

California's Greatest Musical Freak. | America's Greatest Matrimonial Freak.

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Possessing an affectionate nature, he shows a dog-like devotion to the members of the family, and in return never fails to receive a kind word and caress, which are to him as essential as food, for his keen, nervous sensitiveness will cause him to burst into tears at the slightest unkind tone or look. There must be no discords in his world; all is harmony.

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This time it was a lively Scottish air, and as the notes came faster, faster, one spontaneous burst, and Buddy was dancing about much as a young elephant would cavort, all the time clapping his hands and grinning until he spied sitting in the doorway his favorite brother Dick, for whom he made straightway and began a systematic search through his pockets, at last finding his reward with which he went off like a pleased child.

What a curious problem this involves, considered in the context of the entire intellectual structure of this boy. In intellect, reason and judgment he is an imbecile, entirely incapable of comprehending the simplest conversation on ordinary subjects, yet possessed of this remarkable ability to retain and produce every musical note that falls upon his sensitive ear. Placed where the work of the great masters could be heard, what possibility does not lie with the phonographic accuracy of that memory and these ten supple fingers?

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influence over the child. Quieted in a moment by melody, be it either vocal or instrumental, a discordant note or harsh sound would cause the tiny body to writhe as with intense agony. Later, when the years passed and the helpless condition of this boy became apparent, the fact that melodies followed when his fingers touched the piano did not seem to cause comment among the members of the family, but was accepted as a matter of course. And the neighbors, who in this country of stock farm and fruit ranch are few and far between, would listen to the music of that foolish Blair boy as they called him, but instituted no inquiry as to the cause of this phenomenon. In the course of conversation I am told that Buddy has an inordinate love for flowers, birds and animals, flying into a paroxysm of rage when a horse or dog is punished in his presence. Chancing one day upon his brother, who was killing a chicken to be prepared for the noonday meal, he uttered a cry of physical pain, and he hurried into the house, chattering and gesticulating. As he became quieter he rocked himself to and fro, looking at no one and for hours refusing all food.

Actual physical debility follows this condition of mind. Consequently everything of a disagreeable nature is kept from him, and he now lives in a world of his own with his music, birds and flowers; his very helplessness making him the pet of the family, the members of which are intelligent and entertaining.

Two of the brothers have until this last year been teaching school, and the sister, the only one at home, a bright, pretty girl, takes almost entire charge of Buddy, who obeys her every wish. She washes his face, combs his hair and, tucking a snowy napkin about his neck, sets before him his dinner, which she has cut for him, for though his ten fingers can execute upon the piano that which would take others years to be taught, yet they fail to properly manipulate the knife and fork; he eats his food after the manner of Adam, conveying it to his mouth by his fingers.

A preference for foods? Yes. He almost lives on fruit and vegetables, but like a child, is fond of cakes and sweets. As we prepared to say good-by to Buddy was induced by the bribe of more candy to play for us, but his mood changed now, and only the memory of the last service at church was given. "At the Cross" was followed by another hymn, "Rock of Ages," one of his favorites, and this time he accompanied it with his own queer words.

All is yet uncertain, for he has not that great guide to short cuts and open sesame of barriers—money. It is a long story, this wife hunt of his, and now aside from his lack of money there is another obstacle in the way of his attainment of his darling wish and that is his bashfulness.

The Man Who Would Wed

HUNTING for a wife, Ide Neff, whose home is the United States, has traveled 86,000 miles, visited more than ten thousand towns and is yet a bachelor.

He has kept a standing advertisement in a Chicago matrimonial paper, and to further help himself in his lifelong quest has written a booklet in which he cooes his yearning for a mate and tells some facts for those who may take an interest in him.

In its opening paragraph he thus explains the reason of his weary chase: "To have you understand better why I am a wanderer, will say, once upon a time in the long ago I had a sweetheart (dead now). Met in school; love on sight. I was too bashful to speak. Ten years later she married another. Well, 'tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. Her memory has kept me out of bad company."

Filled with that lonely feeling, even in the thickest crowds, he started on his travels, always going as far as his money would take him, pausing only to earn more. Searching feminine faces everywhere, finding never a one which could take the place of that which he had lost forever by his early bashfulness.

The travel in search of a mate at last turned his passion from wife-hunting to travel for travel's sake alone, and he was willing at one time to marry any one who would bring him money enough to enable him to make his mileage; reach the hundred thousand mark.

