses and guns are in good condition.—Despatch from South Africa.

The ragged commandos are coming in—
The ragged commandos have fought their fight:
They have borne unstained the flag of the veldt
In the battle with world-wide might.

The ragged commandos are coming in,
Tattered and shoeless and sore bespent
But clothed in a glory that shines undimmed
In the Darkest Continent!

Yonder's a horseman travel-stained—
Battle-grimed—but unconquered yet—
With a prouder name than the kings of earth—
Prince of the brave—De Wet!

And Botha, too, of Colenso's ford,
Spion Kop and a hundred fights,
He rides with the air of a Roland of old
At the head of his band of knights.

There is a spirit unbroken still,
Bold as a lion to meet the fray,
With the eye of a hawk to mark the foe—
The dauntless De la Rey!

O, the ragged commandos are coming in—
Coming in from the plains and hills,
With their guns, unshaken, yet in their hands
And their freemen's hearts and wills!

No tinsel of rank can outshine this—
This tattered homespun of manly men—
It brings to our unbelieving days
The Spartan time again.

Better than riches, stronger than power
The soul of a man who dares to stand
Unmoved, unawed by the hosts of might
For right and native land!

O, the ragged commandos are coming in—
Coming in through Honor's door,
And in God's good time they'll be coming in—
In to their own once more!

JOHN JEROME ROONEY.

Kipling on Epilepsy.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—Sir: THE SUN had recently a reprint of an article on epilepsy. I cannot refrain from sending you the inclosed poem by Rudyard Kipling, and hope you will give it wider publicity, it is too comical and witty to be lost or to reach the eye of only a limited number of people.

C. L. STEENBERG, M. D.

From the Detroit Medicine.

Did he, therefore, jilt Miss Boffkin, impulse of a baser mind?
No, he started epileptic fits of an appalling kind.
(Of his *modus operandi* only this much I could gather,
"Pears' shaving sticks give you little taste and lots of lather.")

Frequently, in public places, his affliction used to smite
Sleary with distressing vigor, always in the Boffkin's sight:
Ere a week was over, Minnie weepingly returned his ring,
Told him his "unhappy weakness" stopped all thought of marrying.

Sleary bore the information with a chastened, holy joy—
Epileptic fits don't matter in political employ;
Wired three short words to Carrie—took his ticket, packed his kit—
Bade farewell to Minnie Boffkin in one last, long, lingering fit.

Four weeks later Carrie Sleary read—read and laughed until she wept—
Mrs. Boffkin's warning letter on the "wretched patient."
Year by year in pious patience, vengeful Mrs. Boffkin sits
Waiting for the Sleary babies to develop Sleary's fits.

Kidney Troubles & Urinary Discharges.
SANTAL CAPSULES MIDY
A CURE IN 48 HOURS.

Omega Oil

Omega Oil is used by hundreds of men and women every day after a bath.
It keeps the muscles, sinews and tendons in fine shape.
It removes that tired feeling so common in spring, summer and autumn.
It invigorates the body without disturbing the digestion like medicines you swallow.
It puts the body in splendid shape for exercise.
You don't get tired easily when you use Omega Oil.
You feel just as much like working in hot weather as in cold.
It acts the same upon the muscles and joints as lubricating oil acts upon machinery.

I take the liberty to say that Omega Oil is the best and quickest relief for rheumatic pains and soreness throughout the body that I know of.
During my ten years' experience as a massage operator (chiefly among the well known athletes of to-day), I find it is the best "rubbing stuff" I have ever used. LOUIS L. EBGOLD,
Massage Operator, 308 E. 12th St., New York City.

OMEGA OIL SOAP IS THE SWEETEST, PUREST, NICEST SOAP FOR THE BATH. 800a

IT ISN'T THE SAME OLD CONEY.

NEW YORK'S ISLAND BEACH IS CHANGING FOR THE BETTER.

It Has Not Only a Park That Is Clean and Tidy, but a Bank and Real Shops—Brick Houses, Too—Concert and Dance Halls of a Better Type Than Were There in Former Years.

