

HOME TOWN HELPS

WHY POORLY MANAGED CITIES

Inefficient Officials Placed in Charge of Affairs of Which They Know Nothing; Extravagance Follows.

A big city—whose affairs, says the Chicago Post, are more complex than those of any private corporation; whose revenues and expenditures are counted in many millions; whose administration affects the prosperity, health and morals of a million or more people—selects from among its citizens a politician, good fellow, joiner, and makes him its mayor. He appoints to office men of his own kind, chosen for personal or political reasons.

And then we wonder that extravagance, inefficiency and worse mark municipal government.

A big city puts on its council ward politicians and individuals who have never displayed a capacity for any useful occupation, and we wonder that the public interest is neglected.

A big city puts on its school board men who have no knowledge of educational problems, and we wonder that our schools are mismanaged.

It is the inefficiency of democracy, we say. Rather, it is the stupidity of people who have never tried to realize the possibilities of democracy; who have never given democracy a chance.

It is no essential principle of democracy to ignore the necessity of training for service. But that is what we have been doing. We persist in regarding public position as political jobs rather than as occasions for the employment of trained men in the doing of highly specialized work.

Mayor Mitchel of New York declares it to be his experience that trained men are practically unobtainable for municipal office. And that will remain true until we provide for their training and create a popular demand for their service.

The Wisconsin legislature is considering a bill to establish in the state university a training school for public service under a professor of public administration.

Every university has departments of political theory, but this school will deal with the practical problems of government and administration—municipal engineering, lighting, street making and cleaning, transportation, parks and playgrounds, health, drainage, education and the rest. It will endeavor to develop the practical expert in such matters.

LESSON FROM THE INDIANS

Natives Made Bread From Nuts and Other Products of the Forests That Still Exist.

Germany has sent her children to the forests for oils that are badly needed in the fatherland. Mere tots are employed to pick up beechnuts, which are rich in nutritious qualities vital to the health of the nation. If America is ever compelled by a great food shortage to return to nature, the present inhabitants of the United States will do well, according to the forest service of the department of agriculture, to take a lesson from the original owners of the soil. Thomas F. Logan writes in Leslie's. The forests of this country offer an amazing variety of edibles. American's beechnuts, butternuts, walnuts, pecans, chinquapins and hazelnuts are toothsome, highly nutritious, and may be used as a substitute for meat.

The Indians, according to forest service experts, mixed chestnuts with cornmeal and made a bread which was baked in corn husks, like tamales. Our redskin predecessors also manufactured a flour from the fruit of the oak. They pounded the acorns and leached out the tannin by treating the pulp with hot water. The result was a palatable and nourishing bread. Pine seeds, wild persimmons, wild crab apples, bulbs of the Judas tree and pods of the honey locust, cabbage, palmetto, mesquite and sassafras are excellent substitutes for cultivated fruits and vegetables. Nature is so prodigal of her riches in this country that America can never be starved to death by an "iron ring."

Poisoned Fish for Rats.

The city dump at Somerville, Mass., is headquarters for a rat army which has invaded the city. The authorities are carrying on a franc-tireur warfare against the invaders, and the enemy has been exacting reprisals on family larders.

Householders fear that the cold weather will drive the rats away from the dump to some more private and exclusive domicile.

Poisoned fish are scattered about the dump and boys police the vicinity to keep children, dogs and cats from interfering with the rats' repast.

Maund Unit of Weight.

The average Aden merchant prefers to calculate the weights of many of the commodities which he imports or exports, buys or sells, in terms of maunds. A maund is an Indian unit of weight having different values in various parts of that country, but having a value of 28 pounds in Bombay. It is the Bombay maund that is used extensively in Aden, and four maunds equal 112 pounds, the local hundred-weight.

PHIL

By MILDRED WHITE.

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The storm was coming. James Burrows let out the speed of his red car, hoping to reach the village five miles below before the rain should descend. The sky grew darker as thunder rolled about the encircling hills.

To the city lawyer the rough winding roads seemed almost impassable, impatiently he decided to seek shelter at a farmhouse not far distant, than hesitated undecidedly, as the sun gleamed for a moment in promise. As he slowed down near the gateway, a bent old man peered up at him.

"Good morning, uncle," the lawyer greeted, but the old man did not return his smile.

