Riley James Whitcomb, Nye Bill

Nye and Riley's Wit and Humor (Poems and Yarns)

James Riley
Bill Nye

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Содержание

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Biographical

Edgar Wilson Nye was whole-souled, big-hearted and genial. Those who knew him lost sight of the humorist in the wholesome friend.

He was born August 25, 1850, in Shirley, Piscataquis County, Maine. Poverty of resources drove the family to St. Croix Valley, Wisconsin, where they hoped to be able to live under conditions less severe. After receiving a meager schooling, he entered a lawyer's office, where most of his work consisted in sweeping the office and running errands. In his idle moments the lawyer's library was at his service. Of this crude and desultory reading he afterward wrote:

"I could read the same passage to-day that I did yesterday and it would seem as fresh at the second reading as it did at the first. On the following day I could read it again and it would seem as new and mysterious as it did on the preceding day."

At the age of twenty-five, he was teaching a district school in Polk County, Wisconsin, at thirty dollars a month. In 1877 he was justice of the peace in Laramie. Of that experience he wrote:

"It was really pathetic to see the poor little miserable booth where I sat and waited with numb fingers for business. But I did not see the pathos which clung to every cobweb and darkened the rattling casement. Possibly I did not know enough. I forgot to say the office was not a salaried one, but solely dependent upon fees. So while I was called Judge Nye and frequently mentioned in the papers with consideration, I was out of coal half the time, and once could not mail my letters for three weeks because I did not have the necessary postage."

He wrote some letters to the Cheyenne *Sun*, and soon made such a reputation for himself that he was able to obtain a position on the Laramie *Sentinel*. Of this experience he wrote:

"The salary was small, but the latitude was great, and I was permitted to write anything that I thought would please the people, whether it was news or not. By and by I had won every heart by my patient poverty and my delightful parsimony with regard to facts. With a hectic imagination and an order on a restaurant which advertised in the paper I scarcely cared through the livelong day whether school kept or not."

Of the proprietor of the *Sentinel* he wrote:

"I don't know whether he got into the penitentiary or the Greenback party. At any rate, he was the wickedest man in Wyoming. Still, he was warmhearted and generous to a fault.

He was more generous to a fault than to anything else – more especially his own faults. He gave me twelve dollars a week to edit the paper – local, telegraph, selections, religious, sporting, political, fashions, and obituary. He said twelve dollars was too much, but if I would jerk the press occasionally and take care of his children he would try to stand it. You can't mix politics and measles. I saw that I would have to draw the line at measles. So one day I drew my princely salary and quit, having acquired a style of fearless and independent journalism which I still retain. I can write up things that never occurred with a masterly and graphic hand. Then, if they occur, I am grateful; if not, I bow to the inevitable and smother my chagrin."

In the midst of a wrangle in politics he was appointed Postmaster of his town and his letter of acceptance, addressed to the Postmaster-General at Washington, was the first of his writings to attract national attention.

He said that in his opinion, his being selected for the office was a triumph of eternal right over error and wrong. "It is one of the epochs, I may say, in the nation's onward march toward political purity and perfection," he wrote. "I don't know when I have noticed any stride in the affairs of State which has so thoroughly impressed me with its wisdom."

Shortly after he became postmaster he started the *Boomerang*. The first office of the paper was over a livery stable, and Nye put up a sign instructing callers to "twist the tail of the gray mule and take the elevator."

He at once became famous, and was soon brought to New York, at a salary that seemed fabulous to him. His place among the humorists of the world was thenceforth assured.

He died February 22, 1896, at his home in North Carolina, surrounded by his family.

James Whitcomb Riley, the Hoosier poet, was for many years a close personal friend of the dead humorist. When informed of Nye's death, he said:

"Especially favored, as for years I have been, with close personal acquaintance and association with Mr. Nye, his going away fills me with selfishness of grief that finds a mute rebuke in my every memory of him. He was unselfish wholly, and I am broken-hearted, recalling the always patient strength and gentleness of this true man, the unfailing hope and cheer and faith of his child-heart, his noble and heroic life, and pure devotion to his home, his deep affections, constant dreams, plans, and realizations. I cannot doubt but that somehow, somewhere, he continues cheerily on in the unspoken exercise of these same capacities."

Mr. Riley recently wrote the following sonnet:

O William, in thy blithe companionship
What liberty is mine – what sweet release
From clamorous strife, and yet what boisterous peace!
Ho! ho! It is thy fancy's finger-tip
That dints the dimple now, and kinks the lip
That scarce may sing in all this glad increase

Of merriment! So, pray thee, do not cease
To cheer me thus, for underneath the quip
Of thy droll sorcery the wrangling fret
Of all distress is still. No syllable
Of sorrow vexeth me, no tear drops wet
My teeming lids, save those that leap to tell
Thee thou'st a guest that overweepeth yet
Only because thou jokest overwell.

Why it was done

What this country needs, aside from a new Indian policy and a style of poison for children which will be liable to kill rats if they eat it by accident, is a Railway Guide which will be just as good two years ago as it was next spring – a Railway Guide, if you please, which shall not be cursed by a plethora of facts, or poisoned with information – a Railway Guide that shall be rich with doubts and lighted up with miserable apprehensions. In other Railway Guides, pleasing fancy, poesy and literary beauty, have been throttled at the very threshold of success, by a wild incontinence of facts, figures, asterisks and references to meal stations. For this reason a guide has been built at our own shops and on a new plan. It is the literary *piece de resistance* of the age in which we live. It will not permit information to creep in and mar the reader's enjoyment of the scenery. It contains no railroad map which is grossly inaccurate. It has no time-table in it which

has outlived its uselessness. It does not prohibit passengers from riding on the platform while the cars are in motion. It permits every one to do just as he pleases and rather encourages him in taking that course.

The authors of this book have suffered intensely from the inordinate use of other guides, having been compelled several times to rise at 3 o'clock a. m., in order to catch a car which did not go and which would not have stopped at the station if it had gone.

