

MISCELLANEOUS.

MR. DANA OF THE SUN.

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How would you like to be in your prime at seventy-six years of age—to be able to do as much work as you do now at thirty and to get more and more out of life as the years go on? I know of a man who is having such an experience. I had a chat with him this afternoon in the editorial rooms of the New York Sun. His name is Charles A. Dana, and he is, as you know, one of the most influential men of our country. For more than fifty years, Mr. Dana has been one of the chief molders of public opinion in the United States, and today his mind is as bright and his step is as quick as that of a boy. His fair complexion is rosy, he has but few wrinkles and his only sign of old age is in the silver strands of his beard and hair. More than this, his soul is as young as his body. He still likes a good joke and can tell a good story. He can feel the beauties of a lyric poem as deeply as a young man in love, and can at the same time appreciate the sunlimb of the epics which he publishes every Sunday in his column of "Poems Worth Reading."

Mr. Dana dresses like a young man. He is, I judge, fond of good clothes. The creases in his pantaloons are well marked and his silk hat is of the latest style. The necktie he wore when I met him today was as red as the comb of one of his Plymouth Rock roosters, and the cane which he picked up as we left the office I could see was carried rather as a habit than as a means of support. Mr. Dana has a young appetite. He eats well and drinks well. His chief meal is his dinner, and his cook I am told, is a famous French chef. He enjoys his vacations like a young man. He works only while at the office, spending his leisure at his country home on Long Island. He has there one of the finest private collections of trees and shrubs in the world. He has green houses in which tropical plants are seen at their best all the year round and mushroom cellars in tunnels where mushrooms can be gathered from October to May. It is on his farm that he spends his mornings and evenings, and here every Sunday he takes a day off and amuses himself with his trees and his grandchildren. He spends only about six hours of each day at the office, coming there at 11 a.m. and leaving at 4. His work on the Sun is largely made up of editing and suggesting. He keeps his eyes on every department of the paper and reads most of the proof.

It was at the close of his work that I called by appointment at the office of the Sun, and a moment later I was in the sanctum of the editor-in-chief. This was a little room not bigger than an ordinary hall bed room, with a window looking out on City Hall Square. Mr. Dana sat in front of the window at a flat-topped walnut desk, with a pile of proofs before him. He laid down his blue pencil as I entered and gave me a seat. My first question was as to the secret of his vitality. I asked him how he managed to keep so young.

"I don't manage it," was the reply. "I have, you know, a good constitution,

and my ancestors have generally lived to a good old age. I suppose my youth is somewhat due to inheritance though it may be that hard work has something to do with it, for I put in about six hours every day. I sleep at least eight hours every night, and I am careful not to eat too much."

"But, Mr. Dana, looking young and feeling young are different things. I wonder if you enjoy life as much now as when you were young."

"I know I do in some respects, replied Mr. Dana. "I can appreciate some things more now than I used to. But I thought you wanted an interview. Are you interviewing me now?"

"Yes," said I. "There are many young men who would like to be able to do at seventy-six what you are doing now. They would like to know how to live long and keep well. I am forty-one, and I can tell you that I would give a good deal to learn how I could live thirty-five years longer, and feel as well as you do when I got to that point."

"Well," replied Mr. Dana, "I really think I get as much fun out of life as I ever did. I have more pleasure from books and more from the learning of new things. My enjoyment from children has steadily increased. They are the most genuine things of the world and the pleasure of association with them is a real pleasure. I have now thirteen grandchildren."

"Suppose you had to start over again, Mr. Dana, would you select the newspaper for your life work?"

"I don't know," was the reply. "My first ambition was to be a parson or a college professor. I looked forward to the day when I would have a pulpit and could preach. I think I should have made a fairly good college professor. Why, as it is, I have been a professor for a good part of my life."

"How is that, Mr. Dana?" I asked.

"I have classes in my home. We have had a number of social clubs there for the study of languages and literature and I have led them. For several years we devoted ourselves to Dante, studying him in the original Italian. Then a year or so ago I had a class studying the Icelandic languages, and we have also worked at other tongues."

"How about the Russian?" Mr. Dana? I understand that you have taken up that most difficult language."

"I am now able to read the Russian," was the reply. "I visited Russia a year or so ago, and I find that I can get along in speaking the language as far as ordinary matters are concerned. I can read anything in Russian with a slight use of the dictionary. I keep some Russian books by me, and when I have ten minutes to spare I read a little. Here is my Russian dictionary. (Here Mr. Dana picked up a book out of a case at his side.) And there (pointing to another,) are some Russian fables which I am now reading."

"Where do you get your linguistic faculty, Mr. Dana?"

"I don't know," replied the man of many languages, "unless I was born with it. When I was eleven years old I was working in a store in Buffalo. We had among our customers many Seneca Indians. I picked up much of their language from talking with them. We

had also many Germans at Buffalo. I learned something of the German language, and later on, when I went to Harvard College. I found no trouble at all in acquiring the German pronunciation."

"You are a college-bred man, Mr. Dana. Is a college education a necessity to the making of a good journalist?"

"I think it is a good thing for a man to have a college education," replied Mr. Dana. "But I don't think it is a necessity. A college-bred man has a better trained mind, and as a rule he can use his faculties to better advantage, still the boy who is self-educated often surpasses him who is college bred. It depends upon the person. If he has it in him he will be successful; if not, he won't."

"Please give me a word of advice for the young newspaper men of today. What should they do to succeed?"

"Tell the truth and shame the devil," replied the editor of the Sun.

"How about wages in newspaper work? Have not the hard times affected them?"

"I don't think they have in this office, though I am told that they have in other places. The forces have been cut down as well as the wages. Here in the Sun our men stay with us for years. We have the merit system, and some of our best men have gone in as office boys. The office boy of the Sun has a chance to become managing editor if he can show that he is the best man for the place."

"But the pay of newspaper men of today must be far better than it was when you were young, Mr. Dana," said I.

"Yes," was the reply; "it is. For some of my first newspaper work I received \$5 a week. This was when I was twenty-five years old, and was one of the editors of the Chronotype of Boston. A little later on I came to New York to be city editor of the Tribune. My wages then were \$10 a week. After awhile I was raised to \$20 a week, and at last, when I became managing editor of the Tribune, I was given an equal salary with Mr. Greeley, receiving \$50 a week."

I here referred to Mr. Dana's connection with President Lincoln as assistant secretary of war, and asked Mr. Dana why he had never again accepted office, and whether he had not had ambition to be a high public official. He replied:

"No, I do not care for such things. I have always thought it best to stick to the newspapers, though I suppose I could have had official positions had I desired them. I could have been minister to Russia under President Lincoln, but when I looked into the matter I found that it would cost me nearly \$40,000 a year to keep up the proper style of St. Petersburg, and that my salary would only be \$15,000 a year. It did not take much figuring to see that I could not afford that."

"What has become of the weekly newspaper, Mr. Dana? Such papers have not the great circulation which they had in the past."

"No, the great weekly is no more. It has been killed by the low prices of paper and the cheapening of newspaper making. People will not subscribe for a weekly when they can get a daily from their own territory at from 1 to 3 cents a day. When I left the New York Tribune its weekly had a circulation of 130,000. I doubt if it has half that number today."