"Bad evening, mister," he replied, "go in to have one of our blowups. Better stop, hadn't ye an' wait inside?"

"Thanks," Burrows responded, "I think I can reach the village before the storm breaks, and have supper there."

The old man shook his head. "Don't believe it," he said, "we're alone here, Phil an' me, but I reckon Phil could pick up something for you to eat."

Turning, he cupped his hands and called to a blue-overalled figure hoeing in the distance.

"Phil," he screamed, "Phil." The lad bending over his work apparently did not hear.

"Never mind," Burrows said, "I'll take a chance and ride on."

"Wonder—" the old man asked, "if you could carry me along to the next house down there? See it?—the red one?"

"Certainly," the lawyer agreed, and the former seated himself in the car with evident pride.

When Burrows had disposed of his companion, the storm descended unexpectedly. Great sheets of rain swept against him, the wind threatened to blow his small car from its course, lightning flashed whiplike around the hilltops. Swiftly he turned about, with difficulty, making his way back to the old man's house. Uninvited he sheltered his car in the great white barn, and dashed breathlessly up the steps of the porch.

"Phil" was there before him, evidently the youth also had rushed to safety. His fresh face shone startled beneath the brim of his old felt hat at the stranger's approach, but he went on stolidly scraping the mud from the soles of his rubber boots.

"An old man—your father I suppose—" the lawyer said, "suggested that I wait here until the storm has abated." Burrows smiled. "He also intimated that you might 'pick up' something for me to eat, I'm furiously hungry."

The boy lounged in the doorway. "That was grandad," he answered laconically. His eyes studied the stranger. "Perhaps, I could find something," he said suddenly, and disappeared in the house. His heavy boots tracked the clean scrubbed floor, as the lawyer followed him inside, the rain-soaked old hat still rested upon Phil's head, as he deftly placed tempting food upon the table.

"Sit down," he said at last abruptly, and himself dropped into a wide armed chair at the opposite end of the wooden table.

"You and your grandfather live alone?" Burrows asked incredulously, as he buttered a flaky biscuit, "then you makes these?"

"Me," the youth answered, his tone was sullen. "Cooking, farming, everything—I do it all, but I won't much longer. Grandad's going to be married again—" a sneer curled the red lips—"that's where he's visiting now."

"And then?" the lawyer asked interestedly, "What are you going to do?"

Phil shook his head despondently. "Don't know," he replied. "Never had a chance to prepare for anything, had a fight with grandad every day I went to school, but I did the work mornings and evenings, and I made it. Now," the young voice broke discouragingly, "he don't need me any more."

Sudden unaccountable sympathy flamed in the lawyer's breast.

"Phil," he said, "if you will come with me—tomorrow, I'll give you a start in the world. Help is scarce at this time, I need you in my office."

Crimson spots glowed in the lad's round cheeks, quickly he rose to his feet. "You mean," he said, "that you'd take me there to the city, that you'd help me to—live."

The lawyer nodded silently. Then with sudden passionate motion the lad buried his face in his arms, his shoulders shaking with sudden sobs.

"Oh! I can't go," he cried and snatched the felt hat from his head. About the round childish face, fell a mass of golden hair, angrily Phil caught the hair and drew it like a cloak about her. "You see," she said, "I—I am his granddaughter, Phillippa. The overalls and boots were but my farming costume. I allowed you to think what you believed."

Tragic disappointment lingered in her eyes. The lawyer stood staring as though he too, saw a vision.

"Phillippa," he said slowly, "I've a mother back there in the city, who needs a companion like you, someone to teach—to love, to care for. When she comes for you, will you be ready to go back with her?"

And Phillippa said she would.

His Specialty.

"If you are worried about your insomnia, pick a quarrel with that amateur prizefighter."

"Why?"

"He can put you to sleep."

A Mysterious Burial in Siam

By WARREN MILLER

(Copyright, 1917, Western Newspaper Union.)

In Siam on the banks of the Klawng canal, not far from the city of Bangkok, lived Lim Thai in a thatched house elevated on posts and looking more like an antiquated barn than anything else. One night Lim Thai came home from a gambling house in Bangkok—the Siamese beat the Mexicans in gambling—having lost what little money he had, and settled himself to chewing the betel nut before turning in on his straw bed.

