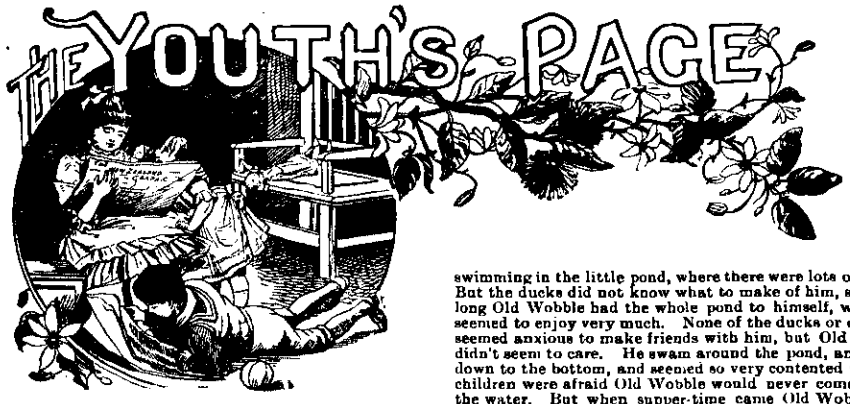

'OLD WOBBLE.'

FOR two whole years Uncle Fred, who was a captain in the navy, had been away with his ship, and had sailed hundreds and hundreds of miles. Now he was home once more, and had brought something for his little nephews and nieces, whom he never forgot.

'And what do you suppose I have?' asked Uncle Fred, turning to Hal and Dick and Mary and Kit, who stood around his chair.

'A doll,' cried Mary, clapping her hands. 'A real French doll that says "mamma" and "papa."'

'Pooh!' said Dick. 'Men don't buy dolls, do they, Uncle Fred?'

'Not often,' replied their uncle, laughing; 'and this time it is not a doll. Now everyone may guess once.'

'Is it alive?' asked Hal, very much interested.

'Yes,' answered Uncle Fred; 'that was a good guess; it is something alive.'

The children all clapped their hands and shouted for joy.

'A monkey,' cried Dick.

'Yes, a monkey,' said Hal, who thought that a pet monkey would be the finest thing in the world.

'A parrot,' guessed Mary, but Kit could not think of anything to say.

'Well, what do you think it is?' asked Uncle Fred, turning to Kit.

'I don't know,' answered the little girl, 'unless—unless it is a baby elephant.'

Uncle Fred laughed at this, but shook his head. 'No, no,' he said, 'you are all wrong. Come out in the garden now and I'll show you.'

So Hal and Dick and Mary and Kit followed Uncle Fred into the garden, where he opened a big box, and took out the funniest-looking thing ever seen. You could not tell exactly whether it was meant for a bird or not. Uncle Fred set it on the ground, and it walked around as though it had been used to the place all its life.

'Oh, what is it? what is it?' came the anxious chorus, as the children gathered around to view the new pet.

'It is a fowl,' explained Uncle Fred, 'that is called a penguin.'

'Dear me,' said Mary, watching it from a distance, 'isn't it queer! Hasn't it got funny wings! Won't they grow any more?'

OLD WOBBLE.

'No,' replied Uncle Fred. 'It is a bird that never flies, but lives in the water most of the time. A sailor caught this for me on an island in the Pacific Ocean. We kept it on board the ship, and it is quite tame now.'

'What do you call it?' asked Mary, who was very much interested in the strange creature.

'A penguin,' said Uncle Fred.

'I don't like that for a name,' Kit said, slowly; 'it is too hard. Look at him wobble when he walks. Zackly like a little baby that has just learned.'

'That's a good idea, Kit,' returned Uncle Fred. 'Why don't you call him Old Wobble?'

'Yes,' shouted the children, 'we'll name him that. Hello, Old Wobble!'

But the penguin did not seem to know his new name and walked down the path without paying any attention to his owners.

All that day Old Wobble kept the children amused. He was such a curious and solemn fowl, so different from all other kinds. He walked into the chicken-yard, and scared the hens so that they ran away cackling. Then he went swimming in the little pond, where there were lots of ducks. But the ducks did not know what to make of him, so before long Old Wobble had the whole pond to himself, which he seemed to enjoy very much. None of the ducks or chickens seemed anxious to make friends with him, but Old Wobble didn't seem to care. He swam around the pond, and dived down to the bottom, and seemed so very contented that the children were afraid Old Wobble would never come out of the water. But when supper-time came Old Wobble was glad to come ashore and get into his box again.

