The Great Seal of the United States

SOME English writers declare that the American colonies desired to be independent ever since the English revolution in 1688, but Washington, the noblest American, wrote to the contrary as late as October, 1774: "I can announce as a fact that it is not the wish or interest of any government upon this continent, separately or collectively, to set up for independence."

In the Quaker City, on the Fourth of July, 1776, the State House bell proclaimed "Liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof"; the immortal Declaration of Independence was signed by America's loyal patriots; and a committee was appointed to prepare a great seal for the new empire—the baby republic which was four hours old, and no one felt certain would live.

Six weeks later, Jefferson, Du Simitiere, Dr. Franklin and John Adams, each presented a different design in which the sentiments of the people were well expressed. It was decided that Jefferson combine the ideas of all into one compact description of a proper device for the great seal. He did so, and it is now preserved, in his own handwriting, in the office of the secretary of state at Washington.

Neither this device nor any of the individual ones were considered, because a weightier subject engaged the mind of congress—something more important than the making of a seal for a government that "seemed for a long time to have no more stable foundation than paper—a paper declaration of existence and a paper currency!"

In March, 1779, John Jay appointed a committee, which two months later decided the seal should be four inches in diameter, but the design for it was yet wanting. Du Simitiere's new device, together with the old ones were considered then, and a year later, and reconsidered in April, 1782, still congress was not satisfied and despairingly referred the whole matter to Charles Thomson, its secretary.

Will Barton submitted two designs, and Mr. Thomson rejected one as too elaborate, but accepted the smaller sketch for the reverse of the seal. It represented an unfinished pyramid with MDCCLXXVI on its base symbolizing the incomplete but growing republic. In the zenith was the AllSeeing Eye of Providence in a radiant triangle (the trinity) whose glory should extend over the republic.

Adams, while in England negotiating for peace, became acquainted with Sir John Prestwick, an antiquarian and a friend of the Americans. Conversing with him one day, on the bright prospects of America, Adams mentioned the fact that his countrymen were searching for a device for the national coat of arms. Sir John suggested that an escutcheon bearing thirteen perpendicular red and white stripes, with a blue chief spangled with thirteen stars would be an appropriate design, and to give it more consequence, place it, without supporters, on the breast of a displayed eagle, as emblematic of self-reliance. This device was withheld from congress for three years, hoping some American would conceive a better one, and not be indebted to a titled aristocrat of the country with which it was at war. But Sir John Prestwick's device was accepted and placed upon an upright, bald-headed eagle spread across the seal, holding in his dexter talon an olive branch (denoting the desire for peace); in his sinister talon a bundle of thirteen arrows (denoting the condition of America at that time). The spread eagle, symbol of power and authority, represented congress, and America is the only part of the globe in which the bald-headed eagle is found.

This was accepted by congress in June, 1872, with Will Barton's sketch for the reverse side.

—H. F. Brockett in The American Boy.

A Chance for Journal Juniors

TO every boy sending The Journal ten new subscriptions for a month paid in advance at 35 cents a month each we will give a nice Watch (nickel) guaranteed for one year.

For forty monthly subscriptions paid in advance we will give a nice Gold Watch suitable for boy or girl.

Get to work at once and earn a Watch.

MYSTERIOUS LOST RIVER

Rugged Region of the Hoosier State Abounding in Natural Curiosities.

ONE of the wonders of Indiana is Lost river. The region through which it runs is the most rugged in the state. This mysterious stream rises at Carter's creek, in Northeast township, and sinks in Orleans township. It begins to sink at the old Maxwell mill and gradually grows smaller and smaller for a couple of miles, and disappears apparently through fissures in the rocks. Lost river, after disappearing near the Maxwell mill, filters through the ground for about seven miles and rises again in a large spring at the foot of a high bluff in the town of Orangeville.

For at least ten months in the year the bed of the river for the seven miles between the places where the river disappears and rises again is dry. But when the rains fall and the freshets appear, the rock fissures are not able to take the water and the dry bed is filled with a torrent that would float a large steamboat. Lost river, after its last appearance, flows through southern Indina, empties into White river and finally finds a outlet in the Ohio.

