

The Story of a Blackberry Patch

As Told by George A. Abbott in a Word Picture--Read by Him at the Horticultural Meeting Last Week.

As a matter of fact the following poem, which was read by the author at the Horticultural meeting Wednesday of last week is self-explanatory, but we all know that to write poetry one must have a muse. The "muse" in this case came to Uncle George Abbott one hot, sultry day, when he was working in his blackberry patch. It struck him so hard that he immediately threw aside his old grubbing scythe and straight to the house he went. This is what his pencil said:

I had a patch of bramble that no mortal could walk through,
Where the blackberry and the horse weed and the honey suckle grew,
And the sun flower and the ragweed and the rambling wild grapevine
And the poison ivy and thistle did lovingly entwine;
And every weedy creeping thing brought forth by rain and sun
From our rich Nebraska soil grew rank, as they had done.
Before the foot of white man this virgin soil had trod,
When the wild man in the wilder woods knew not the white man's God.
One day some Christian ladies from out the nearby town
Came riding by and said to me "Why don't you cut them down?"
'Tis a sin" said they, "to cumber the earth God has made so fair
With such unsightly jungles, 'Tis worse than the tiger's lair."
With a shame faced look "I know," said I, "'tis horrible, but then
It's rather hard work for a man like me, past three score years and ten,
And the weather so hot." "Hold on," said they, "we do not mean that you
With your whitened hair and trembling limbs such slavish work should do;
But pardon us, we have heard it said, in fact are often told,
That somewhere you have hidden away great stacks of shining gold;
And pardon us, old man, for soon your time may come to go
And you cannot take it with you, as one of your sense must know.
So go and hire some younger man, some lusty school athlete;
'Twere just the thing for his muscles, he would think it quite a treat;
Besides he needs the dollars that you soon will leave behind,
So give him a chance to develop his muscles and his mind."
"Tis a happy thought," said I, "and I'm sure I thank you well
For your kindly speech and manners, far more than words can tell."
And so I started out at once and sought, through all the town
In quest of a high school athlete to cut that jungle down.
And the first one that I came to was a stalwart lusty lad,
With muscles as hard as iron, sunbronzed, you'd think he had
Been cutting jungles all his life; and it made me proud to know
I had paid the tax to school him and make those muscles grow.
In quavering tones I accosted him (I'm old and feeble you see)
"Would you like a little work to do?" "Work?" and he looked at me
With a pitying stare; "Work, old man, work did I hear you say?
What? Ask me to work? Who said I would?" his laugh was blithe and gay,
Then his voice softened as I looked abashed, "I would, old man, but then,
Today is the base ball tournament and I'm one of the main field men.
So come and see me toil and sweat in the sultry summer sun
It's harder than cutting jungles, but then you know it is FUN."
And then I tried another and another, but all the same;
Each was willing and anxious to work, and after this base ball game
And the foot ball and the field meet and the circus had come along,
And Chautauqua days were over. (It was always the same old song.)
It makes me proud to see them as with leisurely pace they stroll,
And it makes me proud to see them as with an artist's skill they roll
Their cigarets, and I pay the taxes cheerfully, ah well,
I'm paid when I hear the music in their modern high school yell.
And close by the high school building, it pleases me to tell,
I can hear my neighbor's donkeys rehearsing that high school yell.
And I doff my hat to the real thing; for in the years to come,
When this old world is busy with the rustle and the hum
That shall feed the teeming millions, their progeny will be
Of some use to their human friends; but the two-legged kind, Oh gee!
Well at last I grew disgusted, and then I said I'll try
To cut that jungle down myself; there are many ways to die,
And maybe I'll get sun-stroke, and then when I am gone
The preacher will tell how good I was, how I died with the harness on.
Then I whetted up my brush scythe, as our fathers used to do,
When they toiled in the wild wood jungles, when this old world was new;
And early and late I labored in that rank and tangled mass
Till it's now a thing of beauty, which, I think, mayhap will pass
For a fairly clean blackberry plot; and as I feast on jell
Made from the luscious berries, I will hear some kind of yell,
And I'll feel I'm compensated, when their grimaces I see,
As they feed on glucose jelly boiled down from beef-foot tea.
Yes, early and late I labored, and no one will ever know,
How my old heart throbbed and fluttered, as I cleaned each tangled row;
And how I took their jeering as their high-toned rigs would pass,
And how I sweat and struggled in that sultry, tangled mass.
One day some fine dressed people were cutting quite a swell
In a shining, puffing thing they called an ought-to-be-in-hell,
And they laughed at the old man working, and some smart thing one had said
And the old man chuckled, too, as he thought—their store bill isn't paid.
But compensation is nature's law, and sometime they will find
There has come a day of reckoning for people of their kind;
For "Age and Want is an ill-matched pair", and some time they will know
They would better have learned athletics with the sickle and the hoe.

