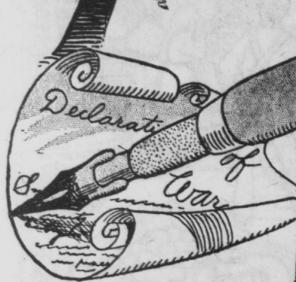


THE WISHES IN THE MINE



DEEP in the earth, in the mother-rock, where nothing, absolutely nothing, could be seen, because it was 500 feet deep under the grass and the flowers and the sunlit plain and the hills, and where nothing could be heard, or ever, ever had been heard, except the sound of waters rushing hither and thither and up and down, each searching for a place of escape, three pieces of iron ore sat and talked to each other.

Their conversation was exceedingly intelligent; for two of them talked about themselves, and if a person cannot talk intelligently about himself it isn't likely that he can ever talk intelligently about anything else.

"Really," said the top piece of ore, "really, it is quite ridiculous. Here am I, the finest quality of magnetic iron, as I think I have told you before, wasting my talents in holding the crushing weight of the earth on my shoulders. I shudder to imagine what would become of the rest of you if my wonderful strength were to give out. It is awful."

"As for that," said the piece of ore just below, "I am holding my share. Sometimes I feel sure that I will have to yield just a bit; but if I did, do you know what would happen? There would be an earthquake and houses and churches would fall helter-skelter. That is what would happen. But I agree with you that we are wasting our time. I have within me the ability to do a great deal for the world; it is something that cannot be done in a dark place like this, where there is not even a toad to admire one or to learn from the wisdom that one has acquired by steady thought through the ages."

The third piece of ore said nothing. It was the lowest of all, and it was actually holding all the weight. The great pressure had made it so strong and solid that it was really the very finest ore of all. But it lacked the power of expression.

It thought, however, that if it could speak as eloquently as its two friends it would declare that it was quite sufficient for a piece of iron ore, however excellent, to sit tight and do its duty, whether it be in the blackness of a mine or the sun of the upper air.

But it did not say so; and the other two pieces continued to wish for deliverance and a chance to show their quality.

Suddenly one day they heard a new sound; the first sound except the rushing of waters that they had heard from the time they were born. They wondered what it was, but they could not guess, for, of course, they could not recognize the sound of pickaxes, since they had never heard of such things.

That is what it was, however; and every day it became louder, until, all at once, one day there came the loudest stroke of all, and the three ores were blinded by the first beam of light.

"Hurrah!" cried a voice. "We have struck the finest strata of ore that I ever saw!"

"A strata!" said the top ore to itself. "So that is what I am. Thank goodness, I always knew that I had talent."

But soon all thoughts were driven out of its head, for a terrible pain shot through its very center. That was a steam drill, boring chug! chug! into it.

"I am afraid that the world is coming to an end," said the ore to its two friends, who were still undisturbed in the lower layers of the mine. "I have such a violent pain that I am sure things cannot last."

But the drill stopped after a time



and something black was poured into the wound and pounded in.

"I wonder what they are doing now," whispered the ore. "One certainly has strange experiences when one is a strata of the finest ore. You may be glad that you are not as talented as I am. It brings its own troubles with it."

Just then a miner lit a fuse that led into the black stuff in the wound. And in another minute all the ores in the mine thought that surely the top ore had been correct when it prophesied the end of the world; for there was a tremendous roar and then a withering blast of fire and then everything was filled with choking fumes.

But when these cleared away, the world was still just as solid as it ever had been; the only sufferer was the top piece of ore, which had been blown into a thousand pieces.

However, its conversational ability had not been at all injured by the experience. Indeed, it had been increased, for each fragment spoke for itself.

"We have moved!" they cried. "We have moved. Now we only hope that you will not be crushed by the weight of the earth, for we cannot hold it up any longer. We are going on our travels, and we shall achieve something."

