MR. BOWSER, ORATOR

HE TACKLES A COUNTY FAIR ADDRESS.

If Mr. Bowser had discovered a way of steering a balloon against a cyclone he could not have looked more important than he did the other evening as he came home from the office. Mrs. Bowser noticed his general bearing at once and began to wonder what had caused it, but it was not until they were seated at the dinner table that she queried:

"Has anything special happened today?"

"Some folks might not call it special," replied Mr. Bowser as he swelled out a little.

"You—you haven't been buying a barrel of root beer for a fall tonic?"

"Mrs. Bowser, when I buy a barrel of root beer for a spring or fall tonic the said barrel will be rolled in at the basement door. No barrel came this afternoon, did it?"

"You are not thinking of trading the house for a chicken farm?" she persisted.

"Nonsense!"

"Then—then——"

He regarded her for a minute in silence and then pompously observed:

"I shall be very busy in the library this evening, and if any one calls you are to say that I am not at home. I have a little address to write."

"O-h! What sort of an address? I hope it is not one for some club. You remember how the Jolly Old Boys made a fool of you last spring. They pretended they wanted an address, and then——"

"Stop right there, Mrs. Bowser—stop right there!" he exclaimed as he pointed his knife at her across the table. "I know nothing about the Jolly Old Boys. I never wrote an address for the Jolly Old Boys. The Jolly Old Boys can go to grass for all of me. What do you mean when you say that they made a fool of me?"

"Why, they got you to write an address and then shouted and laughed and guyed you so that you could not deliver it. Don't you remember how they stood you on your head, made you climb a ladder and rolled you on a barrel?"

"By thunder, woman, but are you talking such talk to me? Are you out of your head? Have you gone plumb crazy since I left the house this morning? Bowser laughed at Bowser on a ladder! Bowser rolled on a barrel!"

"But you told me so when you came home that night."

"Never! Never in all this world! However, we have had enough of this. Don't ask me any more questions, for I shan't answer them. I have no time to throw away on lunatics."

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!"

Mrs. Bowser subsided, and a few minutes later Mr. Bowser finished his dinner and went up stairs and locked himself in the library.

"Is it that he's going to practice on the water pipes?" asked the cook in a whisper.

"Oh, no."

"Will he blow up the range or the furnace, ma'am?"

"He is going to do some writing."

"But if he's going to put dynamite in the chimneys to clean them out you should let me know, Mrs. Bowser. I'm the sole support of a widowed mother, and I don't want to be found hanging across the clothesline a mangled corpse."

Mrs. Bowser sat down in the sitting room to read, and it was a full hour before she heard from Mr. Bowser. He finally came out of the library with some sheets of paper in his hand and a perplexed look on his face, and after pacing up and down the room for two or three minutes he said:

"Perhaps I spoke too harshly at dinner, but I had a great thing on hand and was somewhat worried about it."

"If I can help you at all I shall be glad to," she replied.

"It's just this way. I received a call today from one of the executive committee of the Branch County Fair. He wanted me to write and deliver an address. There's no money in it, but lots of fame. I want to get up the very best address delivered at any county fair this fall, and if you help me a little I could do it."

"Certainly, I'll help you. How much have you got written?"

"Not so very much, but it's good. I will read it to you:

"'Ladies and gentlemen: It goes without saying that I stand here before you to-day with all the emotions surging up in my breast that Washington felt when he crossed the Delaware. After Lexington — after Bunker Hill—after years of patriotic suffering, we finally achieved our independence and we stand here to-day under the banner of freedom.'"

"But I don't like the beginning, dear," said Mrs. Bowser, as he paused for breath. "Now, don't get angry, but you see that Lexington and Bunker Hill and Washington crossing the Delaware have nothing whatever to do with the Branch County Fair."

"I'd like to know why they haven't? Could Branch County have had a county fair except for those things?"

"That's too indefinite. I should plunge right into my subject at once. You seem to have mapped out a Fourth of July oration instead."