THE POLAR DASH

PEARY WILL PLANT AMERICAN SET BY THE FLAG

Arctic Night to be Lightened by Globe-Girdling Libraries. Two of 3000 Book Chests Sent to The Farthest North

New York, July 30.—With the prospect of being the first printed pages to penetrate the uppermost polar region, two sets of American books are today sailing the northern seas, snugly set up in the hold of Lieut. Peary's stont ship "Roosevelt". Reports that these two of their 3,000 floating libraries were going into brisk circulation among the arctic explorers when the party finally cast off for the pole have reached the headquarters of the American Seamen's Friend Society in this city today. That some of this nation's literary works may eventually be planted beside the flag at the "farthest north" is the object of the determined crew who are to enjoy their solace in the bitter solitude of the next two years.

Months before the "Roosevelt" was finally commissioned for its latest dash toward the pole, the preparation of these libraries, which were to occupy the minds of the men through the long polar night, was carefully begun. From a list of the 618,400 volumes which they have placed before 422,230 sailors on every sea in the last fifty years, the officers of the American Seamen's Friend Society chose two sets best calculated to supply the hungry brains of the isolated explorers. Those books of travel, adventure, history, religion, fiction and biography which have come back most thumbed from almost a hundred thousand fo'castles were finally selected. In two of the society's ship-shape book chests the collections were arranged and sent to be set up in the mess room of the Peary ship at Shooter's Island, where it was being finally outfitted. A dictionary, bible, atlas and Pilgrim's Progress were included with the fiction favorites of the seamen.

It is the more sober works that stand the men in best stead in the long test of the arctic night, Lieut. Peary declared before leaving this city to join his ship. In his last "Farthest North" expedition the explorer found one of these American Seamen's Friend Society libraries a steady resource for his men, marooned in the ice packs. The books which served through that long night siege from October 12th to March 6th are today lying in their weather-beaten case at the headquarters of the society. The lighter fiction is much more free from the tell-tale dogears which mark heavily the more serious volumes that were thumbed over and over in the frigid solitude.

If Peary succeeds in planting these treasured volumes beside the American flag at the pole, the twenty-six thousand libraries which the American Seamen's Friend Society has kept afloat for half a century will have penetrated every region on the globe known to the seafarer. From almost every state in this country applications to set one of these book chests on its constant course have now been received. Each library is registered and regularly reported in its wanderings to any one who may pay twenty dollars to launch and keep it afloat. To President Roosevelt, who as a boy of ten presented one of these libraries for the society, the sight of the two book-chests on Peary's ship was as familiar as it has now become to hundreds of thousands of sailors the world over.

Corn Worth Some Money to Him

J. M. Farmer, who lives near Peru, has in his cribs for future sale between 4,000 and 5,000 bushels of corn from last year's crop. At the present price of corn, this amount of grain represents a big sum of money. Mr. Farmer manages about 280 acres of rented land and is more than prospering. Last fall he bought 240 acres of unimproved land in Kimball county, paying seven dollars an acre for it.—Stella Press.



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