While thus engaged, the juice of the betel nut dripping through the openings in the floor, Lim looking through the crevices in the back of the house, uttered an exclamation of surprise and cunning satisfaction. His abode, though a primitive one, stood in the vicinity of the residence of Thee Wan, a rich ivory merchant. Lim had very good eyes and could distinguish distant objects with remarkable clearness.

He saw Thee Wan and his wife carrying from the rear of their house a box just large enough to contain a little child. Thee carried the box while his wife held a light. They took the box to a spot about a hundred yards from their house; Thee dug a hole in the ground; the box was placed in it, covered with earth; then the man and his wife knelt beside the spot, and they said their prayers. This being finished, Thee led his wife away, she weeping as though her heart would break.

Lim Thai was overjoyed. He had often gazed upon the palatial residence of Thee Wan and cursed his fate in having to live in such a humble abode as his own while Thee Wan resided in such splendor. Lim did not consider that while the merchant had worked hard for his comforts, he (Lim) had spent his time gambling.

Lim had a lively imagination, and evolved many explanations of the secret burial he had witnessed. This was his favorite theory: Thee Wan's wife had an orphan nephew, a minor, who would inherit a large fortune in elephants. The child had been under the care of his aunt. To get possession of the elephants, the couple had murdered the heir and buried him in the rear of their grounds in the dead of night.

While Lim was asleep that night he dreamed that Buddha had appeared to him and told him that his theory was correct, and directed him to send a message to Thee telling him that he knew his secret and unless he would send him a hundred tekels (about \$60) he would inform the king's officers that he had seen him and his wife bury their nephew at midnight.

Now, while Lim had every confidence in his dream and in Buddha, he would rather have examined the grave himself and confirmed the theory. Unfortunately, the grounds of Thee were inclosed and guarded by dogs. Lim would have poisoned the dogs, but the dog is a sacred animal in Siam, and Lim dared not commit such an unholy act. So he proceeded more discreetly, obeying Buddha's instructions, and sent an anonymous letter to Thee demanding blackmail.

Lim waited a week, and receiving no reply, he sent another message to Thee, this time demanding a thousand tekels for keeping the secret. Since this produced no effect he kept on sending demands, till tiring of threats, he sent one more message declaring that it was the last, and that if the money was not immediately forthcoming he would inform the king's judicial officers of what he had seen.

This, like the rest of Lim's messages, not producing any effect, he informed the king's chief prosecutor of the mysterious burial and awaited the result. He was soon summoned to court, where he told the whole story, including the elephant fortune, which had been confirmed by Buddha in his dream.

The king was very wroth when he heard of the elephants, for his majesty has a cinch on the elephants in Siam, and it is hands off by all others. He sent an order for Thee Wan to appear before him and answer to the charge that had been made against him and his wife. Thee appeared at the court, and begged that the king send his chamberlain to his house; the grave should be opened, and the contents of the box exposed.

The same day the chamberlain, Thee Wan, and his wife, and Lim, with attendants from the court, stood beside the spot where the burial had taken place. The grave was opened, the lid removed, and there lay the remains of a little monkey.

Thee explained that it had been a pet of his wife's, that there was no nephew, no elephant fortune; indeed, that Lim had coined the story out of his brain.

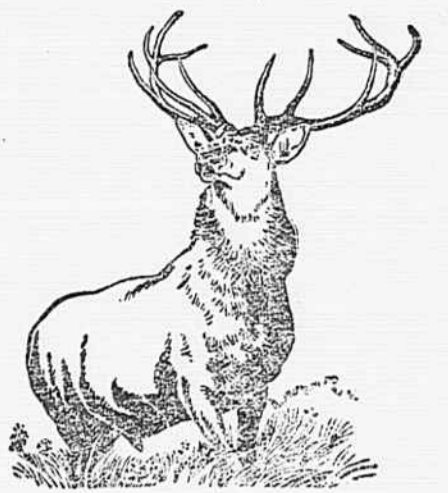
Lim was taken by the chamberlain to the king and the results of the investigation were given to his majesty. Lim begged to be excused for making a mistake which was a very natural one, and the king might have excused him on the ground that his theory had been confirmed by Buddha himself; but his majesty was greatly disappointed at not being able to confiscate a herd of elephants to attach to his own herd, and consequently not disposed to leniency. He ordered Lim to be beheaded, and the poor man, instead of having a house over his head, however imperfect, was consigned to a home under ground.



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