"Nothing of the kind, woman!" angrily exclaimed Mr. Bowser. "I was a fool to appeal to you. I might have known that your jealousy would lead you to find fault with whatever I wrote. Don't agitate yourself further. Your opinion is nothing to me."

He therefore retired to the library and slammed the door after him, and it was fifteen minutes before he reappeared. He had tried again, and after swallowing his pride he read:

"Fellow citizens: As I cast my eyes over this smiling landscape today and recall the fact that when Christopher Columbus landed here four hundred years ago he found nothing but a vast and silent forest filled with whooping Indians and raging wild beasts—I say that when I look around me and see—see——"

"But Columbus landed down in Florida, you know," interrupted Mrs. Bowser.

"And what of that? Can't I speak in a general way?"

"You have a vast and silent forest, and then you say it was filled with whooping Indians and raging wild beasts. You must be consistent, Mr. Bowser.

"But do you think any one is going to cavil about such trifles?" he demanded as he flushed white and red. "Besides, I am sure that Columbus landed on the very spot where they are going to hold the fair."

"Then all histories are wrong."

"Then they are, and I can prove it. In fact, the man who engaged me said that he did, and that they had a stone there to mark the spot."

"Well, let that go," said Mrs. Bowser. "What were you going on to say about the whooping Indians and the raging wild beasts?"

"Not a blamed word! You have knocked out the whole thing, just as I might have known you would. The chance comes to me to make a great name as a literary man and an orator, and you immediately proceed to jump on it with both feet. If I had your disposition I'd go hang myself."

"If you will only be reasonable"—

But Mr. Bowser wouldn't. He strode down the hall, clapped his hat on his head and banged the door behind him. Arriving at the corner drug store, he asked of his family druggist:

"Say, White, where did Columbus land in America?"

"On the coast of Florida," of course.

"Um! Do you know anything about the Branch County Fair?"

"It was held two weeks ago!"

Mr. Bowser walked out of the store seeing red. There was a man waiting on the corner to strike him for a dime. He was a poor man and a weary and discouraged man, having lost his wholesale dry goods business in the California earthquake.

"Will I! Will I!" shouted Mr. Bowser in glee as the man made his request. "You bet I will!"

And then two men struggled for a moment—went down and rolled over—got up and fled—and it was the blood-thirsty Mr. Bowser who pursued with demoniac yells.

"WENT DOWN AND ROLLED OVER."

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ARIZONA KICKLETS.

LOTS OF THINGS HAVE HAPPENED OUT WEST.

As usual, when we rode over to Lone Jack one day last week to ask the editor of the Banner why he had called us a liar over the telephone, we discovered that he had made for the woods. We shall have the luck to run across him some day and strew his carcass on the sands of time.

We don't know whether our esteemed contemporary shot at us one night last week or not, but as long as he says he did we will let it go at that. If he had shot, then the moon had a narrow escape.

Mr. Henry Shine writes us from Salt Lake City that he will come to Giveadam Gulch within a month and end our career with a bullet. We'll bet ten to one that if Mr. Shine arrives here with any such bee in his bonnet he will become a permanent occupant of our private editorial graveyard.

Colonel Shipley wishes us to announce that he raised strawberries this Summer as large as quart bowls. We make the announcement to please the colonel, but add, for the benefit of the public at large, that we have ever found him the biggest liar in Arizona.

The twenty-two saloons in this town formed a Trust last week and raised the price of drinks one hundred per cent. After the indignant populace had wrecked five buildings and got well started, the trust announced a bust and prices went back to normal. We have our little way here, even with trusts.

We are Mayor of the town, Deputy U. S. Marshal, Fish Commissioner, Postmaster, Game Warden, a member of the Irrigation Committee, secretary of the Vigilance Committee, editor of The Kicker, foreman of the Fire Company, and captain of the local guards, but when we are asked to step up to the bar and have something our dignity won't excuse a refusal.

