SCHOOL DAYS HERE AGAIN AFTER LONGEST OF VACATIONS

Talking over the First Day

His First Term. It's Hard on Father and Mother Too.

Got a New Book to Study This Term

The School boy with Shining Face? Not Exactly, but Sister Is Happy.

Eager to Begin

Three Little Maids from School Prepared for Rainy Weather

More Than 800,000 New York City Children to Get Instruction Under Most Modern Conditions

ALL ready for the first dip in the Pierian spring! School days are here, and, the doctors willing, this week will see the small pitchers on their way to the fonts of wisdom. That is to say, if they have all been properly scrubbed and looked over for signs of trouble. Going to school in New York is a complicated business, what with your nurses and inspectors and lynx eyed officials of all kinds. It was not so when we were young.

Ever notice on going home in the subway how many a man takes cautiously from his pocket some little old weekly newspaper of provincial makeup and gives it a visual caress? Nearly everybody in New York has his heart somewhere in the provinces, where long ago he put on his red mittens and his ulster warmers and had the cut lick his slate nicely and started off for the red school house on the hill. Why are all country school houses always painted red? The first thing that our forebears did was to kill Indians of course, and after that they built the school houses and painted them with their minds full of the hue of carnage.

Not all the rules of the board, not all the wiles of the Health Department and all the inspectors that ever were, can take the thrill out of one's first day at school which so many of the youngsters of this big village are feeling. What difference does it make that the urge of the trudge is toward Tudor buildings, built "H" fashion, that suggest the aristocratic calm of old Oxford? Architecture may be frozen music all right, but it can never cool the heart of youth.

This has been a long, hard summer, and I bet you some of the fellows are glad to get back to school. Of course one would not wager one's bottom dollar on it. Girls are different. They take to books as easily as a freckled kid with one cloth suspender does to the old swimming hole on an August afternoon. Ever notice that sometimes people with short hair slicked up and wearing knickerbockers often go to school wishing to surpass the musicians, which she, she just walks along as though she were treading on the blue sagebrush and knocking the stars with her toe tops?

It's like to see a girl walk along all frames and gamms and pickles, just as though getting down to the books again was as good as a season pass to the Polo Grounds. Shakespeare was not such an original genius as some people think, for nobody can read any of his plays through without finding it all full of familiar quotations; but he certainly did understand human nature when he sang about the way the schoolboy crept to his first day. Who ever heard of a girl creeping along like a snail to her same? Not much!

Girls are different. They yearn for a chance to improve their minds and to see what the other girls have on and if the teacher has any new gowns or any fancy ways of dressing her hair, and it may be she has a new beau or is wearing a diamond ring on the third finger of the left hand as a result of the summer vacation.

Do you happen to realize that there are thousands of boys and girls who are going to the school house this autumn for the first time in all their young lives and what all that means in their young lives? It means something to you, now, don't it? And say, do you happen to recollect when those slates came in with red flannel all around the frames bound by black strings run through holes? Weren't they great?

How the eyes of the boys who had just ordinary slates did stick out when they saw that dossy slate! And Hattie Finnifrock glimpsed that new slate and she came right up and walked with you and said that the red flannel did not seem to match anything at all and she wondered why boys had their slates all dressed up just like that. Now if it was a girl's slate it would be different, for girls had red hair ribbons.

And what was that you said? That they had red cheeks, too. Were you like that? And you gave your red flannel slate to Hattie Finnifrock? And an apple also? A pippin! No, she wore the apple was a big Spitz. No. Further. And then you told her—but this isn't right at all; the article was meant to be full of information about school, something serious for parents.

Oh, Reddy Smithers and Hattie Finnifrock! Who said that? Why does your fist double up after all these years, and why do you start as though you were going to fight fifteen or twenty of the fellows who wrote that legend on the coal house down at the end of the lot? And you grew up and she grew up, and she called you James for a while and she was Harriet, and she smiled about the corners of her mouth when she asked you if you remembered that first day at school and how you and she trudged along hand in hand after changing slates, and you gave her the big red tomalto one day that you had brought for teacher.

Of course most parents took their children to school for the first day, but ours were busy that day at exactly the same time, and the same thrill comes over the youthful system even if the school bells do not ring and there are no chaires to be done, and it is not considered according to rule to bring red apples to teacher. Everywhere about us we feel the stir of the great city, the city of joys and sorrows, of hopes and fears.

How many of the pupils of the public schools have come from other shores, speaking alien tongues at home still, and reaching out to the land of a new speech and a new freedom! They may have come from far Odessa to live in that strange region which we call the East Side, where there are so many thousands who know little even of the great Broadway, the street of the million lights, which stretches to the north only a few blocks from where they live. They are the citizens of to-morrow.