So on its travels it did. With rattle and rattle the black ore-cars came thundering down from the daylight to the dark and carried the broken ore away to the surface, where it was seized by human hands and steel hands and beaten and crushed and melted and fused and rolled and welded until it felt quite certain that the whole round earth was doing nothing except to work over it.

So it stretched and stiffened itself and shone with vanity until one day it heard a voice say:

"This is fine steel. We will take it for our pen factory."

"Well, well!" said the ore, which was now steel, to itself: "How quickly true merit is recognized. To think that I am to go to the pen factory and to become a writer. How the other ores would envy me if they knew it!"

This was said so pompously that the men said: "Listen to the fine temper of this steel. It actually sings."

So the ore, which was now steel, went in state to the pen factory and was made into a million times a million steel pens. These went abroad into the world—Greenland and Wall Street and Paris and Hoboken and even into the palace of the Emperor, where one must be well recommended indeed.

Immediately all these millions of pens began to write. Unluckily, however, most of them were in such a hurry that they did not stop to think, but imagined that it was quite enough to be full of ink. So it was not long before the world was full of poor

poetry and of something that the pens called philosophy, though it really and truly was only particularly opaque ink.

Other pens wrote wills and contracts; and these in turn gave abundant employment to pens that had entered the law. The pens that went into Wall Street had a responsible position. Every time they wrote something it was sure to make one man as poor as it made another rich. So they said that they were keeping things balanced exactly.

The pen that went into the Emperor's palace reached the very greatest and finest achievement of all. It signed a declaration of war, and lived universally respected thereafter on a crimson velvet cushion in the Imperial Museum.

And this declaration of war was the thing that led to the deliverance of the second piece of ore. Men entered the mine and said:

"Ah, here is a grand layer of iron, the very finest kind. It is just what we need for our cannon. Hurry, hurry, and get it out."

"Do you hear that, old stick-in-the-mud?" cried the ore to the lower one, which was as silent as ever. "Do you hear that? They are going to make a military character of me. That is what it is to have true genius and to be born to command. But you are lucky to be stupid and dull for I can feel in my bones that my unusual powers of mind will bring me much suffering."

And so it was. The second ore was treated even more painfully than the first piece; but when it was all done, it passed through the streets in triumph with ten thousand people waving their hats and cheering, for the layer of ore had become a hundred immense cannon, each with a fierce mouth, wide open.

The Archbishop himself blessed them and then they went forth on



ships and became sailors. Every time they spoke, other ships went down into the ocean, never to be seen again. At last they all lay with their angry mouths fronting the land, where armies of men lay behind forts and earthen walls.

One morning they all spoke at once; and the earthen mounds seemed to melt away in dust, while all the men who had been behind them were dead.

Soon the forts and cities began to suffer. The walls crumbled away, one by one. Church steeples toppled. Houses fell into ruins. Fires sprang

up wherever a cannon sent its message.

So far did they send out their destruction that the bare eye could not perceive all the ruin; men had to use telescopes to see how much the cannon had destroyed.

"This," said the biggest cannon of all, "is achievement indeed. Suppose that our old friend could see us now."

"Yes, indeed," the other cannon thundered and roared and barked, with voices graduated according to their sizes, "we are, indeed, 'sing great and worthy deeds. Did you see us knock the town hall down? It had

stood for five hundred years and never a storm of all the storms that ever were loosed could move it. But we did it with one word."

"Did you see how beautiful the land was when we appeared?" boomed the big cannon. "Look at it now. This is, indeed, the proud—"

Just then something seemed to choke it. It could not utter another word.

"Cracked, by Jove!" said a man's voice. "Our best gun is out of action. We must withdraw the ship."

"What's this?" cried the lesser guns on the other ships. "Why are we suddenly doing so much less damage?"

"Because your big partner is burst," cried the guns of the land, with fresh courage. "He did all the work. We will show you little barkers now what we can do."

"This is terrible!" said the guns. "Too much is too much. We cannot fight with people of twice our size."

One by one, they ceased talking; some cracked, like the big cannon, because they thought it was fashionable; and others were struck by balls from the land and rendered insensible. At last the ships had to turn around and run away to the sea.