So he continued to feel, until one day when he was picking oranges on the Pine-apple River in Florida there came a letter and a photograph from the State of Washington in the opposite corner of the United States; an answer to the little advertisement in the Chicago paper. There was in the wording of the letter and in



THE TRAIN COLLIDES WITH THE MULE.

the expression of the face something that promised to fill the void in his life, and away he went, walking, canoeing, steamboating and by rail on his long way across the continent to meet the writer of the letter.

He has just passed through San Francisco on what may prove to be the last lap of his race for a wife.

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That is the reason that he gives his story to the public. It is not for all, but for the one, that he tells it. He intends that the avowal of his affection hereinafter set forth shall be a declaration to the lady of his hopes, and in this way he makes the proposal that for a year has been hanging on his lips, which are all unused to amorous avowals.

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For twenty years, through twenty-six States and Territories, he has walked 35,000 miles, ridden 15,000 on passenger trains and the same distance on steamers and paddled 2600 miles in a canoe, making himself the champion in that line as well.

The rest of the 86,000 miles has been variously made on and under box and baggage cars, in stages, on bronco back, and even on the cowcatchers of engines, which last method was his favorite until a recent experience put an end to his desires for that sort of excitement and nearly ended life and travels as well.

This is his vivid story of that night accident:

"It was on the St. Louis and San Francisco line. I had a railroad ticket, but I like to travel for the sensations of traveling, rather than for the mere purpose of corporeal transportation.

"Leaving Pierce City the moon was just about full, and the black smoke from the zinc smelters drifted in picture-like clouds across its face. I did not care on such a night to be shut inside of a car, where all the world looks alike. Just as the train was ready to pull out I went ahead in the darkness and seated myself on the cowcatcher, well back under the extension front of the boiler.

"That is the best place of all for seeing things. Every object in range ahead of you seems to be flying straight in your face, and it takes some nerve to feel comfortable there, even if nothing does happen.

"It's like riding straddle of a cannon ball.

"We were going down an easy grade, with a long straightaway stretch of track in front. At the end of it was a white speck, which was growing constantly larger and seemed to be coming at me, a mile a minute. As we rushed upon it I saw that it was a white mule standing obstinately upon the track, while the whistle roared, the bell jangled double rings and steam screeched out of the cylinder cocks.

"But the mule was a mule and he did not care.

"I did. There was no place to go and no place to stay if the mule continued his mind to get suddenly aboard and ride with me.



IDE NEFF, THE MAN WHO HAS TRAVELED 86,000 MILES IN SEARCH OF A WIFE.

while the train went on with me, unhurt.

The greater part of Ide Neff's adventures have been as harmless to him although less spectacular than this one; which demonstrates the remarkable fact that one may spend half of his life traveling and meet with not the slightest accident. Yet there are those who fear a little ferry trip lest something befall them.

Though Mr. Neff has traveled continuously and realized what has been merely a dream with thousands—the dream we hope to realize when our ship comes in—he has done it all without money. He says that when you want to travel, the way to do it is to begin and travel—just start out. If you haven't any money do not let that stop you. Nothing but a policeman can do that if you really have a mind to go, and no officer of the law has ever yet laid a hand upon Mr. Neff, for he is a good man, and the constabulary are only looking for bad ones.

Most of us are self-managed to a life which we detest. There is no reason why we should not travel, except that we do not want to. We hamper ourselves by saying that we have our business affairs to attend to. Mr. Neff makes traveling his business, and he goes right on and attends to it. We would wait until we pack our trunks, or perhaps we have not one to pack and would have to wait until we got it. Neff has no trunk, does not want any and has nothing to pack in it. All he has is himself, and when he wants to travel he just puts one foot before the other and off he goes in the very way that nature intended him to do.

If he wants to travel farther or faster than his feet can take him, then he puts in a few days at work, which, by the way, he says can always be found anywhere in this much underrated country of ours by a man who is really looking for it.

So when he travels on foot it is only by choice and for the reason that he wants to see more of the country and its people than are on view from platform and deck.

He carries no baggage, this traveler with 86,000 miles' experience, and in that he is as was the great De Lesseps. It is cheaper to buy than to pay freight and be incumbered by impediments.