All along the course of Lost river there are wonderful natural curiosities. On the old Lindley farm, one-half mile west of the wagon bridge on the Paoli and Orleans road, there is a cavity in the ground. In the wet season the water runs into this cavity, but in the dry season it can be explored. About one hundred and fifty yards inside this cavity a stream of water is found, running at right angles with the opening. At the end of this cavity is a large room, perhaps twenty-five feet high, and a great mound of earth that has been washed in by the water. In this cavern are pools in which are found eyeless fish. Bats' cave is two miles distant. The ground in that locality is comparatively level, until it begins to sink down and the cave is found. In this cavern the bats congregate in winter, and Major John R. Sampson of Paoli says he has frequently seen bats enough hanging to the roof and sides of this cave to fill a large wagon.

The most wonderful of all the caves is called "The Gulf," which is located two miles from Bats' Cave, on the Huddleson farm. The land is level, except about fifteen acres, which is gradually depressed until it becomes twenty-five feet deep. At the foot of this depression, in the dry season, there gushes forth a spring of pure water. The stream from the spring runs about twenty feet and then disappears again and it is generally thought that this is one branch of the Lost river. On the east side of "The Gulf" is a perpendicular wall thirty feet high, on which grows a great number of large forest trees. On the depressed fifteen acres the owner of the farm raises grain when the water is low. On the west side of the depression there are a number of caves, many of them having been explored for some distance. In several of these caves are found stalactites and stalagmites of great purity and beauty, and in the subterranean streams are found several varieties of blind fish, blind craws, etc. Another point of interest on Lost river is Pitcher's cave. At Pitcher's Cave the earth has given away for a distance of about eight hundred feet and left an opening, into which could be driven a load of hay and a four-horse team. From one side of this cave bubbles up a stream of clear, cold water that runs across the cave and then disappears as suddenly as it appeared.

Geologists have not yet fully explained the mystery of Lost river, but they believe that the foundation of Orange county is honeycombed and that future generations will make surprising discoveries.—Indianapolis News.

The Gingerbread Man

Humpty, dumpty, dickery dan,
Sing hey, sing ho, for the gingerbread man!
With his smile so sweet and his form so neat,
And his gingerbread shoes on his gingerbread feet.

His eyes are two currants, so round and so black;
He's baked in a pan lying flat on his back;
He comes from the oven so glossy and brown,
The loveliest gingerbread man in town!

And why is his gingerbread smile so sweet?
And why is his gingerbread form so neat?
And why has he shoes on his gingerbread feet?
Because he is made for my Teddy to eat.

—Eva E. Rowland.

IN THE MYSTIC ORIENT

Marvelous Performances of Hindu Fakirs That Cause Travelers to Wonder.

STRANGE stories are told of the mystic powers of Hindu fakirs. Careful attention has not discovered the secret of their startling illusions with certainty; but Captain James Parker, the English traveler lately returned from India, believes they perform these tricks by means of hypnotism. One incident which he describes bears out his view.

The trick which is acknowledged to be the greatest of these Hindu mystic performances, says Captain Parker, and the one that has been described by trustworthy persons too often to be doubted, is the one in which the fakir throws a ball of twine into the air above him, until it disappears from sight. The loose end of the string he holds in his hand, and after the boy assistant has climbed up the string until he, too, is out of sight, the fakir himself follows, with a knife between his teeth.

The spectators, surprised when both boy and man climb out of sight, are horrified when the boy's severed head, arms and legs, followed by the trunk, fall to the ground, and the man slides down close behind. Their astonishment is increased when the fakir gathers the severed members and restores the boy to life.

Well, I saw this performance once, and once I didn't see it; and the latter experience was more wonderful than the other. I had some London friends visiting me, and after having left them for a few minutes on the veranda of my bungalow, I saw, as I was returning, the same fakir and his assistant whom I had seen perform the trick, standing about forty feet in front of my friends, apparently preparing to begin a performance. As I was about as far behind the natives as my friends were in front of them, and had not been observed, I stood quietly where I was.

The man placed a drawn knife between his teeth, took the usual ball of twine in his right hand, made a motion as if throwing it into the air, and then stood perfectly quiet. My friends on the veranda were looking into the upper air with astonishment on their faces, which in a minute turned to a look of horror as their eyes came back to the ground. In another minute their countenances lighted up with pleasure, and they applauded roundly.

They could not say enough about the wonderful performance they had seen, and they were astonished beyond measure when I told them I had been as near the fakir as they, and had seen nothing of what had so wonderfully impressed them.