Here are the boys and girls of the sunny skies whose fathers are fighting in the Carnic Alps for all we know and they know. Here are the daughters of the Hungarian and Austrian subway scorers, the children of the towering tenements, who are finding the school house as we have built it a source of inspiration and of new being.

It may be that in the days when the Bard went to Stratford Latin school, or wherever it was he took on his cargo of small Latin and less Greek, there were laggards in letters. What would he have said if he could have looked into the eager eyes of some of the children of the cosmic oakdron who are seeking to utilize fully the wonderful opportunities given in this promised land? Their pace is not that of the snail but of the hare that runs to the rainbow's end. They seek the gold of education with tireless brain and ever willing feet. For them the sun of opportunity shines, and they are grateful to the core of their being for all that the city and the nation vouchsafe for a free education.

The deferred opening of the schools is not to all the that hope which when deferred "maketh the heart sick," at least as far as most of the youngsters are concerned, but it has not much reduced the labors of the teachers. The law requires that they shall put in so many weeks in the schools. To cover that contingency the idea of sending them all to school themselves was developed.

This has been regarded as one of the jokes which Johnny had on teacher, but as a matter of fact the two weeks which the instructors have put in have been a period of refreshment and interest. The Teachers Institute given for the first time in New York city is a well established institution in the rural districts. The institute in the middle West, especially in such States as Ohio, is a very efficient instrument for standardization.

It brings the teachers of the widely scattered rural school districts together, gets them in touch through lectures with some of the best educational thought of the day and gives them new inspiration. The institute is an exchange of ideas. In New York city special attention has been given to physical training, to the discussion of ways and means for safeguarding the health of the children and to the discussion of new theories in pedagogy.

Many of the teachers did not hasten eagerly to their school at first. They did not seem to be especially keen about it, but now there is a wave of enthusiasm in many directions and everybody feels that it was good to have been there.

One of the new features of the work of the schools this year will be the introduction of compulsory military training for the boys of the high school grades. The innovation follows along the demand for preparedness. One of the leaders of this movement was Gen. George W. Wingate, a veteran of the civil war, long a member of the Board of Education and a leader in the plans for the development of the youth of the country. Dr. John H. Finley, the State Commissioner of Education, has put in charge of this new work Dr. Storey, who did much effective work in building upon the constitutions of the students of the College of the City of New York.

The bodily development of the boys of all grades and the girls too is being looked after by Dr. G. Ward Crampton. Vigorous athletics for the boys and folk dancing and calisthenics for the girls will be utilized more than ever this term. Everywhere in the public school system are made the lessons of efficiency and aptitude which are being developed by the great world changes.

There is no very tangible basis for calculating the number of pupils who are likely to be in the schools this year. The registration days were held on the last three days of last week and they indicated that the attendance would be good.

The same old problem of getting enough seats for the pupils confronts the administrators as usual. If the population of New York would stay put it would be no difficult task to know just how to provide seats for every child of school age. But when during summer a whole block of dwelling houses or tenements is wiped out to make room for a skyscraper and the inhabitants go to The Bronx or Queens, congestion suddenly appears. Everywhere there is flux and change in the Great Village and the problem will always give more or less trouble even under the best conditions.

There are six new buildings to be opened and some important additions to existing structures planned by C. B. J. Snyder, the architect of the Department of Education, including the great Evander Childs High School at Creston avenue and 184th street in the Borough of The Bronx.

What with the furnishing which the buildings have received during the summer and the new structures the education system of New York is well prepared to receive its hundreds of thousands of pupils.

SEAMEN'S CHURCH LAUNCH CARRIES CARGO OF HAPPINESS FOR SAILOR APPRENTICE

"HIS a good sport and we all like him. This is my third voyage; I'm a senior 'prentice and I've met him before."

The speaker was a red cheeked, blue eyed lad of 16 who had come aboard the launch from a British sailing ship. He was talking to us about Howard G. Wood of the Seamen's Church Institute, who goes out into the harbor every day to collect the apprentices and ships' officers from the ships in port and take them to the institute at 25 South street, where they have tea, coffee and attend motion picture shows.

The Seamen's Church Institute was founded seventy-two years ago ostensibly to care for the spiritual welfare of sailors in port at New York, but its mission has broadened greatly since then and the huge red building houses hundreds of sailors every week, providing food and lodging at a reasonable rate and furnishing the amusement for which the heart of the sailor is hungry after a long voyage.

But you can find out all about the board of directors and the rules and regulations by visiting the institute. This will give you a view of the Sailors' Church Institute from the inside looking out. I preferred to get my view from the outside looking in, so I took a trip with Mr. Wood on the launch J. Hooker Homersley one Sunday afternoon and had an opportunity to talk to the apprentices themselves and find out what they thought about it.