It is a long time since I heard of him, but the last news was that Old Wobble was well and happy, and a source of interest to everybody that came from the surrounding neighbourhood to see him. He even became so wise as to know his name, and everybody thought that it suited him exactly, for he did wobble very much when he tried to walk.

WHAT JACK OVERHEARD IN THE CELLAR.

'THIS cellar is awfully damp,' said the Rat-trap. 'I'm afraid I'll catch malaria.'

'If you don't catch malaria any better than you catch rats, you needn't be afraid,' said the Kindling Wood.

'You seem to have a cold,' said the Milk Pail to the Refrigerator.

'Yes; in my chest,' said the Refrigerator with a smile.

'I hate being locked up here in this dull place,' said the Furnace.

'Oh, I don't think it's so bad,' said the Fire.

'Oh, it's easy enough for you to talk,' said the Furnace. 'Fires can go out, but Furnaces can't.'

'How did you happen to see all these things you tell us about?' asked the Coal-bin of the Saw.

'The same way I saw everything else,' said the Saw; 'with my teeth.'

'I hear you called on the Refrigerator yesterday,' said the Wood-box to the Pail. 'Were you received pleasantly?'

'No. The Refrigerator treated me with great coldness,' said the Pail.

'This house is beautiful upstairs,' said the Furnace to the Poker. 'The flues are going up there all the time, and they told me all about it.'

'Oh, please stop poking me, said the Furnace Fire to the Poker. 'You tickle.'

'I hear you are quite a sportsman,' said the Snow Shovel to the Coal.

'Never handled a gun in my life,' said the Coal.

'Why, I'm certain I overheard somebody saying that he'd seen the Coal chute,' said the Snow Shovel.

ESSAY ON DREAMS.

BY A PUBLIC SCHOOL BOY.

DREAMS are imaginative workings of the brain when a person is asleep. There is a writer who says, 'Tell me a man's dreams and I will tell you what he is,' but although this may be true in some instances it is not so in mine. I do not often dream of what I think and feel, but more of what I read. Of course I am only a boy, and things which I read have, probably, a more powerful effect on my mind than upon the mind of a man, and perhaps this is the reason that I dream so seldom of my inmost thoughts and feelings. Dreams seem to the dreamer to occupy a considerable length of time, and even when he wakes he thinks that it took him a considerable time to dream that which he has dreamed. But there is one case which came under my immediate notice, in which the person concerned is certain that he dreamed his dream in the period of time occupied by his opening his eyes when awaking. When he was fully awake he noticed a sunlight shadow upon the wall opposite to him, caused by the sun shining through a space between the window and the blind. The shadow was something in the shape of a man. He immediately seized upon this as the origin of his dream, which was as follows. He dreamt that a ghost of about the substance of tissue paper was following him wherever he went and that it was seeking his life. He was afraid that it would spring upon him from behind and thus secure an advantage, so that he always kept his face towards it as much as possible. He often tried to catch it, but it always eluded him. Day after day for about a week did this continue, but at last he got it in a corner and caught hold of it and after a severe struggle, killed it. Now the dreamer was certain that it was the shadow which had caused his dream, and that he dreamt it while opening his eyes, for he had been reading nothing about ghosts and had not had the slightest thought of them. It shows how rapid thought is, and how quickly a dream passes when we consider that in the 20th part of a second he should dream so much and go through so many adventures; however mixed up and confused.

Master Willie (who has just been described by a visitor as 'Such an intelligent little fellow!'): 'Papa, has the gen'lum brought my new boots?' Papa (who doesn't see what is coming): 'Boots, Willie? Why, what makes you ask?' Master Willie: 'Cause when he came 'fore, you said he was a snob; and I asked Jane what a snob was, and she said a shoemaker.' (Sensation.)

HOW AN APPLE GOT ITS NAME.

MOST folk like Ribston Pippins, but few know the origin of this funny-looking name. Long ago Sir Henry Goodriche, so the story runs, had three apple pips sent to him from Rouen, in France. It may be supposed that they were the seeds of a very fine kind of apple, for Sir Henry took the trouble to plant them in the garden of his house at Ribston, in Yorkshire. Two of the pips died, but from the third were derived all the Ribston apple trees in England. The fruit was called Ribston from its English birthplace, and Pippin from the original pip that was sent over from Normandy.