They have decided, therefore, to issue a guide which will be good for one to read after one has missed one's train by reason of one's faith in other guides which we may have in one's luggage.

Let it be understood, then, that we are wholly irresponsible, and we are glad of it. We do not care who knows it. We will not even hold ourselves responsible for the pictures in this book, or the hard-boiled eggs sold at points marked as meal stations in time tables. We have gone into this thing wholly unpledged, and the man who gets up before he is awake, in order to catch any East bound, or West bound, North bound, South bound, or hide-bound train, named in this book, does himself a great wrong without in any way advancing our own interests.

The authors of this book have made railroad travel a close study. They have discovered that there has been no provision made for the man who erroneously gets into a car which is side-tracked and swept out and scrubbed by people who take in cars to scrub and laundry. He is one of the men we are striving at this

moment to reach with our little volume. We have each of us been that man. We are yet.

He ought to have something to read that will distract his attention. This book is designed for him. Also for people who would like to travel but cannot get away from home. Of course, people who do travel will find nothing objectionable in the book, but our plan is to issue a book worth about $9, charging only fifty cents for it, and then see to it that no time-tables or maps which will never return after they have been pulled out once, shall creep in among its pages.

It is the design of the authors to issue this guide annually unless prohibited by law, and to be the pioneers establishing a book which shall be designed solely for the use of anybody who desires to subscribe for it.

Bill Nye.
James Whitcomb Riley.

P. S. – The authors desire to express their thanks to Mr. Riley for the poetry and to Mr. Nye for the prose which have been used in this book.

Where He First Met His Parents

Last week I visited my birthplace in the State of Maine. I waited thirty years for the public to visit it, and as there didn't seem to be much of a rush this spring, I thought I would go and visit it myself. I was telling a friend the other day that the public did not seem to manifest the interest in my birthplace that I thought it ought to, and he said I ought not to mind that. "Just wait," said he, "till the people of the United States have an opportunity to visit your tomb, and you will be surprised to see how they will run excursion trains up there to Moosehead lake, or wherever you plant yourself. It will be a perfect picnic. Your hold on the American people, William, is wonderful, but your death would seem to assure it, and kind of crystallize the affection now existing, but still in a nebulous and gummy state."

A man ought not to criticise his birthplace, I presume, and yet, if I were to do it all over again, I do not know whether I would select that particular spot or not. Sometimes I think I would not. And yet, what memories cluster about that old house! There was the place where I first met my parents. It was at that time that an acquaintance sprang up which has ripened in later years into mutual respect and esteem. It was there that what might be termed a casual meeting took place, that has, under the alchemy of resist-less years, turned to golden links, forming a pleasant but powerful bond of union between my parents and myself. For that

reason, I hope that I may be spared to my parents for many years to come.

Many memories now cluster about that old home, as I have said. There is, also, other bric-a-brac which has accumulated since I was born there. I took a small stone from the front yard as a kind of memento of the occasion and the place. I do not think it has been detected yet. There was another stone in the yard, so it may be weeks before any one finds out that I took one of them.

How humble the home, and yet what a lesson it should teach the boys of America! Here, amid the barren and inhospitable waste of rocks and cold, the last place in the world that a great man would naturally select to be born in, began the life of one who, by his own unaided effort, in after years rose to the proud height of postmaster at Laramie City, Wy. T., and with an estimate of the future that seemed almost prophetic, resigned before he could be characterized as an offensive partisan.

Here on the banks of the raging Piscataquis, where winter lingers in the lap of spring till it occasions a good deal of talk, there began a career which has been the wonder and admiration of every vigilance committee west of the turbulent Missouri.

There on that spot, with no inheritance but a predisposition to baldness and a bitter hatred of rum; with no personal property but a misfit suspender and a stone-bruise, began a life history which has never ceased to be a warning to people who have sold goods on credit.

It should teach the youth of our great broad land what glorious

possibilities may lie concealed in the rough and tough bosom of the reluctant present. It shows how steady perseverance and a good appetite will always win in the end. It teaches us that wealth is not indispensable, and that if we live as we should, draw out of politics at the proper time, and die a few days before the public absolutely demand it, the matter of our birthplace will not be considered.

Still, my birthplace is all right as a birthplace. It was a good, quiet place in which to be born. All the old neighbors said that Shirley was a very quiet place up to the time I was born there, and when I took my parents by the hand and gently led them away in the spring of '53, saying, "Parents, this is no place for us," it again became quiet.

It is the only birthplace I have, however, and I hope that all the readers of this sketch will feel perfectly free to go there any time and visit it and carry their dinner as I did. Extravagant cordiality and overflowing hospitality have always kept my birthplace back.

Never Talk Back

Never talk back! sich things is ripperhensible;
feller only "corks" hisse'f that jaws a man that's hot;
In a quarrel, of you'll only keep your mouth shet and act sensible,
The man that does the talkin'll git worsted every shot!

Never talk back to a feller that's abusin' you —
Jest let him carry on, and rip, and cuss and swear;
And when he finds his lyin' and his dammin's jest amusin' you,
You've gut him clean kaflummixed, and you want to hold him there!

Never talk back, and wake up the whole community,
And call a man a liar, over law, or Politics, —
You can lift and land him furder and with gracefuller impunity
With one good jolt of silence than a half a dozen kicks!

The Gruesome Ballad of Mr. Squincher

"Ki-yi!" said Mr. Squincher,
As in contemplative pose,
He stood before the looking-glass
And burnished up his nose,
And brushed the dandruff from a span-
Spick-splinter suit of clothes, —
"Why, bless you, Mr. Squincher,
You're as handsome as a rose!"

"There are some," continued Squincher,
As he raised upon his toes
To catch his full reflection,
And the fascinating bows
That graced his legs, – "I reckon
There are some folks never knows
How beautiful is human legs
In pantaloons like those!"