We are in receipt of a letter from a minister of the Gospel in Connecticut, criticising us severely for indulging in the sport of horse racing. We admit all he says, but what's a feller going to do? When you are in Giveadam Gulch you have got to do as the Giveadam Gulchers do or be thought a kicker. We race, but we do it hoping the other party will win and give the money to the heathen.

A stranger named William Bliss turned himself loose in town the other evening and shot the insulators off of twenty-one telegraph poles. Some patriotic citizen then split William's left ear with a bullet, and he howled around like a boy five years old after a spanking. He was finally ducked in the creek and ordered to move on.

This is our regular day for lying about our circulation, and we therefore gird on our armor and announce that the figures are very close to the three million mark, and that if the boom keeps up we shall have to order one hundred new presses to print the edition in time. Our circulation now exceeds the combined circulation of everything in the shape of printing in the whole world. We have done it with our little hatchet.

A Cincinnati paper announces that we, as Postmaster of Giveadam Gulch, have been called to Washington to instruct the Postmaster-General in the art of playing poker. The article is a little too previous. We live in hopes that such instructions may come, and if they do we will make such a pokerist of him as has not been seen in the East for the last twenty years.

Having learned that a shyster lawyer in this town named Sol Davis was telling that he would shoot us on sight for a little article that appeared in the Kicker last week, we walked around to his office on Tuesday last to pass the time of day. Mr. Davis had a shotgun, two revolvers and a knife handy by, but he begged the privilege of taking us by the hand and assuring us that he would kill himself sooner than even point a gun at us. There is nothing like following up such rumors with promptness and dispatch.

In riding over to Big Tree last Tuesday in hopes to add a few more subscribers to our list we were halted at Cat Hill by a road agent and robbed of fifty dollars and our guns. As a consequence we have lost prestige locally and a number of subscribers have stopped their papers. We are sorry, but we shall have to stand it. When a beetle-browed desperado has the muzzle of his gun within a foot of our eye and commands us to climb down and shell out we are not going to stop and argue the matter. We may some day add our friend of the road to the happy collection in our private graveyard, but meanwhile we wish him luck.

"ROBBED OF FIFTY DOLLARS AND OUR GUNS."

We started out the other day to convince Tom Connolly, of the Bald Eagle saloon, that advertising always pays at least one hundred per cent., but as soon as we entered the door of his place Thomas opened fire on us. We saw in an instant that he did not love us, and that oral arguments would be wasted, and we returned his fire and knocked him over with a bullet in his shoulder. After the lead had been extracted and he had three days in which to think it over, Tom came around to our way of thinking and will hereafter be found among our most enterprising advertisers. We had much rather shoot off our mouth than our gun in drumming up ads, but there are times when the thing has got to be reversed.

At ten o'clock on Wednesday evening last we had to mount a mule belonging to Mr. Charles Helmsford and drive three cowboys out of the town. They had fired over one hundred shots at random, and many citizens had had narrow escapes. We got the trio on the run after firing six shots and uttering three warphoops, and we drove them two miles.

The autoist who passed through here on his way to Florence last week had not reached that place at last reports, and his friends are very much worried. The last seen of him was at a point eight miles from the Gulch. He was then seeking to outspeed a gang of a dozen cowboys, but the road was rough and they were shooting the tires off the machine. They may have hung him and his machine on the same limb for a joke. We issued a warning long ago. Now and then a bikist may squeak through, but there are a hundred chances to one against an autoist. The boys don't like the smell of the gasolene.

Our society reporter announces that the season will open with great eclat in Giveadam Gulch next month, and that among the earliest things on the carpet are a candy pull, a poker party and a high tea. We shall be there. We shall run the society of the town the same as in the past, and any ambitious man or woman who thinks we can be safely snubbed had better pause and think before trying it on.