Once there, the father of all the storms came along and began to dance with them. He danced till they were not only out of breath, but dizzy. So, to save themselves, they began to throw the guns overboard, letting them plunge straight down into the deep green sea. And there they sit to this day, talking about their deeds.

The mouth of the biggest gun of all is turned straight upwards, and a beautiful blue and green lobster lives there in magnificence.

He loves to hear the cannon speak of its career as a military character.

"Ah, yes," he sighs on such occasions. "One must be born with talent. My brother was that way. He had the artistic temperament and he went into the upper world, where I hear that he entered society as a salad. But I have never been able to rise beyond my sphere. I love, however, to hear about those who do. It is very improving."

Now all the land was blackened. The cities were ruined. All over the world, wherever the Emperor's pen had sent its declaration of war and the cannon had spoken with other cannon, people were miserable, and, worst of all, they were hungry; for the fields that had been full of crops were blasted and there was nothing to eat anywhere.

The Emperor called his generals and colonels who had advised him to declare war.

"Can you feed my people?" he asked them.

"You will have to accept our resignations," they replied haughtily. "It is we think that we should live to be insulted by you after our faithful service. You should know that we have been trained to kill people and not to feed them."

So the Emperor called his financiers, and they explained to him that they could feed the people if, first, they could get money enough to buy

food, and if, secondly, it were possible to buy food even if they had the money. They then withdrew to live on their incomes.

The Emperor tried everybody he knew—statesmen and diplomats, and at last even the court jester. But none of them could imagine how one could feed people.

So he gave it up and issued proclamations. These did not, however, provide many meals in the Empire.

All this time the third and lowest piece of ore, patiently supporting the weight of the earth, sat and wished that it could do something noble and romantic like its two friends. And one day, when the people of the world were so hungry that they were talking of eating the Emperor himself, men tapped its broad back, and said: "Goodness! Here is a better layer of iron than any that ever came out of the mine. What a fine thing this would be for our cannon. Then we should have won the war; for this surely would not have cracked."

The piece of ore felt its rusty red heart leap at the words; but the next moment it was overcome with disappointment, for the voice went on:

"Well, there is need for our cannon now. But we can make this into steel for ploughs."

"Alas!" said the ore to itself. "Alas! My brilliant friends were right when they said that I was dull. I shall never become anything now, but must burrow blindly into the earth."

Still, the ore did not forget its duty, though it was sadly disappointed. It stretched itself and became limber and hard, elastic and stiff by turns under the hammers and rolls and fires that men applied to it, until it was the most perfect of steel; so perfect that it was put on exhibition, and men came from all countries to study it.

Even the Emperor came to see it, because his Professor of Metallurgy told him that the country had regained its old place in the industrial world by turning out such a magnificent piece of metal.

The ore that was now steel did not become vain, for it still thought of its companions who had become writers and military characters, while it was only good enough for farming.

"Such ploughshares were never seen," said people, when the steel was at last fashioned into more than ten thousand implements. "It is well, indeed; for we need strong ploughs to break up the withered land, that is full of cannon balls and stones from the ruined walls."

"It is true that we are but ploughshares," said the biggest ploughshare to the rest, "but it is our duty. See that you do your best."

"How we wish we were pens or cannons," replied the ploughshares in chorus. "But there is no use in lamenting. We will furrow the earth as it has never been furrowed before."

"Ah, children!" said the earth. "I have been waiting long for you. Drive in deep and wipe out the cannon scars and the misery of the battle. Of all my children, you are the only ones who will do anything glorious."

"What!" said the ploughshares all together, so that the farmers said "Hear them ring."

"What!" they cried. "We thought that we were the stupid ones. Did not the other two ores become writers and military persons?"

"Yes," said the earth. "But the pens only talked and the cannon only destroyed. You are going to produce."

"Hurrah!" said the ploughshares, cutting the earth swiftly into long, straight furrows. "Hurrah!"