"But ah!" sighed Mr. Squincher,
As a ghastly phantom 'rose
And leered above his shoulder
Like the deadliest of foes, —
With fleshless arms and fingers,

And a skull, with glistening rows
Of teeth that crunched and gritted, —
"It's my tailor, I suppose!"

They found him in the morning —
So the mystic legend goes —
With the placid face still smiling
In its statuesque repose; —
With a lily in his left hand,
And in his right a rose,
With their fragrance curling upward
Through a nimbus 'round his nose.

Anecdotes of Jay Gould

Facial Neuralgia is what is keeping Jay Gould back this summer and preventing him from making as much money as he would otherwise. With good health and his present methods of doing business Mr. Gould could in a few years be beyond the reach of want, but he is up so much nights with his face that he has to keep one gas-jet burning all the time. Besides he has cabled once to Dr. Brown-Sequard for a neuralgia pill that he thought would relieve the intense pain, and found after he had paid for the cablegram that every druggist in New York kept the Brown-Sequard pill in stock. But when a man is ill he does not care for expense, especially when he controls an Atlantic cable or two.

This neuralgia pill is about the size of a two-year-old colt and pure white. I have been compelled to take several of them myself while suffering from facial neuralgia; for neuralgia does not spare the good, the true or the beautiful. She comes along and nips the poor yeoman as well as the millionaire who sits in the lap of luxury. Millionaires who flatter themselves that they can evade neuralgia by going and sitting in the lap of luxury make a great mistake.

"And do you find that this large porcelain pill relieves you at all, Mr. Gould?" I asked him during one of these attacks, as he sat in his studio with his face tied up in hot bran.

"No, it does me no good whatever," said the man who likes to

take a lame railroad and put it on its feet by issuing more bonds. "It contains a little morphine, which dulls the pain but there's nothing in the pill to cure the cause. My neuralgia comes from indigestion. My appetite is four sizes too large for a man of my height, and every little while I overeat. I then get dangerously ill and stocks become greatly depressed in consequence. I am now in a position where, if I had a constitution that would stand the strain, I could get well off in a few years, but I am not strong enough. Every little change in the weather affects me. I see a red-headed girl on the street and immediately afterwards I see one of these big white pills."

"Are you sure, Mr. Gould," I asked him with some solicitude, as I bent forward and inhaled the rich fragrance of the carnation in his button-hole, "that you have not taken cold in some way?"

"Possibly I have," he said, as he shrank back in a petulant way, I thought. "Last week I got my feet a little damp while playing the hose on some of my stocks, but I hardly think that was what caused the trouble. I am apt to overeat, as I said. I am especially fond of fruit, too. When I was a boy I had no trouble, because I always divided my fruit with another boy, of whom I was very fond. I would always divide my fruit in two equal parts, keeping one of these and eating the other myself. Many and many a time when this boy and I went out together and only had one wormy apple between us, I have divided it and given him the worm.

"As a boy, I was taught to believe that half is always better than the hole."

"And are you not afraid that this neuralgia after it has picnicked around among your features may fly to your vitals?"

"Possibly so," said Mr. Gould, snapping the hunting case of his massive silver watch with a loud report, "but I am guarding against this by keeping my pocketbook wrapped up all the time in an old red flannel shirt."

Here Mr. Gould arose and went out of the room for a long time, and I could hear him pacing up and down outside, stopping now and then to peer through the keyhole to see if I had gone away. But in each instance he was gratified to find that I had not. Lest any one should imagine that I took advantage of his absence to peruse his private correspondence, I will say here that I did not do so, as his desk was securely locked.

Mr. Gould's habits are simple and he does not hold his cane by the middle when he walks. He wears plain clothes and his shirts and collars are both made of the same shade. He says he feels sorry for any one who has to wear a pink shirt with a blue collar. Some day he hopes to endow a home for young men who cannot afford to buy a shirt and a collar at the same store.

He owes much of his neuralgia to a lack of exercise. Mr. Gould never takes any exercise at all. His reason for this is that he sees no prospect for exercise to advance in value. He says he is willing to take anything else but exercise.

Up to within a very few years Jay Gould has always slept well at night, owing to regular hours for rising and retiring and his careful abstinence from tobacco and alcohol. Lately neuralgia has

kept him awake a good deal at night, but prior to that he used to sleep as sweetly and peacefully as a weasel.

The story circulated some years ago to the effect that a professional burglar broke into Mr. Gould's room in the middle of the night and before he could call the police was robbed of his tools, is not true. People who have no higher aim in life than the peddling about of such improbable yarns would do well to ascertain the truth of these reports before giving them circulation.

The story that Mr. Gould once killed a steer and presented his hoofs to the poor with the remark that it would help to keep sole and body together, also turned out to have no foundation whatever in fact, but was set afloat by an English wag who was passionately fond of a bit of pleasantry, don't you know.

Thus it is that a man who has acquired a competence by means of honest toil becomes the target for the barbed shaft of contumely.

Mr. Gould is said to be a good conversationalist, though he prefers to close his eyes and listen to others. Nothing pleases him better than to lure a man on and draw him out and encourage him to turn his mind wrong side out and empty it. He then richly repays this confidence by saying that if it doesn't rain any more we will have a long dry time. The man then goes away inflated with the idea that he has a pointer from Mr. Gould which will materially affect values. A great many men are playing croquet at the poor-house this summer who owe their prosperity to tips

given them by Mr. Gould.

As a fair sample of the way a story about a great man grows and becomes distorted at the same time, one incident will be sufficient. Some years ago, it is said, Mr. Gould bought a general admission ticket to hear Sarah Bernhardt as Camille. Several gentlemen who were sitting near where he stood asked him why he did not take a seat. Instead of answering directly that he could not get one he replied that he did not care for a seat, as he wanted to be near the door when the building fell. Shortly after this he had more seats than he could use. I give this story simply to illustrate how such a thing may be distorted, for upon investigation it was found to have occurred at a Patti concert, and not at a Bernhardt exhibition at all.