Of all the new things at Coney Island this season the park, which the city has established, is the most striking. It extends 700 feet west from the boulevard and is about 400 feet deep. The grass and shrubs are doing well, and it has converted a plain that was formerly a rubbish-strewn eyesore into a beauty spot.

The coming of the park, which was sudden, surprised three old, ragged, disreputable wrecks of willow trees which, like many of their human neighbors, have been living by their wits, on the north side of Surf avenue among sand, tomato cans and a jumble of discarded things. These leering old wretches of trees, accustomed to the opprobrium of pedestrians and the abuse of wind and spray, found themselves a few days ago surrounded by fresh, innocent grass and hopeful flowers. It must have been a very great shock to them, but with the pluck of the old rounder they are making an attempt to conform to their surroundings or "get into the game," as, if they could, they would doubtless express it. The expression of tough and reckless levity they formerly had has been replaced to some extent by an aspect of respectability, as though they had become serious minded and were determined to establish a reputation for churchgoing.

In front of the park the beach has made out very considerably in recent years. West Brighton beach having increased greatly at the expense of Brighton beach, out of which the ocean has taken an enormous bite. It is 300 yards of hard, white beach, therefore, from Surf avenue to the water in a line from the west end of the park. The thoughtful city this season has provided benches many scores of them—that stretch all along this clear beach. An observer who has watched Coney Island's evolution for the past twenty years looked on those benches the other night and found them good.

They were fronting the sea just a few feet back from the tide. The moon was large, golden and amiable; the lady with the coronet who resides in it was clear and smiling. The tide came in with a curl, a roaring rush and a foaming leap. Far off a flash light came and went, while another light, Sandy Hook way, burned steadily. Near at hand the sea was black except in the path of the moon, but further out it grew gray and hazy and finally united with the sky, one could not tell where, or whether the black sail that pushed through the silvery gray haze was in the sky or on the sea; or whether the mysterious bright gleams here and there were rifts in cloud or reflections from the water.

Away to the east and west were the human hives of Brighton and West Brighton, most brilliantly gemmed with electric lights. But the city's waterfront was beyond the reach of their sounds and suggestions. It was alone and in harmony with nature, and the observer noted that her wonderful aws were in full working order. There in the sea chemical affinity asserted itself in spite of gravitation, two atoms of hydrogen associating with one of oxygen to form a molecule of water.

On the park benches affinity asserted itself also, without any regard for gravity or the neighbors, one atom of femininity and one of masculinity combining to form a molecule of mutual happiness. Invariably the young man sat on the right side of the young woman with his left arm around her and his right hand holding hers, and every bench was occupied.

The only improvement that the observer can think of was in the way of an addition. A minister with a copy of the marriage service and a couple of witnesses stationed in the Shelter between the hours of 9 and 11 P. M. during the summer season would be a convenience.

The new things at West Brighton are, for the most part, the old things developed. Coney Island is so different from other seaside places, either here or abroad, that all its life it has been experimenting, and the forms which survive are those which have passed through a process of evolution that has made them larger, cleaner and better.

Twenty years ago there was "shadow dancing" in The Gut—wild orgies of whites and blacks, among whom robbery and violence were frequent. Dance halls outside The Gut were small and ramshackle, the dancers tough and shameless. To-day there are acres of perfectly polished dancing floors, where many hundreds of well-dressed young couples disport themselves while their elders sit around at small tables eating sandwiches and drinking beer. These places are brilliantly lighted and disorder in them is rare. Good dance music is provided and there is nothing in them to offend the eye or ear.

The concert halls, too, show a change for the better. They are brighter, cleaner, larger and better lighted, the waiters are more civil and not so prone to giving short change—perhaps because they are more closely watched. The drinks are better, and the performance on the stage is a real attempt to entertain legitimately. The girls all stay on the stage and acknowledge advances on the part of spectators only by smiles and winks. Some of them can dance after vaudeville chorus fashion and one or two can sing without getting notably out of tune. There is one troup of colored people, including quadroons and octoroons, that is clever in buck dancing, cake walking and singing.