Mr. George Taylor, a painless dentist from Denver, arrived here last week to open parlors, but after a short talk with us he concluded not to and returned home. We simply told him that the first time he broke a patient's jaw no time would be given him to get to the woods. As a people we hold a man to what he advertises.

CAMPING OUT.

"When you catch me going into the woods again with a party of men on a vacation you will catch a weasel asleep," said the hardware merchant who had just told a female customer that if she didn't like his washboards she could go to pot.

A minute later he had cooled off enough to resume:

"There were six of us, and we went into the woods up-State with tents and all equipments. We were to fish, hunt and loaf, and so far as the other five went they looked to be strong, healthy men. After a drive of thirteen miles right into nowhere, we came to a puddle called a lake and pitched our tents. Three of the five were too exhausted to help any, and the other two played out as soon as the tents were up. Then I discovered that rupture, weak heart, rheumatism, nervous prostration and consumption were the ailments in camp.

"I had to gather and bring in all the wood or we would have had no fires. I had to do all the cooking or we should have had nothing to eat. I had to wash all the dishes or they would have remained without washing. They played it on me for fair. They fished and loafed and lied, and I had to do all the work. If any of them were called on his ailment broke out afresh, and more than ten different times I was asked to go twenty miles for a doctor. I didn't go, however, but they did throw all the work on my shoulders, while they took all the comfort, and I didn't get even with them until the very last."

"How did you do it?" was asked.

"Left the camp at dark and walked all night through the woods and took the train for home, and the five are there yet, so far as I know. The He was listened to with the close year will get one on the nose right off, and I wish the fact to be published far and wide. Unless you've got spinal complaint or St. Vitus' Dance and can throw everything onto the other fellows it's a delusion and a snare."

UNCLE ELI'S FABLES.

THE SAGE AND THE YOUTH.

One day as the Sage was lying on his back in the sun and wondering why a ram's horns had a twist in them instead of growing straight as a broom-stick and being put to use as baseball bats, he was approached by a young man who made him obeisance and said:

"O, Sage, I have come all the way from Pikeville to drink of thy wisdom."

"That's a right smart town, that Pikeville," replied the old man as he sat up. "Anything like a Fall boom on there?"

"Pikeville is holding her own and a little more, O wise man, but what I would ask thee about is this! There dwelleth near me a fair and gentle maid."

"So? They are always fair and gentle, I believe."

"I no sooner beheld her than I loved her."

"That's right. Never lose any time in getting hold of a good thing."

"Three days ago I told her of my love, O Sage."

"Right again. Never let a girl get away from you for the want of a little gab."

"I poured out the tale of my love. She listened to me. I told her that unless she consented to be mine I should kill myself."

"Very proper, young man—very proper. Did you specify any particular way in which you intended to take yourself off?"

"I—I think I said something about drowning."

"Nice, easy way. And the girl?"

"She sighed, but said nothing. Canst tell me, O Sage, if my love is returned?"

"Certainly it is, my son. Get a girl to sighing and love quickly follows. Old Sam Ray, of Pikeville, could have told you that."

"But, O wise man, canst tell me if I will be happy if we marry?"

"You love, and will die if you can't marry the object of your affections. He loved, and is dead because he married her. It's even up, young man, and you can take your choise."

Moral—Of the two evils go a-fishing.

THE KING AND THE CARTERS.

The King was riding out with his suite when he was halted at the foot of a long and steep hill by a dozen carters, who had heard that he was coming that way, and who had a petition to present.

"O Ruler of the sun, moon and stars," began the eldest of the carters, who had been selected to state the case, "we whom you see before you have been carters for many long years. For twenty years our laden carts and asses have been toiling up and down this hill. Our petition to you now is that you have it graded down to make the road level."

"It shall be done as soon as possible," replied the King in gracious tones, and he was heartily cheered as he rode on.

On reaching the brow of the hill he met another delegation of carters, and the eldest of them took his courage in his hand and stepped out and said:

"O greater than the earth itself, we pray you take notice of the steep slant before you. Often and often our beasts of burden have fallen on their noses in descending this hill. Our prayer to you is that it may be graded down to a level."

