

of the world, but it too frequently happens that our consuls are unacquainted with any other language than their native tongue, a circumstance which very much impairs their usefulness.

It is evident that under our present system of changing these officers on the advent of every new administration, the American consul has neither a fair chance to become conversant with any other language, nor the chance to equip himself for his duties as thoroughly as he usually finds his colleagues from other countries at the same post. If the appointee is intelligent, and takes an interest in his duties, he is far more useful to the Government at the expiration of four years than at any shorter period of his service.

Ordinarily nothing is more deluding and disappointing than an American consular position, and I have often wondered, considering the precariousness of its tenure and the insignificance of its rewards, how so many of my countrymen who were at all fitted for its duties could be found to accept it. It is a species of banishment, where one is separated from opportunities and forgotten by friends, and it is attended by many sacrifices, and has few appreciable advantages to the holder of the office.

My own opinion is that the consular service should be put on a footing similar to the army and navy; that a man ought to be prepared for the service by some fixed rules, and when he has entered, should not be subject to removal for political reasons. He should also be transferred from one post to another, according to his merits, and the best interests of the service.

More than this, justice would require that such an officer, spending his life in foreign lands in the public service, should, like an officer of the army and navy, be allowed a decent retiring pension after a certain age and number of years of service.

What I have said with reference to the inexpediency of removing consular officers for political reasons applies, in my judgment, with equal force to secretaries of embassy and legation. Our diplomatic service suffers from lack of what may be called continuity in the routine work. This condition would be ameliorated if we had some men always attached to our missions who have a competent knowledge of foreign languages, and know something about the methods of doing business in the different foreign offices. It is sometimes very embarrassing and a great disadvantage not to be *en rapport* with these methods. A young man fit to be a secretary of legation, and who has his way to make in the world, acts, in my judgment, very much against his own interests and prospects in life if he accepts one of these secretaryships on a meager salary, with a certainty that after a few years he will be thrown out. It would doubtless be better for the service if our secretaries held office by a more permanent tenure.

Lambert Tree.

"The Century's" American Artist Series.

EASTMAN JOHNSON. (See page 816.)

EASTMAN JOHNSON, whose picture, "The Nantucket School of Philosophy," is engraved in this number of THE CENTURY, is one of the ablest and best known of American portrait-painters, and a painter of genre whose work is not only remarkable for technical excellence, but is also invested with much sympathetic feel-

ing in the presentation of scenes from every-day life. He was born at Lovell, Maine, July 29, 1824, and when a child was taken by his parents to Augusta, where he obtained his education at the high school. There was a teacher of drawing in the high school, and Mr. Johnson in his boyhood acquired a certain degree of skill with the pencil. He took up drawing in earnest when about seventeen years of age. During a winter spent in Portland he became intimately acquainted with the parents of the poet Longfellow, and with the latter's sister, Mrs. Pierce, and drew their portraits. In 1845 he accompanied his father to Washington, D. C., and during his sojourn there made a large number of portraits in crayon. Among his sitters were John Quincy Adams, Mrs. Madison, Daniel Webster, Mrs. Alexander Hamilton, and Robert C. Winthrop. In 1846 he went to Boston, where he remained three years, making portraits in crayon and pastel, including those of Longfellow and his children, Emerson, Sumner, Hawthorne, and President Felton of Harvard. In 1849 he went to Europe. He spent about two years in the Royal Academy at Düsseldorf, a short time in London, and four years at The Hague. From The Hague he went to Paris, but was called home after about a year's residence in that capital, having then spent six or seven years abroad. On his return, he settled in Washington, spending two summers in travel and study in the Northwest, and came to New York in 1858. He had a studio in the old University building in Washington Square for fourteen years, removing thence in 1872 to his present home in West Fifty-fifth street.

Mr. Johnson began painting genre subjects while abroad, and his career as an artist has been one of industry and success. One of the first of his pictures to bring him reputation was "The Old Kentucky Home," now in the permanent collection of the Lenox Library, New York, to which it was presented, together with his "Sunday Morning," by Mrs. R. L. Stuart. "Corn Husking," one of the most important of his pictures, and one that completely realizes what we are wont to speak of as "American genre," is owned by Mr. Potter Palmer of Chicago. "The Cranberry Harvest," "The Peddler," "Fiddling his Way," "The Old Stage-Coach," "What the Shell Says," "Two Men," and "The Pension Agent," are some of the pictures that made his fame as a painter, and have given him popularity. At the Paris Exposition of 1867 he exhibited "The Old Kentucky Home"; at that of 1878, "Corn Husking"; and in 1889, "Two Men." He received from the jury of award a bronze medal for the last-named picture. He has painted a large number of excellent portraits, and is a regular exhibitor at the current exhibitions. He was elected a National Academician in 1860, and a member of the Society of American Artists in 1881. Mr. Johnson's painting, in whatever field, is characterized by individual technical treatment, and is in general marked by excellent qualities of color.

William A. Coffin.

The Origin of "O. K."