Mr. Gould's career, with its attendant success, should teach us two things, at least. One is, that it always pays to do a kind act, for a great deal of his large fortune has been amassed by assisting men like Mr. Field, when they were in a tight place, and taking their depressed stock off their hands while in a shrunken condition. He believes also that the merciful man is merciful to his stock.

He says he owes much of his success in life to economy and neuralgia. He also loves to relieve distress on Wall street, and is so passionately fond of this as he grows older that he has been known to distress other stock men just for the pleasant thrill it gave him to relieve them.

Jay Gould is also a living illustration of what a young man may

do with nothing but his bare hands in America. John L. Sullivan and Gould are both that way. Mr. Gould and Col. Sullivan could go into Siberia to-morrow – little as they are known there – and with a small Gordon press, a quire of bond paper and a pair of three-pennyweight gloves they would soon own Siberia, with a right of way across the rest of Europe and a first mortgage on the Russian throne. As fast as Col. Sullivan knocked out a dynasty Jay could come in and administer on the estate. This would be a powerful combination. It would afford us an opportunity also to get some of those Russian hay-fever names and chilblains by red message. Mr. Gould would get a good deal of money out of the transaction and Sullivan would get ozone.

A Fall Crick View of the Earthquake

I kin hump my back and take the rain,
And I don't keer how she pours,
I kin keep kindo' ca'm in a thunder storm,
No matter how loud she roars;
I haint much skeered o' the lightnin',
Ner I haint sich awful shakes
Afeared o' *cyclones*– but I don't want none
O' yer dad-burned old *earth*-quakes!

As long as my legs keeps stiddy,
And long as my head keeps plum,
And the buildin' stays in the front lot,
I still kin whistle, *some*!
But about the time the old clock
Flops off'n the mantel-shelf,
And the bureau skoots fer the kitchen,
I'm a-goin' to skoot, myself!

Plague-take! ef you keep me stabled
While any earthquakes is around! —
I'm jist like the stock, – I'll beller,
And break fer the open ground!
And I 'low you'd be as nervous,
And in jist about my fix,

When yer whole farm slides from inunder you,
And on'y the mor'gage sticks!

Now cars haint a-goin' to kill you
Ef you don't drive 'crost the track;
Crediters never'll jerk you up
Ef you go and pay 'em back;
You kin stand all moral and mundane storms
Ef you'll on'y jist behave —
But a' EARTHQUAKE: – well, ef it wanted you
It 'ud husk you out o' yer grave!

August

O mellow month and merry month,
Let me make love to you,
And follow you around the world
As knights their ladies do.
I thought your sisters beautiful,
Both May and April, too,
But April she had rainy eyes,
And May had eyes of blue.

And June – I liked the singing
Of her lips, and liked her smile —
But all her songs were promises
Of something, *after while*;

And July's face – the lights and shade
That may not long beguile,
With alternations o'er the wheat
The dreamer at the stile.

But you! – ah, you are tropical,
Your beauty is so rare:
Your eyes are clearer, deeper eyes
Than any, anywhere;
Mysterious, imperious,

Deliriously fair,
O listless Andalusian maid,
With bangles in your hair!

Julius Cæsar in Town

The play of "Julius Cæsar," which has been at the Academy of Music this week, has made a great hit. Messrs. Booth and Barrett very wisely decided that if it succeeded here it would do well anywhere. If the people of New York like a play and say so, it is almost sure to go elsewhere. Judging by this test the play of "Julius Cæsar" has a glowing future ahead of it. It was written by Gentlemen Shakespeare, Bacon and Donnelly, who collaborated together on it. Shakespeare did the lines and plot, Bacon furnished the cipher and Donnelly called attention to it through the papers.

The scene of "Julius Cæsar" is laid in Rome just before the railroad was completed to that place. In order to understand the play itself we must glance briefly at the leading characters which are introduced and upon whom its success largely depends.

Julius Cæsar first attracted attention through the Roman papers by calling the attention of the medical faculty to the now justly celebrated Cæsarian operation. Taking advantage of the advertisement thus attained, he soon rose to prominence and flourished considerably from 100 to 44 B. C., when a committee of representative citizens and property-owners of Rome called upon him and on behalf of the people begged leave to assassinate him as a mark of esteem. He was stabbed twenty-three times between Pompey's Pillar and eleven o'clock, many of which were

mortal. This account of the assassination is taken from a local paper and is graphic, succinct and lacks the sensational elements so common and so lamentable in our own time. Cæsar was the implacable foe of the aristocracy and refused to wear a plug hat up to the day of his death. Sulla once said, before Cæsar had made much of a showing, that some day this young man would be the ruin of the aristocracy, and twenty years afterwards when Cæsar sacked, assassinated and holocausted a whole theological seminary for saying "eyether" and "nyether," the old settlers recalled what Sulla had said.

Cæsar continued to eat pie with a knife and in many other ways to endear himself to the masses until 68 B. C., when he ran for Quæstor. Afterward he was Ædile, during the term of which office he sought to introduce a number of new games and to extend the limit on some of the older ones. From this to the Senate was but a step. In the Senate he was known as a good Speaker, but ambitious, and liable to turn up during a close vote when his enemies thought he was at home doing his chores. This made him at times odious to those who opposed him, and when he defended Cataline and offered to go on his bond, Cæsar came near being condemned to death himself.

In 62 B. C. he went to Spain as Proprætor, intending to write a book about the Spanish people and their customs as soon as he got back, but he was so busy on his return that he did not have time to do so.