And they have never said another word since; for they are so busy doing things that they have never again had time to waste in conversation.

JULIUS MULLER.

Dorothy Ficken's Funny People



THE THUMPWOG.

This fearful creature is the Thumpwog. It is his savage habit to thump on the floors of theatre, lecture rooms, and even churches when he deems something worthy of applause. He often dies young, and when he survives to grow old, he lives universally lamented.

A Misunderstood Bottle

The hydrographic office in San Francisco has always found the Pacific Coast skippers willing helpers in its work of discovering new currents and rendering more accurate the marine navigation charts. One of the most active observers among the master marines was Capt. Calhoun of the bark Ceylon. On his trips to Honolulu and Tahiti he would often cast overboard a bottle containing a piece of paper upon which would be inscribed the latitude and longitude of the ship's position when the bottle was thrown overboard.

He did this one day down in the South Seas. The paper in the bottle read:

"This was thrown overboard from the bark Ceylon on Jan. 10, 1901, in lat. — and long. —. The finder will please return to Capt. Calhoun at Honolulu or San Francisco."

About two and a half years after the bottle with this inscription had been thrown over in midocean two roughly clad sailors came aboard the Ceylon in San Francisco and knocked at the cabin door. The steward appeared.

"Is the captain in?" asked one of the seamen in strong Scandinavian accent.

"Yes, but he isn't up yet," replied the steward.

"Den give him dis," said one of the strangers, and he gave the steward a package done up in a newspaper.

When the captain arose he undid the package and found the bottle he had thrown overboard two years previously. He looked at the paper, but, to his disappointment, found no record of when or where it had been found. Then he turned it over and read:

"Yure botel is returned as requested. But next time you throw botel overboard have something in beside de smell and a piece of paper."



THE DISTANCE PUZZLE

A page leaves the castle on foot just as a messenger on horseback arrives at the drawbridge. They meet 16 feet from the castle. The drawbridge is 84 feet from the castle and is half way between the castle and the forest. When the mounted messenger is leaving the castle, the page, returning on foot, is just emerging from the forest. The page, on foot, travels one-sixth as fast as the mounted messenger. At what point do they meet again?

True Fish Stories

In no division of the animal kingdom are found more curious creations than among fishes. The flying fish is so well known that almost every one has seen either a dried specimen in a museum or a flock of live ones skimming over the surface of the sunlit tropic waters which they inhabit. Yet even to those most familiar with flying fishes it is always interesting to see these little creatures change themselves into birds, as it were, and go flying over the sea with great swiftness, soaring frequently as high as a ship's deck.

Their broad and filmy fins become veritable wings as they rise from the water, and remain so as long as they are wet. But as soon as the fins become dry they shrivel up and then down falls Mr. Flying-fish on deck or back into the water.

These fish are very numerous in West Indian waters and are excellent to eat, the people of the island of Barbadoes especially priding themselves on their skill in cooking them.

A great many thousand years ago there used to be a fish which probably had the power of flying as the flying fish of to-day has. It has vanished from among living things now, but workmen, breaking their way through ancient rocks, sometimes come upon the bodies of these fishes turned into stone, and scientific men have called the species by the hard name of Pterichthys, which is only the Greek for winged fish.

These same scientific men say that these fish were so fond of their wings that they never could have made their way through the water by swimming, but must either have flown over the surface or crawled about on the bottom of the great Devonian sea.

In this they were not so fortunate as the flying fish of to-day, which can swim as fast as they can fly and as easily.

Both the Pterichthys and the mod-



"Ho! I can bough," said Mabel. "As you can plainly see, I cannot bough as many times at once, as can a Tree!"

ern flying fish may fairly be called "bird-fishes."

There is another sort of fish that might be called the "flower fish," for the individuals of the species grow up from the sea bottom as a plant would grow and look like lilies on a stem, wherefore they are called sea-lilies. But they are real fish nevertheless, with mouths and digestive organs and all the other attributes of animal life, though they look so like plants that the unscientific person would be deceived when he saw one.