

THE SQUIRE'S FUN.

Squire Doolittle was a farmer, fat and jolly, who liked fun, but always preferred it at some one else's expense. If he could play a trick on one of his sons he enjoyed it hugely. As a consequence the boys did not reverence him much, and were always trying some practical joke upon their father. Sometimes they succeeded, but not often.

"I'm too old a fish to be caught by the pin-hooks of boys," he would say, when some plan of theirs had miscarried and the joke was turned upon themselves, much to his delight and their chagrin. "You've heard of weasels, haven't you? Yes? Well, weasels, especially old weasels, never sleep."

"We must get a laugh against him in some way," said Tom. "He's too provoking! I'd give a dollar to trick him in such a way that he wouldn't like to hear about it."

"So would I," said John.

"And I'd make it two," said Robert. "But we are hardly sharp enough. That's the trouble."

It happened that the squire was in the haymow in the barn when this conversation took place, and the boys were sitting on some boxes on the barn floor. He chuckled as he listened, and a moment later called out from his lofty perch: "I'll tell you what I'll do, boys. When you get a good joke on me I'll buy each of you a hat."

The boys looked foolish. But finally, because they had nothing else to say, they accepted the challenge, and in a half-hearted sort of way set their wits to work to earn the hats.

In the squire's flock of sheep was an old ram called David. The animal had a chronic spite against the whole human family, and never lost an opportunity of exhibiting it to any individual of the family that crossed his path. If a stranger entered the pasture or yard where David was the poor man was fortunate if he was not knocked down as suddenly as if he had been struck by lightning.

The ram always attacked from the rear. He would get behind the object of his attack, curb his neck, shut his eyes, and charge! As may be imagined, the great horns of the animal, backed up by the momentum gathered by his charge, gave anything but a pleasant sensation when they came in contact with the legs of his unsuspecting victim. Generally a board was strapped to his horns, over his woolly face, to obstruct his range of vision, and serve as a warning to strangers of his warlike propensities. But he often contrived to tear it from his head, and then alas for his unsuspecting victim.

The boys enjoyed many an hour of fun with David. The sheep-pasture came up to the barnyard on one side, and a creek ran along by both. Where the pasture came to the creek there was a very high bank, and this bank was steep. The Doolittle boys used to get upon a narrow rock that was just under the edge of the bank. Here, when they stood up, all of their bodies above the waist could be seen above the level of the pasture. Placing themselves in this position, they would attract the attention of old David by calling and shaking their hats at him. He was always ready for battle. With lowered head, curbed neck and a snort of

anger, he would rush at them with his eyes closed. Taking advantage of this peculiarity, the boys would drop down behind the bank, and David would go over them and into the water, with a plunge that would have done credit to a Newfoundland dog. Then he would get back to the shore, looking wrathful and sheepish; but he could not be induced to renew the attack again at that time.

His memory, however, was poor, or his pugnacity was too strong for his discretion, for in an hour, if the boys came back and showed themselves above the bank, he was ready for another charge. Perhaps the foolish animal thought that some time he would be too quick for them.

The squire had often watched this sport, and laughed at David's recklessness and at his appearance as he plunged into the water and came forth with wet wool and disgusted and wrathful aspect.

One day the squire was in the barnyard salting the cows. He had a half-bushel measure in his hand, and as he looked over the fence into the sheep-pasture, and saw David watching him, he held up the measure and shook it at the old fellow. David gave a snort of defiance, and began to curb his neck and shake his head, as if challenging the squire to combat.

"I wonder if I couldn't trick the old fellow in the same way that the boys fool him?" thought the deacon. He looked about the yard cautiously. His sons were not in sight, and he concluded he would have a laugh at David's expense. Crawling through the fence, he reached the rock on which the boys stood in their encounters with David. The ram had not seen him. When the squire raised himself cautiously and looked over the bank, David was watching the barnyard, and evidently wondering what had become of the man who had just challenged him.

"Hi, David!" cried the squire, holding the half-bushel measure out before him as a target for the sheep to aim at. "Hi, David!"

David "hied" at once. He gave a grand flourish, as if to say, "Look out there!" then charged.

Unfortunately for the squire, he was so excited over the fun that he forgot himself completely, and only thought of the half-bushel measure. Instead of dropping out of the sheep's way, he swung the measure on one side, in his excitement forgetting that David always shut his eyes when he charged, and aimed for the object before him when he closed them. The consequence was that the ram did not follow the measure, but bolting straight for the place where he last saw it, struck the poor squire square in the stomach and he and David went over the bank and into the creek as if shot out of a cannon.

"Wall, I snum!" sputtered the squire, as he made his way to the bank. "I forgot all about dodging. I do b'leeve the old reprobate's broke my stomach in, by the way it feels. You old rascal!" he screamed to David, whose air was one of victory, as he stood on the pasture side of the fence, making defiant motions with his head at the squire, who had clambered out of the water on the barn-yard side; "I'd like to break your old neck! I shan't get over this for a month, if I ever do. I wouldn't have been so bruised for five dollars. I'm glad the boys didn't see me."

He made his way up the bank and to-

wards the barn, under cover of the fence. He didn't want anyone at the house to see him in his wet clothes. As he opened the barn door, a broadside of laughter saluted his ears from the hay-mow in the end of the barn towards the creek. He knew then that the boys' hour of triumph had come. They had seen his discomfiture.

"I say, father!" irreverently called out Tom, in a voice choked with laughter, "you didn't scrooch quick enough. Next time you'll know better how to do it."

"What became of the half-bushel?" asked John; and Rob screamed, "Hi, David!" in such a way that notwithstanding his pain the squire was half inclined to laugh himself.

"I—I acknowledge that David was too much for me that time," said the squire, looking very red and foolish. "Laugh away, boys, if it does you any good."

"What's the price of hats?" asked John.

"Well, but the joke wasn't yours," said the squire. "But I'll tell you what I'll do. If you won't say anything about this foolish affair, I'll buy the hats, and give you a day's fishing any time you like to take it."

"We agree!—we agree!" cried the boys.

But the story leaked out in some way, and the squire had to endure a good deal of sly laughter from his fun-loving neighbors. But he never quite forgave old David, and although he did not say so, he had a feeling of unqualified satisfaction when he heard one day that the old sheep's neck had been broken in a fight.

Winkle—"I wish I could devise some way of hanging up my clothes."

Nodd—"I wish I could devise some way of getting them out after I have hung them up."

A highway robber, on being brought before the magistrate, asserted that he was more entitled to be pitied than to be punished. When asked to explain his meaning, he said, "Sure the money wasn't in the bank a week when the bank stopped payment, and I was robbed of every shilling."

Mary—"Isn't Miss Gowild's hat too sweet for anything?"

Mabel—"Yes; perfectly lovely. But I believe her dressmaker could make a clothes-prop look graceful."

"Yes; I believe you. But you go to the same dressmaker, too, don't you?"

"Ah, Jonesy, old man," said Hicks, as he and Jones walked home from the club. "there's a light in your window for you! You married men—"

"By George! So there is!" returned Jones. "Let's go back to the club."

"Is there such a thing as a waiters' union?" asked the hungry customer in the restaurant.

"Yes, sir," said the waiter.

"I believe I'll join it. I've waited here long enough to make me eligible, I fancy."

"May I trouble you to pass the mustard?" said a gentleman in a London dining-room to his opposite neighbor.

"Sir, do you mistake me for the waiter?" was the uncivil reply.

"No, sir; I mistook you for a gentleman."