Cæsar was a powerful man with the people, and while in the

Senate worked hard for his constituents, while other Senators were having their photographs taken. He went into the army when the war broke out, and after killing a great many people against whom he certainly could not have had anything personal, he returned, headed by the Rome Silver Cornet Band and leading a procession over two miles in length. It was at this time that he was tendered a crown just as he was passing the City Hall, but thrice he refused it. After each refusal the people applauded and encored him till he had to refuse it again. It is at about this time the play opens. Cæsar has just arrived on a speckled courser and dismounted outside the town. He comes in at the head of a procession with the understanding that the crown is to be offered him just as he crosses over to the Court-House.

Here Cassius and Brutus meet, and Cassius tries to make a Mugwump of Brutus, so that they can organize a new movement. Mr. Edwin Booth takes the character of Brutus and Mr. Lawrence Barrett takes that of Cassius. I would not want to take the character of Cassius myself, even if I had run short of character and needed some very much indeed, but Mr. Barrett takes it and does first-rate. Mr. Booth also plays Brutus so that old settlers here say it seems almost like having Brutus here among us again.

Brutus was a Roman republican with strong tariff tendencies. He was a good extemporaneous after-dinner speaker and a warm personal friend of Cæsar, though differing from him politically. In assassinating Cæsar, Brutus used to say afterwards he did not

feel the slightest personal animosity, but did it entirely for the good of the party. That is one thing I like about politics – you can cut out a man's vitals and hang them on the Christmas tree and drag the fair name of his wife or mother around through the sewers for six weeks before election, and so long as it is done for the good of the party it is all right.

So when Brutus is authorized by the caucus to assassinate Cæsar he feels that, like being President of the United States, it is a disagreeable job; but if the good of the party seems really to demand it he will do it, though he wishes it distinctly understood that personally he hasn't got a thing against Cæsar.

In act 4 Brutus sits up late reading a story by E. P. Roe, and just as he is in the most exciting part of it the ghost of the assassinated Cæsar appears and states that it will meet him with hard gloves at Philippi. Brutus looks bored and says that he is not in condition, but the ghost leaves it that way and Brutus looks still more bored till the ghost goes out through a white oak door without opening it.

At Philippi, Brutus sees that there is no hope of police interference, and so before time is called he inserts his sword into his being and dies while the polite American audience puts on its overcoat and goes out, looking over its shoulder to see that Brutus does not take advantage of this moment, while the people are going away, to resuscitate himself.

The play is thoroughly enjoyable all the way through, especially Cæsar's funeral. The idea of introducing a funeral

and engaging Mark Antony to deliver the eulogy, with the understanding that he was to have his traveling expenses paid and the privilege of selling the sermon to a syndicate, shows genius on the part of the joint authors. All the way through the play is good, but sad. There is no divertisement or tank in it, but the funeral more than makes up for all that.

Where Portia begs Brutus, before the assassination, to tell her all and let her in on the ground floor, and asks what the matter is, and he claims that it is malaria, and she still insists and asks, "Dwell I but in the suburbs of your good pleasure?" and he states, "You are my true and honorable wife, as dear to me as are the ruddy drops that visit my sad heart," I forgot myself and wept my new plug hat two-thirds full. It is as good as anything there is in Josh Whitcomb's play.

Booth and Barrett have the making of good actors in them. I met both of these gentlemen in Wyoming some years ago. We met by accident. They were going to California and I was coming back. By some oversight we had both selected the same track, and we were thrown together. I do not know whether they will recall my face or not. I was riding on the sleeper truck at the time of the accident. I always take a sleeper and always did. I rode on the truck because I didn't want to ride inside the car and have to associate with a wealthy porter who looked down upon me. I am the man who was found down the creek the next day gathering wild ferns and murmuring, "Where am I?"

The play of "Julius Cæsar" is one which brings out the

meanness and magnetism of Cassius, and emphasizes the mistaken patriotism of Brutus. It is full of pathos, duplicity, assassination, treachery, erroneous loyalty, suicide, hypocrisy, and all the intrigue, jealousy, cowardice and deviltry which characterized the politics of fifty years B. C., but which now, thanks to the enlightenment and refinement which twenty centuries have brought, are known no more forever. Let us not forget, as we enter upon the year 1888, that it is a Presidential year, and that all acrimony will be buried under the dew and the daisies, and that no matter how high party spirit may run, there will be no personal enmity.

His First Womern

I buried my first womern
In the spring; and in the fall
I was married to my second,
And haint settled yit at all? —
Fer I'm allus thinkin' – thinkin'
Of the first one's peaceful ways,
A-bilin' soap and singin'
Of the Lord's amazin' grace.

And I'm thinkin' of her, constant,
Dyin' carpet-chain and stuff,
And a-makin' up rag-carpets,
When the floor was good enough!
And I mind her he'p a-feedin'
And I recollect her now
A-drappin' corn, and keepin'
Clos't behind me and the plow!

And I'm allus thinkin' of her
Reddin' up around the house;
Er cookin' fer the farm-hands;
Er a-drivin' up the cows. —
And there she lays out yender
By the lower medder-fence,

Where the cows was barely grazin',
And they're usin' ever sence.

And when I look acrost there —
Say its when the clover's ripe,
And I'm settin', in the evenin',
On the porch here, with my pipe,
And the *other'n* hollers "Henry!" —
W'y, they ain't no sadder thing
Than to think of my first womern
And her funeral last spring
Was a year ago.

This Man Jones

This man Jones was what you'd call
A feller 'at had no sand at all:
Kindo consumpted, and undersize,
And saller-complected, with big sad eyes,
And a kind-of-a-sort-of-a-hang-dog style,
And a sneakin' kind-of-a-half-way smile
That kindo give him away to us
As a preacher, maybe, or sumpin' wuss.

Didn't take with the gang – well, no —
But still we managed to *use* him, though, —
Coddin' the gilley along the rout'
And drivin' the stakes that he pulled out; —
For I was one of the bosses then
And of course stood in with the canvas-men —
And the way we put up jobs, you know,
On this man Jones jes' beat the show!