Costumes generally throughout these concert places, are the same in character as are found in the city vaudeville shows with the difference that vaudeville choruses are uniform in dress and change costumes with their subjects. Here variety of costume is the rule and there is no attempt to conform costume to subject. The girls wear just what they had left when the road companies laid them off.

Humble as these stages may appear from the point of view of Broadway they yet have their jealousies. The pale girl with the fair hair and the lilac silk dress, who does the heavy singing and imagines she is the queen of one of these places, held the centre of the stage for a few moments when by right it belonged to the large pronounced blonde in the red dress. She was quickly informed of her error by her rival and retired "like a real lady."

The day of the flimsy and merely temporary at the beach is passing by and the permanent is advancing boldly. Instead of shanties there are large, solid wooden buildings even on the Bowery, and here and there is a brick building. The police station very appropriately led the way in brick as if quite assured that it was there to stay, and its example has been followed. There is one big brick building on the Bowery now, and on Surf avenue actually a brick bank and safe deposit building with barred and grated front.

To the old Coney Islander this is the most surprising and revolutionary thing—the idea of a solid responsible, respectable, grave banking institution shouldering its way in among the Surf avenue buildings. But it seems well satisfied, is doing business and has not yet had its pockets picked.

In spite of the wail that goes up each season from the Island's business people, it is pretty plain that many of them must have made money, because their plants have been constantly growing. The amusements other than the dance halls and concert places are larger and better, more money has been invested in them and that speaks for itself. The best type of carrousel now has four horses abreast, well-carved and painted horses, that not only go round in a circle but also gallop up and down like the real thing. The orchestrions, which in the past were gasping, broken, winded, harsh, shrieking things, that would grate upon the nerves of a Comanche, show equal improvement, giving music that is far from contemptible. The switchback railways are longer and have more and sharper dives. Some of the loop-the-loops have a double twirl that is enough to make a persons's hair turn white, yet they don't lack patrons.

A very great development is to be seen in the residence part of Coney Island. There is a district between the Brighton Beach racetrack and West Eighth street filled with neat new houses, resembling those of Sheepshead Bay. Most of them take boarders and they have pleasant lawns about them. Two or three years ago this place was a sandy waste with only a few old wooden shanties on it.

There isn't one of the open gambling devices to be seen on the beach this season and the skin gambling king is said to be on the Southern circuit. Of course, the stereopticons are all swindles in a way, as the signs over them lead the unwary to believe that the pictures are unfit to be seen, while, as a matter of fact, they are such as may be found in shop windows advertising actresses and cigarettes. Still it is only a penny a peep at these things, and when the peeper is satisfied of the futility of his or her employment he or she does not feel like complaining to the police. So the number of the stereopticons has doubled this year.

The palmists and other fortune tellers seem to have come to stay, though their quarters are still temporary—the tent or the little board shanty. There are about twenty of these seers and seeresses, each with a staff of attendants, including a "barker," so there must be money in the business.

There is one genuine novelty at the Island in the shape of archery. The targets are as big as barn doors and only ten feet from the archers' stand—a sight for Robin Hood. The bows and arrows are not bad and the Englishman who runs the place seems contented with himself and his prospects. Another novelty on the Bowery is a milliner's shop, almost as startling as the bank. It is small and tentative in aspect, but it does business.

There are no "wild men" at Coney Island this season. These cheerful fakes have roamed elsewhere. And the Streets of Cairo have gone away. There is nothing like them at the beach this season, but "riding academies" where the real horses go round and round in a little tan-bark circle are an acceptable substitute.

Compared with its own past Coney is better, cleaner, cheaper and even saner than it was in bygone days. A person from Manhattan Beach may liken it to a cross between an opium vision and a German sailor's dream of heaven, but the two hundred thousand people who throng it and patronize its wonders on a busy day hold to a kindlier view.