He is a miser, too, in his way. A miser in miles only. He cares not for anything but miles, as the regular miser cares only for the gold itself. When Neff travels he avoids shoelaces, cutoffs and crosscuts. The longest way round is the way that pleases him best, for then he has more miles to add to his string. That is the only thing he carries with him. In his mind is the record of the miles and the events that have happened as he traveled them. Every day that he has been moving he spins in thinking miles, miles, miles. Some time he will write a book. That will be when he has traveled a hundred thousand miles or secured a wife.

For he has a dual object, now that he has got so near the one without getting the other.

There is one limitation he has to his way of making his mileage, though, and that is that until he has seen each and every one of the different States he will not leave his native land. There is a patriotic idea in that—he desires to honor his own land in the fullest before he

leaves it. Another limitation, too, that goes almost without saying, and that is that he travels honestly, paying his way, unless for a freak or variety he takes, for a short time, one of the unconventional methods by which tramps project themselves across the landscape. Of course, in traveling so much one has to do something to vary the monotony, else he would come to be an itinerant automaton, like the gentleman of color who presides in the sleeping car and never knows what station or country it is, what the name of the river is, never feels more than half sure where he is in and doesn't care where he is, as long as there is a tip in sight.

But canoeing is Ide's favorite way of covering distance.

Then at the happy time when he has finished a season's work in Minnesota and starts to float down to the gulf he permits himself the luxury of some baggage, and with a companion, if he picks up a congenial one, paddles, sails and drifts down the meridians and across the parallels of latitude.

There is a freedom on the river that obtains nowhere else. The river people are cosmopolitan, for they see much life in passing, while the decadence of heavy river traffic has at the same time separated them from the hurry and bustle of the world. The country itself which borders the margins is returning to a more primitive condition, and all life is seen at its best. Fertility of soil is a natural consequence of the flowing river; the yield of fruit and vegetables makes the farmers liberal, and one may always have for the mere asking a bounteous supply from the gardens and orchards that lie behind the willow veil.

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BUDDY BLAIR.

In Tulare County, under the shadow of the Sierra Nevadas, in a little home made beautiful with flowers and sunshine, in a world of identity, of peace and of harmony, lives a strange child man. We toss our bridle to the boy and make our way through the old-fashioned garden where hollyhock and sunflowers nod with neighborly intimacy, where mignonette sheds an incense in our path and aisles look up saucily as we pass, and ascend the steps, where we are welcomed with true country hospitality by sweet-faced, silvery-haired Mrs. Blair.

"To speak with my boy?" she repeated in answer to my request. A moment's hesitation, then she led the way over the vine-covered veranda through the hall to the back porch, where we found him, seated in his favorite rocker, swaying his body to and fro in time to a peculiar musical cadence which seemed strangely out of harmony with the half-closed eyes and the vacant grin of idleness with which he noted our presence.

"How do you do, Buddy? See, I have brought you some candy." "Buddy likes candy," said the mother. "Buddy likes candy," he echoed as he held out his hand for the sweets. Truly nature has strange fancies; she is both kind and cruel.

This child-man, chosen by God to be anointed with the holy chrism, is Buddy Blair; the baby in a family of ten. Up

to the present age—twenty years—he has, and not unjustly, been regarded as an idiot, for his judgment and reason and even speech rank with that of a child of two years.

Possessing an affectionate nature, he shows a dog-like devotion to the members of the family, and in return never fails to receive a kind word and caress, which are to him as essential as food, for his keen, nervous sensitiveness will cause him to burst into tears at the slightest unkind tone or look. There must be no discords in his world; all is harmony.

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"But the mule was a mule and he did not care.

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"Never before did I make myself so small, as I tucked away in the little space under the projecting boiler front.

"Bang! went the mule and my hat and cane over the top of the smokestack,

while the train went on with me, unhurt.

The greater part of Ide Neff's adventures have been as harmless to him although less spectacular than this one; which demonstrates the remarkable fact that one may spend half of his life traveling and meet with not the slightest accident. Yet there are those who fear a little ferry trip lest something befall them.

Though Mr. Neff has traveled continuously and realized what has been merely a dream with thousands—the dream we hope to realize when our ship comes in—he has done it all without money. He says that when you want to travel, the way to do it is to begin and travel—just start out. If you haven't any money do not let that stop you. Nothing but a policeman can do that if you really have a mind to go, and no officer of the law has ever yet laid a hand upon Mr. Neff, for he is a good man, and the constabulary are only looking for bad ones.

Most of us are self-managed to a life which we detest. There is no