Used to rattle him scandalous,
And keep the feller a-dodgin' us,
And a-shyin' round jes' skeered to death,
And a-feered to whimper above his breath;
Give him a cussin', and then a kick,
And then a kind-of-a back-hand lick —

Jes' for the fun of seein' him climb
Around with a head on half the time.

But what was the curioust thing to me,
Was along o' the party – let me see, —
Who was our "Lion Queen" last year? —
Mamzelle Zanty, er De La Pierre? —
Well, no matter! – a stunnin' in mash,
With a red-ripe lip, and a long eye-lash,
And a figger sich as the angels owns —
And one too many for this man Jones:

He'd always wake in the afternoon
As the band waltzed in on "the lion tune,"
And there, from the time that she'd go in,
Till she'd back out of the cage agin,
He'd stand, shaky and limber-kneed —
'Specially when she come to "feed
The beast raw meat with her naked hand" —
And all that business, you understand.

And it *was* resky in that den —
For I think she juggled three cubs then,
And a big "green" lion 'at used to smash
Collar-bones for old Frank Nash;
And I reckon now she haint forgot
The afternoon old "Nero" sot
His paws on her: – but as for me,
It's a sort-of-a-mixed-up mystery.

Kindo' remember an awful roar,
And see her back for the bolted door —
See the cage rock – heerd her call
"God have mercy!" and that was all —
For ther haint no livin' man can tell
What it's like when a thousand yell
In female tones, and a thousand more
Howl in bass till their throats is sore!

But the keeper said as they dragged her out,
They heerd some feller laugh and shout:
"Save her! Quick! I've got the cuss!"
… And yit she waked and smiled on us!
And we daren't *flinch*– for the doctor said,
Seein' as this man Jones was dead,
Better to jes' not let her know
Nothin' o' that for a week or so.

How to Hunt the Fox

The joyous season for hunting is again upon us, and with the gentle fall of the autumn leaf and the sough of the scented breezes about the gnarled and naked limbs of the wailing trees – the huntsman comes with his hark and his halloo and hurrah, boys, the swift rush of the chase, the thrilling scamper 'cross country, the mad dash through the Long Islander's pumpkin patch – also the mad dash, dash, dash of the farmer, the low moan of the disabled and frozen-toed hen as the whooping horsemen run her down; the wild shriek of the children, the low melancholy wail of the frightened shoat as he flees away to the straw pile, the quick yet muffled plunk of the frozen tomato and the dull scrunch of the seed cucumber.

The huntsman now takes the flannels off his fox, rubs his stiffened limbs with gargling oil, ties a bunch of firecrackers to his tail and runs him around the barn a few times to see if he is in good order.

The foxhound is a cross of the bloodhound, the grayhound, the bulldog and the chump. When you step on his tail he is said to be in full cry. The foxhound obtains from his ancestors on the bloodhound side of the house his keen scent, which enables him while in full cry 'cross country to pause and hunt for chipmunks. He also obtains from the bloodhound branch of his family a wild yearning to star in an "Uncle Tom" company, and watch little

Eva meander up the flume at two dollars per week. From the grayhound he gets his most miraculous speed, which enables him to attain a rate of velocity so great that he is unable to halt during the excitement of the chase, frequently running so far during the day that it takes him a week to get back, when, of course, all interest has died out. From the bulldog the foxhound obtains his great tenacity of purpose, his deep-seated convictions, his quick perceptions, his love of home and his clinging nature. From the chump the foxhound gets his high intellectuality and that mental power which enables him to distinguish almost at a glance the salient points of difference between a two-year-old steer and a two-dollar bill.

The foxhound is about two feet in height, and 120 of them would be considered an ample number for a quiet little fox hunt. Some hunters think this number inadequate, but unless the fox be unusually skittish and crawl under the barn, 120 foxhounds ought to be enough. The trouble generally is that hunters make too much noise, thus scaring the fox so that he tries to get away from them. This necessitates hard riding and great activity on the part of the whippers-in. Frightening a fox almost always results in sending him out of the road and compelling horsemen to stop in order to take down a panel of fence every little while that they may follow the animal, and before you can get the fence put up again the owner is on the ground, and after you have made change with him and mounted again the fox may be nine miles away. Try by all means to keep your fox in the road!

It makes a great difference what kind of fox you use, however. I once had a fox on my Pumpkin Butte estates that lasted me three years, and I never knew him to shy or turn out of the road for anything but a loaded team. He was the best fox for hunting purposes that I ever had. Every spring I would sprinkle him with Scotch snuff and put him away in the bureau till fall. He would then come out bright and chipper. He was always ready to enter into the chase with all the chic and embonpoint of a regular Kenosha, and nothing pleased him better than to be about eight miles in advance of my thoroughbred pack in full cry, scampering 'cross country, while stretching back a few miles behind the dogs followed a pale young man and his financier, each riding a horse that had sat down too hard on its tail some time and driven it into his system about six joints.

Some hunters, who are madly and passionately devoted to the sport, leap their horses over fences, moats, donjon keeps, hedges and currant bushes with utter sang froid and the wild, unfettered toot ongsomble of a brass band. It is one of the most spirited and touchful of sights to see a young fox-hunter going home through the gloaming with a full cry in one hand and his pancreas in the other.

Some like to be in at the death, as it is called, and it is certainly a laudable ambition. To see 120 dogs hold out against a ferocious fox weighing nine pounds; to watch the brave little band of dogs and whippers-in and horses with sawed-off tails, making up in heroism what they lack in numbers, succeeding at last in

ridding the country of the ferocious brute which has long been the acknowledged foe of the human race, is indeed a fine sight.

We are too apt to regard fox-hunting merely as a relaxation, a source of pleasure, and the result of a desire to do the way people do in the novels which we steal from English authors: but this is not all. To successfully hunt a fox, to jump fences 'cross country like an unruly steer, is no child's play. To ride all day on a very hot and restless saddle, trying to lope while your horse is trotting, giving your friends a good view of the country between yourself and your horse, then leaping stone walls, breaking your collar-bone in four places, pulling out one eye and leaving it hanging on a plum tree, or going home at night with your transverse colon wrapped around the pommel of your saddle and your liver in an old newspaper, requires the greatest courage.