The launch had been ploughing through white-capped waters, while tain fell on her deck, and we had all crowded into the cabin. Mr. Wood had several women and some attractive young girls, a tempting invitation to the boys who had been away from home and mothers and sisters for so many weeks. Every time the launch stopped at a pier where ships were moored three or four boys climbed eagerly aboard. Those who had been on the Seamen's Church Institute launch before knew the rules and shook hands with every one in sight whether they had met before or not. The new boys were a bit shy, but they soon found their voices and joined in the conversation, or happily secured a corner decorated by a pretty girl.

"We certainly appreciate what they do for us," one of the boys told me. "You see, apprentices don't have very much money to spend, in fact, it takes about all our money just to buy tobacco. We have to live on the ship but we can get shore leave for a day or an evening, but shore leave isn't much good in a strange country with no money to spend. We certainly have great times at the institute."

"It must be very nice to keep in touch with your church life, too," I said, striving to exercise a good influence, but I had made a mistake.

These men of the world, 16 and 17 years of age, were not to be patronized by a mere woman, no matter what her seniority.

"Yess; but we don't care so much about that," said the seventeen-year-old. "Some of the lads don't go to the Sunday tea because they have to stay to service afterward. I don't mind it, though. I like to hear Mr. Wood play the organ. He's all right. One time he winked at me from behind the organ. He was playing, too, at the same time."

"Don't you have church on board ship?" I asked the boys.

"They have services on all passenger ships but not on the mercantile ships that we enlist on. Sometimes a sky pilot comes aboard, but we stay below and pretend that we're Catholics or atheists. You wouldn't think that we cared much about church if you could spend just one day on board a sailing ship with us. Shall we tell her about what we did the last time we ran out of cigarette papers?" asked the sixteen-year-old in a mysterious whisper.

"You'd better not," said the seventeen-year-old.

"Go on," I encouraged. "I will not reveal your secret."

"Well, it was like this. We had some tobacco but no cigarette papers. Of course you can buy them at the slop chest, but they make you pay two prices and we were broke anyway, so we tore sheets out of our Bibles to roll cigarettes with."

After this there was nothing more to be said. They had proved that they were desperate men, but I couldn't help thinking that Mr. Wood would have winked had I told him, just as he did at the boys when he was playing the organ.

The Rev. Dr. A. R. Mansfield has been head of the institute since 1895 and Mr. Wood has been lay assistant since 1903. His work is largely among the young apprentice boys—mostly from British ships. He asked me not to talk about him.

"If you want to give credit to any one," he said, "give it to the Seamen's Benefit Society. It is composed of young society women in New York, who have helped us immeasurably with our work. They provide money for the theatre parties which we give the boys in winter time and have done a lot of other things. We have never asked them for anything which they have not responded to with the utmost generosity.

"You see we are not narrow in our views. We don't ask the boys what church they attend. They get the benefit of our services and of the society of the people who work in the institute, and we believe that we can show the value of religion better by example than by precept. We believe, too, that these boys need more than prayers and sermons.

"If they were allowed to go ashore with no definite destination they would be almost sure to get into bad company and bad surroundings, for they aren't much more than children, and many of them have never been away from the influence of their parents. It is excellent discipline for them and they become self-reliant men in a very few years, but they need guidance. They are healthy, normal boys, and they need amusement, too, of a wholesome kind. This is what the Seamen's Church Institute tries to give them.

"Some people may regard it as in a way a foreign enterprise, but we regard it as distinctly American. America owes something to every person who sets foot on her shores if it is no more than a course in welcome. We send these boys back to their ships with the feeling that America is a great country. We show them a clean, healthy, happy New York, instead of the sordid evil sets which they might easily find if they wandered around the docks alone."

By the time the launch had made the rounds of the ships in the harbor there were about twenty boys on board. The sixteen-year-old had grown confidential. He had told me about his brothers and sisters and was discussing women's fashions. He thought the short full skirts were very jolly, much more than the "bubbles" girls wore two years ago.

"The girls in London," he confided to me, "carry walking sticks and smoke cigarettes. The girls in America don't smoke—at least not the girls we meet at the mission." He looked at me questioningly, but I decided to keep the secrets of New York girls and let him get his impressions of us from the Seamen's Church Institute.

The rain still continued and it was growing dark—much as it was only 6 o'clock. We [illegible] the dock and could see the light in the tower of the Seamen's Church Institute, shining out across the water like a welcome light from the window of home. But the eye cannot measure the actual distance over which it shines, for its light and warmth are carried to every port in the world in the hearts of grateful women and homesick boys, who look forward to New York Harbor as only second to the home port, in its wealth of good cheer and happiness.

Tore out leaves to roll cigarettes.

A tempting invitation.