"I am glad you spoke of it, and it shall be done at once," was the reply. Thereupon the great man was cheered as long as the cavalcade remained in sight. When he had returned to the palace, Murphy, his Prime Minister said:

"You promised to have the ascent of that long hill graded down."

"That's what I did, Murphy."

"And you likewise promised to have the descent graded."

"I am aware of that."

"It will cost ten thousand dollars, and we haven't fifty in the treasury."

"O thou Prime Minister of little faith!" laughed the King. "I was petitioned to have the ascent and the descent graded was I not?"

"You surely were, and you promised."

"Well, you will arrange it to-morrow so that I will be petitioned not to ruin the picturesqueness of the road by any grading whatsoever, and that will be my excuse for doing nothing. Murphy, any King who knows his business will promise anything anybody wants. At the same time, any King who knows his business will fail to keep his promises on the ground that he doesn't wish to injure any one else."

THE JERICHO P. O.

PAP PERKINS, POSTMASTER, TELLS HOW A BOOM WAS KILLED.

We had had a Liars' Club in Jericho for over five years, and it was admitted on all sides that it had been a great benefit to the town. It met at the post office every night in the week, and on Saturday nights it drew farmers in from five miles around. Many of the latter would have gone to Dobbs' Ferry to buy their groceries but for the club. They just loved to sit around on the barrels and boxes and hear the Liars lie, and it was calculated that their purchases at the stores amounted to over one hundred dollars a week.

In addition to the farmers, whenever a peddler, a lightning-rod man or a piano agent found himself within five miles of Jericho and night or Sunday coming on he made for the village so as to be present at the meeting of the Liars' Club. Strangers passing through and intending to simply stay over night at the tavern would hear of the club and stop for two or three days. The three ministers of the town had set out time after time to break up the club. Deacon Spooner was chairman and a member of the church, but when they argued and appealed and threatened to discipline, he merely replied:

"We are a club of liars, but we don't lie to hurt any one. They are just slick, pleasant lies, told to pass the time away and to help along the business of the town. Take away our liars and we would degenerate into a one-horse burg in two weeks."

The Liars' Club had passed its fifth year and was gaining on it all the time when there arrived in Jericho one day a little old man who gave his name as Abijah Goodheart. He came to look for a relative, but the person had moved away. Mr. Goodheart wouldn't have stayed beyond two days if he hadn't happened to hear of the club. His old wrinkled face lighted up with eagerness, he rubbed his hands with glee, and he wanted an introduction to Deacon Spooner at once. When the Deacon was brought around the two fell in with each other and that night Mr. Goodheart occupied the post of honor on the corner of the counter. Nine of the best liars of the club were selected to give him specimens, and as he heard them reel off their yarns his face was wreathed in smiles and he said he hadn't enjoyed an evening so well in twenty years. When the nine liars had finished, the stranger was asked to tell a whopper. He was promptly willing.

There are plenty of people yet living in Jericho who remember every incident of that story. The old man was prospecting in Colorado for gold, and remained in the mountains too long. Winter found him there, and he built a shanty and had been living on the carcass of a deer he had killed, when there came a snowslide. He was carried a full mile and buried under thirty feet of snow. Some logs lying on top of bowlders made an arch and thus saved him. His gun was gone, he had neither blankets nor provisions, and he realized that it was impossible for him to dig his way out. After three days of hunger he turned to his boots. They lasted him eight days. He managed to eat them down to the last inch, but gave it as his opinion that they didn't begin with cold chicken as a steady diet. After three days more of gnawing hunger he laid him down to die, but Providence was looking out for him. A grizzly beef was tunnelling in from the west to get him, and at the same time another was tunnelling in from the east. They met right at his camp and fought and killed each other and supplied him with food for two months. At the end of that time, during a thunderstorm, a bolt of lightning struck the snow and bored a hole down to him and let him escape. In escaping he found a nugget of gold weighing one hundred pounds and had been living on the sale of it ever since.