Too much stress cannot be placed upon the costume worn while fox-hunting, and in fact, that is, after all, the life and soul of the chase. For ladies, nothing looks better than a close-fitting jacket, sewed together with thread of the same shade and a skirt. Neat-fitting cavalry boots and a plug hat complete the costume. Then, with a hue in one hand and a cry in the other, she is prepared to mount. Lead the horse up to a stone wall or a freight car and spring lightly into the saddle with a glad cry. A freight car is the best thing from which to mount a horse, but it is too unwieldy and frequently delays the chase. For this reason, too, much luggage should not be carried on a fox-hunt. Some gentlemen carry a change of canes, neatly concealed in a shawl

strap, but even this may be dispensed with.

For gentlemen, a dark, four-button cutaway coat, with neat, loose-fitting, white panties, will generally scare a fox into convulsions, so that he may be easily killed with a club. A short-waisted plug hat may be worn also, in order to distinguish the hunter from the whipper-in, who wears a baseball cap. The only fox-hunting I have ever done was on board an impetuous, tough-bitted, fore-and-aft horse that had emotional insanity. I was dressed in a swallow-tail coat, waistcoat of Scotch plaid Turkish toweling, and a pair of close-fitting breeches of etiquette tucked into my boot-tops. As I was away from home at the time and could not reach my own steed I was obliged to mount a spirited steed with high, intellectual hips, one white eye and a big red nostril that you could set a Shanghai hen in. This horse, as soon as the pack broke into full cry, climbed over a fence that had wrought-iron briers on it, lit in a corn field, stabbed his hind leg through a sere and yellow pumpkin, which he wore the rest of the day, with seven yards of pumpkin vine streaming out behind, and away we dashed 'cross country. I remained mounted not because I enjoyed it, for I did not, but because I dreaded to dismount. I hated to get off in pieces. If I can't get off a horse's back as a whole, I would rather adhere to the horse. I will adhere that I did so.

We did not see the fox, but we saw almost everything else. I remember, among other things, of riding through a hothouse, and how I enjoyed it. A morning scamper through a conservatory

when the syringas and Jonquils and Jack roses lie cuddled up together in their little beds, is a thing to remember and look back to and pay for. To stand knee-deep in glass and gladiolas, to smell the mashed and mussed up mignonette and the last fragrant sigh of the scrunched heliotrope beneath the hoof of your horse, while far away the deep-mouthed baying of the hoarse hounds, hotly hugging the reeking trail of the aniseseed bag, calls on the gorgeously caparisoned hills to give back their merry music or fork it over to other answering hills, is joy to the huntsman's heart.

On, on I rode with my unconfined locks streaming behind me in the autumn wind. On and still on I sped, the big, bright pumpkin slipping up and down the gambrel of my spirited horse at every jump. On and ever on we went, shedding terror and pumpkin seeds along our glittering track till my proud steed ran his leg in a gopher hole and fell over one of those machines that they put on a high-headed steer to keep him from jumping fences. As the horse fell, the necklace of this hickory poke flew up and adjusted itself around my throat. In an instant my steed was on his feet again, and gayly we went forward while the prong of this barbarous appliance, ever and anon plowed into a brand new culvert or rooted up a clover field. Every time it ran into an orchard or a cemetery it would jar my neck and knock me silly. But I could see with joy that it reduced the speed of my horse. At last as the sun went down, reluctantly, it seemed to me, for he knew that he would never see such riding again, my ill-

spent horse fell with a hollow moan, curled up, gave a spasmodic quiver with his little, nerveless, sawed-off tail and died.

The other huntsmen succeeded in treeing the anise-seed bag at sundown, in time to catch the 6 o'clock train home.

Fox-hunting is one of the most thrilling pastimes of which I know, and for young men whose parents have amassed large sums of money in the intellectual pursuit of hides and tallow, the meet, the chase, the scamper, the full cry, the cover, the stellated fracture, the yelp of the pack, the yip, the yell of triumph, the confusion, the whoop, the holla, the hallos, the hurrah, the abrasion, the snort of the hunter, the concussion, the sward, the open, the earth stopper, the strangulated hernia, the glad cry of the hound as he brings home the quivering seat of the peasant's pantaloons, the yelp of joy as he lays at his master's feet, the strawberry mark of the rustic, all, all are exhilarating to the sons of our American nobility.

Fox-hunting combines the danger and the wild, tumultuous joy of the skating-rink, the toboggan slide, the mush-and-milk sociable and the straw ride.

With a good horse, an air cushion, a reliable earth-stopper and an anise-seed bag, a man must indeed be thoroughly blase who cannot enjoy a scamper across country, over the Pennsylvania wold, the New Jersey mere, the Connecticut moor, the Indiana glade, the Missouri brake, the Michigan mead, the American tarn, the fen, the gulch, the buffalo wallow, the cranberry marsh, the glen, the draw, the canyon, the ravine, the forks, the bottom

or the settlement.

For the young American nobleman whose ducal father made his money by inventing a fluent pill, or who gained his great wealth through relieving humanity by means of a lung pad, a liver pad, a kidney pad or a foot pad, fox-hunting is first rate.

The Boy Friend

Larence, my boy-friend, hale and strong,
O, he is as jolly as he is young;
And all of the laughs of the lyre belong
To the boy all unsung:

So I want to sing something in his behalf —
To clang some chords, of the good it is
To know he is near, and to have the laugh
Of that wholesome voice of his.

I want to tell him in gentler ways
Than prose may do, that the arms of rhyme,
Warm and tender with tuneful praise,
Are about him all the time.