If that was not hypnotism, what was it?

"BARBARA FRIETCHIE."

There has been a good deal of discussion lately over the question whether Whittier's stirring poem, "Barbara Frietchie," had any real foundation of facts. In connection with this dispute a letter from Whittier himself, in 1880, has been published, and seems to show that the poet had no very strong belief in the legend which he made so famous. The letter is as follows:

"Oak Knoll, Danvers, Mass., 10 Mo., 19, '80.—My Dear Friend—I had a portrait of the good Lady Barbara from the saintly hand of Dorothea Dix, whose life is spent in works of love and duty, and a cane made of wood from Barbara's cottage, sent me by Dr. Steiner of the Maryland senate. Whether she did all that my poe mascribed to her or not, she was a brave and true woman. I followed the account given me in a private letter and in the papers of the time. I am very truly thy friend, —John G. Whittier."

GLOVES OF FAIRY THREAD.

The latest society fad is to possess a pair of gloves woven from spider silk. A popular French hosier states that as much as 200 francs is constantly being paid by leaders of fashion for a pair of gloves made from cocoon silk. It is interesting to observe that one firm calculates that it requires 1,350,000 yards of single spider thread to make one square yard of silk suitable for dress material. The thread varies in thickness from a thousandth to the four-thousandth part of an inch, and will bear aweight of sixty grains.—Modern Society.

FAVORABLE TO LONG LIFE.

People usually live longer in islands and small peninsulas than on continents. Barbadoes, Greece, Madeira and the Shetlands are all favorable to long life.

A SAUCY MIMIC

The Master Silently Approved A Bit of Schoolboy Mimicry.

Seldom indeed did a schoolmaster of the olden time regard with toleration a joke perpetrated among his pupils in school hours. Pranks so mild that in our day they would meet no sterner reprimand than a shake of the head or a word of caution were then sternly punished with rod or ferule, frequently accompanied by thunders of rebuke. Nevertheless it is related of "Master Chase" of ancient Newbury, in Massachusetts, that he once forgave, even manifestly although silently approved, an audacious bit of schoolboy mimicry indulged in by one of his scholars.

There was in his school a boy, one of the older pupils, who was peculiarly pompous and self-conceited, and who had an annoying habit, too, of boasting of his father's wealth and the general superiority of everything belonging to his family.

One New Year's a watch was given to him,—a large, fat, silver watch,—which he carried upon a long silver chain, from which depended also two heavy silver seals and an immense silver key. This gorgeous combination he wore to school, where he swelled and strutted intolerably, jingle-jangling his decorations before the eyes of his fellows,—and awakening the envy of the small fry and the giggling contempt of the girls. The other big boys were disgusted, and even the master was observed to scowl derisively at the resplendent waistcoat and appurtenances of the dandy dunce.

The afternoon session came. All had taken their places save one absentee, and the hush immediately preceding the reading lesson had settled upon the assembly when the door opened and the tardy pupil entered, made his bow with an air of imperturbable gravity, and walked up the aisle to his place. All eyes were upon him. He wore a long chain, the curb to a bridle, dangling from his pocket; from this swung two great seals cut out of sole leather and an enormous key. He moved and carried himself with an excellent burlesque imitation of the dandy's ludicrous strut, lifting his feet high as he walked, so that his chain jangled and pendants swung violently at every step.

Of course there was a ripple of laughter, and Master Chase looked up; his face twitched, and he was seized with a prolonged fit of coughing, so that it was some minutes before he was able to rap on the desk for silence and bid the class proceed. All that afternoon the braggart blushed and fidgeted and his saucy parodist pranced, glittered and jingled, but the master would notice nothing.

The next day both lads came quietly to school, and the watch and the curb chain were both left at home.—Youth's Companion.

Eventide

It is the hush of eventide,
And all the world is still,
The pasture gates are open wide,
The fold comes down the hill.

They stop and graze along the way,
And then they saunter on;
The birds have flown unto their nests,
We hear no more their song.

The shepherd blows his pibroch shrill,
And from the vale and hill
The echoes sound, the fold is safe
Within the sheep corral.

He stops and scans them one by one,
Each ewe and lamb can tell.
Then turns and goes his homeward way,
Content that all is well.