ODD CITY INVESTMENTS.

SHOWING ENGLAND'S TENDENCY TO MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM.

Liverpool's Model Tenements—Nottingham's Castle and Doncaster's Municipal Racecourse—Cities in the Milk Trade—Window Plants Sold to the Poor.

Some of the recent reports sent to the State Department at Washington by the United States Consul at Liverpool have been devoted to showing the remarkable spread of a phase of municipal socialism in English cities, and particularly in Liverpool. Not only are English cities generally tending to public ownership of waterworks, lighting plants, electric power and street railways, but they are passing beyond the class of enterprises commonly designated as public utilities.

The capital invested in municipal undertakings in Great Britain has risen, according to Consul Boyle's reports, from $465,000,000 in 1875 to $1,500,000,000 in 1900, and probably to one-third as much again at the present time.

There are now in Great Britain 931 cities owning waterworks, 100 or so owning street railways, 240 owning gas plants and nearly 200 supplying electricity. But many cities are going beyond these things.

Two cities, Harrogate and Leamington, own and operate Turkish baths, which are among the best in England. Harrogate also gives fireworks displays at the expense of the municipality. Glasgow provides municipal lectures and Manchester owns most of the shares in its ship canal. Torquay owns a rabbit warren, Colchester an oyster fishery, Hull a crematory, Doncaster and Chester racecourses, and Bradford and Liverpool each a hotel. Doncaster manages its own races.

The oddest of all the purchases was made recently by a combination of the townships in the north of London. They bought up the Alexandra Palace from the company which was running it at a loss, and now maintain there a theatre and concert hall, give organ recitals, variety entertainments, plays and industrial exhibitions impartially.

Several of the English cities are now establishing local universities. Birmingham has one and Liverpool soon will have. Nottingham, which was the first city in England to take up this idea, has also bought its ancient castle and a forest and owns besides artisan dwellings, public baths, a hospital, markets and a school of art.

In all England the most daring of the cities in its advance into municipal socialism, however, has been Liverpool. That city owns its waterworks, operates the street cars and supplies electric light and power.

It has one of the largest public bath systems in the country and is about to build the finest Turkish bath in Europe. It provides public laundries in the poorer districts, furnishes flowers and plants for windows in the slums and sells sterilized milk at cost.

It has a salaried organist provide music, gives municipal lectures and concerts, and has a technical school and an art school, besides the university it will have soon.

But its greatest municipal undertaking has been to buy up and clear away the slums, replacing insanitary dwellings with model tenements. This work is going on now under authority of a special act of Parliament and of the more recent general law providing for the housing of the working classes.

There are two principal slum areas in Liverpool, one of about 383 acres in the northern part of the city and another of about 100 acres in the southern end. In these overcrowded areas there were about 22,000 old-fashioned and insanitary dwellings.

The city has bought up and abolished about 8,000 and private owners to prevent the seizure of their property have demolished and rebuilt 4,000 more leaving only about 10,000 still to be dealt with. It will take about twelve years to complete the job.

The tenements with which the city is replacing its destroyed slum dwellings are three and four stories high. These are built within convenient distances before the houses they are to replace are destroyed.

Experts say that Liverpool alone among the British municipalities has been successful in supplying a type of building within the financial means of the very poor. A single room in the city's model tenements can be had for as little as 45 cents a week, two rooms at from 60 to 80 cents, three at from $1 to $1.10, and four rooms, the largest number provided in a suite, at from $1.25 to $1.50 a week.

In a few of the dwellings hot water is supplied. Most of them have penny-in-the-slot gas meters, two cents (an English penny) providing enough gas for four or five hours' consumption. All of the rooms have pictures which are superior to those supplied in like dwellings by most owners.

Since Liverpool went into this enterprise it has paid nearly $2,000,000 for condemned property, has bought land near by at a cost of $335,825 for new dwellings, and has spent three-quarters of a million in construction. The city now owns more revenue-producing real estate than any other municipality in the world.

Its income from this source is estimated at half a million dollars a year.