I want him to know that the quietest nights
We have passed together are yet with me
Roistering over the old delights
That were born of his company.

I want him to know how my soul esteems
The fairy stories of Andersen,
And the glad translations of all the themes
Of the hearts of boyish men.

Want him to know that my fancy flows,
With the lilt of a dear old-fashioned tune,
Through "Lewis Carroll's" poemly prose,
And the tale of "The Bold Dragoon."

O, this is the Prince that I would sing —
Would drape and garnish in velvet line
Since courtlier far than any king
Is this brave boy-friend of mine!

A Letter of Acceptance

The secretary of the Ashfield Farmer's Club, of Ashfield, Mass., Mr. E. D. Church, informs me by United States mail that upon receipt of my favorable reply I will become an honorary member of that Club, along with George William Curtis, Prof. Norton, Prof. Stanley Hall, of Harvard, and other wet-browed toilers in the catnip-infested domain of Agriculture.

I take this method of thanking the Ashfield Farmers' Club, through its secretary, for the honor thus all so unworthily bestowed, and joyfully accept the honorary membership, with the understanding, however, that during the County Fair the solemn duty of delivering the annual address from the judges' stand, in tones that will not only ring along down the corridors of time, but go thundering three times around a half-mile track and be heard above the rhythmic plunk of the hired man who is trying to ascertain, by means of a large mawl and a thumping machine, how hard he can strike, shall fall upon Mr. Curtis or other honorary members of the club. I have a voice that does very well to express endearment, or other subdued emotions, but it is not effective at a County Fair. Spectators see the wonderful play of my features, but they only hear the low refrain of the haughty Clydesdale steed, who has a neighsal voice and wears his tail in a Grecian coil. I received $150 once for addressing a race-track one mile in length on "The Use and Abuse of Ensilage as a

Narcotic." I made the gestures, but the sentiments were those of the four-ton Percheron charger, Little Medicine, dam Eloquent.

I spoke under a low shed and rather adverse circumstances. In talking with the committee afterwards, as I wrapped up my gestures and put them back in the shawl strap, I said that I felt almost ashamed to receive such a price for the sentiments of others, but they said that was all right. No one expected to hear an Agricultural Address. They claimed that it was most generally purely spectacular, and so they regarded my speech as a great success. I used the same gestures afterwards in speaking of "The Great Falling Off among Bare-Back Riders in the Circuses of the Present Day."

I would also like to be excused from any duties as a judge of curly-faced stock or as an umpire of ornamental needlework. After a person has had a fountain pen kicked endwise through his chest by the animal to which he has awarded the prize, and later on has his features worked up into a giblet pie by the owner of the animal to whom he did not award the prize, he does not ask for public recognition at the hands of his fellow-citizens. It is the same in the matter of ornamental needlework and gaudy quilts, which goad a man to drink and death. While I am proud to belong to a farmers' club and "change works" with a hearty, whole-souled ploughman like George William Curtis, I hope that at all County Fairs or other intellectual hand-to-hand contests between outdoor orators and other domestic animals, I may be excused, and that when judges of inflamed slumber robes and restless

tidies, which roll up and fall over the floor or adhere to the backs of innocent people; or stiff, hard Doric pillor-shams which do not in any way enhance the joys of sleep; or beautiful, pale-blue satin pincushions which it would be wicked to put a pin in and which will therefore ever and forevermore mock the man who really wants a pin, just as a beautiful match-safe stands idly through the long vigils of the night, year after year, only to laugh at the man who staggers towards it and falls up against it and finds it empty; or like the glorious inkstand which is so pretty and so fragile that it stands around with its hands in its pockets acquiring dust and dead flies for centuries, so that when you are in a hurry you stick your pen into a small chamber of horrors – I say when the judges are selected for this department I would rather have my name omitted from the panel, as I have formed or expressed an opinion and have reasonable doubts and conscientious scruples which it would require testimony to remove, and I am not qualified anyway, and I have been already placed in jeopardy once, and that is enough.

Mr. Church writes that the club has taken up, discussed and settled all points of importance bearing upon Agriculture, from the tariff up to the question of whether or not turpentine poured in a cow's ear ameliorates the pangs of hollow horn. He desires suggestions and questions for discussion. That shows the club to be thoroughly alive. It will soon be Spring, and we cannot then discuss these matters. New responsibilities will be added day by day in the way of stock, and we will have to think of names for

them. Would it not be well before the time comes for active farm work to think out a long list of names before the little strangers arrive? Nothing serves to lower us in the estimation of our fellow-farmers or the world more than the frequent altercations between owners and their hired help over what name they shall give a weary, wobbly calf who has just entered the great arena of life, full of hopes and aspirations, perhaps, but otherwise absolutely empty. Let us consider this before Spring fairly opens, so that we may be prepared for anything of this kind.

One more point may properly come before the club at its next meeting, and I mention it here because I may be so busy at Washington looking after our other interests that I cannot get to the club meeting. I refer to the evident change in climate here from year to year, and its effect upon seeds purchased of florists and seedsmen generally.

Twenty years ago you could plant a seed according to directions and it would produce a plant which seemed to resemble in a general way the picture on the outside of the package. Now, under the fluctuating influences of irresponsible isotherms, phlegmatic Springs, rare June weather and overdone weather in August, I find it almost impossible to produce a plant or vegetable which in any way resembles its portrait. Is it my fault or the fault of the climate? I wish the club would take hold of this at its next regular meeting. I first noticed the change in the summer of '72, I think. I purchased a small package of early Scotch plaid curled kale with a beautiful picture on the outside.

It was as good a picture of Scotch kale as I ever saw. I could imagine how gay and light-hearted it was the day when it went up to the studio and had its picture taken for this purpose. A short editorial paragraph under the picture stated that I should plant in quick, rich soil, in rows four inches apart, to a depth of one inch, cover lightly and then roll. I did so. No farmer of my years enjoys rolling better than I do.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.