"THEY MET RIGHT AT THE CAMP AND FOUGHT AND KILLED EACH OTHER."

Of course, there were a hundred little incidents connected with the story that I have not related. Taken altogether, it was thrillingly interesting and Mr. Goodheart was given a vote of thanks and the freedom of the town. He was asked to repeat the story night after night. Word seemed to go all over the country about it, and within a week there began to be inquiries for vacant houses and real estate. Within two weeks there had been five or six horse trades, several hogs and cows had changed hands, and Alvin Johnson, the oldest man in the town, stood on the steps of the post office and said:

"I'm a-tellin' you that a boom has struck Jericho. It's no ephemeral boom, founded upon the amount of catnip grown around here, but it's somethin' that has come to stay and make a second Chicago of our town. Let us give three cheers for our friend Goodheart. But for that lie of his we might have lived and died unknown to the world."

The three ministers got together and talked it over and then sent for the old man. They told him that he ought to be ashamed of himself and gave him a general raking down. He listened to what they had to say and then replied:

"Gentlemen, I have told a story before the Liars' Club. Do you receive it as a lie or the truth?"

"Why, it's a falsehood pure and simple."

"Sorry to disagree with you, gentlemen, but that story is the solemn truth. I can prove every incident of it."

At that they grew more severe with him and talked about warrants and constables, and when he left them he had tears in his eyes. Deacon Spooner was sent around to see him and tell him he had better go a little slow, but his reply was:

"Why, I thought you all knew that I was telling the solemn truth. There has been so much lying here that I thought I would slip in something truthful for a change."

"Say, you do it nicely!" complimented the Deacon as he winked at him.

"But I can prove the story to be true."

"It's the slickest lie I ever heard, and you shall received all credit for it. Don't trade it off for any other."

Other men complimented him on his gigantic lie, and winked at him when he declared he had been telling the truth, and the iron entered the old man's soul. He wrote letters to Colorado, and in the course of a couple weeks he got affidavits as to the truth of his story. They even sent on claws from the feet of the bears. Bankers, merchants and ministers united in saying that Mr. Goodheart had never been known to tell a lie. He got all this and much more, but Deacon Spooner came around and poked him in the ribs and winked and the ministers called on him and said that his moral example was dragging scores of men down to perdition. After they had told him this the old man went to the Liars' Club, and told his story once more. He took plenty of time, and rung in all the old incidents and a few new ones. Nobody asks me to go camping next summer who wants to hear a story like that."

"Here lies Abijah Goodheart, but he wasn't lying when he told the story of the snowslide."

CHARGED FOR EXPERIENCE.

"I started out in life with a firm resolve to be honest," said the Boston drummer, "but now and then I have bumped up against a situation that shook my resolution.

"Such a case happened while I was in Texas last Summer. I was stopping at a village hotel called 'The Cyclone House,' and had been in bed about two hours when I found myself being carried across the country in the midst of boards, beams and furniture. A cyclone had come along and picked that old house up and made matchwood of it. There were ten people killed and twice that many injured. I had to lay up with a farmer for a week, and then resumed business.

"It never occurred to me until a month later that I ought to have settled my hotel bill before departing. The landlord had been one of the killed, and the town about wiped out, but so heavily did the thing pray on my conscience that I made a trip of a hundred miles to square things. I found the landlord's widow, and she was willing to take my word as to how long I swooped down. I figured it up and handed her the proper amount, but she seemed to have something on her mind. When I told her to speak out, she said:

"'This settles the hotel bill all right, but what about the experience?'

"'How do you mean, ma'am?'

"'Why, hadn't there ought to be at least a dollar more for ypur cyclone experience?'

"I agreed with her, and handed over the greenback, but the more I think of it the more I am inclined to believe that it was pushing an honest man a little bit too hard."