A PICNIC AMONG THE FLOODS.

WRITTEN FOR THE 'GRAPHIC' BY LAURENCE SHEFFIELD.

EARLY Monday morning the rain came pouring down, and our hearts grew dreary at the sight, for it was on that day we were going to view the floods at Mercer. However, at nine a.m. the rain cleared off, showing signs of a fairly fine day, and at eleven our two friends, Mr and Mrs E., who had promised to come with us, arrived, so off we started along the road to the Maungatawhiri Bridge, making in all six persons.

When we had gone about half way, papa, H., and myself hurried on quickly to get the boat ready, leaving the other three to come after. Arriving at the bridge, we soon got the boat ready, and the others coming up we started, and pulling across the railwry line and the Great South Road, which was three or four feet under water, we came into the full force of a strong westerly wind, which made the water dash into the boat. The railway line as well as the road is covered with water, except for a few chains from the Maungatawhiri Bridge to Mercer. The swamps, too, are so over-flooded that gates may be seen floating about all over the place. After passing several deserted houses, most of which were tied with ropes, floating pigsties, upturned wheelbarrows, and other wreckage we arrived at Mercer, where we found everything in a nice state. Canoes were drawn up and moored in front of shop doors. One poor family left their house to the mercy of the water three or four days ago, the youngest child being but a week old. The engine shed floor is covered with water, also the Garrick Hall and the wharf.

After staying at Mercer for some time we started for the mouth of the Whangamerino Creek. We walked along the line, the road being flooded. The line and the road lie side by side between the river and a high cliff. Arriving there, the only wood we could find was wet through, but after some very hard blowing we managed to get it to burn, and then filling the billy at a spring jutting out of a rock close by, we put it on to boil, and, much to our disgust, it took an awfully long time to do so, and by that time I had rolled a big flat stone for us to sit on to a nice place behind a fence, where we proposed to have our dinner. While this was going on Mrs E. and mother were making sandwiches out of sardines and bread and butter, and getting other nice things ready.

Dinner over, we set out to view the floods. We went to the top of a high cliff and saw nothing but water and little islands. We saw a flax-mill half under water, and bundles of flax floating away down the river. The traffic bridge is very nearly under water, though I expect before many days it will be quite covered. After walking about for some time we started for Mercer. On our way it came on to rain, so we went behind some trees. While we were standing there we saw a pheasant start to fly across the river, but when it was about half way over it got blown back by the wind. Soon we came in sight of an island, on which the owner has a large number of fruit trees, which are nearly under that element which I have been mentioning all along. Arriving at Mercer, we got into the boat and pulled about the houses. While doing so we saw some fowls on the top of a shed. They looked as though they would very much like to come down. Passing a house we saw a canoe fastened in the passage, and in a cage, not a bird but a pig. After some time we passed another house which had a lot of piles in the passage.

Coming home we saw another big swamp under water. The railway is in some places being washed away, and will most likely cost the Government a great deal of money to repair. Just before we crossed the road again we saw a house with water up to the window sill, and dog-kennels and other out houses floating about the back-yard. The fences bounding the road are hardly visible. Crossing the road we saw a number of piles which, if not looked after, will soon be carried away. A few minutes after we crossed the line, and pulling through some flax bushes we arrived at the railway bridge, and tying the boat up to some willows, we stepped ashore and watched the train coming through the water, and it looked splendid, the water rushing into the air as from a fountain. We then turned to walk home while my mother rode. Going along the line we saw that the banks on which the line is placed are gradually being washed away. We also noticed several bridges floating about.

When we reached home we found a nice supper ready for us, of which we were very glad.

SCRAPS.

A LECTURER wished to explain to a little girl how a lobster casts its shell when he has outgrown it, so, by way of illustration, he said, 'What do you do when you have outgrown your clothes? You throw them aside, don't you?' 'Oh, no,' said the little one, 'we let out the tucks.'

A school teacher who had just been telling the story of David winds up with, 'And all this happened over three thousand years ago.' A little cherub, its blue eyes dilated with wonder, after a few moments' thought, exclaims, 'Oh, dear, marm, what a memory you must have.'

'Bobby; 'Mamma, didn't Methuselah have more'n one name?' Mamma (reading): 'Only one, of course. Now don't bother me any more.' Bobby (after a long pause): 'Mamma, can't I ask you one more question?' Mamma: 'Yes, yes.' Bobby: 'Was Methuselah his first or last name?'