[WE are permitted to print the following from a private letter from Professor W. S. Wyman of the University of Alabama, to a friend in the faculty of Vanderbilt University.]

The current, but erroneous, account of the origin

of O. K. is as follows: "General Andrew Jackson was an illiterate man, and so, when he was President of the United States, he used to label documents which he approved with the initials O. K., which he took to be the initials of 'All correct' (oll korrekt)."

This story is attributed to Seba Smith, a literary gentleman of the last generation who wrote letters from Washington under the pseudonym of "Major Jack Downing." There is probably no truth in this. I have in my library a copy of "Major Jack Downing's Letters from Washington," and I do not find the story in that book.

It is, however, probably true that General Jackson did indorse with the symbols O. K. public documents which he approved. General Jackson was no scholar, it is true, but he was not so ignorant as to think that "all correct" was spelled "oll korrekt."

If you will examine the autograph letters of General Jackson now in the archives of the Tennessee Historical Society, you will find that he could write fairly for a man who had small educational advantages in early life.

The true explanation of O. K. is probably as follows: There is a tradition among the intelligent Choctaws of the old stock who once lived in Mississippi that General Jackson borrowed the expression O. K. from the Choctaw language.

The Choctaws and the Chickasaws speak the same tongue. In the language of these two peoples there is no copulative verb that corresponds to "be" in English (*esse* in Latin). A substitute for this is found in the emphatic word *okéh*, which ends every assertion in Choctaw. An example will illustrate this.

The English sentence, "The Choctaw Indian is a good fellow," would be in Choctaw,

<i>Hattak</i>	<i>uppeh</i>
Man	body

<i>hoomah chahtah ahookmah</i>	<i>okéh.</i>
red Choctaw good	it-is-all-so.

 } Here *okéh* serves as the verb of assertion. It means, "It is true," "It is so," "It is all right," etc.

General Jackson was frequently among the Choctaws and Chickasaws before he became famous. He must have heard this expression often.

He probably adopted it in early life as a very expressive kind of slang, and used it after he became President as a private symbol (O. K.) to indicate approval. Strong confirmation is found for this theory of the origin of O. K. in a fact mentioned in "Parton's Life of Jackson," Vol. I, page 136. The following entry on the records of the court of Sumner County, Tennessee, was probably written by Jackson himself, who was attorney in the case:

"October 6, 1790, Andrew Jackson, Esq., proved a bill of sale from Hugh McGary to Gasper Mansker, for a negro man, which was O. K." ("A common western mistake," says Mr. Parton, "for O. R., which means 'Ordered Recorded.' Thence, perhaps, the saying, 'O. K.'")

Parton is surely wrong in his conjecture that this O. K. was a "common mistake" for O. R. (ordered recorded). It is highly probable that this O. K. in the record of the Sumner County Court is the very expression used by Jackson to signify that the bill of sale was "all right."

This theory of the origin of O. K. is, if not true, at least well invented, as the Italians say.

There are other Choctaw words that have been naturalized in the folk-speech of the Southern States.

The word "bobashilly" ("barbashilly," "bomashilly," so variously pronounced), in the sense of "friend," "comrade," "brother," is very common in Alabama and Mississippi. I suppose you have heard it often. This word is Choctaw. *Ittebahpashille* is the classic expression in Choctaw and Chickasaw. It means "friend," "comrade" (literally, "he that sucks the same breast"—hence, "brother"). The word "bayou" is another American word of Choctaw origin. This word is incorrectly referred by all our dictionaries to the French word *bayou*, which means a "gut," "an entrail." The English word "gut" is sometimes used for a channel of water, but the French word *bayou* was never so used.

Walking.

APROPOS of "Walking as a Pastime," an old tramp begs leave to differ with Mr. Eugene Lamb Richards on one or two points. Do *not* carry a knapsack or pack. If you do, you cannot rest yourself by shifting the weight, and a load on the back inclines you forward. Take a small satchel, with a strap by which it may hang from the shoulder. Put into it just as little as you can get on with. At the end of the first day remove the extra shoes, brushes, blacking, oil, razors, medicines, etc., and carefully burn them, or give them to tramps. My own outfit, with which I have trod many roads on two continents, is: a nightgown, extra shirt, comb, tooth-brush, map, novel, note-book, pen or pencil, knife, and watch. Sometimes I add a rubber coat. Why carry extra clothes, except in Africa? You can buy them everywhere, and you can have your washing done between two days. Again, an umbrella is a poor walking-stick, for it does not balance in the hand. It is heavy and thick, yet so fragile that it breaks when you kill snakes with it or use it as an alpenstock. Yet, again, the light madras or percale shirt is at least as good as the flannel one, for the latter is heavy, and shrinks. As to shoes, Mr. Richards's are sensible and excellent, but I have walked hundreds of miles in ready-made gaiters, and have never had a blistered foot. It needs only that the shoe be soft and ample. On lonely roads I go barefoot, sometimes. If Americans would walk more they would be bigger, happier, healthier, and tougher. Dudes, especially, should be encouraged to walk, because they are quickly killed by exercise.

C. M. S.