IS THE PLUG HAT DOOMED?

Ancient Symbol of Masculine Dignity Assailed as a Has-Been.

From our earliest infancy we are ingrained with veneration for the plug hat. This shiny cylinder has ever been the badge of erudition, the livery of dignity, the imperious insignia of learning. The world owes a tremendous debt to the patriarchal beard, but it is doubtful if our obligations to whiskers equal what we owe to the plug hat. We are told that the tall hat was invented by the Spanish Inquisition as an instrument of torture, and that later it was worn to designate the learned from the unlettered.

With the origin of the plug hat, however, we have nothing to do. The fact that this institution is doomed to extinction is cause for regret. A French scientist with nothing more to do has discovered that the high hat is a veritable furnace and an awful germ culture. He experimented and found that when the thermometer was 77 in the street, inside the hat it was 90, and when it was 90 outside it was 108 inside. The fact of this intense heat upon the hair and mental machinery is disastrous, and so the Frenchman is not only giving up his hat but he is getting the academy—whenever anything is done in Paris it is through some academy—he is getting the hat academy to place the ban upon the plug hat.

It will be a sad day that sees the last of the plug hat. To be sure, its use is growing more limited as men become bolder in throwing off the shackles of sartorial convention. The plug hat is a decidedly uncomfortable article of wear. But it is picturesque. Who is there but can remember with affection some old childhood character whose distinguishing mark was a battered plug hat that had survived the shocks and the wrecks of half a hundred seasons? The plug hat is associated with the village doctor, the lean and sallow minister and the local undertaker. Perhaps the school teacher had one, too, and it is certain that we can recall distinctly the day that father was elected to the legislature and was presented with a hat by his admiring friends. And there was the county attorney who wore a plug hat with a sack suit and tan shoes. As youngsters we didn't know very much about the art of dressing, but we remember that our older sisters said the county attorney was "jay."

It will be a long time before the plug hat becomes actually extinct. The plug hat is a thing that never wears out. It becomes tattered and generally disreputable, it is true, but this is a condition that seems to endear it that much more in the affection of the possessor. The plug hat has survived the warming pan and the snuff box. When all things else have succumbed to the tide of time the plug hat has held its own on the heads of its devotees. It will be a sorry day when it shall pass away.—Kansas City Journal.

TIDAL WAVE OF LIQUID SAND

Peculiarities of Cimarron River Floods Which Menace Railroad Crossing.

The fatal Cimarron river flood which caused the disaster to a Rock Island passenger train a few weeks ago is described by those who saw it as of greater magnitude than any noted in many years. These floods come with remarkable suddenness and are locally known as "heads." Many equal and some exceed the wall of water that wrought such ruin in Johnstown, Pa., but in Oklahoma the towns and farm houses are located with a view of escaping such floods. At noon, for instance, the South Canadian may be a mere rivulet, meandering over its flourlike bed of sand. Fifteen minutes later the river has changed to a roaring flood ten feet deep, the water coming down in a solid wall. In the big flood of the South Canadian three years ago three head rises followed each other in succession, their combined depth being more than twenty feet. It was estimated that the first wall of water was about eleven feet high.

A head rise is caused by a heavy rainfall over a large scope of country in the plains country of the Texas Panhandle and the region further west. Cloudbursts sometimes add to the natural downpour of water, which reaches the headwaters of the South Canadian from every direction of its plains watershed at about the same hour. Once massed in the river this miniature ocean moves downward with great swiftness and crushing power.

Sand in the river bed mixes with the agitated water until the latter is from 20 to 30 per cent sand, and acts as a battering ram whenever it strikes an obstruction. It tears away poorly built foundations with great rapidity. It is asserted that as the big waves broke in the river at the Dover bridge sand, being heavier than water and having a greater impetus, would shoot upward like shot in a handful of dust tossed upward. The sand laden water was so heavy that the trough between the waves was shorter than in water of less gravity.

The problem of controlling floods in the Salt Fork, the Cimarron and the North and South Canadian rivers, all of them rising in the plains country and having flat and sandy beds, has cost railroad companies in Oklahoma and Indian Territory millions of dollars in bridges and dykes. The estimated cost of the Rock Island bridge, now being built across the South Canadian is $1,000,000. The cost and maintenance of the Santa Fe bridge at Purcell has gone far in excess of $1,000,000. The "Katy" bridge at Canadian, I. T., has eaten up large sums of money.

These big steel bridges are as solid as granite hills, resting upon foundations of cement and stone sunk far below the danger line of floods, but the bridge approaches are constantly menaced. The rivers tear them out frequently and repairs and improvements are almost constantly under way. The railroad companies employ watchmen at these bridges to insure the safety of their trains.

In earlier years when there was lack of telegraph communication with the plains country where these "head" rises have their origin these floods would appear without warning. About two days is required for a "head" to reach central Oklahoma, and the moment high water appears in the Panhandle country warnings are telegraphed and the bridge employes are on guard.

The roar of these approaching walls of water can be heard a mile or two. Farmers living in the South Canadian valley declare that when the monster "head" rise came three years ago its growl and roar could be heard for five miles. For many feet ahead of these walls of water the bare riverbed spouts up slender columns of water because of the sudden impact and pressure of the flood upon the sand through which the river when low finds its subterranean way.

To be caught in one of these floods is a situation of great peril. The rising water loosens the sand, and the entire river bed becomes a vast quicksand. Once firmly caught a wagon and team will disappear from sight in a short time. When the water begins falling the sand loses its velocity, sinks to the bottom and regains its firmness.

The recovery of objects lost in this quicksand is practically impossible, as its location cannot be ascertained and only a costly dredging machine could surmount the difficulties of excavation.

A countless caravan of wagons and their contents lies buried in these rivers from their source to their confluence with the Arkansas. In the seventy or eighty years the United States army has been in this portion of the southwest portions of many wagon trains have gone down in these quicksands.—New York Herald Letter.

To Study Railroad Wrecks.

The German government has taken possession of a short strip of track near Berlin and is planning to execute a unique series of railroad "accidents" made to order. Every variety of misplaced switch will be tested, every possible defect in wheels, axles and car equipment will be tried out and the grand finale is to be an immense head-on collision of locomotives. These spectacular exhibitions are not planned by the government as a national amusement. They are for the purpose of scientific experiment, so that the engineers and railway experts may study ways and means to prevent accidents of all kinds in the future.

Railroad disasters have occurred with alarming frequency in the German empire. It is estimated that the German railways lose $1,200,000 annually through damages. After the causes and effects of each variety of wreck have been noted it will be the task of the government officials to devise safeguards.—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

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